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Football School: An Analysis of College Football Culture inside the Neoliberal University

Neal Ternes
FOOTBALL SCHOOL: AN ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL CULTURE INSIDE THE NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY

By

NEAL TERNES

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The members of the supervisory committee were:

Michael Giardina
Professor Directing Thesis

Joshua Newman
Committee Member

Jeffery James
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the thesis has been approved in accordance with university requirements.
I dedicate this to my parents, Tim and Kathy Ternes, who have given me profound support and encouragement throughout my academic career. I love you both very much.
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ABSTRACT

The term “football school” has been disseminated in some manner or another in the popular press, by scholars, and by colleges for the past century. This label is shared and understood at a certain cultural level but research has yet to attempt to provide a detailed account of the implications of this term let alone provide a definition that takes into account the broader significance of football on college campuses. Football Saturdays on college campuses are unique to collegiate athletics in that the spectacle of sport is secondary to the experience of consuming the event. Fans and students pack in tailgating areas hours before as well as after a contest to share in the communal consumption of a football Saturday, indulging in countless hedonistic rituals that are in some cases as old as the game itself. These rituals, such as the Breakfast Club student bar crawl at Purdue University or the midnight yell practice at Texas A&M University, reflect particular community identities that have become woven into the fabric of college football programs.

With the rise of the neoliberal university, football has been implicated in the branding process more than ever, with the identity of being a ‘football school’ actually becoming a valuable title in an increasingly competitive academic market. This has further complicated the linkage between the consumption of football culture and the academic identity of the university which supports the team. Fans actively consume football cultural forms and artifacts in the events preceding, during, and after a contest at big Football U’s, but this consumption has gone largely unaddressed in defining what it means to be a “Football School” (Toma, 2003). With the intensification of football culture and the rise of the neoliberal university it is important to develop an understanding of how football fan identities exist and are co-opted as part of a branded university identity (Sperber, 2001). In this study I used comparative case studies of three different football schools to develop an understanding of what it means to be a football school at the subject institutions by addressing the following questions: Is football culture implicated in the power knowledge of the neoliberal university?; Is branded football culture consumed by members of the university community?; and does the surveillance of football culture on university campuses implicate members of the university community?

I find that football within the branding of each university is utilized as the “front porch” of the institution at each school and this causes football culture, as well as the logics inherent in
the football culture at each institution to overshadow the brand of the institutions themselves. Through the promotion of football culture, each university becomes complicit in reproducing the logics of neoliberalism as well as power knowledges of militarization, paleoconservative religious identity, and the image of “beer and circus”. For each institution I visited, I find that the unique combination of power logics of each individual space are located within the football identity of the institution and that football becomes the site of manufactured consent for power logics that are often anathema to the stated goals of each institutions brand.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Every year *US News & World Report* publishes a series of lists which rank schools from nearly every aspect of the collegiate experience imaginable. From academics, to research, to who has the best parties, and, most importantly for this paper, which are the top football schools, there exists lists that on which a prospective student may potentially base their college choice on (Lytle, n.d.). *US News & World Report* is not the only mainstream publication to do this either; *The Princeton Review*, *Forbes*, and even sports journalism providers such as *The Sporting News* and *Sports Illustrated* have gotten into the act of pushing labels on not just incoming students, but the public at large. Although schools don’t always directly apply these labels to themselves, they are certainly not shy about emphasizing their athletic prowess in the most nationally popular intercollegiate sports, which are football and men’s basketball (Sperber, 2001). If all these names signified was what programs are currently excelling at a particular sport we wouldn’t need the label at all, since we could just check on who went to the Final Four or played in a BCS bowl game last year. The implication of these titles is that going to the Final Four doesn’t make Ohio State a basketball school just like going to the BCS wouldn’t make Kansas a football school (at least, not in the popular imaginary). For while athletic success is certainly a major factor in assigning these labels, it does not account for the cultural and historical impact these sports have had on college campuses and in the surrounding college community for many years. Football in particular has a very rich and storied history on the campuses of American institutions of higher learning and the sport’s influence has grown to massive proportions (see Smith, 2011, Sperber 2001, Watterson, 2006, Toma, 2004, Oriard, 2009). With football becoming such a major focus of popular interest both in and around the university there exists a need for scholars to understand exactly what defines a “football school” in a socio-cultural context and what the cultural implications of that label are when utilized within higher education by increasingly corporate universities.

In the case of big money NCAA Division I athletics, there is considerable consternation and debate about the role of sports within higher education. While college sports certainly have the capacity to draw fans and visitors to the institution, there are those who feel that taking the focus away from academics undermines the core mission of higher education (see Sperber, 2001,
Oriard, 2009, Smith, 2011, Clotfelter, 2011). Some critics have gone so far as to charge college administrators with becoming cheerleaders for their campus sports teams who will sacrifice the integrity of higher education for victories on the playing field (see Smith, 2011, Sperber, 2001). Still others argue that, “those who have complained about big-time athletics over the 90 or so years of episodic debate have typically proceeded directly from indictment to proposed solutions, skipping entirely the intervening step of considering the causes of those perceived problems” (Clotfelter, 2011, p. 211). However, despite this debate there has been, until fairly recently, a lack of effort by those in the fields of sociology, communication, and sport management to provide the research necessary to better understand and critique collegiate football culture. In the words of Clotfelter, “there is no foreseeable future that is likely to sever the century-old marriage between commercial athletics and American higher education. But a fresh acknowledgement of the marriage’s benefits and costs, and a willingness to act on this understanding, should help” (2011, p. 221).

While Clotfelter primarily advocates further economic evaluation of the relationship between universities and the athletic programs which reside amongst them, his assertion carries weight outside of his discipline. Although economic research on the costs and benefits of college athletics is certainly a change of pace, we cannot expect a complete understanding of the intricacies of college athletics’ place within higher education without first questioning the logics of the institutional and political climate which their relationship has been born out of. In other words, there is a pressing need to evaluate what Clotfelter refers to as, “the benefits and costs” of the union between universities and big time college sports, but that evaluation should also stem from critical readings of power and discourse that extend beyond the gridiron or the court. The critical approach of this research is absolutely essential for developing a deeper understanding of sporting culture at Americas’ colleges and universities as it reveals the impact of broader university policy and implicates college football within the growing corporatization of the American university. For this research, I will be examining the football culture on college campuses and describe how it is implicated in the branded identity of the university. To achieve this, I observed the college football culture on university campuses and comparing the results with the depictions of football in university branding literature. With this work I hope to develop a more nuanced understanding of how institutions that are typically referred to as “football schools” utilize their football programs as part of their overarching identity. This work is
intended to inform future research on the role of athletics within the corporate university and the culture of major college athletics. Such research will hopefully lead to a more complete understanding of the relationships between big-time collegiate sports and the institutions that sponsor them.

Research conducted on the nature of the “football school” culture has revealed that, at least in part, it has acted as a site where power relations have been implicated and, in some cases, resisted. One early example would be the use of football as a means to support the muscular Christianity movement within American colleges at the turn of the 20th century which was led by President Theodore Roosevelt (Miller, 2012). Football culture came to represent socially conservative views during the 1950s and 1960s. Coaches around the country were notorious for forcing their players to cut their hair short and stay out of political demonstration on university campuses, and for discriminating against minority players. Despite revolts from some athletes, football culture during this time period was largely seen as a positive by the larger societal structure for reinforcing the dominant social conservative power knowledge. Specifically, this received the support of political leaders who advocated for an expansion of traditional patriarchal power structures that disenfranchised women and minorities and the expansion of military operations in Vietnam. Football’s symbolic paternalistic imagery, as seen in the coach player relationships at institutions such as Alabama under Paul “Bear” Bryant, and the militarized discourse of football, as seen in common football vernacular (the quarterback as the “field general”) and numerous traditions with military origins, was held up as the ideal of the American lifestyle by Nixon, Reagan, and other conservative leaders (Oriard, 2009). While these are both general examples, they each demonstrate how football culture has been used in the past as a tool to reinforce cultural narratives that served the interests of maintaining the status quo.

At the same time the narrative surrounding football’s conservative values was adjusting to the rise in liberal thinking and activism in the 1960s and 70s, the American university itself was also experiencing a major shift. The state institutions, which had been planted under the Morrill Act, were growing rapidly. Following World War II, the GI Bill, which allowed returning veterans to attend state colleges on the government dime, caused a growth spurt and colleges were trying to grow enrollment in order to meet rising costs. Enrollment exploded through the 1950s as major public universities looked to keep up with private schools, which earned more in tuition dollars per student. The student body growth also mirrored a shift in the
labor market. As blue collar work that one could do without a college education began to slowly disappear, more and more high school graduates looked to the nation’s universities, primarily the large (and relatively affordable) state institutions, to ensure their future employment bona fides (Hacker & Dreifus, 2010). However, due to political unrest and liberal thinking on many university campuses at this time, there was considerable political capital lost in the public university system, particularly among conservatives who believed that activists on political campuses were simply ‘spoiled children’, a comment Richard Nixon used in California when discussing campus activism (Kamenetz, 2010). This political tension, coupled with a shifting international economy, became the impetus for the shift towards the university model which we see today. That is, to a modern branded, corporate university characterized by the presence of corporate research interests as well as a commitment to marketing and self-promotion, which resulted in a de-emphasis on undergraduate education and financial assistance from state and federal government.

From 1968 to 1974, federal funding for universities dropped precipitously as public focus shifted to financing the war in Vietnam. Furthermore, the political unrest at many institutions, particularly the protests and subsequent shootings at Kent State, had soured much of the country on the prospect of continuing to fund educational institutions that bred political dissidents (Kamenetz, 2010). President Nixon, and later President Reagan, emphasized the need for colleges and universities to be weaned from the public coffers so that they would compete for funding in the corporate sphere. This signaled a paradigm shift away from the Cold War mentality that U.S. supremacy was tied to a strong federal commitment to education and towards the need for economic competitiveness came into being. Fear that falling behind countries like Germany and Japan in technology and scientific fields was seen as a sign that the federal government needed to transfer the responsibility of promoting innovation to private corporations, which would be better situated within the U.S. economy to apply these breakthroughs. The result was the growing privatization of public higher education. Corporate entities became directly linked to public universities across the country, funding research programs and directing them to make projects applicable to the commercial world (Washburn, 2006). As corporate capitalism rapidly became a major capital provider for the public universities, institutional research became less locally focused and more globalized in an attempt to continue to draw in more and more private research projects and funding. Since large state institutions needed large
research arms to drive prestige, receive funding, and to compete against private institutions with larger budgets such as Harvard, many large state research institutions began to emphasize fields of study which were most likely to receive private contracts and to de-emphasize certain disciplines and undergraduate education, which generated significantly less outside funding (Washburn, 2006, Kamenetz, 2010, Hacker & Dreifus, 2010). Because of this turn, the locally focused research that was the intention of the Morrill Act was supplanted by the need to fund research projects that impacted the increasingly globalized economy (2006). Once locally focused state colleges and universities began to extend out and create global networks and research alliances which broadened the cultural reach of the campus community.

Interdisciplinary studies (i.e., the collaboration between various subjects and disciplines), became marginalized in favor of specialization and professors became valued more for their ability to bring in research grants than their ability to teach undergraduates (Rothblatt, 2008). The end result of these policy changes are summed up rather succinctly in this passage,

“The grand vision of a world-class or global university offers one way of coping with certain categories of expenditures. Governments can concentrate resources on institutions with a proven or potential capacity to compete for graduate students, academic talent, and Nobel quality researchers. The expected results enhance national prestige and generate income by producing cutting-edge innovation in science and technology. Such a university becomes ‘privatized’ by attracting sufficient non-state financial support to meet its operating expenses, strengthen its endowment base, and compete even more vigorously.” (Rothblatt, 2008, p.28)

The final result of this was the modern neoliberal university (also referred to as the multiversity, Rothblatt, 2008, Washburn, 2006), a large, diverse institution which specialized in creating experts and promoted globalized research rather than undergraduate education and research that benefited local directives. These universities are often, but not always, state institutions, many of them former land grant colleges, whose historical reliance on state funding made them more vulnerable to the political shift towards neoliberal policies and have since come, to varying extents, to embody dominant neoliberal logics.

Before discussing the neoliberal university in more depth, it is first imperative to define the term “neoliberal”, as it is carries different meanings within different spheres. Economic and
political neoliberalism was conceived largely by Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek in the 1920s, though it did not become popularized until much later. Neoliberalism is grounded in Hayek’s formalized version of the trade cycle theory, which Garrison (1986) summarizes thusly:

“The injection of new money through credit markets suppresses the rate of interest causing resources to be intertemporally misallocated. Capital goods appropriate for a relatively lengthy, or time-consuming, structure of production are created at the expense of capital goods that would be more compatible with the existing, less time-consuming, structure. The credit-financed capital restructuring entails a net increase in economic activity, which constitutes the boom. But with the passage of time, the still-incomplete capital restructuring is revealed to be inconsistent with actual resource availabilities. The newly perceived scarcities are reflected in increased prices of uncommitted resources and in a corresponding increase in the demand for credit. These increased costs necessitate the liquidation or abandonment of misallocated capital. Labor which was complementary to the abandoned capital becomes unemployed. The bust is followed by a recovery in which market adjustments in relative prices and wages allow for the eventual reabsorption of unemployed capital and labor into the structure of production.” (1986, p.437)

Rather than the inflationary economics popularized by Keynesian economists during this time period, which advocated that the state financially intervene during times of economic crisis through deficit spending, Hayek argued that government should avoid direct stimulus of the economy and instead, “expand the realm of private enterprise operating in a competitive market” (Polanyi-Levitt, 2012, p. 11). For Hayek, government intervention in the private economic market was a violation of personal liberty. He believed that when individuals “are coerced into assisting in the achievement of fairness, welfare, and justice, the coercer prevents them from fully developing their intellects and capacities in making independent choices, or using their will, knowledge, and abilities to achieve individual freedom” (Flip, 2012, 73). To this end, Hayek advocated a negative concept of freedom, where individual freedom was achieved by removing intervention, coercion, or attempts to guide individuals from governments, organizations, groups, or other individuals (Hayek, 1960). After World War II, Hayek took up a position at the University of Chicago where,
“With the participation of members of the law school faculty and the Economics Department, it was concluded that classical antitrust legislation was no longer necessary because competition is a sufficient condition to contain corporate market power. Only labor unions were considered undesirable because they violated the right of a worker to negotiate individually with an employer.” (Polvani-Levitt, 2012, p. 10)

Hayek soon became one of the most influential members of the Chicago School, but it wasn’t until the end of the Cold War that his neoliberal framework became a part of governmental policy in the United States.

Neoliberalism did not become de facto policy until it was adopted as a resistance by liberal democrats of the 1960s and 70s to what was believed to be communist economic policy. These liberal democrats supported the liberalization of the world economy through the creation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund following World War II with loan policies based on Keynesian economic principles. However,

“Debt crisis struck in the final years of the Cold War, and when the Cold War was over, heavily indebted nations were compelled to renegotiate their debts from positions of much greater weakness, and consequently had to accept much less favorable terms…the U.S.…handed the job over to the IMF and World Bank. These institutions suddenly arose as serious players on the geopolitical map, charged with implementing the unfavorable (for the indebted) terms that generally go by the names of ‘structured adjustments,’ ‘conditionalities,’ or ‘austerity measures’. These measures are now familiar and include the following: an end to protective tariffs; devaluation (or ‘floating’) of the national currency; interest rate hikes…end to environmental regulations; privatization of government enterprises; and…government employment cutbacks and social service spending reductions, most notable in the areas of health and education. The result…has been an enormous increase in global poverty and global environmental degradation.” (Germic, 2009, p. 133)

The shift in international economic policy largely stemmed from the growth of the neo-conservative movement within the United States. In addition to Hayek the Chicago School was
also home to another famous neoliberal economist by the name of Milton Friedman. He went one step further than Hayek, advocating for,

“a pure capitalist order; whereby only by giving oneself over to the market – to the logics of surplus value and accumulation – can the individual ever truly be free. Rooted in classical liberal economic theory, Friedman’s interpretation signaled a significant break from classical liberal forebears in that while his predecessors saw some value in intervention and state regulation into economic activity…Friedman advocated for a near complete abolition of economic planning activities…Friedman outlined a complete overhaul of the public sector, calling for floating exchange rates, the privatization of public works, educational vouchers and increased monetarism…as a solution to stagflation. Friedman assumed the potential and limitless prosperity through their engagement with unshackled market relations.” (Newman & Giardina, 2011)

Friedman’s philosophy were soon adopted by a new conservative right that was looking to unify the moral conservatives of the Old Right, who were concerned with maintaining the traditions and customs of white, paternalistic society, and the neoconservatives who believed that the only way to guarantee America’s prosperity was through the protection and proliferation of global capitalism (Brown, 2006). Ronald Reagan’s presidential campaign marked the unification of these two factions into a new right, where the aim was simultaneously the imperialistic spread of liberty, the protection of liberty at home through market deregulation, and a commitment to morality as determined by the Old Right (Adler, 2004). Thus Friedman’s push away from the principles of Hayek, and the subsequent adoption of Friedman’s conception of neoliberalism in Reagan’s New Right, resulted in the proliferation of neoliberal policy in the United States.

For this research I draw from Foucault’s understanding of neoliberalism, which can be described as “a political rationality that tries to render the social domain economic and to link a reduction in (welfare) state services and security systems to the increasing call for ‘personal responsibility’ and ‘self-care’” (Lemke, 2010, p. 203). Neoliberalism, according to Foucault, is a technique of power which pushes “not only the individual body, but also collective bodies and institutions (public administrations, universities, etc.), corporations and states have to be ‘lean’, ‘fit’, ‘flexible’ and ‘autonomous’” (in Lemke, 2010, p. 203). In his lecture on the Chicago School he noted that there were some similarities between US neoliberalism and the Ordo-
The term ordo-liberals refers to German economists from the Freiburg School known for being associated with and publishing in the journal *Ordo*. These men believed that the economy was not an organic entity but rather an artificial institution that needed to be controlled by the government (Lemke, 2010).
generalizing all discursive language into the parlance of economics as well as shifting the evaluation and surveillance of subjects into the methodology of economic efficiency. In Foucauldian terms, the knowledge of power within the neoliberal society is that of economic efficiency, and all subjects, whether individuals or institutions, are implicated through discourse based in its logics. *This includes higher education in America.*

Since the 1960s, public funding for colleges and universities has been steadily decreasing, thanks in large part to the loss of political clout during the anti-war and Civil Rights movements (highlighted by the aforementioned comments by Nixon) as well as the shift to the neoliberal university model. As a result, marketing and institution branding have become a major focus of college administrations. This push toward a corporate university structure has had a number of profound effects on higher education. With public funding for higher education dwindling, universities have had to look for new ways to increase revenue. The new model for funding American colleges has added more corporate partnerships as well as encouraged ballooning tuition and enrollment (at least at most public universities) while cutting costs wherever possible. In other words, the universities have become brands (Ginsberg, 2011), to be thought of and run like for-profit corporate entities.

The multiplicity of university functions and missions makes analysis of the university branding process a daunting task. Because of the rise in specialization and the increasing segmentation of departments, it is very common for various colleges within a large public university to have a degree of autonomy in marketing under the umbrella brand of the university (Waeraas & Solbak, 2009). This can be seen in the way that different departments or branches of large universities use different signage or logos in their promotional materials. Perhaps the most obvious examples would be athletic departments at many public universities who use logos for their sports teams that often are very different from the logos of the institution itself. The University of Texas at Austin is one example; its burnt orange longhorn head logo is one of the most iconic athletic department symbols in the country. The longhorn is not the official emblem of the university (the institution’s official logo is the university seal); however, it utilizes the school’s official color scheme and is often paired with the word ‘Texas’ in order to establish the connection between the athletic department and the school. The athletic department as a whole is consolidated under the longhorn logo and, even though it is different from the university logo, there are enough visual and contextual clues to maintain the connection between the athletic
department and the university as a whole (University of Texas, 2012). Universities can thus be classified as brand communities that contain, “a broad assortment of entities and a number of relationships between them” (Anctil, 2008, p. 44). Through this lens we can see the university’s image as a conglomeration of mediated images of the various components of the university as a whole. Everything from the school fight song to the campus architecture is included in the branding process as part of an attempt to appeal to a specific idea of what a college ought to be (Ekman, 2007). Antcil writes that,

“This brand community gives common purpose and a central route for communication between colleges and universities and their various stakeholders and audiences. Brand communities maintain the brand just as the marketers behind the brand have the power to shape the brand and potentially the brand community.” (2008, p. 45)

While colleges had been competing against each other like commercial entities since the early 20th century, the shift in focus towards the neoliberal university model intensified this competition and led to a massive university investment in marketing and branding strategies (Ginsberg, 2011).

Branding strategies have also come to implicate previously autonomous aspects of university culture. For this research I employ an anthropologically rooted definition of culture conceptualized by Silk and Andrews (2011) as part of their ontological approach of Physical Cultural Studies in order to develop a more pluralistic and homeostatic understanding of college football culture. Anthropological depictions of culture define the term as, “learned behaviour which is socially transmitted and cultivated over time, and which serves as a main determinant of human behaviour” (Girginov, 2010). This definition predicates any understanding of the culture of college football be understood through mapping of the “social relations, practices, and experiences” that are the manifestation of the historically rooted and constantly evolving ideologies and traditions which constitute culture (Silk & Andrews, 2011, p.14-15). Through this Physical Cultural Studies approach the context of culture becomes key, as, “while physical cultural practices are produced from specific social and historic contexts, they are also actively engaged in the ongoing constitution of the conditions out of which they emerge” (2011, p. 15). This understanding of culture puts a premium on how the physical aspects of the space, that is the organization of structures and bodies, is implicated through dominant discourses, hence the
designation of Physical Culture Studies (Giardina & Newman, 2011). In applying this definition more completely to the issue of neoliberalism, this definition can be further nuanced so that culture is,

“understood not so much as the distinctive forms of ‘a whole way of life’ but, rather, as (or, and also as) a set of dynamic, productive, and generative material (and immaterial) practices that regulate social conduct and behavior and that emphasize personal self-management…political affiliation, and trans/national identity. Given the power of trans/national (cultural) sporting agents, intermediaries, and institutions to actively work as pedagogical sites hegemonically reinscribing and re-presenting neoliberal discourses on sport, culture, nation, and democracy, it is imperative for us as cultural critics to excavate and theorize the ‘contingent relations, structures, and effects that link sport forms with prevailing determinate forces’.” (Giardina & McCarthy, 2005, p. 148)

In this research I thusly examine college football culture through its emergence of football culture from a construct based on history, rituals, and codes of conduct into a commercially driven spectacle which is leveraged as a marketing arm for universities. Moffat notes that, “in the late nineteenth century American under-graduates themselves invented the youth culture of outside-the-class-room-college, naming it ‘college life’ and passing it down to future student generations” and that elements of the traditional collegiate lifestyle still remain in one form or another on many university campuses (1991, p. 44). However, these traditions and rituals have, since the 1960’s been married to a youth counter-culture. As Moffatt explains,

“Though specifically collegiate ‘traditions’ may have been handed down from undergraduate generation to generation in the past, such traditions are no longer particularly important among the students at present. Most undergraduates at Rutgers and elsewhere, for instance, probably know only a few things about older college cultures. They know that college is about adolescent autonomy. They know that it is about fun and games: elaborate college pranks, and so forth. They know that they will find such typical college institutions as dormitories and fraternities on most campuses. Since the ‘60s, they have also expected to find political protestors and cultural radicals of
a particular type in college. Otherwise, almost everything in the college lives of students … is less a product of the collegiate past than a projection of contemporary late-adolescent mass culture into the particular institutions of youth which colleges now represent - places where everyone else is fairly intelligent, places where students are on their own with large numbers of their age-mates and with considerable amounts of free time, and places where adult authorities have minimum knowledge of and impact on their private lives.” (1991, p. 57)

It is at this intersection of the modern manifestation of past traditions and expectations regarding the collegiate experience, which constitute a more or less organic collegiate culture, and the “late-adolescent mass culture” which is a product of modern neoliberalism, that this research is situated. This can be more narrowly defined as culture branding; the logics of free-market capitalism and corporate brand management which combine to form their own behaviors, rituals, and belief systems (Klein, 2010). It is at this point where the culture branding of the neoliberal institution intersects with the cultural phenomenon of the organically manifested collegiate lifestyle to form a culturally poignant brand.

Culture branding has become an integral part of constructing corporate branding identities. Corporations since the 1990’s in America have looked to absorb and transform the culture that they exist within in order to strengthen the impact of their brand.

“Companies like Nike, Polo and Tommy Hilfiger were ready to take branding to the next level: no longer simply branding their own products, but branding the outside culture as well – by sponsoring cultural events, they could go out into the world and claim bits of it as brand-name outposts. For these companies, branding was not just a matter of adding value to a product. It was about thirstily soaking up cultural ideas and iconography that their brands could reflect by projecting these images back on the culture as ‘extensions’ of their brands.” (Klein, 2010, p. 31)

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2 For the sake of this research, I differentiate between football culture that is incorporated into the brand as non-organic or inorganic football culture and all other mediated or existing forms of football culture as organic football culture. This is not an ideal label but still serves as a functional differentiator between the types of football culture I wish to describe in this thesis.
Klein reflects further that,

“The picture of our culture’s lost innocence is mostly romantic fiction. Though there have always been artists who fought fiercely to protect the integrity of their work, neither the arts, sports nor the media have ever, even theoretically, been…protected sovereign states….Cultural products are the all-time favorite play thing of the powerful….Though the degree of meddling varies, our culture was built on compromises between notions of public good and the personal, political and financial ambitions of the rich and powerful.” (Klein, 2010, p. 31-34)

For the neoliberal university, this has meant absorbing the combined ideal created by the confluence of traditional collegiate rituals and expectations and modern consumer culture to develop a branded collegiate lifestyle. The paradigm of collegiate lifestyle branding largely grew out of the cult following of the film *Animal House*, which was released in 1978 and has since become a cottage industry, with universities perpetually exploring ways to make their school the most fun (Sperber, 2001). This has created what Klein describes as the mall mentality. Klein notes that the new college “students slip into class slurping grande lattes, chat in the back and slip out. They’re cruising, shopping, disengaged” (2010, p. 98). The new branded university is duty bound to appeal to this demographic by emphasizing extracurricular activities and sports (including college football), often at the expense of actual education. Thus the brand of the university has become one of entertainment rather than education, where the spectacle of big time college sports supersedes, to an extent, the need for a quality undergraduate education.

From the perspective of the branded university a strong football program is more important than a strong philosophy department and hiring a great basketball coach is more important than hiring a great English professor. This disconcerting emphasis on entertainment rather than education has diminished the quality undergraduate education at many American colleges and universities. Furthermore, the few students who would partake in meaningful campus activism or academic thought are often hampered by the lack of undergraduate financial burden placed upon many public colleges and universities by local and federal government (Sperber, 2001). From 1993 to 2004 the average amount of debt taken on by students more than
doubled and it continues to climb (Washburn, 2005). With students so heavily in debt from the moment they set foot on campus, becoming politically active is considered particularly risky since any activity which they engage in which draws the ire of the university or those outside of it could potentially harm their ability to find a good job after college which can critically impact their ability to climb out of debt (Sperber, 2001).

Another major issue facing universities is how to control their brand’s appearance by appealing to arbitrary college rankings. Published in popular magazines since the early 1920s, the criteria and results of these pieces have become, to the chagrin of many administrators and faculty members, one of the main criteria by which the American public evaluates the success of institutions of higher learning (Washburn, 2005). The primary critique of these rankings is that they promote an undesirable and unsustainable model of higher education based off of highly successful private institutions such as Stanford and Princeton, which have massive privately funded research departments and institutional endowments which allow them to simultaneously support undergraduate education and major research without reliance on the corporate model, which many state college and universities cannot afford to do. The result is that many former land grant institutions attempt to compete with the Stanfords of the academic world in research by diverting resources from undergraduate education. Woodburry (2003) pulls no punches in his elaboration of what a university needs to do in order to get ahead in the rankings, saying,

“These strategies should carry warning labels, however, because most contribute to bad public policy and undermine the integrity of the institution itself. Any college or university adopting these strategies should not be naïve about the questionable role they are playing in a bigger game.” (p. 18)

He lists producing an application deluge, rejecting as many applicants as possible, spending money, putting emphasis on the scores of college entrance exams such as the SAT and ACT, avoiding nontraditional students, creating a reputation, changing peer groups within which the college is ranked, exploiting some of the more dubious statistical measures used by those who rank colleges, and seeking out quick fixes as the primary strategy for improving an institutions ranking (2003). Put more bluntly, the model most commonly utilized for moving up in the academic rankings has been to move the university towards a corporate model of operation, particularly in marketing (Rouse and Garcia, 2004). By focusing on students and parents as
customers, universities are taught to ignore the educational value of college and focus primarily on the experience. In improving facilities, generating an image of importance, and surveying students about their experience to improve quality, colleges hope to sell the collegiate experience as a product and not an educational opportunity (Scott, 2012). While sports, alcohol, and partying were all part of the collegian lifestyle since the late 1800s (Oriard, 1993), the film *Animal House* (and a slew of films in that genre) romanticized this and brought the concept of the ideal collegiate experience into the forefront of the American imagination. In terms of academic ranking and marketing, it meant that, outside of a few elite universities, few institutions could sell themselves on academics alone and there was an apparent need to promote the collegian lifestyle as part of what their institution had to offer undergraduates. Even though marketing campaigns have paid lip service to the importance of undergraduate education, universities simply haven’t been able to afford to keep up on this aspect of their mission while simultaneously competing in the globalized university marketplace (Ginsberg, 2011). Thus college rankings determine prestige through which a university improves its brand at the expense of actual educational opportunities, meaning that the more an institution embraces neoliberal policies the more likely it is to receive a higher ranking. It is important to point out that these branding strategies have had a profoundly negative impact on the academy, particularly in education and research. In partnering with brands such as adidas and Nike universities are required to sign contracts which allow the apparel companies to cancel the deal and collect damages if the university or its stakeholders disparage them, a convenient perk for companies whose global labor practices have historically been morally questionable at best (Klein, 2010). Corporate connections to university research have been even more problematic,

“Although the government still supplies the majority of the funding for academic research (roughly $21 billion in 2003), the government’s share of the support has from a high 73.5 percent in 1976 to below 60 percent today, even as the cost of research has risen sharply. Federal support for the life sciences has remained strong…rising to 70 percent of the total federal budget for academic research. However, on the same five year period, every other science discipline, including the social sciences, saw its share of federal support shrink.” (Washburn, 2005, p. 5)
State support for public universities has also fallen off, shrinking by more than one third since 1980 (Washburn, 2005). Because of this sharp decline in federal spending for research public universities have had to rely on corporate donations and research grants to support themselves. Faculty at institutions of higher learning have been pushed away from research that does not directly benefit corporate entities, effectively neutering social justice research within the academy and washing out campus political activism. Bose writes,

“Within the university, corporatization has radically altered the conditions of work for the professoriate, in some cases eliminating programs or units in their academic specialties, ratcheting up standards of productivity, and increasing faculty’s general workload in response to the downsizing of academic personnel. A greater reliance on adjunct faculty members has meant that the security and protection of tenure has evaporated for the majority of academics. Moreover, the graying of the professoriate has also heralded larger ideological shifts (contra conservative hysteria about “tenured radicals”) and a political identification away from the concerns of social justice that characterized academics in the latter half of the twentieth century.” (2012, p. 2)

In this sense the branded neoliberal university is not so different from the branded corporation. The neoliberal university has largely shifted itself away from providing material goods (undergraduate education and non-corporate research) and increased efforts to sell the public and prospective students on the quality of its university brand (Washburn, 2005, Klein, 2010). American colleges and universities have thus become the site of neoliberal discourse, whereby ideologies of neoliberalism are both enacted and resisted by subjects, including students, professors, administrators, and members of the university community with surveillance from both outside and within the institutional walls (Bass, Newman, and Giardina, 2012). The question for this research then is how or to what extent is football implicated within this understanding of the neoliberal university? In his analysis of Nebraska football culture, Stein (1977) found that an entire state community becomes a party to football culture at the university and the allegiance to team and coach closely resembles cult-like devotion. In this context football becomes not just a symbol for, but a gateway into the culture of an entire state. Similarly, Newman (2005) documented the use of Confederate symbolism at the University of Mississippi and found that depictions of southern whiteness not only appealed to a specific
demographic but also served to ‘Other’ within the context of Ole Miss athletics that reinforced racial stereotypes. Bass, Newman, and Giardina (2012) likewise describe the nature of civic branding in the case of Penn State University as it related to the events surrounding the Jerry Sandusky child rape scandal. Through these and other analyses we see university athletics as a gateway to a series of dominant cultural ideologies that preference white males on campus that is not only endorsed by the institution, but co-opted and branded as part of the larger university identity. This is only exacerbated by the rise of the corporatized structure within many universities, which changed the focus of American institutions of higher learning, particularly the large state institutions who happen to reside in the nation’s most powerful football conferences, toward corporate global issues and away from regional identities (Washburn, 2006).

With football culture commonly referred to as the “front porch” (Sperber, 2001, Smith, 2011, Clotfelter, 2011) of the neoliberal university, and with much of the dominant cultural ideologies implicated through football culture being scrutinized by both the press and academics (see: Sperber, 2001. Smith 2011, Newman, 2005, etc.), it seems fitting to take a step back and ask what specifically defines different football schools and what does being a football school mean when discussing the dissemination of different cultural ideologies. While other authors have used general definitions for examining Football U, I seek to examine football within the context of the neoliberal institution that goes deeper than simply acknowledging whether a school has been historically successful at winning games. In order to achieve this goal, I have adopted Foucault’s genealogical approach as a theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing the relationship between the university and college football culture. While this does deviate from previous social research on the neoliberal university, which have mostly been based in Marxist praxis (see, Maskovsky, 2012, Zabrodska, Linnell, Laws, and Davies, 2011, Bose, 2012), I believe such a genealogical approach might be more effective for studying and comparing college football culture from different institutions.

Instead of having to discover and elaborate on the state and hegemonic power structures for each institution, Foucault’s (1983) theoretical approach to power focuses on the production of discourse and theorizes the subject to be the result of various discursive workings of power throughout a society. Rather than understanding power as being generated from or organized in a centralized entity, Foucault envisioned power relationships that are ubiquitous to every subject within a society, contributing to the formation of a post-structuralist subject. In fact, Foucault,
“conceptualized power as a capillary-like-network that ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions without being exactly localized in them” (Markula and Silk, 2006, p. 36). Thus, no subject or institution really controls or has power, according to Foucault. This means that rather than exploring and comparing separate hegemonic structures for this project, I am instead examining the various discourses that produce power relationships (or relations of power) on each campus and then determining whether there is anything that can in fact be compared, essentially examining the exteriority of these incidents and trying to find whether there are threads that could lead back toward a center (2006). The distinction here is important as a top down, macro approach does in my view not account for the variance in structures that govern college football culture at different universities or that govern the universities themselves. Foucault’s micro-political approach, where phenomena are viewed on the periphery rather than from the top down, accounts for the individual nuances in governance that likely affect the operations and relations of power on university campuses by characterizing discourse as free flowing. This is important, as historical evidence reveals that college football culture was not shaped from the top down but rather as a communal gathering of ideas. Students, faculty, administrators, media, and government all had a hand in shaping modern college football culture, and Foucault’s peripheral genealogical approach is thus the more appropriate methodological framework for examining it. Attributing power to one single entity as the controller of culture seems disingenuous to the very nature of college football culture, as governance for the sport is not owned by one single entity but rather disseminated through conferences, the NCAA, individual schools, and historically the faculty and student body. I discuss this assertion further in the final chapter of the literature review but for now it is imperative to recognize Foucault as the primary author of the framework used in this thesis.

In this thesis I use a comparative case study strategy to analyze what it means to be a football school at different institutions. Specifically, I intend to analyze how the branded identity of the institution implicates football culture by examining the organic development of football at the university, its current status within the modern college culture, and how the iconography of major college football is presented as a part of the neoliberal university. The purpose of this is to create an understanding of the role football plays in selling the collegiate lifestyle as part of the branding efforts of major universities. I will use ethnography, media analysis, and semi-structured interviews to develop case studies for three different ‘Football U’s” and then compare
my results to answer three specific research questions. The answers to these research questions for each case study will then be examined to determine if there are any results that could perhaps be used to generate future research questions regarding college football culture and the cultural relationship between football and the neoliberal university on a broader scale. I first ask: Is football culture implicated in the received knowledges of and about the neoliberal university? Given the increased importance in branding for institutions of higher education since the late 1960s and early 70s it is imperative to understand how college football culture is co-opted as part of the broader institutional identity of so-called football schools. By examining the branded identity of the neoliberal university I hope to locate football within the patchwork identity of the institution to see how the power logics of football culture interact with the overall knowledge framework of the university. My second question is: Is branded football culture consumed by members of the university community? With this question I hope to address the surveillance of college football’s cultural identity within the university and construct a more robust understanding of the power relationships and bodies of knowledge pertinent to college football culture. Finally, I ask: Are members of the university community implicated in the surveillance of football culture on the university campus. My purpose with this question is to examine how relations of power which exist in the campus football cultures I am examining with these case studies create points of resistance and how deviant bodies are located within the context of the branded multiversity. The results from the examination of this question will then be tied back to the branded university to critique the previously located college football cultural identity within the branded neoliberal university.

In Chapter Two I construct both an historical and ontological framework from which to understand the background and the current state of power relationships within the neoliberal multiversity and college football. I begin with a historical background of American higher education and college football, building into an evaluation of the current state of college football within the multiversity. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Foucauldian theories with a specific focus on power and surveillance so as to build an ontological framework that is then connected to the historical background built in the earlier sections of the chapter. Chapter Three details my methodology in conjunction with Foucault’s ontology, bridging the literature review and methods sections of the thesis. The chapter also contains a procedural description of how
my three case studies are constructed and how the structure of these case studies allows them to be compared as well as the procedure for their comparison.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

It can be argued that much of America’s football culture was built on the political economy of the American University. The system of higher learning in the United States has been the incubator for football culture in this country since the sport was conceived on the intramural fields of Harvard, shielding the sport through its formative years from critics who wanted to see it abolished and providing a surplus of interested students and alumni to spread the game’s popularity (Smith, 2011). In turn, sports (particularly big time football) have impacted higher education, providing assistance as well as political and economic capital for many institutions as they deemphasized undergraduate education and shifted more focus towards the primarily research driven corporate university model (Sperber, 2001). In order to understand how both higher education and football have been intertwined it is first necessary to understand the history of them both. Football and the American university have been articulated together since the sport’s inception and reading them together is paramount to establishing a firm understanding of the narratives that they have spawned and to providing points of inquiry into how those narratives are played out today. Throughout this literature review I will point out various points of inquiry derived from historical perspectives that I will address in this research. This section will begin with a the history of football within the American university with a special emphasis placed on football’s shifting narrative role within higher education as the latter has continued to drift towards the modern neoliberal university model discussed above. Next I will discuss the current state of intercollegiate football and higher education that has been taken up in previous research in order to provide insight into how these two entities currently function together. Finally I will conclude with a discussion of Foucault’s theories on discourse, knowledge, power, discipline, and surveillance. I will then pair this with the historical and theoretical framework established in the first two sections of this chapter, which will transition into a discussion the method for this thesis.
2.1 Early History

To first understand the relationship between the modern university and football it is imperative to have a firm grasp on the history the two entities share. Although football is not nearly as old as the American university system, the two have taken a common course since the former’s inception. The first American universities appeared in the late 1600s as private colleges in the Northeast and largely took after the British model utilized at Oxford and Cambridge. Here the sons of the wealthy were taught by low paid clergymen in an environment that resembled what we would recognize today as more of a boarding school than a major university. Students lived in meager barracks in the middle of rural towns and focused on the study of the same subject list, which had largely been in place in England since the 500s (Kamenetz, 2010). Perhaps the most important note about this period was that the all-male student bodies at these institutions engaged in games, both as social diversions and as hazing rituals for the underclassmen. Among these were early versions of soccer, rowing, and a hazing ritual at Harvard called “Bloody Sunday” which would eventually evolve into American football (Smith, 2011). However, prior to the mid-1800s there was little to no concern among the faculty or the general populace about the games played on college campuses. This was all changed by a massive expansion of the American higher education system under the Morrill Act and the boom of coverage of sporting spectacle by the press which rapidly grew football’s influence on new college campuses and amongst the sport loving public.

The rapid growth of the higher education system in the United States during the mid-1800s can largely be attributed to legislative acts that increased the amount of land available for public colleges; likewise, we begin to see the American university transition away from the classic British model of education curriculum to a hybridized version of both the British and German system of higher education (Kamenetz, 2010). In 1862 President Lincoln signed into law the Morrill Act, which set aside government controlled land across the country to be sold for the purpose of endowing new state colleges and mandated that each state sponsor a public university (Hacker and Dreifus, 2010). These new institutions sought, among other things, to provide a more practical education and to grow rural economies. Colleges such as Michigan State University and Texas A&M University were the direct product of this legislation and they brought new disciplines such as agriculture and engineering into the sphere of American higher education. This era also saw the implementation of new technical schools for women and
minorities. Some major public institutions, such as the University of Iowa, did admit women and racial minorities on an equal basis during this time but most did not (Kamenetz, 2010).

In addition to this massive growth in the number of colleges was the revision of the model that brought in elements of the German system of higher education. Prior to this point the British model of memorization of techniques traditionally labeled the liberal arts had been the style utilized by American colleges. This style specifically emphasized the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic and the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music, which had been the standard curriculum for over a thousand years (Kamentez, 2010, p. 3). This classical education was considered to be the basis of free thinking in classical times but was exclusively theoretical. With the passage of the Morrill Act newly minted institutions brought in German professors to provide a more practical instruction for the new disciplines found in the agricultural and mechanical colleges. These new institutions did not abandon the liberal arts but a hybridized combination of British theoretical teaching and German practicum based instruction was implemented in order to capitalize off of and create an educational system that met a wider diversity of needs. This did not mean, however, that power was transferred equally. Many of the land grant institutions still lacked the prestige of the Ivy League institutions on the East Coast and the technical colleges for women and African-Americans were seen as an after-thought to the larger state land-grant institutions. In this context, university presidents and regents viewed football popularity as a way to boost the prestige of an institution as the sport was beginning to explode amongst the American press corps (Smith, 2011).

The expansion and shift in American higher education was partially facilitated by the growth of the college lifestyle. That is to say, the dissemination of the narrative of an ideal life in the university system facilitated by the popular press. It is in the context of the growing popularity of attending college that football begins to emerge as part of this ideal college lifestyle in the press and what was once a sport played only on the intramural fields at Harvard became a national phenomenon. A soccer-esque version of football was originally more popular than the rugby like version which eventually morphed into modern American football, but Harvard’s staunch resistance to the soccer game that eventually led to the dropping of soccer on college campuses and an adoption of the Harvard game (Smith, 2011). Smith notes that,

“Yale wanted to play against Harvard, who had by 1874 accepted rugby rules after competing against McGill University of Montreal, Canada. Soon Yale agreed to play a
rugby game against Harvard and Princeton knew that it must adopt rugby in order to play Yale. All other schools accepted the leadership of key Eastern schools after a convention was called to ratify rugby rules and create a Thanksgiving Day championship game in New York City beginning in 1876. The student-run Intercollegiate Football Association had reformed football to its liking, and within six years it had changed the rules of play and had Americanized rugby into what became the most popular game on American campuses.” (Smith, 2011, p. 12)

By the late 1800s most American colleges had adopted the Harvard game and the popularity of the sport was beginning to attract outside interests. Massive competition between newspaper editors in New York and in other major Eastern cities was fierce, highlighted by the well-known battle between William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer in New York. From this newspaper battle emerged the sports page, the first ever section of a newspaper entirely devoted to the coverage of sporting contests. This competition and the need for content drove intercollegiate football to an unprecedented level of popularity. In the words of Oriard,

“the development of college football from a campus matter to a public event was paralleled by the development of football coverage in the daily press from paragraph-length notes to multipage features drawing on the full range of the papers’ personnel and resources.” (Oriard, 1993)

As the popularity of the sport grew, so too did the press coverage in the daily papers. By the end of the 19th century nearly every daily in the country covered football in some manner or other and many were devoting large staffs to write multi-page dissertations on the popular games and athletes of the day. Walter Camp, considered the father of American football for his early influence on the rules of the game, spent much of his time writing columns in various publications about the game, serving as both an instructor of the rules and as a promoter of the sport. This coverage served to greatly increase the public awareness of the sporting spectacle on college campuses and drove attendance at events such as the annual Thanksgiving Day championship game (which was abandoned in the 1890s) to incredible numbers (Oriard, 1993). Oriard argues that the popularity of the game is derived from the strength of the football narrative, arguing that, “unlike a soccer match, which tends towards continuous action without a
coherently developed ‘plot’, a football game has a clear beginning, middle, and end, a more pronounced rhythm or pace, and a dramatic structure (situation, rising action, climax, and denouement)” (Oriard, 1993). While this is certainly debatable, there is no doubt that the ability of the popular press to draw narratives from the game and write them into their stories drew in new fans to the sport and grew the popularity of collegiate football exponentially.

The press coverage of intercollegiate football was significant in that it not only grew the popularity of the sport, but also developed the narrative of football being a quintessential aspect of the collegian lifestyle. As the popularity of the sport grew administrators began to take note. In the late 1880s and 90s faculty at universities began to protest the presence of what was increasingly turning into commercial sport on their campuses. These governing boards made several attempts to wrest control of football from the students who had created and maintained the game up until that point. At most institutions these attempts were futile and presidents, the leaders of the new university, remained silent on the matter. The silence of the university presidents in this matter was largely derivative of their need to appease the alumni and board members. These people wielded a large amount of power over the president and were very devout fans of the game of football. The board members, as well as some college presidents, were greatly influenced by Darwinian and Muscular Christian ideals that were present in football narratives from the popular press and would eventually become the rational for presidents taking control of the sport and keeping it on as an essential aspect of the university (Smith, 2011).

While football and the university system were growing exponentially during the late 19th century the concept of social Darwinism and the offshoot Muscular Christianity movement were becoming heavily cited in popular social philosophy. Despite the rise of commercial football on college campuses, numerous athletic directors believed that empowering their students to become physically strong was worth the intrusion of major sporting spectacle. The greatest fear among presidents and many influential boosters (including Harvard alum Theodore Roosevelt) was that removing sports from the collegiate landscape would result in an epicene student body (Miller, 2012). Harvard president Charles W. Elliot put it succinctly when he said in regards to football, “‘effeminacy and luxury are even worse evils than brutality’” (Smith, 2011, p. 36). Boosters, such as Roosevelt, feared

“The trend toward leisure and luxury…had sapped the spirit of a once sturdy frontier people. Like his fellow advocates of a tough, manly character, he worried that

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Americans would fail to develop the physical and mental strength to stand up to predatory powers or third-world hordes.” (Watterson, 2000, p.65)

Further complicating matters was that, even as Progressives fought to regulate football and the violence inherent in the game out of existence, university leaders were reluctant to step away from football because doing so would require a combined effort from competing colleges and universities. As Smith writes, “each institution was constantly competing for resources and enrollment for its own survival, growth, and prestige. The desire to cooperate was limited when the need to compete for survival was so apparent” (Smith, 2011, p. 36). The result was an attachment to the sport that could not be shaken. University presidents largely acted as cheerleaders while disciples of the Muscular Christianity doctrine espoused the need for a holistic approach to education in order to preserve masculinity in the American college (Smith, 2011). This can be best exemplified by Theodore Roosevelt’s words in a letter sent to Walter Camp,

“I do not give a snap for a good man who can’t fight and hold his own in the world. A citizen has got to be decent of course. That is the first requisite, but the second, and just as important, is that he shall be efficient, and he can’t be efficient unless he is manly. Nothing has impressed me more in meeting college graduates during the fifteen years I have been out of college than the fact that on the average the men who have counted most have been those who had sound bodies. Among the Harvard men whom I have known for the last six years here in Washington, [Henry Cabot] Lodge, the Senator, was a great swimmer in college, winning a championship, and is a great horseman now. [Bellamy] Storer, a Congressman for Cincinnati, played first base in out nine. [Charles Sumner] Hamlin, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, also played on the nine. Sherman Hoar, another Congressman, was on our class crew, and so on and so on, and I am inclined to think that even more good than comes to the top-men in athletics comes to men like myself, who were never more than second-rate in the sports. The Latin I learned in college has helped me a little in after life various ways, but boxing has helped me more.” (Miller, 2012, p. 151)
The narrative that football protected the masculinity of the collegian was disseminated with gusto by football enthusiasts such as Roosevelt, Camp, and others. The proposed virtuousness of the collegiate game became the rallying cry for these and other boosters against administrators and faculty who thought the game was receiving too much emphasis on the university campus and against the Progressives and prohibitionists who found the game to be too violent (Smith, 2011). Without football, they argued, their universities would be failing to develop the type of virtuous American man that they thought was needed. If their institution was not playing football, boosters argued that they would become less prestigious than their competing colleges who would be able to provide the benefits of major college football where they couldn’t.

The sum total of all these factors was that, as the university system in America expanded in the late 19th century the game of football expanded with it, bolstered by media coverage that gushed about the virtues of the football athlete and the saber rattling of the bully pulpit. The latter generated a narrative which followed the sport up until the 20th century, that football benefited the university by improving not only the physical wellness of the players but the entire student body who derived a cathartic effect which, according to the narrative, improved the ability of graduates to function as respectable men of society. Kamenetz sums this up succinctly in writing that, “at first barely tolerated by the administrators, sports unexpectedly grew into the one single element that most endeared colleges to the public” (2010, p.10). Thus a strong football team was thought to be a symbol for the universities’ ability to produce men of quality; becoming the foundation of the narrative used today that football improves university popularity and reputation. Over time this narrative evolved into not only a matter of masculinity, but of state and community pride which further cemented the narrative of football as the public face of the university and became the source of controversy as the conservative powers who had shaped football identity since the late 1800s were faced with desegregation and the liberal campus activism during the 1960s.

As football power shifted in the early 1900s the sport’s influence on college campuses grew stronger as success on the gridiron became linked to state and civic pride. Watterson elaborates on this phenomenon.

“The near fanatical support of major football teams by legislators, businessmen, and alumni went back to the 1920s, when states that had enjoyed more ridicule than recognition began to sprout big-time teams. On January 1, 1926, when Alabama won a
close victory over Washington in the Rose Bowl, it represented a triumph for all the former states of the Confederacy. At each town in which the train bearing the victors stopped in Alabama, cheering throngs presented them with gifts, and fifteen thousand people met them in Tuscaloosa when it had reached home from the West Coast. Likewise, the state of Georgia rejoiced when their own Georgia Bulldogs traveled north to defeat the once-great Bulldogs of New Haven in 1927, and, when Yale traveled to Atlanta in 1929 and Georgia shut out the Eli’s in the heartland of the Confederacy their emotions knew no bounds. Similarly, after World War II Oklahoma built a pigskin powerhouse that helped to erase the Okie stigma.” (Watterson, 2000, p. 292)

This state pride was not limited to the South as schools across the country began to gain loyal throngs of followers by appealing to civic history and pride. In the 1920s nuns asked Catholic schoolchildren to pray for the University of Notre Dame’s Fighting Irish football team which was quickly growing into a national power. Despite being located in rural northern Indiana, the school’s appeal to the Irish Catholic population in major cities across the country created a network of ‘subway alumni’ who donated money to the university despite only being connected to the university by listening to the broadcasts of football games on the radio (Kamenetz, 2010).

This connection to civic identity would become an issue during the 1950s and 60s as sweeping changes to American higher education would challenge the traditional power of white masculinity football engendered on college campuses. While African-Americans had been playing on integrated college football teams since the early 20th century, there was always controversy surrounding the inclusion of black men in what had been traditionally built as a white sport. Southern schools and conferences remained staunchly opposed to integration and avoided scheduling teams from northern schools as much as possible. When southern schools did face colleges with black football players on their team there were numerous issues of harassment of the African-American players by southern teams and fans (Watterson, 2000). The harassment and racism was not limited to the Southern states though, as numerous Northern schools were guilty of targeting black players on the teams of conference opponents. In one particularly gruesome incident, Iowa State lineman Jack Trice was killed after being targeted for abuse by opposing players in a game against the University of Minnesota. Playing in his first ever collegiate game, Trice,
“Suffered a broken collarbone early in the first quarter but he insisted on staying in the game. In the third quarter, seeing that he could not stop the bit Minnesota linemen, he attempted a roll block to stop three Gopher blockers in front of the ball carrier. Thrown to his back, he was battered into the turf by the players leading the offensive surge. Carried from the field, he was taken to a Minneapolis hospital, where, on the advice of Minnesota physicians, he was discharged and placed in the back of a Pullman passenger car, lying on a makeshift bed of straw for the return trip to Iowa. A day after the team arrived Trice died in a hospital in Ames of hemorrhaging lungs and general intestinal bleeding.” (Watterson, 2000, p.309)

It was not the only time Minnesota would be accused of targeting an African-American player on the opposing team. Eleven years after the death of Trice, the Gophers were accused of pilling on Ozzie Simmons, an African-American player for the University of Iowa who was knocked unconscious three times before leaving the game in Minneapolis in the second quarter. Iowa fans were so angry with the treatment of the star player that the Governor sent out a threat saying that, “if the officials stand for any rough tactics like Minnesota used last year, I’m sure the crowd won’t” (Borzi, 2010). In some instances northern schools even agreed to sit their African-American players in order to schedule southern opponents, as the University of Michigan did for a 1934 game against Georgia Tech in Ann Arbor (Watterson, 2000).

The issue of race relations intensified during the Civil Rights era, as university campuses became incubators for political activism and civil disobedience. Students around the country began to protest racial discrimination in multiple facets of the university, particularly athletics and the sacred cow football. African American players at the University of Kansas threatened to sit out games as long as the cheerleading squad refused to integrate. Players at Iowa, Wyoming, Oregon State, and Washington dropped out of football after facing racial bigotry from their head coaches (Oriard, 2009). If it hadn’t been for the success that African-American athletes brought to many of these institutions then the protests would not have been so successful in turning around the administration at many northern colleges. However, because African-American athletes found success at many northern and western institutions, the dominant powers revised the football power narrative (Watterson, 2000). Nowhere is this more visible than in the former confederacy where African Athletes didn’t even see the field at many major public institutions until the early 1970’s. According to legend, Alabama’s iconic coach Paul “Bear” Bryant
scheduled a game pitting his all white Crimson Tide against the integrated Trojans of Southern California. Southern lore states that there was a closed door meeting between the Bear and USC coach John McKay to hammer out the details of the series in which Bryant insisted the first game be played in Tuscaloosa, supposedly so the impressiveness of USC’s black athletes would move the Alabama fans to give up on segregation for the one thing they would sacrifice anything for, winning football games. The Trojans soundly crushed Alabama in Tuscaloosa, and the athleticism of the black athletes on the side of USC did end up leveraging the Crimson Tide football program into accepting its first African American football players (Yaeger, 2006).

While there is certainly plenty of reason to doubt the narrative that Bear Bryant negotiated the desegregation of Southern football, the fact that southern football schools in the late 1960s saw themselves falling behind their northern counterparts still remains a valid point. Schools like Michigan State were winning national championships with African American players from the deep South and the major football institutions needed to decide whether their heritage was best preserved through segregation or football. They chose the latter (Smith, 2011).

This does not mean that African-Americans achieved equality in the hegemonic structure of the college. Despite needing these athletes to compete on the gridiron there was no incentive to guarantee that they received a suitable college education or even a degree. One USC professor noted that less than 30 percent of the black players on the football team received a degree and almost all were a part of the practice of clustering, that is, placing players in easier majors and dumbed down courses in order to guarantee that their grades would be good enough to play. Those in charge of major college football balked at the notion that this practice was even an issue, taking the stance that, “football should not only have its own curriculum but also its own set of ethics” (Watterson, 2000, p.329). The belief was that, “if the athletes graduated, they lacked the motivation to play football or were forced to spend their time preparing for classes rather than games” (Watterson, 2000, p.328). In other words, black athletes were seen as athletes only, not the student-athlete prototype that the NCAA and its’ institutions purported to covet. While clustering and outright academic fraud was not necessarily limited to African-American athletes, the practice certainly had a more profound effect on the African-American athlete (Smith, 2011). Thus, even though African-American athletes were given a larger role on the field, they were still being discriminated against by being pushed away from the classroom.
Racial discrimination was not the only culture clash football faced during the 1960’s. The anti-Vietnam protest and anti-government unrest on college campuses reflected a direct challenge to the traditional conservative culture that football embodied. In the earliest writings of Walter Camp the coach wrote of how football was meant as a power structure, with the coach’s ability to lead, instruct, and strategize the most important component. Camp believed that the coach was the CEO of the football team, the players his subordinates, and that this hegemonic relationship provided excellent training for the future businessmen, lawyers, and public officials who played the game at schools like Harvard and Yale (Oriard, 1993). In the 1960s, anti-authoritarian sentiment appeared as a threat to Camp’s prescribed power structure for the game of football, causing numerous conflicts between players and coaches. Numerous players fought with the administration for not being allowed to grow their hair out, an ironic twist in that the earliest football players were required to grow their hair out because of the lack of head protection. Coaches forbade players from participating in political activism, fearing that if the athletes were allowed to protest the government then they might eventually organize against the football staff. In some cases, football players were even organized to counter protest the liberal denunciations of the war in Vietnam and the government, causing some student groups to boycott football games as a result (Oriard, 2009). The NCAA, the governing body for collegiate sports, also feared the uprising of student athletes and, in 1969, resolved to give administrators blanket power to remove football scholarships from players who engaged in the political unrest (Watterson, 2000). In the end football became a tool for by college administrators to check political unrest on their campuses, showing the public that colleges not only harbored free thought but traditional values. By fashioning football into the opposition of liberal political activism, the leaders of colleges were able to save some face with the conservative public that frowned upon the liberal activism on publicly funded college campuses (Oriard, 2009).

The 1970s also brought gender discrimination on college campuses into the popular discourse. In 1972 President Nixon signed Title IX into law. The piece of legislation, which barred discrimination based on gender in all publicly funded institutions, had a powerful impact on college athletic departments who had long denied opportunities for fully funded women’s varsity sports. Backlash to the legislation came quickly as lawmakers made four attempts to amend the legislation during the 1970s, none of which were successful (Smith, 2011).
of the argument against Title IX was that the funds used to support women’s athletics would be taken from men’s sports, thus depriving men the opportunity to compete. The issue with this argument is that these men’s programs were being cut prior to the passage of Title IX in order to inject funding into football programs. Title IX and women’s sports therefore became scapegoats for the institutional practice of focusing funding into big time football (and basketball) programs at the expense of other sports (Women’s Sport Foundation, 2007). Similar to the Civil Rights movement, women encroached on the white male hegemony in college sports during the 1970’s, and, while they certainly gained ground within the power structure, there was still a marked difference between women’s sports and football on the university campus. Women’s sports were couched in gendered language, specifically ‘othering’ women’s sports and creating a clear divide between the genders in collegiate sport. Identifiers such as the “Women’s NCAA Championship” or the “Lady Volunteers” served as distinct barriers between men’s and women’s sports. While men’s basketball was simply “basketball”, women were given the additional label to downgrade their achievements and vicariously promote men’s athletics as being the ‘real thing’. This painted a picture that women’s sporting endeavors were lesser than men’s and that women did not have to struggle as hard for the same sporting accomplishments that their male counterparts. Athletics for women became a sideshow, a quaint endeavor which only served to underscore how much more difficult and meaningful the sporting accomplishments of men were (Messner, Duncan, and Jensen, 2007).

Thus despite encroachment on White hegemonic masculinity of the “football school” ideology, African Americans and women were still unable to achieve equality. The response to this perceived attack on the dominant power-knowledge relationships of football was to consolidate White masculine iconography and power into the specific imagery of the earliest boosters of college football. Walter Camp and Theodore Roosevelt wrote that football, as part of a holistic collegiate education, created the ideal man, fit, intelligent, and charismatic (Watterson, 2000). As African Americans gained entrance into the football world they were denied equal education opportunities, meaning they could not achieve the image of the educated athlete described by Camp (Smith, 2011). Women’s sporting accomplishments were belittled, and the imagery of women’s success was substantially distanced from that of the supposedly more powerful male athlete (Messner, Duncan, and Jensen, 2007). Roosevelt wrote that sports prepared young men for the real world, giving them the drive to succeed in fields like business
and government (Miller, 2011). Perhaps the consolidation of power into this ideal of college football served a broader purpose. In a shifting political landscape the hegemonic power of white masculinity was losing ground to women and African Americans who demanded equality in not just the college, but in the workplace. It is reasonable to believe that preserving white male achievement in athletics was part of an attempt to consolidate and maintain the existing power relationships in some manner. In this sense football became the symbol of white masculinity on the university campus, the dominant ideological background by which liberal thought, Civil Rights, and women’s rights would be integrated into the dominant social structure.

### 2.2 College Football and the Neoliberal University

So what is college football’s role within the hegemonic structure of the neoliberal multiversity? While this is the primary research question of this paper, previous research does provide some insight into the location of big-time football inside the branded academy. Football takes a unique role within the university system, serving as a bridge to the historical values of the American collegiate system as well as the regional or community identities the major institutions have been connected to in the past. In a world where colleges are constantly battling to achieve the same goals through roughly the same methods, big-time football provides a differentiating element which has allowed major state institutions to remain at the forefront of public thought and retain some of their political influence. Harris notes as much in writing that,

> “Perhaps the most telling and disconcerting conclusion of this work is the basic question: What difference exists between institutions? If every institution is performing cutting edge research, has famous alumni, a rich tradition of excellence, and is nationally ranked, how are external audiences able to judge the quality of the institution (and its brand)” (2009, p.294)

The implications for using athletics in this manner are far reaching. In terms of undergraduate enrollment football is often leveraged as a way to attract undergraduates to the university as part of the marketing for the collegiate lifestyle. It has been well documented that undergraduate enrollment applications tend to spike following success in high profile sports such as football and men’s basketball (Hansen, 2011). This phenomenon has been dubbed the “Flutie Effect” after
former Boston College quarterback Doug Flutie’s last second touchdown against top ranked Miami which led to applications to the university to skyrocket the following year. Research has shown that private universities participating in major current athletics leverage this effect to make themselves more selective, bolstering their rankings, while larger public institutions tend to expand their enrollment which grants them more political leverage when negotiating for state funds (Clotfelter, 2011, 146). It should be noted that neither the Flutie Effect nor the presence of a major football program is a major factor in graduate student recruitment (Kallio, 1995). Football also has a direct demographic impact for college marketing departments as schools with major athletics programs are shown to increase the number of students who lean politically conservative (both economically and socially) as opposed to other institutions (Clotfelter, 2011, p. 159).

Football is leveraged in marketing beyond students however, as government officials and business leaders tend to be targeted through the game’s influence. Previous research on marketing sport has shown that, despite public sentiment against aspects of the university since the 1960s, there is still a deep connection between boosters and their formed identity with their favorite college sports team. However, the fanatics who cling to their favorite team are largely concentrated in the highest divisions of intercollegiate sport (NCAA Division IA) where the major football schools compete (Robinson, Trail, Andrew, and Gillentine, 2005). As a result of this, numerous institutions have moved into the NCAA’s highest division for football over the last decade in order to gain the prestige that comes with competing against the historic “football schools”. However, it should be noted that while case studies do show that the move up to college football’s highest division does result in a bump in perceived prestige of an institution, the financial cost and the lack of an empirically defined ability to bring in larger donations to the university make such a move incredibly risky for the institutions that chose to take that road (Dwyer, Eddy, Havard, and Braa, 2010). In fact, numerous research studies have concluded that, while athletic success does have an impact on individual donor contributions to a college athletic department, universities often receive fewer donations when college athletic teams have major success as donors who would donate to different aspects of the institution instead give their money to athletics (Humphreys & Mondello, 2007). The Knight Commission has also noted that the zero-sum nature of sports in general limited the impact institutions would receive from their athletic investments. As one report for the Commission noted,
“The empirical literature does not rule out the possibility that a given institution’s success in big-time college athletics might attract additional applicants or stimulate greater alumni giving. But even if both of those links were strong and positive at the individual level, they would essentially vanish from the perspective of institutions as a whole. Success, after all, is a purely relative phenomenon. Upward movements in the national rankings for some teams necessarily entail downward movements for other teams. If institutions in the first group attracted more applicants and larger donations as a result, the corresponding movements would be in the opposite direction for the institutions in the second group.” (Frank, 2004)

Despite this risk, many state college administrators see the risk as worthwhile for political prestige, which they believe has the potential to be more profitable than direct donations from individual donors (Smith, 2011). Data from the users of luxury boxes of several athletic institutions was measured to find that politicians and business leaders were the most likely groups to receive complimentary tickets to football games. It should come as no surprise then that schools which are the most successful in utilizing this approach tend to receive the most state funding and the largest amount of corporate research investments among schools that participate in big-time football (Clotfelter, 2011, p.142). Despite the fact that this too is potentially a zero-sum game, athletics continue to be heavily linked to the fundraising efforts of major universities.

The marketing image of major universities has also been used to link institutions to regional identities that have long since vanished in the wake of the globalized outlook of the neoliberal multiversity. By harnessing the branding power of football identities, universities have the ability to control a narrative about their institution that can attract public support and boost perception within the state and, if the team is successful enough to warrant national attention, across the country (Toma, 2003). At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln fans are connected to the football team through the way it is situated within agricultural narratives that resonate with the largely farm-based economy of the state. In one article, the authors point out,

“Town Halls host events supporting football to represent the unity of members of the community. This unity is developed with a connection to Nebraska football as the football season coincides with the agricultural harvest. For many, this represents a time in
which supplies are plentiful, hard work has paid off, and an appreciation for understanding the daily toils of farming is celebrated by sharing food from individual farms and cheering on the cornhuskers. Football contains the essence of farming. The work, dedication, nurturing, and preparation is built into a twelve week period in which so many things can go right just as they can go wrong. An early frost can severely limit a crops output just as an injury can dramatically affect the performance of a team. This association between farming and football creates the community connection, and because of the unique agricultural history of the state of Nebraska, this connection exists statewide.” (Satterfield and Godfrey, 2010)

In this example Nebraska football becomes a yearly ritualistic event by which the state comes together and celebrates a civic pride in its agricultural heritage through the united consumption of Cornhusker football. This identity not only separates the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from surrounding states by appealing to the civic pride of Nebraska residents, but also from other schools inside the state who have not managed to cultivate the same type of relationship with Nebraskans as UNL. Thus the Cornhuskers are read not only as a cult following in the state, but also as a symbol of superiority in higher education, a status which likely has far reaching implications on state and university policy.

Sporting identities are also visible in the discourse between different institutions, emphasizing various aspects of the university as a way to create markers between different fan bases. In his book “Rammer Jammer Yellowhammer” St. John (2004) notes the discrepancies between the cultural identities of the University of Alabama and their in-state rival Auburn University,

“The stereotype holds that kids go to Alabama to learn how to cocktail and schmooze before moving on to law school or to take over their father’s insurance business, while kids go to Auburn to learn about things like erosion control and worming cattle. Up close, the stereotypes don’t hold – Auburn has plenty of bright kids from Atlanta and Jackson and Birmingham who’ve come to study engineering or architecture, and Alabama has plenty of students who’ve grown up on farms. But in the context of the football rivalry between the schools, the stereotypes are everything. Competition, after all, stokes the human urge to find and exaggerate differences, even if those differences
are more imagined than real. Both sides play along, Alabama fans – even those sons and daughters of farmers – since “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” during the Auburn alma mater, refer to Auburn fans as “barners,” show up at the big game with signs that read Culture v. Agriculture, and make redneck jokes at the expense of the Auburn crowd. Auburn fans embrace the stereotype in their own way, by assuming the mantel of the perpetual underdogs, have-nots at war with the have-nots to upset the system of privilege and favoritism that has neglected them. If the Alabama psyche is hung up on an antebellum fiction, the Auburn psyche is hung up on a postbellum reality. Auburn fans have all the bottled-up resentments and inferiority complexes of a defeated people. In other words, Auburn’s relationship with Alabama is like the state of Alabama’s relationship to the rest of the country.” (p.237)

In this context the Iron Bowl rivalry between Alabama and Auburn serves as a way for the supporters and members of each institution to separate themselves from one another, generating a semi-artificial identity that marks the clear strengths and weaknesses of not only the fans of two football teams, but also the institutions themselves. This narrative essentially separates the two schools based on the British model of liberal arts and the German practical model, situating Alabama as the liberal arts program where the rich would send their children to become politicians and lawyers and Auburn as the German model program for giving the farmer a practical education to facilitate western economic growth. While both Alabama and Auburn function, as most Americans universities do, on a balanced mix of both models, the football rivalry serves as a public service announcement for the practical and implicated identities of both the different styles of education. The “Culture v. Agriculture” (St. John, 2004) stigma is certainly not relegated to the state schools in Alabama either, as this stereotyping is commonplace in many states that have multiple public institutions competing at the highest level of intercollegiate football. The use of football to enhance regional interest in the university is a seldom-discussed topic, one that I hope to expand on with this paper. Hopefully more researchers will delve into this topic as there are a myriad of implications on how these narratives are used that directly impact how institutions are viewed and how that translates to areas such as student enrollment and public policy.

The branding of football culture is not limited to the on the field product either. The hedonistic binge drinking culture that has followed football culture since the earliest days of the
sport became inflated as well when public policy dictated that institutions seek out corporate support rather than rely on public funding. The result has been a massive growth in the collegiate drinking subculture tied to football that serves as a dangerous marketing tool for the university. Researchers have found that drinking behavior, as well as risky behavior associated with the over consumption of alcohol, among students in particular increases significantly for both home and away football games (Neal and Fromme, 2007). While one study found that less than half of all fans (not just college students) consume alcohol on football game days, the authors caution that changing behavior of fans who do choose to drink may be difficult because of the cultural place of drinking on college football game days,

“College football games are not only high-risk drinking situations but also represent a symbolic event for the university and the surrounding community. Each year, tens of thousands of fans come to campus and tailgate, typically ignoring open-container laws, and perceived and real pressure from alumni, students, and other fans makes changing game-day culture difficult.” (Glassman, Werch, Jobli, and Bian, 2007, p. 259)

The drinking culture surrounding football schools can be traced back to the sport’s origin, with newspapers writing of drunken fans of Harvard, Princeton, and Yale invading New York for the early Thanksgiving Day championship games (Oriard, 1993). Even during prohibition, many college football fans used the sport as pretext for alcohol consumption and the administrators who stood in their way were quickly silenced. Alcohol was so attached to the spectacle of the football Saturday that laws and restrictions were only able to marginally affect its influence at most major Football-U’s (Doyle, 2004). This hedonistic culture was exacerbated in the wake of the policy changes in the 60s and 70s, as the influx of corporate funding and influence on the university campus created a partnership between administrations and liquor companies which directly connected the university’s image and reputation to football’s alcohol obsession. Sperber (2001) writes that in the 1980s beer companies found that,

“Males between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four not only represented a huge percentage of current profits but also promised future sales. During their college-age years, drinkers developed brand loyalty and tended to stay with their favorites for many years. Thus alcohol producers decided to spend a disproportionate amount of advertising
budgets on campaigns aimed at college-age drinkers and, more specifically, sports fans. The goal was to turn the major characteristic of college sports fans – personal loyalty to their teams – into a similar allegiance to their favorite alcohol brands.” (p.49)

Because of the shift in public policies surrounding higher education that made corporate funding the new model for the American university, many administrations held their nose and accepted the presence of corporate alcohol interests on campus as long as that presence didn’t affect the research arm of the institution. This mutual understanding between the colleges and the beer companies paid dividends quickly as college rankings services,

“Began to emphasize the collegiate subculture on university campuses, and downplay the educational aspects of a school. The guidebooks often provided detailed descriptions of life as a college sports fan at a particular university, and tied this to the party scene.” (2001, p. 45)

Thus universities have been able to leverage football’s hedonistic subculture as a marketing tool, wrapping themselves in the imagery of the *Animal House*-esque party school and continuing their trend of creating a more style-less substance driven model for undergraduate education. Despite fears concerning binge drinking and the negative health consequences of the alcohol centric culture, American colleges have become too attached to drinking culture to look back. As with football in the late 19th century, the Darwinian mindset of university leaders prevents any substantial combined effort to affect drinking culture within intercollegiate football nationally, leaving critics of this behavior largely resigned to its presence on college campuses (2001).

Drinking is not the only contentious issue that the marriage of football iconography and branding has raised. While the relationship between the college and college football has shifted of over the past 40 years the general white male hegemonic cultural structure of the sport has not disappeared. Issues of race and gender have only become magnified as collegiate marketing departments have intensified their mission to brand football culture as part of the collegiate lifestyle. This has led to numerous clashes and confrontation where traditional football culture has been forced to move aside in favor of more sensitive branding efforts and instances where the elements of the white male hegemony have been incorporated into university identity.
Several of the major clashes resulting reform of several athletic departments were over the use of racist iconography among college sports teams. While many colleges have used racially charged imagery for the nicknames of their athletic teams and as part of their school identity for years, these practices hampered the branding and marketing efforts of the neoliberal university. Perhaps the most notorious example is that of Chief Illiniwek at the University of Illinois. The mascot, which had been in place since 1926, was a white male student dressed as a stereotypical depiction of an American Indian and danced during home football and basketball games (King, 2004). Critics of the mascot describe it and other similar Native American mascots as a, “series of misappropriations and misinterpretations, rooted in antiquated, fictitious, and racist, if often romantic, notions of Indianness” (2004, p. 4). These mascots adhered to the strictest Hollywood stereotypes of Native Americans, dong fake “war dances” to drum beats that were really only representative of Native Americans in the movies. As the neoliberal multiversity ideal spread across the country the brand image of the Native American sporting mascot became a target for those who found the general depiction of American Indians as brutal or savage to be offensive and degrading. As pressure grew to take these obscene caricatures out of the public university many supporters of football culture fought back, claiming that not only was the Chief not obscene but the character in fact existed to honor Native Americans. This was obviously a pretext, as Farnell (2004) explains,

“The positive moral high ground directly indexed by these writers/presenters is predicated on a constructed narrative of the past, typical of settler colonialism, which supports a strong emotional desire on the part of Whites to feel legitimate on the Illinois landscape. It is predicated on the premise that real Indians must be dead. In declaring the Illinois Indians to be extinct and absolving Whites from any responsibility for this, imperialist nostalgia then clears the way to appropriate an Illini identity as part of a collective White heritage.” (p.48-49)

Thus the backlash against the removal of the racist depiction of the Chief Illiniwek was not about preserving a tribute to Native Americans but rather a shared part of the white football subcultural surrounding the University of Illinois. Furthermore, despite significant backlash, it wasn’t until the mascot controversy threatened to disrupt the school’s accreditation in 2000 when Illinois officials decided to open a dialogue about the topic (Farnell, 2004). Chief Illiniwek and most of
the related iconography would not be removed until 2006. A similar event occurred recently at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) where administrative leaders decided to work to remove symbols around campus, particularly related to the athletic department, which held strong connotations of the Confederacy. The reasoning for their removal was simply that these symbols, including waving of Confederate flags during sporting events and the school’s mascot Colonel Reb who distinctly portrayed an antebellum southern slave holder, was that they were offensive and sent the wrong message about the university. The backlash was immediate, with even the Ku Klux Klan staging a protest in favor of keeping the racial symbolism at Ole Miss as a symbol of southern white heritage. Their message was less subtle than the supporters of Chief Illiniwek,

“Cloaking their visions of the neo-Confederacy as ‘southern pride’ and traditional southern identity, these claims expunge racist connotations. At best, they are instances of nostalgia, and at worst, whether intentional or not, they function as forms of symbolic terror.” (King and Springwood, 2000)

The University of Mississippi has since done away with the flags (for the most part) and removed the Colonel Reb mascot. However, that has not stopped Ole Miss fans from using their football culture as a pretext for the consumption of whiteness on campus. The popular pregame tailgating area, “the Grove”, still serves as a communal gathering place whereby the University of Mississippi’s shared fan identity is expressed,

“At Ole Miss, the practices of ‘being white’ within the Grove spectacle have created a culture industry based around the fetishization of spectacular whiteness. Through the modalities of adornment and deportment, the reification of the body politic is dispersed through, and onto, the politicized and spectacularized body. Symbolic garments, branded tailgating tents, themed provisions, and a variety of Confederate signifiers litter the green space in the center of campus on football Saturdays (see Figure 25). On such days of carnivale, the organic space in the center of campus is transferred into a phantasmagoria of Dixie South whiteness, upon which layers of a conservative ‘ideological blanket’ and commodity whiteness are interwoven within into spectacular space.” (Newman, 2005, p. 438)
These controversies reveal much about the neoliberal multiversity’s relationship with football culture. Here we see that the institution is willing to take criticism of existing football culture practices for the sake of maintaining the benefits that culture supposedly presents them so long as that culture does not cause any major disruption to the institution. While aspects of the fan identity in both the case of Chief Illiniwek at Illinois and of antebellum south imagery at Mississippi, each university also only eliminated the aspects of the fan culture it needed to and left some elements (i.e. the War Chant at Illinois or the playing of Dixie at the Grove) which remain on as pieces of the university sponsored identity. This same practice can also be seen in the tolerance of the relation of college football and alcohol, which was previously discussed (Sperber, 2001).

There are also more direct connections between the racially discriminate power relationships of college athletics and their sponsoring institutions. Some scholars also argue that intercollegiate sports can negatively impact opportunities for non-athlete minorities trying to get into certain institutions. According to Fried (2007), university athletics may function as a barrier to first generation minority college students for state institutions the same way that legacy status does for top tier private institutions. The author writes,

“in the late 1980s, Asian students sued Harvard for racial discrimination, alleging that Asian applicants had a much lower chance of being admitted than white applicants, controlling for academic record. Harvard successfully defended the suit by showing that, while the plaintiffs were correct on the numbers, the disparity was solely a product of athletic preferences and legacy preferences, in which categories Asians were greatly underrepresented.” (2007, p. 14)

In the case of African-American students, who are typically over-represented in the two major collegiate sports (Lapchick, Hoff, and Kaiser, 2010), athletes tend to receive admission over more academically prepared African-American students who are not athletes (Harper, 2006). Also, coaches, athletic directors, and university presidents among NCAA Division IA institutions are overwhelmingly white, with little to no representation for African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans. Even the NCAA headquarters is a predominantly white institution with 75 percent of the top positions belonged to Caucasians while the rest were all represented by African-Americans (Lapchick, et. al, 2010). The picture that emerges from this
data is that of an institution made by whites, for whites, that uses its’ most public façade, college football, as a cultural bulwark to protect the racial superiority of Caucasians within various university sectors. As with the integration of African Americans onto the football field, cultural power relationships regarding race have been consolidated within athletics to protect the universities culture of whiteness from subversion policies that would enforce racial equality. Using athletics as a subtext, colleges, such as Harvard in the example, have been able to limit admission of minority applicants, favoring those with the athletic talent to provide some benefit to the university to the detriment of more academically qualified minority applicants. By maintaining a heavy majority of white’s in high ranking administrative positions institutions virtually guarantee that the regional identity mediated by football remains intact and that social power remains firmly in Caucasian control. Read in the context of the corporate multiversity, these power relationships ensure that knowledge and research remains couched in the language and ideology of the white community identity and that, as with the integration of football in the 1960’s, minorities in these spaces are present but do not have the same amount of influence or importance in the environment as the white majority.

This type of discrimination is not limited to race either. As previously discussed, women are still presented as the weaker sex on university campuses, a negative stereotype which is very present in the world of collegiate athletics. Gender discrimination is not only occurring through the nicknaming of athletic teams or events however, there are also more overt attempts to discount female success within football. Buzuvis (2007) details one such instance of gender discrimination in her analysis of the pink visitor’s locker room at Kinnick Stadium on the campus of the University of Iowa. The locker room, painted pink in 1979 by former Iowa football coach Hayden Fry as a means to demean the opposing team. In his autobiography, Fry wrote that,

“One thing we didn’t paint black and gold was the stadium’s visiting locker room, which we painted pink. It’s a passive color, and we hoped it would put our opponents in a passive mood. Also, pink is often found in girls’ bedrooms, and because of that some consider it a sissy color.” (Fry and Wine, 1999)

When Buzuvis (2008) attempted to challenge the symbolism of the locker room (arguing, correctly, that it represents a slander against female athletes and an attempt to emasculate the
opposing team) she was met with immediate and fierce resistance from a fan base that has been sold on the myth that the pink locker room was meant for the pacification of the other team only and not in any way a statement on pink being a “sissy color”. Similar to the incidents at Illinois and Mississippi, hegemonic White masculinity became a rallying point for thousands of Iowa fans defending the football culture identity stemming from the pink locker room. Even with the iconic coach admitting the gender biased discourse stemming from the pink locker rooms, Iowa officials and fans have refused to change it, clinging to the artificial sports identity. As discourse on the subject has yet to cause any major inconveniences for the university, administrators have no reason to alter the fan identity associated with their football brand. Furthermore, similar to racial discrepancies of employment in colleges, women remain under-represented and under-paid compared to their male counterparts in intercollegiate sport. This is largely due to the fact that ever since women’s sports became lucrative coaching territory men have started to find positions coaching the opposite gender, something women have never been able to do (Theberg & Birrell, 2007). Thus women are also discriminated against within American intercollegiate athletic culture through mediated representations of them as the weaker sex. Thus, just as with race, football identity serves as a cultural discourse of power that allows for female participation but still privileges white males.

In summation, what the history and evolution of football and the university has created is an environment where football culture and fan identity serves as a tether for the neoliberal multiversity to regional and community symbolism. This symbolism is marketed as a means to attracting public support and applicant interest in the institution and, sub-texturally, also serves a pedagogical purpose of indoctrinating cultural power relationships of race and gender. The narratives surrounding college football culture are actively maintained and, where necessary, sterilized in such a manner that appeases the public but simultaneously preserves as much of the power-knowledge as possible. The question then is why? What logics lead to the evacuation of some traditions from university football culture and what logics hold others in place? How are administrators or other entities molding college football to fit their needs? To what end?

To answer these questions we must now shift our focus from the historical framework of this thesis to the ontological framework. In the following section I will detail the workings of Foucault, who provides much of the ontological framework by which I will be reading and investigating college football in this research. I discuss his work on knowledge, discourse,
power, discipline, and surveillance for the purpose of providing a contextualized understanding of the historical background and modern analysis of football culture and the neoliberal university. As a part of this discussion I provide some insight into the formation of the logics which have formed college football culture at public universities, relating this discussion back to the historical evidence presented in this and the preceding section of this chapter in order to connect the historical and ontological frameworks which create the foundational knowledge for this thesis.

2.3 Foucauldian Principles and the Neoliberal University

In this section I will discuss the work of Foucault and relate this work to the study at hand. Even though I have already made some small references to his work throughout this paper, I believe it is necessary to go into further detail here in order to bridge the historical background of college football and the neoliberal university to the methodology and contextual framework of this research. While Foucault and his works are well known within the humanities there is likely to be some question at this juncture as to how they are being applied in this specific research context. With this section I hope to apply some of his theories to the existing background in the literature review in order to draw a clear theoretical position from which we can begin the discussion of the methods by which this research will examine the football school. Specifically, I will apply the historical background on college football and the present description of the neoliberal university in order to draw out the discourses that operate both presently and historically to create the subject within the neoliberal university. For this section I focus specifically on four aspects of the Foucauldian ontological framework: his work on the production of knowledge and discourse, and the theories of power and discipline and surveillance. In this discussion I also point out where he differentiates from other alternative ontological frameworks for examining discourse and explain why Foucauldian analysis is the ideal framework for which to conduct this research. At the conclusion of the section I endeavor to apply the theories to the previously discussed background on collegiate athletics and the neoliberal university to paint a picture of the current understanding of the subject at these football schools.

In order to best understand power and governance it is first imperative to discuss Foucault’s theories on knowledge and discourse. Foucault asserts that knowledge is a form of power, guiding discursive practices and the ways in which discourse is analyzed by members of
a society (Markula and Pringle, 2006). Knowledge thus forms what Hook (2001) describes as “a conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced” (p. 522). As knowledge guides discourse it invariably implicates individuals as subjects, both “subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience of self-knowledge” (Foucault, 1983, p.212). Discourse itself is then both guided by and constituted of knowledge (and, by extension, power) in Foucauldian theory. Foucault (1981) writes, “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a…number of procedures” (p. 52). Hook (2001) defines the implications of this type of knowledge system, saying, “in this way, the effect of discursive practices is to make it virtually impossible to think outside of them; to be outside of them is, by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason” (p. 522). He adds that,

“Discourse is both that which constrains and enables writing, speaking, and thinking. What (Foucault) terms ‘discursive practices’ work both in inhibiting and productive ways, implying a play of prescriptions that designate both exclusions and choices.” (p. 523)

Discourses then, “constitute a coherency of self – through bodily practices, thoughts, and beliefs – to the extent that people are unaware of their sense of self being socially constructed over time through disparity” (Markula and Silk, 2006, p. 33). The identity of the self or subject is thus not created through destiny or rationally but through, “contingency, chance, accidents, and even mistakes” (ibid, p. 33). However, even though identities of the self are negotiated, they are done so through the channels of knowledge and discourse that are pre-ordained, with different opinions receiving different levels of significance, also known as emergence or the “productive influence of the workings of power over time” (2006, p. 33). This is perhaps best exemplified in Foucault’s work on scientific knowledge. Foucault viewed the human sciences as a form of power, developed in the shift between Classical knowledge and modernity that categorizes and controls individuals.

“His first mode of objectification, namely scientific classification, was concerned with how the human sciences construct particular ways of knowing so that people come to recognize themselves as objects and subjects of scientific knowledge. In the human
sciences, subjects are measured using a variety of procedures, such as intelligence tests or skin-fold calipers, and the results are statistically analyzed so the subject can be classified, via norms and deviations, into select groups. Foucault argued, accordingly, that the human sciences help to construct universal classifications of people, and in the process people become objectified. The body under the clinical gaze of doctors, for example, becomes an anatomical machine, that is, subjects become objects under the regime of medical truth.” (2006, p. 25)

To summarize then, Foucault understands knowledge as a form of power, which both guides and is the substance of discourse. In this mode of discourse and knowledge the individual becomes subject; subject to the discipline and control of others who contribute to discourse and subject to their own interpretations of knowledge and discourse.

At this point it is imperative to take a step back to discuss power and governmentality. While acknowledging that knowledge informs power and that both knowledge and power guide discourse is useful to understanding knowledge and discourse, it begs the question as to what exactly is power? Foucault (1983, p. 217) conceptualizes power as a network of devices, techniques, and social and cultural practices that are omnipresent and which are constantly acting on subjects within a society. Power is not a possession, something that can be taken, given, or controlled by an individual or group of individuals, but is based on the relationships between individuals. The individual, however, is not controlled by power, but rather a reflection of the extent of powers articulation within a society (Foucault, 1983). Jessop (2007) writes,

“The study of power should begin from below, in the heterogeneous and dispersed micro-physics of power, explore specific forms of its exercise in different institutional sites and consider how, if at all, these were linked to produce broader and more persistent societal configurations. One should study power where it is exercised over individuals rather than legitimated at the centre; explore the actual practices of subjugation rather than the intentions that guide attempts at domination; and recognize that power circulates through networks rather than being applied at particular points.” (p. 36)

Power, according to Foucault, is not simply an entity in itself; power is a relationship between subjects that includes some capability by all subjects for resistance to power. Not only is power
ubiquitous then, but resistance as well. Foucault, “conceived within this power network were multiple points of resistance or struggle, each of which was a special case that should not be viewed reactions or passive rebounds against the workings of power” (Markula & Silk, 2006, p. 36). Scholars of Foucault maintain that the product of this has been, “the incorporation of power relations through discipline, in a web of interconnected strategies designed to produce ‘docile bodies’ in various institutional settings and cultural habits – armies factories, hospitals, schools, and salons” (Leps, 2004, p. 278). Thus, a Foucauldian definition of a power relationship is essentially, “an action by one person to help guide another’s ‘conduct or direct the possible field of action of others’” (Markulo and Silk, 2006, p. 35). This relation of power assumes the freedom of the subjects involved in it since, without freedom, subjects are unable to engage with discourse on their own. A power relationship is thusly a give and take, whereby subjects create a discourse that has the ability to impact all of the parties involved. No single subject or institution holds or controls power but rather power flows through and influences them. Power, in the form of dominant ideologies and knowledge, informs and controls the subjects and institutions of a society through discourse. This determinist framework does recognize relationships of power, such as between a student and a professor, but does not attribute their maintenance to an all-powerful state or argue for strict hegemonic power structures being over periods of time. In Foucauldian terms power is constantly shifting and can be changed by people but it is not necessarily possible to nail down specific power relations over long periods of time (2006).

If power relationships and knowledge are located within discourse, then discipline becomes the manifested product of discursive power relationships and knowledge. In Foucault’s Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison he describes discipline as the need to promote the efficiency of the body of the subject, writing that, “the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” and that, “the political investment on the body is bound up…with its economic use” (1977, p. 25-26). Discipline is best understood, then, as power relationships which seek to maximize the efficiency of the subject’s body. Knowledge informs this process, Foucault argues, for “it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge…but power-knowledge, the process and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up that determine the forms and possible domains of knowledge”. In this capacity, “knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this (disciplinary) power” (1977, p. 29). Foucault writes that discipline is achieved through three different types of techniques;
distribution, control of activity, and the organization of geneses. Distribution is based on four elements, enclosure, partitioning, functional sites, and inter-changeability of the elements. The first, enclosure, refers to how certain spaces, such as schools, monasteries, barracks, are symbolically given the status of protected spaces and are heterogeneous from all others. Partitioning is the analytical definition and organization of space such that each individual has its own space and vice versa. Functional sites are described as the architectural design of institutions to ease supervision and discipline while minimizing contact between individuals. Finally, inter-changeability of the elements refers to the hierarchy of elements in a space, suggesting that discipline creates complex spaces that maintain functionality and hierarchy (Foucault, 1977, p. 148. Sargiacomo, 2009, p. 273). Control of Activity is based upon five elements, time tables, temporal elaboration of the act, correlation of the body and the gesture, body-object articulation, and exhaustive use. The time table is essentially the way time is allocated and partitioned in a society, articulating when the body of the subject needs to be used or located in a place. Specifically, it denotes when a subject is meant to be the most efficient during a specific set of time, as Foucault writes. The second tenet, temporal elaboration of the act, refers to how actions of the subject are broken down, organized into sub-elements, and then given a hierarchy to follow. Correlation of the body and the gesture refers to the most efficient way to the body to perform a gesture becoming standardized. Body-object articulation refers to standardized relationships between the subject and an object that are meant to maximize efficiency. Lastly, exhaustive use determines a detailed internal arraignment to maximize efficiency of speed and time (Foucault, 1977, p. 149-155. Sargiacomo, 2009, p. 273-274). The third, and final, category of disciplinary techniques developed by Foucault was the organization of geneses which has four steps; dividing duration into successive or parallel segments, organizing these threads into an analytical plan, finalizing the temporal segments by determining their specific details (duration of activity and how it will be concluded), and finally drawing up series of series (1977, p. 157-158). Foucault notes the end result of this process in writing that, “the ‘serration’ of successive activities makes possible a whole investment of duration by power: the possibility of a detailed control and a regular intervention (of differentiation, correction, punishment, elimination) in each moment of time; the possibility of characterizing, and therefore of using of individuals according to the level of the series they are moving through; the possibility of accumulating time and activity, of
rediscovering them, totalized and usable in a final result, which is the ultimate capacity of an individual.” (1977, p. 160)

The attempt to maximize the efficiency of body of the subject is also referred to as “normalization”, or the process by which a subject’s body is disciplined to the point of, more or less, standardization within a society. Subjects who do not meet the normalized standard are termed deviant, marking points of resistance to the discourse at play and causing the subjects to be disciplined until they become normalized (1977). One common example used in social theory today is that of the medicalized body, specifically relating to plastic surgery. As subjects are found to be deviant based on existing knowledge of what a normalized body is, a subject is disciplined into finding a way to make their bodies appear normal to avoid discipline in the form of social scorn or ostracism. Featherstone (2010) argues that plastic surgery provides one avenue subjects have chosen to normalize their appearance in order to avoid discipline.

In order to conduct the normalization process, there first needs to be an examination to determine which bodies can be classified as normal and which can be classified as deviant. Foucault deems this surveillance process “Panopticism”, referring to Jeremy Bentham’s “design for a building to maximize the efficient workings of power” (Markula and Silk, 2006, p. 43). Foucault describes the Panopticon thusly,

“By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions – to enclose, to deprive of light, and to hide – it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap.” (Foucault, 1977 p. 200)

In this metaphor the subject becomes disciplined through the threat, though not necessarily the implementation, of constant surveillance. Because the subject does not know when he is being watched he must assume that he is always being surveyed by the outside of his cell, and the
inability to conceal himself becomes a disciplining force exerted upon him. Foucault continues his metaphor by saying,

“Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its actions; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation in which they themselves are the bearers.” (1977, pp. 201)

This idea that subjects are constantly being surveilled by society’s institutions and by fellow subjects underscores Foucault’s depiction of power relationships as omnipresent, since a subject who is constantly surveyed, or in this case under the threat of constant surveillance, is constantly placed within discourses of power (Hook, 2001). Foucault extended the metaphor outside of the prison as well, writing that, “it is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one other, to hierarchal organizations, of disposition of centres and channels of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons” (1977, p. 205). Therefore, the panopticon becomes the support structure by which Foucauldian power relationships are held in place. Without surveillance, power relationships would be meaningless since subjects would have no consequences for their actions. There has, however, been a substantial amount of criticism of Foucault’s depiction of the panopticon, primarily due to the fact that *Discipline and Punish* was written prior to the advent of modern surveillance technology. This does not mean, however, that the metaphor of the Panopticon is not a useful tool for understanding modern systems (Wood, 2012). Several theorists, including Staples (1994) and Galloway (2004), have found intriguing interpretations of Foucault’s panopticism that they have applied to a digital world. Still, these frameworks are ill-suited for the task of critical discourse analysis and are thus not adequate substitutes for Foucault’s framework in this paper.

Antonio Gramsci’s work on hegemony is perhaps the most plausible alternative to Foucault in this thesis because of his extensive outline of critical discourse analysis. The key difference between the two is that Gramsci utilizes a Marxist approach in which power is
assumed to be consolidated within a dominant social group and that dominant power-knowledges relationships are maintained by both the dominant group and the state as a mechanism for consolidating their own power (Pringle, 2005). Gramsci’s model of hegemony can be seen as,

“The separation of civil society and political society/the State. The former consists of those institutions such as religion, the mass media, the education system, the family, and so forth, that function largely on the terrain of ideology, shaping experiences and worldviews. The latter—political society, or the State—functions mainly as a system of coercion and consists of the police, the army, and the judicial apparatus, which enforce a system of beliefs at the point at which "spontaneous" consent fails….Defined elsewhere by Gramsci as involving ‘intellectual and moral reform’ by the dominant groups, hegemony involves the production of a worldview, inclusive of a philosophical and moral outlook, that is actively supported and articulated by subordinate and allied groups.” (Mumby, 1997, p.348)

The flaw in this framework is that it limits the conclusions and perspectives that can be drawn from this type of research because of the assumption of one dominant group controlling the social narratives in order to maintain power (Tomlinson, 1998). Indeed if we assume that there is a monolithic power structure that is shaping the discourses of football culture on university campuses then there seems little point to study these cultures individually as we would already be assuming that there exists a dominant power group which is the locus of all discourse related to college football. As I pointed out in the introduction, part of the need for this research was to provide a qualitative response to Clotfelter’s (2011) call for a better understanding of the relationship between universities and the major sport teams that reside within them. Doing so with a preconceived framework about the nature of power in college football would turn this paper away from a search for understanding and into a circular logic. In other words, if I had set out with the assumption that power at the neoliberal university operates hegemonically and then conclude that there is a hegemonic structure inherent within the neoliberal university, I would not have provided any real insight into the power relationships at work in the college football culture as all of my observations will be based on the presupposition that my conclusion will be correct.
Furthermore, utilizing Gramsci’s assumptions about the nature of power will do little to address the micro-politics of individual universities and the substantial variances between college football cultures. From the literature review we can see that power relationships within the neoliberal university are extremely complex due to the multifarious operational objectives of institutions of higher education. This is partially due to the fact that neoliberal politics are not applied equally from institution to institution. It is important to note that not all well-known football programs reside within land grant institutions. Several private colleges, including the University of Southern California (USC), Notre Dame University, Stanford University, Duke University, and Northwestern University all participate in football at the highest level within the NCAA. While not all of these institutions may be football schools, at least two (USC and Notre Dame) would certainly be considered by any layman to be football powerhouses. Thus any discussion of neoliberalism and football schools needs to acknowledge that the economic logics of neoliberalism are not likely going to have the exact same effect on discourse from institution to institution. Furthermore, the cultural and historical power knowledges of each institution come from distinctly different areas at each institution. For instance, while Colonel Reb at Ole Miss and Chief Illiniwek at Illinois are both considered to be racist mascots, they represent very different power relationships and carry very distinct historical connotations that are born of separate origins. Generalizing all of the minute differences in college football culture to explain how they benefit one dominant group in a top down manner then becomes problematic as it runs the risk of over simplifying the logics that govern college football culture at different institutions.

Foucault’s theoretical framework is more flexible in this regard as he,

“Did not reject the importance of the state but the idea that power was easily locatable and a binary division existed between the ruled and rulers. He argued there is ‘no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body’. He warned that the analyses of power ‘must not assume that the sovereignty of the state, the form of the law, or the overall unity of a domination are given at the outset; rather, these are only the terminal forms power takes’. Foucault correspondingly asserted that influential groups do not arrive at their position because they have power, but they become influential because of the contingent workings and, at times, tactical usages of discourses…Discourses, accordingly, were understood as shaping and constraining perceptions of reality, including understandings of self and
others. Foucault was, therefore, interested in the material connections between discourse, power, knowledges of self, and regimes of truth.” (Pringle, 2005, p. 260)

Therefore I utilize Foucault’s work in this thesis because it allows for greater flexibility in understanding the workings of power in the discourses of college football within the neoliberal university. I do not assume a top down, hegemonic structure of power (though I am not closed to the possibility of one existing in some capacity either) but rather take the position that the discourses and relationships of power inherent in college football cultures have not yet been examined to determine how they operate to form the collective identity of the football school. To this extent I do not presuppose the idea of the football school to be a part of a monolithic state power structure, but instead as a collection of micro political discourses which somehow come together to form a system of power knowledge that is the football school.

Foucault’s theories on panoptic power suggest that power in this manner is most effective when the burden of constant surveillance is shared across a society. Neoliberal entities in particular necessitate that their subjects have freedom in order for them to assume some of the surveillance responsibility of the state (Markula and Pringle, 2006). As neoliberal institutions shift the surveillance responsibilities from themselves onto the entire population, the surveilled then become responsible for monitoring and disciplining each other. This is achieved through the creation of surveillance networks, whereby subjects in a panoptic power relationship survey each other both from vertical and horizontal positions in the power structure. In other words, an individual is not just surveiled by their peers or by those who hold a higher office, but the whole of society (Brivot and Gendron, 2011). This is also known as “governmentality through interactivity”, allowing the many members of the panopticon to survey and, in some cases, discipline each other (Gane, 2012). This is largely achieved through a mutual understanding of trust, such that those with power trust those they govern to survey themselves while those subservient to the powerful trust their well-being to those who survey them (Taekke, 2011). In the context of the neoliberal university this surveillance occurs through the government, media, and public oversight described by Bass, Newman, and Giardina (2012) as well as within the university itself. Government bodies have, since the Nixon administration, cut funding to the university and encouraged institutions of higher learning to adopt partnerships with corporations as well as shift financial burdens on to students. This practice has been aided by the oratory of
“ivory-tower elitism” and descriptions of faculty as “tenured radicals” (Maskovsky, 2012, p. 820) in order to marshal public support. The budget cuts both implemented and threatened by the government thus become a disciplining force, whereby neoliberal reforms are brought into institutions of higher education through the power knowledge of neoliberalism that exists within American society as a whole. In other words,

“Mobilizing the twin rhetorics of economic responsibility and fear of nonsurvival, governments in capitalist economies have installed surveillance and micro-management as the new normative practice in universities…While one part of the vital work of universities in a democratic state has been to provide critique of government, under neoliberalism dissent and critique have become dangerous.” (Zabrodska, Linnell, Laws, and Davies, 2011, p. 709)

Zabrodska et. al (2011) write that professors within the neoliberal university space are often the target of intellectual bullying at the hands of administrators and even their peers as part of the disciplining process. They also note that, “The practices of surveillance also produce multiple forms of resistance,” including verbal confrontation and resignation amongst the faculty (2011, 717).

However the surveillance structure is not simply limited to the interactions between professors and administrators. Sperber (2001) notes that there seems to be an unspoken non-aggression pact between undergraduates and professors whereby students attend class and avoid bothering the professors and are then compensated with passing grades. While this is perhaps a bit of a cynical over simplification of the relationship, there is no doubt that the majority of undergraduates seem content to coast through their time in college, enjoying the experience rather than actually learning (Klein, 2010). This is in large part due to the fact that the power knowledge of neoliberalism has de-emphasized undergraduate education as an inefficient use of institutional resources which could be better spent on research. Neoliberal universities,

“Reward faculty primarily for research, not teaching, they assign professors to teach massive undergraduate lecture courses, and these classes severely restrict student learning. For example, in all parts of the country, introductory courses in psychology…consist mainly of huge lecture classes. Indeed at some universities with
high powered research departments in this discipline, administrators increase the size of basic psych courses to many hundreds of students to generate more money for research programs, and to provide employment for large numbers of graduate students…However, for most undergraduates, exploring one’s identity along with hundreds of other people in the same room is not a learning experience – indeed, it turns the vast majority of students away from the field. But as one psych professor remarked, ‘That’s the whole idea. Who wants a lot of undergrad psychology majors hanging around a research department?’” (Sperber, 2011, p. 113)

Rather than a quality undergraduate education, Sperber asserts that the neoliberal university has instituted a Roman-esque circus, where college students go watch the school sponsored athletic teams. The “college experience” of sports and partying is yet another power knowledge of neoliberalism that attempts to make the student subject complicit in its own domination. Sperber writes that despite the neoliberal university’s

“Shabby treatment of regular undergraduates in the classroom, they need their tuition dollars and often offer a substitute for genuine learning: a diploma, plus a ‘fun experience,’ including beer-and-circus. Because many students arrive on campus predisposed to the collegiate subculture or immediately become immersed in it, they accept the university’s deal.” (2001, p. 114)

To this extent the students become complicit subjects within neoliberal power logics on university campuses. With sports as a substitute for undergraduate education, the neoliberal university can shift its focus to the research and administrative tasks that are considered to be more efficient uses of time. There is resistance, however, as some undergraduate students do manage to leave college having learned something. However the sequestration of the academically gifted student into specialized honor’s classes and dorms all but removes them from the reality of beer and circus that Sperber portrays (2001). While faculty have both historically and recently been characterized as having a distaste for big time athletics on their campuses, the panoptic gaze of administration and complicit students guarantee that any public faculty outrage over big time athletics will be hastily disciplined (Smith, 2011). For their part
faculty seem to tacitly endorse big time football as a babysitter for their undergraduate students, even though they may not enjoy the stigma that commercial athletics bring to campus (Sperber, 2001).

However one does not have to be a resident of the university to be implicated by football culture. Sporting events at major football and basketball schools regularly draw thousands of attendees many of whom are not native to the campus community. These visitors become game day enforcers of football culture, as their dress and behavior creates color coded binaries of us and them, implicating members of the university in the football contest by their consumption, or non-consumption, of football culture. Warren St. John writes of some of the non-consumers at the University of Alabama,

“Some transplants – particularly professors – take offense at the notion that their new home is hopelessly monomaniacal. They’ll tell you that not everything in Tuscaloosa revolves around football, that there’s a health food store, a yoga studio, and a whole throng of folks who go to the mall during games because they know the parking lot will be empty – that there is a mass of people in town who just don’t care. And imams have overrun Opp (Alabama).” (St. John, 2004, p. 118)

While there are certainly those who are not actively complicit in reproducing football culture on game days, St. John’s sarcastic quip that the likelihood of their being a “mass” of people in Tuscaloosa who don’t follow football is about as plausible as the small town of Opportunity, Alabama being overrun by imams is indicative of just how pervasive the power-knowledges of college football culture can be. All members of the community seem to be implicated in the reproduction of discourses surrounding college football at some level, whether by active consumption or by tacit indifference, and are thusly subjectified within the prevailing power knowledge structures of the neoliberal university and the underlying sporting culture. However, these assertions have not been tested, largely due to the lack research examining the discourses of football culture amongst institutions. This of course all comes back to my original research questions; is football culture implicated in the power knowledges of the neoliberal university?; is branded football culture consumed by members of the university community, and how the surveillance of football culture on university campuses implicates members of the university
community? In the following chapter I detail the methodological framework I have designed to answer these research questions in order to build an understanding of what makes so-called football schools unique in both their football culture and their relationship with the neoliberal university.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

As discussed in the Introduction, this thesis was conducted through the use of comparative case study analysis. Foucault’s genealogical approach centers on the examining of dissent, the creation and destruction of the subject through discourse, and emergence; which is the focus on, “the productive influences of the workings of power over time” (Markula & Silk, 2006). I attempted to address both with this methodological framework. Utilizing ethnographic observation of major football schools on game weeks, qualitative interviews with both consumer-participants and school officials, and media analysis of major university branding material of the participant institutions, I built case studies that I then compared to each other in order to answer my primary research questions: is football culture implicated in the received knowledge of and about the neoliberal university?, is branded football culture consumed by members of the university community?, and does surveillance of football culture on university campuses implicate members of the university community? While building the case studies, I asked questions and focus my observations from the basis of the queries presented in the literature review.

3.1 Participant Selection

Comparative case study was chosen as the methodological approach for this paper for two reasons. First, Foucauldian method relies on understanding the world through the examination of events that exist on the periphery, or the exteriority of social interaction rather than the top down or center out understanding advocated by Gramsci (Mumby, 1997, Markula & Silk, 2006). As mentioned in the previous section, the Gramscian approach does not fit with the objectives of this research so we are left with understanding college football culture from the periphery. To this end comparative case study is a fitting approach as, “the decisive factor in defining a study as a case study is the choice of the individual unit and its boundaries…you are therefore not so much making a methodological choice as a choice of what is to be studied” (Flyvbjerg, 2011). By defining this as a series of case studies I allowed myself to define my own study area and the parameters that will define the boundaries of each case, thus allowing me to select individual cases from the periphery in accordance with Foucauldian methodology. Second, the comparative portion will allow me, through the use of a common design in the
construction of my case studies, to compare these various cases. Flick describes comparative case studies as the collection of a ‘multiplicity’ of cases that are researched, analyzed, and then compared based on a similar praxis (2009, p. 135). Typically, generalization of case study results in qualitative research is not seen as desirable as the more nuanced aspects of the individual cases can be lost in the drive to create generalized theory (Peattie, 2001). In the words of Flyvbjerg, “the goal is not to make the case study be all things to all people” (2011, p. 312). This is particularly sensitive in a comparative case study where various aspects will, by virtue of having a comparison, will be emphasized over others. While certain elements of the findings of this thesis might possibly be able to inform future research that leads to a more holistic understanding of college football culture within the American university, the purpose of this study is not to create a universal theory of college football culture but rather to provide points of inquiry and observation. In answering my research questions, I am therefore focusing solely on the cases presented and not on trying to develop a universal theory that will disenfranchise the various subtleties that are inherently present in different college football cultures. In the comparison of the case studies I do make an effort to point out common threads or thoughts that emerge from the individual cases for the purpose of informing future inquiry. However, I am assuming that each case beyond the ones I research will have its own unique system of power/knowledge relationships constituting its football culture. For this research my focus was addressing the research questions raised in the introduction and again at the end of the literature review, comparing how football culture is implicated at the institutions studied only.

In order to guarantee that the schools being selected are in fact strong football schools, I checked to see which institutions appeared in BCS bowl games or other high level post season contests during the 2012 football season and cross referenced those teams with a list of the winningest football programs of all time. I selected three institutions, Texas A&M, Notre Dame, and Florida State, which at a glance represented a geographically and historically diverse group of major football powerhouses. Each institution has a rich football tradition, with all three schools claiming multiple national championships and routinely attracts over 80,000 fans to home games. Furthermore, each institution ranks in the top 25 in NCAA merchandise sold, demonstrating that all three schools have large fan bases which are actively engaged in consuming their football culture (The Collegiate Licensing Company, 2012). These schools also had schedules that would allow me to be present for two consecutive home football contests at...
each institution so I had the time to complete the ethnographic and interview portions of my research on campus.

3.2 Ethnographic Observation

The ethnographic portion of each case study is derived from the work conducted by Newman (2005) in his work on studying whiteness and football culture at Ole Miss. Specifically, I utilized his approach of oscillating between both a participant-observer status, where I was interacting with subjects and the environment, and as a non-participant observer, where I took the “fly on the wall” approach (2005, p. 53). The non-participant observer approach is the primary role I assumed as the researcher in order to limit the amount of impact my presence had. As a non-participant observer my role was to, “maintain distance from observed events in order to avoid influencing them” (Flick, 2009, p. 223). In his work Newman writes that,

“While not hiding the fact that I was present and taking notes or recording social activity, I endeavored to remain in the background of empirical occurrences. Furthermore, as participant observation does not entail singling out any particular individual at the event or asking individuals at the events to behave in any matter different than they would if the observer was not present, I attempted to limit the effects of my researching practices and record my observations in a non-obtrusive manner.” (2005, p. 52)

For this research I more or less duplicated this approach. Flick notes that the key to this approach is defining the parameters of the researcher, specifically drawing a line to determine where between being a participant and a non-participant in the research space (2009, p. 224). Newman (2005) defined this in his research by his actions, noting that he was defined as a non-participant observer when he, “strategically positioned” himself in key places on campus in order to observe the behavior of subjects at Ole Miss (p. 52). I likewise be utilized time on each of the campuses I visited to act as a non-participant observer, staking out certain events (pep rallies, tailgating, bar districts, and other high traffic areas) which can be historically and culturally linked to the football culture of the institution. I also deviated from Newman’s work as I chose not only to attend the social events surrounding games but also to live “on-campus” (or as close to campus as reasonably possible) and to spend my time watching the day to day activities of the
campus communities from various vantage points. The reason for this is because the subject being studied, that is the surveillance of football culture on university campuses, is not limited to certain events or contexts but rather is presumed to exist as an “omnipresent gaze of authority” (Markula and Silk, 2006, p. 43)

Also like Newman I will be conducting pieces of my ethnographic work as a participant observer. Gold (1958) specifically describes this methodology as the researcher approaching subjects and interacting with the space by maintaining the position of data collector rather than approaching subjects as a participant. While this can mean that data will be more difficult to gather, as it is presumed that subjects will be less open in front of a researcher than a fellow participant, it can still yield relevant information as long as the researcher accepts a diversity of truths within the space and constructs the research narrative as a dialogue between the researchers own voice and the numerous other viewpoints of the subjects (Angrosino, 2005). In describing his own application of this methodology Newman (2005) writes,

“While taking note of that which I observed, I abandoned a geographic or spatial agenda in favor of ‘drifting’ in and toward the attractions of the social terrain found within the Grove. In other aspects of ethnographic engagement with Ole Miss, such as attending public meetings or acting as a ‘flaneur’...strolling across campus, I assumed a more “active” membership, ‘playing’ the ambiguous role of student researcher.” (p. 53-54)

This is an essential role as there is only a limited amount of data that I can gather by observing from a distance. By joining into the environment and acting as a participant-observer I was not only able to provide a more nuanced description of the space but provided a more detailed account of how the space affects me as a participant. By recording my own feelings and observations of myself I was able to provide a reflexive account of how I felt implicated in the space that should provide further perspective to my findings. This approach will utilize Spradley’s (1980) three phases of participant observation. I first began with descriptive observation, spending my first days working to describe the locus of my research and to seek out the lines of vision which will guide my deeper inquiry. During this period the participant observer role becomes critical because it allows me, through both formal ethnographic interviews and informal conversations with subjects, to tease out possible locations to observe on campus and to define what places on campus are, as defined by the subjects, key in producing
college football discourse and in reproducing the mediated image of the neoliberal university. I then moved on to focused observation where I will narrow my perspective to the specific problems posed in my research questions. During this phase I utilized both the non-participant and participant observer roles to examine key areas and to interview subjects with a specific bend toward answering my research questions. Finally I conducted the selective observation stage which means I will focus on finding examples and further evidence of the practices found in the second step (1980, p. 34). Given my short time frame that I had at each location, and the fact that I was only present for two football games, this process may not be as clean or as systematic as it would be in an ideal research setting. However, by being opportunistic and flexible I was still able to gather quality data that can address the problems posed in my research questions adequately. For recording of my findings I utilized the exact same devices as Newman (2005), that is hand written observations from the field, voice recorded observations from the field, and a daily journal which will record my findings and reactions to the events of the day. During my time on campus I also took photographic and video recordings of various events both for the sake of recollection and to enhance the findings of this research. Some of these visual recordings are included in this thesis.

### 3.3 Interview Methodology

Interviews are a key component of ethnographic research and in this study I paired ethnographic interviews with open-ended “expert” interviews to provide a unique perspective on the issue of branded college football culture. For all interviews I conducted participants were required to sign a consent form (see Appendix A) prior to being recorded. All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. The ethnographic interview is a commonly utilized, open-ended style of that which occurs, both in this research and in other works, mostly spontaneously (Flick, 2009). These interviews are conducted with only one or two pre-planned questions that differ from subject to subject and from case to case. The pre-planned questions for these interviews will be taken from the same question list as the expert interviews (see Appendix B). The purpose of this is to compare and contrast responses of the subjects based on their position in the space (fan, student, administrator, etc.) to determine what the various symbols of the space represent to different stakeholders and to determine how the mediated image of football culture at each institution is perceived and consumed by different individuals. In the context of
qualitative research interviews, the term expert has a number of varying definitions. Experts are generally defined as those with a specific function or series of knowledge that is both reflexively accessible and practically useful both in real world situations and for the purposes of the research (Flick, 2009).

For the expert interviews in this study I set arranged times with university and athletic department personnel who lent an informed voice to the discussion of institutional branding practices. The experts here were determined by both an examination of their job title as well as an online examination of how the marketing and branding arms of the different university and athletic department administrations are configured. Because each of the experts I interviewed has a very different function within the university, and because the university itself is so diverse in its endeavors, my goal was to interview experts who represent interests that, when put together, create a more three dimensional picture of how stakeholders view and are mediating the image of the university. While each of these individuals came from different departments and areas in the university, and, while their functional roles were not necessarily similar, they were all relatable in that they were all be privy to the institutional branding process and had some role in communicating that branding process to relevant stakeholders either within or outside the university. I interviewed individuals who hold positions within the athletic department, within the university’s marketing department, and those involved in fundraising for both the university and the athletic department. All of these people were directly employed by the institution being studied or with fundraising arms which are directly associated with the institution. The interviewees chosen from within the athletic department and from within the university marketing departments represent those experts who have input in the creation and initial operationalization of brand strategies by the university. Their level of expertise was evaluated by their job descriptions, all of which are publicly available, and pre-interview questions to determine whether or not they are qualified to act as an expert on the institutions branded identity. I chose them because their job descriptions indicate that they have a voice in the creative process of creating the university’s brand and also have some working knowledge of how it is operationalized either through the athletic department or other university functions. The interviewees selected with a background in fundraising were chosen because their job descriptions indicate that they work with the branded identity of the institution and act as a mediator between fans, alumni, and other stakeholders and the experts in charge of constructing
the brand. Each subject in the expert interviews will had a counterpart at the other institutions I am studying who holds a similar job description so that the results from each of these interviews can be compared across their respective case studies. Each of these expert interviews was conducted in a semi-structured format though there is a set of five pre-determined questions (see Appendix B) that was used to initiate the interview with to each participant as open-ended pieces, which allowed the respondents answers to these questions to direct some of the subsequent questions (Markula and Silk, 2011). The listed interview questions should be viewed as a guideline, not all subjects were asked every question on the list but each subject was prompted with at least three of the questions. This allowed me to have some comparable topics to discuss when comparing my case studies but will allow me the flexibility to discuss issues pertinent to each case with the relevant stakeholders. More adherence to the interview guide also helped keep the interviews on point and away from data which will not be useful. With expert interviews and,

“in contrast to biographical interviews,…the interviewees are of less interest as a (whole) person than their capacities as experts for a certain field of activity. They are integrated into the study not as a single case but as a representing group (of experts).” (Flick, 2009, p. 165)

Therefore the interview guide served as a way to keep the subject on topic and away from personal anecdotes and diversionary tactics which will not be useful for the purpose of building the case study. The presence of the expert interviews in the case study will address the concept of descent within the Foucauldian genealogy as the interviews have allowed me to build an understanding of the knowledge which creates the campus subject, guiding college football related discourse. Finally, to protect their identities, interview subjects are only referred to by the school they were researched with and a vague reference to their relationship to that university (i.e. A&M Student 1, or Notre Dame Fan 4).

3.4 Media Analysis Method

Where ethnography and interview methodologies will allow this study to detail and observe the relationships of power occurring from the place of the surveyed population, Descriptive content analysis of mediated branding material will provide more direct information
from the surveyor about the structure and scope of panoptic power on campus. In his study of college football culture at Ole Miss, Newman (2005) writes that,

“If ethnographic participant observation is the strategy which best illuminates the social dynamics of the local, then perhaps critical discourse analysis of the mass media best elucidates the impetuses and impediments created by cultural intermediaries within the public sphere. Media imagery and rhetoric substantiate an important role in shaping ideological discourse, and thus any study of identity would profit from a critical examination of the mediated, discursive texts which shape localized representation and signification.” (2005, p. 54)

Newman continues to note that, while media imagery is an important part of the mediated discourse, it is not the terminal result of the process. Media imagery acts as both a, “product and producer of the practical, political, and social relations surrounding its creation” (2005, p. 55).

Studying mediated discourse requires, “acknowledging the context in which the text was produced and the interpretive posture from which the researcher is operating. This type of research stratagem often entails the project of poststructuralist ‘deconstruction’ of contextually-specific mass mediated discourse” (2005, p. 55). To this end I begin each chapter with a contextualization of the case study; discussing the history of on campus football narratives and traditions as well as the history of each university. While there are some similarities between my methodology of critical media analysis and Newman’s (2005), what sets this research apart is that this will be a lighter descriptive content analysis and will utilize a Foucauldian framework.

Foucault’s discourse analysis, “aims to detect what knowledge dominate particular fields, where they have come from and how they have been dominant” (Markula and Silk, 2011, p. 130), which makes it the ideal methodology for this thesis. Discourse analysis, however, has multiple meanings and there is room for interpretation and variation within it such that it becomes necessary to even more narrowly define the scope and approach of what this research is attempting to achieve. In addition to the assumptions made by through adopting Foucault’s philosophies on the nature of power (described in the previous chapter), Foucauldian discourse analysis utilizes a particular poststructuralist view on truth which is pivotal to reading mediated discourse. Yates and Hills (2010) provide a more complete and specific description of this when they argue,
“A discourse analysis conceived as a ‘critical ontology of ourselves’ is potentially one such tool (though not the only one possible to conceive). Sufficiently theorized and applied, such a study has some potential strengths. Where genealogy focuses on the historicity and contingent emergence of objects of knowledge and systems of practices, discourse analysis can provide a specific focus on the consequences of power for people who are its subjects, the ‘cost’ of certain forms of truth they are obliged to recognize in themselves, and also their resistances, and their formations of self-relationships. This analysis also allows for a clearer focus on what people themselves struggle with and find ‘intolerable’.” (2010, p. 62)

The application of discourse analysis in this sense does recognize the poststructuralist views of Foucault which define truth as relative, however it also possesses the capability of viewing truth conditions as a structured system of ideologies. As Hook explains,

“It is in this way ludicrous to read Foucault as suggesting that truth is ‘relative’, in the open sense of the term, where all possible truth-conditions are equal, depending merely on context or interpretative perspective. Foucault views truth-conditions as extremely stable and secure, as situated in a highly specific idiosyncratic matrix of historical and socio-political circumstances, which give rise to, and are part of, the order of discourse. A skepticism of truth here defers not to a ‘baseless’ relativism, but instead to a carefully delineated set of conditions of possibility under which statements come to be meaningful and true.” (2001, p. 525)

In this sense the analysis of media for this research is less concerned with the statements made in the media but the conditions by which those statements express truth and how those conditions contribute to the creation of the power knowledge of college football culture. This should not be mistaken for a structuralist view of the truth, but rather as an evaluation of the conditions by which statements become true. This can only be achieved through a strong connection between the contextualization of the media discourse analysis (done at the beginning of each chapter) and the media analysis which marries the context and current media discourse in order to provide insight into how, and more specifically off of what power knowledge, current truth statements are being constructed.
Applying this framework to my descriptive content analysis, I critiqued the branding material, including pamphlets, websites, brochures, student recruitment material, and videos, that I obtained from the institution itself and from online sources such as YouTube. Specifically, I selected printed and physical material that is available on campus to visitors on a typical football Saturday such as brochures, visitor’s guides, and other items that are readily available and are produced and made available by the university for free. Furthermore, I examined media produced and disseminated through the school via the online site YouTube, where each institution has its own individual account where videos and commercials about the university can be viewed. I will only be examining media from the institutions primary account and not the videos disseminated by various departments within the university such as the athletics department, college of business, etc. In doing this I have developed a complete picture of how the university as a whole incorporates football into the larger institutional brand image. Also, in order to limit the number of videos and online items I access I only analyzed videos posted on the official account during the 2013 NCAA football regular season (which is roughly the same time period that I conducted my on campus research. The ‘corpus’ of material drawn out here is representative of the multifaceted method by which the academy portrays its branded identity and sets the standard by which the campus is surveyed (Flick, 2009). What I examined is what ideologies and systems of power knowledge, if any, are emergent in these brand materials and then how are those ideologies reflected in my interviews and ethnographic observation. This will complement the expert individuals in providing an analysis of the descent of Foucauldian discourse of the creation of the subject and will also guide my analysis of the emergence in the ethnography as I examine how the power-knowledge developed through the marketing and dissemination of football knowledge impacts the subjects on campus. Each of the various sources of media will be documented and analyzed to determine how panoptic power is implicated within the university brand, how external forces shape panoptic power both within and against the neoliberal academy, how college football culture is woven into the institutional identity, and what role college football culture plays in supporting the hegemonic and panoptic powers and ideologies of both the academy and those who survey it. Because the university identity is partially created out of external pressure to conform to a socially acceptable public façade, there will be consideration given to how the material may be read by those surveiled on
the university campus as well as how it may be read by the external forces who mediate the narrative of the university identity (Bass, Newman and Giardina, 2012).

Chapters four, five, and six will contain each individual case study. In each of these chapters I begin with a section that contextualizes the discourse on each campus and then spend a section delineating my findings from each of my research methodologies. I conclude each of these chapters with a section that discusses the overall finding of each case study. The purpose of this is to create case studies that stand separately, thus allowing them to be read in their entirety and not just in relation to each other. This will also be instrumental in teasing out any dominant power-knowledge relationships that exist in multiple case studies and separating those from the relationships that are unique to each campus setting. In chapter seven I compare the case studies, specifically focusing on what findings from this research answer my original research questions. Finally in chapter eight I provide some concluding thoughts including a summary of my findings, and problems with the research, and possible research topics for future research that have been found during the process of generating this thesis.
CHAPTER FOUR

TEXAS A&M

Opening in 1876 on the banks of the Brazos river in central Texas, Texas A&M (referred to as A&M), is the oldest public institution of higher education in the state of Texas. The roots of A&M’s culture lie in military tradition. The institution was originally founded as an alternative to the University of Texas, focusing more on agriculture and engineering studies than the liberal arts, law, or medicine (hence the school’s name, A&M and their nickname, Aggies). In 1891, then president Lawrence Sullivan Ross decided that, in order to keep the school from closing or folding into the larger University of Texas at Austin, the university needed to shift its primary focus from agricultural and mechanical disciplines to military training (Jacobs, 2002). Military tradition and custom became the cultural norm for students who,

“Rose at sunrise to bugle play, marched down Military Walk to the campus chow hall, and drilled for war in the afternoons. In between came classes. The Cadets began to bond and, in turn, to foster traditions –some born out of boredom and bulls sessions, but most derived from respect, loyalty, and values that came with a conservative, military lifestyle. Many of those traditions dealt with everyday life in the Corps dorms, while others centered on football games. Still others…were military traditions that helped differentiate A&M from any other school in the country.” (Jacobs, 2002, p. 14)

To say there has been significant change at Texas A&M since the early days of the Corps of Cadets would be a gross understatement. A&M is now the sixth largest institution in the United States with an enrollment of 53,219 students. Women, who were not admitted to the university until 1964, now make up 46.9% of the student body at the College Station campus (Data and Research Services, 2012). The Corps of Cadets, once mandatory for all students, makes up close to 4.5 percent of the entire student body (roughly 2,400 students total) and membership in the corps is no longer connected to compulsory military service (Corps of Cadets boasts largest Corps in over 40 years, 2013). However, many of the traditions that came from the early days of the Corps, such as yell leaders, Silver Taps (a monthly ceremony honoring all current A&M

3 While Texas A&M was the first institution of higher education in the state, the University of Texas as already conceptualized in the state legislature as the flagship university for the state of Texas (Jacobs, 2002).
students who have passed away in the last month), Aggie Muster (a yearly gathering where A&M graduates meet around the world to honor those with connections to the university who have passed in the last year), and the 12th Man remain in some form or another to this day. Tradition and ritual are of particular importance to the university community, so much so that one university official described A&M as a “cult”, a term which many Aggies take as a form of endearment (A&M Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013).

The military tradition at A&M permeates into all things. The presidential library of George H.W. Bush resides on campus and the former president has made several trips back to visit the Corps, including coming to games and standing on the review stand for the march in to the stadium (Zwerneman, 2011). In 2002 former head of the CIA Robert Gates was named the president of Texas A&M University. During his inauguration he posed in the university president’s office with several members of the Corps of Cadets while wearing the Cadet boots (Elides, 2008). Gates left the position in 2005 to become the Secretary of Defense for George W. Bush’s presidency but he has continued to promote the military brand of Texas A&M, including during another photo opportunity in Fallujah where he stood with a group of soldiers holding an A&M flag and at events where he joins heads of state and other important political figures in their visits to the A&M campus. More recently President Obama has included Texas A&M on his speaking tours and has made it a point to be seen shaking hands with members of the Corps of Cadets (Kraft, 2009). The symbolism of these images is powerful. The Corps of Cadets embodies the Texas A&M militarized identity and the members of the Corps have come to symbolically represent neoconservative military ideals of neoconservatism, including the use of American military power to guarantee the strength and stability of a free market economy. To this end my analysis of A&M will focus heavily on the military rituals and traditions which carry significance in the Aggie community and which demonstrate the connections between Texas A&M and neoconservative politics.

In this chapter, I will dissect A&M culture as it related to the university branding process, organizing the discussion into three separate sections based on the breakdown of campus culture between organic culture components and cultural branding which I detailed in the introduction. In the first section I will explore the organic A&M football culture through the adoption and implementation of various traditions and iconography that have become integrated into the institutional brand. In the second section, I use the vignette of Texas A&M’s departure from the
Big XII conference as a discussion point for how A&M utilizes cultural branding and the impact of the university’s synergistic relationships on the campus space as they relate to the institution’s attempts to build a lifestyle brand. Finally, I will use the third section to detail the surveillance of college football culture in the campus community by detailing the attempts to control the institutional brand and reign in the brand altering power of Heisman winning quarterback Johnny Manziel.

4.1 The Spirit of Aggieland

There is a saying at Texas A&M that, “from the outside looking in you can’t understand it and from the inside looking out you can’t explain it”. The “it” in that quote can be referred to as Aggieland, the nickname given to the College Station campus and the phrase “Welcome to Aggieland” is common on t-shirts, signs, on the west grandstands of the football stadium (see Figure 4.1) and is even painted on the campus water tower (see Figure 4.2). Aggieland has its own language (a “Glossary of Texas A&M terms” can be found on Wikipedia with close to one hundred phrases, which still doesn’t cover all of the unique parlance of Aggieland), it has its own customs, it has its own values, and its own traditions, many of which date back to A&M’s identity as an all-male, military training institution. In short, Aggieland is the cultural embodiment of Texas A&M’s campus culture and history. To understand the true spirit of Aggieland one must understand the organic components of tradition which commercial entities, including A&M itself has built around. The organic components of Aggieland are witnessed most prominently in the Corps of Cadets. Despite undergoing many changes, the Corps of Cadets still remains a powerful symbol of the past for Texas A&M.

The Corps not only reflects military service or the past military associations of the university, but also the politically conservative, and specifically pro-military, values which are interwoven into the culture of Aggieland. Corps members are considered the “keepers of tradition” at Texas A&M, meaning that many of the old customs and parlance of the military academy that A&M used to be remains alive among the Cadets. Nearly all students who enlist in the Corps are expected to live on campus in specially designated barracks. They wear khaki uniforms on campus and partake in rigorous physical training which is meant to liken the Corps experience to a military boot camp. Nearly all football traditions at A&M are mediated through
the image of the Corps of Cadets, and the shared knowledge of Aggieland is inextricably linked to Corps life. By virtue of their dress and significance to the historical iconography of the campus culture, the bodies within the Corps become the site of accumulation (Markula & Pringle, 2006), whereby the idealization of the Texas A&M student body is both projected and recreated through military fetishism.

This chapter will focus on the essence of Aggieland through an examination of the militarized culture born out of the Corps of Cadets which is reproduced on campus and which, through the proliferation of football culture branding, implicates all members of the Texas A&M community. The first section of this chapter will provide a critical understanding of the Corps that is situated within readings of the militarization of the neoliberal university. I will then examine how football traditions at A&M reproduce militarized images of the Corps of Cadets and how these are incorporated within the football brand image. Finally, I will discuss how the branding of the Corps has impacted the overall institutional brand of the university and the conflicts of identity between the branded images of Aggieland and the university.

The militarized identity of the Cadet body, as well as the general space of the campus, at A&M is a reflection of the logics of neoliberalism operating within the space and represents the authoritarian nature of neoliberal society, as well as the militarization of the neoliberal university. In discussing the workings of the neoliberal state, Giroux writes that the,

![Figure 4.1 The Welcome to Aggieland sign inside Kyle Field](Image)

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“Neoliberal ideology, on the one hand, pushes for the privatization of all non-commodified public spheres and the upward distribution of wealth. On the other hand, it supports policies that increasingly militarize facets of public space in order to secure the privileges and benefits of the corporate elite and ultra-rich.” (2004, p. xxiv)

The militarization of public spaces and social order, or proto-facism according to Giroux, is predicated on the circulation of a military presence through the ‘military-industrial-entertainment-complex’ where the militarized iconography is reproduced in various social and economic institutions for the purpose of developing masculine identities, “sanctioning war as spectacle, and using fear as a central formative component in mobilizing an effective investment in militarization” (2004, p. 33). Militarization has been linked to the neoliberal university in several ways, most notably in academics where researchers take government funded grants to create new innovations which will ultimately be used for war, or students who accept government funding for their education and are ultimately groomed for careers in military or espionage (Giroux, 2009).

Texas A&M is unique in this as, while Giroux and other scholars have primarily focused on militarization as a result of neoliberalism, A&M has had strong ties to the military for almost one hundred years. While the Corps has always been a strong identifier for A&M, it has become a major factor in marketing and branding for the university as militarization of public spheres has risen in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001. The militarization which is
occurring as part of the Texas A&M brand development and maintenance is not a so much an original adoption of militarism into the campus space but a re-emphasis of the military traditions and culture that are unique to A&M. Militarization operates within the brand of A&M to wrap the institution within the traditions of Aggieland and to turn the resulting militarized image into the brand image of the space. For the university, that means using the Corps of Cadets as what one university official described as a, “unique selling proposition”, where prospective students might be intrigued about coming to the university because of the militarized traditions and values inherent in Aggieland. The official asked, “How many other universities are you going to attend class with a kid who got up at 4:30 that morning for reveille and then marched? So I think it’s kind of an impressive thing and that sort of helps in creating this respectful brand that we have, this environment” (A&M Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013).

However, by focusing on the militarization of the Corps of Cadets, A&M becomes complicit in reproducing the paeloconservative masculinity implicit in many of the traditions of the Corps as well as normalizing the Aggieland mystique at the expense of the majority of the student population at the university.

Being a member of the Corps was once compulsory but is now a choice that most students elect not to make. However, while most choose not to enter the Corps, there is a distinct feeling on campus that the only way to truly immerse oneself in the collegiate experience at A&M is to become a Cadet and participate in all of the ”Corps Games”. The students who do elect to become Cadets consist of a mix of ROTC members (ROTC classes are required of all freshman and sophomore Corps members but students are not required to continue on after their second year), those students who are do not intend to join the military but believe that the Corps provides the best way to experience college at A&M, and all 450 of the university marching band (referred to as the Fightin’ Texas Aggie Band). The groups of students on campus are given labels based on their affiliation with the corps. The term “Corps Turds” (or CT’s) refers to those members of the corps that are not members of the band and who tend to view themselves as superior to the non-Corps affiliated members of the student body. The marching band, referred to as band queers (or BQ’s by other members of the corps) and general corps members
are often at odds as to which of them has the most authentic Corps experience. Says one
member of the band,

“There’s kind of a small rivalry there. Actually, it’s probably a little bit bigger than
small. I guess just being a part of the Aggie band, we have this sort of superiority
complex and we feel as though you’re not really in the Corps unless you’re in the band. I
think that’s kind of true because we are up earlier, trained and done with half of our drill
before they even get up in the morning. We have more regulations in our rooms like
what we can have on the shelves or how our clothes have to be made out so it is a lot
more disciplined. They came up with the term band queer for us but we just kind of
embraced it, kind of like you can’t break us down kind of thing. So it was actually meant
to be derogatory but we embraced it and now if you’re a BQ you’re proud to be a BQ.”
(A&M Student 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

The discrepancy between those students who are in the band versus those that are just in the
Corps is small compared to the difference between those students in the Corps and the majority
of students who never become Cadets. Students who do not join the corps or participate in the
regular consumption of Aggieland are referred to as two percenters. In the words of one Texas
A&M official,

“It’s that two percent of the student body that doesn’t participate. So they think that 98
percent of the student body participates in all the stuff while they are here because it is a
different university and there’s a lot of things to do. If you didn’t go to football games or
you didn’t go to yell, or you didn’t go to silver taps, or you didn’t do the big event you’re
called a two percenter. There’s a lot more than two percent.” (A&M Official 1, Personal
Communication, 2013)

Another term for these students is “non-reg” (short for non-regulars). These are the individuals
who, when compared to the militarized body of the Cadet, do not measure up as “true Aggies”.
As one student in the corps and the Aggie band explained,
“I remember during freshman orientation week the people from the Corps came in and every day was like corps stuff and towards the end they were like, ‘hey you guys are going to start classes soon, try not to talk about the Corps all the time and yeah you are better than the non-reg but you don’t have to say that to them, they don’t like to hear about that stuff’. So we feel like we are having the true Aggie experience and we don’t disrespect the non-reg for not joining the Corps because it’s tough and it’s not for everyone, but we kind of see ourselves as an example for the non-regs. [emphasis added] How to have integrity, and honesty, and loyalty, and discipline, selfless service, honor and if they have questions they’ll ask us first. I feel like it’s mixed feelings from the non-regs like I hear from some people that think the Corps is great and they wish that they could do it and when they graduate they wish they had done it. Or if they punch, which is quitting, they wished they had stayed all four years. Some people think the corps is disgusting because of stories they have heard or something some person did like hazing so they don’t like the Corps at all.” (A&M Student 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

The implication here that the members of the corps ought to set an example for the non-regs is a reflection of the hierarchy generated by the militarization of the Corps of Cadets. Promoting and idealizing the Corps the marketing arm of the university effectively others the rest of the students population. The thousands of people moving across campus on a daily basis without wearing Cadet khaki are viewed, through the criterion provided by the university, as less than ideal Aggies. In reality, the Aggieland defined by the university’s attempt to brand the militarization of the Corps of Cadets is quite small, encompassing only the students whose bodies can be sold to donors as the guardians of traditions and as a unique selling point for prospective students.

In addition to the vast number of slang terms and phrases used in the Corps, Cadets must also learn the many rituals and traditions associated with being in the organization. These include some of the more banal military tasks such as marching or proper saluting as well as firearm maintenance and weapons training. Corps life is expected to mirror some of the basic training given in the military and Cadets expend a great amount of time “playing soldier” as one band member noted
Figure 4.3 Massive American flags are displayed on the walls of the barracks of the A&M Corps of Cadets.

Figure 4.4 The Memorial Student Center at A&M houses the wall of honor, which pays homage to past graduates who have earned the Congressional Medal of Honor for their military service.
“I would say it’s tough and very time consuming. Basically as a fish, or freshman, everything but like eight to five is scheduled out for you. So we are required to study every night. We wake up at 5:45 or 6:15 every day. We train, as far as physical training and how to wear uniform and stuff like that. So it’s busy, but I think it’s teaching me about discipline and respect.” (A&M Student 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

The military iconography often extends beyond the personal schedules of Cadets and confronts visitors to campus very directly. Corps members are easily recognizable as they are required to wear their khaki uniforms every day to class and there are few places on campus where one cannot hear the jingle of the spurs on the boots worn by senior Cadets. In this sense, the bodies of the cadets, in their specialized uniforms and military haircuts, are symbolically militarized and are singled out by being forced to appear in classes and around town in the costume of a soldier. The space these cadets occupy is likewise militarized. Their barracks (where almost all members are required to stay) are located squarely in the middle of campus with walls that are festooned with giant American flags (see Figure 4.3). The Memorial Student Center (or MSC, A&M’s equivalent of a student union) is dedicated to former students who have died while serving in the military and it is required that all people inside the building remove their hats. Wearing a hat inside the building, even by accident, draws almost immediate reprisal from those inside, particularly former students and Cadets. A&M does not refer to its graduates as “alumni” but rather as “former students” as a sign of respect for those students who chose to leave school in
order to serve in the military and who never graduated. On the North side of the first floor there is a long hallway which includes a display with names of former students who have died while in military service and several individual displays of former Aggies who have earned the Congressional Medal of Honor (see Figure 4.4). The Corps has its own traditions on college football game days and Cadets are treated almost as the guests of honor inside of Kyle Field. In the words of an A&M band member,

“It’s crazy. If you’re walking around on game day in the band people are looking at you and trying to take pictures with you. Even if you’re alone, even if you’re just walking from place to place there are people stopping you and asking you questions because they think you know things. Of course we are supposed to know things like when step off is but a lot of things we don’t know. Being in the band though is really exciting. We wake up at seven or eight in the morning and have our final drill rehearsal and everybody is super pumped. They are really excited to get on the field. We do this thing called spirit band and it is over by the alumni center so we teach the little kids some yells and everyone’s crowded around us while we play a few songs and then we march the football team into the stadium. I feel like we get as much hype as the football team as band members and it’s really exciting. It’s really great having everyone on campus here to see us.” (A&M Student 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

For members of the Corps, game day begins with special tailgates hosted by alumni from their unit. After some mingling, Corps members return to their barracks to prepare for step off, the ceremonialized march of the entire corps of cadets from their barracks, across the campus, and through around Kyle Field before ending their march by saluting the review stand in the West sideline of Kyle Field where, typically, a high ranking military officer is in attendance to review the Cadets. Prior to step off the freshman members of the Corps come running out of their barracks with arms raised and yelling, a mild form of hazing, which is followed by their uniforms being inspected by the senior officers.

Step off is signaled by a cannon blast outside the courtyard of the corps and the sharp blast of brass counting off “one-y-and-two, and three, and four” that makes up the opening to the Texas A&M fight song (see Figure 4.5). The massive column of Cadets lurches forward and
winds uphill towards Kyle Field. Fans line the street along the way, thousands of maroon and white clad spectators craning to get a glimpse of the thousands of khaki clad students (see Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7). People climb up into the stadium and to the second level of the MSC to get a glimpse of the parade marching towards the entrance to the stadium. The band takes its seats in the stadium and cycles through a repertoire of songs that are synonymous with the school. Led by the mounted cavalry units, each unit of the Corps of Cadets marches along the track that rings the grass playing surface inside Kyle Field. As they march past the West grandstands they salute the visiting general (from the United Stated Army) who looks on from his perch on the review stand. It is a scene that feels as though it is pulled from a low budget remake of Leni Riefensthal’s film *Triumph of the Will*, with khaki clad, banner carrying units of cadets marching in step past the reviewing stand⁴. The spectacle of Step Off and the Corps March are certainly the most blatant attempts for the militarization of the Corps of Cadets within the college football culture at Texas A&M. It is perhaps the clearest example of Giroux’s proto-fascism within Aggieland, whereby the need for brand differentiators to make A&M stand out in a neoliberal education marketplace have led to the rise of militarized spectacle in relation to Aggie football (2004).

![Figure 4.6 Fans crowd the streets of the Texas A&M campus to watch the Corps of Cadets march to the stadium](image)

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⁴ This should not be interpreted as a comparison of the ideologies at work at Texas A&M and those of the Third Reich, which are not the same. Rather, this comment should be read as comparison between the military pageantry at both A&M and present in Riefenstahl’s work.
This militarization of A&M football culture also implicates the masculine identities of the Corps performing the militarized rituals of Aggieland. Within this militarized space, the Corps of Cadets becomes implicated in the production and reproduction of paleoconservative interpretations of the masculine identity. Specifically, the paleoconservative masculinity of the Corps implicates gender identities within the campus space. Since the university began admitting women on an equal basis in 1965 there has been constant consternation on the part of male students and alumni as to how the university was going to be able to maintain its tradition of, “turning boys into men” (Smith, 2007). The patriarchal society of A&M, prior to the admission of women, had been built around the conservative, military values of the Corps of Cadets. These values are more or less the same as that of the modern neoconservative movement. As one university official explained,

“One of the things we found was ‘how do you like the area?’ was usually the first question and the second question was ‘what church do you go to?’ and it’s very based around that. It is Southern. People tend to talk about it down here where in the North you keep it to yourself. What we found is that everybody is really nice, but you don’t make that next level of connection with someone unless you are in their bible study class. That’s the students all the way through people who have lived here for years and years and years. It’s very rooted in Christianity around here and it makes it hard for people who aren’t rooted in that same thing. The students here are rooted in that same faith

Figure 4.7 Aggie fans gather around and on top of the Memorial Student Center to get a glimpse of the Corps of Cadets marching to the stadium
based thing too and they’re great kids. You are going to hear a lot of yes sir, no sir, yes ma’am, no ma’am, coming from the students and it’s a different kind of student than anywhere else...It’s just there’s a lot of middle class value and I think that is one of the knocks against us too and that’s something (head football coach) Kevin Sumlin has to come up against in recruiting is that there is this feeling we are all white middle class people at Texas A&M University…The faith stuff definitely plays into it.” (A&M Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Students on campus agreed with this sentiment, with one noting that he specifically chose Texas A&M because of the, “moral, conservative values that you don’t really get at other schools, especially (the University of Texas)” (A&M Student 2, Personal Communication, 2013). These paleoconservative Christian values are imbedded in the military core of Texas A&M traditions. For A&M officials this presents a problem as the traditions of the corps have largely been coopted as the part of the non-brand football culture at Texas A&M. This is perhaps best exemplified in the tradition of Bonfire. Bonfire was once considered one of the most iconic Texas A&M football traditions. In the weeks leading up to the annual rivalry game with Texas, Corps members would go out into the woods South of campus and cut down trees to make a massive bonfire which would be lit prior to the game. According to Smith,

“After the Second World War, cadets began to justify the Corps, and Bonfire, as a school that made boys into men. Its principal lesson was courage, perhaps the essence of manliness, and this lesson waxed emphatic because Bonfire grew large, difficult, and dangerous.” (p. 190)

With the admission of women and the non-compulsory membership in the Corps, Cadets began to codify their traditions and emphasize the importance of supposedly “turning boys into men”. This included Bonfire, and the restructuring of the wood pile meant that year after year for decades the wood pile would grow taller and taller, becoming a temporary phallic monument to the masculinity of those who aided in its construction (Smith, 2007). The tradition was discontinued in that form in 1999 after the collapse of the bonfire structure killed 12 A&M
students (Jacobs, 2002). This does not mean that the paleoconservative masculinity that made Bonfire special to many Aggie fans has been lost from campus entirely.

Paleoconservative masculinity still exists in several Aggieland traditions, most notable the Yell Leaders. Yell Leaders are male students (female students can be elected to be Yell Leaders but this has never happened at A&M) who lead the student section and crowd in specialized yells at sporting events and serve as the leaders for the crowd during certain events such as Midnight Yell Practice (the pep rally held every week prior to a football game). A&M fiercely defends the distinction between cheerleaders and the Yell Leaders, quickly correcting anyone who refers to the school yells as cheers or the Yell Leaders as cheerleaders. The reason for this is simple; cheerleaders are girls. Cheers, backflips, and pom-poms are how women support games. Yell Leaders are a major part of Aggieland tradition because they represent an important part of the patriarchal identity of A&M. This does not mean that aspects of the Yell Leader tradition, like Bonfire, can’t change.

“Traditions are timeless. But sometimes the way they are practiced changes from time to time. One way we see that is every year we invite back former Yell Leaders. We don’t have cheerleaders we have yell leaders. There are five of them. They are elected by the student body. They wear white outfits, we don’t have pom-poms or anything like that, but to get the former Yell Leaders on the field with the current Yell Leaders and you can see the difference in the hand motions or how the current yells are led. We still have the tradition of the Yell Leaders we still have the tradition of the yells, but how those traditions are led and done change over time.” (A&M Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Even though there have been subtle changes to the function of the Yell Leaders over time, the implicit connections to A&M’s patriarchal values remain. Because the Yell Leaders continue to represent the militarized culture of Texas A&M, fans continue to recognize them as one of the most iconic traditions on campus. Nearly every person I surveyed mentioned the Yell Leaders as a major part of the football culture of Texas A&M, while only one person mentioned the Big Event at all.
Though women are allowed to participate in the Corps of Cadets, they too are implicated in the reproduction of paeloconservative narratives. Of the over 2,500 students who are in the corps only about 200 are women. Rather than alter the discourse surrounding the corps change when women were admitted, women I observed have had to negotiate their own feminine identity to accommodate their position within the Corps. Silva (2008) describes how women in a study of ROTC participants negotiated their own gender identity when they joined the military by saying, “while female cadets (at least sometimes) view ROTC as a setting in which they can actively redefine constrictive definitions of femininity, their redefinition proceeds only to the point where they can still be recognized – and recognize themselves – as women” (2008, 955). She notes in her study that, in order for women to negotiate their feminine identity while performing a traditional male gender role, the subjects in her study would re-negotiate the terms of nurturism and motherhood to fit their situation. Thus,

“None of the women in my sample rejects their femaleness or even their femininity as a fundamental component of their core identity. The deep, hierarchal logic of gender – mainly the notion of women as nurturing care-takers and of men as steadfast warriors – remains untouched” (Silva, 2008, p. 955)

The women in the corps are implicated in the gender roles cast by the militarization of Aggieland in much the same way. The women I spoke with and observed who were part of the Corps all seemed to emphasize their own role within the corps. One in particular noted that she was adjusting to a role as a mentor in the corps, coaching students on homework even if they were higher ranking in the corps and participating in the cheerleading aspect of the physical training exercises. “I try to keep the relationship professional when it comes time for business” she said, “I am glad people are able to come to me when they need help but if there is one thing I am learning in the Corps it is that I need to show humility and respect in certain situations.” In essence, being outnumbered over 12 to 1, female Cadets have found their niche in the Corps by finding ways to redefine femininity to fit their role in the Corps which is still centered in paeloconservative masculinity.
The Corps of Cadets is a constant fixture in the A&M branding material, appearing in all forms of university publications. According to university officials, the Corps is an identifier with many people associated with the university because of the traditions that are linked to the Cadets,

“Even though for the past 25-30 years the corps has been a small percentage of the student body it’s still a strong identity for the university. Until recently I think most people who watched a game with Texas A&M would think most of the student body was in the corps, but it’s not it’s less than five percent of the student body. But it’s still a very strong identity and those who were in the corps of course they identify strongly with anything we show that deals with the corps. Those that were not in the corps, they still identify strongly because that image represents tradition, the history of the university. So it’s not an image for most that’s offensive in any way or excludes them in any way. Most still want to see those traditional things so we use the corps in many of our publications and many images because I think it represents our history and also that continuum because that is still something that is an important part of our university and something that is unique for us.” (A&M Official 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

The branding material of the university reproduces the Corps of Cadets in two ways. In items that I picked up from the visitor’s center, the Corps was presented as an activity or club that students could join. Corps members were always grouped with other students. In fact, unless a picture in the Visitor’s Guide is paired with an article or advertisement for the Corps or ROTC, there is not a single photo of a Cadet in uniform where there are at least five or six other students who are dressed in civilian attire. In the videos produced by the university that are specifically targeted towards incoming students, the relationship is the same. There is very little discussion of the Corps of Cadets and images of Cadets on campus are very few. None of the narrators for these videos, who are all presumably students, are dressed in Corps regalia and outside of a few brief references there are very few members of the Corps depicted.

One caveat to the proceedings, however, is that when the Corps is depicted it is almost exclusively in reference to football, when the Corps of Cadets and the yell leaders are featured running onto the field ahead of the team and cheering in the stands. The implication with this seems be that being a part of the Corps is not a prerequisite for enjoying the college experience at
A&M and that it is one of several options available. Rather, the Corps of Cadets is depicted as simply being a part of the football pageantry at A&M and not a constant part of campus life. This belies the reality that Cadets on campus are a constantly felt presence and ignores the reality that Cadets and the traditions of the Corps implicate all members of the university. Juxtaposed to this is the material I retrieved from the Alumni center on game day, where nearly every photo of students is made up mostly of members of the Corps. Former students are specifically recognized for their military service and there is a special section in the Alumni Game Day guide as to where service members can join in Aggie Muster and watch games at military bases around the world. There are several photos of military members as well, service men (no women) in combat fatigues either on location in Iraq or Afghanistan or at memorials to fallen soldiers. A two page spread in the middle of the periodical includes a photo of the cadets and Yell Leaders running onto the football field with the caption, “Game Day in Aggieland” (Association of Former Students, 2013).

Among the videos produced by the university there are several which depict the Corps of Cadets. The university also had videos reproduced celebrating the Corps and the militarization of the university in general, including a video of a former A&M student being added to the Wall of Honor for his military service and a special clip on the new certificate in Homeland Security being offered by the university. The latter video emphasizes the need for military security in a post 9/11 world by opening with the retired Army Lt. Colonel Danny Davis, the director of the Homeland Security program, stating that, “The whole society needs to understand there are people out there looking to harm us; looking to end our way of life” (AggieMedia, 2013a). The most direct reference to the Corps however is in the official commercial for the university for the 2013-14 Academic year, which is the same commercial that is played on television during sporting events. The commercial shows the Corps marching through campus and raising an American flag along with the word “leadership” (AggieMedia, 2013b). The commercial, titled “What do you stand for” will be discussed in more detail in the next section but this segment of it is clear. The Corps of Cadets are the leaders on campus, and they set the example for the non-regs. This is further underscored by a video of the class president, a Cadet who emphasizes the need to show integrity and tells students to think hard about what they want to be when they leave A&M so that they can work on building themselves at the university. This second depiction of the corps is the one which fetishizes the universities military history and militarizes
the campus experience in order to exploit both the nostalgic sentimentalities of a largely military oriented alumni base and to promote fear in the general public post 9/11 with the threat of terrorist activity. It is this second identity which is propped up alongside football as being the true spirit of Aggieland by the administration and students, once on campus, soon learn that the true identity of the university is still based in the military rituals and traditions.

The university is not the only one selling this image, as members of the media who are partnered with Texas A&M often focus on the Corps lifestyle when depicting Aggieland, particularly during the broadcasts of football games. This creates a major problem for Texas A&M university officials who feel as though the way their brand is being portrayed outside the university does not reflect the core identity of the institution.

“I think that one thing that shocks people is how small that portion of the student body that is in the corps. We have 50,000 students and 2,000 are corps members and whenever we do play football, if a network is broadcasting our games the camera automatically goes to the band or a corps group because it’s so different. A crowd of people wearing their school shirts is nothing new, but a crowd, mixed in with that crowd of students, is these khaki wearing military students and the cameras just gravitate to that. So I think the perception nationally is that we are a military school and it’s because that’s where we started. It’s certainly part of our DNA, but it’s a small part.” (A&M Official 2, 2013)

This statement was echoed by another university official who stated that,

“One of the things that we run up against here is we have our roots in military history. We have 50,000 students we have 2,500 in the corps of cadets and the corps of cadets used to be the entire school. Well now it’s not necessarily affiliated with the military if you’re in the corps you don’t have to go into the military after. You don’t have a commitment unless you join as an ROTC member. But the corps, the band is a military marching band still, the corps of cadets has a block right there so everyone is wearing maroon except these guys and girls in khaki. So that is the image, and I had this image too, and seeing the guys kiss their girlfriends after every score, and I knew that stuff just from watching TV so football is that, however it’s not a fair representation of who we
are. So there is this misconception that we are this all-male military school. Football right now helps proliferate that, but we have people who it’s their job to try and pull that back and try to work with ESPN, try to work with CBS and trying to show that we’re more than that. It’s a double edge sword and I think we’ve got some unique things that people remember.” (A&M Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

There is no shortage of irony here as A&M officials complain that their own mediated image of the university is being used against them by their own media partners to shape the university’s public perception. Even if the university weren’t promoting the concept that A&M was a military institution through its own branding mechanisms, the organization of events and pervasiveness of the Aggieland concept belays any attempt to brand the institution as something. The technologies of Aggieland, the maintenance of military spectacle of tradition on campus and among the student body, in addition to attempts to emphasize the militarization of the university within the institutional branding process, create a distinct image of Texas A&M which is mediated by and through the Corps of Cadets. Yes, the Cadets are only a fraction of the student body, but the pervasiveness of military tradition and culture on campus embodied in the Corps, in the military pageantry of a college football Saturday, and in the branding of the university conflate to idealize the Corps within the branded image of the entire university. The result is an institutional ideal of militarized values and patriarchal culture which implicates all subjects within the campus space through the spirit of Aggieland.

4.2 Goodbye to Texas University

In the previous section I discussed how Texas A&M incorporated the organic components of the Aggieland cultural mystique into its branded institutional image and the effects that has had on the campus. For this section I will be analyzing the other half of Moffatt’s dichotomy of campus culture; the cultural branding of the space by outside corporate interests. Specifically, I will focus on developing an understanding of how Texas A&M has constructed its own corporatized brand model and then analyze how the university has used that identity to develop synergistic relationships with other corporate entities. This will culminate in my discussion of Texas A&M’s move from the Big XII athletic conference to the Southeastern Conference (SEC), which
reveals how football is implicated in the development of brand partnerships for the university and the logics which dictate the terms of such a transition.

The Texas A&M brand is built on the same corporate logics which govern the creation of brands in the private sector. A&M has focused on trying to create a brand that functions much in the same way major corporations, such as Nike, McDonalds, and Disney function. This includes developing a consistent visual identity across the university and developing a brand strategy which draws in consumers through an artificial connection to a unique aspect of the university’s organic culture. The first arm of this has largely been accomplished through the adoption of stricter brand guidelines and the consolidation of control over the visual and logistical elements of A&M’s brand. One university official noted,

“In terms of recognition and identity, the consistency of brand identity is invaluable and you have corporate America to look at and see why in terms of recognition, identity, in terms of a university it’s not necessarily a consumer product that, in some regards. But in we are selling a product. We are promoting higher education and we are promoting higher education at Texas A&M so we need people to know who we are and what we are about and the first step is getting visually recognized so that people know when they spot

Figure 4.8 A banner showing A&M’s core values which resides in the Alumni Center lobby, which is a hot spot for fans on football weekends
this, oh, that’s that university in College Station. So what was happening was that everyone was communicating a different look and feel. So there was no continuity. People were getting messages from our spectacular college of engineering and then they were getting messages from our college of agriculture and they would not really make the connection that they were a part of the same university because they were branded so differently.” (A&M Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

The consolidation of logos can be seen in the newly minted Texas A&M brand guide, which provides precise instructions of how A&M is meant to be represented visually, including the precise shades of maroon and white in which the school can be presented and the precise configuration of the school logo. The logo is important for Texas A&M is ever present, on shirts, banners, billboards, and even the equipment of the Aggie athletic teams,

“One thing that Texas A&M has done that I have not seen done at any other university is use one mark for academics and athletics. Typically you see a university seal that is used as the formal academic identity and then you see a mascot graphic as the athletic identity. We use that block “TAM” as a singular icon to represent the university. The idea that we are all one, we are all on the same team, it’s true for any academic institution there’s sort of that wall between athletics and academics and we are trying to break that down and show how they really complement each other and support each other and that they’re all fighting for the same thing.” (A&M Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

To this end A&M has strongly adopted the notion of athletics being the “front porch” of the university, where outsiders can experience A&M through the athletic department and then eventually be drawn in to witness the multitude of functions of the institution.

“[One of our previous administrators] would use a phrase that, ‘the athletic program is the front porch of the university’ and so that you see this great house and on the front porch people greet you. Then you come in and you see ‘oh it’s a great house it’s got all these other things going on’. That’s the analogy he used which I think is pretty applicable in that athletics is going to get you the greater visibility just in terms of the
common, average person on the street. They’re going to see the hoopla on TV and all kinds of media and that’s how you get the recognition established and then once they know “oh that’s the school with the football team, the school with the Heisman trophy winner”, then they look further into it and see “Oh, they’ve got this amazing academic program that I didn’t know anything about” so that’s the connection” (A&M Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

Another university official was quick to point out that the “front porch” analogy would only be successful if it actually persuaded sports fans to move beyond seeing the institution as a sports franchise and take notice of all of the academic and research opportunities provided by the university. They said,

“I think the biggest challenge that you have with so many schools that have major athletics or major football programs fail is that they leave people on the front porch of the brand. You know you always hear that athletics are the front porch of the university. We are very deliberate to get people to transition off the front porch of athletics and through the front door to see this world class university that Texas A&M is and there’s not a lot of schools that have figured that out yet.” (A&M Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

This has not stopped the university from using athletic tradition as a means to communicate the university brand. In the previous section of this chapter I discussed how university officials had co-opted the Corps imagery as part of a concerted attempt to brand A&M as a militarized institution which is a strong example of this. Another example would be the adoption of the 12th Man mythology and its use in the branded image of the university. In the words of one university official,

“12th Man is really the big one and…the original 12th Man is E. King Gill and I think its 1922…But King Gill was a former football player, or manager I think he was, and decided to concentrate on basketball. He was at a football game and a bunch of the people kept getting hurt so the coach asked him to suite up and stand on the sideline and
he did and he never got in the game. So it doesn’t have that Rudy-esque feel to it. He didn’t get in and make the game saving tackle of touchdown. When asked afterward he said, ‘well I’m standing ready to serve my university’. So that kind of has been the mantra for the entire university.” (A&M Official 1, Personal Statement, 2013)

The mythology of the 12th Man has morphed into a major image maker for the university in recent years, becoming the foundation for many branding initiatives at the university. The phrase “Home of the 12th Man” is emblazoned on the side of the stadium (see Figure 4.4), it is a common theme on t-shirts and towels, and it is a licensed trademark which the university defends vigorously. The 12th Man is now the nickname of the Aggie fans at Kyle Field and the image of the student section waving 12th Man towels is recycled constantly both within and outside the university as a symbol for Aggie football. Most importantly however, it is an abstraction of the values A&M wishes to symbolically reproduce through its branded image. In 2005 A&M ran a branding campaign where it tried to identify six core values based on suggestions from a survey of current and former students. The result was a list of integrity, respect, loyalty, honor, excellence, and selfless service. These brand values are represented visually around campus, including on banners and signs of areas with high football game day traffic (see Figure 4.8). The 12th Man has become the most recent vehicle to display these brand values through the “What do you stand for?” commercial.

“So standing during the game is a big thing and we’ve kind of incorporated that into our marketing campaign “What you stand for says a lot about who you are” and that has kind of been building upon that, kind of making the point that the 12th Man is the student body and the 12th Man stands ready is not just athletic iconic and it can stand for many things. It can stand for excellence in academics and all those kind of things.” (A&M Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

The commercial opens with an overhead camera shot of the student section waving their 12th Man towels and wearing maroon 12th Man shirts with the word “spirit appearing underneath”. This is followed by a shot of a girl in a 12th Man shirt working with villagers in a third world country to create a system that will give them clean drinking water with the word “Service”. The
next shot is of the Corps of Cadets marching through campus, and then another cadet brandishing a sword, and then finally a shot of two cadets raising a flag with the word “Leadership”. The narrator reads “at Texas A&M, we believe what you stand for, says a lot about who you are”. This cuts to a shot of Aggie student assembling a solar panel as the word “Excellence” flashes across the screen. The commercial then cuts to a shot of the corps member and several Aggie students petting Reveille, a border collie which serves as the school mascot, while the word “Loyalty” runs across the screen. The commercial closes with a return to Kyle Field as the narrator says, “we are Texas A&M University, home of the 12th Man” as the crowd roars in the background (AggieMedia, 2013b). The commercialized image of the 12th Man is a reflection of the cultural branding utilized by A&M officials. By twisting an aspect of the organic football culture at A&M to fit the corporate identity of the university (represented in the core values), the institution is utilizing the same logics of cultural branding as other corporate entities who use the culture around them to build a brand.

Figure 4.9 The Slovacek Sausage tent is one of many food tents on Joe Routt Blvd. before football games that are used by the school’s corporate sponsors

A&M also operates in the corporate branding model through its use of synergistic relationships to advance the status of the brand. In the words of Klein, “Synergy…is about much more than old-style cross-promotion: it is about using ever-expanding networks of brand extensions to spin a self-sustaining lifestyle web” (2010, p. 148). Simply put, corporations, including Texas A&M, are attempting to build a lifestyle brand which acts as an umbrella that consumers can live their entire lives under. For Texas A&M this has meant the branding of consumer goods, everything from colognes and perfumes to clothing and apparel. The problem
for A&M is that all of the products that are sold with the university brand are already branded with the logo of another corporation. A&M apparel is licensed by adidas, their perfume and cologne fragrances are sponsored by Masike, and even the space inside the campus is branded. On game days Joe Routt Boulevard, which runs between the North end zone of Kyle Field and the MSC, is lined with tents and booths set up by corporate sponsors (see Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10). Everything at football games from the types of sausages sold at the concessions stands to the advertisements played during timeouts implicates a corporate partner of the university. The branding of campus space isn’t relegated to the game day experience either. The book store in the MSC is operated by Barnes and Noble, the coffee in the coffee shop is brewed by Starbucks, and apple has a special technology center set up in the book store basement. Credit card companies have dozens of advertisements inside the MSC and there is a food court in the MSC basement which is home to several restaurant chains including Panda Express and Chick-n-Grill. The entirety of the campus space, from the food courts to the academic buildings, have been sold to corporate partners, but even outside the campus space the A&M brand is constantly being leveraged by businesses. The cities of Bryan and College Station both rely heavily on interest and traffic from A&M, particularly Aggie football, for their economic survival. As one city official noted,
“For us there are several ways to look at it. On the athletic side, because of the football games, all of our hotels are sold out. Our restaurants are full every weekend when it’s a home football game weekend. When it’s not we try to put conferences and meetings in there. A lot of those conferences and meetings are coming from Texas A&M because the departments that they have on campus. We have a great veterinary medicine conference that comes here once a year and all the departments at Texas A&M have meetings and have groups that they bring in. While the football games are big because they sell out the city, it’s actually an area wide sellout because we have people for this weekend staying as far away as Houston because there’s no room within a 100 mile radius. Or if there is a hotel room it became available and it’s $400 a night.” (BCS Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

According to officials from the city, everyone from car dealerships and realtors to restaurant owners and mall employees is implicated in the economics of an Aggie football home game. During my visit it seemed pretty evident that football was having an impact on the local economy. Every bar or restaurant with televisions was filled to the brim before kickoff of the Alabama game. Booking a hotel in the city itself was impossible, even six months before my visit, and the nearest city with rooms available was almost 45 minutes away. Traffic backed up for miles the day before the game and local landmarks, such as the George Bush Presidential Library, were inundated with Alabama fans several days before the game. There were RVs parked on campus as early as the Tuesday before the game and the College Station’s entertainment district (a three square block set of bars, restaurants, and shops referred to as Northgate) was awash in Alabama crimson and Texas A&M maroon on the Friday before the game. According to one bartender, the move to the SEC had been particularly lucrative for the local drinking establishments as the SEC fans tended to travel in larger numbers, drink more, and tip more than their counterparts from larger Big XII schools such as Texas, Texas Tech, and Nebraska. An employee at the local mall noted that game day weekends tended to be the most busy, even for stores selling non-football related items such as electronic goods or novelty items. Because the mall is home to the shuttle service, which allows football fans to park and take a shuttle to the football stadium, fans will hang around and spend their money. For A&M officials, corporate sponsorship is perceived as a synergistic relationship, where the university’s
brand can be built through the pre-existing value in their corporate partners. It is, in practice, the branding of a public space and then selling of that same space to corporate entities in order to enhance the brand value of that same space. Even though there is certainly an argument to be made that A&M is receiving benefits of some kind for their partnership with the various corporations who exist on campus, it is hard to believe that the subjects within that space, namely students, faculty, administrators, and fans, are deriving an equal benefit. In essence, it is the privatization of public space in the name of the A&M brand.

Texas A&M’s move to the SEC presents perhaps a more recent, and well publicized, example of how A&M utilizes brand partnerships and synergy to build its institutional identity and privatize the public space on campus. The events and ideas which led to the secession of the Aggies from their former home of the Big XII conference in July of 2012 demonstrate a commitment to football as a major brand identifier for the university and a key marketing tool which those associated with A&M believe is a key component for improving the academic quality of the university. In this section I will examine the complicated relationship between A&M and the University of Texas which ultimately led to the Aggies leaving the Big XII conference to join the SEC. This is important to discuss since it not only provides an example of how the university interacts with other brands but it also provides anecdotal evidence of how the university attempts to leverage brand relationships to achieve its goals.

During the 2011 season Texas A&M announced that it was leaving the Big XII conference, and rivals Texas, Texas Tech, and Baylor for the promise of greater exposure and better brand power. In this chapter I will analyze how Texas A&M, in some ways, resembles the brand factories discussed by Klein (2010), who invest in marketing and brand management while minimizing costs in the actual production of the product. The move to the SEC is a prime example of this and it demonstrates how the Texas A&M, as a neoliberal university, is driven by many of the same corporate logics and values that are synonymous with companies such as Nike and adidas. This discussion will be broken down into two parts; the first will historically locate the rivalry between the A&M and the University of Texas and contextualize the received knowledge that ultimately caused the move to the SEC. In the second part I will broaden the discussion to describe how the transition to the SEC has impacted the university as a whole and the surrounding community.
Since the institution’s inception, Texas A&M has seemed to be inextricably linked to the University of Texas at Austin. As a point of fact,

“Though it opened its doors a few years before the University of Texas did, A&M was to be considered an annex to UT, and the Texas Constitution never amended that law. Merely a gentlemen’s agreement existed to keep A&M under its own umbrella. Only when oil was discovered on UT’s public lands in 1923 did A&M succumb to the notion of being a branch of the University of Texas. That year, the Permanent University Fund (PUF) was established, and A&M fought hard for a third of the royalties. The Aggies received their share, but the partnership between the two schools went no further. ‘We’re a part of UT for one day every year,’ former A&M president Jack Williams would say, ‘…when they split the PUF.’” (Jacobs, 2002, p. 12-13)

Texas A&M was given university status after World War II when it was named the flagship institution of the Texas A&M University system, but A&M is still, both athletically and academically, in a constant battle with the University of Texas for prestige both within and outside the state (A&M system history, n.d.). This was no more apparent than in football, where the annual rivalry game between the Aggies and the Longhorns on the last weekend of the regular season consistently drew a national viewing audience. Dubbed the ‘Lone Star Showdown’, the match up was the third longest running rivalry series in the country prior to its cancelation, which coincided with A&M’s departure from the Big XII. Traditions surrounded the series, with A&M hosting a massive on campus bonfire the night before the game against Texas (this tradition ended in 1999 when the bonfire collapsed and killed 12 students). Texas meanwhile held its own Hex Rally where Longhorn fans tried to curse the Aggies and their football team. The two schools even mention each other in their fight songs, as the lyrics to Texas’ song include the words “Texas fight, Texas fight, and it’s goodbye to A&M” while the lyrics to Aggie War Hymn include the verses “Goodbye to Texas University, so long to the orange and the white”, “The eyes of Texas are Upon you, that is the song they sing so well” (this verse is followed by the unofficial line “sounds like hell”), and “saw varsity’s horns off”. Texas A&M students have stolen and branded Texas’ live longhorn steer mascot with the score of football games and street signs around Kyle Field include pictures of the Texas Longhorn logo.
with its horns sawed off. Very few institutions share as rich of a football culture history as Texas and Texas A&M, but the strong relationship between the two would eventually cause the Aggies to leave.

Texas A&M officials and fans felt that the University of Texas dominated the spotlight, both within the state and the Big XII. Noted one Aggie fan, “people were always saying Texas, Texas, Texas, Texas” when A&M was a part of the Big XII. It is true that Texas has generally been the wealthier and more prominent of the two institutions, but the fact that the relationship between the two institutions was so strong meant that Texas A&M was constantly compared to the University of Texas institutionally. Feelings of resentment were common among Aggies who felt that everything about their historical relationship with UT, from the state legislature declaring Texas to be the first state flagship institution despite A&M being the first public college in the state, to having a smaller endowment and athletic budget, to the lack of success against the Longhorns on the football field (A&M trails Texas in the all-time series 76-37-5), reflected poorly on their own institution. One university official pointed out,

“When I first got here we were in the Big XII and it was everything was focused on Texas and we were the little bother. There were these things called Aggie jokes, and whenever anything bad happens, “oh that’s an Aggie joke” and Texas has all these things and they have these cheers like, “poor Aggies”. They’d cheer because we were little brother and we didn’t have the money they had.” (A&M Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Thus, for those invested in Texas A&M, the relationship with Texas became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Longhorns got more, in football, in academics, in state funding, because they were better, and Texas was better because they had more. This culminated in the University of Texas receiving permission from the NCAA and the Big XII to form their own institutional television network in conjunction with ESPN which many thought would give Texas an unfair advantage in both football recruiting and in institutional prestige. The perceived knowledge of Texas A&M’s status was not exclusively a result of the A&M relationship with the University of Texas either. Another university official noted that the placement of the university within the Big XII was directly harming A&M’s perceived value as an institution.
“For so long our university, our brand, had been defined by other schools. We were obviously compared to Texas but we also had people from Texas Tech, from Baylor they were defining our brand for us. We thought, and also we thought our brand was undervalued. You go outside the state of Texas and people have no idea we have 50,000 students. People have no idea that we are one of the top 20 research universities in the country. They have no idea we are a member of the AAU. So we thought we were undervalued. So we thought that we needed to change the game and do something different. We moved to the SEC because we thought the SEC could give us unparalleled exposure, with their media contracts. It also gave us an opportunity to wipe the slate clean and tell our brand story the way we want it to be told.” (A&M Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

In this instance, an aspect of the organic college football culture at A&M was seen as a detriment to the brand. The historic rivalries and associations with teams like Texas, Baylor, and Texas Tech which come to be associated with the university were seen as a restraint on economic progress. In the balance between organic culture and culture branding which forms college football culture, Texas A&M’s move to the SEC reflects that components of the organic culture can be cast aside if the needs of the brand are not met. Image is essential to the success of the neoliberal institution, and with these power knowledge at work the decision to keep or discard organic tradition at Texas A&M became a simple cost benefit analysis in favor of the institutional identity as an economic mechanism.

Texas A&M formally announced that it was leaving the Big XII to join the SEC during the 2011 football season but the discussions about leaving the University of Texas and the Big XII occurred a year earlier. According to one university official,

“In 2010, it really started picking up steam that this is when all these conference changes were going to happen and that’s when Nebraska bolted to the Big Ten and Colorado bolted over to the Pac 12…there were hot and heavy talks about getting A&M into the SEC at that time. Then Texas stepped in and tried to get everybody to go into the Pac 12 and try and turn that into a better conference. A&M kind of put the brakes on it and fast
forward to 2011 and the Longhorn network and there’s a lot of things like ESPN is going to carry high school football games which everybody thought was a direct violation but the NCAA was saying, “no it’s fine”. That’s when our president started talking to the SEC again and worked with the regents and made it happen. What’s it’s done you know it’s helped us to step out from the shadow of Texas.” (A&M Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Perhaps the most drastic institutional change caused by the move to the SEC can be seen with Texas A&M’s football stadium. Kyle Field was set to be renovated prior to the announcement that the school was changing its conference affiliation. According to one athletic department official,

“Right now we hold about 82,600 something. They had already started these plans to renovate Kyle Field. Well the plan at that point was to lose 10,000 seats to make the amenities better, to give people more room. We were having a hard time selling tickets anyways. So why not go down to 72,000 that’s still a really big stadium but at that point everyone thought you know let’s look at that. So they had architects looking at it and artists renderings and that stuff coming and then the SEC stuff hit and that project was halted because it was thought, “well if we’re going to the SEC is it really prudent to take away 10,000 seats” and it wasn’t. So that Fall we put together a Kyle Field study group and brought in architects and all that…The stadium we are going to get is one hundred percent because of the SEC. It is one hundred percent because of the renewed interest. We just, two weeks ago today, we sold out of all of our tickets for 2015 for a 102,500 seat stadium. We’ll have some tickets but essentially we are sold out we stopped selling new season tickets in there. And yet, on a week to week basis, minus this week, we are having a hard time selling all of our tickets to a 82,600 seat stadium. So it’s that interest. It’s that level of interest for the SEC that is pushing us forward make no mistake that stadium is going to be what it’s going to be because of SEC because it would have been a totally different 10,000 seat less than what we have now if we are still in the Big XII.” (A&M Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)
During my visit to College Station I could already see the renovations underway on the East grandstands. Walking around the concourse to the seats in the student section meant navigating a maze of chain link fences, concrete, and wooden walkways. The sidewalk all along the East side of the stadium was fenced off and the ground inside the construction site was littered with broken concrete and exposed metal supports.

The renovation to Kyle Field, which will be completed by the beginning of the 2015 football season, comes with a price tag of $450 million, making it the most expensive stadium renovation in the history of college football. That cost would help build A&M one of the largest stadiums in college football, a 102,500 seat behemoth with luxury suites, new video boards, all new concourses and plaza spaces around the stadium, statues depicting famous Aggie traditions, and a museum depicting seminal moments in A&M’s athletic history. This is all part of maximizing the brand value of Aggie football. A&M officials believe the bigger football is, the more brand power it has the potential to generate and they look to, “feed the beast” in order to continue their brand value’s upward trajectory (A&M Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013). Still, it seems that by highlighting the perceived institutional brand benefits of the move to the SEC, the administration has successfully sold the move to their constituent groups as being a break from tradition which was necessary for A&M to reach its full brand potential. According to university officials, early returns on the move to the SEC have been staggering. One such official noted that,

“Every measure you look at the move has truly been incredible for Texas A&M. You can look at applications, you can look at fundraising, you can look at licensing revenues, you can look at sponsorships. We’re building a $400 million football stadium. GameDay has been here twice and before they had only come here two years in history, previously. So it has been transformative in how Texas A&M is perceived not just in the state but nationally.” (A&M Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Yet another university official noted some of the responses that the football games in the SEC have had with alumni,
“The Sunday night after we beat Alabama last year, we raised more money in our call center in four hours than we normally raise in a month. So when athletics does well people feel good about their university. It increases their pride, it increases the affinity, and they’re more likely to give back because they feel good. Athletics can be a big part of that emotional connection of a brand.” (A&M Official 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

From the perspective of A&M administration, the move to the SEC has allowed the institution to pair with more like-minded brands, forming a brand synergy within their new conference that has strengthened their institution by discarding organic components of football culture in favor of the cultural branding of the SEC. By pairing with the SEC Texas A&M could create for itself an image of success that could be sold as an institutional improvement. Yes, A&M did lose a historical part of its identity by separating itself from Texas, Texas Tech, and Baylor, but by partnering with the SEC, a stronger brand than the Big XII in college athletics, A&M could see the value of its own brand sky rocket. The received knowledge at play here then is that success in athletics and powerful brand associations in athletics, are part of what builds the college brand. In essence, school officials are selling the idea that being part of the SEC has created a superior college experience at Texas A&M. This seems to have been at least somewhat successful, in the words of one student

“The year I got here was the year they stopped playing TU so I never really got to experience that energy but from what I’ve heard, you know our fight song is all about ‘beat the hell out of Texas’. I think that, since we’ve entered the SEC we’ve been much more recognized for our football. Before I got here I never heard of Texas A&M. I don’t think any of the football games were televised except for the TU game. Then we get into the SEC and we get Johnny Football and that’s who we are. Everybody wants the jerseys, the hats, the signatures they want to come to our football games because we’re good now. So I think football is definitely becoming a part of us.” (A&M Student 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

Another student I spoke with made a similar comment, saying,
“I think, especially for people outside of Texas, when they think of Texas A&M they think of football, especially with the move to the SEC. I think they have really been pushing that because it has gained them a lot of exposure. They really have been pushing that ever since they made the change where before, you know A&M probably wasn’t as well known but with the SEC they are really pushing the football program.” (A&M Student 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

The changes at A&M instead reflect a decision to discard those components of the brand, namely those organic historical rivalries with schools like Texas, which had kept the university from maximizing its football exposure. In this sense, the balance between the organic football culture and cultural branding is determined by the value of the brand. In other words, A&M is better at football, then the institution as a whole is also better (at least in the eyes of those associated with Texas A&M). Association with powerful athletic brand names (in this case the SEC) further empowers the institution, raising the importance of the brand above that of the actual institutional output. It is because of this logic that the athletics staff, particularly the football coaches, represent many of the highest paid employees at the university, in some instances making almost 13 times more than the highest paid professor on campus (Texas A&M University Salaries, 2013).

The move to the SEC has, so far at least, also been profitable for A&M’s brand partners. The move to the new conference has meant new media partnerships and both CBS and ESPN have drawn major ratings from the Aggies according to officials. Bryan and College Station have also seen substantial economic returns to their campuses,

“We did not realize how many, what type of recognition was going to happen from being in the SEC and being a part of the SEC. So that was probably the best decision they made really because really, it’s odd to me, and I love college athletics especially college football’s my favorite, but it was kind of a shock to me that when we announced we were going to be in the SEC, the recognition that, ‘oh you’re in the SEC’ and suddenly groups that we had been talking to or maybe groups that we hadn’t been talking to in the past all of the sudden were listening a bit more. It was almost like, ‘oh you’re good enough to be in the SEC so it’s ok so now we can work with you’, especially on the sports market side
of things. Groups that weren’t as interested before are now becoming interested. Like for instance we had, which is really no collection, USA BMX, which is racing it isn’t the X Games so they do racing not tricks, never really, you know we talked to them at several conferences and have a great relationship with them. Never really got too interested, and then all of a sudden we are in the SEC, and all of a sudden it’s like we’re a little bit more interested, we’re wanting to go a little bit further with this relationship. Well one of their main people is an LSU graduate and it was kind of like ‘oh’. Kind of like the Aggie Network now we have the SEC network where now you’ve got people that went to an SEC and they may be higher ups and they may be the planner in the group and now we have a little bit of a connection because everybody wants to see the SEC succeed. Just like with our Aggie Network, now we’ve got a little SEC network going too. So that really helped, because now we’ve got a little avenue where we can sneak in and the SEC family I guess.” (BCS Official, Personal Communication, 2013)

The cities themselves have gone all-in on the move to the SEC, posting signs welcoming fans from conference rivals and the conference logo can be seen in numerous sports bars and store fronts in the retail areas surrounding campus.

Figure 4.11 A banner on the A&M campus advertising the school’s membership in the Southeastern Conference.
While A&M sought to improve its brand by joining the SEC the new conference could also be seen as expanding its brand by adding the Aggies. The move to the SEC is visible all over campus on game days. Banners hang on poles around many of the tailgating areas and Saturday’s most heavily trafficked corners of campus (see Figure 4.11). High school seniors and their parents waiting inside the visitor’s area at Rudder Tower to take a campus tour around a football weekend can pick up buttons and stickers with the SEC logo in maroon and white (the A&M school colors). The SEC plays commercials on the massive television screen inside Kyle Field and the conference’s logo is painted on the playing surface. There has been some attempts to imply that the move to the SEC has also been an academic boon for the university by making a concentrated effort to reference the SECU (the SEC’s academic consortium which is essentially a loose affiliation of academic initiatives based on football conference affiliation) in university branding material. The Visitor’s Guide to Texas A&M provided to freshman in the same lobby includes a two page layout where the Aggies participation in the SEC as an athletic and academic member are outlined. Of particular interest is the paragraph on the SECU which reads,

“Texas A&M didn’t just experience athletic success in its first SEC season. Participation in the SECU, the conference’s academic initiative which promotes scholarship, research and achievement among member institutions, gave Texas A&M faculty, staff and students opportunities to collaborate and enhance academic resources with other SEC schools.” (Texas A&M Visitor’s Guide, 2013)

There are also cards produced by the athletic department before SEC games which are distributed to fans and media members which, in the words of one official, “highlight the academic values” of each institution (A&M Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013). These could be found sitting along with stacks of other material in the visitor’s center before the Alabama game. On the front they compare four different facts about the university; the year each institution was founded, who the president of each institution is, the enrollment, and their academic ranking among public institutions from US News & World Report. There are also three “Academic Connections” listed;
“Partnered to devise ways of extracting oil from fields in Alabama by tackling problems in productivity and profitability, share faculty connections in fields like geoscience, business, and engineering, and proudly stand as their respective state’s first public institutions of higher learning” (Texas A&M University, 2013),

On the back side is a list of the football traditions of both schools which includes each school’s first season in the SEC, their school colors, mascots, and the names of the fight song along with a brief summary of five Texas A&M football traditions. Perhaps the most disturbing thing about the card is that the SEC logo on the back is almost one and a half times larger than that of the A&M logo on the front. What is in fact occurring here is that the SEC is trying to incorporate A&M into its own brand umbrella. The SEC logo is ubiquitous within the public space of A&M and by incorporating the state of Texas into its brand the conference has expanded its own influence nationally. For A&M, there has been little substantive change to the academic arm of the university as a result of the move to the SEC, but holding up the fringe benefits of the SECU allows the university to justify cordonizing off public space for the SEC.

In essence, the conference change is representative of A&M’s branding strategy in general, where an institutional image, largely driven by football and major athletics, is promoted over the sanctity of public space. Furthermore, there is an explicit acknowledgement of football’s place within the university brand and the need to “feed the beast” in order to improve the quality of the university vicariously by growing football. The university and the public may not always receive tangible benefits from the promotion of the athletic brand at A&M and the corporate synergies that result from that promotion, but there is no shortage of belief in that it benefits the university. In the words of one university official during the week prior to the football game against Alabama,

“We’re on the precipice of one of the biggest early games ever in college football that I can remember something this big with this much of a story line. Number one has played number six in September before but without this storyline with us going in and beating them and Alabama being this juggernaut that can’t be stopped and we’re the only team that beat them…and everything. So it is important that people are working with CBS and ESPN to try and position what we are as an institution because people in Maine never get
this chance or don’t get this chance very often to see Texas A&M University and without football they’d never have that opportunity and without sports they’d never have that opportunity unless they’re interested in oceanography and know that we have a good oceanography program. So on the academic side; this is really the double edged sword. The academic people don’t like to admit that football is the window. That athletics is the window. That in order to make your university what you want it to be a lot of times you have to utilize what is in front of you instead of saying no we can’t use that as the window. Administration here knows that and they have embraced it. Football is king, especially in a state like this. Someone in Washington isn’t going to know that. This weekend they will.” (A&M Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Brand synergy and image enhancement drive the decision making process regarding college football’s place within the branded identity of the institution as a whole. Football is viewed as the vehicle by which institutional recognition can be achieved and this belief is outwardly manifested in the brand decisions of the university. By emphasizing the importance of brand synergy and connections to corporate brands, A&M promotes the most visible component of its institution over the less visible and allows the public space of the university campus to become privatized by utilizing the campus space as currency in exchange for corporate partnerships. This strategy has visibly positive effect on the football program at A&M, which is growing exponentially with the move to the SEC, but it is still too early to say whether the move has had a long term positive impact on the rest of the institution, particularly academics. In the end, all the move has accomplished for those on campus is to further privatize the public campus space.

4.3 When Johnny Comes Marching Home

This third section will be devoted to the confluence of organic culture and cultural branding at A&M and how this confluence of forces impacts the institutional brand. Of particular interest is the surveillance of football culture on the A&M campus and how the surveillance of the branded iconography of Texas A&M is conducted. This has already been touched on in the previous section to a slight extent, particularly in the discussion of the surveillance of Corps culture in the discussion of the Aggieland mystique in Section 4.1 and the
branding of campus space in Section 4.2. Thus instead of focusing on the mechanisms employed by A&M to define their football culture I will devote this section to the narratives of Texas A&M generated from stakeholders outside the institution and which threaten the branded received knowledge of the university and how these are implicated in the surveillance of A&M’s branded identity. In order to illustrate this I will detail the complexities of Johnny Manziel, also known as “Johnny Football”, Texas A&M’s Heisman Trophy winning quarterback and how his iconic status as a college football savant is implicated in the branded identity of A&M.

Johnny Manziel came to Texas A&M in 2011 and took a redshirt year where he did not play. In 2012, Manziel broke several quarterback records, becoming only the fifth player in history to pass for over 3000 yards and rush for over 1000 yards in a single season, and led the Aggies to an 11-2 record. Manziel would win the Heisman trophy and be dubbed by the media as Johnny Football, a name that he would later trademark. Seemingly overnight, Manziel became a national sensation, appearing courtside at NBA games and seen partying with music stars such as Drake. Manziel’s popularity caused problems however, as video surfaced of the young quarterback partying at a fraternity at the University of Texas during the offseason. He was later accused of violating NCAA rules by providing autographs in exchange for cash, a charge which was never substantiated but nevertheless tainted the public perception of Manziel, painting a picture of him as the bad boy of college football (Lewis, 2013). For Texas A&M, this created a problem as school administrators wrestled with how to reconcile Manziel’s law breaking public image with the military values of the institution. Even more troubling for administrators, despite Manziel’s image nationally, the university was still profiting off the Manziel craze and the quarterback’s popularity among A&M fans was still quite high.

Manziel’s popularity, and similarly his economic value to the university, was a major determining factor in how the quarterback’s brand image was incorporated into the university. According to fans, Manziel’s off season dalliances with the NCAA had not tarnished the quarterback’s image. According to one fan,

“He can do no wrong in my eyes. People are making too big a deal because I know they are holding him to a higher standard because he’s a Heisman trophy winner. We don’t feel that he has been covered fairly. I think it’s helping A&M.” (A&M Fan 1, Personal Communication, 2013)
The idea that Manziel wasn’t being covered fairly was evident across campus. Retailors outside the university began selling shirts that read “BTHO ESPiN”, (BTHO is a common A&M acronym for “Beat the Hell Outta”) insinuating that the popular sports broadcaster had been manipulating the Johnny Football narrative to create a sensationalist story. In the words of one university official,

Figure 4.12 Jerseys and shirts bearing Johnny Manziel’s number 2 hanging in the bookstore inside of the Memorial Student Center

Figure 4.13 T-shirts referencing Johnny Manziel’s Heisman trophy win inside the Memorial Student Center Bookstore
“Aggies want to be liked, and we are coming up on a spot where, on the national
landscape, where we are not liked right now. We’ve come up against some things with
our football program and our Heisman trophy winning quarterback that people want to
see us fail on a national level and that’s very hard for people to grasp, because they’ve
spent their whole lives wanting everyone to like us and embracing that.” (A&M Official
1, Personal Communication, 2013)

For fans, it was Manziel, not the move to the SEC, which had raised the profile and prestige of
A&M and it was the association with the Johnny Football brand that was truly benefiting the
university. Said one student,

“It gets us noticed more, across the country because my cousins didn’t really know about
A&M until I went there and the Heisman win and so it’s getting us on the map more for
football… Since he won the Heisman I am pretty sure that is what A&M is known for
now.” (A&M Student 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

For all of the administrative discussion of how successful the move to the SEC had been for
Texas A&M, it is possible to argue that Manziel was equally, if not even more, valuable to the
university in the short term. The university printed shirts celebrating the Heisman win for
Manziel and jerseys bearing his number two took up an entire wall in the A&M bookstore right
across from Kyle Field (see Figure 4.12 and 4.13). There were special buttons made with the
Heisman logo on them and Manziel received a quarter of a page congratulations in the visitor’s
guide handed out to visiting high school students. A clip of Manziel scoring a touchdown
against Florida is featured in one of the recruitment videos for incoming freshmen (AggieMedia,
2013c). Paintings of Manziel’s iconic touchdown against Alabama, where he bobbled the ball,
picked it up, and tossed it to an open receiver in the end zone while evading a defender, has been
immortalized in oil paintings which are advertised for sale on the jumbo-tron during games.
Furthermore, the university maintained a tight grip on the imagery of Johnny Football.
According to one university official,
“One of the funnier things that happened recently, there’s this guy KR Wood, he’s an older guy and a country Western singer. He wrote this song about Johnny Manziel and wanted us to promote it for him and he was going to give back 10% of the proceeds....finally we told him we couldn’t do it...What people don’t understand and what KR didn’t understand is he called during the summer and we said, “I don’t think you can make this song, I don’t think you can use Johnny Football and utilize our trademarks” and he was like “we’ll I’ll see” and he wrote it and recorded it and he can’t do it.” (A&M Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

The irony of this is that, per NCAA regulations, Manziel was not allowed to receive any compensation for the blatant use of his likeness by A&M. Thus the branded image of Johnny Football was co-opted by the university, and the image of Manziel’s Heisman heroics became a part of the institutional brand.

However, even with the Johnny Football iconography being implicated in the branding of A&M, administrators saw the need to distance themselves from the star quarterback, who many believed did not reflect brand values which the university was trying to sell. After all, how could the university claim integrity and selfless service as two of its core values when the most visible member of the campus community had been implicated in a scandal where he allegedly broke NCAA rules for his own financial gain and then lied about it? According to one university official,

“So for us right now Johnny Manziel is not our brand. He is a moment within our brand, a temporary moment. It could be one year, two years, three years, four years I don’t know. But he is not our brand because this brand is built over 100 years. So I think sometimes people tend to get caught up in the moments and not look big picture at what the brand really is. Johnny has certainly taken our brand at this time we’re seen as a place to be. We’re progressive, there’s a lot of energy behind our brand. But we have to be sure to balance that and at the core Texas A&M is a world class research universities, a member of the AAU, and happens to have one of the top athletics programs in the country. We’ve got to make sure that those are in balance, and I talk a lot about brand
balance and it is kind of at a scale, you know you got to make sure that your balance is even.” (A&M Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

While Manziel was featured in some of the university’s branding material, he never appeared in conjuncture with the images of A&M’s organic football culture. In some cases, A&M even refused to promote Manziel in pieces of branding material. As one university official explained,

“I’d say the social media pretty much stays away from controversy so I don’t think you’ll see any kind of official tweets from the university on Johnny Manziel or whether college athletes should be paid. In fact I think the Time Magazine cover we didn’t even tweet that. Other people did but the university didn’t tweet that saying “hey look we’re on the cover of Time”. (A&M Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

The official also noted,

“We ran some billboard campaigns and one thing we are conscious about doing is not making our brand about one person. So we didn’t, the billboards didn’t have Johnny Football, I don’t think a single board had him in it. So I guess we would say we are aware of this and maybe we react to it by not emphasizing on it and the billboards were already produced when the controversy of Johnny Manziel and the signatures came out so that was a fortuitous thing that we stayed away from that.” (A&M Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

In essence, Manziel was censored from the A&M brand except in cases where the material was aimed at current Aggie fans or prospective students. Since university officials could not part ways with the lucrative, Johnny Football was marginalized within the institution. The Manziel image was not promoted nationally by A&M after the run-in with the NCAA and was relegated to a specific niche within the university brand.

The case of Johnny Football presents a clear conflict between the organic culture and the cultural branding of the university. On one hand, there is no doubt that Manziel’s transgressions put him at odds with the identity A&M had crafted for itself based on the Corps of Cadets. Manziel’s time spent with NBA stars and rap artists drew national criticism which was only
compounded by the NCAA scandal. Even though the charges against Manziel were never substantiated, his national image became a liability for the Texas A&M brand. On the other hand, Manziel’s popularity among Aggie fans and prospective students had never been higher. The Johnny Football image was too valuable for the university to completely abandon so Manziel was relegated to local branding efforts only. In Manziel’s case, the Heisman trophy winner was surveyed by the university and judged as a disruption in the balance between organic football culture and the cultural branding of the institution. As one university official described it,

“For some Aggies, having our quarterback be a huge fan of a rap star is probably kinda hard for them to grasp. They’d probably rather their quarterback be a huge fan of Tim McGraw or something like that. So it’s a little different but what matters is how they play on the field.” (A&M Official 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

The irony of this is that every A&M fan I spoke with supported Manziel wholeheartedly. For them, his play on the field had transcended his transgressions and fans saw him as a positive for the university. Institutionally however, Manziel’s national image proved to be too dissonant with the militarized image of the university. When asked what kind of person associated with the university would be incorporated into the branding material, an official answered,

“I would say we want to, we tend to showcase former students who are using their Texas A&M core values which are excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect, and selfless service. Using those core values to make a difference in the world and that might be through their profession, it might be through service. We have a former student who has been for the last 10 years working in Iraq distributing wheelchairs to Iraqi children that don’t have wheelchairs and in that country that’s not often the greatest priority because if you’re trying to decide if this faction is fighting that faction, so he’s trying to distribute wheelchairs in countries like this. When we were still involved as a nation in that country he used US soldiers to distribute these wheelchairs to kind of bridge relations. You know you don’t see a soldier as someone scary you see a soldier as someone who brought something to your family that changed someone’s life in a positive way. So we like to highlight things like that that show Aggies making a difference in the
world through service. We highlight, across this campus people who give back financially. People who use their resources to make Texas A&M better.” (A&M Official 4, Personal Communication, 2014)

Manziel’s party boy behavior, hanging out with rap stars, showing up drunk to the Peyton Manning QB academy, getting into trouble with the NCAA, and sitting courtside at NBA games, flew in the face of the university’s conservative values and made it difficult for A&M to simultaneously promote the discipline and selflessness that they believed were built on their Corps history. His actions were unrepresentative of the values instilled in the Corps of Cadets, and as a result the university has attempted to distance itself from him.

This exemplifies the way subjects are surveyed under the A&M brand. If a subject is deemed to be a liability to the institutional brand, and more specifically the iconography of the Corps of Cadets, they are cut out or marginalized from the brand identity. This also speaks to the lack of panoptic power levied by the brand in this case. The sheer volume of Manziel merchandise on sale and the amount of affection given to Johnny Football reveals a separation between the brand of the university and the mediated identity of Texas A&M football as it exists outside the control of the university. Johnny Football, for better or worse, became the Texas A&M brand. He was the most recognizable figure on campus and his ability to draw in attention and merchandise sales and Johnny Football was arguably the most reproduced image of Texas A&M nationally after the Heisman trophy win. This draws into question the real power of the brand on the mediated space of Texas A&M. Johnny Manziel’s place as a national media fixture belies the fact that he was relegated to local branding only by the university and seems to indicate that the narrative of the university brand is not the dominant power knowledge of Texas A&M.

4.4 Conclusion

Texas A&M proliferates its militarized image as an attempt to create a unique selling point through which to identify the institution as a whole. The Corps of Cadets represents the embodiment of military identity and pageantry at Texas A&M which is highly visible in the football pageantry of game day weekends. By seeking to replicate the Corps as a form of the institutions branded identity, the university reproduces many of the paleo-conservative traditions
and beliefs which are implicated in Corps life, and the institutions over-branding of the Corps has, according to university officials, caused the institutional branding message to be misunderstood by the public who believes the school to be an all-male military institution.

In order to compete within the crowded academic marketplace, A&M has pushed for a stronger, more unified brand image that synchronizes, both through visual and textual messages, the identity of the university across the various departments and colleges which are a part of it. In using football and the 12th Man as the primary engine for university brand management the institutional identity has become even further conflated with football. This includes brand partnerships such as the move to the SEC which is described as a success for the university as a whole despite it being a primarily football move. Even though the football stadium is growing and the team is getting more exposure, there has been little substantive change to the university as result of the move, despite it being labeled as a step up for the entire institution.

With the case of Johnny Manziel, the university’s attempts to survey the campus community become revealed and the militarization of the academy is read as a technology of dominance which subjugates all of the members of the Texas A&M community. As subjects, members of the university community are evaluated by the example of the Corps of Cadets and the paleo-conservative values that are a part of that cultural identity. However, this also reveals the conflict between the neoliberal identity of the university and the paleo-conservative Corps ethics, as Manziel was kept within the university because of his value as a marketing tool despite the fact that his behavior was anathema to the Corps ideology.

In the next chapter I will examine Notre Dame University and how the conflict between the institutions Catholic and academic identities has been implicated in the creation and reproduction of campus football culture. My analysis will analyze how the organic Catholic identity of the university and the inorganic academic identity forged in university branding are combined through football. I will then discuss how the resulting combined brand, which I term the brand of the Fighting Irish, is implicated within the campus space and the university brand, as well as how that identity conflicts with the Catholic and academic identities of the institution.
The University of Notre Dame is a small, private, Catholic institution located in Northwest Indiana, just outside of the towns of South Bend and Elkhart and only a few short miles from the Michigan border. The university was founded by a young French Priest named Edward Sorin, a member of the French order known as the Congregation a Sancta Cruce or Congregation of the Holy Cross, who named it L’Universite de Notre Dame du Lac. Sorin established Notre Dame as its own municipality, giving the university its own postal code and post office, of which he was named post master general. Unlike many other Catholic universities of the time, the French origins of Notre Dame meant that the university was not directly inside the papal loop that many other American Catholic universities were a part of and, as a result, was less favored by the church in Rome. Nonetheless, Notre Dame grew, becoming a primary landing spot for many students seeking a Catholic education in the Midwest. Sperber writes,

“With improved rail transportation the school-situated within a day’s ride from the growing Catholic populations of Milwaukee, Chicago, Toledo, Cleveland, and Detroit-became a logical place to send Catholic youths for part or all of their formal education. The majority of these boys were of Irish or German descent, and a number stayed on at Notre Dame to enter the [Congregation of the Holy Cross] seminary and become priests. Sorin is reported to have disliked the Irish because they were ‘not obedient by nature’ but increasingly, they came to dominate the ranks of the [Holy Cross] clergy and supply most of Notre Dame’s faculty and administration.” (1993, p. 7)

Notre Dame is also arguably one of the most iconic brands in all of college football. Indeed, from the invention of the forward pass by former coach Knute Rockne, a strategy which would revolutionize the game of football and turn Notre Dame into a national power in the sport over Ivy League schools such as Yale, to the Hepsburgh Library’s Word of Life mural, which is affectionately referred to as ‘Touchdown Jesus’ (see Figure 5.1), football is ingrained in the culture at Notre Dame. The school’s football program has become a popular culture sensation
off campus, being represented in films such as *Rudy* and *Knute Rockne All American* and in music like Cathy Richardson’s single *Here Come the Irish*. Over time, and in large part thanks to the university’s football success, Notre Dame became the leading Catholic institution of higher education in the United States. Today that position is in doubt, as changing beliefs and warring factions within the Catholic church in America have forced Notre Dame to walk a very fine line of public perception. On one side the school must face the conservative traditionalists within the Catholic faith who are fighting adamantly to oppose policies both at Notre Dame and within the church as a whole which they believe are an affront to traditional Catholicism. On the other side, Notre Dame faces a changing world where the university is being evaluated by the willingness of administrators to engage in cutting edge research and discard socially conservative beliefs. Nevertheless, Notre Dame remains an incredibly popular and well-respected institution, with one of the premier college football programs in the country.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 5.1** The Word of Life mural, also known as “Touchdown Jesus”, on the side of the Hepsburgh Library on the Notre Dame campus

As with Chapter Four, this chapter will be organized with a three section approach which will be divided on the breakdown of campus culture between organic culture, cultural branding, and the combination of these two factors. In the first section I will further elaborate on the role of Catholic identity on university culture, building a historical context on the university as a Catholic institution and elaborating on the role of faith within the university and the institutional brand. The second section will examine Notre Dame’s branding process as it relates to
academics and the interplay between Catholicism and the academic identity of the university, with a specific focus on the discrepancies which arise from the combination of religious and academic ideals in the neoliberal university. Finally, I will analyze Notre Dame’s institutional branding as it implicates the football game day experience, drawing parallels between the university and other brand models to develop an understanding of how the brand of the Fighting Irish operates in relation to the university identity.

5.1 Notre Dame Our Mother

Being a Catholic institution is perhaps the single most identifiable characteristic of Notre Dame University, at least that is what officials would hope. The faith identity of the university, and the connections many who ascribe to Catholic teachings feel to the university because of its faith identity, is an omniscient presence on campus and within the brand of the university. This Catholic identity is bolstered by Notre Dame’s unique standing. In this chapter I will examine Notre Dame’s identity as a Catholic institution with the express purpose of drawing out the Catholic identity which the university has attempted to capture in its branding materials. This will begin with a brief historical background on how Notre Dame became the most well-known Catholic institution in the United States and how football has mediated the Catholic identity of the university. I follow this with a brief discussion on Catholicism as it appears organically in university culture today, particularly among specific groups on campus. Finally, I will transition into an analysis of the conflicts facing the university today as a result of its connections to the Catholic faith, specifically focusing on recent events and social policies which have drawn the ire of more conservative American Catholics.

Notre Dame was founded during a tumultuous time for Catholicism in America. Catholic immigrants were scorned and discriminated against by a largely Protestant populace. Political parties such as the “Know Nothings” formed along the East coast with the intention of driving Catholic immigrants out. Out of fear that Catholic traditions might be jeopardized by allowing Catholic children to receive the same education as their non-Catholic peers, a decision was made to form a separate school system to serve the Catholic community. Sperber writes,

“When the size of the American Catholic community reached critical mass and could sustain its own institutions, an internal debate over integration or separation began. The ‘liberals’ argued for accommodation with the Protestant majority and attendance by
Catholic school children at public schools. The ‘conservatives’ however won the debate and, at the Third Plenary Council of Bishops at Baltimore in 1884, they began to implement a Catholic parochial school system. The bishops’ edict required separate and complete schooling for every baptized child.” (1993, p. 4)

Despite the ongoing conflict with Protestant Americans, there was a concerted effort by Catholic immigrants to assimilate into American society, at least in ways that would not conflict with their religious beliefs. This is largely due to the evolving social policy of the Catholic church, which believed that, in order to increase its influence and to gain new followers, there needed to be a concerted effort to incorporate local traditions, customs, and even beliefs into religious practice. Angrossino writes,

“When Christianity was first spread beyond Europe, Rome attempted a strategy of imposition, the enforced use of unmodified Roman forms. This attempt gave way to translation, the preservation of Roman forms encoded in the local vernaculars. At present the church is trying adaptation, the tailoring of Roman forms to local tastes and expectations. The idealized culmination of this process occurs when Roman forms become incarnate in new cultural settings. The sequence of strategies is not unlike those of international development. Development agents were no less convinced than religious missionaries that they had truth and historical inevitability on their side. At first they presented their innovations in undigested form with little cognizance of the differences of communication styles, values, or customary practices of the people they contacted. Such programs often failed, not because of the insufficiency of the technology in which the innovators had such great faith, but because the innovations conflicted with local traditions and institutions. At least in part because of long-standing anthropological criticism, developers are beginning to pay attention to sustainable development that incorporates respect for indigenous knowledge.” (1994, p. 824-825)

The end result of this progression of policies was the adoption of ‘inculturation’, that is the, “encounters whose outcome is a convergence that does not replace either of the cultures from which it arose. Both parties to the inculturative exchange undergo internal transformation, but neither loses its autonomous identity,” (Angrosino, 1994, p. 825). Inculturation can be seen in
several non-European countries, particularly in the use of religious instruments and even the reading of other religious texts during mass (Angrosino, 1994). For Catholics in America, that meant in part participation in sports. For political reasons, many Irish immigrants were unlikely to participate in games which had evolved from Britain, particularly soccer. For many Irish immigrants, baseball was the sport of choice until football started to spring up on college campuses (Sperber, 1993). Notre Dame found early success in the sport, winning national titles under head coach Knute Rockne as early as 1919. Notre Dame’s football team became the embodiment of Catholic immigrants for many Americans. For many recent Catholic immigrants the Notre Dame football team was seen as,

“The shock troops of Catholicism’s ‘holy war’ on American Protestant culture. Notre Dame’s ‘athletic traditions’ (as coaches and administrators in South Bend like to phrase it) emerged in the era of rabid anti-Catholicism, so that the national prominence of Knute Rockne’s teams from an obscure and penurious Catholic school in one of the most Protestant states in the Union became a source of pride and group esteem for millions of American Catholics who would never set foot on campus.” (Massa, 1999, p. 197)

The group pride in the Notre Dame football team extended to thousands of what would become known as subway alumni, immigrant Catholics in Northeastern cities who had never even been to Indiana but who supported Notre Dame’s football efforts as a manifestation of the culture war between the millions of immigrant Catholics and the Protestant political groups such as the “Know Nothings” who were trying to deny them their rights as American citizens. Conversely many Protestants came to despise Notre Dame, whose success on the gridiron only seemed to bolster the resolve of immigrant Catholics. This became apparent in the numerous derogatory nicknames flung at the Notre Dame football team by the public press. Massa writes,

“While the exact morphology of the title ‘Fighting Irish’ has engendered an impressive historical literature of its own, it can be documented that during its first decade of intercollegiate contests the team as identified by a number of sobriquets that help to explain the blending of ethnicity and religion that has marked it since: the football team was identified by various Midwestern sports writers as the Notre Dame ‘Papists,’ the ‘Horrible Hibernians,’ the ‘Dumb Micks,’ and the ‘Dirty Irish’.” (1999, p. 198)
While not derived directly from one of these insults, the Notre Dame athletics nickname, the Fighting Irish, is more or less the result of the various racially charged slanders hurled at the football team during those formative years. Sperber writes,

“The fame of the Irish-American fighters is the probable source of the Notre Dame nickname, ‘Fightin’ Irish,’ but because nineteenth century boxing was attached to drinking, gambling, brawling, and disreputable subculture, the priests who ran the university encourage or even condone the nickname until well into the twentieth century.” (1993, p. 9-10)

Despite the thinly veiled racism in the nickname Fighting Irish, the label became a rallying cry for the thousands of subway alumni who basked in the collective glory of Notre Dame athletics. This did not mean exclusively Irish immigrants, as Italian, German, Polish, and all ethnicities of Catholic Americans supported Notre Dame’s football team as a form of resistance against the Protestant majority.

After World War II America’s religious makeup changed dramatically. Once a nation controlled, both politically and culturally, by a Protestant majority, the United States was shaken by a wave of scientific and cultural change that moved Catholicism into a position of power. It was,

“A series of nasty shocks provided by Darwin, Freud, and assorted other ‘god killers,’ as social crises that exposed genuine cultural pluralism for the first time in North American history. Further, in the decades after the Second World War, what sociologist Robert Wuthnow has termed a ‘restructuring’ occurred in American religion, so that the old religious Establishment, ‘lost’ in terms of both absolute numbers and in cultural influence, while ‘others’ – Catholics being among the most visible – ‘won’ in influence and institutional growth.” (Massa, 1999, p. 225)

The emergent American religious landscape from this spiritual upheaval was one where Catholicism held a position of strength. Catholics were no longer the invading immigrant horde threatening Protestant control, but one of the dominant religious sects in the United States emboldened by one of their own, John F. Kennedy, being elected to the office of President. Massa writes,
“The forest lawns across the country balancing the flag with the Madonna bespoke confident identity, pride, and purpose. They were (as Catholics always knew they were) the true ‘insiders,’ and the city on the hill was now safely in their keeping. They were now the guardians of the covenant with a high priest in the presidency to prove it.” (1999, p. 226)

Many Protestant American traditions, the concepts of Manifest Destiny and the City on a Hill chief among them, were co-opted into American Catholicism. However, with no direct guidance on issues such as economic policy and scientific discovery, Catholicism in America has become increasingly aligned with neoconservative political philosophy. With so many social teachings of the Catholic church falling into the paleoconservative arena, and with paleoconservative beliefs becoming merged with neoliberal economic policy under the umbrella of neoconservatism, American Catholics have seemingly been paired with neoliberalism by default. However, as debates over the true meaning of personal justice and human dignity in relation to economics within the Catholic church continue to rage, it is important to note that the relationship between neoliberalism and American Catholics has also been a complicated, and sometimes tenuous, alliance.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the neoconservative movement bridged the gap between neoliberal economic policies and paleoconservative social teachings. This was especially true of American Catholics, who, along with Evangelical Christian groups, supported the paternalistic social policies advocated by neoconservative leaders. Bibbee writes that,

“Modern neoconservatism has been strongly influenced by the religious values of American society and the increasing involvement of the religious right in the American political system. Many neoconservatives can trace their personal intellectual epiphany to their evangelical Christianity and do not see their roots in Marxist inversion. Many see a morally driven political and social agenda as a fulfillment of their commitment as Christians to adhere in their private and public lives to the teachings of Christ and working towards God’s purpose. This religious ethos is much stronger for many neoconservatives than the origins of their movement. It is this religious influence on neoconservatism that gives rise to their attitudes towards technology. From evangelical Christian fundamentalism to mainstream Roman Catholicism, significant worth is placed
on human life, human nature, and its divine conception. In Genesis, God creates man in His own image and gives Adam dominion over His earthly creation. While this dominion is thought to justify man’s centrality on earth, it comes with responsibility. Humans are entrusted with God’s creation, respecting its force and using human creativity to develop technologies that retain a sense of reverence for God’s divine plan. As such, fundamentally altering the nature of God’s greatest creation is anathema. Actions such as abortion, in vitro fertilization, destroying embryos to obtain stem cells, human cloning—and in the case of Roman Catholicism the death penalty, masturbation, and the use of artificial contraception—subjugate God’s divine plan and, as such, merit prohibition.” (2007, p. 18)

The paleoconservative values inherent in Catholic interpretations of the neoconservative movement imply a dominant relationship of man over all of the earth, endorsing a masculine hegemony which is still present in both the structure of the Catholic church and the social teachings of the church on issues such as abortion and gay marriage. However, over the past decade this has caused several arguments within the church as to the implications of this philosophical premise in relation to scientific knowledge of the world. For example, Catholics have split on environmental issues since the 1950s, largely due to different biblical interpretations of the exact nature of man’s dominion over the earth. For Catholics, environmental issues raise broader biblical questions such as,

“What role did the Earth itself play in the Christian drama? What did the Bible say about it? Did God want people to dominate the natural world and exploit its resources, or to tread lightly upon its surface and cause the least possible disturbance? Did ‘nature’ include or exclude human beings, and what were the implications for theories of ‘natural law’? What counted as relevant evidence in answering these questions? Scripture and tradition, surely, but perhaps findings from ecology, climatology, astronomy, and biology too.” (Allitt, 1998, p. 264)

Tensions over these questions have been further exacerbated by accusations from the non-Catholic community that Catholic policies and social teaching have had a directly deleterious effect on the natural world. Claims that Catholic teachings against contraception have caused
over-population or that religious readings of man’s dominance of the earth were responsible for the depletion of natural resources soured many Catholics to the scientific and academic communities (Allitt, 1998).

Further complicating the marriage between American Catholicism and the neoconservative movement, neoliberal economic policies have become a major source of division between Catholics who differ on biblical interpretations of the accumulation of wealth and material goods. While many neoconservative Catholics will point to Pope Pious XI’s comments condemning socialism as anti-Catholic as being an endorsement of neoliberal economics, Hitchcock writes that,

“Pius XI condemned socialism not so much for its economic doctrines and practices but because of its predominantly materialistic view of society; this position was developed further by later popes. Catholic economic doctrine has never supported unrestrained free-market capitalism, and papal social teachings, dating at least from Leo XIII in 1891, condemn acquisitive competitiveness and advocate a society governed by moral principles, especially a ‘just price’ and a ‘just wage.’” (2007, p. 10)

As a point of fact, the Catholic church has largely struggled to provide a distinct or unique insight into economic policy. Instead, Popes throughout history have published a series of works on economics, including Revrum Novarum by Leo XII and Quadragesimo Anno by Pius IX, which provide no academically informed position on economics, do not advocate any particular system of economic policy, and only seem to say that Catholic economic policy is based on the, economically undefined, concept of human dignity

5 (McDowell, 1991). For neoconservative Catholics, the concept of human dignity is merged with the neoliberal idea of economic freedom, equating the dignity of the individual with the individuals location within a free-market capitalist society. Bibbee writes,

“The lack of ambivalence results because neoconservatives generally cite liberty as a foundational moral value that underpins societal structures. For neoconservatives in America, capitalism follows from moral values, and it is these same moral values that

5 This was most recently discussed by the church in Pope Francis’ Evangelli Gaudium which chastised economic thinking as creating a “throw away culture” which breeds exclusion and inequality. While this can certainly be read as a strong critique of neoliberalism, it has, to date, had little discernable impact on the behavior of American Catholics who remain strongly connected to neoconservative politics and politicians (Francis, 2013).
support technological innovations that allow humans to be better stewards of God’s creation. Human beings were endowed with free will, and social structures that enable the carrying out of one’s free will are seen as praiseworthy. This ability to choose is a gift from God that should be reflected in other aspects of our lives. As such, capitalist market structures and developing technologies are thought to naturally emerge from the God-given human capacities for choice and creativity” (2007, p. 19)

While not all Catholics in the United States can be classified as neoconservative, many who follow the paleoconservative beliefs of the church closely have become converts to neoliberal economic policy due to the binary nature of American politics,

“For over three decades the pro-life movement has defined itself as a ‘single issue’ constituency, although the issue of abortion has inevitably metastasized into euthanasia and other practices. Some pro-lifers do not believe that political activity is the best way to fight for life, but such activity is imperative, because no society can be allowed to withhold legal protection from any category of persons, and because it is primarily through politics that abortion has been made an accepted social practice. But involvement in political action necessarily brings with it the moral ambiguities inherent in all politics. Citizens cannot simply will into being a political movement that perfectly satisfies all their principles; of necessity, they must work with existing parties and groups. Except in totalitarian states (and sometimes even there), politics remains the art of the possible. Abortion as a political issue brought the pro-life movement into a somewhat unexpected alliance with the Republican Party, an alliance that has made many formerly Democratic pro-lifers uncomfortable. Such an alliance necessarily places voters in the situation of in effect having to buy a whole political package. Public officials have to take positions on a wide range of issues, so that, in supporting Republicans, pro-lifers are implicated in everything that party does.” (Hitchcock, 2007, p. 16)

This alliance between paleoconservative Catholic beliefs and neoliberal economics under the umbrella of the Republican party can be traced back to the Reagan era fusion of these two political belief systems. Newman and Giardina detail this,
“With the emergence of Reagan era conservatism and the ‘Republican Revolution’ that soon followed, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between these two ideological formations in the United States’ recent political history. Through the Reagan years, and later the junior and senior Bush presidencies, paleo-conservative foundations of faith, traditions, and protectionism found consonance with neo-conservative dictums of American empire, expansionism, and market-first deregulations. Within the ‘Reagan Coalition,’ the domestic protectionist social agenda was strongly reconciled with hypermilitaristic, expansionist, free marketization. Reagan was successfully able to popularize an agenda that at once promoted further class divisions, job outsourcing, and increased financial instability (mainly in the medical, property, and financial sectors) while at the same time concretizing the fundamentalist canon of ‘traditional American values’ and liberties.” (2011, p. 56)

Since this fusion, Catholicism’s paleo-conservative dictums regarding faith, sexuality, and abortion have all become implicated in neoconservative politics. While this marriage has not been complete, and it is a mistake to say all Catholics or all Catholic institutions are completely in sync with the political doctrine of neoconservatives, it has still produced several strong ties between mainstream Catholicism and right-wing politics. Many leaders of the Republican party and the neoconservative Tea Party, including Rick Santorum, Newt Gingrich, John Boehner, Paul Ryan, Marco Rubio, and Jeb Bush, are all Catholic. Furthermore, the majority of Catholic voters have trended towards conservative Republican candidates since the Reagan Coalition. By the mid 1980s the Moral Majority, Jerry Falwell’s conservative political organization which supported neoconservative politics, drew a third of its funding from Catholic donors (Stanley, 2012). Also, “In the 2004 election, Bush beat John Kerry among Catholics, despite the fact that Kerry described himself as a faithful Catholic who never went anywhere without his rosary beads,” (Stanley, 2012).

While neoconservatives do not represent all, or even a majority, of Catholics, there is a strong connection between paleoconservative Catholic beliefs, as well as the neoconservative politics those social beliefs are sometimes paired with, and Notre Dame which is largely located

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6 While traditional definitions of neoconservatism would seem to exclude the Notre Dame boosters this chapter refers to, I use the term throughout the chapter to specifically underscore how many powerful Notre Dame
in the history and tradition of the football program. Notre Dame’s status as the preeminent Catholic university in the country, which was largely born out of the institutions football success, attracted Catholics from across the country who rallied behind the university. As Notre Dame has changed and refocused its academic initiatives away from traditional Catholic methods of instruction, neoconservative Catholic alumni, students, and fans have become some of the most vocal critics of the university (Massa, 1999).

![Figure 5.2](image1.png)

**Figure 5.2** A portrait of Columbus inside the entrance to the Main Building on the Notre Dame campus.

![Figure 5.3](image2.png)

**Figure 5.3** A fresco of Columbus preaching the Catholic faith to Native Americans in his travels to the New World

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stakeholders are characterized by both their paleoconservative social beliefs and a general adherence to the types of economic logics (particularly economic efficiency) found in neoliberalism. These views are combined as part of the power knowledges that inform many of the discourses surrounding the Notre Dame institutional identity.
While the position of Catholics within American culture was shifting after World War II and beyond, so too was Notre Dame’s position changing within Catholic culture in America. As Notre Dame’s football success reached new heights, with several national championships and Heisman Trophy winners, the school’s prominence and place within Catholic culture increased substantially. Affluent Catholics from the Midwest routinely chose Notre Dame over local Big Ten institutions and more and more students were willing to travel to South Bend from the East Coast. Furthermore, the school’s academic reputation nationally was further bolstered by a philosophical shift in the university away from the traditional Catholic model of education. The change occurred,

“In the 1930s, when American Jesuit colleges became more conservative in curriculum, their chief rivals – Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and Notre Dame – edged further into the educational mainstream, establishing more professional and graduate schools. In 1934, a national evaluation of American graduate education gave ‘approval ratings’ to only six programs at Catholic institutions, all of them at Catholic U. and Notre Dame.” (1993, p. 367)

As Catholic U did not have the same athletic success as Notre Dame, the latter became the face of Catholic education in America. Led by a mix of modern educational techniques and research practices and a nationally potent football program, Notre Dame was accepted in the national

Figure 5.4 The Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes on the campus of the University of Notre Dame
media and amongst Catholics as the premier destination for a Catholic education. In the words of one Notre Dame alumni,

“It’s in the blood stream if you’re Catholic and you live in Indiana. And then I went to a Catholic high school. I knew of Notre Dame probably before I entered high school but as soon as I entered high school our team’s nicknames were the Irish so from then on...”

(ND Fan 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

In practice, Catholicism is still a major part of the campus culture at Notre Dame and religious faith is continuously implicated in the lives of those on campus. For students, this means chaplains in all of the residence halls and several religious services held throughout the week. As one student put it,

“Faith at Notre Dame is unlike any place I’ve seen before. It just sort of seems to be engrained in the place. From Mary being on top of the golden dome, to the grotto, to having a basilica on campus a lot of the students are really faithful whether they are in a specific tradition or are just sort of a good person. There’s that willingness to make the world a better place.” (ND Student 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

Another student commented that Catholic faith is,

“Really kind of integrated into just about every aspect, your coursework, there’s masses in all the dorms. Each sports team has a chaplain that says prayers before the games. The men’s basketball team’s chaplain actually lives in my dorm. There’s a lot of service. Just about everybody does some service break type trip or something to that effect. You see a lot of respect for other people. It’s not quite as homophobic as other people would make it out to be.” (ND Student 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

The campus space itself is bathed in Catholic iconography. The walls of the Main Building (more commonly known as the Golden Dome to outsiders) are covered in frescos depicting Columbus’ voyage to the America’s and the resulting spread of the Catholic faith (see Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3). The Laeteare medal, an award given out by the university for service in the name of the Catholic church, has a display case in the basement of the Main Building along with a list of past recipients. An explanation on the display calls the award, “the highest honor given
to American Catholics”. The church on the Notre Dame campus is designated as a basilica, meaning that it has been given special ceremonial rights and distinction by the Pope. Perhaps the most iconic symbol of Catholic faith on the university campus is behind the basilica, in an area known as the grotto (see Figure 5.4). The grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes is located at the bottom of a small hill behind the basilica on campus and is based off of a Catholic holy site in France. It is designed to be a quiet place where students and Catholic faithful can pray, worship, and light candles in honor of the Virgin Mary but also serves as a site of spiritual reflection and prayer for students with other religious preferences as well. It is considered to be one of the most sacred places on campus and draws thousands of visitors routinely, particularly during football weekends when fans come to light a candle and pray for a Notre Dame victory.

Notre Dame officials are well aware of the status that the university has among many American Catholics. One university official stated,

“Among Catholics, people who have no affiliation with the university other than being Catholic I think feel a real sense of ownership. This is a place that resonates with Catholics, whether they went to school here, whether their parents went to school here, whether they follow football, it’s nothing to do with anything other than Catholicism and so I think they really look to Notre Dame as a leader in the church. There’s a famous quote from Father Hepsburgh, ‘Notre Dame is the place where the church does its thinking’ and so people are looking at us as sort of thought leaders. With that comes an opportunity to tell our story to people who are interested in us and are passionate about us, but it is also a great challenge because people want us to behave in a certain way. Everybody has a different perspective on what Notre Dame is or what Notre Dame should be so you always seem to have someone who’s unhappy with the university for one reason or another. So it’s kind of trying to balance those audiences but more importantly for Notre Dame to be what it is and maintain its identity and not fall into becoming this perception of what everyone thinks Notre Dame should be. I think that’s sort of an added challenge we have and it’s a good one because we have very passionate alumni and fans but it can be difficult when they turn on against us.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)
For Notre Dame, the concept of being “thought leaders” in the church is based heavily around the distinction between the institution and other Catholic universities. Notre Dame’s research status has put the university into a position of not just being the most prominent Catholic university, but one of the most respected academic institutions in the nation, continually achieving high rankings from academic services and well-reviewed by many in the academic community. Nevertheless, there is still a strong connection between Notre Dame and the Catholic community in America at large, and because of the university’s commitment to maintaining its status as a preeminent Catholic institution, that faction of general American Catholics will always be a vocal component in the organic creation of the Notre Dame brand.

![Figure 5.5](image)

**Figure 5.5** A bronze statue outside the Basilica of the Sacred Heart dedicated to, “the innocent victims of abortion”

The change in the image of the university, specifically those relating to beliefs and teachings with a heavily conservative political orientation, has produced a significant amount of anger from neoconservative American Catholics, who believe that the university is failing to properly utilize its position as both the preeminent Catholic institution in the country and one of the most well-known, and well-respected institutions of higher learning as means to spread Catholic teaching and conservative social beliefs. The most constant and pressing political issue regarding Notre Dame is the university’s stance on abortion, a practice condemned in nearly all
corners of the Catholic world. Notre Dame is no exception, with a strict anti-abortion policy that is visible in the iconography surrounding the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, the Catholic church on Notre Dame’s campus (see Figure 5.5). However, the research initiatives of the institution have still come under scrutiny from many in the Catholic faith,

“There have been times where some people will see a conflict with different types of research. We do adult stem cell research here and many times people will confuse that with embryonic stem cell research which would specifically not be supported by church teaching.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

The stem cell research issues were further complicated by the University’s decision to invite President Barack Obama to receive an honorary degree and to speak at commencement. Obama’s longstanding position as a pro-choice advocate drew significant criticism from many Catholics who believed that the university should not be giving a platform to someone who held strong opposition to what is considered a fundamental church teaching. In the words of one Notre Dame official,

“In 2009 when we invited President Obama to speak at commencement Catholics were very divided on the issue. President Obama is known for being Pro Choice. We were giving him an honorary degree that did not sit well with a lot of people who felt that the university should not honor anyone who is Pro Choice because obviously that is a major tenet of the Catholic faith. On the other hand we are a university and to have the sitting president on campus, many saw as a great honor and that we should welcome the diversity of opinion and what better way to change someone’s opinion than to bring them in and have a dialogue with them. That was our Father Jenkins’ position and that was the reason for extending the invitation and, more importantly, for not rescinding the invitation when there were a lot of people who were very vocally opposed to this invitation. It was a great example of how that can just flare. We are now working on some new policies regarding LGBT students and there are people who are more conservative who do not agree with some of the positions the university is taking. We can’t win at all.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Another university official added,
“I think the reality is regardless of what institution you’re in there are certain topic areas you have to be wary. Anything that skews into the political realm is completely one of them. The reality is if we brought President Bush in instead of President Obama a few years later there would have still been strong feelings on that based on people’s political leanings. The reality is that we as a university, when we made that announcement, didn’t fully know where this would go. There was some concern in connection to that but not a recognition of the whole scope of the reaction to it. As a Catholic university I would say it’s really difficult to satisfy everyone across every dimension across what it means to be a Catholic or a Catholic institution. Topics from abortion to Obama to topics around what percentage of our faculty or our students should be Catholic, there are so many measures that we are going to perform really well across some and others we will continue to improve in. It all depends on where you want to focus your attention. Our alumni can jump up and down about we don’t have enough faculty that are Catholic. We are doing all we can about that, but that factor alone doesn’t mean that we are no longer a Catholic institution.” (ND Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

The Affordable Care Act has also been a point of contention for both the university and its alumni as the institution has now filed multiple lawsuits against the legislation, claiming that it restricts the ability of the university to exercise its religious rights. As part of the law, employers are required to provide contraception, which the Catholic church has forbidden (Associated Press, 2014). After the first lawsuit was thrown out of a federal court the university seemed content to move on but a protest from the Sycamore Trust, a group of several powerful conservative alumni and donors, led the university to refile the lawsuit (Pashnman, 2014). The university has since lost the second lawsuit in federal appeals court (Associated Press, 2014).

Abortion is not the only contentious issue at the university which has implicated the school’s religious identity. The university’s attempt to create new policies that would allow for the official recognition of LGBT student groups have drawn substantial criticism and the number of Catholic students and faculty is a constant battle for administrators. For Notre Dame, being a major Catholic institution has meant a constant struggle to balance Catholic tradition and faith against the university’s mission to be competitive in higher education and research. As one administrator described it,
“There is a natural tension between being an institution of higher education and Catholic institution and we have catholic tradition and beliefs to uphold but at the same time our students are still encouraged to discover and explore and those kinds of things. If you look at most universities that exploration piece is sort of innate in their fabric and it is in ours as well, but sometimes that exploration can be at odds with Catholic social teaching. So even though our students are 80% Catholic their beliefs are not always going to align but exploration is a natural part of higher education and that puts pressure on us as a Catholic university.” (ND Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

The fear amongst those neoconservative Catholics who support the university, is that Notre Dame is not only breaking from tradition, but is using the assumed identity of the university as one of the premier Catholic institutions in the country to blind the faithful who support the institution from the fact that it has in fact become Catholic in name only. In the words of one ranking member of the Catholic church I spoke with, “Notre Dame used to be the premier Catholic university in the country, but they started getting into all this liberal garbage and moved away from what it means to be Catholic.” Notre Dame’s more progressive social and academic policies, such as the university’s acceptance of LGBT students or an increased focus on research, arguably reflect a more progressive version of Catholic doctrine which has upset several more conservative Catholics and have created an identity crises for the university to navigate.

For the university, this underscores the need to balance the various stakeholder perceptions of Notre Dame and determine the best way to navigate the institution’s organic Catholic cultural identity while still pushing for policies and programs which will make the institution more economically and perceptually competitive with other colleges and universities. Thus, while Notre Dame’s Catholic identity is a strong part of the university image, it also presents a challenge for the branded image of the university. While having the support of a large religious community with little, if any, direct connection to the university’s academic initiatives has been a positive for the university financially and promotionally, the political affiliations and beliefs of these constituents have caused conflicts with the university. In order to maintain the relationships between the institution and these American Catholics while still trying to gain grown in an increasingly competitive international research and academic marketplace, the university has had to cautiously navigate the political ideologies of many conservative American Catholics while still trying to further scholastic initiatives.
While I have discussed in this chapter that Catholicism and religious faith are powerful forces on the university campus, it is necessary to discuss how Catholicism is incorporated as part of the academic brand of the university in order to situate the role of football within Notre Dame’s institutional branding process. In the following section I will address this process and elaborate on how Catholicism enters the Notre Dame brand by focusing on the discrepancies between Catholic identity on campus and in the self-mediated identity of the university.

5.2 Sing Her Glory and Sound Her Fame

As noted in the previous section, Notre Dame’s academic ambitions often can appear at odds with the Catholic identity of the institution. For the university brand, this presents a difficult challenge as the institution tries to fight for position in a competitive academic marketplace which values, among other things, research and questioning traditional thought, while simultaneously appealing to traditional Catholic belief systems. To this point Notre Dame has created a brand which, in some cases, construes the university as an almost secular institution that has a strong, though not necessarily denominationally specific, faith component. In other words, Notre Dame has balanced the twin identities of traditional Catholicism and progressive academics by generating a mediated identity that downplays the role of the Catholic faith on campus and instead promotes the university as a place for those who wish to connect to spirituality without necessarily being tied to a specific religious tradition. As a part of this role Catholicism takes on the role of brand differentiator and marketing tool to appeal to potential students and advance the academic reputation of the institution, to the point where Notre Dame as Catholic institution is replaced by the mediated image of Notre Dame as spiritually aware academic institution. In this section I will analyze the academic brand of the university with a specific focus on the interplay between the research identity and the Catholic identity which exist as a part of the overall institutional brand. I will begin with a broader contextualization of how the Notre Dame brand is organized, focusing on branding policies and the process of building the Notre Dame brand in order to develop a basis for understanding where brand choices come from and how they are decided. This will then lead into a discussion of the Notre Dame academic identity and the university’s attempts to enhance the university’s academic profile. Finally I will locate the Catholic identity of Notre Dame within this academic branding initiative and describe
how the image of religious faith has changed as a result of a need to compete in the neoliberal academic world.

Notre Dame’s academic identity was born out of a desire to compete with nearby institutions for prestige and power. Founded as a religious institution, Notre Dame struggled in the late 19th and early 20th century as shifting ideals of the proper way to build an academic institution diminished the fledgling university’s regional prestige. At a time when Catholics sought to build institutions of higher education which reinforced religious teaching and obedience to church law, the hybridized version of German and British models of education finding favor at new universities in the United States was encouraging research and challenging traditional thought systems. This new model of education,

“Was proceeding in the opposite direction from the Catholic schools. Not only were there no Catholic laymen with the money of Rockefeller, Stanford, or Carnegie to endow and financially stabilize a university, but intellectually, Johns Hopkins, Chicago, and like-minded places were moving from curricula of received ‘truths’ to research methods that abolished the beliefs of the time. These new systems of inquiry were anathema to the Catholic church in America and in Rome, but an activist minority within the priesthood, including Father James Burns, a future professor of Notre Dame, were intrigued by them.” (Sperber 1993, p. 5)

Notre Dame remained committed to the traditional Catholic mode of education and was thusly shunned by neighboring land grant colleges. The university’s lack of a research program or formal standards for admission (Notre Dame was committed to being open to any student willing to learn and able to make some form of payment in its early years) kept the university out of the Western Conference, the precursor to the Big Ten Conference.

“In the next few years the conference took in Indiana and Iowa and became known as the Big Nine, but in 1908, Michigan withdrew over rules disputes. Notre Dame applied again and was rejected, prompting Father Crumley’s remark about the battle being, ‘theological rather than athletic’. Father Crumley was correct, but in more than one sense: the Western Conference representatives not only showed contempt for Catholic higher education, with its emphasis on religious training and open admissions, they also
scorned the idea that the N.D. faculty board could control intercollegiate sports at its school when, in the ‘theological’ world in which it existed it had limited power.”
(Sperber, 1993, p. 19)

Despite being denied the opportunity to form athletic alliances with neighboring land grant institutions such as Michigan or Purdue, Notre Dame thrived, particularly in football where head coach Knute Rockne crafted some of the most dominant teams in the history of the sport. This lack of acceptance by the Western Conference eventually became a part of the Notre Dame identity, as the football team, to this day, is not a complete member of any athletic conference, which is a major source of pride for many Fighting Irish fans who believe that it demonstrates their ability to avoid the toxic secular interests of other universities. By the 1920s and 30s it had become obvious, however, that something was going to have to change for Catholic universities to remain viable,

“Catholic schools, particularly in the Midwest, were caught between their traditional role as custodians of the faith and the demand of the rising Catholic middle class for preparation of their children for better paying jobs. Most parochial colleges were unable to accommodate these conflicting pressures and increasing numbers of Catholics began attending state universities. Complicating the problems of the Catholic schools was the growing power of the accrediting agencies. As higher education became more research oriented and run by ‘Academic Men,’ the certification of curricula and degrees became more important. Accreditation groups investigated schools and, using strict criteria, certified a college or university as providing a meaningful education and degree. The North Central Association in the Midwest, because of its backing by the Western Conference universities, became the most powerful accreditation agency in the country. In 1920, the main concern for this association, based upon the enrollment of the school, were a minimum number of faculty members with Ph.D.’s, a minimum number of books and periodicals in the library, regular admission procedures, standard curricula, and a healthy endowment. Most Catholic schools could not meet the minimums and, as significantly, did not care to – they considered the accreditation criteria to be based on values alien to their religious purposes and they resented any secular agency telling them how to run their parochial institutions.” (Sperber, 1993, p. 67-68)

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Notre Dame, and a few other select Catholic institutions, broke from this mindset and started investing in academic research and employing Ph.D.’s. This included fundraising to create an endowment, an effort where Notre Dame broke with its independent tradition and solicited funds from non-religious organizations, particularly the Rockefeller Foundation which granted the university $250,000 on the explicit orders that none of it was meant to be utilized for religious instruction. The university also began using the popular football team as a fundraising instrument. This began with the organization of,

“The school’s alumni into a network of clubs and, in 1922, set up a functioning alumni association and magazine. Inevitably, the appeal for alumni contributions often connected to Notre Dame’s culture of athleticism: Father John McGuin, [Notre Dame president Father James A.] Burns’ main assistant in the fundraising drive, likened the campaign to football, terming it, ‘one of the biggest games in N.D.’s career… and to win that game will require all the fighting characteristic of Notre Dame football.’ Coach Rockne also participated in the campaign and always used sports metaphors in his speeches; in addition, the football team frequently appeared at fund-raising rallies.”

(Sperber, 1993, p. 69)

In this way Notre Dame broke from the traditional Catholic model of education and forged its own path, becoming a nationally reputable institution with a strong Catholic background and heritage. Notre Dame’s endowment is now one of the largest in the nation, worth billions of dollars, and the institution is home to the only Catholic academic publishing house in the nation. However, in order to maintain its status as a top flight academic institution the university has also found itself trying to forge an image which combines two very different intellectual spaces. As a progressive and research minded institution, the university is intent on crafting an identity for itself that reflects the intellectual advancements being made on campus. However, the Catholic heritage and beliefs of many of the university’s supporters bristle at the idea of Notre Dame as a research oriented institution, preferring to see the university focus primarily on undergraduate education and religious training in the Catholic education tradition.

The branding process at Notre Dame is unique, largely due to the fact that university is a private institution run by a religious organization. The university is governed by two distinct bodies, the Fellows of the University, which is a group of six members of the Priests Society of
the Congregation of Holy Cross, and the Board of Trustees, which contains members of the Congregation of Holy Cross as well as men and women from outside the church. The latter group is responsible for academic and faculty committees, student affairs, university relations, and athletic affairs in addition to other university responsibilities, making it the primary governing body for the university’s academic image. According to one university official,

“Our primary tools for telling the Notre Dame story are media placements, we do a lot of media relations, a lot of proactive media relations trying to get national media placements for our stories in that area. We use our website. We do a lot of direct outreach, that takes place maybe dean to dean, provost to provost and that’s sort of behind the scenes. That’s just them networking with their colleagues. So what we’re really trying to do is advance the university’s academic reputation. So if you look at it from a triangle perspective, our audience, we have these influencers we really want to reach and then maybe we have alumni and then we have prospective students and prospective faculty. And then Notre Dame, we have Catholics. So we have this huge hierarchy of audiences and we reach them all in different ways. From an overall communications perspective we’re just throwing everything out there and just trying to reach those people in as many ways as we possibly can.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

In branding the university as a Catholic institution, Notre Dame’s stated goal is to reconcile the numerous assumptions about what it means to be a Catholic institution with the demands of marketing higher education in a neoliberal marketplace. In the words of one university administrator,

“It’s a pretty complex institution in many ways and you can’t necessarily hit all of those identities at once but I think as you go through the course of our work those themes get picked up in our story telling and that is what Notre Dame is. We are all of those things put together. When we look at a story that we are promoting at the university level we run it through those filters and say does that support what we know Notre Dame is? Is that story going to educate people about what Notre Dame is and what it does? It influences us in the work that we do, that we are telling people about all the important parts of Notre Dame and not just one. We want to make sure that people get a really
broad representation of all that Notre Dame is.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

For branding purposes, the Catholic identity of Notre Dame is utilized as a brand differentiator to separate the university from other institutions. The marketing of the university as a whole is, according to university officials, largely the vision of Reverend John I. Jenkins, the university president. Jenkins’ vision for the university is on display on the Notre Dame YouTube page, where the school’s most recent commercial, the one shown during football broadcasts, is centered on excerpts from Jenkins’ inaugural address to the university in 2005. In the commercial, Jenkins says,

“The world needs a university that educates men and women who accept their responsibility to serve others. We will strive to build a community where education, inquiry, and faith combine to respond to the demands of justice. This is our goal. Let no one say that we have dreamed too small.” (NDdotEDU, 2013)

The quote encapsulates the Notre Dame brand image; an institution where religion and knowledge meet to create better citizens of the world. This statement also seems to imply equality between faith, education, and inquiry, where all three elements of the Notre Dame brand share an equal responsibility and value within the university system. Furthermore, outside of one piece of Catholic iconography in the commercial, the image of the Virgin Mary statue atop the golden dome of the Main Building, which is shot in such a way that it is impossible to tell, except for the last few seconds of the commercial, that the statue is even female, let alone the Virgin Mary, and the brief picture of the Notre Dame University seal which contains an image of the cross, the commercial contains no direct reference to Catholicism (NDdotEDU, 2013). The use of the main building (see Figure 5.7) rather than the Basilica of the Sacred Heart (see Figure 5.8) as the most representative campus building in commercials and practically all other branding material is a clear representation of the university’s attempts to highlight the academic prestige of the institution rather than to market Notre Dame’s identity as a Catholic institution. The main building does contain architectural references to the institutions Catholic heritage, but they are far less discernable than the gothic spires and crosses which highlight the exterior of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart.
The university has sought to brand itself as an academic, as opposed to religious, institution whereby students would come to receive a quality education that is overseen by Catholic officials. This has challenged what it has meant for Notre Dame to provide a “Catholic
education”, and has reshaped the way religious practices and values are implicated in the academic image of the university. This is accomplished in two ways, first by appealing to the faith based connections to Catholicism at the university and secondly by redefining the identity of the Fighting Irish football team. In appealing to faith, Notre Dame is constructed as a thoughtful institution, one which has the capability of improving the lives of incoming students and those associated with the university through a holistic approach to education through a religious, though only vaguely Catholic, college experience. The official guidebook to the university includes a passage on the religious experience at Notre Dame which reads,

“At Notre Dame, our Catholicism is as much an intellectual pursuit as a spiritual journey. This is because our value system challenges us to look for unconventional solutions to age-old questions, inspired thought-provoking discussions, and challenges us to consider our wider role in the world. But it does more than just spark healthy debate and consideration,. It galvanizes a whole generation of students, encouraging them to get their hands a little dirty in the name of progress. Here you’ll enter an open minded environment that welcomes all religions, beliefs, ideas, and approaches to the world. We understand that discovering you faith is an intensely personal experience – one that will help you discover your role in society, live through your passion, and engage empathetically with others. This is why we encourage you to learn deeply about yourself through reflection, discovery, and experience, while providing a quiet presence of support so that you are never alone in your journey.” (Office of Undergraduate Admissions, 2013)

This statement seems to encompass the image Notre Dame is trying to establish as a spiritual institution, not one that is hell-bent on the dissemination of Catholic dogmas but one where students can reach enlightenment with a quiet, Catholic support system. The idea that Notre Dame is not just for Catholics is embraced by the student body,

“I would say that even if you aren’t Catholic there’s still a way for you to connect spiritually with whatever your deity or lack of deity is. Like I said we go to the grotto and I personally am with a group who goes every night. I obviously don’t go every night because I have homework some nights that I really can’t put off but when I can we go
every night. Someone is going at least and we aren’t all Catholic. There are Protestants we have a girl in the group who is Buddhist and she just goes for the quiet and to center herself. It isn’t even talking to God you know, whatever your spiritual identity is there are ways to find yourself and if you are interested in becoming Catholic there’s certainly a lot of motivation because there is a lot of religious groups to become involved with. There’s always mass going on somewhere. Like every Sunday each of the 20 plus residence halls has mass some of the residence halls have mass every day. So it’s really easy to stay in touch with your faith here. I would say because there’s so many ways to practice it.” (ND Student 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

University officials recognize, and embrace the fact that Notre Dame is not an exclusively Catholic institution,

“I think that the Catholic character of Notre Dame is very important to what it is. About 80 percent of our students are Catholic which means 20 percent are not, but we are absolutely welcoming to people of all faiths. I think we have a fairly diverse faculty from that perspective. The majority of our faculty is Catholic but we do have several faculty members who are not. We encourage a lot of theological discussion on campus and not just Catholicism. I think, for Catholic students that do come here, they are going to find a Catholic home here. There’s a chapel in every dorm, there are many, many opportunities for them to have a great faith life here. I don’t feel like it’s exclusive. I feel like our non-Catholic students certainly feel like part of the culture and they don’t feel shut out. They feel welcome to explore their own faith or other faiths so I don’t think we’ve ever had a problem with non-Catholic students feeling out of place because they’re at a Catholic university.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

The official Notre Dame YouTube account includes several videos of debate on campus in an effort to highlight the fact that the university is open to different belief systems. References to religion in other handouts to potential students are also generally vague, focusing either on the connection between Notre Dame’s Catholicism and intellectualism, such as the story in the Mendoza School of Business’s magazine about nuns and priests receiving graduate degrees, or faith and spirituality as being open and not exclusive to one single religion. Essentially,
Catholicism is not branded as a spiritual identity to incoming student but rather as a brand. Being a Catholic institution does not mean following the Catholic faith or agreeing with church teachings, it simply means that there is a spiritual aspect to the university which is facilitated by the Catholic faithful on campus. This does not mean that Notre Dame isn’t Catholic as an institution, but that in creating an identity for potential students the university actually distances itself from the Catholic church by branding itself a spiritual institution rather than an exclusively Catholic one. For potential students, the message is that Notre Dame is a place to grow spiritually but not necessarily one where they will be required to adhere to Catholic dogma. In effect, this sells the university as a spiritually secular institution, a place where learning and discovery are enhanced by a spiritual guidance that is only cursorily connected to a specific faith.

Further complicating matters is the branding process of the institution. Unlike many other neoliberal universities that have a streamlined, corporate model for managing their brand identities, Notre Dame uses only a generalized brand guide which is then molded to fit the needs of the various departments of the university. In the words of one university official,

“I think people will do what they will with the messages we provide and everybody has their interpretation of what Notre Dame is and what it should be. So the best we can do is present something that is sort of broad and hope it resonates. I think that we can’t focus too much on making sure every little group is satisfied. What we have to do is make sure we know what Notre Dame is and what it stands for and communicate that right.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

The result is a university brand where the core values of the institution are distributed unequally, with different departments focusing on some elements of the education, inquiry, and faith trifecta Reverend Jenkins referred to in his inauguration address more than others. This is particularly evident in the literature provided by academic departments. In one magazine printed by the Mendoza College of Business for example, there are only two sentences, out of a 17 page work, devoted to recognizing Notre Dame’s Catholic identity. Instead, the brochure relies on vague buzzwords, such as ethics and values, throughout the pamphlet to imply the university’s faith based connections to education without specifically employing them as an exclusively Catholic product. This holds true for the 10 page booklet given to visiting undergraduates from the
College of Science, where the only reference to the university’s religious influence comes through in one, vague sentence,

“What hasn’t changed – and never will – is the University’s unwavering commitment to its Catholic character and the college’s mission to prepare tomorrow’s scientific leaders to think big, while also inspiring them to make a difference and to share their knowledge and discoveries in ways that encourage collaboration, advance learning, and contribute to the common good.” (College of Science, 2013)

The inverse is true for Notre Dame’s religious programs, which focus exclusively on faith in their publications with very little, if any, reference to academics or research. Ultimately, the effect of these branding strategies has been to create a falsified image of Notre Dame, one where religious faith is encouraged but separated from the academic mission of the university. From a distance, one can experience Notre Dame as an almost secular institution, one that has a religious heritage but that does not carry the political or ideological baggage of a specific denomination.

It is, at its core, an attempt to sell a Catholic University to non-Catholics. Notre Dame, like many neoliberal universities, has become increasingly active in efforts to bring in students from across the United State and other countries, rather than from a regional pool. The primary purpose of this is to compete internationally, for prestige in education and research, so that the university might be better situated within the global academic marketplace. This also means developing a brand which can appeal to any potential student or faculty member, Catholic or otherwise, who may be able to assist with this mission. This has not meant the wholesale abandonment of Catholicism at Notre Dame, as mentioned in the previous section Catholic faith still plays a very strong role in the day to day life of those on campus and Catholic iconography is abundant at Notre Dame. Rather, it has meant the creation of an image where Notre Dame’s Catholicism is downplayed, separating the academic identity of the institution from the political baggage that many of the university’s neoconservative supporters have been associated with.

Furthermore, the academic arm of the university has continued to break with the Catholic model of education in order to continue to increase the ranking of institutional academic programs. As one university official noted,
“Rankings are an interesting beast; they’re really kind of a necessary evil. You ideally would like to educate your students, give them the right kind of moral background and develop them as leaders to go out and do great things in the world without having to think what that will do in the rankings. The reality is that rankings are an important component of how we draw prospective students in, especially as you look at an institution like Notre Dame that is increasingly trying to draw more international students. You’ll find international students are much more interested in rankings, even more than domestic. So it’s an important thing, one we celebrate when we hit a good mark” (ND Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

There are some associated with Notre Dame however who see the need to be competitive in the academic rankings as a toxic practice for the university. As one Notre Dame alumni told me, part of appealing to the rankings services means having a low acceptance rate. Part of the ranking system used for groups like *US News & World Report* relies on data on the number of students applying who are denied admission to an institution, following the (flawed) logic that an institution that is highly selective must provide a better education. In order to improve this number, the alumni told me, Notre Dame, “encourage[es] students to submit applications who have no business applying. They know [these students] aren’t going to get in, but they bring them on visits and raise their hopes so they can deny them and boost their ranking,” (ND Fan 3, Personal Communication, 2013). Notre Dame is trying, both in branding and in practice, to be a neoliberal university. However, the result of this strategy has been a break from the moral values and beliefs that are a part of the university’s Catholic heritage. University practices, including the attempts to fight for position in institutional rankings, are seen as a betrayal by many neoconservative Catholics who believe that these are attempts by the university to further distance itself from the Catholic education model. In effect, Notre Dame’s identity as an academic institution is built around neoliberal economic policy, rather than paleo-conservative social politics, a fact which has been a persistent source of conflict between the administration and a number of neoconservative donor, faculty, student, and alumni groups.

As the university has shifted its focus to becoming a modern neoliberal institution, it has inevitably fallen towards a more libertarian tradition, one where the church’s traditions are contextualized, rather than inculturized, to fit the various needs of the university’s academic identity. The result has been a Notre Dame where Catholicism is practiced and implicated in the
structures and actions of those on campus, but is somehow separated from the academic brand of the institution, where Catholicism is mediated as a more generalized set of corporate values in order to market Notre Dame’s statues as a Catholic institution as a brand differentiator. Notre Dame’s move here serves to make the university more accessible to non-Catholic students while still salvaging some of the tradition and prestige the brand has built among American Catholics, particularly neoconservative Catholics who strongly oppose the university’s non paleo-conservative bent on social issues. Despite the anger Notre Dame’s policies towards LGBT students and President Obama have elicited from the more neoconservative Catholic base, university officials have justified these actions by arguing that Notre Dame needs to balance its identity between the needs of various groups of stakeholders with different interpretations of what the institution needs to be in order to be successful.

5.3 Wake up the Echoes

In the previous sections I have set the stage for a more intensive discussion on the role of football within the Notre Dame brand. For this section I will locate football within the Notre Dame brand both internally, as it is intended to be viewed from the perspective of university administrators, and externally, how it is consumed on the university campus. I will begin this section by locating the institutionally mediated image of football as it relates to the fabric of the Notre Dame identity, primarily focusing on the interplay between football and the quasi-secular academic image of the university brand. The discussion will then turn to an analysis of how football is actually consumed both on and around campus. This will be split into two parts, the first studying the historical evolution of campus football culture in relation to the Catholic heritage of Notre Dame and the second analyzing the university’s football culture as its own brand within the institutional identity that connects the university to other corporate entities and provides a marketable face to the institutional brand.

The institutional narrative surrounding Notre Dame is one of minimization. While Notre Dame officials cannot deny that football has been a major catalyst for shaping the institutional identity among Catholics and the country as a whole, there is a push to see football become operationalized as a tool to convey the academic message of the institution. As one university official stated,
“I think the university does a good job of actually integrating football into the overall brand not just a brand all on its own. I think with many academic institutions you will find that athletics almost has a life of its own and it perhaps even supersedes the brand of the university. I think at Notre Dame they are nicely meshed together. So you don’t talk about athletes without talking about them being student athletes and our graduation rate is something we have a great deal of pride in to the point of not just the caliber of athlete we bring in to the university but also the caliber of student we bring in to the university.” (ND Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Another university official stated that,

“I think that a lot of people do associate Notre Dame with athletics and they will listen to the other stories better in the context of athletics, and I think, over the years, Notre Dame has built a reputation of having smart student athletes. Sometimes that’s used against us when our teams aren’t doing very well, but on the academics side that is a really positive thing. Even though we all want our football team to win, if the story is Notre Dame isn’t having a great year in athletics but boy are those kids smart; that is a win for us. It all sort of is part and parcel of that story that we have smart undergrads that also play football. Not so much with other schools where you have these star athletes that also go to college. From our perspective the message we want to promote is their off the field achievements… I think we can’t deny a lot of people are fans of Notre Dame because of football and other athletics. From the academic side of things that is certainly not the first story we want to put out. That’s not what we want to say, ‘hey everybody Notre Dame has a great football team, oh and this is our academics’. We want people to see what Notre Dame is doing as an academic institution and we certainly don’t shy away from the fact that we have a football team that a lot of people follow, which is great thing. It’s certainly a positive, but from the academic perspective that’s not the story we want to tell. We are happy for people to have that story and have that perception of Notre Dame but we are not in the business of selling that.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)
Even though the academic message is the primary directive that officials at Notre Dame wish to communicate, there is an acknowledgement that many of the people who come to know about the university are doing so through athletics and, in particular, football,

“There is no doubt that how we perform athletically any given year can sway interest in our academic programs so that’s a big piece of it. As a young person exploring academic institutions the traditions and the quality of athletics at those institutions are a huge draw.” (ND Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Another official stated,

“I think there’s a lot of people who think of football first when they think of Notre Dame. That’s probably more of Notre Dame’s historic success than anything they’ve done recently. But football is what connects to the average person. You know the average person isn’t going to understand that Notre Dame has been ranked as one of the top university’s in the country. For the average person it’s athletics.” (ND Official 4, Personal Communication)

The message here was very similar to the one that I heard at Texas A&M, where football and athletics were considered the “front porch” of the university and that the success of an athletic program meant the ability to disseminate institutional narratives to a large audience. The students I encountered on campus largely regurgitated this institutional narrative, noting that the strength of the academic programs at the university superseded any type of athletic success. In the words of one student,

“I feel like Notre Dame does enough that they don’t have to have football. If we just didn’t have football Notre Dame would still thrive as an academic institution. There’s an old story about Father Hepsburgh who this library is named after about how in the 1950s he wanted to know how to make the school better. So he called together an advisory committee and they said there are two things you can do to make this school better as an academic institution, one is to get rid of the football program and the second is to admit women. He said we’re not getting rid of the football program so they admitted women and that’s where we are today and it’s really managed to grow as a thing and it’s really
managed to kind of grow as a thing. Everybody’s into it but at the same time we know that it’s like a secondary aspect of our lives it’s just a fun thing to do on Saturday’s. It doesn’t just completely envelope us. But the football program here is really unique and the football team is what kind of drives the South Bend economy and it probably wouldn’t exist without the university… What makes Notre Dame unique as a university is it’s really just full of perfect people and I feel like that is something they take a lot of pride in. Like look around here, do you see a ton of unattractive people? There’s not really a lot of them. Everyone here has is coming out of the top of their high school classes. They’re smart, they’re athletic, they are the best at what they do no matter what it is and I feel like that is something that makes Notre Dame a great place to be is that you have people that are constantly striving to be the best and it took me a while to reach that point.” (ND Student 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

Several students also commented that their Catholic faith was more important to them in defining life at Notre Dame than football. One student commented, “It’s not that I don’t like football it’s just not the reason that I am here. I mean I’ll go to the games, it’s fun student involvement, but it’s not why I’m here;” (ND Student 1, Personal Communication, 2013). However, the same student was quick to acknowledge that the football team did play a large role in recruiting students to campus, stating that that was one of their earliest connections to the university. The idea on campus seems to be that the academic brand of the university is prioritized over the football identity, and that athletics is just part of the collegiate lifestyle reproduced by the university. This is supported in the branding materials of the university, where depictions of athletics are placed alongside discussions of student life and tradition at the university. Notre Dame is unique in that it doesn’t have sororities or fraternities, but rather sorts students into dorms which operate in much the same style as Greek communities at other schools. Each dorm has its own unique traditions and community activities which promote dorm and campus pride. Because of this students rarely venture off campus. In fact, the campus itself is known as the “Notre Dame bubble,” as 80 percent of undergraduates live on campus (City Official 1, Personal Interview, 2013). As one student explained,

“When you are a freshman you are randomly assigned and there is basically no criteria. They don’t even ask if you smoke or not it’s just some of them are smoke free. I don’t
know. You’re just randomly assigned to a dorm and to a roommate. Obviously if you are in a quad you get three roommates. After your freshman you can pick but I think most people just to stay with their dorms because it’s like your little home. I don’t want to say their like they are like sororities and fraternities here but you really have dorm pride.” (ND Student 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

This insulates the Notre Dame community to the campus space, making the institution feel like an independent and self-sustaining entity. Football is viewed as a broader extension of the dorm concept, it is an event that unites the entire campus and that exists as a campus controlled set of traditions and spectacles geared towards promoting the uniqueness of Notre Dame to the outside world. In this sense football is perceived as a uni-directional message, it is what the university wants it to be and is shaped entirely by the institutional academic brand. As one university official stated,

“This is aided by Notre Dame’s independent status in football and the university’s minimalist view towards the inclusion of corporate branding in the stadium space. Notre Dame Stadium has no electronic video boards and does not announce sponsors over the loudspeakers during games. The only corporate entity advertised is a small section of the scoreboard which is devoted to NBC Sports, the official broadcast partner of all Notre Dame home football games (see Figure 5.8). Notre Dame has its own television deal rather than one negotiated as part of a conference, something people on campus believes allows the university to tell its story without the filter of an athletic organization,

“I understand the whole football independence thing. It allows us to build a stronger schedule; it allows us to kind of be special with it. We’re the only notable independent team. The Army and the Navy their independent but nobody really cares about them they
aren’t nationally prominent or anything and then like New Mexico State they’re independent, nobody cares about that, but Notre Dame being independent that’s a big deal. They’ve got their own TV deal and all that kind of stuff and I think that’s kind of important to us as a school because it allows us to bring in more revenue for the students. Everything really comes back to us. We don’t have to split revenues with a conference so everything really does come back to us.” (ND Student 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

Notre Dame prides itself on a non-corporate atmosphere for home football games. With no in-game advertisements or corporate signage, the university and its fans believe that they are adhering to the history of independence with Irish football. They believe that, if there is no conference to determine how the Fighting Irish brand should be utilized, then there should also be no corporate entities trying to redefine the meaning of Notre Dame football. As one university official stated,

“I think if you look at our venues and how they don’t have signage, it doesn’t mean we don’t do giveaways or have promotions like white outs, green outs what have you. But I think that always strikes people when they see, because there is no signage in Notre Dame Stadium, there is no signage in the basketball arena or the ice hockey arena. Also, we have video boards but there’s no advertising on them and we really use those in a tactful way in that you don’t really see a lot of kids games. We have a board we use it to promote our other sports or tie it in to the university. We aren’t going to have a cheesy game, it’s all done in a classy way.” (ND Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

There is even an effort being made to incorporate academics into the football stadium itself. In 2013 university officials unveiled a strategy for renovations to Notre Dame Stadium which would include adding academic facilities to the structure. This is meant to further the perception of athletics as contributing to the university brand and being a gateway for people to learn about and access the university. One official stated,

“We’re using our stadium now as a means to the university. Up to now it was used six times per year. There weren’t stadium tours and now there are stadium tours, furthering our brand to get people in and look at our iconic stadium and getting them to experience what we have. The new model, if it gets approved, is to incorporate classrooms into the
stadium so it’s used all year as opposed to just six Saturdays. I think on a football weekend especially here everyone’s is trying to do something that weekend. Whether it is other teams trying to host recruits, other teams in season trying to play game, so much is done on campus and it’s such an exposure that everyone’s goal is to schedule something with their department on one of those six weekends. So it definitely plays a part in how the brand is utilized.” (ND Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

Still, football’s role within the academic brand of the university is very limited. For instance, in depictions of football in university recruitment material, the university almost always uses shots of the marching band. The band, wearing simple, navy and gold uniforms and often depicted cheering in the stands or playing instruments, is an attempt to eschew the inherent religious symbolism in Fighting Irish football and an attempt to construct campus athletics with the same semi-secular image that is used with the academic brand. Touchdown Jesus appears only partially in pictures of Notre Dame Stadium. The university attempts to construct football as another student activity; something that acts same way that dorm rituals such as floating (see Figure 5.9) and Muddy Sunday work to develop bonds within the student community. By using the band and other student activities as the primary representation of student life on campus, the university is avoiding much of the religious symbolism of the university space and reconstructing student activities as secular. Football is thusly branded as another way for students and alumni to connect and come together for the academic institution. Yet this brand message causes a dissonance between the academic identity of Notre Dame as an almost secular institution and the Catholic history and religious iconography on campus. The branded football identity of Notre Dame, which is the mediated image of football being the front door to the university’s academic oriented programs, ultimately clashes with the organic football tradition of the university which is bathed in the history and iconography of campus. The result is that both the organic football culture and the football brand of the university have come to represent, in many cases, the exact opposite of the identity and values Notre Dame purports to hold dear as an institution.
Football game days at Notre Dame are rich in religious symbolism. For outsiders, visiting Notre Dame is treated as a pilgrimage and the university facilitates this in the organization of campus events and services. Fans are given handouts which advertise, along with a schedule of football weekend events, the university's faith website, FaithND, which provides daily gospel reflection, prayer, and a daily saint. Touchdown Jesus is perhaps the most iconic representation of the bridge between religion and athletics at Notre Dame but it is only one of many religious symbols.
to be appropriated with football nicknames. These include the “Holy Hand-off”, which depicts an infant Jesus being handed from Mary to Joseph, and “First Down Moses,” which depicts Moses pointing with a single finger in the air. The football team’s iconic gold helmets are meant to invoke the dome of the Main Building and the statue of the Virgin Mary on top of it, which is why the team and the fans are often referred to as “Domers”.

Several Notre Dame traditions, including postgame Mass services at the Basilica, prayers and candle lighting at the Grotto, and the phrase “God, Country, Notre Dame” which is a rallying cry depicted often at football games that was developed by former Notre Dame president Father Theodore Hepsburgh and is engraved in the nave of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, necessarily invoke Catholic images. The post-game mass is particularly popular among the droves of visiting fans and, as one woman explained, “they announce post game mass over the loudspeakers in the stadium, and it is the only time you will ever hear 80,000 people cheer for mass.” Catholicism is tied to nearly every aspect of football at Notre Dame, and there is a concerted effort within the university administration to protect that. Even though the academic image of Notre Dame is one of religious freedom and the open expression of beliefs, the draw of Notre Dame football to American Catholics is too great for the university to ever completely separate itself from the game. One Notre Dame fan commented,

“I think it’s extremely unique when it comes to the rest of the university and that in itself is a great tradition. If it weren’t for football this place would remain podunksville. Notre Dame was built by football. There’s no doubt about it, and now they have one of the largest endowments in the country I think it’s like six billion, seven billion dollars. They’d still be a rinky dink Northern Indiana, maybe out of existence already without the forward pass coming along.” (ND Fan 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Several students mentioned that they only first heard about Notre Dame because of the football program, including one who said, “Well I always watched ESPN in the morning and they’d always talk about the football team and I thought yeah I guess I’ll have to check out this school and it just kind of grew in my mind,” (ND Student 3, Personal Communication, 2013).

University officials also acknowledged the fact that football was a major draw for many people to the institution, but they were also adamant that academics were a key element in the
construction of the university identity and something that could draw people to the university. In
the words of one official,

“Athletics could be the first reason you maybe come to the campus but when you think of
Notre Dame you think of the high academic standards you think of it being Catholic. So
they’re all equally important. You just can’t get involved with academics when you are
very young. You could certainly visit the basilica or the grotto.” (ND Official 2, Personal
Communication, 2013)

Thus, because of the fact that so many people come to Notre Dame through the football
program, the university has made a concerted effort to appeal to these people through the way
that Fighting Irish football is presented. Despite the fact that Notre Dame has broken from
Catholic tradition in many ways in its pursuit of academic recognition, there is still a large
number of Catholic Americans who identify with the university because of the football team’s
place within its religious history,

“All those blue and gold flags bearing only the letters ‘ND’ waving from front porches
from coast to coast during football season proclaimed the Americasness of their owners,
but an Americalessness of a particular stripe and ‘denomination’… The ‘Fighting Irish’ in
the decades after World War II would continue to elicit the ethnic loyalties of millions of
fans who never set foot on the South Bend campus precisely because Notre Dame was, in
some palpable if oftentimes misunderstood was, ‘ethnic’; but in years after mid-century
this ‘ethnicity’ had little or nothing to do with social or educational marginalization or
economic deprivation.” (Massa, 1993, p. 219)

The support of the Catholic imagery of Notre Dame football seems to capture the words of
former university president Rev. Theodore Heapsburgh, who noted, “my deepest conviction is
that Notre Dame won’t make it unless it stays Catholic. If we lose our Catholic character we will
not be very successful in getting people to support this place,” (as quoted in Massa, 1993, p.
215). Due to of the importance of tradition and Catholic iconography in the football experience
at Notre Dame, university officials are extremely cautious in how they handle the various
traditions associated with Fighting Irish football. As one university official noted,
“I think the tradition of Notre Dame and how we celebrate football, on and off the field, is quite a marvel, and that tradition is why we have to be careful when we talk about changes. We have resisted changes inside our stadium which, in some cases, make it a better experience such as video boards and what not. We are just very methodical and thoughtful as we make those decisions because we want to stand true to the traditions. Whether it’s the way the Irish guard comes through the north tunnel to the way the team comes out we are very methodical about how we approach tradition.” (ND Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Another university official commented,

“From an athletics perspective you will see this flare up when people talk about turf or a jumbo-tron or whether we pipe in music in the stadium. People do not like tradition to be messed with when it comes to Notre Dame. I think our alumni had such great experiences when they were here that they want to bottle it up and save it for future generations. Things will change but they will never change that anyone should fear. We are very committed to keeping the tradition alive and the students are as well and in many cases they are the ones driving that. I feel like change is hard and we are a university that’s going to grow and change with the times and it should, it has to, but we know that tradition is at the heart of what we do and we don’t want to change so much that we get away from that.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Unfortunately for the university’s academic brand, this also means that the Catholic imagery and iconography associated with football is untouchable. This creates a clash between the organic football culture of the university and the branded academic institutional image. It is impossible to separate the neoconservative, “God, Country, Notre Dame” image of the football program held onto by those who still consider the Fighting Irish to represent Catholicism’s, “shock troops” in the war against Catholic values and beliefs, from the religious iconography of Notre Dame football. Whether it is the statue commemorated to the “innocent victims of abortion”, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, the Grotto, the statue of the Virgin Mary atop the Golden Dome, or the numerous frescos inside of the Main Building, there is too much Catholic symbolism on Notre Dame’s campus for it to be casually ignored in the academic branding literature. For
American Catholics, Fighting Irish football represents all of this, and that connection has not been severed by the university’s branding efforts.

**Figure 5.10** The Hammes Bookstore on the Notre Dame campus has its own religious section where visitors can purchase Catholic jewelry along with a football jersey or Fighting Irish replica football helmet

**Figure 5.11** Fans pack the Hammes Bookstore on the Friday before a game, purchasing everything from religious artifacts to game day apparel
The university further complicates this with the creation of a separate brand for Notre Dame football. I refer to this as the, “brand of the Fighting Irish” because it represents a conflation of both the Catholic iconography of the Notre Dame football team and the semi-secular identity of the university. It is the result of an attempt to combine these two identities which has resulted in a unique football brand which, in many ways, has become almost completely anathema to the principles, values and beliefs of both the Notre Dame academic brand and the Catholics who associate with the university because of its athletic heritage. The brand of the Fighting Irish is an attempt to brand the university as Irish, rather than as Catholic, somehow thus maintaining the historical relevance of the football team but losing the paleoconservative political values that are associated with Catholicism. However, the final result has become an almost Disney-esque reproduction of the campus space as a fantasy land, a place where both Catholicism and the university identity are commodified and consumed by visitors. The Notre Dame is as Disney metaphor is not an original comparison. While it occurred to me independently on my travels through campus I have also found it in popular press, including on the sports website bleacherreport.com where the author writes,

“The first thing anyone notices about Notre Dame is the Golden Dome. Like Magic Kingdom’s Cinderella Castle, all roads point to the Golden Dome. As the face of Notre
Dame, it sits in the middle of campus for all to see, especially when anyone makes the beautiful drive up Notre Dame Avenue to Main Circle. After taking the obligatory photo in front of the Golden Dome, the savvy visitor should venture inside both Main Building, the official name of the Golden Dome, and the Basilica where one can take in the ornate structures and artwork that represent traditions of Catholicism and the University. Like Disneyland, Notre Dame is divided into unique parts. Each quad has its own traditions, and each quad has its own unique structures. For example, South Quad is home to South Dining Hall a cafeteria known for its medieval design where sitting at one of the elevated tables makes you feel like you’re eating at the last supper… Notre Dame even has its own Epcot Center called Stepan Center which has the same eerie golf ball design as Epcot… Similar to Mickey, Minnie, and Goofy, Notre Dame has an unrivaled legacy of characters that have solidified themselves in the minds of America. The legends of Notre Dame Football began with Knute Rockne and the Four Horseman and continued to include the Gipper, Parseghian, Holtz, and Rudy to name a few. Which one is your favorite? Notre Dame doesn’t reach its full potential as a tourist attraction until home game weekends. Unlike Disneyland, you definitely want to visit Notre Dame when the crowds are at their peak… Whether you love the Irish or hate the Irish, magic is around the every corner at Notre Dame. From the unique architectural motif to the never-ending reminders of Notre Dame’s tradition, no place can overpower you with a sense of awe like a trip to South Bend. And… If you look really closely, you just might see Tinker Bell fly over the Golden Dome. Well, at least, you’re guaranteed to see a little man in a green suit. No, I’m not talking about Regis. Like Disney, though, you won’t be disappointed.” (Horner, 2008)

Somehow this piece only captions a fraction of the faux realism that encapsulates Notre Dame. Notre Dame’s campus, particularly the areas around the South and Central parts of campus where football traffic is the highest, are landscaped to postcard-esque perfection, making a walk between academic buildings feel like a stroll in a park. Tall Oaks, Beeches, Maples, and Pines shade wooden benches which rest along a crisscrossing sidewalk. All of the buildings on
campus are modeled in a faux Gothic architecture and are so well kept that they almost all appear to have been built recently⁷. In the words of one fan I encountered,

“You know, I love this campus. It’s just beautiful to me. You know I spent ten years of my life here on this campus and it means a lot. Nothing in particular, trees grass, beautiful. The gothic architecture, the unity of that is nice. Most college campuses you see a 60s building a 70s building an 80s building a 90s building and it’s just what does the hell does this have to do with anything? So that’s basically it.” (ND Fan 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Unifying the style of architecture and manicuring the campus foliage is a brand move, designed to brand the Notre Dame campus space and make it distinct from competing colleges and universities. In essence, Notre Dame has built its campus space in the same way that many corporate brand have built their brands, by redefining the space to fit the message of the brand. Klein writes,

“The superstores constructed to reflect these corporate personalities are exploring the boundaries of what Nike refers to as ‘inspirational retail’. As Nike president Thomas Clarke explains, large-scale ‘event’ outlets ‘give retailers the opportunity to romance products better’. How this seduction takes place varies from brand to brand but the general idea is to create a venue that is part shopping center, part amusement park, part multimedia extravaganza – an advertisement more potent and evocative than a hundred billboards.” (2010, p. 150)

By operationalizing the space as place where the brand of the Fighting Irish is experienced, the university is operating in the same manner as corporate entities, such as Disney, who specialize every aspect of the space so that visiting consumers will experience the brand. It is not limited to the aesthetic appeal of the buildings and foliage either. The university is awash in caricaturized depictions of Gaelic culture which are particularly noticeable in areas with high football weekend traffic. Nowhere is this more apparent than the apparel stores on and around campus. Each of the stores utilizes the same Gaelic-ized text font and sells items such as Irish

⁷ One woman who I encountered walking around campus commented, “I expected everything to be old here but it all looks brand new. They have to be doing maintenance on these things every other day.”
crystal and Irish chocolate. Furthermore, these stores sell religious artifacts, including necklaces, statues of Saint Mary, and crucifixes only feet away from football t-shirts bearing the Fighting Irish leprechaun logo or hats with shamrocks (see Figure 5.10, Figure 5.11, and Figure 5.12). There is the leprechaun mascot that cheers the team on the sideline and serves as a logo, along with a shamrock icon, for the Fighting Irish athletic teams. There is the use of kilt wearing bagpipe bands and Celtic music on campus prior to football games (see Figure 5.13).

On the Friday’s before games fans can tour Notre Dame stadium, get their picture taken with the iconic “Play Like a Champion Today” sign which the players touch on game day (see Figure 5.14), and get their photo taken wearing the school’s football helmet and gloves. Students and fans are encouraged to purchase “The Shirt” which is the official t-shirt of that particular Notre Dame football season and is typically worn on home games during the year. Notre Dame has attendants wearing earpieces and green sport jackets standing around campus on game days with pockets full of maps and schedules of the numerous events going on around the university, providing costumed guides for the numerous visitors who flock to campus on football weekends. Sitting in the parking lot outside Notre Dame stadium before the pep rally are cars from all over the country, including Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, California and Florida just to name a few of the most common ones. In the words of one university official,

“I think what’s interesting about it, it’s like a pilgrimage. A lot of our fan base, due to our alumni lottery that we have, it brings a lot of new faces in periodically. So we have fewer season ticket holders than a lot of other schools because we choose to open those up to our alumni and we have a national alumni base. So getting those people in, it’s interesting. You come Friday and there’s a pep rally at night. Sometimes there’s another sporting event in the evening then Saturday everybody gets here earlier and starts tailgating. A lot of them walk the campus. Some of them go to the dining hall to eat. Sunday always seems like the day that people go to the basilica and the grotto and of course there’s mass and that stuff. I think being a Catholic institution how that plays into the whole experience here and you hear people say, ‘you just can’t get everything you want done’, I’ve had people try to visit me on these weekends and there’s so many things to do. I think it’s just a unique opportunity that’s a way of selling the entire campus. Everyone plays a role in a football weekend, and you could say that about a lot of places
but especially here, with masses and the dining halls and the grotto and what the band does at the main building it just seems like football is a big part but there’s so many other things that add to the weekend. I think the way the campus is, being a pedestrian campus, it’s kind of an isolated look. Other campuses you might drive around and it’s a huge campus in a city. So it’s kind of a unique setting.” (ND Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

Notre Dame has not only branded its own space, but has also sought to brand the space around it as well. This is perhaps most apparent in the Eddy Street Commons area which is just South of Notre Dame Stadium. The area is essentially a college town, with apartments, boutiques, restaurants, hotels, and bars all arraigned over a few square blocks with areas where the roads can be closed off for foot traffic on game weekends. Eddy Street Commons is fairly new, first opening in 2009 as a joint effort by Notre Dame and the City of South Bend. Prior to this point, Notre Dame had always seemed like a cloistered campus, with students rarely venturing off campus. As one university official noted,

“Our students in years past wouldn’t venture off campus much. It was pretty contained. They have everything they need here. Off campus was a foreign place, a scary place maybe. So there wasn’t much of a reason for them to go off campus and they weren’t necessarily integrating into the community. I feel like we’ve come a long ways in getting our students more interested and more involved in venturing off campus. Eddy street commons, that wasn’t there a couple years ago. That whole area was flat or it was tress before it was built up by the community in partnership with Notre Dame. So that’s kind of giving students expanding the ground they cover. So students are branching out a bit and getting out to town a bit more.” (ND Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Eddy Street Commons then became a way for the Notre Dame brand to expand by branding the city environment around it. In effect, Notre Dame constructed its own artificial college town in order to bolster the image and the functional commercial space of the university. Each of these examples implicates the brand of the Fighting Irish as functioning similar to a corporation, creating a sort of Notre-Disney campus space whereby visiting Fighting Irish fans can consume and reproduce the brands of the university.
However, in being shaped into the brand of the Fighting Irish, the football brand of the university becomes contradictory to both the academic and the Catholic identities of the institution. In building the brand of the Fighting Irish the university has broken from its traditional emphasis on independence, an element which transcended both the academic narrative of brand building and the historic Catholic origins of the Notre Dame football team, by forming
corporate relationships and allowing business and retail entities an ever increasing role in the Notre Dame branded space. In order to accommodate the donors who come to Notre Dame to visit on football weekends, the university now holds kickoff luncheons on the Friday before games which are sponsored by Sprint (see Figure 5.15). There are food tents outside of the Joyce Center before the Friday night Pep Rally (see Figure 5.16) and adidas, the official apparel provider for Notre Dame athletics, has its own special displays inside the Notre Dame bookstore and in tents around campus.

Figure 5.15 The Football Fridays tailgate on the Notre Dame campus is sponsored by Sprint, who advertises at the event

Figure 5.16 Food and clothing tents sponsored by corporate entities are located outside of the Notre Dame Friday night pep rally
Notre Dame’s television deal with NBC was recently restructured so that the Irish would sometimes appear on NBC’s lower sports channels and all of the football teams away games and bowl games are broadcast by ESPN or ABC, who don’t have the same relationships with the university that NBC has and have less of an incentive to frame Notre Dame the way the university wants to be framed. Thus, by promoting the brand of the Fighting Irish the university has lost its autonomy over its own institutional narratives, crippling the university to promote the version of the brand that it wants to promote. Furthermore, it utilizes the Fighting Irish nickname as a platform to caricaturize the campus, turning the Catholic culture of the university into a cartoonish representation of Gaelic fantasy. Rather than framing the institution as a Catholic university, the brand of the Fighting Irish promotes the racial aspects of Notre Dame’s history, which diminishes some of the religious significance of the nickname and its place in the history of Catholic Americans. In the end, the football brand of the Fighting Irish created to combine the educational and Catholic brands of the university only serves to pervert them into a gaudy, commercialized corporate brand which fails to represent either institutional identity.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I analyzed Notre Dame as a uniquely Catholic institution. The university has a storied history among American Catholics and the stature of the football team has created an identifier for believers across the country. This has caused some conflict as many neoconservative Catholics have become increasingly displeased with the way in which the university has chosen to brand itself. The institutional decisions made by Notre Dame as a whole, to break from the traditional model of Catholic education and to instill in the university the same research and academic prestige that exist in many nearby public institutions, has angered the neoconservative Catholics who believe that the university should represent more traditional paleo-conservative social values. The university’s invitation of pro-choice President Obama to speak at commencement, the inclusion of students and faculties who are not Catholic in the Notre Dame community, and the issues with the institution’s lawsuit against the Affordable Care Act have all caused conflict between the university and the various neoconservative stakeholders who believe that Notre Dame is not representative of the Catholic faith.
Notre Dame has attempted to craft an image for itself that fits the institutional goal of competing as a major research university within a crowded academic marketplace. This has largely meant a break from some of the traditional paleo-conservative social values inherent in Catholic teaching. The university has constructed an image for its academic arm which depicts the institution as an almost secular place where faith is implicated as broad, practically important component of education rather than a specifically Catholic attribute. Furthermore, Notre Dame’s academic arm has attempted to become open to belief systems outside of conservative Catholicism, inviting President Obama to campus, encouraging open debate of social policies and posting the debates on the university YouTube page, and trying to contextualize religious spaces on campus such as the grotto as being non-denominational.

In combining these two logics around the popularity of the football team the university has created the brand of the Fighting Irish, an athletic-centric brand which capitalizes on the historical significance of the football team while attempting to embrace the secular logic of the academic identity of the institution. Notre Dame in effect becomes a brand community, whereby the structures, symbolism, and bodies on campus all serve to replicate some aspect of the academic or Catholic identities of the institution. Rather than serving as a mesh point for these two identities, the brand of the Fighting Irish constructs a third, separate identity for Notre Dame which does not adhere to either of the other two. Instead, the brand of the Fighting Irish serves as a site of consumption, whereby fans consume Notre Dame as a commercial enterprise. Football serves as an opportunity to consume a commercialized iteration of both the Catholic and academic identities of the institution which is not representative of the ideals of either image.

In the next chapter I will examine Florida State University and how football culture serves as a symbol and site of consumption for neoliberal economic logics. Through the proliferation of the Seminole brand, the institution implicates itself within and reproduces the logics of the neoliberal university.
CHAPTER SIX

FLORIDA STATE

In 1825 the United States government reserved two townships in the state of Florida for the purpose of locating state seminaries. The Florida Institute was a school for boys located in the city of Tallahassee starting in 1851 and it was hoped that the institution would be taken over by the state for the purpose of becoming one of the two state seminaries (About Florida State, n.d.). In 1857 this dream was realized and the West Florida Seminary was created. The school served as The Florida Military and Collegiate Institute after 1863 to reflect the addition of military training to the curriculum (unlike Texas A&M however, military training was not compulsory) and the institution became a training ground for Confederate cadets during the Civil War (About Florida State, n.d.). By 1891 the school had evolved into the first liberal arts college in the state and in 1901 became the Florida State College (About Florida State, n.d.). This change also coincided with the adoption of football as a campus sport. Football had been played in Tallahassee by local clubs since 1890 but the Florida State College had never officially sponsored a team,

“As the game’s popularity increased, however, FSC students clamored for a team. Football – with its action-packed allure, its appeal to school spirit, and its ability to galvanize loyalty – undeniably was collegiate. At least, FSC’s President Albert A Murphree thought so, and in 1902 he strongly supported the new squad.” (Kabat, 1991, p.23-24)

The football team found early success, winning state championships three times from 1902 to 1905. However, in 1905 there was a,

“Reorganization of Florida's educational system by the Legislature, six state institutions of higher learning were consolidated into two when the University of Florida in Gainesville was established and designated a men's school and the Florida State College became a women's school called the Florida Female College. The male student body moved from Tallahassee to Gainesville, taking with it the fraternity system and the
College football team, which had been state champions in 1902, 1903, and 1905. In 1909 the name of the college was changed to Florida State College for Women, an institution which grew to become the third largest women's college in the nation during the 1930's.” (About Florida State, n.d.)

It remained the Florida State College for Women until after World War II, when the G.I. Bill and the overwhelming number of returning soldiers clamoring to get a college education meant that demand for a college education was too high in the state for the institution to remain exclusive to women. In 1947 the institution returned to coeducational status and was renamed as The Florida State University (FSU). The move brought football back to campus and the team image was given the named the Seminoles after a student body vote (About Florida State, n.d.). However the football team struggled; getting routinely blown out by rival Florida and consistently finishing with losing records. In the mid-1970’s, with the state in financial crisis and many public universities feeling the strain, there was serious discussion about dropping football as the University of Tampa did. Freeman writes,

“The lack of fan interest and a dearth of victories led to a fiscal crisis. The football program was so broke that Florida State was unable to repair badly damaged equipment or replace scruffy practice gear. When Tampa abolished football, Florida State athletic officials hurriedly sent a large truck to the school and purchased Tampa’s equipment at a discount.” (2009, p. 103).

FSU’s football fortunes shifted dramatically in 1976 when the school hired former assistant coach Bobby Bowden to become the head football coach. Under Bowden’s leadership, the football transformed from a laughingstock into a national powerhouse, recording the longest streak of top five finishes in NCAA history from 1987 to 2000 (Freeman, 2009). Under Bowden, football came to embody what former Florida State College president Albert A. Murphree had hoped the sport could be for the university back in 1902, a symbol of university pride and prestige which could raise the national profile of the institution as a whole (Kabat, 1991).

To this day, football remains a powerful force at Florida State which seeps into all aspects of the university image. In this chapter I will locate football within the branded image of
the university and describe how the use of the football image has not only overwhelmed the academic identity of the university, but also allowed outside forces to imprint their own identity on the mediated image of FSU. Through the reproduction of football culture, Florida State becomes implicated within and complicit in the reproduction of knowledges of and about the neoliberal university and in this chapter I will examine how the institution is identified as being neoliberal and how football culture is implicated in the consumption and reproduction of neoliberal logics. Also, I will describe how additional cultural phenomenon, including racism and the exacerbation of “beer and circus” hedonism are implicated in Florida State’s identity as a neoliberal university. The first section will be devoted to analyzing the branding methods of the university as a whole, including discussion of the visual identity of Florida State and the ways in which the institutional brand appears in branding materials. In the second section I will introduce the football image, with a specific focus on the Seminole name and logo, to describe how the football image of Florida State has overpowered the academic image in the public eye. Finally I will broaden my discussion of mediated football culture at FSU to analyze the implications of the football-centric identity of the university.

6.1 Hymn to the Garnet and Gold

While football is a major identifier for Florida State, the university has been attempting to establish its own unique, academic oriented brand. That does not mean that football is not meant to be a part of the academic brand of the university, but rather that football is intended to act as only a small part of the institutional identity of FSU. Like Texas A&M, officials at Florida State are not shy in saying that football acts as the “front porch” of the university, drawing people in to the institution but not necessarily defining it. This section will detail the academic brand of FSU and the institutional goals the university is trying to achieve through the construction of the Florida State brand and how the construction of this brand contributes to the reproduction and consumption of logics of and about the neoliberal university. This will begin by historically locating the Florida State academic brand and detailing what the brand is intended to represent for the university. I will then discuss the implications of the academic brand on the university and the motivation for the maintenance of the academic identity of FSU. Finally I will locate
football within the Florida State academic brand in order to describe how the sport is meant to be perceived as part of the overall institutional identity.

As an institution, Florida State has become beholden to neoliberal logics and is representative of the description of the neoliberal university provided in the introduction. FSU has a high involvement in contract research which is aided by an emphasis in funding for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) initiatives. Funding for these fields from the private sector is typically more common and more lucrative than in other disciplines such as liberal arts and the humanities and FSU emphasizes these programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level in hopes of promoting institutional prestige and increasing research output. In the promotional material I collected there were multiple mentions of research opportunities in STEM fields and an emphasis placed on studying and graduating with a degree from one of the four STEM disciplines. In addition to pushing for further private research funding in the STEM fields, Florida State has also partnered with billionaire brothers David and Charlie Koch, more commonly referred to as the Koch brothers in the press, who fund the economics department at FSU. The Koch brothers are notorious their neoconservative political values and have used their considerable wealth and political organization, known as Americans for Prosperity, to back neoconservative political candidates and initiatives nationwide at all levels of government. At Florida State, control of the economics department by the Koch brothers means the proliferation of neoliberal economic theory through the control of the department’s purse strings. As one report noted,

“His representatives get to screen and sign off on any hires for a new program promoting ‘political economy and free enterprise’. Traditionally, university donors have little official input into choosing the person who fills a chair they've funded. The power of university faculty and officials to choose professors without outside interference is considered a hallmark of academic freedom. Under the agreement with the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation, however, faculty only retain the illusion of control. The contract specifies that an advisory committee appointed by Koch decides which candidates should be considered. The foundation can also withdraw its funding if it's not

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8 This was widely criticized in the national press when a negative ad campaign run in the city of Coralville, Iowa for a city council election heavily offended voters because of misleading claims about the city becoming the next Detroit and that one candidate for mayor cheated on his taxes. One of the candidates backed by the Koch brothers (without his prior approval) described it as, “kind of like being endorsed by Charles Manson” (Davidson, 2014).
happy with the faculty's choice or if the hires don't meet ‘objectives’ set by Koch during annual evaluations.” (Hundley, 2011)

In a sense, many aspects of the university have largely become privatized, relying heavily on outside funding from groups, including the Koch brothers, to ensure the maintenance of the university.

This is not limited to research or education either. The university has a multitude of brand partnerships which are visible across campus, similar too, though a bit more exaggerated, than the ones I have described at Texas A&M and Notre Dame. Students can dine at the on campus restaurants including Chili’s, Denny’s, or Papa John’s. They can shop at the campus apple store, use the on-campus Kaplan Test Prep center to buy books and tutoring for graduate school entrance exams, or use the on campus UPS store to mail something back to their family. Starbucks is perhaps the most visible corporate entity at Florida State with multiple locations across campus. University branding material actually celebrates the presence of Starbucks inside the main campus library, rebranding the building as a social gathering place rather than a place to read. The main campus guide says,

“The main library on campus; The Robert Manning Strozier Library (Club Stroz) is known as the ‘social library’. Club Stroz represents the evolution of the modern college library – a one-stop academic and campus community spot for every Seminole – 7 days a week. It’s the premier location to immerse yourself in your coursework and browse back book collections, as well as the place to congregate, snack, satisfy your caffeine fix (home to the nation’s first double-sided Starbucks), and make valuable peer connections.” (Florida State University Office of Admissions, 2013)

In essence there is very little space on the university campus which is not influenced or controlled by the private sector. In essence, Florida State has become the embodiment of Klein’s (2010) critique of the modern neoliberal university as a space where commercial logics and corporate logos have overrun the previously public academic space of state sponsored higher education.

This does not mean that Florida State is without a brand of its own. The university has a unique academic brand which, in the words of officials, reflects the principal values of the
institution. The academic brand of Florida State is built around the idea that the university provides an exceptional education at a reasonable price, in keeping with the institutions neoliberal values. In the words of one university official,

“In the marketing world your brand is your promise. So the brand of Florida State is an incredible education at a great value. That is what our promise is. We have one of the lowest tuition rates and you get this top 40 education for pennies. At the end of the day that’s what we promise people.” (FSU Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

In essence, FSU’s values are the values of neoliberalism. By emphasizing the ability of the university to provide a quality education at the lowest price possibly, university officials are performing to the logics of market efficiency outlined in the introduction to this paper. The official noted that this was particularly visible in the people on campus and in the behavior of alumni once they had left Tallahassee,

“I think that one of our characteristics that we always hear about is that FSU is a very friendly place. So maybe it’s just the demeanor of the people on campus that have a willingness to help people. I think the fact that we’re in the state capital seems to bring a lot of people who have, whether it’s because they’re going to be in state government or public service, a spirit of wanting to do good. I think the other thing about FSU is that it’s sneaky. People don’t realize how good it is. They get here and they see the rich history in the arts and the sciences and they are surprised… Every day I get emails about alumni doing something wonderful, professional or otherwise, and I’m always amazed at some of the things our alumni our doing. An FSU alum is the head of the largest wealth management fund in the world. John Theo is the head of Meryl Lynch. An FSU graduate runs the largest tourist destination in the world, Disney. Maycroft, actually she’s been kicked upstairs in Anaheim and is in charge of their parks around the world. An FSU alumnus is the heir to run Berkshire Hathaway. “ (FSU Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

On its YouTube page Florida State has taken a unique approach to creating a window into the lives of students and academics on campus. Each month the university publishes two or three videos of current students on campus simply talking about their experience at Florida State
and what the university has done for them intellectually and professionally. These testimonials typically last between one and two minutes and are strategically shot outdoors around campus to show the beauty of the campus space. Each student shares their major, why they chose their major, what they have achieved in their major (typically major internships or academic accomplishments), and how being at Florida State has helped them find success. The final component typically elicits references to critical thinking and leadership skills that the student has felt they have learned at FSU. Of particular interest is the emphasis on the word value, which is one of the most common descriptions of the university in each of these videos. Several students describe the value of an education at Florida State, almost always implicitly referencing the potential value of a degree from FSU in relation to the low cost of attending the university. This again underscores the power of neoliberal logics in the brand of the university and the importance, for the officials responsible for the creation and maintenance of the institutional brand, of performing neoliberal logics within the branding material of the university. There are very few references to athletics or extracurricular activities in any of these videos and, when they are present, they are usually when a student is an athlete on a team (like softball) or when the student has shown leadership in that extracurricular activity. Essentially, Florida State is attempting to demonstrate how the typical student can find success at the university and what a successful student looks like so that they can be used as an example.

Symbolically, the university is academically represented by the university seal, a circular logo containing the name of the university, the year the university was founded, three torches, and a ribbon with the words “Vires, Artes, Mores” which can be translated to “Strength, Skill, Character”. The logo is reproduced all over the campus space, including on buildings and on the banners that hang from lamp posts. As one university official explained,

“When I first came to Florida State I thought we were founded by the Seminole tribe. I just assumed that there was some kind of connection there. As far as I know the university was not founded by Seminole Indians, it was simply an honor that a class in the 1950’s chose to adopt an, I hate to use the word mascot because they are a group of people not a mascot, but, for lack of a better term, one class in 1956 said we need to call ourselves something. The Seminole tribe had roots here in this area and they decided to call themselves that. By no means was it the university saying this is who we are, this is what we want to align ourselves with, it was solely athletics. The university our, motto is
Vires, Artes, Mores which you will see in the seal. So in terms of an academic approach to our branding the two were kind of developed simultaneously. Once the university went from being the Florida State College for Women they created the seal, a version of which you will see today. Around that time that the graduating class adopted the Seminole as the quote mascot. So the seal of the university and the torches have been around long before the Seminole head. That’s how you get the academic head leaning on that Vires, Artes, Mores and the athletic side leaning on the Seminole head.” (FSU Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

In the branding material the university produces the Westcott Building, which is the administration building on the East edge of campus, is also used as a symbol of the academic brand of the university. The buildings iconic brick towers and white fountain are always used in conjunction with discussion of the preeminent status of the university and the university’s ranking in academics. Florida State has an existing brand based around the motto on the university slogan, vires, artes, mores which stands for strength, skill, and character, yet that brand does not appear in English in the Visitor’s Guide and was never emphasized in any of the material I gathered. Florida State does have issues with the brand when it comes to creating and enforcing brand standards. As one university official noted,

“Anything to do with branding of the university is done through university communications. We inherited a culture that had not had a very cohesive brand to it. These most recent guidelines came out in March, 2009. So the university was kind of left with a 74 page document about how we’re supposed to brand ourselves and what happened was, the book was done by an outside agency, and from my understanding it was not completed. Back then it was very expensive to hire an outside company. These are visual guidelines but that doesn’t mean that it’s a brand. So there are pieces missing that the university is supplementing at the moment to make the brand more flexible and justifiable. A brand is not just a logo, a brand is all kinds of things. When I think of a brand I think of Publix a lot. Their tag line is ‘where shopping is a pleasure’. So if that is going to be your tagline then you should do everything possible to ensure that shopping is indeed a pleasure every time I walk into that store. I don’t know if you shop at Publix but it does tend to be a pleasurable experience; fast lines, well lit stores, well stocked stores,
clean stores. So that’s kind of a situation where I identify through Publix’s brand through their tagline but that’s just one piece of the puzzle. For Florida State, we have some pieces but not the whole puzzle” (FSU Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Unlike the Publix example given by the official, Florida State does not have the ability to create and enforce its brand image on its own terms. The strength, skill, and character is almost invisible on university branding materials and the words are never specifically identified as the university brand. Despite having a visual identity through logos and pictures and having a stated mission for the university, Florida State does not have an institutionally controlled method of determining success in achieving institutional brand goals. Unlike Texas A&M, which uses the Core values based on the Corps of Cadets, or Notre Dame, which advertises itself as the preeminent source for Catholic education, Florida State does not have a unique selling proposition whereby the universities goals are internally generated and the method for evaluating those goals is gauged by the university, Florida State’s promise to be a cheap yet quality educational experience, in essence to be a quintessential neoliberal university, is evaluated by outside sources.

Of particular pride for the academic brand is the institution’s designation as one of the two preeminent research institutions in the state of Florida. Preeminent status was created by the Florida legislature in 2013 as a way to provide additional funding of the most successful state universities rather than those who. In order to receive preeminent status, a university must have,

“Average weighted GPA of 4.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale and an average SAT score of 1,800 or higher for fall semester incoming freshmen, Top 50 ranking on at least two well-known and highly respected national public university rankings, Freshman retention rate of 90 percent or higher, Six-year graduation rate of 70 percent or higher, Six or more faculty members at the state university who are members of a national academy, Total annual research expenditures of $200 million or more, Total annual research expenditures in diversified non-medical sciences of $200 million or more, Top 100 university national ranking for research expenditures in five or more science, technology, engineering or mathematics fields of study, 100 or more total patents awarded by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for the most recent three-year period, 400 or more doctoral degrees
awarded annually, 200 or more postdoctoral appointees annually, [and] Endowment of $500 million or more.” (Candelaria, 2013)

This theme is strewn throughout the branded literature produced by Florida State, particularly the guides given to visiting prospective students. Nearly every guide given to students mentions Florida State’s preeminence on the very first page of the guidebook. The official visitor’s guide handed out to visiting prospective students reads,

“Designated a pre-eminent university in the state of Florida and the nation’s most efficient university, Florida State University is one of the most respected research and learning institutions in the country. Named by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education as a leader in very high research activity – a designation given to only 73 public colleges and universities – Florida State is home to many nationally-ranked programs, including the sciences, arts, business, communication, and law.” (Florida State University Office of Admissions, 2013)

Nearly every piece of branding material I acquired uses the labels of preeminent and efficient to describe the university, fitting with the official comment that the brand of Florida State is built on quality education at a low cost. However, this underscores the importance for the university to fit better with academic ranking systems that do not necessarily result in a better education.

In branding the university as high-quality (as implicated in preeminent status) and efficient, Florida State has become extremely reliant on ranking agencies to determine the value of its own brand. Preeminent status in the state of Florida, as outlined in the previous paragraph, relies heavily on the same metrics utilized by ranking services such as US News and World Report as well as direct information from those services (Candelaria, 2013). As one Florida State official stated,

“We did an alumni survey a few years ago and we asked the alumni what is the number one thing that shapes your image of FSU today and the answer is the value and respect for degree, which means we want to see FSU is doing everything that it can to increase the value and respect for their degree. I often tell our alumni that their degree is the one thing they can earn and invest in that you cannot sell or give away. The value of it is based on the university’s reputation today. So that’s what they’re concerned about and
that’s how they interpret the things that are going on here at the university. So we try to convey to them what the value of their degree is, what are our rankings, what is the president’s plan to get us into the top 25, those are the things we talk about with alumni.”

(FSU Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

In order to bolster the university’s reputation the university has made achieving status both through the national rankings and through preeminent status a primary goal for the institution. For the latter goal, that has included an outreach program which is intended to utilize Florida State’s large alumni following to put pressure on the state government for support to FSU. The purpose of this campaign, titled “Advocate for Florida State,” has been to make sure that the university is granted preeminent status and to push policy makers to continue to heavily fund FSU’s academic initiatives. One flyer handed out to alumni for the program reads,

“State lawmakers encourage the general public to provide input and feedback on legislative issues and that contact is simplified for the FSU community through the Advocate for Florida State website. By signing up for this free service, you’ll receive periodic emails from FSU about important issues before the Legislature. Should you wish to contact state lawmakers about these issues, the email tool on the Advocate site automatically directs your message to the House and Senate members who represent you, and provides the option of sending your email to more state legislators. Your voice is vital to advancing the University’s position on higher education funding and other important issues. Strengthen that voice with Advocate for Florida State and help communicate the educational, research, and community-service mission of Florida State University to state policymakers” (FSU Office of Governmental Relations, n.d.)

This focus on rankings and preeminence implicates Florida State within an academic arms race that does not truly determine how well students are learning at an institution. As discussed in Chapter 1, the ranking classification system utilized by US News Report and other college ranking systems is fundamentally flawed in that it favors statistics which do not necessarily implicate student learning as part of their metrics and also encourage universities to engage in unscrupulous business practices that are anathema to actually educating members of the populace
(see Klein, 2010, Washburn, 2006, Bose, 2012, Woodbury, 2003, and Sperber 2001). The result of the commitment to appealing to rankings is,

“Once the spectacular economy of the USN rankings becomes understood as real, it intersects with a larger web of economic and social relations. It reconfigures what Bourdieu called a ‘field’ of capital in which people compete in a game like activity by strategically exchanging various economic, social and cultural capitals based on their ‘feel of the game’. For example, a parent may enroll their daughter at a higher ranking institution rather than an alternative liberal arts college due to strategic considerations of ‘investment’ in the field of the USN spectacular economy. And, by systematically producing various ‘irrationalities of rationality’, such as the stratifying and counterproductive effects we have reviewed, the USN proffers a trend of McDonaldization of higher education. This trend pressures colleges and universities to increase efficiency, calculability, predictability and control according to the standards constructed by the USN rankings.” (Chang and Osborn, 2005, p. 355-356)

Chang and Osborn also note that the use of rankings within advertising for universities implicates the institution as complicit in reproducing the knowledge of the ranking companies. The authors note that,

“This sort of advertising is only useful due to the value of the rank (i.e. lower ranking institutions gain very little from posting their ranking), and the capital value of rankings cannot be developed or increased through the work of the institution. However, alongside the process of relying on the USN rankings to increase a college’s positive publicity, a reverse process is also happening. As the USN spectacle is embraced and, thus, legitimized by a social institution that historically represents reason and knowledge, the university is not only using the media; the university becomes the media. The institutions, in this sense, understand and present themselves as the image abstracted by the USN. It is difficult to judge which of the two phenomena is worse: the knowledge institution’s legitimating of a spectacle or the necessary reliance on a spectacle to legitimize a knowledge institution within a commodified society.” (2005, p. 357)
Thus Florida State’s attempts to market itself as a highly ranked institution really only serve to legitimize the rankings that are giving positive images to the university. For the university brand, that means that rankings and quantifiable results are the construction materials for the branded identity of the institution. If the university can be ranked highly in something, then it should be. It is in this hyper-competitive knowledge base that football has emerged as the so-called “front porch” of the university.

Officials are Florida State were unanimous in declaring football as a major factor in developing a rapport between the community, potential students, and the public at large and the university brand. One university official commented,

“It’s the window, it’s the front door that people see this university a lot of times. [We produced] a spot one year we were playing in a National Championship game in the Sugar Bowl, in this spot right here we shot this and the 2000 Sugar Bowl 20 million people are watching the game and we included something about our Nobel Prize winning faculty member we had on campus. I got a call from a professor at Stanford who had been working on his computer and he heard Burt Reynolds introduce Robert Schrieffer who he had introduced at a conference coming up soon and it was this sort of unexpected recognition of how this person who was a professor at Stanford who wouldn’t have been connected to the university otherwise. So athletics is the window, door, or front porch we say of getting people to come to this university.” (FSU Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Another university official noted that the spectacle and resulting media coverage of college football made the sport a strong vehicle for the institution to introduce the public to the university academic brand,

“That’s seven times a year you have the biggest target market not only in the stadium but on television as well. If you watch the game you see the commercial that was produced by FSU film students. We run that in the stadium but it also gets played on all the broadcasts, so you are using that to launch the campus through athletics… I think that’s kind of what puts you on the national stage. We have been on the national stage a couple of times this year. Monday of Labor Day weekend we were the only game on television.
If you were going to watch football that Monday night you were watching Florida State and Pittsburgh so it’s putting the national scale. College GameDay this weekend, another national scale, and I think that’s where the different advertising spots come in and try to grow the university.” (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

One of the benefits, as explained by another university official, was the ability to draw in potential students from outside the state who may not have any other opportunity to learn about the university except through football. The official noted,

“Athletics and football is the window that people see the university through but once you walk in there is a whole lot there. That window is key to getting you engaged and getting you in…I think it brings a lot of people here and I love the community here. It brought me here. The football team kind of put it on the map for me, being from so far away, so it definitely helps in taking a wider pool of applicants.” (FSU Student 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

Institutionally, football is used to tell an academic story, rather than an athletic one. The football team’s success in the rankings is held up next to academic success in rankings as the type of success that Florida State is trying to achieve. If the Seminole football team can achieve success on a national stage while operating on a lower budget than most of the larger athletic departments in the country, then it stands to reason, in the brand logics of FSU, that the university can achieve the same feat.9 As one university official explained,

“I would say it’s exciting, it’s a competitive brand. Winning is important. I think it’s two different things really the Florida State brand for athletics is going to be evaluated by where the program is ranked in the director’s cup so it’s not just based on revenue generating sports but all sports. For the university I think the performing arts is obviously big here and I think there a lots of great programs here that are promoted by the university.” (FSU Official 4, Personal Communication, 2013)

9 The USA Today NCAA College Finances Database ranks FSU 15th among public Division I universities in expenditures for the year 2012 with $90,278,878 in expenditures. While this is certainly not a small amount, it is significantly less than national powers Texas ($138,269,710) and Ohio State ($124,419,412) as well as regional rivals Alabama ($108,204,867) and Florida ($105,102,198) (Berkowitz, Durkin, Schnaars, Uptoun, Schouton, and Ely, et. al 2013).
In university branding material, football is fairly scarce. However, there is a discussion of Seminole athletics in the main visitor’s guide which demonstrates the connection to ranking metrics at the university. The guide reads,

“Intercollegiate athletics has played a particularly important role in the rapid growth and academic standing of Florida State University. Seminole athletics gave the University immediate exposure when the transition from the Florida State College for Women to Florida State University took place in 1946 with plans for fielding a football team, one of the first items on the agenda in 1947. While Seminole athletics may have had a relatively late start, the Seminole program has done a remarkable job of catching up and placing themselves among the most recognizable and prestigious programs in the country. Florida State has finished among the Top 15 nationally in the annual Director’s Cup, which measures overall strength of athletic programs, each of the last seven years… Florida State teams have won 14 national championships including two by the storied football program in 1993 and 1999. Seminole student athletes have been just as successful in the classroom producing two Rhodes Scholars in the last nine years. Florida State’s outstanding academic accomplishments include regular competition for the ACC’s top producer of Academic Honors memberships as well as a number of Academic All-Americans. FSU’s program has met the NCAA standard for academic performance in every sport during every year that the program has been monitored.” (Florida State University Office of Admissions, 2013)

In theory, Florida State athletics, particularly football, is meant to embody the best of what a student can achieve at Florida State. Specifically, it is meant to represent how a student can maximize the efficiency of their time at the university by showing how students who compete in sports that often have the time requirements of a full-time job are also able to achieve great things in the classroom. This ideal is largely held up in the story of Myron Rolle, the FSU football player who earned a Rhodes Scholarship while still competing for the Seminoles. Rolle’s story of both athletic and academic success was held up by university officials as an exemplar of the connection between athletics and academics at the university and how football was a successful vehicle in delivering the academic message of the university,
“If something happens negatively it’s going to happen it’s going to put that at the forefront, but also if something positive happens it’s going to put that in the forefront. For instance, Myron Rolle earned his Rhodes scholarship and we were playing Maryland on the one night that they do the Rhodes Scholarship interviews in Birmingham. Rolle is our starting safety. So he goes to the interview in Birmingham and there is a jet waiting for him and he finds out that he got it. ESPN followed him from the plane to getting to the locker room at halftime and suiting up to coming out onto the field as a Rhodes Scholar. You couldn’t buy that. I mean if the man was just a student who earned a Rhodes Scholarship. That night, everyone in America who was watching the ESPN prime time game knew about it. We couldn’t ever buy that.” (FSU Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Football is also combined with academics in order to sell the university brand to fans and alumni. This includes using football as an event to bring together alumni and fans and to teach them face to face about the university brand. One university official stated,

“We utilize athletics wherever we can. What we’ve found as a good combination is to use athletics and academics together. Last year we played a football game in Tampa and our president wanted to give a talk to our alumni in Tampa. One way we augmented that presentation was we asked Chris Weinke, our Heisman trophy winner, to introduce the president. So we found when we mix athletics and academics together it really brings our alumni out. Four years ago we created a program where we took our three Rhodes Scholars and we took them to four different places around the country so that was a good combination of athletics and academics.” (FSU Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Recently, former head football coach Bobby Bowden, who had not been back to campus since his forced retirement following the 2009 football season, has also been added to the dais of football stars who have become integrated into the Florida State brand, as he has joined with the university to speak at alumni functions and other fundraising events to help raise money for the school. In essence, the school is hiring Bowden to serve as a spokesman for the university and to moderate the university brand through football. Thus Florida State uses football, in theory, to
introduce people to the academic arm of the institution and to create a positive image of the institution as a whole. To that end the university has seen some success. In the words of one university official,

“I think a lot of times it happens organically. You need three things for someone to give a gift. They have to have the capacity to give a gift. They have to have the interest, and then they have to have the willingness to do it. In my experience the interest is really tied to the willingness and that is where that front porch comes in. People say, ‘Oh now I’m interested I need to learn more about it’ that’s why we have an Alumni Association to keep people interested. I can tell you a story about a guy who was a graduate in the 60’s, went off and had his career and retire in the Brevard area. He went to this Seminole club event to be a part of this athletic thing and he ended up giving $1 million to this athletic chair, he gave $1 million to the athletic program, and now he has an aquatic center named after him. He was somebody who was reintroduced to the university through athletics.”

(FSU Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

The university image is built around performing the role of the neoliberal university, minimizing costs while maximizing value to create an economically efficient college experience. Football is incorporated into this academic brand to promote the institutional message by competing against larger athletic departments, producing athletes who are able to maximize the efficiency of their time at FSU and excel both in and outside of the classroom, and to provide a window for reaching people outside the university to spread the brand message which could not be achieved through any sort of advertisement campaign by the university. However, there is concern that the image of football and Seminole athletics as a whole has become more than just the front porch of the university. As the influence and prestige of Seminole football grows so too does the independent image of the Seminole football program. In the next section I will discuss the rise of the Seminole athletic image and how football iconography has, in many ways, come to eclipse the academic identity of Florida State.
6.2 Scalp ‘em Seminoles

As Florida State’s prestige in football has grown so too has the prestige and visibility of the athletic brand at the university. The athletic department at FSU has its own marketing identity, its own logos, and its own view of what the image of Florida State is. The Seminole identity has become, to the chagrin of university officials I spoke with, the most recognized symbol of the institution. While the football culture at Florida State does in fact duplicate the neoliberal logics which the university has built its brand upon, the symbolism and iconography through which those logics are reproduced have become a cause for concern among university officials because of the racial overtones that accompany the Seminole brand. In this section I will discuss the creation of the Florida State athletic brand and how it has come to surpass the academic brand of the institution as the primary identity of the university for the public. I begin by describing the football identity, with a focus on the Seminole name and the reasons why athletics and academics are treated as separate brands by the university. This will be followed by a discussion of how the football brand is used as the front porch of the university and how the university attempts to realize its goal of an athletic brand which serves the academic brand. Finally, I will discuss how the university replicates the neoliberal academic logics of the university through football in various ways to demonstrate how football has come to represent, in practice, the neoliberal identity of Florida State.

Figure 6.1 There are numerous license plates and car accessories sold at the FSU bookstore displaying the Seminole logo
Figure 6.2 There are numerous shot glasses on sale in the FSU bookstore with the Seminole logo.

Figure 6.3 Bags of popcorn bearing the Seminole logo inside the FSU bookstore.

Figure 6.4 Chief Osceola and Renegade preparing to perform the ritual of planting the spear before a football game.
The nickname Seminoles was bestowed upon the athletic teams at Florida State in 1946 after a vote by the student body and has persisted in spite of growing public opposition to the use of Native American names in sports, thanks largely to an agreement between FSU and the Seminole Tribe of Florida which has consented to the use of the name as long as the Tribe has some control over logos and depictions of the Seminole Indians (About Florida State, n.d.). As one university official explained,

“It started back from Osceola and Renegade. Everything we do now goes through the Seminole tribe they approve all of our logos and marks. We are rolling out new marks, logos, and branding next year with Nike but everything is pre-approved with the Seminole tribe. Obviously we know that there is national controversy with this sort of thing and with the Washington Redskins. We have had the Tribe backing us since ’05-06 and they know that we are promoting them as well as us so it is a give and take relationship.” (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

Today the Seminole logo is emblazoned all over campus and depictions of Native Americans are common at Florida State football games. The FSU athletic department relies on several visual logos, including a spear, arrowhead, and the head of a Seminole Indian, within its brand that evoke references to Native Americans. These logos are blazoned on all manner of consumer goods which are sold on campus (see Figure, 6.1, Figure 6.2, and Figure 6.3). During football games the band, known as the Marching Chiefs, is led by drum majors in faux Indian attire and plays music such as the “War Chant”10 and “Seminole Uprising” which use the type of rhythms and melodic lines that are typically reserved for Hollywood depictions of Native Americans (see Ancillary Material 1). On football game days the school dresses one student in Seminole garb, chosen by the Seminole tribe, and rides a horse into the stadium before the team, planting a flaming spear into the midfield grass before the start of each contest (see Figure 6.4). The rider, named after the famous Seminole Chief Osceola, and the horse, nicknamed Renegade, is considered one of the most iconic college football traditions in the country. One university official noted,

10 The song and the accompanying stylized “tomahawk chop” arm movement began at Florida State but has since become a staple of several sports teams that utilize Native American imagery, including the Atlanta Braves and Kansas City Chiefs.
“We have the most iconic sports tradition in the country. So named by EA sports which is the Osceola and Renegade tradition, which in fact we call a tradition, it’s not a mascot. Ironically the year that that happened the chairman of our national board of directors is the owner of the Osceola and Renegade campaign and on Friday they had the anniversary of the campaign and I was able to go to a dinner, I think there has been about 11 or 12 riders in the history of that, and they had them there for that event. So we have been able to embrace the Osceola and Renegade program more than most because of the fact that the owner of the program was our chairman. His dad started the program 35 years ago, he now owns it. He owns the horses. He owns the whole operation, the whole thing. We started a tradition here at the Alumni Association a few years ago that every year our chairman, when they are finished with their year as chairman, gets a feather from Osceola’s spear that was on the spear that year. They get and we put it in a big frame, or shadowbox.” (FSU Official 1. Personal Communication, 2013)

Another university official pointed out that, although the Osceola and Renegade tradition is iconic and draws attention to the university athletic program, there are some challenges with having such an iconic symbol on campus and not having complete control over it as part of the university brand. The official stated,

“I think our connection to the Seminole tribe is very unique. Every once in a while there will be some brouhaha kind of like what the Washington Redskins right now where somebody gets it into their mind that, ‘you’re being insensitive to an entire race of people, calling yourself the Seminoles, and doing war chops, and all that’. Our relationship with the Seminole tribe is so good and so mutual that those issues are very easily resolved. So in that respect FSU is often cited as having the best tradition in college football for Renegade and Osceola. That whole tradition of riding the horse into the stadium and planting the flaming spear and the horse buckling and running off, that is something that is very specific to Florida State University and most, if not all other schools, have the fuzzy mascot that bounces around on the sidelines. We don’t dress anybody up in a costume that hides their whole body to make them look like an Indian. We are very respectable in that respect. But that can be a double edged sword. The university doesn’t own Osceola and Renegade, a family in Tallahassee owns that
program and then they basically lease it to the university. So you will know none of our trademarks show Osceola riding Renegade with a flaming spear because the university doesn’t own that, the Durham family owns that and they’re very connected to the university. So there is a very good relationship there. FSU has the best tradition in college football but we technically don’t own it.” (FSU Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

For fans, the image of Osceola and Renegade is one of state pride. These fans feel that the deep connection between the Seminole Indians and the state of Florida means that the appropriation of the Native American imagery is a symbolic way of representing the state of Florida to the rest of the nation. As one fan commented,

“I think it’s a really big part of FSU’s image and their brand. Of course, going back to Chief Osceola that’s a big image for FSU which I think is a good positive image. I think it brings positive light to the image for FSU and the image for Florida... I think, growing up in Florida, and the rivalries between Florida State and Florida, their main image is the alligator which contributes back to Florida. So even with the Seminoles, the Gators, and the [University of Miami] Hurricanes, it gives a little advertising to the region and it says what it unique about this region and that rivalry is also big for this region as well.” (FSU Fan 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

The Seminole logo and the accompanying traditions are very well recognized outside of the university and generally appreciated by the fans and students that I encountered.

Still, despite the prevalence of the Seminole identity on campus, the popular symbolism of Osceola and Renegade, and the connection between the school athletic identity and the history of the state of Florida, there is a concerted effort to draw a clear and definite line between FSU’s athletic and academic identities. From the academic perspective, the use of the Seminole and other Native American marks used by the athletic department, should not be used to represent the academic values and initiatives of the university. As one official explained,
Figure 6.5 A student wears an Indian headdress to the set of College GameDay at Florida State

Figure 6.6 Fans stand with replicas of the spear used by Osceola and Renegade outside of Doak Campbell Stadium

Figure 6.7 Fans wear faux Indian headdresses outside Doak Campbell Stadium before a football game
“It is an athletic trademark so for them to use it and use repetitiously is in their best interest. What’s interesting from an administrative perspective there’s no concern that it’s more recognizable, I think from a fan perspective it’s often curious to some people why the university, the academic side, doesn’t use it as its identifying trademark. But a lot of the faculty and staff think that is something for athletics so a Seminole head representing the college of nursing makes no sense.” (Official Interview 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

One reason for the division between academic and athletic identity at Florida State is the racial nature of the mascot. Officials in academics were visibly less comfortable discussing the Seminole identity and the depiction of Chief Osceola, with one declining to answer the question as to whether they believed the Seminole athletic identity was racist. To understand this it is first necessary to contextualize the Osceola and Renegade spectacle, and the other White interpretations of Indianness on campus during football weekends, within a historical perspective. When the Seminoles was first decided upon as the official team nickname of FSU athletics the school began fashioning faux-Indian iconography to symbolize the athletic program. This led to several different Indian mascots, starting in the 1950s with,

“Sammy Seminole, portrayed by a White male dressed in a breechcloth and single feather, led the team onto the field and served as an all-purpose cheerleader throughout the game. Even more carnivalesque, Chief Fullabull arose as the mascot at home basketball games, performing silly stunts and clown-like routines, until the American Indian Fellowship, in concert with ‘off campus Seminole people’ pressured the administration to retire it in the early 1970s. Alongside these caricatures, ‘Savage Sam,’ a dancing, axe wielding, feathered figure, emerged as the university’s logo. All of these figures faded into memory, displaced by a reincarnation of Chief Osceola, the Seminole renegade renowned for his armed resistance against the United States in the 1830s. This fundamental ritual has… reinvigorated and transformed Seminole Pride.” (King &Springwood, 2000, p. 285)

Since the 1980s and 1990s, when the racist depiction of Native Americans at sporting events entered into the public forum of debate, the university has sought out the Seminole Tribe
of Florida for approval of the use of the Chief Osceola imagery. The thinking goes that if the Seminoles Tribe of Florida signs off on the use of the Seminole athletic identity and the depiction of Chief Osceola, then there is nothing inherently racist about their use (King & Springwood, 2000). This ignores the fact that several Native American groups, including members of the Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma, have disapproved of the Seminole identity being co-opted by FSU athletics and that the image created by the spectacle of Osceola and Renegade is neither accurate of the Seminole Indians and nor is it a flattering image. Kind and Springwood write,

“When Osceola leads the FSU football players onto the field, he signifies armed resistance, bravery, and savagery, and his appearance builds on the prevailing understandings of Indianness that construct Native Americans as aggressive, hostile, and even violent. Although numerous other attributes would evoke qualities esteemed on the playing field, violence, competition, and force are invested in the FSU athletic symbol. When read against the past and present representations of Native Americans within American popular culture, this association becomes clear: It draws on the Euro-American knowledges of Native American cultures, misconceptions that paint them as savage warriors removed from the mores of civilization and constantly eager for combat. To characterize the indigenous Seminole people or any other native nation of North America as warlike or bellicose dehumanizes and demonizes them. More important, it disregards both their cultures and their histories. It reduces them to a single aspect of life, namely, war, ignoring the numerous other experiences and activities more valued than war. Osceola, as portrayed by FSU, thus offers a stereotypical representation of Native American cultures and histories informed by racist notions and romantic sentiments.” (King & Springwood, 2000, p.285-286)

Furthermore, the use of the Seminole imagery inspires even more White interpretations of “Indianness” on game days. Many students dress in faux Indian regalia, including feather headdresses and buckskin dresses (see Figure 6.5, Figure 6.6, and Figure 6.7). There are painted faces and fake weaponry (tomahawks and spears being the most common) at tailgates. In producing the Seminole as a representation of the university athletic program, Florida State not creates a racist depiction of Native Americans, but it also encourages other, mostly White,
members of campus to construct their own representations of Indianness and to re-enact what are often violent and ignorant depictions of the Seminole people. Thus the apprehension by the university’s academic brand to adopt the athletics tradition; if the university were to adopt the Seminole iconography from the athletic program officially it would be openly endorsing the kind of racist displays created by the fans and athletic department on football weekends.

This does not mean that Osceola and Renegade do not make occasional appearances in university branding literature. FSU’s school commercial, played in the stadium and on the television networks who broadcast the games, features Osceola and Renegade. The commercial, shot in black and white, shows the student dressed as Osceola placing a blanket on the back of the horse as the animal stamps its feet into the dirt. A narrator reads, “A spirit roams these parts; a spirit of respect, competition, and academic greatness. Some call our spirit myth. Others call it legend.” The camera switches from the extreme close up shots of both the horse and the rider to a wider view showing the student dressed as Osceola on the horse, holding the flaming spear above his head as the horse rears back. The screen then goes black and the “War Chant” starts to play. The narrator says, “we call it Florida State University” and the academic seal appears on the screen (Florida State, 2012). One university official noted,
“Some universities choose to do more academics commercial and others choose to do more of an athletic commercial. I think ours is just a very well done branding piece and it kind of promotes the athletic spirit, the university spirit, and the Seminole tribe spirit so encompasses the university as a whole.” (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

Much of the print material used by the university includes a depiction of the Unconquered statue which depicts Osceola riding a bucking horse while brandishing a spear. The statue sits directly outside the South end zone of the football stadium which is also where the visitor’s center and the staging point for campus tours are located. The statue is not only a direct representation of the Indianness portrayed by the athletic department but is also directly implicated in football game day tradition and thus represents a clear attempt by the university to subtly co-opt the athletic iconography. Even the bags that visitors are handed to carry brochures and other branding material from the university in on official visits are marked with the Seminole head rather than the university seal.

The Seminole imagery is also occasionally co-opted by the various colleges, such as the banners used to advertise the FSU College of Business (see Figure 6.8). While each banner carries the university symbol at the top, by painting the faces of the subjects on the banners the college is still implicating them in the athletic culture on the university campus. It seems that the lesson from these examples is that Florida State uses the image of the university seal as an excuse to co-opt the racialized imagery of the athletic department in its branding materials. As one university official explained,

“There’s certainly a disconnect with ‘well in academics they use this logo and in athletics they use this logo’ but if the athletic logos we have just don’t speak to a university as a whole. Still, if you ask 100 people what our logo is 99.9 of them are going to say it’s the Seminole logo.” (FSU Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Another university official added,

“I think that between the Seminole head and Osceola that’s kind of a link that spans across athletics and the university. It’s not just athletics its academics as well so that’s
something that bridges the whole campus together.” (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

By having the university seal in place the school can still claim that it has a separate identity when in fact the reality is that the athletic image of the university has become the most visible symbol of the academic brand.

This leads to the question of why the university would choose, despite the racist connotations of the iconography of the athletic department, to co-opt the athletic brand and use it to promote academics at the university? According to one university official, the answer is simply money,

“Athletics has their own marketing team, their own logos, we call them trademarks here at FSU, the Seminole logo, the spear, are not used by the academic side because those are very symbolic of our athletics program which is very separate from our academic program. Academics works much more with the university seal. Now does it spill over? Absolutely. For example, university communications handles the Florida State license plate program which is the one you can go over to the DMV and buy. There is only one, and it has the Seminole head and the two national championship years. So when the university needs to release one product it typically leans on athletics because that is the more recognizable trademark. The university does receive money for scholarships for money that is generated by the license plate so it is in our best interests to have a sellable license plate. That’s not to say the university seal on a license plate wouldn’t sell but chances are when people but a license plate that is ‘Florida State’ they want a Seminole head on it. Same goes true for licensed merchandise. Florida State University licenses the Seminole head, the spear, all of that. They license it to t-shirt companies, to notebook companies, to bookstores. Again we take a cut of all those licenses so it’s in our best interests to do the ones that will sell.” (FSU Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

On FSU fan also noted,

“I think it does bring in a lot of positive things to a university. Of course money, people like the image of football when football’s successful of course and when you have a good team… Having a really good football team brings a lot of students here
and it brings a lot of success and I think it translates over to other aspects of the academic side as well.” (FSU Fan 3, Personal Communication)

While money and pre-existing recognition are simple reasons to understand, the real reason behind the use of the Seminole imagery as a replacement for the academic brand is that it fits with the institutional values of Florida State which drive the institution to fashion itself as a neoliberal university. The recognition provided by the Seminole logo is valuable to the institution because of its popularity and how it resonates with the football-aware populace. As one university official pointed out,

“Absolutely, our institutional message which airs at halftime of our football games was created by our film students. It’s black and white with the horse. I think everyone associates the horse with athletics and this is the commercial that everyone sees around the country for FSU. The president, we take the president on the road quite a bit to speak to our alumni and the last few years he has used the video in his presentation. He shows it at the beginning and talks about what it all means and then shows it again at the end… There’s no question, obviously athletics is an opportunity for alumni to gather around an event because it’s on TV and we have a network of 80 Seminole clubs and chapters and they all host game watching parties so you know if you are in Iowa or if you are California or wherever you’re at you can go and gather with your friends and it’s sort of this coalescing activity. So we do have this sort of relationship, we operate those clubs, we are the managing partner, but we do so in conjunction with Seminole Boosters which is the fundraising arm for the athletic program. “ (FSU Official 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

Because the Seminole logo is more visible, due to the high popularity of the football team, the university uses it to relate to consumers. It is reflective of the economic reality that the university academic brand is not well known, and that if the institution wants to compete for attention in a crowded academic marketplace the Seminole logo, and its popularity, represents a more effective marketing strategy than the university seal. It is, in essence, a reflection of the university’s status as a neoliberal institution. Being identified through the adoption and practice of neoliberal logics dictates that Florida State operate as efficiently as possible, and that includes
utilizing the brand image that will be the most efficient in raising awareness and attracting people to the university, even if that image is not something that members of the academic branches of the university are comfortable with. As one university official pointed out,

“They are the most visible, it’s what’s next to our name on the ESPN score screen. Because our football games are often nationally televised the Seminole head is on the field at the 50 yard line. It’s just more visible.” (FSU Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

The pre-existing visibility of the Seminole imagery makes it the more efficient brand image for the university and, even though the racial nature of the football identity is not an image that many in the academic side of the university are comfortable with, it has become the de facto brand of the university as a whole.

It is disingenuous to say that the university had no part in making athletics the primary image of the university. If that were the case then athletic images such as the Unconquered statue and the Seminole head wouldn’t be appearing in the branding material created for the academic institution. The university is still implicated in the proliferation of the athletic image of the Seminoles in their own branding material. Florida State’s own identity as a neoliberal institution dictates that the university be operated to maximize efficiency. In that sense, the adoption of the Seminole logo makes perfect sense since using the pre-existing popularity of the football identity to further the institutional prestige of the university is more efficient than creating an entirely new brand image and trying to generate fan interest for that brand. The Seminole brand then effectively operates as an almost ironic reflection of the logics which govern the university brand. While university officials may be hesitant to utilize racist images to promote the brand of the entire institution, their use is necessary if Florida State is to follow its own brand promise and act as an efficient, neoliberal university. Thus the university has co-opted the athletic identity of the football program as a means to market the institution, and their efforts, combined with the popularity and proliferation of the Seminole identity, have meant that the university’s accepted branded identity has become the same racist image that the academic side of the university had been trying to distance itself from.
6.3 Seminole Uprising

The implications of allowing the football brand image to become the most prominent image of the university have been numerous. With football iconography as the primary image of the institution, Florida State has in essence put its university brand in the hands of the athletes and boosters who are involved with the program. Furthermore, utilizing the athletic image as the primary identifier has elevated the public awareness of the hedonistic behavior associated with football weekends, including binge drinking and tailgating. In this section I will detail how the use of the Seminole imagery has impacted the university brand. First I will detail how the use of football imagery in the university brand has shifted some of the brand building power of the university onto the athletic department and the boosters, and then examine how this has impacted the university brand. Secondly I will be to describing the drinking culture at Florida State and then analyze how promoting football has brought this into the forefront of the public image of the university. Finally I will examine Florida State as a neoliberal university in the context of the boosters and drinking culture I describe in the first two sections and analyze how these factors are implicated in the logics of the neoliberal university.

As a result of the university supported promotion of the Seminole image, the university becomes beholden to the athletic department. This means that the university image is often at the mercy of the football team’s record. As one student commented,

“When they’re winning it does contribute to the university. When they’re losing not so much because we are in such tight competition with the University of Florida in every aspect that I feel like when we lose it’s one more thing like, “Oh you go to FSU, did you not get in to UF? Is that why?” (FSU Student 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

This goes back to the earlier discussion in this chapter of the university using ranking systems and ratings to justify the strength of the brand. Football is yet another rating system by which the value of the entire athletic brand is evaluated, which puts a tremendous amount of pressure on the football program to carry the university as it is the primary location of the Seminole imagery which the university is built on. As one FSU student noted,
“I know they push football to be really big and they push them to win a lot so football can be internationally known, so that our school can be known internationally. They also recruit players that people look up to and probably how those players. What those players do is kind of the image of the school.” (FSU Student 1, Personal Communication, 2013)

This can cause a problem as the superstar status of many football players on the Florida State campus often opens them, and by extension the university, up to criticism when players become the focus of media attention. As one university official explained,

“This 18-19 year old students will be thrust into a national spotlight. They will be walking off the field and immediately have a microphone shoved in their face and now they are speaking to the world and now they are a Florida State representative. Not technically, they’re not charged with being spokespeople for the university but they are put into that situation when that happens. Again these are students who should be well spoken. So there are times when all people see is our athletics but hopefully that is a doorway for them to learn more.” (FSU Official 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

Even more threatening is the possibility of a player running afoul with the law and potentially becoming a media subject for negative behavior. However, football players are valued for their ability to bring in prestige and money to the university and, when their own actions impact the narrative of the university, the administration is more willing to be lenient towards its athletes. This is not a relatively new phenomenon at Florida State as the institution has had many issues with players being implicated in criminal investigations, including,

“The team’s kicker, Sebastian Janikowski, was known for his brawling at campus bars in the late 1990s. Another was accused of soliciting sex from an undercover female police officer. Wide receivers Peter Warrick and Laverneus Coles went on a discounted shopping binge in 1999 that led to a charge of theft. Warrick was a Heisman Trophy candidate at the time and was suspended by Bowden before rejoining the Seminoles. Coles was kicked off the team. He’d had previous run-ins including a suspension for a misdemeanor battery charge and academic issues. ‘It’s not like I killed the president,’ Warrick told the media then. Warrick initially was charged with a felony, and Bowden
joked at the time that he was ‘praying for a misdemeanor’. In 2002, quarterback Adrian McPherson was being investigated on gambling and theft charges. Bowden dismissed him from the team. ‘When they recruited me, the coaches came and told my parents that they would be my parents away from home,’ McPherson said. ‘I went to the coaches and they turned their back on me.’ However, later, McPherson pled no contest to theft, forgery, and gambling charges.” (Freeman, 2010, p. 229-230)

There was also an incident in 1994 when, with several sports agents footing the bill, six players on the Seminole football team entered a Tallahassee Foot Locker store and left with nearly $6,000 in merchandise, a violation of the NCAA’s amateurism statute. The incident resulted in Steve Spurrier, the Head Coach of rival Florida, to quip that FSU stood for ‘Free Shoes University’ (Freeman, 2010). In the year 2013, two Florida State players were implicated in sexual assault allegations by members of the Tallahassee community. Wide receiver Greg Dent is currently on trial for sexual battery and Jameis Winston, who won the Heisman trophy following the 2013 season, was implicated, though never charged, in the rape of another FSU student. Both incidents made national headlines that led many media members to question the safety of both Florida State and the Tallahassee community. The latter incident with Winston caused many people to believe that the university and city police department may be attempting to cover up the behavior of football players who bring prestige to FSU. When asked about whether the university was concerned that the football programs players could potentially harm the reputation with the school because legal trouble, one university official simply stated, “That’s part of it. You live by the sword and you die by the sword. You just have to have a good explanation if something goes wrong, but that’s just part of it.” (FSU Official 1, Personal Communication)

Football players are not the only non-university stakeholders who have become implicated in the branding process of the university through the emphasis on football. The athletic department, and more specifically the boosters who raise money for athletic events on campus, are widely considered to be some of the most powerful individuals at the university. As one Florida State fan noted,

“I think it’s a marketing strategy as much as anything. I think they’d be foolish not to especially because of the money. I hate to admit it but it’s all about the money…
Actually I think that there’s a certain select group of alumni here, what I’m saying is that there’s a lot more money that comes to the school than people realize, and it’s actually just given straight up to the school. There’s a lot of money behind the scenes, and the alumni here, particularly the 1%, the upper crust of our society here they have a lot more to say about what goes on here. I think they have a lot of say and swing, because when you’re talking money when you want something done, like if they wanted to squeeze Jimbo some, not that they do that, but they could if they wanted to. I don’t think the president of this university is at the head of this university. There’s a lot more powers that be than the president.” (FSU Fan 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

The Booster group has its own suites in FSU’s athletic facilities, including offices inside of Doak Campbell Stadium. Boosters control many of the ancillary events around football games, including the Osceola and Renegade tradition and many of the fundraising events which support the athletics program. As a result, the Boosters have a tremendous amount of influence on the university and can, to an extent, control how the university is portrayed. One university official, commenting on the institutional message played during football games, remarked, “It’s easier to keep fans than to get new fans so we try to appeal to them. We know there are season ticket holders so we just try to keep their interests and it’s always interesting new ways to pique their interests and keep them engaged. The one thing they can do is advocate, so if they are going to talk to their friends about Florida State and say, ‘oh did you see that commercial’ so I think that’s the best way to promote to your current fan base.” (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

In order to keep the Boosters engaged so that they can advocate on behalf of the university, the university is beholden to the Booster’s concept of what the institution is and how it ought to be portrayed.

Most recently this has meant renewing the relationship between Seminole Boosters and former Head Coach Bobby Bowden. Bowden was the coach who first brought national championships to the Florida State football program and his image will always be invariably linked to Florida State football. His image appears as a statue outside Doak Campbell Stadium and on a stained glass window on the exterior façade of the North end of the stadium. Even the
field inside of the football stadium is named Bobby Bowden Field. As one university official explained,

“I think that every institution has their own unique qualities, I may be a bit biased but I think from an outsiders perspective looking we have certain qualities that are unique and special. Bobby Bowden, he built this program from the ground up and he used to go from sorority house to sorority house, from dorm to dorm, inviting kids to come to the games. So he grass roots built the programs. “ (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

However since his dismissal in 2009, Bowden had not returned to the Florida State campus. That changed during the 2013 season, when Bowden was offered a contract by the Seminole Boosters to appear on behalf of the fundraising group and to help raise funds for Seminole athletics. As one university official explained,

“Currently Bowden is an ambassador for Seminole Boosters and they are paying him something like $250,000 a year to do speaking engagements for different events for them and they can use him throughout the years he is under contract. This past weekend he came back which is a huge deal. IMG, Collegiate Licensing struck a deal with apparel and clothing and hats with Bobby Bowden on it so revenue wise it was a huge deal for the university. Attendance wise it was big, it wasn’t a sell-out but it was close to a sell-out we had a lot of fans who might not necessarily have come to the game coming back just to see him.” (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

For the football game against North Carolina State Bowden returned to the Seminole sideline for the first time since his dismissal. To commemorate the occasion, the campus bookstore put out a cardboard cutout of the legendary coach and printed shirts with his likeness on them (see Figure 6.9). The Bowden reappearance and his use as a fundraiser for the school reflects the importance of the football image to the Seminole Boosters. The former coach’s legacy with the school is unique and is an emotional connector to members of the university community. However, by using Bowden as a fundraiser, plastering his image on banners and cutouts on campus, and selling merchandise with his likeness on it, the Boosters, and the university which owns the campus space and stores where much of this occurred, is reproducing
the football narrative embodied by Bowden. The former coach is just another symbol of the football program, and by promoting his image the Boosters are empowering the narrative of Florida State as an athletics first institution.

**Figure 6.9** Bobby Bowden’s return to Florida State by use of his likeness on merchandise in the Florida State bookstore

**Figure 6.10** A sign for a football weekend party on a street near Doak Campbell Stadium
Florida State is not only known as a football school. The university also makes regular appearances in the lists of the top party schools in the nation. While this designation is often based on, at best, dubious analysis on the part of the services who provide such ratings, the party culture at FSU does have an impact on the university image which is partially influenced by the university’s status as a national football power. Several fans and students noted that the school was home to a party culture and their observations about the nature of that culture are below,

“I know that a lot of my friends go to bars. We usually go to places like midtown pass that are like sports bars and get really drunk. Or we just go to someone’s house because it’s cheaper that way…There are a lot of people that drink underage…I actually know a couple of people who have a fake I.D., I know a lot of people actually. I’m actually one of the few people who didn’t have one. So I didn’t actually get to go to a real bar until I was 21. But I did drink at home, so from personal experience yes. But I think it kind of helps the downfall of drinking, because when you turn 21 since the only thing you can do is go to a bar legally now.” (FSU Student 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

“Yeah, it’s a party school. We’re consistently ranked in the Top Ten for party schools. I mean I haven’t been to a lot of other universities but I’ve definitely seen a lot of people come here and not be able to keep up with the pace here…I’ve been to keggers with 500 people so they can get pretty crazy and pretty big. They can be small too so it just depends…There’s definitely more of a bar culture than house parties. I would say house
party is more of the freshman sophomore on campus scene. Makes sense since you can’t drink at the bars until you are 21…Tailgating is something you don’t want to miss out on. There’s drinking, a whole bunch of people, all of your friends, and then mobbing into the game and getting rowdy at the game.” (FSU Student 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

“I don’t like going to football games. I would much rather watch them at home. My wife and I gave up going to the football games about 20 years ago. We don’t like the crowds and we don’t like to drink and party. Once upon a time we did but now. We gave it up many man years ago. The only reason we go to games now is to see our son play. We try to watch the games but it isn’t my cup of tea… While I’m at the games we don’t notice it as much now, but there’s still some drinking. Some people old enough to be my parents will bring flasks and things in and I can even smell the whiskey in the air. It’s still not as bad because 20 years ago it was rowdy. A lot more rowdier than it is now as far as it is drinking. I think the university has done a good job with that and with the tailgating. We’ve never had a problem walking through the tailgate parking lots. There’s still drinking and stuff going on with the tailgating but I don’t encounter many people who are being obnoxious who are being obnoxious because they had too much to drink. “ (FSU Fan 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

“It’s always there and it’s always been here. I think that’s just part of college life and that’s just part of going to college. I am not condoning underage drinking or anything but that’s just part of going to college.” (FSU Fan 3, Personal Communication, 2013)

While I was conducting my research on campus and around the Tallahassee area I witnessed several examples of the FSU party culture for myself firsthand. There were signs up all over town for various parties being held the week before the Miami game (see Figure 6.10). An outside company known as I’m Shmacked set up a massive outdoor party stage and roped off a parking lot outside of a strip mall one mile west of campus (see Figure 6.11). The Friday night before the game there were parties outside several houses and bars were packed, with some having lines stretching around the door.

11 The company films documentaries of colleges throwing massive parties, many facilitated by the company. There have been cases where these parties have escalated to near riot status (Otani, 2013)
Figure 6.12 The main stage at the Friday Night Block Party

Figure 6.13 Beer maker Shock Top brings customized car to advertise its product at the Friday Night Block Party

Figure 6.14 Sales of beer, including Natty Light, are common at the Friday Night Block Party
Football events in particular draw out the party culture at Florida State. Tailgating is massively popular at Florida State and the binge drinking that accompanies it is visible all across campus on game days. The party for a Florida State home football game typically begins on a Friday evening at the block parties held each week in downtown Tallahassee. The Seminole Boosters and city invite fans to visit a party which features a visiting band and exhibits by corporate sponsors. Of particular interest are the vast number of beer sponsors who turn out for the event, several of which have their own booths where alcohol is sold to visitors (see Figure 6.12, 6.13, 6.14, and 6.15). In this space the university is not only allowing drinking in conjunction with the institutional image, it is allowing the sale of alcohol and encouraging its consumption at a university event. On the day of the Miami game I strolled across campus to get a view of the tailgates. There were RV’s and cars filling up the parking lot to the Donald L. Tucker Center on the East side of campus and people drifted from tent to tent trying to carrying red solo cups with Bloody Mary’s or bottles of cheap light beer. A few blocks further west on Fraternity row there were house parties. Mobs of 20 something year old students grinded to rap music being blasted in the backyard of one fraternity house and the noise, trash, and smell of fresh vomit assaulted could be experienced from as many as three houses away. Other students gathered at local bars, crammed into outdoor patios with massive televisions to watch the game.
Outside the student section before the gates to the stadium opened a massive crowd of students, many dressed in faux Indian attire, passed around bottles or liquor and cans of Natural Light.12

Inside the stadium fans discreetly passed flasks back and forth to keep their buzz going throughout the game. Fans around campus took over the grassy patches of earth between the various campus buildings and planted tents and chairs. Some kept out what appeared to be fully stocked bars full of liquor and beer which they sipped in the shade (see Figure 6.16 and 6.17). Just South of campus were more RV’s and tents selling merchandise for both the Seminole and Hurricane football teams (see Figure 6.18 and Figure 6.19). In campus parking lots around Doak Campbell Stadium there are more booster tailgates, with RVs and tents, some with their own satellite dishes and televisions to watch games as the fans sipped from bottles of beer. For the game against Miami there had been some irritation among the fans that the tailgating areas had not been open sooner so that they could begin drinking for the game earlier. When asked why the tailgating lots had not been opened earlier, one university official pointed out that the tailgating on campus was,

“Obviously is allowed. It’s more of a booster issue. Seminole Boosters controls the parking lots for game day, any game day, on campus. Technically tailgate lots open five hours prior to game day, nine is the approved time anyone can come to go to College Gameday fans have to leave. We just ask that, some boosters have stuck to the five hours before kickoff which is 3pm, but obviously that has caused a lot of uproar and what not. What people don’t realize is there are still a lot of logistical issues that have to be worked out and that’s why we still stick to the five hours before the game. Any non-sanctioned booster lot you can still set up and tailgate any time you want. It isn’t that the campus doesn’t approve tailgating, it’s just that there are certain avenues that we have to go through logistics wise, police, camera crews coming in to make sure we can fill everything we need to do before the football game before the fans come in…It’s the whole variety of things, working with the cities to shut down avenues for us, they’ll turn streets inside and out. Police having them be able to man it for an extra hour, it costs us money if we have to open it earlier.” (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

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12 Once the students entered the stadium you could see massive piles of alcohol cans and liquor containers, some covered in what smelled like vomit, filling up the drainage grates in the street. The flies outside the student section gate were swarming the rotting trash pile but the stadium officials only a few feet away ignored it.
Figure 6.16 Fans set up their tailgates beneath trees with coolers full of beer and soda

Figure 6.17 Fans with what appeared to be a fully stocked bar of liquor tailgate on the edge of the FSU campus

Figure 6.18 FSU fans pack an RV lot south of campus in the early morning before a football game
There were only few police officers on campus and they simply patrolled a few busy streets and sidewalks listlessly (see Figure 6.20). For the university, the behavior of drunken fans, particularly during intense rivalry games against Miami and Florida where tensions are particularly high, is a concern as alcohol related violence or vulgarity could potentially harm the image of the university. As one university official explained,

“...fans get heated it’s part of the nature of sport. It’s not necessarily a bad thing, fans get heated. We have statistics from the police department they know what to look out for. They are fully prepared for this game. You do see incidents rise with rivalry games Florida, Miami, Clemson but they are fully prepared.” (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

Despite the concern that fan behavior and the widespread drinking on campus during football weekends could possibly cause damage to the reputation of the university, the Boosters are still allowed to control the campus space for game days and alcohol is rampant amongst the tailgating crowd.

By allowing the boosters and the media to contextualize and control the mediated representations of football culture on campus, Florida State is essentially privatizing and monetizing its own football culture in keeping with its identity as a neoliberal university. This can be seen in both
the privatization of campus space by the boosters for the purpose of enhancing the college football experience and the spectacalization of drinking and tailgating on campus through outside influences such as ESPN’s College GameDay. For the Boosters, the Gaines Street area on the south edge of campus represents a commercial investment to make the football culture at the university stronger and more appealing. The Gaines Street Revitalization Project was conceived by the city of Tallahassee and is intended to create a commercial district just south of the Florida State campus which would serve as a place to establish new private businesses that would primarily cater to the college and football crowds (Waters, 2013). Seminole Boosters has taken on the largest part of this project, known as College Town. This area, which was recently completed, includes new apartment complexes, retail stores, restaurants, and a night club which are entirely geared toward the college student and football visitor crowd (Waters, 2013). The official website describes it as,

“Located just two blocks from the FSU campus, College Town will provide a pedestrian friendly place for FSU nightlife, Seminole football game day, and the newest in Tallahassee restaurants, bars and live music. College Town will fill a void in Tallahassee becoming a ‘College Main Street’, the likes that will someday rival famous college towns like Boulder, Ann Arbor, and Austin, a place for a world-class college experience for future students and athletes, as well as a great place for alumni to reconnect with our University. College Town is set to be the catalyst for the revitalization and re-use of the Madison Street/Gaines Street area. From current students looking for the perfect place to meet up with friends to alumni reliving game day traditions, College Town will quickly become the ‘place to be’ in Tallahassee.” (Dining & Entertainment at College Town, n.d.)

It is, in effect, a parallel to the Eddy Street Commons development created at Notre Dame, with the only difference being that the football booster organization, rather than the university, is directing the project. Florida State has privatized the creation of its own football brand community and left it, as with the rest of the football brand, in the hands of the Seminole Boosters. The development of College Town reflects the neoliberal identity of the institution as it is the result of a privatized initiative which, supposedly, will make the university community a better place. However, in doing this the university is beholden to the football logics which
govern the Seminole Boosters and as such the development of College Town has become focused on improving the game day experience more than anything else. The website advertises rooftop pool bars with special glass overlooks facing Doak Campbell Stadium as well as several sports bars with televisions for watching games. There are expensive restaurants and a night club which advertises its bottle service and private cabanas. It is essentially a branded as a new place for people to live, drink, and go to football games all in close proximity. Thus the development of College Town on Gaines Street reflects the privatization of the university’s Seminole brand image and how the Seminole Boosters, who have become the keepers of the football brand, have justified the commercialization of the space around the south end of campus as a way to boost the profile of the university by creating new ways to consume football culture on campus.

Figure 6.20 A few police officers in squad cars patrol the tailgating on the Florida State campus

The party school-tailgating culture of Florida State is implicated in the university brand through football, primarily through media coverage of the campus leading up to the event. This is best exemplified through the program College GameDay, ESPN’s on-campus Saturday morning football pregame special whose presence is coveted by most schools who also participate in major college football. As one university official commented,

“It’s huge, the fact that one they are on campus and Doak Campbell’s right behind them. They came today and they are going to be doing behind the scenes looks and exclusive interviews with athletic officials and student athletes. I think they’ve done a piece on the
Fishers before… So that’s just a way that athletics helps different platforms.” (FSU Official 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

There is also a belief amongst fans that the university benefits from the increased exposure that the media coverage of college football generates. In the words of one fan,

“Whether it’s just a façade or a perception, and maybe a lot of it is, it brings people to this university. It brings a lot of attention to the university when ESPN is bringing possibly college GameDay here next week it just puts a real spotlight. Yes the spotlight is football and the spotlight is GameDay but there are a lot of people here that aren’t necessarily football fans, like we are. So I think it’s really good for the university, it’s really positive that way.” (FSU Fan 2, Personal Communication, 2013)

**Figure 6.21** A fan sign at ESPN’s College GameDay that reads “Jameis Will Tame Ur Strange”

**Figure 6.22** Signs and flags waving behind the set of ESPN’s College GameDay at Florida State the morning before the game against rival Miami
Yet as the university’s football culture is broadcast across the country so too are the more hedonistic rituals that accompany a college football weekend. The morning of the Miami game I attended the College GameDay taping on Langford Green, just South of Doak Campbell Stadium. The crowd of mostly college-age Seminole fans was already beginning to swell behind the main stage and many of the fans carried signs ranging from the tame references to FSU Tight End Nick O’Leary’s grandfather being a famous golfer, to the more political, “Miami’s offense runs like Obamacare”, to more sexualized posters such as the one which just read “Dildo” (see Figure 6.21, and Figure 6.22) Many of the students I encountered had brought alcohol with them, mostly light beer cans and bottles, and were drinking around campus. There were beer bongs on the ground as well (see Figure 6.23, 6.24). The spectacle of hundreds of drunk, screaming fans behind the College GameDay on the morning before the Miami game was broadcast globally through ESPN’s media platforms.

GameDay is described by university officials as an opportunity for Florida State to communicate its athletic and academic brand to the world. In reality, the show is a spectacle which sells the idea of the campus lifestyle of beer and circus described by Sperber (2002). When asked what they thought the image of FSU was for people within the state of Florida, one student remarked, “They look at us like we’re a shit-show,” because of all of the party and alcohol stories that come out of the university (FSU Student 2, Personal Communication, 2013). This is largely due to the media coverage of FSU’s tailgating and party culture. By partnering with ESPN and allowing GameDay on campus, the university is complicit in developing the mediated image of itself as a party school. The College GameDay example reveals how the university is willing to create brand partnerships and privatize its college football culture in order to garner exposure. By partnering with ESPN to distribute the Seminole brand, the university is sacrificing creative rights as to how the brand is portrayed as part of the university. As a result, the image of the university that appears on national television is that of a drunken part culture that is beholden to the football program. This is justified through the institutions reliance on the neoliberal logics and the need to efficiently and effectively create and distribute the university brand so that it can be leveraged into maximizing the value of the university. In the logics of the football as “front porch” of the university, since Seminole football is the engine of the university brand then any exposure which helps the football program is, by extension, good for the university, even if that means showing shirtless, drunken undergraduates on national television.
Thus the neoliberal image of the university is revealed in the way in which football culture on campus is proliferated. The university privatizes the iconography of the Seminole brand with the assistance of the Seminole Boosters who, due to the widespread use of the Seminole identity in lieu of the academic identity of the university as the brand image of Florida State, effectively serve as the unofficial marketing arm of the university. As a result, the football power knowledge of this group becomes the university brand and decisions to improve the football experience at FSU, particularly as it relates to the boosters, becomes essential to improving the image of the university. Also the organic drinking and tailgating component of football at Florida State is leveraged by outside companies, including ESPN, in exchange for the proliferation of the university brand image. However, the brand image that is often proliferated is not the academic brand of the institution but rather a mediated combination of the Seminole brand and depictions of risky drinking behavior. This is justified through the same football logic as the Seminole Boosters in that it is believed that what improves the football atmosphere, or in this case the image of the football atmosphere, must by extension be seen as a positive for the university.

**Figure 6.23** Florida State students sip beer on campus at the site of ESPN’s College GameDay

**Figure 6.24** A beer bong lays on the ground next to an empty beer cooler at GameDay
6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I examined how Florida State has branded and been branded as the quintessential neoliberal university. By privatizing everything from academic departments to the campus space the university brand has become an exemplar of the neoliberal logics of how a university should operate through the consumption and reproduction of those logics institutionally. This has led to the university chasing approval and affirmation of its success from outside sources including preeminent status and rankings in popular media rather than having the institution develop its own mission and goals internally. In this sense, the academic ideals of the university are not entirely in the control of the university administration.

Furthermore, while the Seminole brand embraced by the football program is inherently racist and is not completely embraced by the academic side of Florida State, it has come to represent the university as a whole because of the logics of efficiency which govern the institution. Because the image of the football program is already more widespread and more popular than the academic image of the institution, it has been unofficially used as the brand of the institution by several members of the university community. Use of the Seminole logo has been used to market everything from the Business School to the general scholarship fund at the university, and it has essentially replaced the academic brand image of the university as the recognized symbol of Florida State University. As a result, the university has tacitly endorsed the racist imagery it had hoped to avoid with the creation of a separate academic identity by following the logics of efficiency and going with the preexisting popular image of the football program rather than an image which would be less racist and would more closely resemble the image that the university administrators would like to convey about the institution.

Because the Seminole identity has come to represent the university as a whole the institution has become beholden to the football logics of outside groups such as the Seminole Boosters and ESPN. By being in control of the Seminole imagery which has become synonymous with the university, the Seminole Boosters have been given an extraordinary amount of control over the public image of the university and have leveraged that position to hold the university hostage to the football program. In their eyes, what benefits the image and prestige of the football program, the “front porch” of the university, will benefit the university as well. Likewise, the university has allowed outside companies such as ESPN to utilize the
hedonistic aspects of a college football Saturday in order to expand the brand recognition of the university, even if the image of Florida State that is projected does not mesh with the academic brand. As with Seminole Boosters, the party culture at Florida State is viewed as a necessary component to increasing the prestige and awareness of the football program and, by extension, the university itself.

In Chapter Seven I conduct my comparative analysis, bringing together the information from the case studies I have discussed in chapters 4-6. For this analysis I address each of my research questions and describe how these questions were answered in the course of my research. I also provide a conclusion to this thesis where I summarize the findings of the research and the implications of my findings on future work.
CHAPTER SEVEN

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

In Chapters Four, Five, and Six I detailed the cases for Texas A&M, Notre Dame, and Florida State, describing the unique football culture at each institution, the way in which football was implicated in the branding of the different institutions, and the various conflicts between football culture and the branded institutional identity of each school. While each of these case studies can provide unique insight into the construction of the football identity and institutional football brand of each university, a comparative analysis of these cases ought to provide insight into similarities in differences that could guide future research on football and the neoliberal university.

For this chapter, I will compare these three case studies and elaborate on the similarities and differences in how football operates as a part of the brand of each neoliberal university. Each section of this chapter will be organized around one of the three research questions I presented in the introduction of this paper. The first section will discuss the research question: Is football culture implicated in the received knowledges of and about the neoliberal university? In this section I will focus on the concept of football as the front porch of the university and the attempts to brand football culture at each institution. In the second section I will address my second research question: Is branded football culture consumed by members of the university community? Here I will focus on the discrepancy between organic and branded football culture, specifically analyzing how each is consumed and the discrepancies and similarities between the organic and branded football cultures at each institution. Finally I will discuss the third research question: Are members of the university community implicated in the surveillance of football culture on the university campus? In this section I will detail how the components of organic football culture are surveyed by the university branding process and how football culture is implicated in the university surveillance of subjects on campus. Furthermore, I will address the balance of power between organic football culture and the branded identity of each university and analyze how this impacts surveillance of each identity at these institutions. This paper will conclude with a section devoted to a summary of my findings, which will include comments on the role of football in building institutional culture and branding as well as suggestions for future research on football culture and the neoliberal university.
7.1 The Front Porch of the University

While each of the universities I studied had unique components to their football culture, each one consistently used football as a part of the university branding process. For these three institutions there was a fairly uniform logic that football served as the, ‘front porch’ of the university and that by incorporating the popular campus football team into institutional brand material there would be greater awareness and respect for the brand of the institution as a whole. This is perhaps the simplest answer to my first research question; is football culture implicated in the received knowledges of and about the neoliberal university? In this section I focus then on how football is implicated in the received knowledges of and about the neoliberal university at each of the institutions. I begin with a brief comparison of the organic football culture at each institution to define just how different football culture is between the different universities. I then analyze how organic football culture is implicated in the branded identity of each university and describe how football is used to achieve brand differentiation between the institutions by emphasizing specific aspects of their football identity.

Figure 7.1 A statue in the Northgate District near the Texas A&M campus where a statue of a student preparing for Bonfire reads “Aggie Spirit The Tradition Lives” while a Miller Lite truck unloads its contents for the nearby bars
Though the case studies I have built over the course of this paper do focus on varying components of football culture at different institutions, the organic football culture at each of the three institutions I visited was quite similar. Militarization played a major role in the culture of Texas A&M, but it wasn’t hard to find military themes at Notre Dame and Florida State either. Both Notre Dame and FSU have active ROTC programs which participate in the game day pageantry, Notre Dame’s basilica includes the inscription, “God, Country, Notre Dame”, and FSU hosts regular military appreciation days. In fact, Florida State prides itself in being a

Figure 7.2 Fans at Texas A&M carry a pack of Miller Lite across campus to their tailgate in the basketball arena parking lot

Figure 7.3 Beer cans and plastic cups litter the grounds around the Notre Dame Stadium parking lot after a football game
veteran friendly campus and advertises its own institutional connection to the military with special, football game oriented events such as flyovers, camouflage Seminole gear, and special recognition of members of the armed forces before and during games. There were similar examples of hedonistic party culture at both Texas A&M and Notre Dame as well. There certainly was no shortage of tailgating or alcohol consumption on either campus during football weekends (see Figure 7.1, Figure 7.2, and Figure 7.3). While neither Florida State nor Texas A&M are exclusively Catholic, there are paleo-conservative Christian values implicated in the football culture of both schools. At Texas A&M in particular this was quite apparent, as a number of people, including university officials, commented on how important Christian values (particularly Evangelical and conservative Catholic) was to the Aggieland community. At Florida State there was less open discussion about Christian values among fans and university officials that I spoke with, however there has been a significant amount of religious connotation in various speeches given by coaches and players within the football program. This is not restricted to the internal operations of the football team, as both Fisher and former head coach Bobby Bowden\textsuperscript{13} have spoken on behalf of the university at fundraising functions about the connections between religious faith and football (see Bilardello, 2012, Carter, 2010, and Ferrante, 2009). Each of these components from my case studies was implicated, in some form or another, in the organic football culture at each institution.

Finally both Texas A&M and Notre Dame were implicated in the same logics of neoliberal efficiency that I described at Florida State and are typified by the adoption of the logic of football as the, “front porch” of the university. For A&M, this was best exemplified in the use of the Corps and 12\textsuperscript{th} Man; pre-existing football images that were easily recognizable as brand differentiators for the institution and which provided an efficient way to market the university. At Notre Dame this was typified in the creation of the brand of the Fighting Irish as a means to placate conservative Catholics and to craft an institutional identity that would be capable of appealing to a broader audience spectrum than either the institution’s Catholic or academic identity could do individually.

While football culture has been fitted to the institutional identity of each university, it still maintains some connection to its early cultural beginnings, when the sport was perceived to be

\textsuperscript{13} Bowden’s autobiography, Called to Coach, is in fact a memoir of how Christian faith has impacted his football career.
an opportunity for young men to learn good morals and to train their bodies for military
service\textsuperscript{14}. The hedonistic party scene can be traced to both the early days of collegiate sport\textsuperscript{15} and
the later glorification of the Animal House collegiate lifestyle described by Sperber (2002).
Together, the militarization, religiosity, and hedonistic aspects of football culture at each of these
institutions constructs football as a neoconservative cultural phenomenon. By combining paleo-
conservative masculinity and religious beliefs with military proto-fascism and neoliberal
branding values, college football organically comes to represent neoconservative philosophy
within the discourse of the university space. By incorporating college football into the university
brand, the institution is thus politicizing itself and its mission. This does not mean that all three
of universities are branded the same way, but that they all wish to operationalize football as a
part of their brand in a similar fashion.

The distinction between organic football culture and branded football culture is the
mediation of the university brand, which selects the various components of the football program
to include in the institutional brand. Because of the “front porch of the university” philosophy
embraced by each institution I visited, college football was embraced as a major part of the
university’s branding efforts. Specifically, college football came to represent the institutional
cultural identity of each university. However the connection between college football culture
and the branded identity of football within the university was not necessarily the same at each
institution.

A&M relied more heavily on militaristic iconography and tradition because of the history
of the institution as a military training center. Despite the fact that the majority of the student
body at Texas A&M is not directly involved in the Corps of Cadets, and even those students who
are involved are not all going on to military service, the university promotes the military image
of the Corps of Cadets as a standard for institutional values and ethics. At Notre Dame, the
historical importance of the football team among American Catholics is used to symbolically
represent the university’s increasingly obscure connection to conservative American Catholics.
Through the creation of the brand of the Fighting Irish, the university takes this beyond
symbolism and crafts the Catholic imagery of the institution into a commercial entity which can
be consumed by visitors during a football weekend. Florida State incorporates the Seminole

\textsuperscript{14} See the discussion of college football’s early history, particularly pages 26 and 27.
\textsuperscript{15} Tailgating has accompanied collegiate sport since the very beginning. The first intercollegiate sporting event, a
rowing competition between Harvard and Yale, had tailgating spectators (Smith, 2011).
logo despite the racist overtones because the football program can be operationalized as a symbolic representation of the university’s competitive goals in academia, particularly the race for rankings. Football culture has also brought recognition to the university’s party culture, particularly through the tailgating rituals that occur prior to college football games.

This would initially suggest a hegemonic interpretation of college football culture at these institutions, where branding serves a pedagogical function of indoctrinating fans into the football values implicated in campus ritual for the purpose of advancing the branding goals of the university and the greater logics which inform those goals. In essence, the logics of neoliberalism that are inherent in the way that each of these universities operationalizes football as part of an institutional brand. However, this is complicated by the differences between organic football culture and branded football culture, as well as the resulting issues the former has caused the universities in this research who have attempted to place football near the forefront of their branding initiatives.

At Texas A&M, the military identity caused perception issues with the university; causing people to believe that the institution was still an all-male military academy. It has also placed the university in brand partnerships with the SEC and other entities that manipulate the image of the university to fit their own agenda. Notre Dame created its own brand image for football which fails to completely represent either the Catholic identity of the school implicated in the history of the football team or the academic initiatives of the institution. Florida State utilizes racist imagery in its football brand that the university has tried to subtly distance itself from and the hedonistic image that the institution does not hope to openly promote is largely centered around football culture. There is a clear conflict between the organic football culture and the branded image of football within these institutions.

While organic football culture may operate as a hegemony, the branded image of football is that of a component of a larger institution, with goals that do not necessarily coincide with everything implicated in football traditions. While the university does have some level of control in how football is centered within the university brand and has shown an ability to resist the power knowledges inherent in the organic football culture on their campus (as exemplified by Notre Dame’s aversion to direct football imagery in its brand materials, Florida State’s use of the university seal, and A&M’s attempts to separate itself from the Johnny Football narratives) these institutions each have inevitably ended up promoting sporting identities which are not
necessarily in line with the university brand. Thus, rather than operating as a form of hegemony, the branded identity of football is a negotiated narrative of the sport on campus that is subject to evaluation and transformation based on external power knowledges, particularly, but not necessarily exclusively, interpretations of the neoliberal university.

The branded football identity of these universities was intended to act pedagogically, however the idiosyncratic relationship between organic and branded football culture has resulted in a constant power struggle between the brand ideals of what football should mean to the university and the organic relationship of football to the campus community. This is even further complicated by the presence of other brands on each university campus which have formed partnerships with the football programs and have an impact on how that football culture is perceived. Rather than a hegemonic relationship, the difference between branded (by the university and other entities) and organic football culture on these campuses reflects a more Foucauldian relationship, whereby the power knowledge of the football school is negotiated between the mediated brand of football, presented through the university and the corporate partners who associate themselves with the university football programs, and organic football history and tradition. These power knowledges of what football is to the university are played out on a public stage and, because of the use of college football as the “front porch of the university,” each of these institutions has shown that their college football brand has come to represent something which is not completely symbolic of the university or its missions. While each of these universities has different interpretations of what college football culture is intended to symbolize, military discipline and values at Texas A&M, Catholic tradition and beliefs at Notre Dame, or competitiveness and efficiency at Florida State, the result of these interpretations being negotiated by other branding filters as well as the organic football history and tradition at each institution means that the institutional reading of football culture is not the only power knowledge being consumed within that space, if it is being consumed there at all.

16 This is particularly relevant to my discussion of the relationship between Florida State and ESPN College GameDay in Chapter Six.
7.2 Consuming Brand Football

In the previous section I discussed how, although football is implicated in the university’s brand narrative, the institutional narrative of football is not the only one being consumed on these university campuses and possibly might not be consumed at all. To this I directed my second research question: Is branded football culture consumed by members of the university community? The answer is not as simple as the answer to my first research question and perhaps needs a bit more of an explanation at the institutional level. While each of the three universities that I studied had a branded football identity, that identity was often obfuscated by the more popular organic culture of football of the mediated image of football presented by other corporate entities. While nearly every member of the campus community seemed to recognize the dominant power logic of football as the “front porch” of the university, very few could actually say what that front porch was. This was particularly evident in my planned research questions, especially the first question; are there any iconic football traditions at your institution? While the people I interviewed at all three campuses unanimously agreed that their respective institutions all had iconic football traditions, there was a strong disagreements for what those traditions are. In this section I will describe the variances in response to this question for each university and detail what this means for the consumption of brand football at each institution.

Texas A&M had some variance between respondents. While most were able to identify the 12th Man as a football tradition and the Corps of Cadets as being implicated in several of the football weekend rituals, there was some discrepancy as to what other traditions on campus were. University officials, who have situated the Corps as the focal point of the university brand, were more likely to point out Midnight Yell, Aggie Muster, or Silver Taps, which are all traditions inspired by the Corps of Cadets. The Corps members I spoke with also listed these traditions as the main part of the game day experience and also added the band and fight songs, which are performed by the Cadets in the Fightin’ Texas Aggie Band. There were some alumni who also used Corps traditions, though they primarily referenced the now defunct bonfire tradition. For these Aggie fans the memory of the bonfire was a strong symbol of what it meant to be an Aggie and the masculine hegemony embodied in bonfire was something that the university needed to replace. Fans with only a proximal connection to the university and students considered tailgating to be one of the university’s biggest traditions and named the hedonistic rituals before
games before they listed any Corps rituals, if they mentioned any at all. There were even a few fans and students who mentioned Johnny Football as a university tradition, something that the university officials explicitly stated was not intended to be a part of the institutional brand. In general, the 12th Man was agreed to be a fitting representation of the university, however there was a considerable amount of difference as to what else constituted the university’s football brand image. Yet, while the 12th Man and Corps of Cadets can be said to define the essence of Aggieland, the identification of tailgating and Johnny Manziel as being a part of the university’s brand image seems to indicate that there is more being consumed here than just the university’s branded football identity. Furthermore, as several university officials pointed out, there is a considerable amount of concern that the identity of the Corps and the 12th Man is being consumed in a way which is not representative of the intended brand of the institution. This is particularly true in the instances where outside media sources, such as the SEC, CBS, and ESPN provided a mediated image of the university that, according to officials, caused people to believe that the institution was an all-male military academy rather than a large public institution.

At Notre Dame, there was almost no agreement whatsoever on the iconic football traditions of the university. University officials focused on the golden dome and the symbolism of the football team’s helmets as well as the band, which was the most common representation of the football team in the university’s branding material. Meanwhile others focused specifically on the religiously situated traditions on campus, particularly symbols like Touchdown Jesus and rituals such as pregame prayer, postgame Mass, and visiting the grotto. Here the religious component and attraction of Notre Dame football was highlighted by many fans and students who felt that the Catholic identity of the football team was the primary identity of the football team. Still others noted the Rudy story17 and film, the leprechaun mascot, “Play Like a Champion Today” sign, and tailgating as university traditions, all of which seem to fall under the brand of the Fighting Irish. The majority of fans and students, as well as a few university officials, provided answers from all three categories. This seemed to confirm my on campus observations that the academic, religious, and Fighting Irish identities all were competing for space on the university campus. While the brand of the Fighting Irish represents the university’s attempt to combine the academic and Catholic identities of the institution, there seemed to be a

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17 Rudy is short for Rudy Ruettiger, who famously walked on to the Notre Dame football team and, in the last game of his senior year, was allowed to play. The story was made into a film starring Sean Astin and the real Rudy has since gone on to be a motivational speaker.
recognition that the football brand of the university did not wholly encompass either the Catholic or academic identities of the institution. While the Notre Dame brand of the Fighting Irish was an attempt to combine these two identities on the university’s terms using the football team’s popularity, there were still a number of people, particularly students and alumni, who rejected the notion that the popularity of the football team was of major importance to the university goals and identity. For these people, the brand of the Fighting Irish was something created for the so-called “subway alumni”, the thousands, if not millions, of American Catholics who supported Notre Dame only because of the historical relationship between American Catholicism and the university football team. These fans are the reason Notre Dame has become a Disneyfied campus and, in the eyes of the students and alumni I spoke with, are the reason that the brand of the Fighting Irish even exists in the first place. While there was a general acceptance that football, when being utilized as the “front porch” of the university through the brand of the Fighting Irish, was a useful tool for the university in brand building, the true nature of the university brand was different based on the subject I was interviewing.

Florida State had the most agreement on what the most iconic football traditions at the university were. Everybody I interviewed mentioned Chief Osceola, Renegade, and the pregame ritual of planting the spear into the grass at Doak Campbell Stadium as the most iconic football tradition. There were some students and fans who listed tailgating as another university tradition and a few listed things like the Tomahawk Chop and the War chant but overall most people simply noted the Osceola and Renegade tradition. Likewise, there was a unanimous agreement that football acted as the “front porch” of the university and that the football culture of FSU was implicated in the branding of the university for the purpose of attracting interest. Where discrepancies arose was around what the university brand was and how the university was perceived by those who were not a part of the administration. While university officials described football as being a part of a larger university brand, most fans and students stated that Florida State “is” football, meaning that the Seminole identity is not a part of the university brand but rather is a main component of the brand. Not only is this inconsistent with the branded identity established by the university, but it is anathema to the goals of the institution to separate itself from the racist Seminole symbolism of the athletic department and, particularly, the football program. It also implicates the university as complicit in developing the party school culture which is particularly potent during the tailgating events on college football weekends. In
this interpretation of organic football culture, the university brand does not exist and the football identity of FSU is the brand of the institution as a whole. While there is an appreciation of what the university gains from having football as the “front porch” of the university, at Florida State there is a clear struggle in the identity of the institution as to whether the academic or football image of the institution is really in control. Because of the dominance of the logics of neoliberal efficiency on the FSU campus, the more visible and more popular football identity of the institution has a massive advantage in this struggle which is evidenced in my discussion of how several academic components of the university have defected into utilizing the Seminole football imagery as a means to increase the visibility of their own departments. In the end, attempts to incorporate football into the university brand have led to the outsourcing of the institutional identity of Florida State to booster clubs and media entities who have largely utilized the football imagery of the institution for their own purposes. While the academic brand certainly has a voice in the identity of Florida State, the logics of neoliberalism have empowered the campus football identity and those stakeholders who control that imagery over the academic brand.

In terms of what is being consumed, the branded identity of the football team at each of these institutions was consumed at least partially by the subjects I encountered, but there were varying degrees of acceptance of the football brand image. While football may be intended to represent something specific at each institution, whether that be the Corps values at A&M, the Catholic history of Notre Dame football, or the academic competitiveness at Florida State, branded football is not operating pedagogically but rather as a part of a greater discourse as to what defines football culture at each institution. Football culture in these spaces contains multiple meanings which are derived from multiple sources, and the subjects within these spaces have some ability to pick and choose how they interpret football culture at their chosen institution.

For Texas A&M, fans have chosen to adopt both the university branded image of football, based on the Corps of Cadets, as well as organic football culture components such as the Johnny Football imagery. At Notre Dame, the power of the brand of the Fighting Irish is relative to the subjects relationship with the university and beliefs in how the university should handle its image as a Catholic institution. The subjects who were more strongly polarized to either the academic image or the Catholic image of Notre Dame typically rejected the university’s attempt to create a branded middle ground with the brand of Fighting Irish. Those
subjects relating to the Florida State brand consumed the branded identity of the school football team as it was depicted ritualistically and symbolically, but did not consume the football brand as a component of the larger institution. Rather, Florida State subjects consumed an enlarged version of the football brand whereby all of the university falls under the power logics of the football program and the neoliberal logics of the university. Thus, while the branded football culture was consumed in some way by various members of the university community at each of the institutions studied, there were also other knowledges contributing to the discourse and affecting how and what aspects of the branded football culture were being consumed. Members of the university community agreed that football was useful as the “front porch” of their institution but could not agree on what the football identity of the each school was or what it represented. Instead, members of the campus community simply accepted the very neoliberal idea that football represented the most efficient and effective way to spread the brand of the university, despite the fact that the brand of the university was, in all three cases, being manipulated by football logics which undermined the academic identity of each institution. This underscores that, while each institution has control over the branded image of the football program, there are other sources contributing to the college football discourse on the campus space which can affect the image and perception of both the football program and the universities themselves.

7.3 Surveillance and Power of “Beer and Circus”

In Chapter One I discussed Foucault’s depiction of the Panopticon as a method of surveillance for various power knowledges. Throughout this chapter I have described college football culture as a discourse between the branded image of football at these different universities and the various mediated identities and organic components of the college football cultures which were not included in the branded football identity. Thus I have read college football culture as something unique to the different circumstances of each institution rather than as a single, uniform entity. In this section I will address my final research question: Are members of the university community implicated in the surveillance of football culture on the university campus? To do this I will compare how the different circumstances of the institutions
I have studied create surveillance technologies and analyze how members of the campus community are implicated as subjects as part of a unique brand football culture.

I discussed the subjection of the campus community fairly explicitly in Chapter 4.3, where I detailed the saga of Johnny Manziel and how his image was deemed deviant from the branded image of the Corps of Cadets and he was subsequently stricken from the university brand. For Texas A&M, the explicit values of the institution and the openness of the military identity of the institution make subjection fairly straightforward, as those who are not members of the Corps become labeled as the other, or in Aggie parlance, two percenters. However, this surveillance is occurring through the power knowledges of the mediated and organic football cultures as well as the university brand. As officials noted in my interviews, there is increasing concern about alternative perceptions of the university as an all-male military academy, a concept which is promoted by media coverage of the football program. Furthermore, the old guard of former students are still very tied to the military tradition of the university and they have worked to preserve as much of the organic football culture of the university as much as possible. While football culture does produce technologies of surveillance on the university campus, those technologies are not necessarily the intention of the institutional brand. Rather, by promoting football as the front porch of the university, A&M becomes complicit in reproducing the technologies of surveillance inherent in the organic and mediated football identities of Aggie football. While the brand may actively promote the surveillance of the subjects based on the Corps values (particularly in the Johnny Football case), the university is also implicitly endorsing the traditional history of the Corps, which others all non-military members of the university community under the label of two percenters.

At Notre Dame those in the campus space are surveyed by the brand of the Fighting Irish. The Disney-fied campus space, which has constructed the university as the physical manifestation of the brand of the Fighting Irish and, acts a specialized zone, whereby the subjects within that space are expected to perform specific roles in order to reproduce the branded Notre Dame football experience. For students this means waking up early to set up special booths on the campus lawn and participating in ritualistic traditions with their dorms (such as floating for the St. Edward’s dorm). For fans this means traveling to the various attractions on campus, visiting the grotto, the trumpets in the dome, and the pregame pep rally on Friday night. This also means buying the latest Fighting Irish merchandise at the store and spending money at the
Notre Dame controlled Eddy Street Commons. Each member of the community has a very specific defined role within the branded campus space and the subjects, particularly the students and staff who actually reside on and around the campus space, are become actors, performing the brand of the Fighting Irish for the entertainment of visiting fans. Because the brand of the Fighting Irish is not completely beholden to either the academic or Catholic identity of the university but is a rather a malleable, commercial representation of both, deviance from the normalized Notre Dame body is impossible to locate. Simply put, subjects are surveyed based on their consumption of the brand of the Fighting Irish. Because this brand is based entirely on consuming a distilled combination of both the Catholic and academic identities of the institution, it leaves very little room for variance. A student who chooses to study in the library rather than engage in the football rituals of a Fall Saturday is still performing the academic perspective of the brand of the Fighting Irish. Fans who skip pregame festivities and tailgating to attend Mass are still performing the Catholic perspective of the football brand. Those who spend the day drinking in the tailgating lots North of campus are still performing the rituals of a Notre Dame football Saturday. Even opposing fans, who play the part of the heathen hordes in the university’s symbolic football crusade, are implicated in the creation of the brand of the Fighting Irish because without them there would be no pretext for utilizing the decades old image of the Notre Dame football team as American Catholicism’s “shock troops”. This does not mean that deviance is impossible; theoretically one could concoct outlandish scenarios where subjects could deviate from the brand of the Fighting Irish. As mentioned in the previous section, not all members of the university community were consuming the received knowledge of the brand of the Fighting Irish as being representative of the university. Nevertheless, it is impossible to avoid playing a part in the reproduction of the brand of the Fighting Irish once an individual has decided to locate themselves on the remote, isolated campus space, even if they do not agree with the narrative that the football brand represents.  

Surveillance of branded football culture at Florida State is almost completely opposite of the surveillance technologies at Notre Dame. The university branded image of football, that is football as a component of the university as a whole which does not speak for the academic or research missions of the institution, but rather provides an access point through which people can

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18 Naomi Klein (2010) discusses this in her description of the Branded Village, particularly the Roots Reef Point Resort which is described as, “‘like living in a billboard’” (p. 153).
become familiar with FSU, is overshadowed by organic football culture, which is the true power knowledge controlling the space. Rather than football being a smaller part of a whole institution, as the university football brand would suggest, football becomes the symbolic representation of the entire university. This actually makes sense. Florida State officials and branding material espoused the importance of the university being competitive (both in academic rankings and in athletic competition) and being highly efficient, which is essentially an acknowledgement of the neoliberal logics of economic efficiency, which I described in the Introduction, being the driving force of surveillance on campus. It isn’t efficient for Florida State to have two different university identities and the academic brand was demonstrably less useful for Florida State’s attempts to situate itself within a crowded academic marketplace. Thus many departments and colleges within the university have chosen to adopt the Seminole symbolism of the football program in conjunction with and, in some cases, in lieu of the academic symbols of the university (see Chapter 6.1). In doing this, the powers of surveillance have shifted entirely away from the university brand and onto the football powers on campus \(^{19}\). In effect, the surveillance on campus is based on how much individuals buy in to the organic and corporate mediated football culture, with the concept of football being the “front porch” of the university being used as a pretext for allowing football culture to define the institution. The end result is very similar to Texas A&M, as subjects on campus are implicated in the surveillance of organic and mediated football culture, which includes components of that culture which are not endorsed by the university brand. For FSU, this means that the Seminole identity and the consumption of the hedonistic aspects of football culture become the technologies for surveillance on campus.

Where Florida State and Texas A&M differ is that, while A&M has embraced the combination of football and academic identity by utilizing the same marks and constructing the institutional goals and identity in the symbolism and parlance of Aggieland mystique, Florida State is still working to create separate academic and athletic brand identities. This seems largely to be based on the fact that Seminole identity embraced by the organic football culture is racist and the university does not want to have itself defined by racially charged imagery. However, because of the power knowledges of competition and efficiency, the logo discrepancy has created a

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\(^{19}\) This was discussed in Chapter 6.2 when I described the perception that the Boosters actually controlled the image of the university.
situation where, rather than have the university surveys the campus culture, the football culture becomes a technology which surveys the institution.

One of the recurring themes in my discussion of the consumption of football culture at each institution was that multiple people, mostly fans and students, listed tailgating as a tradition at their institution. While religious ideologies and militarization were implicated in each of the different football cultures researched, tailgating and general alcohol consumption stood out because of how integrated it was into the game day ritual of each institution. I discussed issues with alcohol and college sports in Chapter One and the concept of “Beer and Circus” in the introduction. Both were visible on each campus as the spectacle of college football was largely connected to ritualized alcohol consumption and rationalized as part of the college experience. None of the university brands actively promoted the hedonistic game day rituals as part of the football brand that was presented as part of the “front porch” of the university. Rather, the “Beer and Circus” was primarily located in both the organic football culture of each institution and the mediated image of football culture at each campus. For Texas A&M and Florida State, this was primarily visible when ESPN’s College GameDay visited campus, as the show displayed hundreds of fans and undergraduates drinking on campus as they partied behind the stage where the show was filmed. For Notre Dame, who did not host College GameDay, there was still a large amount of alcohol present on campus during football weekends.

At each school, football games were a pretext for the consumption of alcohol and the ritualistic tailgating and drinking games I observed on each campus underscored this assertion. At each school local bars were filled to the brim from the night before until the day after games. Students stumbled across campus while carrying cans of cheap beer. There were fans tailgating on and around campuses with RVs for some games as early as the Thursday before the contest. While alcohol was not a part of any of the university’s branded football image, it was certainly a major component of the organic football culture at each institution. The surveillance of the hedonistic celebrations before football games underscored the balance of power at each of the campus. Each institution utilized local law enforcement to contain the “beer and circus” on campus for college football weekends and law enforcement officers were common place in my travels across each campus. In addition, College GameDay brought its own security to the Texas A&M and Florida State campuses when it visited and these officials stood guard around the set
to ensure that none of the students or fans would do something that could disrupt the show or cause ESPN to be fined by the FCC.

Still, neither group seemed too interested in curbing the consumption of alcohol or stopping risky drinking behavior that I witnessed on campus. This underscores the relationships that exist within the campus space in regards to college football culture, as it is possible to see how the knowledge of organic football culture, where drinking is a celebrated component of Fall Saturdays, becomes the power knowledge of the campus space which is enforced through the surveillance mechanisms provided by the university. By choosing to allow tailgating culture on campus and surveying it on the terms of the dominant organic football power logics, the institutions become complicit in the proliferation of the non-brand related drinking culture on campus and subservient to the power knowledge of organic football culture. If football is the front porch of the university, then each institution is implicating tailgating and alcohol consumption as part of its university image, even if that is not the intended identity the institution was trying to create. Sperber writes that,

“The bottom line is clear: many Big-time U administrators want to have it all ways – big time college sports and no beer – but that is an oxymoron. University officials welcome the circus, but now they wish to keep the beer wagons away; however, the collegiate subculture, aided and abetted by the alcoholic beverage industry and the people who run college sports, demands beer. Whether college presidents and their hordes of assistants like it or not, beer-and-circus is a done deal, as permanent a part of their campus as their Collegiate Gothic-style buildings.” (2001, p. 192)

While the football culture at each institution reproduced its own variety of college football culture, each university was complicit in the manufacturing of “beer and circus”. This may reflect a broader standard of what is implicated in the major college football identity nationally, meaning those who approach an institution through college football are expecting “beer and circus”.

The surveillance at each of these institutions was quite different and reflected the discrepancies between the various relationships between organic football culture and branded football culture at each institution. In regards to Texas A&M, the organic football culture was by far the most embedded within the university brand but the institution was still complicit in
surveying campus subjects through the logics of the Corps, including the ones it had tried to exclude from the institutional brand. At Notre Dame, where the football brand of the Fighting Irish represents a conglomeration of both the academic and Catholic identity of the institution, the entire campus reproduced the athletic image to create a brand community which implicated all subjects within the campus space in the consumption and reproduction of the institution’s football brand, even if the individuals did not believe that the football identity was an appropriate representation of the institution. Florida State, meanwhile, had separation between the academic and football brands because of the implications of the racist images used with the Seminole athletics. Nevertheless, the university relied upon the organic football culture to represent the institution and was complicit in surveying subjects on campus through the power logics of Seminole football. For each of these universities, the adoption of the logic that football should serve as the “front porch” of the university inevitably led to a football identity which, in many ways, was not representative of the brand that the institution was trying to create for itself. Rather, it led to each institution becoming complicit in the reproduction and surveillance of a football culture that was created both organically over time and through media representations of “beer and circus” college athletic culture. While it would be a mistake to draw too many broad conclusions about the nature of big-time football culture and its relation to the branding and economics of institutions of higher education, it must be noted that each institution in this research attempted to use football as a method for marketing its own brand to the public at-large and, based on the results of the research I have described in this chapter, ultimately failed this goal. Rather than represent the university brand, each institution instead implicated itself in both the rituals and traditions of its own unique and organic football culture, as well as mediated depictions of the idealized “college lifestyle”.

7.4 Conclusion

In the introduction to this paper I cited Charles Clotfelter’s (2011) call for a greater understanding of the costs and benefits of the relationship between university’s and major college athletics. I wrote that the purpose of this paper would be to analyze how college football is incorporated into the brand of the university in order to understand how different institutions were trying to situate themselves inside of a competitive academic marketplace. Throughout this
research I have separated the organic college football culture, which is derived from the historical ritualization and repetition of various activities organized in and around major college football, and the branded football identity of each institution I visited, which represents the mediated image of college football presented by the university. In doing this, I discovered that, while each institution I observed did craft an institutional football brand which was in some ways different from the organic football culture of that institution, the organic football culture of the institution inevitably became the dominant power knowledge of the institution and implicated the university and those on campus in the surveillance of a cultural identity which was, in several ways, working against the brand image that each institution was trying to create.

In doing this, each institution became the site of manufactured consent for the ideologies of and about the neoliberal university (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Through their complicit reproductions of the power knowledges of the neoliberal university, in addition to the reproduction of narratives of militarization and religion among others, these institutions are branding themselves together with the ideologies of neoliberalism and cementing themselves as neoliberal institutions in the public eye through their reproduction of football narratives. Football then, as both an organic and institutionally mediated phenomenon, serves to reproduce the logics of neoliberalism and becomes the site of manufactured consent due to its status as a primary public relations tool (the “front porch of the university”) for each institution. Thus these institutions’ commitment to football and football culture only serves to further embed them in the power logics of economic efficiency which are the hallmark of neoliberalism.

My first research question asked is football culture implicated in the received knowledges of and about the neoliberal university? My research in this thesis revealed that it indeed was, largely due to the fact that each institution ascribed to the concept of football being the front porch of the university. Each university incorporated football into its brand image in a way that officials believed would fit with the overall ideals and values of the institution, creating a gateway brand through which fans could access the institution. At Texas A&M this meant the use of the Corps of Cadets and the 12th Man as symbols of the university’s core values. For Notre Dame this meant crafting the brand of the Fighting Irish as a combination of the institutions Catholic and academic identities. Finally, for Florida State this meant utilizing the football identity of the institution in lieu of the institutions academic image in order to adhere to institutional values of neoliberalism.
For my second research question I asked is branded football culture consumed by members of the university community? Over the course of my research I discovered that, while the organic and media created versions of football culture were consumed by members of the university community, the branded football culture was only partially consumed. The branded football identity, which implicated the sport as the “front porch” of the university at each institution I visited, was only consumed insofar as members of the university community accepted that football was the focal point of institutional branding. At each university, the limits imposed on football power knowledge by the university brand were rejected in favor of conceptual understandings of the specific role of football on the university campus based on the organic and mediated components of the schools’ football identity. This is what led to the overstatement of the Corps and the Johnny Football identity at Texas A&M, the conflated Celtic identity of Notre Dame, and the promotion of the Seminole identity and the party school identity at Florida State. While the concept of football as the “front porch” of the university seems to be unanimous among all three universities, the ability of the university brand to control that image and mediate the image of football so that it furthers the goals of each institution is undermined by discrepancies between the institutional football brand and the organic football identity.

Finally, with the third research question I asked are members of the university community implicated in the surveillance of football culture on the university campus? While the subjects were implicated in the reproduction of the intuitional football identity at each university, the surveillance of members of the university community was largely operated through the power knowledges inherent in each university’s organic football culture. In essence, by empowering football as the “front porch” of the university, each institution allowed the organic aspects of its own unique football culture, as well as mediated ideals of football culture and the neoliberal university (such as “beer and circus”), to control the surveillance of its own campus. Simply put, by empowering football through the university brand each institution was ceding power to the organic football culture of the institution.

Each university, in essence, tried to tame and control football culture, but inevitably found itself complicit in the reproduction of the organic football identity. While it needs to be stressed that the results of this research are not meant to be generalized to college football at all so-called football schools, the implications for these three universities were very alarming. Even if the visibility and prestige gained from utilizing football as the “front porch” of the university
was substantial, each institution paid a substantial cost in compromising the integrity of its own branded identity. Furthermore, by promoting college football within the university, each institution became complicit in reproducing many of the same conservative logics which led to the creation of the neoliberal university in the first place. As each school chooses to utilize its football program as the “front porch” of the university, and as more power knowledge is concentrated in the individual football programs, they implicate themselves in the brand culture of modern higher education and reproduce the logics of modern neoliberalism. Ultimately the football culture at the university operates pedagogically to inform the institution and the university community of how the logics of neoliberalism operate within the campus space. Thus the university utilizes football as a sort of self-surveillance, whereby the institution and those in and around it, are subjectified and surveyed through the neoconservative logics of the football culture on campus.

I also, in some instances, mentioned the use of mediated narratives to construct college football culture. This was a portion of my research which was not completely described, largely because of the already substantial size of the project. Because of this, the research does not paint a completed picture of college football culture on any of these campuses. Both local and national media are heavily involved with the dissemination of football culture and researching them is imperative to understanding how the branded identity of college football is being consumed and what logics are driving the strength of both organic college football culture on each of these campuses and the “beer and circus” identity I encountered at all of the institutions. Until research is done to examine the mediated message produced by programs like ESPN’s College GameDay there will be a gap in our understanding of how college football culture is constructed and how it implicates the university in the surveillance of neoconservative power knowledges. Furthermore, it bears repeating that the results of this research are not generalizable to other football schools. One of the most important themes of my findings was how different logics and beliefs shaped both the organic and branded image of college football at the institutions I studied. Ignoring those differences essentially erases any benefit future research on the connection between football culture and institutional identity could possibly have. Institutional level research is essential to understanding the nuances of how college football culture exists on a specific campus and what logics are conveyed through representations of football culture at various universities.
Ultimately I was successful in describing the relationship between college football and institutional brand at the three universities studied. While each university community created and consumed football culture in a unique way, they each attempted to utilize the popularity of their football team as a means for promoting the brand of the institution. In doing this, the institutions were complicit in reproducing institutional identities which were dictated by their organic football culture, and in many ways were at odds with the stated brand of the institutions. To this end each institution was not only unable to actually promote its academic brand through the university, but each was also complicit in its own failure as all three institutions inevitably promoted the organic football identity of the institution rather than the brand. Also, operating under the use of football as the, “front porch” of the university caused each university to implicate itself in the reproduction and surveillance of neoconservative logics; essentially promoting the concept of the neoliberal university and a competitive marketplace for American higher education.
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Office of the Vice President for Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 07/24/2013

To: Neal Ternes

Dept.: SPORT MANAGEMENT

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Football school: An analysis of college football culture inside the neoliberal university

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 07/23/2014 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Michael Giardina, Advisor
HSC No. 2013.10891
CONSENT FORM

FSU Behavioral Consent Form

Football School: An analysis of college football culture inside the neoliberal multiversity

You are invited to be in a research study of football culture and university life. You were selected as a possible participant because you are actively involved with college football, student or community life, and/or university administration at Texas A&M University, Notre Dame University, or Florida State University. We ask that you please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Neal Ternes, Department of Sport Management, Florida State University

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand how football culture at three major public universities impacts institutional branding and the overall culture of the university community.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in an interview lasting no longer than 30 minutes. It will be recorded and transcribed but no indefinable information will be collected. Pseudonyms will be used.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:

The study has no risks. But at any time, you may terminate your participation in the study.

This study has no direct benefit, though your contributions may contribute to a better understanding of college football and university culture.

Compensation:

You will receive no compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. The principal investigator is the only individual that will have access to the recordings and transcriptions. The recordings will be stored on a password protected
personal computer for one year and then destroyed. The transcriptions will be stored on a password protected computer for one year and then erased.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the university or its subsidiaries. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Neal Ternes. You may ask any question you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact Mr. Ternes or his advisor Dr. Michael Giardina.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

________________                        _________________
Signature                                          Date

________________                        _________________
Signature of Investigator                    Date

HSC # 2013.10891
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Are there any iconic football traditions at your institution?

2. Do you think the university incorporates football into its brand image? If so how?

3. Do you see the football program contributing to the image of the university as a whole? How so? To what extent?

4. How are branding decisions at your institution made?

5. Do you think there is something unique about your football culture compared to other football schools?
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Neal Ternes was born and raised in Overland Park Kansas on July 10th, 1989. He held several communication positions in sports including brief stints with the Kansas City T-Bones minor league baseball club and with the Iowa Rush soccer club. Neal has also worked as a web designer for Finkbine Golf Course in Iowa City, Iowa and has served as a correspondent and editor for several in house publications at The University of Iowa. During his time at Iowa Neal was a radio broadcaster for 98.7 KRUI Radio where he served as a DJ and sports talk personality and he also called high school games for Iowa City West High School on local public television. Neal graduated with Honors from The University of Iowa in December 2011 in both Sports Studies and Journalism and Mass Communications. He enrolled as a graduate student at The Florida State University in the Fall of 2012 and plans to complete his degree the Spring of 2014. His future plans include working towards a doctorate degree and pursuing research and education opportunities in Sports Management.