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Image repair and media coverage following sexual assault in college athletics: two case studies

Sarah E. Igram
University of Iowa

IMAGE REPAIR AND MEDIA COVERAGE FOLLOWING SEXUAL ASSAULT IN COLLEGE ATHLETICS: TWO CASE STUDIES

by

Sarah E. Igram

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Thesis Supervisor: Assistant Professor Travis Vogan

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The University of Iowa
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Sarah E. Igram

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree
in Journalism at the May 2017 graduation.

Thesis Committee: _____
Travis Vogan, Thesis Supervisor

_____
Thomas Oates

_____
Melissa Tully

ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses universities' image repair strategies when a student athlete is accused of sexual assault and the media's coverage of these strategies. This is a particularly important issue due to the prevalence of campus sexual assault, as recent studies have shown that one in five women is sexually assaulted in college. Sexual assaults involving college athletes typically receive more media attention due to their high-profile nature.

Athletic programs are typically sites of hegemonic masculinity, where men take action to maintain dominance over women. They may do this through misogynistic and homophobic talk or committing violence against women. Athletic departments' image repair strategies when male athletes are accused of sexual assault also sometimes uphold hegemonic masculinity if their main goal is to maintain the team, which may generate significant revenue for the university. As such, their image repair strategies may allow male athletes to continue to partake in misogynistic practices, including committing violence against women. The media also has been accused of upholding masculine dominance by supporting rape myths or blaming the accuser in sexual assault incidents.

This thesis consists of two case studies: the University of Colorado, which faced several allegations of sexual assault by football players in the early 2000's; and Baylor University, which underwent a similar scandal starting in late 2015. It contains textual analysis of officials' image repair strategies at both schools and the media's responses to them.

Ultimately, both Colorado and Baylor upheld hegemonic masculinity through their image repair strategies, though Colorado did so on a larger scale. In both instances, journalists were largely critical of their image repair strategies and argued that the strategies were not enough to change the structure of masculine dominance.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual assault on college campuses has received widespread attention from the media recently, due in part to the high number of female students who experience and report it. The National Criminal Justice Reference Service found that one in five women are assaulted while in college, but more than 90 percent of these victims do not report the assault (Krebs, 2007). The Association of American Universities conducted a similar survey in 2015 and found that across 27 universities, "The incidence of sexual assault and sexual misconduct due to physical force, threats of physical force, or incapacitation among female undergraduate student respondents was 23.1 percent, including 10.8 percent who experienced penetration" (aau.edu, 2015). Rates of reporting incidents to university officials and law enforcement remained low, ranging from five to 28 percent depending on the specific type of conduct. Most victims did not report incidents because they didn't think it was serious enough, they were embarrassed or ashamed, or they did not think anything would be done (aau.edu, 2015).

The issue has also received attention from the government. In 2014, President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden established the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. The Task Force's efforts included providing universities with supportive measures for victims and defining prohibited behavior in sexual misconduct policies. Later that year, Obama and Biden launched a public awareness campaign, "It's On Us," to "fundamentally shift the way we think about sexual assault, by inspiring everyone to see it as their responsibility to do something, big or small, to prevent it" (whitehouse.gov, 2014). Despite these efforts, campus sexual assault and victims' hesitancy to report it still persist.

Sexual assault may be an even bigger problem among male college athletes. Some scholars have concluded that college athletes are more likely to commit sexual assault or dating

violence than non-athletes. A 2007 article by Sarah Murnen and Marla H. Kohlman, psychology and sociology professors at Kenyon College, found higher self-reports of sexual aggression among athletes after a meta-analysis of 29 studies on the topic. Specifically, these men reported higher rates of hypermasculinity and rape myth beliefs (i.e. that women can resist rape if they want to, that they "ask for it," and that they frequently lie about being raped, among others). Athletes also report higher rates of sexual aggression itself (Murnen, 2007). A 2016 article from the journal *Violence Against Women* found similar results in that male athletes were more accepting of rape myths and traditional gender roles than non-athletes and that they were also more likely to self-report sexually coercive behaviors (Young et al, 2016). In his 2002 book *Taking the Field: Women, Men and Sports,* Michael Messner hypothesizes why male athletes are more likely to believe rape myths and traditional gender roles, as well as actually commit sexual violence. He asserts that athletes use misogynistic talk as a form of bonding within their teams, rejecting anything that may be considered feminine; that athletes learn to suppress empathy in order to win games, which also affects their relationships with women; and that they are taught to use their bodies as weapons, rather than to connect intimately with others (Messner, 2002). A 1991 study of discussions in locker rooms found that two types of conversations about women took place among male athletes. Conversations about women as real people who athletes had ongoing social relationships with generally happened discreetly and in hushed tones, while conversations about women as objects of sexual desire were "told with braggadocio or in a teasing manner; they are stage performances usually requiring an audience of more than one, and may be told to no one in particular" (Curry, 1991, 128). This perspective highlights the fact that many male athletes believe the use of women's bodies is more important than knowing them as people. Such a masculine institution is also more likely to believe rape myths, as it is "the logical

and psychological extension of a dominant-submissive, competitive, sex role stereotyped culture" (Burt, 1980, 229).

However, other studies have concluded that male student athletes do not commit sexual assault at higher rates than other male students. A 1995 article showed that at thirty Division I universities, there was no significant difference between male student athletes and nonathletes in rates of sexual assault reported to campus police, although a higher rate of sexual assaults committed by male athletes were reported to judicial affairs offices (Crosset, Benedict & McDonald, 1995). Some scholars also believe that sexual assaults involving male athletes simply receive more public attention because of their high-profile nature (Dershowitz, 1994). Regardless of the incident rates among male college athletes, many universities, including Florida State and Baylor, have recently come under fire for their handling of assault allegations.

College athletic departments contribute to sexual assault among male athletes in several ways. Author Taylor Branch argues that, by not paying players, athletic departments commodify their bodies while simultaneously profiting from them: "The NCAA makes money, and enables universities and corporations to make money, from the unpaid labor of young athletes" (Branch, 2011). Athletic departments also sometimes use female recruiters, or hostesses, to assist potential student athletes when they visit campus. While not all hostesses have sex with recruits, "the problem comes when programs run by older white men use female hosts specifically because they are women – and because their presence promises teenage boys and young men something more than a tour of the quad" (Luther, 2016, 114). This recruitment tactic can have dangerous side effects. In 2001, three women reported that football players and recruits from the University of Colorado had raped them at a party. The players were not charged after stating that they

believed everyone at the party had already consented to sex, and that the purpose of the party was actually to provide them with sex (Associated Press, 2004).

When male athletes do commit sexual assault, athletic departments often fail to hold them accountable for their wrongdoings (and therefore give them no reason to change their behavior). A 2014 government survey found that many colleges use different adjudication processes when athletes are accused of sexual assault than they would for non-athletes. More than 20 percent of the schools surveyed gave athletic departments oversight of such cases (U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Financial & Contracting Oversight, 2014). They may take such actions because their players help them fill stadiums and arenas. It is also possible that coaches and administrators do not hold players accountable because they are more accepting of traditional gender roles, and therefore "experience internal pressure and conflicts that inhibit their taking appropriate steps to rectify a situation that involves accusations of rape if they believe their decisions could put at 'risk' the careers of male athletes and coaches, and thus jeopardize the preserve of men" (Davis & Smith, 2009).

SIGNIFICANCE

Much research has been conducted on why the gendered power in sport may make athletes more likely to commit sexual assault, but little research exists on how this power affects athletic departments' and universities' responses to sexual assault incidents. There has also been extensive research published on media coverage of violence against women, but not much that focuses on coverage of violence committed by athletes specifically. It is important to study these responses for several reasons. First, it is possible that gendered power is as prevalent among coaches and administrators as it is among athletes. Athletic departments are often seen as tolerant of sexual violence among their players. When they are made aware of an allegation, they often attempt to protect athletes from such claims in order to keep winning games and generating revenue. Florida State's athletic department has been criticized heavily for protecting players accused of sexual assault, and Title IX coordinator Melissa Ashton recalled that 'in the nine years she worked in that office, an estimated 40 football players had been accused of either sexual assault or 'intimate partner' violence, and that to the best of her recollection, only one person had been found responsible. She said most of the women chose not to pursue the cases 'based on fear'" (Bogdanich, 2015). Perhaps the most recent high-profile instance of an athletic department mishandling a sexual assault complaint occurred when Baylor administrators worked to suppress reports of sexual assaults by football players, despite 17 women making reports in the past five years. A report from *60 Minutes Sports* included interviews from Baylor administrators. One regent admitted that Baylor had prioritized winning football games over the safety of female students, explaining that former head coach Art Briles (who has since been fired) "had us where we've never been before, and we were winning and things were awesome. And I think our main problem was it's hard to mess up awesome" (Redford, 2016). In high

profile sports such as college football and basketball, winning comes with lucrative amounts of money. In 2014, the Department of Education said that college football alone generated $3.4 billion. Schools and the NCAA profit greatly from television rights, merchandise sales, ticket sales, and concessions at games (Luther, 2016, 75). When athletic departments protect players accused of sexual assault, they are protecting a source of revenue, often to the detriment of victims.

Universities and athletic departments may attempt to protect players through the image repair strategies they use when addressing sexual assault allegations. Organizations use a variety of image repair tactics when attempting to resolve a crisis, whether they deny the event took place, evade responsibility for the event, reduce the offensiveness of their actions, explain how they plan to solve or prevent the problem, or simply apologize for their actions (Benoit, 1997, 3). For example, after a former Florida State student alleged that star quarterback Jameis Winston had raped her and that FSU had failed to investigate her claims for almost a year and created a hostile environment, university president John Thrasher denied having created such an environment. He also attempted to reduce the offensiveness of Florida State's actions by repeatedly stressing the ways officials had tried to help Winston's accuser, including meeting with her at least thirty times in the year following the alleged incident, offering emotional support, arranging academic accommodations, and communicating her options under the student conduct code. Thrasher added: "For many years Florida State University has had excellent victim-centered policies with regard to sexual violence. The University recently conducted an exhaustive review and took additional steps to further ensure it employs the very best practices. Florida State University does not tolerate sexual violence in any form, regardless of who the alleged perpetrator might be" (Romero, 2015). However, they did not offer many details on why

they waited so long to investigate Winston's actions or on Ashton's claims that women had chosen not to report sexual assaults by football players out of fear. Studying the image repair strategies used by athletic departments will determine whether they are concerned with actually preventing sexual assault or simply continuing to win games.

Another reason for this topic's importance is that, although the media frequently reports on sexual assault cases such as the ones at Baylor and Florida State, they sometimes provide biased accounts, as "coverage is rooted in cultural myths and stereotypes about women, men, and violence, the links between sexist violence, social structures, and gendered patterns of domination and control are disguised" (Meyers, 9). The media itself can contribute to gendered power in athletics by employing myths and narratives to describe sexual assault incidents. Several studies on news coverage of violence against women show that media outlets are also likely to reinforce beliefs of rape myths, including when these cases involve famous athletes. This reinforcement may be due in part to a lack of female sports journalists. In 2013, only 12 percent of sports writers and 10 percent of sports editors were women (Laphick et al, 2013). Male-dominated news outlets often make female journalists feel that their feminist or feminine concerns are "not what is required of a true news professional" (Skidmore, 1998, 209). Female journalists also "scorn the detachment and insensitivity in many of their male colleagues, believing they are hiding behind the idea of objectivity to exclude all compassion and humanity that one should bring to journalism" (van Zoonen, 2002, 36). This insensitivity was apparent in coverage of Jameis Winston at the 2015 NFL Combine. Instead of writing that he had previously been investigated for rape, reporters frequently used euphemisms such as "off-the field issues," "behavior problems," "character flaws," "immaturity," "bad decisions," "mistakes," and

"baggage" (Davidson, 2015). More research needs to be conducted to make sense of the coverage of athletic departments' responses to assaults, rather than just the assaults themselves.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early feminist scholars first recognized that gender was not simply a physical trait. In a 1986 analysis for *American Historical Review,* Joan Scott defined gender as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and… a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (1067). In her book *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett (1970), a writer in the second-wave feminist era, disputed the claim that males and females shared equal experiences. On the contrary, she wrote, male and female are two different cultures with completely different experiences. From a young age, boys and girls learn from their parents and peers how they are expected to act based on their gender. These separate cultures "encourage the young male to develop aggressive impulses, and the female to thwart her own or turn them inward. The result is that the male tends to have aggression reinforced in his behavior… the same process of reinforcement is evident in producing the chief 'feminine' virtue of passivity" (Millett, 31). It is these beliefs that contribute to hegemonic masculinity. The concept of hegemony addresses the ways a ruling class establishes and maintains its dominance. Hegemonic masculinity, then, is the "pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that [allows] men's dominance over women to continue" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, 832). One of these practices is the perception of women as objects for sexual validation, which men compete to achieve. Males are also able to maintain dominance through their abilities "to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, [and] to formulate ideals and define morality" (Donaldson, 1993, 645).

Gender is also "present in [an organization's] processes, practices, images, ideologies, and distributions of power" (Acker, 1992, 567). Most organizations have been created and

dominated by men, while women are often excluded or relegated to subordinate roles. Sexual harassment is a significant issue in organizations, and a woman's employment is often contingent on her willingness to tolerate sexual harassment. Women's bodies are frequently sexualized and objectified within organizations, though male bodies are not (Acker, 1990, 152). Sport is a type of organization in which gendered power is often prejudiced; it remains largely sex-segregated with an uneven distribution of power between men and women. Male athletes, coaches and directors "are enabled and privileged by virtue of their positions in this institutional structure" (Messner, 2002, 66). Men often maintain their dominant position in sports by degrading anything feminine. While conducting a study of conversation in a college men's athletic locker room, sociologist Tim Curry found that most discussion centered on competing and bragging about sexual conquests of women. Men who did not conform to this dominant conversation were branded "women," "pussies," and "faggots" (Curry). Sport typically constructs hegemonic masculinity, the "pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that [allows] men's dominance over women to continue" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, 832). All men position themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Even men who do not enact strong masculine dominance – who, in fact, may be uncomfortable with the thought of masculine dominance – can "be regarded as showing complicit masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 832). Messner (2002) outlines the dynamic of male athletics that allows hegemonic masculinity to sustain itself. At the center of athletic peer groups are *leaders,* the highest-status boys and young men. They actively conform to hegemonic masculinity by using homophobic and misogynistic language, bullying vulnerable boys, hazing younger athletes, and committing sexual violence against women. Closely connected to the leaders is the *audience*, which directly supports and encourages the leaders' behaviors. While they are not at the center of

the group, they wish to belong, share in the benefits of hegemonic masculinity, and avoid being degraded with homophobic or misogynistic insults. The outermost circle of the group consists of *marginals,* who are the most uncomfortable with the leaders' words and actions. They are the most likely to experience empathy with victims of jokes and assaults and may choose not to participate in bullying, hazing and assaulting women. However, they are also often complicit with these actions, knowing that staying silent will keep them in the group and garner respect from outsiders (Messner, 2002, 36-37).

Hegemonic masculinity enables rape culture in that men often assume that they should be in control of their sexual partners. If they do not experience a passive female sexual object as expected, they may "revert to an internalized sexual script, which often contains elements of rape myths" (Messner, 2002, 44). Feminist theorists also maintain that rape, along with other acts of violence against women, is committed in order to keep women subordinate to men (Bart & Moran, 1993, 1). Carole Sheffield also points out that all systems of oppression use violence or the threat of violence to ensure compliance and describes sexual violence as "a crucial strategy in sustaining the power relationships of patriarchy" (Sheffield, 1987, 171-172). The belief that women should be submissive to men is linked to a higher acceptance of rape myths, or "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (Burt, 1980, 217). Examples of these myths include that women can avoid being raped if they want to, that they frequently lie about rape, that they "ask for it," and that most rapists are insane (Burt, 1980, 217). A university survey found that male college students were more likely to support rape myths than females, and that 79 percent of a sample of college men thought that raping a woman was justifiable if she was perceived as being "loose" (Germain, 2016, 5). Rape culture may be even more prevalent in college athletics.

Rape culture persisted in sports even after Congress's passage of Title IX in 1972. The goal of Title IX was to reduce gender discrimination in all educational programs, including athletics. While Title IX does not require colleges to offer the same sports to men and women or provide men's and women's sports equal funding, it does stipulate that any entity receiving federal financial assistance provides "equal athletic opportunity for both sexes" (Koller, 2010, 4). Title IX has been praised for increasing the number of female participants in sports, but there are still far more male participants. Furthermore, social scientists have shown that, while a high number of elementary school-age girls participate in sports, many quit as teenagers (Koller, 2010, 6). Feminist scholars assert that "because the definition of discrimination adopted by Title IX is the failure to create sufficient opportunities for women within the existing male-shaped model for sport, the model itself was left untouched by Title IX's equality mandate" (Koller, 2010, 10). As such, if women wish to participate in sports, they must assimilate into an institution in which men are dominant over women. Critics have also said that Title IX is inadequate for preventing campus sexual assault. At the end of 2015, there were complaints against 152 universities for possible violations of federal law based on their handling of sexual violence or harassment complaints (Moorman & Osborne, 2016, 546). However, the Department of Education's guidelines for Title IX investigations are extremely vague and stipulate that investigations "vary depending on the nature of the allegation, the age of the student or students involved, the size and administrative structure of the school, state or local legal requirements (including mandatory reporting requirements for schools working with minors), and what it has learned from past experiences" (Department of Education, 2014, 24). It is noteworthy that, while a university that violates Title IX is in danger of losing its federal funding, no university has ever actually lost funding over such a violation (Luther, 2016).

As sexual violence is a form of gender discrimination, victims have often invoked Title IX when they felt that universities mishandled their sexual assault reports. In 1999, the Supreme Court identified circumstances where an educational institution could be liable for student-on-student sexual harassment: when the harassment deprived the plaintiff of educational opportunities or benefits, when the university had knowledge of the harassment, and when the university was "deliberately indifferent" to it (Davis & Smith, 2009, 642). Two later cases, at the University of Georgia and the University of Colorado, determined that universities could also be held liable for their actions before a sexual assault if they had created an environment where the assault was likely to take place. In both cases, the plaintiffs alleged that they were raped by student athletes and that the universities created an environment where this was more likely to happen. The plaintiff suing the University of Georgia alleged that she had been raped by three athletes and that the head basketball coach recruited one of her assailants knowing that he had a previous record of sexual harassment (Davis & Smith, 2009, 645). Similarly, at the University of Colorado, the plaintiffs alleged that they were assaulted by football players, while "CU sanctioned, supported, even funded, a program (showing recruits a 'good time') that, without proper control, would encourage young men to engage in opprobrious acts" (Davis & Smith, 2009, 647). More recently, Erica Kinsman, a Florida State student, reported that quarterback Jameis Winston had raped her a month prior. Athletic department officials met with Winston's lawyer days after the accusation, but they never contacted the accuser's lawyer to hear her client's account. The department then decided not to move forward with a university investigation, despite the university being "legally obligated to conduct a 'prompt, thorough and impartial' disciplinary inquiry" and despite the fact that university officials outside the athletic department are supposed to handle such decisions (McIntire & Bogdanich, 2014). Florida State

went on to win the national championship that year. Kinsman later sued Florida State, claiming that they violated her rights under Title IX by failing to properly investigate her claims. Before the case went to court, Florida State reached a settlement with Kinsman. They were required to pay her $950,000, though her lawyers received over $700,000 of the settlement. University president John Thrasher said in a statement that it did not make economic sense to continue with litigation, even though he was confident Florida State would have prevailed (DeSantis, 2016). By protecting Winston from a university investigation and never admitting any wrongdoing on their part, Florida State officials continued to perpetuate hegemonic masculinity.

Universities and athletic departments generally employ some form of image repair after being accused of mishandling sexual assault allegations. To do this successfully, they first need to understand the severity of the offenses and tailor their responses accordingly. Benoit suggests that an organization at fault should admit to it immediately and then detail "plans to correct and/or prevent future problems" (1997, 183). They can choose several approaches. One strategy, denial, involves either simply calling an accusation untrue or shifting the blame of an incident to another party. Organizations may also choose to evade responsibility by claiming the incident was in response to another offensive act, claiming the offense was an accident, or claiming that they meant well in committing the act. They also may reduce the offensiveness of an act by bolstering (stressing their good traits), claiming that the act was not as serious as perceived, mentioning that there are more important considerations, or attacking their accuser's credibility. They may use corrective action, outlining their plans to solve or prevent any future problems. Finally, they may simply choose to apologize for the offense (Benoit, 1997). Sports figures are often compelled to use image repair strategies because of their importance in American culture. They may attempt to "bolster by aligning themselves with the sports they represent and by

asserting that their attitudes toward the game are positive" (Kruse, 281). Ideally, this strategy shows fans that they recognize the game's significance and deserve to be members of the sport community. They are also likely to apologize for their actions. Expressing regret for an offense serves as "evidence that one has taken the first step in mending one's ways and, thus, serves as temporary proof that one is worthy of being reunited with the community one has offended" (Kruse, 281). Perhaps the most effective strategy is to demonstrate improved character to fans with concrete actions.

Media outlets have also been guilty of adhering to and reinforcing male supremacy. News scholars have found that the "values, norms, and conventions that shape the news support the status quo by representing the interests of a white, middle- and upper-class, male elite" (Meyers, 1997, 19). The media's use of myths or narratives to support the existing culture "suggests that news is a social construction, but it also suggests that news amounts to an ongoing telling and retelling of familiar stories with a relatively consistent set of themes, actors and moral lessons that link with the broad, common beliefs of a dominant ideology" (Berkowitz & Nossek, 2001). For instance, the media's coverage of Title IX reflects the hegemony of male dominance. Mainstream media accounts tend to "support the perception that while Title IX has been a tremendous boost for girls and women's sport, that success has come at the expense of men's minor sport programs" (Walton, 2003). Some also focus on the negative effects on male athletes; one reporter wrote that "one unintended consequence of Title IX has been that many colleges and universities have dropped men's programs simply to meet an artificial quota, which the test of proportionality imposes" (Larimer, 1997). These media accounts tend to support the ideology that women are not as interested in sports and not as equipped to participate in them as men are.

Mainstream media outlets also sometimes reinforce male supremacy through their coverage of violence against women. Often, media coverage supports the rape myth that all men who commit sexual violence are insane, allowing other men to distance themselves from these crimes. This myth, of course, ignores the social and cultural factors of rape that Millett, Sheffield and others have detailed. Helen Benedict suggests that two narratives emerge in the coverage of rape cases. In a book about press coverage of sex crimes, Benedict (1992) contended that rape myths lead journalists to choose between the "Virgin" or "Vamp" narratives. She describes the Virgin narrative as the belief that "the man, a depraved and perverted monster, sullied the innocent victim, who is now a martyr to the flaws of society" (Benedict, 23). The Vamp narrative is the belief that "the woman, by her looks, behavior or generally loose morality, drove the man to such extremes of lust that he was compelled to commit the crime" (Benedict, 23). She names factors that contribute to this narrative: knowing the assailant, absence of weapons, being the same race as the assailant, being the same class as the assailant, being the same ethnic group as the assailant, being young, being pretty, and deviating from the traditional mother role. Additionally, the media may place blame by asserting that the victim was drunk, on drugs, not careful enough, or engaged in questionable activities (Meyers, 61-62). These narratives reinforce "patriarchal notions about the 'proper' place of women" (Meyers, 24).

The Vamp narrative was prevalent in coverage of a 2006 rape investigation involving members of the Duke lacrosse team, who hired two strippers to perform at a team party. Afterwards, Crystal Mangum, one of the strippers, claimed that three lacrosse players had raped and beaten her. Mangum's occupation as a stripper certainly deviated from the traditional mother role, and many journalists labeled her a vamp. Susan Kosse (2007) conducted an analysis of media coverage in the aftermath of the accusations. In studying the labels used to describe

Mangum in various articles, she found that the label "exotic dancer" was used 12 times, the label "stripper" was used 21 times, and the label "dancer" was used 15 times. In contrast, few articles focused on her positive attributes: the label "student" was used 3 times, the label "mother of two/mother" was used 9 times, and the label "Navy veteran" was used 2 times (Kosse, 2007, 268). In this instance, media outlets clearly contributed to male supremacy by employing the myth that a woman who deviated from traditional gender roles was less likely to be raped.

The myth that women frequently lie about rape is also often present in media coverage. One example of this is the coverage of the 2003 rape accusations against Kobe Bryant. Renae Franiuk conducted a study of 156 articles about the case from 76 different online sources (such as CNN and ESPN). The articles chosen were from the time between the media breaking the story and the charges against Bryant being dropped. The results showed that the myth most commonly mentioned was the possibility that the victim was lying: 42.3% of the articles made such suggestions (Franiuk et al., 2008, 7). In contrast, only 7.7% of articles suggested that Bryant was lying when he claimed he had consensual sex with the alleged victim. In addition, 26.3% of these articles had positive comments about Bryant as a person, while only 5.1% of articles had positive comments about the victim as a person (Franuik et al., 2008, 8).

Because sport is a site of hegemonic masculinity, "spectators, coaches, and commentators alike are prone to accept misogynist comments and actions as natural aspects of sports" (Enck-Wanzer, 2009, 6). An analysis of televised sports shows found that when they address violence, the often suggest "that this kind of action, though reprehensible, is to be expected" (Messner, Dunbar & Hunt, 2000, 387).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The gendered culture of universities and athletic departments may enable players' likelihood of committing sexual assault. It may also cause them to mishandle sexual assault incidents, since athletic department officials and university administrators are often seemingly more concerned with winning games and generating revenue than protecting accusers. In order to examine the connections between the gendered culture of athletic departments and their difficulties in addressing sexual assault incidents, I used news articles of incidents at two universities to examine the image repair strategies employed by university presidents, athletic directors, head coaches, university regents, and media figures. News accounts provided additional insight into these issues, since previous research has shown the news media to reflect societal gender values.

I chose to study image repair strategies because they would show whether university officials were more concerned with actually changing rape culture or leaving their athletic programs intact. For instance, universities may use image repair strategies to publicly communicate that they do not tolerate sexual assaults, but they may not hold officials who mishandled the allegations accountable or offer resources to victims. This would indicate that they were most concerned with protecting their athletic programs' success. By doing this, universities ultimately preserve a site of hegemonic masculinity and the rape culture it sustains. It is also possible that university officials use image repair strategies to take extensive corrective actions following sexual assault allegations, even if they risk the success of their athletic teams in doing so.

Specifically, I focused on the allegations at Baylor University in 2016 and at the University of Colorado in the early 2000's. In December of 2001, two women claimed that they

were sexually assaulted by Colorado football players and recruits at a party. A third woman said that she was assaulted in a dorm room afterwards. Prosecutors decided against rape charges because they believed the men had "third-party consent" to have sex with women at the party (Associated Press, 2004). This was not the first occurrence of sexual violence by Colorado football players. Women had also accused several Colorado football players of sexual assault in 1990 and 1997, and Boulder Assistant District Attorney Mary Keenan had met with school officials to express concerns about sexual misconduct. In 2004, Keenan accused Colorado's athletic department of using sex and alcohol to recruit players. Two accusers filed lawsuits under Title IX, claiming that the university's recruiting program encouraged acts of sexual violence. They later settled for $2.5 million and $350,000, respectively. Colorado officials initially placed head coach Gary Barnett on paid leave for his role in the scandal. They later reinstated him and announced that no one would lose their jobs because of the incidents. However, they did announce the intent to boost accountability in their athletic department (Associated Press, 2004).

Although the sexual assault allegations at Baylor took place almost twenty years later, they were similar to Colorado in several regards. Seventeen women reported assaults involving nineteen Baylor football players since 2011. In 2014, former defensive end Tevin Elliott was sentenced to twenty years in prison after multiple women testified that he had sexually assaulted them. The next year, fellow player Sam Ukwuachu was sentenced to six months in jail for sexually assaulting a female soccer player. Shawn Oakman, an NFL draft prospect, was also arrested for sexually assaulting a Baylor student. In 2016, ESPN reported that Baylor officials failed to properly investigate the allegations against Elliott. They later reported that Baylor had known about several other sexual assault allegations against football players and did not investigate them for more than two years. Several Baylor students have filed Title IX lawsuits,

claiming that university officials mishandled their sexual assault complaints and created a "hunting ground for sexual predators" (Grosbard, 2016). In the aftermath of the lawsuits, Baylor's board of regents announced that head coach Art Briles had been fired, university president Ken Starr had been stripped of his presidency (though he kept his position as university chancellor), and athletic director Ian McCaw had been sanctioned and placed on probation (Litman & Ruiz, 2016). However, a new lawsuit, filed in January 2017, claimed that 31 football players committed at least 52 acts of rape between 2011 and 2014. It describes a culture similar to the University of Colorado's, in which Baylor used sex to sell the football program to recruits. This included escorting recruits to strip clubs and arranging women to have sex with prospective players (Mervosh, 2017). The claims in this lawsuit have not yet been verified, although Briles denied them.

Based on these two cases, my main research questions are:

RQ1: What image repair strategies did Colorado use following sexual assault allegations, and did these strategies uphold hegemonic masculinity?

RQ2: How did media coverage support or critique Colorado's image repair strategies following sexual assault incidents?

RQ3: What image repair strategies did Baylor use following sexual assault allegations, and did these strategies uphold hegemonic masculinity?

RQ4: How did media coverage support or critique Baylor's image repair strategies following sexual assault incidents?

RQ5: What were the differences between Baylor's and Colorado's image repair strategies and media coverage of them, and what accounts for them?

METHODOLOGY

To conduct this study, I conducted a qualitative textual analysis of news articles about the incidents at both Baylor and Colorado. I read approximately 100 news articles for each one. I used the databases ProQuest, LexisNexis, and NewsBank to search for articles from news outlets in Colorado and Texas, as well as from national outlets. This allowed me to analyze universities' image repair strategies, including any official statements they made.

When researching the incidents at Colorado, I analyzed local news articles from the *Colorado Daily* and the *Boulder Daily Camera,* both of which are based in Boulder; and the *Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News,* which are based nearby in Denver. I also analyzed national news coverage from the Associated Press, the *New York Times,* and *USA Today.*

I analyzed 62 local articles in total. Thirteen of these were from the *Boulder Daily Camera.* Of those stories, three were from the sports section, three were from the metro section, five were from the opinion section, and two did not have the section listed. I also found 19 articles from the *Denver Post.* Nine were from the front page, three were from the sports section, five were from the metro section, and two were from the opinion section. I then analyzed 21 stories from the *Colorado Daily;* two were from the opinion section and 19 were from *University Wire.* Finally, I analyzed nine stories from the *Rocky Mountain News.* Two were from the sports section, four were from the metro section, two were from the opinion section, and one did not have the section listed. Interestingly, none of the articles I found from local newspapers were covered by crime reporters, even though the incidents at Colorado involved several crimes.

I then analyzed national news coverage of the incidents at Colorado. Seven of these were from the *New York Times,* with three from the sports section and four with unknown sections. I also found 17 articles from the *Associated Press;* 13 were from the sports section and four were

from the national section. Finally, I analyzed nine stories from *USA Today,* all of which were from the sports section. Again, there was no coverage on the incidents from crime reporters present in these newspapers.

I found many more news articles about the incidents at Baylor, which I believed was either because of how recent the assaults were or the increased national attention to sexual assault. I looked for local news coverage from the *Waco Tribune-Herald,* the local newspaper where Baylor is located. I also analyzed coverage from the local newspapers in nearby cities Dallas (the *Dallas Morning News*) and Austin *(*the *Austin American Statesman*). As I did when researching Colorado, I also analyzed national news coverage from the Associated Press, the *New York Times,* and *USA Today.*

I found the most news articles by far from the *Waco Tribune-Herald*, with 119 stories in total. Of these articles, four came from the front page, 18 came from the sports section, 75 came from the metro section, and 22 came from the opinion section. I did not find any stories from their crime section.

I also analyzed 22 articles from the *Austin American Statesman,* with two from the front page and 20 from the sports section. I found no stories in their crime section. Finally, I analyzed 24 articles from the *Dallas Morning News.* Two were from the sports section, two were from the crime section, nine were from the opinion section, and 11 were from another section, *The Scoop.*

I did not find as many articles from national news outlets. However, I analyzed seven articles from the *New York Times.* Two were from the sports section, three were from the national section, and two were from the opinion section. I analyzed 23 *Associated Press* articles, with nine from the sports section, 13 from the national section, and one from the opinion section. Again, I did not find coverage from the crime section of any of these news outlets.

To research Baylor, I analyzed local news articles from the *Waco Tribune-Herald,* which is in the same city as Baylor. I also analyzed articles from the newspapers in nearby cities Dallas (the *Dallas Morning News*) and Austin (the *Austin American-Statesman*). For both case studies, I located a few official statements on Baylor's website, since they created a page last year specifically outlining their response to sexual violence. However, I mainly relied on news articles about changes to Colorado's athletic department.

After studying the schools' image repair strategies, I analyzed the media's coverage of both the sexual assaults and the schools' responses to them. It was interesting and productive to compare these incidents to the ones in Colorado because, although they occurred almost 20 years apart, they were similar in several regards. Most importantly, accusers claimed that both schools used sex to recruit players, which may have fostered an environment where sexual assault was more likely.

A textual analysis involves "assessing the content of a text, including the opinions, beliefs, values and other judgments, the vocabulary used, the stereotypes and characterizations of people, and the conflicts, resolutions and other actions within the texts, help us to understand how a specific social reality is constructed" (Brennen, 2013, 202-203). Anything from which we can make meaning, including news stories, can be qualified as a text. Researchers conducting textual analyses do not just describe the texts, then; they explain how audiences use those texts to create meaning within their cultures. Brennen (2013) emphasizes that researchers' discoveries may differ from their initial predictions of what they would find, and that they must "let the evidence guide their interpretations rather than attempting to make the evidence fit with their preconceived opinions and beliefs" (207).

Researchers conduct different types of textual analysis, such as ideological analysis, genre analysis, and rhetorical analysis. I mainly used ideological analysis to answer my research questions. Brennen (2013) describes ideology as "the dominant ideas of an individual, group, class or society, the way meanings are socially produced, or even as the false ideas upon which a social, political or economic system is based" (p. 201). Therefore, when conducting ideological analysis, researchers see texts as representing dominant ideologies at specific times and places, and they attempt to explain how those ideological perspectives shape texts. Mike Cormack (1995) suggests that researchers analyze several elements when conducting ideological analyses to understand how texts shape understandings of reality: the content of a text, including opinions, beliefs, values and other judgments; the vocabulary used within the text; the stereotypes of people employed; and the conflicts, resolutions and other actions described. For this project, I analyzed Colorado and Baylor officials' actions during their respective scandals and media figures' opinions on whether these actions were appropriate. Because Baylor's and Colorado's football teams were clearly sites of hegemonic masculinity where many athletes committed sexual assault, I was interested in studying whether university officials' responses reflected the ideologies of hegemonic masculinity by attempting to preserve their athletic programs. Similarly, many studies have shown that the media often reflects ideologies of dominant groups, so I aimed to study whether this was the case with the media coverage surrounding the incidents at Colorado and Baylor.

ANALYSIS

RQ1: What image repair strategies did Colorado use following sexual assault allegations, and did these strategies uphold hegemonic masculinity?

This analysis focuses primarily on the image repair strategies of four University of Colorado officials: university president Elizabeth Hoffman, Boulder campus chancellor Richard Byyny, athletic director Richard Tharp, and head football coach Gary Barnett. They were the most closely involved in Colorado's image repair strategies, and media outlets often criticized their role in not doing enough to prevent sexual assaults.

On Dec. 7, 2001, one woman alleged that she was raped while drunk at an off-campus party for football players and recruits. In the immediate aftermath, officials attempted to reduce the offensiveness of the incident by bolstering.

> Barnett began the day trying to praise his program before the monthly meeting of the Board of Regents. Acknowledged for winning the Big 12 championship -- his and the Buffs' first -- Barnett tried to emphasize the supervisory role he and his coaches have taken with players this season.
>
> "We are teachers," Barnett said. 'And these guys (the coaches) are tremendous teachers. They've been exemplary" (Hilliard, 2001).

At the time of the accusation, Colorado was preparing to play in the Fiesta Bowl on New Year's Day. The team's coaches did not suspend any players before the game. Many people, including Colorado students, thought that university officials were not addressing the allegations in more detail because they did not want to distract from the Fiesta Bowl (Sink, 2001). Barnett attempted to minimize offensiveness of the lack of suspensions by claiming that "only one player who played with any degree of regularity for our team this season has been intimated in the

allegations" (Sink, 2001). Barnett further specified that the player willingly took a polygraph test, and the results cleared him from any suspicion.

In late April of 2002, Boulder prosecutors decided against filing criminal sexual assault charges. Soon after the decision, Colorado officials held a press conference, "apparently to ease anticipated criticism from the public" (Fruchter, 2002). The main image repair strategy Byyny and Barnett used at this press conference, and in future public comments, was announcing plans to take corrective action or "promising to prevent the recurrence of the offensive act" (Benoit, 1997, 181).

> In an effort to "prevent this type of incident from ever happening again," Byyny announced new guidelines for visits that include closer adult supervision and the use of "well-trained, mature student athletes as hosts for high school recruits." Guidelines prohibiting recruits from attending off-campus parties were not among Byyny's new guidelines. Barnett said such a mandate would be unrealistic. "We'll guide them, but we can't prevent them," he said (Fruchter, 2004).

In June of 2002, Byyny again reminded the media of Colorado's intentions to take corrective action and prevent future sexual assaults by athletes. He issued a press release claiming that he had ordered Tharp to "raise behavioral expectations for athletes and enforce tighter recruiting regulations" and "asked for improved communications between departments that have contact with student-athletes as well as increased drug and alcohol awareness programs for them" (*Colorado Daily*, 2002).

The allegations resulted in no criminal charges. But in late 2002 the accuser filed a lawsuit against Colorado under Title IX. Two other women filed lawsuits in December of 2003 and January of 2004, alleging that they were raped at the same party. All three women claimed

that Colorado officials "had knowledge of pervasive and serious sexual harassment of female students and other women in connection with its football recruiting program since at least December of 1997" (Ewing, 2004). On Jan. 28, 2004, a deposition from Boulder District Attorney Mary Keenan was released, in which she said that "sex parties for recruits were part of 'an understanding that rose up in the culture' of the department, 'an expectation' among players and prospects" (O'Driscoll, 2004). She claimed that she had met with Colorado officials in 1997 to warn them to put an end to sex parties for football recruits, after a woman alleged she was raped by two football players. However, she said the department had decided not to change this expectation because they did not want to lose the competitive edge against universities such as Oklahoma and Nebraska (O'Driscoll, 2004). Many Colorado officials, including Tharp and Barnett, used the simple denial strategy to refute these claims.

> Barnett, visibly angry and holding a copy of his player handbook, added: "Neither Gary Barnett nor any coach has ever encouraged or condoned sex as a tool or part of the recruiting process, period. The accusation is wrong, inaccurate, false."
>
> Tharp called the sex- party reports "untrue allegations created by fantasy assumptions" about the school and its aims (O'Driscoll, 2004).

University president Elizabeth Hoffman also denied the claims but said that she planned to create a special committee to investigate them. She followed through on those plans, and the Board of Regents created the investigative panel.

In the weeks following Keenan's claims, Barnett and Byyny used bolstering to further repair the department's image. Barnett said that he always required players hosting recruits to sign letters promising not to expose them to improper behavior and that he had previously cut players accused of unlawful sexual conduct (Kieckhefer,

2004). Byyny claimed that, contrary to Keenan's claims, he had actually taken several steps to review the football team's recruitment guidelines. For example, he said, he had reviewed the athletic department's guidelines for recruiting weekends in and created new policies in 1998. That same year, he had begun requiring athletes to take "life skills" training sessions that included lessons on sexual harassment, sexual assault and alcohol (Vaughan, 2004).

Byyny also stated that Barnett was hired because of his "reputation for integrity" (Vaughan, 2004). He pointed to a player handbook Barnett had developed when he was Northwestern's head football coach, which included sections on date rape and social expectations, as well as alcohol use. Byyny also said that Barnett had continued to strengthen those policies since Colorado hired him. He claimed that Barnett had imposed a 1 a.m. curfew for recruits in 2002, required students hosting recruits to read through a list of expectations and agreed to follow them, and sent letters to recruits and their parents explaining expectations for their visits Byyny continued: "It's sometimes easy for people retrospectively to criticize or to say you should have done this… We were really doing our best, you know, trying to use our best judgment about how we could make the experience a positive one and how we could prevent the things that had occurred" (Vaughan, 2004).

Despite these strategies, the scandal heightened when two more women alleged being raped by Colorado football players. On Feb. 17, 2004, former Colorado kicker Katie Hnida told *Sports Illustrated* that she was sexually harassed by other players and raped by a teammate during her time on the team. Hoffman and Byyny issued an official statement encouraging Hnida to report the assault to police and promising to investigate all of her allegations (O'Driscoll, 2004). Barnett, however, used the attacking the accuser strategy to reduce Hnida's credibility. He

told reporters at a press conference that her teammates did not respect her because she was a distraction to the team and an "awful football player" (Balink, 2004).

Distressed by the report and Barnett's comments about Hnida's athletic ability, Hoffman and Byyny took corrective action by placing Barnett on paid leave that night. Tharp supported the action, stating in part: "I have expressed to Coach Barnett and others my concerns about his recent remarks regarding former student Katie Hnida's athletic abilities. I agree with President Hoffman and Chancellor Byyny that these remarks were both inappropriate and insensitive in the context of her allegations of sexual assault and harassment" (O'Driscoll, 2004).

After being suspended, Barnett appeared on *Larry King Live* and evaded responsibility for his comments about Hnida. He first claimed that he had not meant to attack her, saying: "I think I said the wrong thing the wrong way and at the wrong time… I understand how it looks. I really do" (Hughes, 2004). He then expressed that he had made the comments with good intentions, clarifying that he was trying to express concerns about Hnida and the allegations of her experience at Colorado. He later told the panel investigating Colorado officials' handling of sexual assault claims that he had spoken with Hnida's friends, former teammates and a rape counselor to whom she had spoken, but he was unable to substantiate her claims (Associated Press, 2004). He also said that he had repeatedly asked Hnida to give him the names of the players who had harassed and assaulted her.

The day after Hnida's allegations became public, police released a report from another woman who alleged she was raped by a Colorado football player in September 2001. The woman also said that she had reported the incident to Barnett, who told her that he would "back the player 100 percent" (O'Driscoll, 2004). Barnett used denial when addressing the claims that he had told the other woman who accused a football player of rape that he would support the player.

Barnett's lawyer issued a statement that said in part: "Mr. Barnett told Jane Doe that he would support her in her decision to take any appropriate action, and assured her that he would attempt to maintain her privacy by pursuing the matter internally. Mr. Barnett continues to support Jane Doe and will continue to do so in the future" (Ewing, 2004).

Hoffman also used corrective action several times after suspending Barnett. In March 2004, she announced changes to the athletic program, calling the new guidelines the strictest in the nation. The changes restricted recruits from visiting bars and private parties and called for close supervision from parents and coaches. They also required recruits to visit the Boulder campus during the offseason and limited the visits to one night instead of two. All activities during visits would be planned, approved and supervised by coaches. Hoffman said that she hoped Colorado could set an example for other schools: "As painful an experience as it may be, we view it as an opportunity to set the standard for an issue all colleges and universities must be concerned about" (Tsai, 2004).

Officials such as Hoffman and Barnett also used bolstering while introducing the changes. Hoffman said that they had been discussing the changes for over two years, and they were consistent with what Barnett considered before being suspended. Barnett, who was still suspended at the time, said: "We always take this time of year and look at everything we do to see if the situation dictates that we change. These changes are a result of the changes in the climate and atmosphere around recruiting, and it doesn't mean that anybody before was doing anything wrong" (Sarche, 2004). Hoffman added that Colorado's sexual harassment policy was one of the best in the nation but needed better ways of addressing accountability (although she did not state specific plans to accomplish this).

If Barnett told a woman accusing a football player of sexual assault that he would support

his player 100 percent, and if officials encouraged the use of sex to recruit players and made no attempts to stop it, they clearly initially upheld hegemonic masculinity by allowing players to commit violence against women without fear of real consequence. Furthermore, all the corrective actions Colorado officials took following the allegations focused on football players, while they rarely mentioned the women accusing players of sexual assault. Messner (2002) argues that through hegemonic masculinity, male athletes learn to bond through misogynistic talk and to suppress empathy towards women, instead viewing their bodies as objects. Colorado officials' imposition of stricter recruiting guidelines did nothing to directly address these behaviors. Although the new rules could keep athletes from taking recruits to parties or drinking too much, they likely would not change players' views of women.

Additionally, by using corrective action and bolstering to disclose new recruitment restrictions at Colorado while praising the disciplinary strategies that were in place before the allegations, Barnett and others were able to avoid taking any corrective action for their responses to sexual assault claims. This allowed them to possibly continue protecting players accused of sexual assault and to avoid compromising the football program's prospects.

Hoffman, Byyny, Tharp, and Barnett denied knowing about the use of alcohol and sex to entice prospective players, and they all stressed that they took sexual assault allegations seriously despite claims to the contrary – for example, although Barnett said that he had asked Hnida to give him the names of the players who had harassed and assaulted her, Hnida's father said that Barnett already knew the players involved and was lying about it (Sink, 2004). While all four officials still outlined several corrective actions to restrict the athletic department's recruitment processes, they did not disclose corrective actions to address future sexual assault claims. Hoffman did identify the need to better address accountability in Colorado's sexual harassment

guidelines but offered no plans for actually doing so. They appeared to be more concerned with maintaining their football program than giving more power to sexual assault victims.

After Hoffman suspended Barnett, she said that she would reinstate him if he proved that he would not immediately back players accused of sexual assault while ignoring the women making the allegations. However, Barnett offered no plans for correcting the way he handled sexual assault claims. Instead, he repeatedly insisted that he had done nothing wrong, even though an investigative panel found that he "failed to sufficiently monitor football recruits and that he personally did not follow protocol following reports of sexual assault or harassment" (Kohler, 2004). Despite his apparent willingness to discipline players, "his head-in-the-sand attitude in regard to what went on when recruits were visiting, his 'insensitivity,' the panel stated, and the suspicious tactics of his assistant coaches overshadows the good he accomplished" (Paige, 2004).

When Barnett attacked Hnida's credibility by criticizing her athleticism, he implied that she was not capable of playing a traditionally male sport and therefore did not deserve male teammates' respect. While he later claimed that he was trying to express concern for Hnida when he made these comments, he nevertheless painted her as an intruder into a male space and a distraction to male players. Furthermore, his decision to refer to Hnida as a "girl" was inconsistent with the way coaches generally refer to male players: "Generally, coaches refer to their players as 'young men,' the obvious equivalent of which would be 'young women,' if referring to female players. But Barnett chose not to call Hnida a 'young woman,' opting instead for 'girl.' In this way, he further reduced her stature and credibility, implied that she was emotional and immature, and foreclosed the possibility that she could be valued within the culture of college football" (Butterworth, 2008, 267). Barnett also wondered in an e-mail

whether he should publicly disclose rumors about her sexual history (Paige, 2004), reinforcing the myth that women cannot be raped if they are sexually promiscuous. Despite this, Hoffman reinstated Barnett in May of 2004, calling it the "right thing to do" (Banda, 2004). Altogether, these image repair strategies combined suggest that Colorado officials wanted to preserve their football program as much as possible. They therefore upheld a site of hegemonic masculinity.

Interestingly, the only image repair strategy Colorado officials did not use during the scandal was mortification. Hoffman "stopped just short of apologizing to sexual misconduct victims, saying she empathized 'with the suffering and frustration some of you have experienced.' But she also said some criticism of Byyny, Tharp and Barnett amounted to 'blood sport'" (Banda, 2004).

RQ2: How did media coverage support or critique Colorado's image repair strategies following sexual assault incidents?

The news media, especially local news sources such as the *Colorado Daily, Boulder Daily Camera, Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News,* was largely critical of Hoffman's, Tharp's, Byyny's and Barnett's image repair strategies following the sexual incidents involving Colorado's football team.

Most media sources were quite critical of Barnett's image repair strategies involving Hnida's allegations of being raped by a teammate, with Jim Spencer of the *Denver Post* suggesting that the university "cut out Gary Barnett's tongue" (Spencer, 2004). Mark Kiszla, also of the *Denver Post,* called for Barnett's termination after his comments about Hnida and the release of a report suggesting he would support a player accused of sexual assault 100 percent: "In five seasons as coach of the Buffaloes, Barnett has never believed anything was his fault. In

criticizing the errors of his players, the coach can be brutally honest to a fault. At age 57, Barnett has never learned when it is time to shut up" (Kiszla, 2004). National news sources published similar reactions to Barnett's actions. An article in the *New York Times* called Barnett's response to Hnida's charges "breathtakingly dumb" (New York Times, 2004).

> Mr. Barnett could have expressed dismay. He could have offered an apology. He could have started an inquiry. He will have plenty of time to consider all the decent things he might have said or done, now that Elizabeth Hoffman, the university's president, has put him on paid leave, pending an investigation. (*New York Times*, 2004).

In addition, the *New York Times* criticized Barnett's use of denial when facing accusations of allowing sex and alcohol to be used to lure recruits.

> As the number of young women who claim they've been assaulted by recruits or team members grows, it is just plain callous and foolish to say, as Barnett did last Tuesday, "We have not done anything wrong. There isn't a shred of evidence to this date to back up any allegation that's been made. And there won't be."
>
> How does he know there won't be any evidence backing up these allegations? The investigation is just beginning. He would be much better off if he'd said, and meant it, "I am deeply concerned about these charges. I am committed to running a football program based on integrity, excellence, and respect. I am anxious to see the results of the regents' investigative process." (Schoettler, 2004)

Media figures praised Hoffman for her use of corrective action, both in suspending Barnett and in appointing a panel to investigate the allegations. However, local and national journalists agreed that she needed to take further corrective actions. Gail Schoettler of the

Denver Post wrote: “When young women expose themselves to the invasive publicity that accompanies a rape charge, particularly when they don't name their attackers, it's fair to assume there is a problem we must deal with immediately. If the CU football team does, indeed, operate in a culture of disrespect for women, that culture must be changed today” (Schoettler, 2004). The *New York Times* advocated for Hoffman to take further action if the panel she established found incriminating evidence about the football program’s conduct.

> Suspending Mr. Barnett is only the first and most obvious item on Ms. Hoffman’s to-do list. This cannot be treated as a simple public relations problem, a coach’s gaffe. For starters, as promised, she has to clean up the university’s mess of a football program. The independent committee she has established to investigate Mr. Barnett’s comments has also been told to look at an alarmingly long list of other allegations about how the football program has been conducted on Boulder’s campus in recent years… At the end of the day, assuming the evidence is there, Ms. Hoffman should be ready to fire Coach Barnett and anyone else who is contributing to this destructive culture. (*New York Times, 2004*).

Two days after Barnett was suspended, an editorial in the *Denver Post* also called for Tharp’s termination: “Asked repeatedly about his role in handling the reported assaults, the best he can muster is a mantra of no comment. That’s not leadership – that’s passing the buck. And CU can’t tolerate that in a key leadership position – not now, not in the future” (*Denver Post*, 2004).

Hoffman faced media criticism in May when she introduced policy changes but did not fire anyone involved in the scandal. Jim Spencer of the *Denver Post* called Hoffman’s decision spineless and wrote: “Hoffman bragged about reforms that restrict recruiting visits and treat the

athletic program like an academic program. But she ignored an investigative commission's plea to deal with 'plausible deniability' about the use of sex and alcohol in recruiting. She also didn't do enough to address the commission's concerns about insensitivity to sexual assault" (Spencer, 2004). However, not all media figures disagreed with Hoffman's decision not to fire anyone. Steve Wilstein of the *Associated Press* wrote that Barnett in particular deserved to keep his job: "He never should have been put on leave in the first place. Hoffman overreacted to [his comments about Hnida] rather than just telling Barnett to keep his mouth shut" (Wilstein, 2004).

That most journalists were highly critical of Colorado's image repair strategies seems to differ from the idea that news coverage helps sustain male supremacy. While Meyers (1997) writes that "by perpetuating male supremacist ideology and the myths, stereotypes, and assumptions that underlie it, the news ultimately encourages violence against women" (9), most media outlets heavily criticized Colorado for allowing violence against women to occur. Additionally, while Benedict (1992) argues that journalists tend to support rape myths, those myths were generally not present in media coverage of Colorado. Indeed, most journalists were especially critical of Barnett for seemingly perpetuating the myth that Hnida could not be raped due to her sexual history.

RQ3: What image repair strategies did Baylor use following sexual assault allegations, and did these strategies uphold hegemonic masculinity?

This analysis mainly addresses the image repair strategies of Baylor's Board of Regents, as they initially received a report of Baylor's failings in addressing sexual assault and were involved in most of the decisions to take corrective action. However, it also focuses on former head football coach Art Briles and former Baylor president Ken Starr. Finally, it addresses

Baylor's new leadership: interim president David Garland, interim head coach Jim Grobe, and new athletic director Mack Rhoades. All three were involved in the image repair strategies Baylor used in attempting to move on from the allegations.

Two weeks after Baylor football player Sam Ukwuachu was convicted of sexually assaulting a fellow student, the university's Board of Regents began to take corrective action when it hired the Philadelphia law firm Pepper Hamilton LLP to conduct an independent investigation into how the university handled alleged sexual assaults. Starr said the investigation would "help us pinpoint where we are strong and where we need to make improvements to ensure the highest degree of integrity to protect the safety and welfare of all our students" (Witherspoon, 2015). Starr also announced that he would create a new position within the athletic department to oversee athletes' behavior and he expressed sympathy for Ukwuachu's victim: "Our hearts break for any victim of such an unspeakable crime against human dignity. Her moving testimony at trial greatly disturbed all of us. What she said in court has prompted us to take swift action" (Witherspoon, 2015).

No Baylor officials would comment on details of the investigation while it was ongoing. However, in March of 2016, student affairs administrator Kevin Jackson detailed corrective actions the university had taken. He said that Baylor had assembled a team of full-time Title IX investigators and staff members to educate students, allocated $900,000 per year to expand student counseling and provide more training for counselors, and planned to give sexual assault prevention training to all incoming and returning students and staff in the fall. Jackson also added: "We are providing a clear message that sexual violence has no place in our community. We have work to do; we know that. But we get up every day focused on this" (Watkins, 2016). However, Jackson claimed that those measures were not just put in place in response to recent

reports of sexual assaults by football players, and that the university began making prevention efforts in 2013.

Baylor regents received a briefing from Pepper Hamilton LLP in May of 2016 but declined to publicly release the full report. They did issue a summary of the report, "Findings of Fact," which detailed the university's failures to prevent and properly address sexual assault incidents. Specifically, the report stated that Baylor failed to implement Title IX and adequately support sexual assault victims: "Implementation efforts were slow, ad hoc, diffuse, and uncoordinated. Senior leadership failed to recognize the significance of the national context, including evolving guidance from OCR and high profile examples of institutional failures at peer institutions. As a result, Baylor lacked the sufficient infrastructure and an informed policy" (Board of Regents, 2016). In some instances, administrators also "directly discouraged complainants from reporting or participating in student conduct processes" and "contributed to or accommodated a hostile environment. In one instance, those actions constituted retaliation against a complainant for reporting sexual assault" (Board of Regents, 2016). The report also acknowledged issues within Baylor's athletic department.

> In addition to broader University failings, Pepper found specific failings within both the football program and Athletics Department leadership, including a failure to identify and respond to a pattern of sexual violence by a football player, to take action in response to reports of a sexual assault by multiple football players, and to take action in response to a report of dating violence. Pepper's findings also reflect significant concerns about the tone and culture within Baylor's football program as it relates to accountability for all forms of athlete misconduct (Board of Regents, 2016).

The Board of Regents also issued a press release saying that it would "carefully consider the information provided in the briefing and determine how to decisively act upon Pepper Hamilton's findings and recommendations" (Ericksen, 2016). Two weeks after it received the report, the Board of Regents took corrective action by firing head football coach Art Briles and removing Starr as president (though he initially kept a position as chancellor of the law school and resigned a few weeks later). They retained athletic director Ian McCaw, but placed him on probation (he also resigned several weeks later). In a phone press conference, Board members said that they made these decisions "because, above all, we must safeguard our students and our campus" (Ericksen, 2016). However, they declined to give many specific details, such as why they had not worked to adequately implement Title IX, how many other employees would lose their jobs, or why they had decided to retain Starr as chancellor.

Starr used defeasibility as an image repair strategy, claiming that he had no knowledge of allegations regarding interpersonal violence until the fall of 2015, when he first recommended the external investigation by Pepper Hamilton. He also used mortification by directly apologizing to sexual assault victims:

> To be sure, this is an exceedingly difficult time for the University family, especially so for the victims of sexual violence and their loved ones. I join the Board of Regents and Senior Administration of the University in expressing heartfelt contrition for the tragedy and sadness that has unfolded. To those victims who were not treated with the care, concern, and support they deserve, I am profoundly sorry (Ericksen, 2016).

Briles also used mortification a few months after he was fired. In an ESPN interview with *College GameDay* host Tom Rinaldi, he took responsibility for the athletic department's

mishandling of sexual assault allegations. “There were some bad things that happened under my watch, and for that, I’m sorry. I was wrong. I’m going to learn. I’m going to get better” (*Waco Tribune-Herald*, 2016). However, he denied a statement from the Pepper Hamilton report that the athletic department had failed to respond to reports of sexual assault committed by football players and had created a risk to campus safety. “‘I would never allow that to ever happen under my watch,’ Briles said. ‘If I felt like somebody on our team was a threat to the student population, I mean, that just wouldn’t happen. Where they’re getting that information or what their facts are to have that, I don’t know’” (*Waco Tribune-Herald*, 2016).

Baylor’s interim president, new athletic director, and interim head football coach all primarily focused on corrective actions. The Board of Regents named David Garland interim president in May. Garland issued a statement that read in part: “The actions being taken in response to the findings of the Pepper Hamilton investigation, we hope, will help our community heal, communicate our concern for those impacted by interpersonal violence, and reaffirm that Baylor is resolutely committed to its foundational Christian mission” (Ericksen, 2016). Garland also said that he would work with the university to implement the 105 recommendations in the Pepper Hamilton report to make Baylor safer for all students. In July, he gave more details on the university’s corrective action, explaining that Title IX Coordinator Patty Crawford was developing a plan for continuous trauma-informed training, Baylor police officers would receive specific training on responding to sexual violence, and the size of the counseling staff would almost double (Ericksen, 2016).

On May 31, the university named Jim Grobe as the football team’s interim head coach. In his first press conference, he said that he had read the information from the Pepper Hamilton report and that his thoughts were with the victims. Although he did not offer specific plans for

corrective action, he emphasized that football players would be held to a high standard going forward: “This egregious stuff is off the table. There’s no tolerance. You can’t bully people, you can’t be involved in sexual assault, sexual harassment. These kinds of things are just not tolerable” (Werner, 2016).

In July, Mack Rhoades was named Baylor’s new athletic director. Like Grobe, he used his first press conference to state that the university would not tolerate sexual violence, although he did not elaborate on specific corrective action. He did say that he hoped Baylor would become a leader in how athletic departments dealt with sexual violence.

In August, Garland and Grobe continued to emphasize the importance of protecting students over winning football games, with Garland stating, “I don’t care if we go 0-12. We cannot have sexual assaults” (Ericksen, 2016). Grobe added that winning was important, but he stressed that he cared more about players being good citizens off the field.

Baylor officials’ efforts to expand resources for victims and their repeated assertions that they would not tolerate sexual and dating violence among football players appear to show that they were willing to alter their football program, a site of hegemonic masculinity, if it meant preventing future assaults. Furthermore, the fact that Grobe and Rhoades addressed the issue of sexual assault in their first press conference suggests that they were more concerned with preventing future violence than winning games. Despite these positive steps, the Board of Regents’ lack of transparency when addressing the university’s previous failings in addressing sexual assault allegations suggests that Baylor ultimately did uphold hegemonic masculinity through their inaction.

The Board of Regents declined to release the full Pepper Hamilton report, instead only releasing a 13-page summary that made no mention of specific incidents or people responsible

for the lack of victim support. They also offered no details about how much they knew about the pasts of players like Ukwuachu, who had previous histories of violence against women before coming to Baylor. Officials' failure to give many specific details makes it impossible to know whether their corrective actions were appropriate, because they never told the public how expansive the problem was. They declined to give specific names of coaches who they believed had encouraged a culture of violence against women, meaning those coaches might still be with the program. Additionally, their decision not to address claims that they recruited players despite knowledge of their violent pasts means they could continue to do so in the future. Ultimately, officials may have decided against full transparency to maintain Baylor's football program.

Title IX Coordinator Patty Crawford resigned from Baylor in October of 2016, claiming that the university had obstructed her from doing her job since she was hired in 2014. She said reports to the Title IX office had increased under her leadership, but senior administrators told her more reports looked bad for the school. She also added that shortly after she started her job, she learned of allegations of gang rape and dating violence among football players, and McCaw asked her if she could grant immunity to the players who were still at Baylor (Halliburton, 2016). Crawford filed a complaint with the university upon her resignation, alleging that officials were still violating Title IX. Additionally, in January of 2017, a new Title IX lawsuit filed by an alleged rape victim claimed that Baylor officials knew of 52 rapes committed by 31 football players in a four-year period. If any of these allegations are true, they imply that the Baylor Regents chose not to disclose the scope of Baylor's failure to address sexual assault claims. The corrective actions officials did take, then, may not be enough to actually change the structure of masculine dominance.

RQ4: How did media coverage support or critique Baylor's image repair strategies following sexual assault incidents?

This analysis involves news stories from national outlets like the Associated Press, the *New York Times,* and *USA Today.* It also involves stories from the *Waco Tribune-Herald,* the main newspaper where Baylor is located, and the main newspapers from the cities of Dallas (*Dallas Morning News*) and Austin (*Austin American-Statesman*), which are both close to Baylor.

Shortly after Ukwuachu was found guilty of sexual assault, the *New York Times* published an article criticizing Starr's response of denouncing the incident as an unspeakable tragedy and announcing that he would hire a full-time official to oversee student-athlete behavior. The article referred to Starr as complicit in the athletic department's failure to hold players accountable and said that his "current 'anguish' [seems] like little more than P.R. posturing" (Nocera, 2016). Additionally, the article criticized Starr's idea of hiring someone to monitor the athletes, asking, "Shouldn't the real issue be who the school admits in the first place, and how forthrightly it acts when problems emerge?" (Nocera, 2016).

News outlets also criticized Baylor's silence on alleged sexual assaults before Pepper Hamilton's report was finished. *Dallas Morning News* reporter Sharon Grigsby called Baylor's "the-report-is-yet-to-come" strategy "ridiculously wrongheaded and fraudulent with every new report of alleged misdoing" (Grigsby, 2016). Bill Whitaker of the *Waco Tribune-Herald* also disagreed with their strategy, calling it a "colossal blunder" (Whitaker, 2016). Additionally, *Waco Tribune-Herald* reporter Brice Cherry wrote that while he understood that Briles and McCaw had likely been advised to avoid answering some questions for legal reasons, they still should have given details about how much Briles knew about Ukwuachu's history before he

transferred to Baylor, how they conducted background checks of athletes, and why they allowed Ukwuachu to stay on scholarship after he was indicted. Cherry added that Baylor officials had actually helped their case when they chose to speak out and urged them to be more transparent.

> Going forward, Baylor should seek to start the conversation, not run from it.
>
> Starr's move to bring in outside counsel to lead the investigation into the case was a wise one. The Baylor president would make an even bigger impact if the entirety of the investigation's findings were made public once completed. That is the real point of an external investigation, as Starr well knows (Cherry, 2015).

As Baylor officials continued not to make statements pending the Pepper Hamilton report's release, the *Waco Tribune-Herald* regularly pressed them for details on the matter and further criticized their choice to remain silent.

> Are Baylor officials hoping these allegations of inaction dissipate? If so, the strategy invests heavily in chance and ignores the outrage that victims, their friends and families understandably must feel. Some Baylor officials may conclude this is a private matter. But when an athletic player sexually assaults others and it spills into criminal court, it ceases to be entirely a private matter. It becomes a matter in which the university must explain what went wrong, why it went wrong and how it is correcting protocol (*Waco Tribune-Herald*, 2016).

After Baylor's Board of Regents presented a summary of the Pepper Hamilton report in May, the *Austin American-Statesman* supported the choice to fire Briles but criticized how long it had waited to take corrective action. "It's sad all the way around and it's a really bad look, not only for Briles and those who knew about the crimes, but for the powers that be who were painfully slow in enacting policies that would better protect the young women on that campus

from perpetrators of violence who were allowed to roam the lawns and streets of a nice-sized college town" (Golden, 2016).

The *Dallas Morning News* and *Austin American-Statesman* also criticized Baylor Regents' decision not to release the Pepper Hamilton report in its entirety. An *Austin American-Statesman* article argued that "the summation of facts released by the university would appear to leave out some very important details as to the actions of the regents themselves. The report included verbiage, including 'board issues,' conflicts of interest,' and 'reporting protocols and lines of communication' with the football program that was presented without any supporting details'" (Doolittle, 2016). The *Dallas Morning News* called Baylor's image repair attempts incomplete without more details.

> Baylor's Finding of Fact Report and the accompanying Recommendations Report don't mention ousted president Ken Starr and football coach Art Briles by name for example. Nor could I find a timeline that would re-create an official tick-tock of events. Pepper Hamilton reported that they interviewed more than 65 individuals, some across several offices and departments.
>
> And while student privacy laws probably come into play, I expected a document that kept student names private, but described infractions and the school's responses in more detail. In other words, I expected something that elaborates on this statement from the school that officials were 'horrified' at the extent of the sexual assault charges (Mitchell, 2016).

A *Waco Tribune-Herald* editorial added that Baylor Regents' decisions to take corrective action by firing Briles and demoting Starr may have been wrong, because "the simple fact remains that the public has no idea how or even if Starr, Briles, McCaw and other figures at

Baylor actually failed in their duties. In the absence of regent accountability, some have suggested that certain individuals at Baylor were simply sacrificed in a desperate bid to appease stinging criticism and make the scandal just go away" (Waco Tribune-Herald, 2016).

In most instances, the media did not particularly criticize the corrective actions Baylor did take, but they were very critical of Baylor waiting so long to address the allegations and of their failure to release the full Pepper Hamilton report. Rather than simply support the changes Baylor made, journalists took the stance that the public deserved to know exactly how widespread Baylor's problems were. The *Waco Tribune-Herald* in particular repeatedly asked the university to release the report's findings, albeit without much success. As was the case with Colorado, the media's criticism of Baylor's silence and their willingness to seek more information from the university suggests that they did not reinforce narratives of male supremacy.

RQ5: What were the differences between Baylor's and Colorado's image repair strategies and media coverage of them, and what accounts for them?

Colorado used bolstering more than Baylor, with Barnett and Byyny asserting that they had begun restricting players before the sexual assault scandal and referencing a player handbook that included a section on date rape. When Colorado officials further restricted recruitment after the assaults, Barnett insisted they did so because they discussed changes every year, not because anyone had done anything wrong.

Although both Colorado and Baylor took corrective action following their respective scandals, Baylor's actions were more extensive than Colorado's. While Colorado officials imposed stricter recruiting guidelines for athletes, they offered little corrective action focused on

assisting sexual assault victims. Baylor officials' corrective actions included plans to assist victims by expanding both the Title IX staff and the counseling staff. Additionally, Colorado's corrective actions did not include firing anyone. Hoffman, Byyny, Tharp and Barnett all kept their jobs following the scandal, despite the media frequently accusing all four of allowing rape culture to persist at the school. In contrast, Baylor's Board of Regents fired Briles and demoted Starr. They did, however, retain most of Briles' coaching staff, despite findings in the Pepper Hamilton Report that some coaches had enabled a culture of violence against women.

Baylor officials also used mortification far more often than Colorado officials did, with Starr and Briles both directly apologizing to victims. In contrast, although Hoffman said she empathized with victims' suffering, she did not explicitly apologize, and neither did Tharp, Byyny or Barnett.

While it is not possible to know exactly why Baylor's corrective actions were far more extensive than Colorado's, a couple contextual factors may have influenced Baylor officials' decisions. They may have taken further corrective action after witnessing many sexual assault cases involving college athletes. Jessica Luther (2016, 42-43) named 36 rape allegations involving football players since 2012, many of which were gang rapes. Baylor had likely observed universities' image repair strategies following these assaults and the media's criticism of schools they felt had not done enough to help victims. Additionally, while Title IX guidelines for universities handling sexual assault complaints existed in 2002, Baylor's scandal came to light shortly after the Obama administration launched a public awareness campaign on campus sexual assault and published comprehensive reports to help universities understand their obligations to victims. Baylor initially appeared to ignore the White House's suggested guidelines for developing effective sexual misconduct policies, and the Pepper Hamilton Report

found that "prior to the 2014-2015 academic year, Baylor failed to provide training and education to students; failed to identify and train responsible employees under Title IX; failed to provide clear information about reporting options and resources on campus; [and] failed to have a centralized process for ensuring that all reports reached the Title IX Coordinator" (Board of Regents, 2016). However, when Baylor's scandal became public knowledge, officials likely knew they would have to take extensive corrective action due to a national discussion of sexual assault that was not widespread when Colorado's scandal took place. Many of the suggestions for corrective action in the Pepper Hamilton Report, such as providing prevention training and expanding victim advocacy services, were also suggested by the Obama administration in 2014 (Department of Justice, 2014).

While the context of time appeared to influence differences between Colorado's and Baylor's image repair strategies, it did not significantly impact media coverage of the incidents. The media's coverage of both Colorado's and Baylor's handling of sexual assault complaints was quite similar because journalists accused both universities of not doing enough to prevent future occurrences. Specifically, reporters criticized Colorado for not firing anyone involved in the scandal and for not doing enough to ensure that officials would not mishandle future sexual assault complaints. They also were specifically critical of Barnett's comments on Hnida's athletic ability. While reporters were not generally critical of Baylor's corrective actions, they frequently suggested that it was impossible to know if the university was doing enough to address sexual assault because of officials' decision not release the full Pepper Hamilton report.

DISCUSSION

These case studies show that Colorado and Baylor both upheld hegemonic masculinity through their chosen image repair strategies when addressing allegations of sexual assault by football players. Both universities were clearly hesitant to make significant changes to their athletic departments, which were sites of hegemonic masculinity. Of the two, Colorado more powerfully upheld the existing structure of hegemonic masculinity by making fewer changes to its athletic department and repeatedly denying that officials had overseen the use of sex and alcohol to recruit players or promised to back players accused of sexual assault.

Colorado officials such as Hoffman, Byyny, Tharp, and Barnett offered plans to restrict athletic recruitment, such as requiring coaches' approval for activities and making curfews earlier. However, none of these plans specifically addressed players' actual treatment of women. Officials offered no plans to change players' potential misogynistic beliefs or support of rape myths. While restricting recruitment activities may make players and recruits less likely to attend parties, it does not make them less likely to degrade women or more likely to understand consent. Colorado officials also never addressed claims that they had vowed to back football players accused of sexual assault beyond using simple denial. By taking no corrective action to better address sexual assault allegations in the future, officials left open the possibility of defending the accused. Additionally, Hoffman chose not to fire anyone involved in the scandal, even after Barnett responded to a female player's rape allegation by calling her a terrible football player. Ultimately, Colorado officials made few changes to its athletic department, a site of hegemonic masculinity. They clearly upheld hegemonic masculinity through their unwillingness to significantly change the athletic program.

Baylor officials showed more empathy towards the women who accused football players of sexual assault. Starr, Briles, and others apologized for not doing enough to help them. Officials attempted to give sexual assault victims more power by better explaining the process of reporting rape, expanding their Title IX office, and doubling the size of their counseling staff. They also required all students and staff to take sexual assault prevention training courses. In this case, while their actions may not have upheld hegemonic masculinity, their inaction for several years did. By failing to address the allegations immediately after the assaults occurred, they were complicit in upholding hegemonic masculinity. They were at least initially unwilling to change a culture of violence against women as long as the football team continued to win games – in one regent's words, "We were winning, and things were awesome. And I think our main problem was it's hard to mess up awesome" (*Doe vs. Baylor University,* 2017). They did not take any disciplinary action against players accused of sexual assault, even allowing Ukwuachu to keep his scholarship after he was indicted. This allowed players to continue committing violence against women without fear of consequence. When Baylor officials eventually addressed the sexual assault allegations, they declined to release the entire report of their failings, creating suspicions that they were not forthcoming about the extent of the problem and that their corrective action strategy was incomplete. The decision not to fully disclose their shortcomings suggests Baylor officials were still concerned with not drastically altering the athletic department. Their actions therefore preserved a site of hegemonic masculinity, though to a lesser extent than Colorado's.

It is not possible to say why Baylor's image repair strategies upheld hegemonic masculinity to a lesser extent than Colorado's. However, outside factors, such as new studies highlighting the prevalence of campus sexual assault and the government's efforts to prevent it,

may have influenced Baylor officials' decisions to better aid victims. The number of athletic departments who had previously dealt with players accused of sexual assault and the public's scrutiny of these incidents likely caused them to address the issue more thoroughly than Colorado had. Of course, not all universities that have recently faced sexual assault scandals have done the same. For instance, Florida State took very little corrective action after rape accusations against star quarterback Jameis Winston became public knowledge in late 2013, less than three years before Baylor's scandal. University officials settled a Title IX lawsuit with Winston's accuser before it went to court, although they maintained that they had done nothing wrong. Officials were also largely silent after claims that 40 football players had been accused of sexual assault in the nine years prior and that most victims had been too afraid to pursue the cases. One reason for Florida State's inaction following the allegations may have been the involvement of a superstar player (and, therefore, a high source of revenue). Although Colorado and Baylor were both competitive football programs during their respective scandals, they were not on the verge of winning a national championship, and none of the Colorado or Baylor players accused of sexual assault were Heisman Trophy winners or eventual top picks in the NFL Draft. Additionally, Florida State's revenue increased by $27 million in the season following their national championship title (Smith, 2017). They may have chosen not to take extensive corrective action because they felt they had more at stake than either Colorado or Baylor did.

Although both Colorado and Baylor upheld hegemonic masculinity in some ways following sexual assault accusations, it is not possible to conclude that other universities do the same following similar incidents. With the number of universities that have recently faced sexual assault accusations involving male athletes, more research is necessary on how many universities take actions similar to Colorado's and Baylor's.

In both case studies, media outlets were highly critical of Colorado's and Baylor's image repair strategies. Reporters tended to argue that the universities still were not doing enough to help victims. Furthermore, they were generally skeptical when university officials denied prior knowledge of sexual assaults, generally referencing external reports that they had received sexual assault reports and failed to adequately address them. Reporters cited an investigative commission's findings that Colorado officials had exercised plausible deniability about the use of sex and alcohol in recruiting and had been insensitive to reports of sexual assault. In light of the commission's report, they criticized Hoffman's decision not to fire anyone in the athletic department. They especially criticized the decision to retain Barnett, whose criticism of a female player's athletic ability in response to her allegation of rape showed that he was mainly concerned with preserving an institution marked by masculine dominance. Many reporters wrote that Barnett "looked like he was offering an excuse for Hnida's hostile reception on his football team" (Spencer, 2004). Journalists were also critical of Baylor's failure to prevent violence against women by ignoring sexual assault claims for years and then not disclosing the breadth of the problem when they did. Many reporters cited the Pepper Hamilton Report, which found that the university discouraged the reporting of sexual assault and retaliated against victims. They also criticized Baylor's decision not to release the full report: "The summation of facts released by the university would appear to leave out some very important details as to the actions of the regents themselves… It's only reasonable to ask what did the regents know – and when did they know it?" (Doolittle, 2016) This finding is a deviation from previous studies, which have shown that the media is likely to represent male interests.

However, although media outlets were critical of Colorado's and Baylor's image repair strategies, this is not always the case. After Winston was accused of rape, media outlets

sometimes attempted to explain away the allegations and FSU's failure to address them by blaming the accuser. The local newspaper (the *Tallahassee Democrat*) published an article soon after the accusations became public knowledge, calling the evidence against Winston "thin on the surface" (Edwards, 2013). When a Florida attorney decided not to press sexual assault charges against Winston, CBS Sports columnist Gregg Doyel wrote that it was time for journalists to move on from the accusations. To not do so, he said, would be unfair "to Jameis Winston, to the system we have, to the state of Florida for spending time and money to pursue the accuser's story before deciding, no, there just isn't a case there" (Doyel, 2013). Other reporters, such as Tomas Rios, criticized their colleagues' failure to cover the accusations more thoroughly: "FSU imposed a 'football questions only' decree on the media that was met with no resistance because countering PR machinations is no longer an important part of the media's job – assuming that it ever was" (Rios, 2013). Similar to Florida State's inaction following the accusations, journalists may have chosen not to criticize the university due to Winston's superstar status. In an article for *Bloomberg View,* Kavitha A. Davidson (2015) suggested that sports reporters "really, really don't want to think of sexual violence when they think of Jameis Winston. They'd like to forget the accusations – for fans to forget too – and concentrate on important things like third-down conversions. It's far easier to envision your team drafting an immense talent when you don't associate him with sexual assault." However, in 2013, national news sources also largely ignored gang rape cases involving football players at Vanderbilt and the Naval Academy, instead focusing on claims that Texas A&M quarterback Johnny Manziel had accepted money for autographs (Luther, 2016). Clearly, more current research on media coverage of violence against women would help make sense of why journalists are more critical of some universities than others.

These findings also indicate practical guidelines universities may use when student athletes are accused of sexual assault. First, university officials should not hesitate to fire employees who did not do enough to protect victims, as was the case at Colorado: "The higher-ups at universities need to be held accountable for failing victims and protecting players, especially once established patterns emerge of different players committing violence under that university president or athletic director or coach" (Luther, 2016, 199). Officials can also work to change structures of hegemonic masculinity by emphasizing to players the importance of respecting women. This could involve officials communicating to players a zero-tolerance policy for sexual assault, teaching players about consent, and discouraging the use of misogynistic and homophobic language (both in referring to women and fellow players). These actions are all focused on specifically preventing sexual assault, rather than just limiting athletes' social activities. Additionally, officials should be as transparent as possible when discussing their failings in preventing the incidents. This was clearly where Baylor's image repair strategies fell short. To avoid the same criticism that Baylor faced, universities should be transparent in describing what went wrong and what actions they will take to prevent future sexual assaults. Universities should also identify which officials, if any, were at fault in the incidents, and what penalties those officials will face. They may disclose what officials will do to educate players and what policies they will update. Finally, universities may consider hiring more women in key positions to change the view of women as intruders into masculine spaces. In April of 2017, Baylor hired the first female president in its history, Linda Livingstone. Hopefully, this will be a step towards preventing similar incidents from happening in the future.

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