A Critical Discourse Analysis of the National Collegiate Athletic Association Response to the Federal Investigation into Men’s College Basketball

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On September 27, 2017, the Federal Bureau Investigation (FBI) arrested 10 individuals connected to National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I men’s basketball programs on charges of bribery, money laundering, and wire fraud. In response to the public release of this investigation, the NCAA formed the Commission on College Basketball (CCB), to address “fairness and opportunity for college athletes, coupled with the enforcement capability to hold accountable those who undermine the standards of our community” (Emmert, 2017, p.1). Hence, the purpose of this study was to analyze the NCAA’s response to the FBI investigation into men’s college basketball. Despite widespread reform recommendations dating back from the NCAA’s inception, I argue the timing of creating the CCB suggests the NCAA is more concerned with protecting their ideological hegemony than improving the quality of life of and professional development opportunities for college athletes. Using a critical discourse analysis of stakeholder responses (NCAA, college sport reform groups, and select sport and non-sport media outlets), findings revealed how the NCAA responses reflect their escalating commitment (Staw, 1976) towards amateurism as well as the role of racialized interest-convergence as outlined in critical race theory (CRT; Bell, 1980, 1992). Implications for policy and practice are discussed.