

Exploring the legitimacy of wheelchair basketball as an NCAA emerging sport

BEN LARKIN, MS.¹, MICHAEL COTTINGHAM, PHD.² and
JOSHUA PATE, PHD.³

¹ *University of Massachusetts Amherst, MA, USA* ² *University of Houston, TX, USA* ³ *James Madison University, VA, USA*

Given the frustrations of wheelchair basketball athletes' media portrayal, NCAA recognition of the sport would presumably be paramount. While this status has been argued for in past research (e.g., Fay, 2012), the legitimacy of such a moniker has not been studied. Accordingly, this study sought to explore whether the attainment of NCAA recognition for the sport of collegiate wheelchair basketball would be an appropriate endeavor under the NCAA bylaws as of 2014. Applying the constant comparative method for document analysis, the study examines the legitimacy of this moniker with respect to the requisite number of teams for emerging sport status, divisional alignment, academic eligibility, Title IX, and institutional recognition. Ultimately, the study recommends that female collegiate wheelchair basketball teams apply first for NCAA emerging sport status, while men's teams could follow, provided the requisite number of teams rule could be waived.

Exploring the legitimacy of wheelchair basketball as an NCAA emerging sport

Founded more than 100 years ago in 1906, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the main governing body of college sport (NCAA, 2013a). Comprised mostly of higher education institutions, this member association not only protects student-athletes from exploitive tactics, but offers them financial, educational, and physical health and wellness support as well. Benefits for a sport to be recognized as an NCAA activity include increased worldwide awareness and the potential for growth to become a mainstream sport. Considering such advantages, it is no wonder that athletic directors, participants, promoters, marketers, and other stakeholders of developing sports aspire earnestly for the coveted NCAA championship status or even emerging status. Given the potential

benefits to the student-athletes (Hardin & Hardin, 2004; Hargreaves & Hardin, 2009; Goggin & Newell, 2000), participants of wheelchair basketball would presumably be no different.

NCAA recognition would be important for the sport of wheelchair basketball and its athletes. In one sense, it would serve to substantiate the sport of wheelchair basketball; that is, the moniker would provide a measure of endorsement and authentication. Further, it would contribute to the self-worth of its athletes. Simmons and Childers (2013) found intercollegiate athletes to report greater levels of self-esteem and self-description than those who either participated only in intramurals or did not participate in athletics. Given the frustration that many wheelchair basketball players experience regarding their skewed public portrayal (Hardin & Hardin, 2004), the acknowledgement and greater appreciation for the athletes would presumably be paramount. Thus, exploring the potential of an NCAA-sanctioned league for wheelchair basketball then creates a natural progression for wheelchair basketball athletes seeking to compete in the sport at a national and international level. This study is important for student-athletes because it explores the potential to create a college-level league that is recognized by the NCAA and create a pipeline for athletes to compete past college, much like other NCAA sports such as basketball, football, and baseball provide. While universities and club teams offer team opportunities, NCAA recognition could add viability. Second, NCAA recognition may stimulate growth of collegiate wheelchair basketball. The development of sports such as women's water polo, rowing, and ice hockey was expedited following NCAA recognition (Hosick, 2007a; McKindra, 2005), and given the relative paucity of teams (National Wheelchair Basketball Association, 2013), such a catalyst would be a welcomed boost for wheelchair basketball. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the legitimacy of recognizing wheelchair basketball as an NCAA emerging sport.

Truly, the process of officially becoming an NCAA sport is no easy task. The sport must be sponsored by 40 institutions in order to attain championship status (Hosick, 2011a). However, a helpful and common precursor to achieving championship status is "emerging" status. Initially recommended by the NCAA Gender-Equity Task Force, emerging sport was designed to give greater opportunities to female student-athletes, including more sport sponsorship for institutions (Watson, 2009). Additionally, institutions can use emerging sport to help meet the minimum sponsorship and financial aid requirements needed by the NCAA. Over time, the emerging sport can become an NCAA championship sport if it succeeds in gaining sufficient sponsorship and funding in the allotted 10 years; that is, at least 40 varsity NCAA programs must exist (Emerging Sports for Women, 2012). The critical distinction between the two is that while championship status means the NCAA awards a championship in the sport, emerging sport status represents more of a trial period aimed toward monitoring the progress and development of sports (Emerging Sports for Women, 2012). Because emerging sport status was originally intended for female athletes, this study will address the legitimacy of wheelchair basketball both as a collective sport and also as separate women's and men's teams.

Of course, a certain level of foundation of the sport is expected before even considering applying for emerging sport in the NCAA. Collegiate wheelchair basketball, for instance, was established in 1977 under the umbrella of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA). Following its development, collegiate wheelchair basketball teams formed the Central Intercollegiate Conference (CIC) in order to fit the collegiate model and provide rules of government. The number of teams in the CIC ranged from 6–12 as the sport progressed (Byon, Carroll, Cottingham, Grady, & Allen, 2011). The conference reorganized in 1999 as the NWBA Central Intercollegiate Division (CID). As of 2012, there were eight men's teams and four women's teams in the CID, and a total of eight institutions were represented. These schools ranged from Division III (i.e., University of Wisconsin Whitewater) to Division I (i.e., University of Alabama). Although the eight men's CID universities had wheelchair basketball programs, only Southwest Minnesota State University was officially housed in the university athletic department at the time of this study (Southwest Minnesota State Mustangs, 2012). The others competed under club team status. As will be discussed later, housing in relation to NCAA sport is essential, and the differences of being housed in the athletic departments versus club sport may have a dramatic impact on the sport programs.

With its steady and organized development as a collegiate sport, Fay (2012) indicated that there have already been efforts to explore the recognition of wheelchair basketball as an NCAA emerging sport. Fay determined that the central argument for inclusion was based on social justice and presented a clear justification of NCAA status for wheelchair basketball. However, Fay did not address the legitimacy of this status under the consideration of both the current NCAA rules and regulations and the infrastructure of collegiate wheelchair basketball. Halgin (2006) defined legitimacy as a “generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (p. 81). Therefore, the legitimacy of NCAA status for collegiate wheelchair basketball remains unclear because, as of this study, this particular topic had not been investigated in research. This begs the question of whether or not the attainment of NCAA recognition for the sport of collegiate wheelchair basketball would be an appropriate endeavor under the NCAA bylaws as of 2014.

Collegiate Wheelchair Basketball

To assess collegiate wheelchair basketball as a candidate for an NCAA emerging sport, it is important to first acknowledge the arguments in support of why the sport should be considered in the first place and what it could gain from pursuing NCAA recognition. Previous research on collegiate wheelchair basketball included physiological performance and the psychological experiences of athletes (e.g., Miles *et al.*, 1982; Skordtlis, Gavriilidis, Chakitou, & Asonitou, 2003; Paulsen, French, & Sherrill, 1991; Vermillion & Dodder, 2007). While these studies have spoken to the mood (Paulsen *et al.*, 1991), self-esteem (Vermillion & Dodder, 2007), achievement orientation (Skordtlis *et al.*, 2003), and effectiveness of upper-

body training regimens (Miles *et al.*, 1982) of wheelchair basketball athletes, they did not offer any insight into the *perspectives* of collegiate wheelchair basketball athletes. To that end, the specific lines of research relevant to the study at hand involve perspectives of collegiate wheelchair basketball athletes on the way they are perceived and promoted, and consumer perspectives of collegiate wheelchair basketball spectators. This is largely significant because attaining NCAA sport status will undoubtedly change the perspectives of both the athletes and their spectators.

Regarding the former, Hardin and Hardin (2003) found that the media coverage for male collegiate wheelchair basketball players as athletes was curtailed. The researchers argued that these athletes were more likely to be covered in community sections of the media rather than provided sport coverage. Hardin and Hardin (2004) noted that male collegiate wheelchair basketball players were aware that they were presented as inspiration stories rather than as viable athletes. While many of the athletes were frustrated by this portrayal, some acknowledged that the inspirational image is the primary way that they can gain traction in the media. A theme that is evident in both studies is athletes' frustrations and efforts to accrue viability. Hargreaves and Hardin (2009) echoed these sentiments when they discovered similar findings following interviews with female collegiate basketball players. NCAA recognition can change this narrow media perspective on athletes. Just as the advancement of the Paralympic Games helped attract media attention (Goggin & Newell, 2000), NCAA could have the same impact for US-based wheelchair sports.

With respect to the spectator perspectives, Cottingham, Byon, Chatfield, and Carroll (2013) found that spectators without disabilities could be attracted to disability sport. Further research by Byon, Cottingham, and Carroll (2010) and Cottingham *et al.*, (2014) examined spectator motivations and their influences on future consumption behavior. Findings in both studies indicated that the motive that most impacted re-attendance and desire to purchase team merchandise was acquisition of knowledge, or being informed about the sport. In other words, for spectators to become fans, they must become more informed. Hosick (2007a) explained that more substantial promotion will occur with the backing and legitimacy of the NCAA brand, as the NCAA moniker has historically been shown to make sports more visible to the public. Through legitimization of wheelchair basketball players as a result of NCAA status, this symbolic recognition could in turn lead to more athletic department recognition and promotion including institutional support, the potential acquisition of sponsors, and inclusion of already developed athletic sponsorships and contracts. Further, the enhanced media attention from the NCAA moniker (Goggin & Newell, 2000) could go a long way toward easing the student-athletes' frustrations over their media portrayal (Hardin & Hardin, 2004; Hargreaves & Hardin, 2009).

The Development of Emerging Sports

For the NCAA to officially recognize a sport, it must be well-established and will likely have followed a certain pattern of stable origin, successful development, and

prosperous expansion. This process which takes the sport from mere practice to consumption, from initial provenance to widespread popularity or commercialization, has been referred to as “sportization” (Dunning, 1999, p. 107). The current review will identify the following components of progression: adaptation of a related sport or activity, social factors such as media attention and sponsorships, and the establishment of formal associations, which highlight the growth and development of new sports. These are all necessary steps towards achieving recognition and possible acceptance into the NCAA.

The first of these steps refers to the conception that although a new sport can theoretically emerge from anywhere, literature indicates that in modern times the process has often begun with the adaptation of an existing sport or activity. As noted by Dunning, McGuire, and Pearton (1993), sports have not always existed in their present forms, but rather as play-activities developed over time as variations of earlier, different forms of sport practice. Academic case studies such as Humphreys’ (1997) examination of snowboarding and Atkinson’s (2009) examination of parkour are the most indicative examples. Snowboarding is essentially a hybrid between skiing and surfing. The adaptation of these two sports by a middle-class leisure movement “disenchanted with the values of mainstream sport” (Humphreys, 1997, p. 148) resulted in this new and emerging sport. Similarly, in-line hockey was an adaptation of ice hockey more suited to warm climates (Chin-Hsien, 2010).

These two sports arose from the previously well-established sports of skiing, surfing, and ice hockey, respectively. In the case of parkour, however, the sport derived from an early 20th century discipline emphasizing the practice of “basic human muscular-skeletal movements,” and was adapted for the urban environment from a relatively unknown “natural method” (Atkinson, 2009, p. 171). Parkour is a physical discipline geared toward improving a person’s ability to move in all environments, and training involves sprinting, crawling, jumping, swimming, and climbing (Taylor, 2009). The adaptation gave rise to a lifestyle sport performed in suburban settings.

Following its initial conception, another key factor underlying the development of new sports is the social phenomenon that modern media has become. Dunning *et al.* (1993) indicated that new sports in modern times are predominantly collective rather than individual inventions and develop in response to scientific and/or social factors. One such factor central to sport development is the media attention placed on a sport. As noted in Heino (2001), media affect and control new sports with the sole purpose of driving the consumer market. Decisions are made to bring mediated presentation to a certain standard, significantly affecting the development and presentation of new sports.

Humphreys (1997) identified media exposure from skating publications such as *Skateboarder* and *Action Now* as contributing factors in the growth of snowboarding. Pickert (2009) echoed this sentiment in pointing out that ESPN’s X Games helped legitimize sports like snowboarding, aiding its ascent into national and international popularity. Additionally, media exposure in the form of television commercials, documentaries, movies, and print media coverage centered

in Europe in the 1990s led to widespread youth interest in parkour (Atkinson, 2009).

A third central factor common in sport development has been the establishment of leagues and formal associations. Dunning *et al.* (1993) explained that new sports differ from their original forms in their higher levels of rationalization, standardization, secularization, and quantification. This theoretical point of view has been apparent in the sport of snowboarding, which established the Professional Snowboarders Association in 1990 to aid in the successful popularization of the sport, just as the National Skateboarding Association had done for its own sport in years prior (Humphreys, 1997). Parkour has also established various formal associations, including the International Amateur Freerunning and Parkour Organization, Australian Parkour Association, and Hong Kong Parkour Association, among others (Parkulture, 2012). As Chin-Hsien (2010) pointed out, in-line hockey has undergone substantial growth in recent years with the establishment of leagues like Roller Hockey International and Major League Roller Hockey. Additionally contributing to the growth of the sport was the establishment of the National Collegiate Roller Hockey Association (About the NCRHA, 2012).

Finally, the last key factor in the development of emerging sports has been exhibited by the sponsorship of both the sport and in some cases its participants. As explained by Humphreys (1997), a pivotal event in the popularization of snowboarding occurred when multinational companies like Swatch, O'Neill, and Suzuki began sponsoring what was then considered to be a new sport. In fact, the level of advertising from these multinational corporations was disproportionate to the modest participation base for snowboarding at that time (Heino, 2000). Furthermore, the amount of advertising in the sport of snowboarding has been deemed disproportionate to the overall participation (Heino, 2000). Likewise, parkour participants have started gaining sponsorships from organizations like American Parkour (American Parkour, 2012) and have additionally increased in popularity with support from clothing lines such as Take Flight Apparel (Take Flight, 2012) and Urban Freeflow (Urban Freeflow, 2012). Finally, professional in-line hockey players have obtained sponsorships from such hockey giants as Bauer Hockey and Labeda Hockey (Team USA, 2012), which help to promote the teams and athletes they publicly endorse.

Emerging Sports in NCAA

If a new activity succeeds through these steps of adaptation, media expansion, and sponsorship, and develops into a well-known, commercialized sport, the next aspirational right of passage would be acceptance into the NCAA. With a strong emphasis on both athletics and academic excellence, the organization serves as the governing body of collegiate sports on all matters, particularly personnel, amateurism, recruiting, eligibility, and financial aid (NCAA, 2013b). As of 2012, the NCAA recognized 89 championships in 23 sports across three divisions; however, only four of these sports have been developed within the last 15 years (NCAA, 2013a). These sports are women's rowing, ice hockey, water polo, and

bowling. As detailed in *Emerging Sports for Women* (2012), the NCAA created a list of emerging sports for women in response to recommendations made by the Gender-Equity Task Force in 1994.

An emerging sport is defined as a sport recognized by the NCAA with the intention to provide additional athletics opportunities to female student-athletes. As noted in Eckert (2012), the NCAA is concerned with the growth and development of a sport as well as the potential financial and liability ramifications on athletic programs when considering whether to grant a sport “emerging sport” status. In order to be granted this status by the NCAA, a sport must obtain a minimum of 10 sponsors and have at least 20 varsity and/or club teams in existence at college campuses (Hosick, 2011). The NCAA will look at other data such as participation numbers, injury and risk statistics, current training and certification requirements for judges and officials, growth in youth format of the sport, diversity opportunities, etc. to determine potential for growth (Hosick, 2011).

Strong participation rates and internal organization are among the primary characteristics new sports must exhibit in order to be considered for NCAA emerging sport status. Research indicates that mere participation without such organization does not ensure NCAA status (Quidditch – the next big team sport?, 2011). The case of quidditch, a sport adapted from the activity popularized by the *Harry Potter* book and movie series, has displayed strong participation and growth, as evidenced by its increase from eight teams and 100 spectators at the inaugural World Cup event in 2005 to 46 teams and more than 1,000 spectators at the 2010 event. Upwards of 300 colleges were either forming or already had active quidditch teams with more than 400 in existence at all levels worldwide. Despite this growth in participation, the sport has failed to develop the type of organization and standardization characteristic of emerging sports, as it still lacked official uniforms, equipment, and goals as of 2011 (Quidditch – the next big team sport?, 2011).

In contrast to quidditch, competitive cheerleading has exhibited both the participation and internal organization typical of emerging sport status. As explained by Eckert (2011), not only has participation already been significant at the high school level, where approximately 20% of the 600,000 participants also compete in some type of annual cheer or dance competition, but it has also displayed active growth in the youth format of the sport and established certifications for judges and a safety council to address safety and injury concerns. The USA Federation for Sport Cheering developed the safety council not just to raise awareness of safety and education, but also to address misconceptions about injuries and provide data to support appropriate training of athletes (USA Cheer, 2012).

As an emerging sport, a program such as cheerleading can gain championship status by becoming sponsored and funded by 40 varsity programs for individual sports and 28 for team sports. This must happen within 10 years of becoming an emerging sport or steady progress must be made toward this goal. The NCAA looks for significant growth, and if this is not displayed, the NCAA may remove the sport from the “emerging sport” list, as has been evidenced by sports such as

synchronized swimming, team handball, archery, and badminton (Emerging Sports for Women, 2012; The National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2012).

Literature has indicated that factors common among sports having recently taken the step from emerging sport status to NCAA championship status include the increased exposure associated with emerging sport status (Hosick, 2007a; McKindra, 2005), the presence of a championship prior to gaining NCAA status (Hosick, 2007a; McKindra, 2005), and the removal of barriers that prevent institutions from sponsoring the sport (Hosick, 2007a; Hosick, 2007b). The most common way that emerging sport has been examined in literature is by way of case studies such as in the contexts of McKindra (2005), Hosick (2007a), and Hosick (2007b).

The exposure inherent in “emerging sport” status has been crucial to the development of sports like women’s water polo, as well as women’s rowing, women’s ice hockey, and women’s bowling. Since being granted this status, all of these programs have grown significantly as more and more programs have added a varsity team. It makes it easier for an athletic director to add the sport if it has the ability to count toward minimum financial aid and sponsorship requirements (Hosick, 2007b). Rosner (2001) explained this concept in the context of women’s rowing, referencing the large number of scholarships that can be offered. This made the sport such an appealing option for athletic directors that it grew from 96 teams upon being granted NCAA championship status in 1996–97 to 136 teams as of 2000–01 (Rosner, 2001). In addition, the women’s rowing championship has expanded from 12 teams in its initial format to 22 teams as of 2012 (Brown, 2012). This rapid proliferation has been unparalleled in the realm of NCAA emerging sports.

In addition to financial aid and sponsorship compliance, the exposure from emerging sport status can also aid the development of championship programs. As noted by McKindra (2005), the exposure from emerging sport status gave women’s water polo the opportunity to develop a highly competitive club championship program. This contributed to significant growth throughout the 1990s, which helped the sport achieve NCAA championship status in 2000 (Hosick, 2007a). Hosick (2007a) and McKindra (2005) also explained how in the case of women’s rowing and ice hockey, the establishment of club championships while they were considered emerging sports helped gain the momentum that drove interest and participation as the sports grew.

A final factor common among all sports that have recently gained NCAA championship status has been the removal of barriers—such as the lack of internal infrastructure—that may prevent an institution from sponsoring a sport. As mentioned by Hosick (2007a), women’s rowing was granted NCAA championship status in 1996, a product of coaches taking advantage of emerging sport status and nurturing the sport through the growth phase to what it has become as of 2012. Hosick (2007b) explained that this is a model the current emerging sport of women’s rugby is looking to follow in gaining championship status. By creating competition schedules and an officiating bureau, the goal is to make it obstacle-free for decision makers, removing barriers that will give the women’s rugby movement the momentum necessary to achieve NCAA championship status

(Hosick, 2007b). In all, having increased exposure, championship programs, and removal of barriers can help to develop any sport aspiring for NCAA recognition, from emerging sport status and beyond. For the sport of collegiate wheelchair basketball, this status could have the added benefit of contributing to the self-worth of athletes and relieving their frustration over their public portrayal (Hardin & Hardin, 2004; Hargreaves & Hardin, 2009; Goggin & Newell, 2000).

Resource Mobilization Theory

With regard to wheelchair basketball becoming an NCAA emerging sport, an examination of resource availability, structural preference, and analyzing the sport's future is needed. In order to effectively address each of these elements, resource mobilization theory (RMT) was used to approach this study. RMT offers a means to explore social movement by examining the support base, strategy and tactics, and relation to the larger society (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). It is defined as a “structural perspective of social movements” and “seeks to explain the emergence, persistence, and decline of social movements by examining how the social actors create or gain access to key resources to pursue a common agenda” (Corte, 2013, p. 29).

In contrast, traditional perspective proposes that social movements proceed by engaged supporters. Under the resource mobilization perspective, stakeholders may provide sources of support, but they may not necessarily have a commitment to the social movement. For example, some wheelchair basketball athletes or coaches may not be committed to moving the sport toward NCAA emerging sport status. Regarding strategy and tactics, traditional perspective is that social movement leaders engage with authorities to produce change, but resource mobilization perspective acknowledges that other strategic tasks beyond engaging with authorities also result in social movement. For example, moving wheelchair basketball into NCAA emerging sport status does not have to solely depend on athletes and coaches pressing the NCAA for consideration, but may stem from multiple negotiations among the sport's stakeholders and other governing bodies. Finally, with regard to relating to the larger society, traditional perspective has largely ignored ways to utilize the environment for social movement, but resource mobilization has embraced aspects of the environment to further organizational and social movement goals. For example, wheelchair basketball stakeholders may capitalize on the shifting environment of the NCAA due to the conference realignment increases, potentially warming the administration for change.

From this approach, applying RMT as a conceptual framework in this study makes sense because it “emphasizes the interaction between resource availability, the pre-existing organization of preference structures, and entrepreneurial attempts to meet preference demand” (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1236). Each of these factors will be addressed as they relate to the existing and relevant literature on college wheelchair basketball, emerging sports, and NCAA emerging sport status.

Methodology

This study used documents to evaluate the status of NWBA-CID programs in relation to the NCAA Bylaws for emerging sports with the goal of developing themes that could be used to identify whether wheelchair basketball was compliant with NCAA regulations and ultimately in position to seek NCAA emerging sport status. Documents provide a “ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator” (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). Document analysis can reveal information about things that are unable to be observed, particularly with regard to program evaluation (Patton, 2002). Therefore, document analysis was conducted in 2012 on the NCAA Bylaws and the existing NWBA-CID policies, procedures, and statuses of the eight universities that offered men’s or women’s wheelchair basketball (Creswell, 2009; Mogalakwe, 2006). The universities were Auburn University, Edinboro University, Southwest Minnesota State University, University of Alabama, University of Illinois, University of Missouri, University of Texas-Arlington, and University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

Sample

The 2012–13 NCAA Division I Manual (The National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2012) was the primary document examined for this study, specifically exploring the following 11 sections that addressed emerging sports:

- 3.02.3 Membership Categories
- 3.2 Active Membership
- 3.4 Affiliated Membership
- 10.3 Sports Wagering Activities
- 16.8 Expenses Provided by the Institution for Practice and Competition
- 17.1 General Playing-Season Regulations
- 20.02.4 Emerging Sports for Women
- 20.02.5.2 Sports Sponsorship
- 20.9.1 Financial Aid Requirements
- 20.9.7 Football Bowl Subdivision Requirements (FBS)
- 20.9.8 Football Championship Subdivision Requirements (FCSD).

The 2012–13 NCAA Division I Manual was obtained from the NCAA Publications website (The National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2012). Each of the NCAA Bylaws addressed emerging sports to some degree, and therefore, is applicable to this study. Additionally, the NWBA official website was examined, specifically focusing on the NWBA constitution and bylaws, official rules as published on the NWBA website, and the Collegiate Division History page. Additional information was sought from each university’s website where wheelchair basketball information was provided.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method was used during data analysis of the documents. The constant comparative method allowed the researchers to compare segments of the data with each other to search for similarities and differences

(Merriam, 2009). For example, segments of the NCAA Bylaws on emerging sports were compared to segments of the CID policies and procedures. The analytical questions that guided the data analysis were focused on commonalities and differences between CID characteristics and NCAA criteria for emerging sports: (1) Do CID policies and procedures match NCAA emerging sport criteria?, and (2) If they do not match, how are the CID policies and procedures deficient with regard to NCAA emerging sport criteria? The data were then grouped together based on similar qualities and assigned categories, enabling the researchers to determine which criteria wheelchair basketball met or fell short of to be identified as an NCAA emerging sport. Table 1 depicts a list of NWBA-CID wheelchair basketball programs, where they were housed at the time of this study, whether they possessed a men's and/or women's team, their division, as well as the academic eligibility of the respective programs.

Findings and Discussion

Following an extensive examination of the NCAA rules for emerging sport status and the current policies and procedures of the CID, five primary issues came to light that would most impact the recognition of CID schools. These issues were the requisite number of teams for emerging sport status, divisional alignment, academic eligibility, Title IX, and institutional recognition. These issues are discussed below in order to examine the opportunity and complexity of wheelchair basketball receiving NCAA emerging status.

Requisite Number of Teams for Emerging Sport Status

As of 2012, the NCAA required 20 varsity and/or club teams nationally to be considered for emerging sport status (Hosick, 2011; Rosenberg, 2004). The CID was well short of this target number with 11 men's teams and three women's teams in existence as of 2014. It is apparent that the purpose of this rule is to ensure sufficient institutional support to prevent turnover from sport to sport, rather than to limit the number of sports in the NCAA. As collegiate wheelchair basketball has

TABLE 1
NWBA-CID WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL PROGRAMS

University	Housed	Men	Women	Division	Academic Eligibility
Auburn University	Club	Yes	No	Division I	No
Edinboro University	Club	Yes	Yes	Division III	Yes
Southwest Minnesota State Univ.	Athletics	Yes	No	Division II	Yes
University of Alabama	Club	Yes	Yes	Division I	Yes
University of Illinois	Club	Yes	Yes	Division I	Yes
University of Missouri	Club	Yes	No	Division I	Yes
University of Texas-Arlington	Club	Yes	No	Division I	Yes
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater	Club	Yes	Yes	Division III	Yes

Note: Auburn University was comprised of students and non-students at the time of this study, relegating it to developmental status.

been in existence since 1977 (Byon *et al*, 2011), sustainability does not seem to be a serious concern. For this reason, the NCAA would be justified in making a rule exception related to the requisite number of teams needed to achieve emerging status. This change would seem to be a plausible solution; however, granting emerging sport status to a sport that does not even meet the requisite number of teams may be met with resistance by sports such as archery, badminton, and synchronized swimming, which have been removed from the emerging sports list due to lack of growth (Buzuvis, 2011). Such a potential rule change hearkens to RMT's strategy and tactics tenet with regard to relationships. Damaging its reputation amongst other sports by requesting a rule change prior to being recognized as an NCAA sport may not be ideal for wheelchair basketball. Thus, such a relationship between the sport and the NCAA must be fostered with a more tactical approach.

Traditional perspective would have resulted in wheelchair basketball stakeholders engaging NCAA administration. However, using resource mobilization perspective, wheelchair basketball stakeholders may engage other sports' stakeholders as well as NCAA administrators to seek the most practical solution. Furthermore, this brings into account RMT's relation to the larger society, or in this case the other NCAA-sanctioned sports. To maintain legitimacy not only in sport, but among peer sports that are NCAA sanctioned, wheelchair basketball stakeholders must take into account the larger society of sport governing bodies and their own processes of achieving NCAA emerging sport or championship sport status.

Divisional Alignment

CID teams are represented by institutions at all three NCAA divisions. According to NCAA policy, if representation is lacking at a given level, the NCAA may provide a waiver to allow the team to play at another level (Pat Coleman, Executive Editor D3sports.com, personal communication, September 27, 2012). This exception might put some teams at a disadvantage as Division III teams do not provide grant in aid, whereas teams of Division I and II do. Although many schools provide grant in aid through their club sports, the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater did not at the time of this study. Despite this disparity, it has still captured 11 national wheelchair basketball championships, including three between 2010–2014. Accordingly, divisional alignment among CID teams should not negatively impact NCAA emerging sport status as it would adhere to Bylaw 20.8.1 regarding championship eligibility for sports where championships are not offered in each NCAA division (The National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2012).

Academic Eligibility

CID teams meet all academic eligibility requirements of their institutions and the NCAA, save one: CID teams allow their athletes five years of on-court eligibility rather than the four allowed by the NCAA, according to Bylaw 14.2 of the 2012–13 NCAA Division I Manual (The National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2012). The NCAA could allow for a fifth year of on-court eligibility; in fact the

NCAA already allows for exemptions at universities such as Brigham Young University (BYU), where student-athletes attend religious-affiliated mission trips (Crain, 2005; The National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2012, Bylaw 14.2.1).

Requesting that the NCAA permit an additional year of eligibility would provide the benefit of better competition during an emerging period of wheelchair basketball as an NCAA-recognized sport because it would establish consistency within and among teams, which might translate to more credibility for wheelchair basketball in general. However, it is important to consider that having too many rule modifications and exceptions might dilute the NCAA status of wheelchair basketball as well as the NCAA brand. If Brittain, Ramshaw, and Gamon's (2012) assertions are to be accepted, that disability sport provides a means to social change by way of legitimization, then disability sport must meet as many standards of the non-disability sport world to avoid paternalism. For this reason, we recommend that the CID use traditional requirements for years of eligibility.

Title IX

Title IX, rather than an NCAA regulation, is a federal legislation which prohibits exclusion of sport participation on the basis of gender. Related to this context, compliance with Title IX requires universities to provide equal access to both male and female athletes. This includes but is not limited to the number of student-athletes of both genders and the resources available to athletes of both genders.

Rarely does a university need to add men's teams in order to become Title IX compliant, but adding women's teams is more common and necessary. It should be noted that Title IX issues are most commonly related to underrepresentation of female athletics (Thomas, 2011). The NCAA's addition of men's rifle in 1980 (Williams, 2011) preceded a period of stagnancy for men's sports relative to women's sports where just 1.5 men's programs have been added for every two women's (Garber, 2012). Additionally, four new women's sports have been granted NCAA championship status within the last 15 years with three more currently on the emerging sports list (Emerging Sports for Women, 2012; The National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2012, Bylaw 20.02.4).

As previously noted, the four schools that provide women's wheelchair basketball also provide men's teams. It would then be feasible to add both men's and women's teams for these institutions, provided that the school is currently in compliance with Title IX. Even in these schools, the makeup of the teams may need to be addressed, as published school rosters show that all of the schools with women's teams have fewer players than the corresponding men's teams. Recognizing both the men's and women's teams would exacerbate any issues of Title IX that an institution might have. A review of the CID institutions identify that two schools, the University of Alabama (Greenwell v. Univ. of Ala. Bd. of Trs., 2012) and the University of Illinois (Kelley v. Board of Trustees of the Univ. of Ill., 1994), have had recent issues related to Title IX. The underrepresentation at these institutions might make adding women's wheelchair basketball easier, but adding men's wheelchair basketball more difficult.

If a school is noncompliant with Title IX due to underrepresentation of women's athletics, then only the women's team could be recognized by the institution. For

these reasons Title IX noncompliance might influence only the women's teams to be fully recognized by the intuitions with wheelchair basketball programs.

Institutional Recognition

Institutional recognition is a primary issue. As of 2014, there were 328 collegiate wrestling programs (Cook, 2012), but while many are club, only 222 schools have NCAA wrestling teams (College Sports Scholarships, 2012). The number of NCAA wrestling teams has declined by 475 since 1972 (Cook, 2012). Simply having a program and having sport recognition by the NCAA does not guarantee that an institution will place that program within the athletic department and designate that team as a university-supported NCAA team.

In reality, NCAA recognition might actually decrease the numbers of the CID rather than increase it. If, for example, only four of the institutions that currently have men's CID teams were to include wheelchair basketball as part of the athletic department, then the CID would have to determine if trading conference size for NCAA status is an appropriate exchange.

As previously noted, academic institutions must choose to recognize an athletic program, which sheds light on RMT's perspective of a social movement's support base. An institution may support the concept of wheelchair basketball being an NCAA-sanctioned sport, but elect not to participate in such a cause, with Title IX implications being among the factors. In addition to the aforementioned challenges related to Title IX, funding concerns may also influence institutional recognition. Byon *et al.* (2011) noted that most collegiate wheelchair basketball programs are funded through student fees, adaptive athletic departments, or disability services offices on college campuses. If these programs were to transition to the athletic department, then the expenses would, assumingly, also transfer to the athletic departments. Cottingham *et al.* (2012) noted that a typical collegiate wheelchair basketball team spends \$400,000 annually. This expense could be unpalatable for many athletic departments that are already meeting the NCAA's number of sport requirements of their given division. However, it is possible that some athletic departments would choose to terminate a more expensive sport in exchange for perhaps the less expensive sport of wheelchair basketball. Still, institutional recognition might be a barrier for some of the CID schools due to Title IX and budgetary constraints. For these reasons, NCAA status might decrease the number of collegiate wheelchair basketball teams while raising the profile and legitimacy of those teams whose institutions choose to recognize them.

Recommendations and Future Research

This analysis implies that the NCAA recognition would, from a structural or organizational perspective, not be a serious barrier. The greater challenge would be institutional recognition due to issues related to Title IX and budgetary concerns. Receiving NCAA status might, in fact, decrease the number of collegiate wheelchair basketball teams. Without additional information, we recommend that the women's wheelchair basketball teams apply first for emerging status and request that the NCAA waive the number of teams required for this status. If

approved, women's wheelchair basketball should first work within the NCAA system and determine institutional support feasibility. We recommend only the women's teams apply first because of the issues related to Title IX. If a precedent can be set with the women's teams, then men's teams should be added later provided that issues related to Title IX can be addressed.

While the current study yields a number of discoveries that offer viable recommendations for the sport of wheelchair basketball to acquire emerging sport status, it does come with several limitations that provide a direction for future research. First, no empirical data was collected as a part of this research. As Gratton and Jones (2010) advised, "although theoretical research has its merits, we would suggest that you should—if at all possible—support your findings empirically through the collection of primary data" (p. 8). Though the authors (2010) do not undermine the value of the theoretical research undertaken in the current study, it is nonetheless regarded as a limitation on the application and legitimacy of the recommendations. Second, given that the purpose of the NCAA emerging sport moniker is to promote the growth of women's sports, it is unclear how that would apply in the context of men's wheelchair basketball. While the analysis has indicated that NCAA emerging sport status for wheelchair basketball is feasible on a number of levels, it remains unclear whether or not this could indeed apply to men's wheelchair basketball.

Given the limitations in this study, it is recommended that future research focus on direct communication with all stakeholders in this project. Given the impetus placed upon empirical research (Gratton & Jones, 2010), such communication would go a long way toward substantiating the recommendations made in the current study. Although the findings and subsequent recommendations are evident based on the analysis of NWBA-CID policy and NCAA Bylaws, direct communication with relevant stakeholders would add another layer of support and credibility to this analysis. For example, interviews with NCAA representatives would give researchers the ability to verify issues such as the practicality of waiving the requisite number of teams needed to garner NCAA emerging sport status, as well as the consideration of men's sports under the emerging sport umbrella. Finally, although we presume that NCAA status would go a long way toward alleviating some of the frustrations felt by wheelchair basketball athletes over their public portrayal, future studies would be well served to investigate this further.

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Notes on contributors

Ben Larkin is a doctoral student in the Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His research focuses on consumer behavior, with a specific emphasis in sport media consumption.

Dr. Michael Cottingham is an assistant professor at the University of Houston. He also serves as the Director of Adaptive Athletics at UH, a program that conducts innovative and applied research on disability sport and provides opportunities for sport participation for athletes with disabilities. Dr. Cottingham's research interests include perceptions of athletes with disabilities, disability sport consumer behavior, and organizational structure of disability sport.

Dr. Joshua R. Pate is an assistant professor at James Madison University in sport and recreation management. His research is in disability sport with an emphasis on the experiences of individuals. Pate also conducts research in communications and media coverage of Paralympic sport.