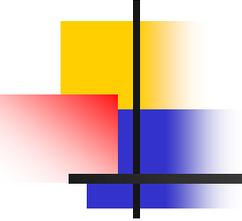


# Exploring Perceptions of the Role of Athletics in NESCAC Schools Following *Reclaiming the Game*

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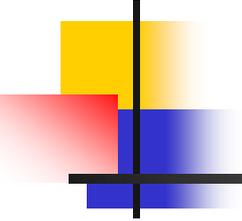
**By: Tyler Simms**



# Research Question

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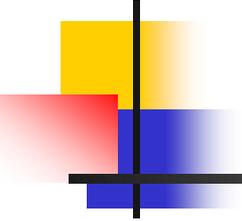
- After the reports were published in *Reclaiming the Game* in 2003 stating that there is significant academic-athletic divide prevalent in the NESCAC, what is the reaction by some of the faculty to these findings? If there is believed to be a divide, what can be done to help close the gap between athletes and students at-large?
  - Also, what have these schools done in attempt to make changes to their policies or practices? If any of these schools conducted their own study, did their findings agree with or contradict those of Bowen and Levin?



# Key Terms

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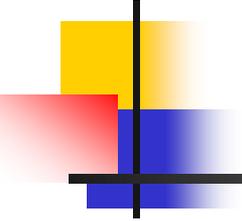
- **Academic-Athletic Divide** - That there is a significant difference in both the admission advantages and the academic performance of athletes versus students-at-large
- **Athlete** - Any student who plays a varsity sport for at least one year
- **Students-at-large** - Any student who does not participate in a varsity sport



# Background

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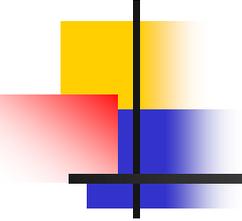
- NESCAC is the New England Small College Athletic Conference
- *Reclaiming the Game: College Sports and Educational Values* by William Bowen and Sarah Levin (2003)



# Significance

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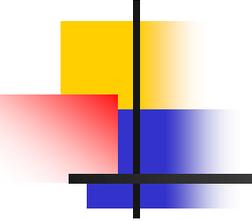
- One of the biggest questions in higher education today involves what role should athletics play in college life.
- My research helps to gauge the perspective of the people who deal with academics and athletics on a daily basis.



# Literature Review

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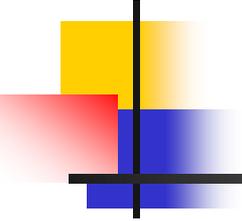
- Previous study titled *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values* (2001) by William Bowen and James Shulman
- Follow-up study done called *Reclaiming the Game* (2003)



## Literature Review (cont.)

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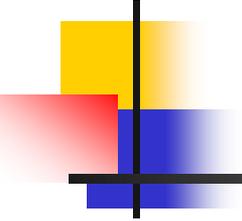
- *Beer and Circus: How Big Time College Sports is Crippling Undergraduate Education* (2001)
- *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big Time College Athletics* (1990)



# Methodology

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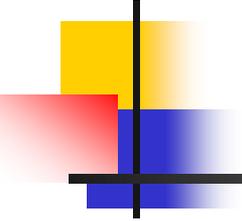
- Formal Interviews
  - With four Athletic Directors, a Director of the NESCAC, an Associate Athletic Director and a Professor
  - Basic Interview Questions:
    - What was your initial reaction to seeing the findings in *Reclaiming the Game*?
    - Has your school made any policy changes or recommendations since the publication of *Reclaiming the Game*?
    - What, if any, changes should be made to help bridge this gap between athletes and students at large?



# Thesis and Findings

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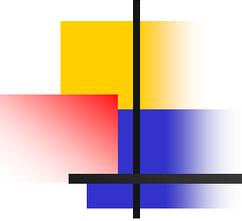
- Despite what the authors claim about the NESAC the faculty that I interviewed do not believe that there is a significant academic-athletic divide at their school.
  - The perception of an academic-athletic divide is far greater than the actual circumstances, however sometimes a minority of athletes support the negative stereotype.



# Thesis Continued

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- The authors dismiss the educational value of athletics.
- All of the schools did their own follow-up study in the aftermath and found that their school did not fit the data in *Reclaiming the Game*
- Both the coaches and athletes as well as the faculty and students, need to integrate themselves together more often.

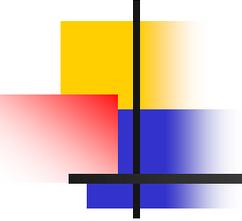


# Findings

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- “I think it’s unfair to stereotype, to put a tag on somebody, and write a book that assumes athletes do poorly compared to their peers. Many of them do come here and work as hard as everyone else but the stereotype comes from the few that may stick out from the group and feed into the stereotype.”

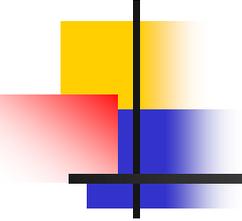
- Mr. Adley at Berry College



# Findings Continued

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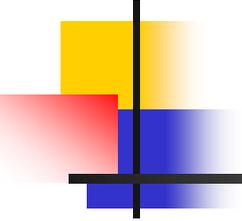
- “They assume that’s there is no educational value to sports...they don’t think of it itself as educational. I think that they dismiss this fact far too easily.”
  - Mr. Yearly at Berry College
- “I think that it’s something that deserves discourse every year; but in the end the divide is only as big as the perception. And the perception is fueled by the people in your community, so if we can get those students and faculty involved every year the perception and divide will be eliminated.”
  - Mr. Henderson at Cedar College



# Conclusions

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- These faculty believed that the perception of the academic-athletic divide outweighed the actual divide they saw on their campuses.
- In order to change this perception, there needs to be more of an interaction between everyone in the community.
- Future Research?
  - An in-depth study looking at the environment of each school to see if the qualitative data fits the quantitative data

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- “Because in the end we’re all here doing the same kind of work, our disciplines are different but we all do them at the same high level. We want to help open avenues so everyone sees that teaching is teaching, whether in a classroom or on a court, we’re all pushing the students to strive for their best in all arenas.”

- Ms. Oslow at Jefferson College