

Claremont Colleges

Scholarship @ Claremont

CMC Senior Theses

CMC Student Scholarship

2020

The Noxious Market of Division 1 College Football

Bryan Carlen

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses



Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [Applied Ethics Commons](#), [Economics Commons](#), [Epistemology Commons](#), and the [Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Carlen, Bryan, "The Noxious Market of Division 1 College Football" (2020). *CMC Senior Theses*. 2496.
https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/2496

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you by Scholarship@Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in this collection by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

Claremont McKenna College

The Noxious Market of
Division 1 College Football

submitted to
Professor Adrienne Martin

by
Bryan Douglas Carlen

for
Senior Thesis
Spring 2020
May 11, 2020

Acknowledgements

First off, I want to thank Professor Martin for all her guidance and patience on this journey. Working with you was an enlightening and extremely engaging experience and I will miss it dearly.

I also want to thank all my friends at Claremont McKenna College, the place I was lucky enough to call home for the past 3.75 years. I am so grateful for all you; not merely for discussing philosophy and football with me, but for always being there.

Finally, I want to thank my family. Mom and Dad, thank you for teaching me that I'm in this world to make it a better place. Nol and Izzy, thank you for teaching me to work to do so, even when it's difficult.

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 3

An Overview of Satz’ Theory..... 5

 Markets and What They Do.....5

 What the Classical Economists Got Right6

 Markets and Contemporary Egalitarian Political Theory8

 Satz’ Framework: The Four Parameters9

College Football as a Market11

 Who’s Involved?.....11

 What’s Their Compensation?12

 Conditions for “Compensation”13

 Recruitment Process & Regulations.....14

The Noxious Market Framework and College Football.....16

 Economic Vulnerability16

 Weak Agency17

 Weak Agency via Ideology & Epistemology22

 Extreme Harm for the Individual30

 Extreme Harm for Society32

Conclusions & Policy Guidelines35

Introduction

Over the past couple years, I've continuously come across headlines and statistics regarding tackle football that leave me queasy to say the least. These headlines and statistics normally have to do with either newfound medical consequences, the racial make-up of who plays tackle football, or the economic condition of those who play. As an individual largely ambivalent towards football, these facts slowly accumulated in my conscious until I recognized that something major was astray; yet, I also realized I still couldn't say exactly what it was. I then remembered Debra Satz' book "Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale" and her framework for identifying and treating so-called "noxious markets;" perhaps I could apply this framework to football to understand what was wrong, then begin to contemplate how to fix it.

This paper's focus will be on division-one college football, as opposed to professional football, for two reasons. The first is that far more individuals play D1 college football than professional football, and the second is that I was curious to see if a framework designed to address formal markets could be applied to the quasi-market of college athletic scholarships.

This paper is made up of four sections. The first will explain Satz' framework for identifying and treating noxious markets, as well as how it was developed, and the second will make the case for viewing D1 football as a labor market. The second section will lay out who's involved, what their incentives are, and what they must do to earn these incentives. The third section will then apply Satz' framework to the market at hand, as well as address a gap in her theory regarding her concept of weak agency. The paper will

then conclude with policy guidelines that, based on the analysis put forward, can be used to address the noxiousness of the market at hand.

An Overview of Satz' Theory

In order to properly apply Satz' framework, it's important to understand its philosophical underpinnings; through a comparison of historic and current conceptions of economics, and an exploration of relevant egalitarian political theory, Satz creates her own framework for both identifying and addressing what she refers to as noxious markets.

Markets and What They Do

In order to build a theory about apparently suspect markets, Satz begins by defining markets and describing their strengths. Satz defines markets as "...institutions in which exchange takes place between parties who voluntarily undertake them" (Satz 15). These institutions depend on property rights, free information, trust, and anti-monopoly measures, which are provided through social, cultural and legal structures (Satz 26). Markets as understood this way have two major strengths; the first being efficiency, and the second being liberty.

Markets' efficiency comes from their price system; prices signal to sellers, buyers, and all those in between how much items are worth (Satz 17). Satz highlights two theorems that illustrate the link between markets and efficiency. The first of these theorems is that a pareto optimal state is pareto optimal "if and only if no one's position...can be improved without reducing the position of someone else," and the second is that "...every Pareto optimal social state is a perfectly competitive equilibrium for some initial distribution of resources" (Satz 18). The first theorem has limited normative use as it doesn't make much of a case against dismantling inequality, however

the second can be used to do so in certain cases. Yet, as Satz sharply points out, both theorems aim to separate economics from the question of ethics; these theorems attempt to turn questions of ethical subjectivity into an objective pursuit. In doing so, Satz argues they actually make an ethical judgement about preferences by claiming that they all should be weighted equally, and that costs are what define harm (Satz 34).

The second strength of markets is the liberty they provide. Satz explains that at a high level, markets allow for individual choice and decision (Satz 21). She elaborates and states that a market can be conceived both as an instrument for promoting freedom, as well as a component of freedom itself; she explains that markets build our capacity for choice, and that markets respect our different and divergent values (Satz 22). She summarizes these ideas by stating that a market doesn't merely provide the freedom of interference from others, but also the positive freedom to "be in control of one's own life" (Satz 24). Alongside these strengths, Satz also recognizes markets flaws: she explains that markets have failures and externalities, which are costs imposed on uninvolved parties (Satz 34). Although Satz does recognize these strengths and weaknesses, she ultimately argues "neither standard efficiency analysis or the generic concept of market failure can tell us when we should use markets to allocate particular goods and when other mechanisms are more appropriate" (Satz 34). Satz thinks a piece is missing to economic analysis, and it's certainly not an emphasis on efficiency.

What the Classical Economists Got Right

Another concept that Satz draws on in the creation of her own theory is the work of classical political economists, especially those who focus on the heterogeneity, limits,

and justice of markets. She homes in on ideas by Adam Smith and highlights two features of his thinking. The first feature is the “social embeddedness” of markets and their need for limits, and the second is the heterogeneity of markets and their ability to shape individuals and society (Satz 39).

Regarding social embeddedness, Smith’s arguments for the market not only values efficiency, but also its social effects, namely its ability to “[emancipate] from a particular kind of political oppression” (Satz 41). Markets allow laborers a sort of independence from employers. However, in order to accomplish these ends of liberty and freedom, Smith recognizes the need for an “independent state” which is “...counteracted by a universal system of education, as well as the regulation of labor markets to protect the freedom of the worker” (Satz 44). His proposed limits are not always Pareto improving; for example, serfs owning their own labor makes lords worse off (while making serfs much much better off), yet most would still prefer to emancipate serfs.

Smith’s work also stresses just how different the different types of markets can be, an example being labor markets. Smith thinks that labor markets don’t merely produce objects, but also shape people’s preferences and capabilities; if this is the case, we shouldn’t only be concerned with how and what markets make physically, but also with how they shape people and therefore how they shape society (Satz 47). In Satz’ own words:

...because the parties to an exchange come to the market with different vulnerabilities to each other and with different information and different capacities for exit from their relationships, because certain market

exchanges shape the parties, and because they are important social goods that a market is unlikely to supply, Smith rejected laissez-faire (Satz 49)

Due to the heterogeneous nature of markets and their ability to shape people, Smith's arguments actually stress the importance of limiting markets. Smith also highlights the paradox of basing a market's success on preferences that it itself may shape, a crucial tenet of Satz' theory. She opposes this to the modern conception of economic theory, which merely focuses on "...how to optimize consumer preferences" (Satz 61). Satz believes markets need something besides efficiency based on preference regulating them, which is where her background in political theory comes in.

Markets and Contemporary Egalitarian Political Theory

The final concept that Satz draws on in the creation of her own theory is contemporary egalitarian theory. She explores Ronald Dworkin's claim that markets have a moral role in egalitarian theory, as well as the approach taken by both general and specific egalitarians to markets.

Ronald Dworkin's strain of equality begins with the notion that people should be treated as equals, and that "the state is obligated to treat all of its members with equal concern and respect" (Satz 66). Dworkin concludes the only way to do so is through a hypothetical clam market and insurance concept, which he calls equality of resources; Dworkin's focus on individual responsibility to others is one of the biggest tenets of his theory. Within Dworkin's theory, "...in principle [there is] no limit on the extent of inequality in the divisible resources held by different individuals given their choices"

(Satz 75). Satz points out two concerns with this view. First, she takes issue with the idea that all preferences should matter morally. For example, she points out that preferences based on contempt, hate, prejudice should not be considered (Satz 76). Second, she objects to one person ever becoming utterly dependent on another, regardless of individual choice.

General egalitarians, who subscribe to a different strain of egalitarianism, understand that markets can create undesirable social inequality based on individual choice (Satz 76). The general egalitarian solution to inequality is a general tax and transfer system, as opposed to a ban on specific markets, because bans or limits could lead to other inefficiencies or fall into paternalistic traps. Satz addresses this with the idea that any market must have a determined scope to be a functioning market and also that “not all goods mean the same as money” (Satz 78).

Specific egalitarianism on the other hand, believes that certain goods must be distributed equally in order to align with our view of equality, and therefore shouldn't be left to markets. One strain of specific egalitarianism strains is based on the concept of the social meaning of goods. However, Satz realizes this view's flaws, namely that “there are rival views of the meaning of any particular goods (and of human flourishing), and, more importantly, there is only a tenuous connection in most cases between the meaning we give to a good and its distribution by a market” (Satz 81).

Satz' Framework: The Four Parameters

By working through all of these concepts and ideas, Satz is able to understand the strengths and weaknesses of markets themselves, as well as the strengths and weaknesses

of different approaches to conceptualizing how markets should work. She acknowledges that markets generally are valuable, and instead is concerned with regulating or limited particular types of market exchanges (Satz 91). Satz' theory emerges from the path laid by Adam Smith regarding the social embeddedness of markets, their need for limits, and their heterogeneity of markets, coupled with relational egalitarianism, which escapes the flaws identified by both general and specific egalitarianism. Satz believes that markets facilitate a society in which individuals can relate to each other as equals, but also that markets need to be checked in order to do so. Satz' theory is designed to make sure that markets do this. Her framework is set up for identifying what she calls "noxious markets;" in her theory, "...lurking behind many, if not all, noxious markets are problems relating to the *standing* of the parties before, during, and after the exchange" (Satz 93).

Her framework consists of four parameters for identifying noxious markets, which are split into two categories, sources and outcomes (Satz 98). The two source parameters are weak agency and vulnerability and the two outcome parameters are extreme harms for the individual and extreme harms for society. Weak agency is when the parties involved either are not acting on their own volition, or do not fully know the costs or consequences of the market, and vulnerability is essentially exploitation of the poor and destitute (Satz 97). Extreme harm for the individual is when the market creates poverty or destitution, and extreme harm for society can mean that the market "promotes servility and dependence, undermines democratic governance, or undermines others regarding motivations" (Satz 100). Satz recommends using these parameters not merely as a diagnosis of noxious markets, but also a tool for deciding the best way to remedy them to increase relational equality.

College Football as a Market

Although college football is not a labor market in the traditional sense, it does contain many of the same qualities as one. Although not composed of individuals receiving monetary compensation, it is composed of a huge number of individuals receiving extremely valuable tangible and intangible goods in exchange for their effort on the football field. The college football market is a behemoth; in fact, the "...NCAA, the nonprofit association that runs college athletics, takes in close to \$8 billion a year" as of 2017 (Illing, par. 4). Furthermore, over twenty-four colleges now take in over \$100 million annually, largely because of their football programs (Gaines, par. 2). This section will describe those involved and the incentives they're receiving, as well as a description of how these incentives are offered and the conditions expected of players to receive them.

Who's Involved?

This is a market composed of thousands of individuals. Division 1 football actually consists of two divisions; the first is the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) and the second is the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) (Pinak, par. 6). The FBS contains slightly more well-known teams such as Stanford and USC and plays in bowl games at the end of each season. Meanwhile, the FCS contains slightly less well-known teams and uses a bracket play-off system to end each season. There are 129 FBS teams and 125 FCS teams. With approximately 110 players on a team, the math works out to approximately 28,000 players total playing Division 1 college football (Pinak, par. 1-15).

What's Their Compensation?

Players are compensated in two ways, one major and one more minor. The major form of compensation is a college degree, and a free one at that. Almost all players are admitted to their college because of their football skill, and most are given a full scholarship because of their athletic ability. FCS teams can have 63 players on full scholarship, while FBS teams can have 85 (Pinak, par. 14). This works out to a total of approximately 8,000 student athletes on scholarship in FCS and 11,000 student athletes in FBS. Most players on each team are on a scholarship, as each team can have between 63 to 85 players out of approximately 110 on scholarship each year. Theoretically, admittance and scholarship for students is supposed to translate into their graduation and consequently college degrees.

It's important to understand the actual graduation rate of students involved in this market, which has interesting racial dynamics. According to a 2019 study on the graduation rate of bowl-bound teams done by The Institute of Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) at the University of Central Florida, approximately 79.1% of these players go on to graduate. However, a noticeable discrepancy exists in the graduation rate between white and African American students; 89.4% of white students on these teams graduated, while only 73.8% of African American students did. The study also noted other alarming statistics, such as the fact that there were three bowl bound teams that graduated less than 50% of African American students, while there was not a single team that graduated less than half of its white football student-athletes (Lapchick 1).

The more minor way players are compensated is through physical goods such as food and merchandise. Players receive all sorts of gear free of charge, including, but not

limited to, “socks, shoes, compression pants, shorts, joggers, sweatpants, undershirts, t-shirts, long-sleeve shirts, polos, rain jackets, sweatshirts, coats, beanies, [and] hats” (College Athlete Insight, par. 6). Student athletes can also be given unlimited food and snacks, beyond what other students on the meal plan are offered (Allen, par. 8).

Conditions for “Compensation”

To receive this “compensation,” players must do three things: first, they need to complete the high school requirements, second, they need to keep playing football, and third, they need to maintain certain academic requirements while in college.

The high school prerequisite requirements are the same for all Division 1 sports and are fairly extensive. Students must graduate high school and complete sixteen NCAA-approved core courses, with at least ten completed before senior year (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA GPA Requirements, par. 9). Students must also earn at least a 2.3 GPA in these core courses, and “earn an SAT combined score or ACT sum score matching [their] core-course GPA on the NCAA sliding scale for Division 1, which balances [their] test score and core-course GPA” (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA GPA Requirements, par. 8). The goal of these requirements is to ensure that prospective student athletes have achieved at least some level of academic achievement alongside their athletic success.

Once admitted, students must also maintain a level of academic success in order to continue playing. These requirements are broken down by year of college and go as follows: players must start sophomore year with a cumulative 1.6 GPA and completion of 1.8 units and end with a declared major, must start junior year with cumulative 1.9 GPA

and completion 72 units (40% of your total degree requirements), must start senior year with a cumulative 2.0 GPA and completion of 108 units (60% of total degree requirements), and must start their fifth year (if needed) with a cumulative 2.0 GPA and completion of 144 units (80% of total degree requirements) (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA GPA Requirements, par. 10). Coaches can terminate scholarships and expect athletes to play their sport; players can have their scholarship revoked if injured and unable to play, although this rarely occurs (Strauss par. 6).

Recruitment Process & Regulations

There is a strict timeline regarding when coaches and students can begin communication with each other. However, there are two forms of communication that can happen at any point in time. The first is that coaches can distribute non-recruiting materials, such camp brochures, to athletes at any time (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA Recruiting Rules, par. 11). The second is that coaches can extend verbal offers to athletes, which are technically nonbinding, at any point (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA Recruiting Rules, par. 13). Verbal offers have been known to happen as early as seventh or eighth grade.

At the beginning of junior year of high school, coaches are allowed to begin initiating direct communication with athletes via emails, recruiting materials, texts and direct messages on social media; in the second half of junior year, athletes can take one of their five allotted official visits (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA Recruiting Rules, par. 14). During that same period, coaches can call athletes once (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA Recruiting Rules, par. 15). During the summer following junior

year, “coaches can contact athletes off campus” for the first time” (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA Recruiting Rules, par. 16). Off campus contact entails any conversation that takes place in-person, not on the college’s campus.

Starting the first day of senior year, athletes can take their additional four visits (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA Recruiting Rules, par. 17). Coaches can also call any student once a week at this point and can call official recruits as much as they’d like (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA Recruiting Rules, par. 18). They can also initiate off-campus contact up to 6 times this year (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA Recruiting Rules, par. 19). Throughout athletes’ final year of high school, coaches also “...can evaluate each recruit once during September, October and November. They can conduct two evaluations per athlete (one to determine an athlete’s athletic ability and the other to determine academic qualifications) between April 15 and May 31” (Next College Student Athlete: NCAA Recruiting Rules, par. 19).

The Noxious Market Framework and College Football

With a thorough understanding of Satz' framework and the market of college football, we are now in position to see how Satz' parameters apply to the market at hand, as well as how they could be improved to better do so.

Economic Vulnerability

The source parameter of economic vulnerability is evident in two major ways. The first is that individuals in bleak economic situations are likely to see college football as a path out of their current dire situation, and the second is that they are likely to see it as a shield from community dangers.

The Jackson family is emblematic of both of these concerns. Shantavia Jackson is a poor Black mother in rural Georgia with three sons; she "...dreams that Qway, [her oldest son], will soon make it out of their home in Colquitt County, a place marked by fields of crops and cotton bales the size of Mack trucks" and that only "football [can] help him do that" (Semuels, par. 3). Both Qway and his mother recognize that college is financially unattainable for them and are hoping for Qway's football skills to ensure him not only college acceptance, but also a college scholarship.

Both Qway and Shantavia view an athletic scholarship as his only route out and are willing to accept some pretty major risks to earn that scholarship.

Financially, this plan does make some sense. Colleges realize just how much money football can make them and have therefore invested more in attracting and training talent; "Since 1988, the NCAA has added 62 Division I schools that are eligible to offer full-ride football scholarships, representing about 3,000 more scholarships

available” (Semuels, par. 25). Young people and their families hear the message schools are sending loud and clear; if you put your body on the line, it pays via a college scholarship. And this message rings especially loud, especially for those in places like rural Georgia.

Families like the Jacksons also see the pre-college football pipeline as a method for keeping their children safe from things like gang violence. Shantavia Jackson is aware of at least some of football’s health risks, however, likely due to her economic condition, “she has a fatalistic attitude about injuries. Her boys could get injured in a car accident or a drive-by shooting. They could get injured if they joined gangs.” (Semuels, par. 24). She sees the pre-college football track as the lesser of two evils; at least she knows where her children are and has some understanding of the risks involved, although the completeness of this understanding is questionable. This is definitely not the case for those in better economic conditions, much unlike Shantavia; “Throughout the country, affluent school districts offer more extracurricular activities than poorer districts, and upper-income parents can pay for more activities outside of school” (Semuels, par. 15). Besides less necessity for a college scholarship, more wealthy families also have more alternatives to keep their children active and entertained. Furthermore, those in more affluent neighborhoods are also less likely to share Jackson’s worries regarding dangers like drive-by shootings or general gang violence.

Weak Agency

Under Satz’ source parameter of weak agency, the market of college football scores highly in two traditional ways. The first is that the full nature of the market’s

consequences aren't fully understood, and the second is that the children choosing to enter the market are indeed children.

Regarding the first point, there is a huge lack of information regarding the full extent of the medical effects of college football. The biggest concern on many football enthusiasts' and health professionals' minds is chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, which is attributed to repeated head trauma, and is linked to phenomena like more concussions and brain trauma (Mez, et al, abstract). Football involves repeated head collisions, meaning people are understandably worried about CTE. While this may be concerning enough on its own, this is an issue of agency and not merely harm (which will be explored later) because "...CTE can only be diagnosed post-mortem," which means that it is "...hard to figure out the impact the brain changes have on a person's health and behavior while they're alive, or how the disease progresses over a lifetime" (Wetsman, par. 7). In short, football players cannot know if they have this condition, and therefore also do not know the full effects that this condition could have on the rest of their life. This seems like extremely pertinent information to have in making the decision about whether or not to join this market, and it simply does not exist as of now.

Addressing the second point, it's clear that those making the decision to enter this market are almost never adults for multiple reasons; first off, "college recruiting can happen as early as middle school, which means kids can feel pressure to start playing sooner to hone their skills" (Semuels, par. 28). Secondly, most of those applying for college are not yet 18, and very often are still not 18 by the time they must make a decision about where to go. The decision to enter this market is not made in a moment; pieces of the decision begin to be made as soon as a child is enough to play sports and

continue to be made until the child commits to a college. This is problematic because, as Satz describes, “children cannot be assumed to have full agency. They lack the cognitive, moral, and affective capacities of adults, and they seldom have the power in the family to make decisions about how to allocate their time” (Satz 157). Children simply do not have the tools at their disposal to make these decisions, and especially do not at such extremely young ages.

Since children do not have full enough agency to make decisions like these, the question then becomes who can and should on their behalf; regarding our specific situation, the question becomes whether or not parents should be the ones to make the decision of whether or not to allow their child to enter the collegiate football market pipeline. In most societies, parents are socially and legally given the authority to make decisions like these. I’m going to argue that parents should only have this authority in certain situations, and that this should be decided by weighing the severity and permanence of the situation and considering the age of the child. Severity refers to the intensity of the decision’s effects, ranging from death to quality of life, and permanence refers to how easily these effects could be reversed or mitigated. Generally, high scores in these criteria warrant parental decision making for the child’s well-being. However, the child’s age also plays a role; the older the child, the more independent agency the child has when it comes to making a decision. The cases of a heart-transplant, cochlear implants, and school choice can be used to justify these parameters.

Beginning with the heart-transplant, it seems like the choice is both permanent and severe; the consequence of the decision could be death, which is both extremely severe and permanent. In this case, the high severity and permanence is what warrants the

parent stepping in. If a parent doesn't decide, the child would die which could never be reversed.

In the case of cochlear implants, severity and permanence are clearly still the relevant factors, yet the answer is less concrete. When the framework is applied, a simple answer isn't provided, but useful observations still result. In situations where babies are born deaf, which means they either fully or partially lack the ability to hear, cochlear implants are an option; these implants "...bypass damaged portions of the ear to deliver sound signals to the hearing (auditory) nerve" directly, fundamentally changing an individual's ability to hear (Mayo Clinic). Severity may or may not score highly in this situation; a deaf child may be able to have an enjoyable and productive childhood with or without cochlear implants, but also could be ostracized from the deaf community if they do undergo the procedure. Alternatively, a deaf child who doesn't undergo the procedure, and has hearing parents, could also feel a sense of isolation. The permanence of the effects may vary as well, as a child may be able to get implants later in life and easily transition or could be extremely overwhelmed if they wait. Based on this, the necessity of parental decision making seems highly circumstantial, although the same parameters still relevant.

When it comes to school choice, the results are murky as well. Although not extremely permanent, as a child could mitigate negative effects later in life, there is potential to score highly enough regarding severity to warrant a parent stepping in. It is clear however, that as a child gets older, they should have more say in this decision. A child may not be able to contribute towards the decision of what preschool they will attend, but college is another question entirely.

There is also the question of who should make these decisions if not parents or children. In both the cochlear implant and school choice decision, it seems as if parents don't have the authority to make the decision, then it should be the child's choice once they reach an age of sufficient agency. This is a fruitful and important conversation to have more thoroughly, although it does not seem necessary or relevant for the question at hand.

When applying these parameters to the decision of preparing to play college football, the framework provides interesting results. First off, as explained previously, the decision is usually made in increments over time. The first step is deciding for the child to play tackle football at a young age, and the final step is committing to a D1 college on an athletic scholarship; because all these decisions take place at different ages, they can't all be viewed equally. At the younger end, there seems to be more of a need for more parental involvement, and at the older end, there seems to be less.

Still, applying the severity and permanence framework as we have above, football scores extremely high regarding both. Regarding severity, as will be further explained in the "Individual Harms" section, college football players tend to acquire medical ailments, affecting both their body and brain, that are extreme and often cost them their life; furthermore, these medical effects are often irreversible and will affect them for the rest of their life. Using the framework above, these high scores warrant the parent stepping in and deciding on behalf of their child.

This raises a similar, though separate, question: why do parents allow their children to play football? It seems entirely optional and extremely dangerous, yet parents still do it. Satz' framework actually accounts for this to some degree; she explains that

parents may not have their children's' best interests at hand, and that we cannot assume parents will always act as "benevolent dictators" (Satz 158). However, the more interesting and pressing question is why they don't. The answer is a combination of factors, including the economic vulnerability explored the previous section, as well the issues of identity and agency, which I will explore below.

Weak Agency via Ideology & Epistemology

Beyond the two traditional pieces of evidence for Satz' concept of weak agency, there is third that goes beyond the scope of her original framework. Through the concepts of identity development psychology, Marxist ideology, and epistemic infringement, we can better understand why some families, especially Black families, have issues related to agency when it comes to the decision to join this market. This is in addition to Satz' own theoretical framework and can help further explain, and hopefully address, the noxious nature of markets.

Psychological research shows that stereotypes based on factors like "gender, sexuality, social class, and nationality, serve as context within which individuals construct, experience, and interpret their identities" (Way & Rogers 269). When individuals construct their identity, or sense of self, they do so in relation to stereotypes related to factors inherent to their being. And in the United States context, Black children are vulnerable to the stereotypes of their particular racial group, which include them being "...athletic, lazy, dumb, loud, and angry" (Way & Rogers 273). Furthermore, behaving in line with these stereotypes is often policed by the community being stereotyped. For example, "in American culture, adhering to the Black male stereotype

becomes essential to gaining and maintaining membership in the Black male social group” (Way & Rogers 275). If Black children are forced into this box of characteristics, one of which is being athletic and none of which include intellectual prowess, then to them, playing football becomes a much more attractive and possible route to a college degree, which equates to success.

This stands in stark difference to the stereotypes that white children face. White children face a completely different set of expectations related to race, which translate much more easily to academic success; for example, studies show that academic achievement is coded as “White” (Way & Rogers 273). For poor white children, academic success is in line with what they are told they can do, while the same cannot seem to be said for poor Black children.

This phenomenon can be further understood through the concept of Marxist ideology as explained by Tommie Shelby. Shelby constructs a comprehensive and systematic definition of ideology; his conception is a critical one in which ideologies are not merely a form of consciousness, but a form of consciousness with features that warrant indictment. Conveniently to the situation, Shelby uses antiblack ideology as a case study to make his argument. Shelby defines forms of consciousness as sets of belief that have four characteristics, which are:

- b. The beliefs form, or are derived from, a prima facie coherent system of thought, which can be descriptive and/or normative.
- c. The beliefs are a part of, or shape, the general outlook and self-conception of many in the relevant group.

- d. The beliefs have a significant impact on social action and social institutions. (Shelby 158)

Beyond the four criteria to qualify as a form of consciousness, Shelby maintains that ideologies have other features that make them so problematic; he argues that ideologies are a “...complex set[s] of characteristics” that have “epistemic,” “genetic,” and “functional” dimensions (Shelby 164). This means that ideologies distort peoples’ perception of reality, generate from class based false consciousness, and function to create and maintain systems of oppression. Shelby explains that antiblack ideology contains all three characteristics, and I’m going to argue that the college football market takes advantage of this. In order to best apply this framework to the market at hand, I’m going to explain what each of these characteristics actually entail, followed by an application of them onto the situation of the college football pipeline.

Shelby uses antiblack ideology in the US to explain how ideologies are epistemically flawed. Shelby explains that the stereotypes that declare Black women as “lazy, irresponsible, and promiscuous” illustrate ideology’s epistemic flaws, and that “...because of this racist stereotype, which is a piece of the larger antiblack ideology, people believe this to be why Black mothers are poor, as opposed to the real structural reasons like *de facto* racial segregation or failing schools (Shelby 166). Ideologies permit people to absorb reality in a way that supports a fictional narrative that differs greatly from the reality at hand. Evidence is used to further an already constructed story as opposed to being used to understand what is actually occurring.

Shelby clearly differentiates between the aforementioned concept of ideological illusion and his next characteristic of class based false consciousness. Shelby explains

that false consciousness is when an individual holds a belief without knowing *why* they hold that belief; he elaborates that “the individual who suffers from a false-consciousness would like to think she accepts a given belief system (solely) because of the epistemic considerations, but...she accepts it (primarily) because of the influence of noncognitive motives...” (Shelby 170). Individuals buy in to ideologies for reasons other than pure observation and logic; non-epistemological motives can sneak in and affect what people believe. Shelby emphasizes this because it can help explain why ideologies seem to maintain such a grip on society, even when false as explored above (Shelby 171). Maintaining a position of comfort or privilege via class is often one such motive; subsequently, this also means maintaining an ideology of oppression.

Shelby’s ideological functional dimension is perhaps the most straight forward; it is simply the idea that ideologies create and reinforce systems of social oppression. This social oppression is the physical action that results from the ideological illusion and false-consciousness; Shelby explains that “we should oppose and seek to subvert ideologies, not simply because they are rooted in illusions and [are] irrationally held, but because of the oppressive social consequences of their widespread acceptance” (Shelby 174). False-consciousness explains why individuals accept the illusions that ideologies create, and why these illusions lead to the oppression we see today.

Ideologies reinforce these biased perceptions of reality which lead to oppression; furthermore, they’re often held and reinforced due to class-based false consciousness, which can be clearly seen in the case of the college football pipeline. In the case of antiblack US ideology, the motive for white or non-Black individuals is to maintain racial superiority. This explains why individuals would believe a version of reality that says

Black men are only good for physical pursuits and are not intellectually inclined, because it keeps them in a position of inferiority. When we look at college football, the high number of Black men who play the sport reinforce the biased perception of reality that purports that Black men are more athletically, and less intelligently, gifted. White or non-Black individuals believe this warped version of reality because they want to remain in positions of power and not feel guilty about doing so. If the reason for social stratification is natural and innate, then it is not their fault, and there's no reason to feel guilty about it. This phenomenon is a clear example of how antiblack ideology facilitates a distorted understanding of the world based on warped observation leading to societal stratification, and is encouraged by false-consciousness.

Furthermore, Shelby explains how Black children can internalize this ideology; “[l]ong periods of subjugation can induce feelings of inferiority, helplessness, and resignation...Oppressed groups under these...conditions more readily accept ideological explanations and justifications” (Shelby 182). In short, because of the long history of oppression towards the Black community, it's possible that members of the community become more likely to internalize antiblack ideology. This could be a partial explanation of why Black families in particular see athletic scholarships, as opposed to other opportunities, as their chance to break free of dire economic situations.

In this way, antiblack ideology keeps young Black men from entering this market on equal footing to their peers. Black men may view their list of viable options as much shorter, often by excluding possibilities like college admission or scholarship based on academic prowess. Meanwhile, their whiter and more privileged peers do deem these other options as possible and even likely. Antiblack ideology sets up this subjugation; this

is at its core an issue of agency. In this situation, ideology is affecting individuals' personal goal setting and decision making. Without these ideologies pressuring these children via societal pressures and norms, these children could enter this market on equal footing; instead, individuals enter this market pre-disposed towards making certain, and often detrimental, decisions due to the effect of pernicious ideologies.

It's also possible to approach this issue as one of epistemic infringement or a violation of epistemic agency, concepts explored by Lauren Leydon-Hardy. Leydon-Hardy explains that "to epistemically infringe on S is to systematically contravene the interpersonal social and epistemic norms that S takes to constrain her relationship to the infringer, in a manner that may encroach or undermine S's epistemic agency" (Leydon-Hardy 30). Although she mostly uses the terms to explore the issue of predatory sexual grooming, she also applies it to other situations, such as military recruiting.

It's entirely possible to imagine a situation in which a football coach recruiting a prospective player could engage in the type of grooming explained by Leydon-Hardy, extremely similarly to how military recruiters often groom their own recruits (Leydon-Hardy 2). Leydon-Hardy explains that "grooming is made possible, in large part, by the ways in which predators are able to exploit and subvert the epistemic norms and expectations attendant to their relationships with their groomees (Leydon-Hardy 5)." A college football coach could definitely engage in this behavior, even if not intentionally, a point made by Leydon-Hardy herself. In situations of grooming, the groomer surpasses healthy relationship norms by setting up new norms that keep the groomee epistemically in the dark about what is happening; furthermore, this is often possible due to the power dynamic by which the groomer has something the groomee wants, such as a college

scholarship (Leydon-Hardy 18-19). This type of epistemic blinding could easily happen between a coach and athlete during the athletic recruitment process, especially given the duration of the relationship, as recruiting begins as early as middle school and lasts throughout high school.

Leydon-Hardy even opens to the door other situations that may be exhibit epistemic infringement, one of which being propaganda as explained by Jason Stanley. Leydon-Hardy explains how propaganda, which often co-opts the democratic norms of expertise and scientific findings “in order to use those very norms for coercive, and epistemically corroding ends,” is consistent with her idea of epistemic infringement (Leydon-Hardy 34). In the case we’re exploring, this would consist of figures of authority, such as politicians or celebrities, using the language of scientific expertise to promote racist or anti-Black ideologies to the masses. This could range from comments claiming that certain races are “genetically” inclined to be more intelligent to suggesting that “data” proves that certain races are more gifted physically or athletically; these claims are ones that even professors have made, such as Michael Levin at CUNY, but also are heard online and in many other media sources (Southern Poverty Law Center, par. 3).

Acts like these infringe on the epistemic agency of individuals on the receiving end of said propaganda by making it difficult to sift between legitimate and illegitimate “scientific” findings, thereby making it difficult to maintain knowledge acquisition processes. This act harms the epistemic agency of those effected and manipulates all reached by the propaganda to adopt these oppressive ideologies, which often work to serve those promoting them. The end result is a corrosion of Black men’s, especially

young Black men's, ability to manage their own epistemic resources. It may be more difficult for them to know what understand what real science is, and what is "science" created merely to perpetuate an oppressive racial hierarchy tied. Furthermore, this corrosion is one that specifically decreases their agency specifically in relation to the market of college football. These men are then disadvantaged when entering the market as their epistemic agency has been compromised.

These are ideas that Satz dances around herself, though she fails to explicitly acknowledge the link between weak agency and something like ideology or epistemology. During her exploration of classic economic thinking, she highlights Smith's concept of markets actually shaping preferences, and agrees with his conclusion that this is something to watch out for and possibly attempt to prevent (Satz 47). Through Shelby's concept of ideology or Leydon-Hardy's idea of epistemic infringement, we can see how college football could actually shaping young peoples' preferences just as Smith believed. Satz analyzes something similar during her chapter on markets in women's sexual labor, although not entirely to the same level. Satz explains how prostitution is objectionable both because it lowers the status equality of those involved, but also because it has third-party harms to other women (Satz 149). By this, she means that it may affect equality between all men and women, not just those involved in the market. Through this explanation given by Satz, the phenomenon is only a societal harm; however, the concepts of ideology and epistemology give us the tools to say that the third-party harms can go further, much further; in fact, they may groom those not yet involved in the market to become involved, in the case of prostitution, women, or in the

case of football, young Black men. These ideas links societal harm back to the issue of agency.

Epistemic infringement, ideology, and the psychology of identity prove that there is a deeper issue of agency at hand; they prove individuals involved in this market are being influenced by stereotypes that tell them that they only possess certain skills, and that these skills that can only be used in certain ways. Ideology shapes individuals' sense of self in such a way as to almost preemptively make decisions for them, and epistemic infringement corrodes the way individuals take in the information needed to understand the world around them to make decisions. If this is the case, individuals in the market are not individual agents; their decision making is not fully theirs and is instead swayed by others, such as the media and those in positions of power.

Extreme Harm for the Individual

College football as a market also raises red flags in both of Satz' outcome parameters, the first being at the level of the individual. The activity involved wreaks havoc on the players' bodies generally but is most harmful to the players' brains.

The physical distress accrued during college football can last a lifetime. In fact, "according to a just-published article in *Sports Health*, 67% of a group of former Division I athletes sustained a major injury and 50% reported chronic injuries, a finding that was 2.5 times higher than that seen in non-athlete," with the highest representation coming from football players (McMahan, par. 6). College sports seem to take an extremely high toll on players' bodies in the long run, and it seems to be exceptionally bad for football players. Paul Weinacht, who played defensive line at Stanford

University, is a prime example of this; to this day, he can list the injuries that have sustained the 15 years since his college football days: “sore shoulders, a screw in his foot and a knee that never recovered from a torn ACL and cartilage damage” (McMahan, par. 10). These athletes’ bodies undergo extreme trauma for four years, but the physical injury can last a lifetime. While this is clearly bad generally, the harm is even more sinister when we consider the effects on players’ brains in particular.

The scientific evidence linking contact football, and college football in particular, with long term brain damage is extensive. One of the largest worries is CTE, mentioned earlier. In a study done by The Journal of the American Medical Association, “among 202 deceased former football players (median age at death, 66 years [interquartile range, 47-76 years]), CTE was neuropathologically diagnosed in...48 of 53 college (91%) [students]” (Mez, et al). It’s clear that those individuals who engage in division one contact football are very likely to develop CTE.

As mentioned earlier, this is likely due to the physical nature of the sport, especially in regard to players’ heads. Repetitive sub-concussions and full concussions, which have been linked to CTE, are correlated with depression and other cognitive impairments (Wetsman, par. 5). More and more research says that CTE can cause symptoms much later in life, up to decades later, with specific issues including “memory loss, confusion, impaired judgment, impulse control problems, aggression, depression, anxiety, suicidality, parkinsonism, and, eventually, [and] progressive dementia” (Boston University). To make matters worse, there is no conclusive evidence that wearing a protective helmet does anything to stop CTE... [as] they can’t stop the brain from hitting hard into the skull and suffering devastating impacts” (Frot, par. 7). In brief, college

football requires repetitive head trauma, which isn't merely correlated to immediate psychological and neurological health problems, but also to long term health issues.

Extreme Harm for Society

The college football market also perpetuates harm on a societal level, the most obvious example being racial inequality. To understand the harm in regard to racial inequality, we'll begin with the unequal racial involvement in football, then explore its pernicious effects.

When looking at which demographics continue to play football and which don't, a troubling trend emerges:

A recent survey of 50,000 eighth-, tenth-, and 12th-grade students found that about 44 percent of black boys play tackle football, compared with 29 percent of white boys, as analyzed by the University of Michigan sociologist Philip Veliz. Football at the high-school level is growing in popularity in states with the highest shares of black people, while it's declining in majority-white states. Other recent studies suggest that more black adults support youth tackle football than white adults (Semuels, par. 5)

While white families are beginning keep their children from playing football due to health and safety concerns, the same cannot be said for Black families. The sport of football is becoming progressively more and more Black; while this may not seem problematic on its own, it actually does have overarching societal effects.

One of the most pernicious of these effects come into sight when this racially divided phenomenon is coupled with the idea of unequal healthcare. In fact, “low-income black communities have less access to good medical services and information that would emphasize the downsides of playing football, says Harry Edwards,” an emeritus professor at UC Berkeley (Semuels, par. 34). This has negative effects on society in a couple ways; the fact that healthcare is worse in low income Black communities both means that Black individuals are less likely to be aware of the risks associated with football, but also that they are less likely to receive quality treatment when needed due to football, which further exacerbates health disparities between racial groups.

Another effect of unequal involvement in football is the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. There is already a stereotype of Black men being more athletically and less intellectually inclined, and having more Black men playing football serves to further this narrative; this is because “stereotypes often confirm their own veracity and may do so implicitly such that perceivers are unaware of the stereotype's activation or use” (Stone, Perry, & Darley 292). In short, because stereotypes about Black men’s high athleticism and low intelligence exist, the high number of them playing football exacerbates the same stereotype.

These stereotypes are harmful to society because they decrease status equality between social groups. This means that Black men engaging in football are seen as less intelligent, and less than generally. Furthermore, Satz argues that there can be “third party effects” in situations like these: just like she describes how prostitution may affect the way society views all women, I think the same can be said for football and all Black

men (Satz 147). It seems highly possible that this is the case with Black men and football, especially when coupled with the self-reinforcing nature of stereotypes. If college football perpetuates the stereotype of Black men as less intelligent, it effects all Black men and not just those who choose to play football. As discussed regarding ideological agency, Shelby's theory of ideology helps prove the point that stereotypes like these can also cause the oppressed group to internalize these ideologies.

Conclusions & Policy Guidelines

Following the application of this revised version of Satz' framework onto the college football market, the question then becomes what to do about it. It's clear that certain populations are economically vulnerable and that there are serious questions of agency, in terms of age, medical information, and identity in relation to ideology and epistemology, and it's also clear that there are serious and permanent physical individual harms, as well as harms to society related to equal standing tied to race. Following the establishment of this market's noxiousness comes the challenge of addressing it.

Based on the application done throughout this paper, I think there is ample reason to ban the market entirely as it scores extremely highly in both the source and outcome parameters. However, although ideal, this approach is not optimal in practicality. As Satz outlines in many of her chapters, outright bans on markets often come with their own slew of issues.

The largest issue with an outright ban is that the main governing body presiding over this market is the NCAA, which inherently has an interest in supporting the market. The NCAA's unlikeliness to ban, coupled with the widespread lack of support for banning (even as doctors and scientists have continued to advertise the danger of contact football, especially regarding brain trauma, it continues to stick around) makes it seem very unlikely that any sort of major ban would occur. On top of this, much of the pre-market pipeline, such as childhood recreational football, is overseen by separate bodies altogether. In short, a lack of incentive and a lack of coordination make a market ban extremely unlikely. Due to this, it seems like the best approach is a more piece meal regulation system.

Instead of going into elaborate detail of the exact market reforms I'd prescribe, I'm going to instead offer regulatory principles, inspired by Satz' discussion of sexual labor, that should and could guide any policy that may be implemented (Satz 153). These principles are designed to align with both the source and outcome parameters explored so far.

- Football players, especially children and even more especially those still in elementary and middle school, should be not engage in aggressive physical contact until there is more scientific information regarding long-term health effects, most importantly regarding brain trauma and CTE (Weak Agency & Individual Harm).
- Parents contemplating allowing their children to play tackle football should be much more informed regarding the long-term health effects of the sport, especially regarding CTE (Weak Agency).
- Youth athletes should undergo extensive education regarding the medical effects of long-term play, beginning at a young age but also continuing as they get older (Weak Agency).
- Children's' education should better focus on the history of anti-Black and other racist ideologies starting from a young age, as well as encourage reflection on their effect today's culture (Weak Agency via Ideology & Epistemology and Societal Harm).
- The relationship between children and recruiters needs to be monitored more closely and purposefully (Weak Agency via Ideology & Epistemology).

- Sports commentators should become more educated in anti-Black and other racist ideologies, in hopes of preventing the reinforcement of these ideologies and stereotypes during their commentary (Societal Harm).

As seen above, these policy guidelines are largely tailored to address the issue of agency and societal harm. These parameters seem to be the easiest to address via direct market reform. Increasing information is definitely doable via increased education, which works to address a lack of agency and also to combat the societal harm of racist stereotypes. However, the other parameters are not quite as easy to address.

There are also larger societal issues that could be addressed that would help in diminishing the noxiousness of this market. For example, wealth distribution could help alleviate the income inequality that creates the economic vulnerability at hand, and universal healthcare could help address the disturbing racial disparities explained in the section on societal harm.

Works Cited

- Allen, Kevin. "Here Are Some Benefits NCAA Athletes Already Are Eligible for That You Might Not Know About." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 1 Oct. 2019, www.usatoday.com/story/sports/college/2019/10/01/ncaa-football-basketball-benefits-college-athletes-now-can-receive/2439120001/.
- "Cochlear Implants." *Mayo Clinic*, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 24 Mar. 2020, www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cochlear-implants/about/pac-20385021.
- "Cochlear Implants Blog Post." *Mybabyfingers.com*, www.mybabyfingers.com/cochlear-implants-controversy/.
- "Frequently Asked Questions about CTE." *Frequently Asked Questions about CTE CTE Center*, Boston University, www.bu.edu/cte/about/frequently-asked-questions/.
- Frot, Mathilde. "Is Playing American Football at College Dangerous?" *Top Universities*, 30 Aug. 2017, www.topuniversities.com/where-to-study/north-america/united-states/playing-american-football-college-dangerous.
- Gaines, Cork. "The 25 Schools That Make the Most Money in College Sports." *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 13 Oct. 2016, www.businessinsider.com/schools-most-revenue-college-sports-2016-10.
- "How Much Gear Do D1 Athletes Get?" *College Athlete Insight*, 7 Apr. 2020, collegeathleteinsight.com/how-much-gear-do-d1-athletes-get/. Illing, Sean.
- "College Football Is a Moneymaking Sham." *Vox*, Vox, 5 Sept. 2017,

www.vox.com/conversations/2017/9/5/16180862/college-football-ncaa-student-athlete-mike-mcintire.

Lapchick, Richard. "Keeping Score When It Counts: Assessing the Academic Records of the 2019-2020 Bowl-Bound College Football Teams." *TIDES: The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport*, 9 Dec. 2019.

Leydon-Hardy, Lauren. "Predatory Grooming and Epistemic Infringement." Amherst College.

McMahan, Ian. "Playing College Sports Could Mean Chronic Injuries." *Sports Illustrated*, 31 Oct. 2017, www.si.com/edge/2017/10/31/former-college-athletes-chronic-injuries-health-issues.

Mez, Jesse. "Evaluation of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy in Football Players." *JAMA*, American Medical Association, 25 July 2017, jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2645104.

"Michael Levin." *Southern Poverty Law Center*, www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/michael-levin.

"NCAA Academic Requirements for Freshman Eligibility." *AthNet*, www.athleticscholarships.net/academic-requirements.htm.

"NCAA GPA Requirements." *NCAA GPA Requirements | What GPA Do You Need to Be Eligible?*, www.ncsasports.org/ncaa-eligibility-center/gpa-requirements.

"NCAA Recruiting Rules: When Can College Coaches Contact High School Athletes." *Recruiting Rules | When Can College Coaches Contact Athletes*, www.ncsasports.org/ncaa-eligibility-center/recruiting-rules.

Pinak, Patrick. "College Football Trivia: What Does 'FBS' Actually Mean?" *FanBuzz*, FanBuzz - Sports News - NFL | NCAA | NBA | WWE, 27 Dec. 2019, fanbuzz.com/college-football/what-does-fbs-stand-for/.

Rogers, Leoandra Onnie, and Niobe Way. "'They Say Black Men Won't Make It, but I Know I'm Gonna Make It' Ethnic and Racial Identity Development in the Context of Cultural Stereotypes." 2019, doi:10.31219/osf.io/s23gt.

Satz, Debra. *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale the Moral Limits of Markets*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

Samuels, Alana. "The White Flight from Football." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 1 Feb. 2019, www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/02/football-white-flight-racial-divide/581623/.

Shelby, Tommie. "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory." *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2003, pp. 153–188., doi:10.1111/1467-9191.00132.

Stone, Jeff, Perry, W. Darley, & John M. "White Men Can't Jump": Evidence for the Perceptual Confirmation of Racial Stereotypes Following a Basketball Game, *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 19:3, 291-306, DOI: [10.1207/s15324834basp1903_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834basp1903_2)

Strauss, Ben. "A Fight to Keep College Athletes From the Pain of Injury Costs." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 25 Apr. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/04/25/sports/a-fight-to-keep-college-athletes-from-the-pain-of-injury-costs.html.

Wetsman, Nicole. "We Have No Idea How Dangerous Football Really Is." *Popular Science*, Popular Science, 18 Mar. 2019, www.popsi.com/how-dangerous-is-football-cte/.