Toward a Grounded Theory of Student-Athlete Suffering and Dealing With Academic Corruption

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The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explain how student-athletes are affected by an instance of academic corruption. Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), multiple sources of data were collected and analyzed using the constant comparison method leading to theory generation. Findings revealed that student-athletes suffer three main consequences (negative treatment, sanctions, and a sense of loss) that lead to various harmful outcomes (e.g., distrust, embarrassment, dysfunctional relationships, stakeholder separation, anger, stress, and conflict). However, the consequences also created a positive outcome displayed through a dual consciousness of corruption (resiliency and empowerment). The results are compared with existing theoretical concepts and previous research associated with the outcomes of corruption. This theory adds to our knowledge of the nature of suffering experienced by student-athletes as a result of corruption and provides direction for future research and practice.

Academic corruption within intercollegiate athletics is unfortunately not an isolated occurrence (Mahoney, Fink, & Pastore, 1999). The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has over 50 documented cases of academic corruption where respective institutions received various types of sanctions in differing degrees of severity (NCAA Manual, 2005–2006). Sanctions include such penalties as reducing scholarships, limiting recruiting practices, expunging of records, termination of personnel, increased oversight, loss of earned revenue, and probation. NCAA and self-imposed penalties are aimed at holding institutions and their athletic programs accountable for their corrupt acts (NCAA Manual, 2005–2006) and to deter respective institutions from engaging in future violations. The penalties, however, are not the only consequences of academic corruption as various types of harm (loss of reputation, loss of trust and public confidence, financial loss,
and personal embarrassment) and dismissal of personnel are associated with this type of corrupt act (Miller, Roberts, & Spence, 2005). These consequences can be problematic for institutional stakeholders, specifically student-athletes who were not involved in the fraudulent acts, but who participate on a sports team and represent their respective university in postcorruption years. The grounded theory study reported in this article was undertaken to explore how men’s basketball (MBB) student-athletes were impacted after a case of academic corruption. Advancing our understanding of how corruption affects student-athletes in a specific sports program is one area where sport management can pave the way within the broader field of organizational corruption.

Literature Review

The extensive literature on organizational corruption illustrates its complex and multifaceted nature (Andvig & Fjeldstad, 2001; Argandona, 2003) where there are “multiple causes and effects, as it takes on various forms and functions in different contexts” (Andvig & Fjeldstad, 2001, p.10). Assorted types of corruption exist including economic, educational, political, judicial, and social, which take place within different contexts such as in corporations, sport, and higher education. Different forms of malfeasant practices occur within these respective types of corruption such as bribery, treason, fraud, insider trading, plagiarism, acceptance of improper gifts and entertainments, misappropriation, abuse and misuse of power, perversion of justice, and so forth (Caiden, 2001). These acts can be classified into a taxonomy of corrupt practices that differ in intensity—quantity and gravity of corrupt activities—and hierarchical scale—the number of hierarchical levels involved in the corrupt acts (Luo, 2004). Consistent in the literature is that the respective type, form, and extent of corrupt activities influences the impact on organizations and institutions (Baucus & Baucus, 1997), thus making comparisons difficult when examining the consequences of specific corrupt acts on organizations and their respective stakeholders (Glaser & Saks, 2006).

The consequences of organizational corruption have primarily been studied from a macro perspective where several consistent findings can be summarized. Corrupt activities in general yield various kinds of harm (Cialdini, Petrova, & Goldstein, 2004; Everett, Neu, & Rahaman, 2006; Jain, 2001; Miller et al., 2005; Zahra, Priem, & Rasheed, 2005) including economic (through sanctions, loss of business, sponsorship, and legal fees), professional and organizational (institutional reputation, loss of public trust, shame through public disgrace, and penalties), and social (destabilization of the state and weakening of public trust of social and public institutions). For example, research on economic corruption has been found to waste revenues and resources (Gillespie & Okruhlik, 1991; Werner, 1983) as well as significantly impact respective organizational reputations, brand equity, and business relationships (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2005). Studies on corporate corruption show that economically malfeasant acts erode citizen trust and potentially affect ongoing contractual ties with employees and customers (Lewis, 2003; Neil, 2004). Organizations develop poor reputations among current and prospective clients and business partners, which limit opportunities for future business (Cialdini et al., 2004; Luo, 2004; Neil, 2004). Furthermore, it is extremely difficult for companies
to eradicate the stigma that is attached to corruption as individuals react more adversely to dishonesty than any other attribute (Anderson, 1968; Barrett, 2002).

The seriousness of malfeasant acts also has a lasting effect on an organization (Baucus & Baucus, 1997; Hughes & Shank, 2005; Jarrell & Peltzman, 1985; Luo, 2004; Randall & Newman, 1979). Serious violations (e.g., insider trading, fraud, and bribery) generally result in harsh penalties that have both multiple and enduring influences on an organization, harm the long-term reputation of a firm, and generate ongoing negative publicity. Corporate illegalities also have a greater long-term effect on a firm’s performance than in the short-term (Baucus & Baucus, 1997). Baucus and Baucus (1997), for instance, found that corporate illegality, multiple convictions, and the seriousness of a violation negatively affected a firm’s long-term performance. Over a five-year period their findings showed that convicted firms experienced lower sales growth, firms that had committed serious violations experienced negative rate of assets, and firms that had multiple convictions experienced both decreased rate of assets and rate of sales. Hughes and Shank (2005) studied the impact of sport scandals on consumer perceptions where they found that the number of individuals involved in a scandal and the number of violations that occurred repeatedly over a period of time are perceived more negatively than isolated incidents by individual agents.

Research on higher education and corruption suggests that malfeasant acts have far-reaching consequences on society and academia itself as education is considered a public good (Altbach, 2004; Heyneman, 2004; Rumyantseva, 2005; Wells & Carozza, 2000). Educational corruption (e.g., academic fraud, bribery, and abuse of authority) reportedly emasculates public trust, teaches distorted values and culture, and corrosively educational quality. In particular, Rumyantseva (2005, p. 84) argues that “corruption distorts civic culture by scarring the reputation of fairness normally associated with an educational establishment and breeding a culture of cynicism about the nation and its claimed civic virtues.” Professional misconduct including academic fraud is also argued to have a more profound effect on young adults and children as they can be led to believe that cheating is acceptable (Heyneman, 2004).

In the context of intercollegiate athletics, corruption leads to institutional, financial, and academic harm (Grimes & Chressanthis, 1994; Hughes & Shank, 2008). Research indicates that the specific team on NCAA sanctions for rule violations is linked to a decline in donor activity (Rhoads & Gerking, 2000). Rhoads and Gerking (2000) found that a university’s men’s basketball team on NCAA probation will experience greater reductions in alumni giving then when a football program is on probation. Charitable giving and overall student enrollment is also negatively affected in the long-term where it is reported that institutions struggle to recover from their precorruption fund-raising capabilities (Hughes & Shank, 2008).

The microorganizational-level analysis of the impact of corruption on employers who were not involved in respective corrupt activities is nominal (Baucus & Baucus, 1997; Cialdini et al., 2004; Zahra et al., 2005). Management fraud can lead to serious consequences for organizational stakeholders, in addition to affecting society and respective communities where particular firms exist (Luo, 2004; PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2005; Zahra et al., 2005). In general, individuals experience personal (loss of reputation and financial loss through fines) and familial (loss of reputation, shame through being publicly disgraced, and financial loss to
oneself and to one’s family) harm. Zahra et al. (2005) argue that management fraud hits employees the hardest as their reputations are impaired, their employment can be terminated, and they may find seeking alternative employment difficult. Fraudulent behavior, such as that displayed by Enron and Worldcom, can also led to indirect costs of degradation of the work environment such as adversarial relations between employer and workers, diminished productivity, dysfunctional relationships, and decreased staff morale and motivation (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2005). Increased oversight as a result of corruption can also lead workers to perceive management distrust of them (Cialdini et al., 2004) and thus they feel insulted that their integrity is being questioned.

Absent from the research on corruption is the impact of malfeasance activities—in particular academic fraud—on specific intercollegiate sports programs and their stakeholders. The study of corruption and intercollegiate athletics has attracted the attention of many sport scholars since the inception of intercollegiate athletics (cf. Chu, Segrave, & Becker, 1985; Funk, 1991; Gerdy, 1997; Savage, Bentley, McGovern, & Smiley, 1929; Thelin, 1994). This literature is primarily anecdotal and tends to focus on reform where it represents a pattern of documenting cases of corruption (cf. McCallum & O’Brien, 1994; Smith & Yeager, 1998; Suggs, 2003), raising alarm at the state of intercollegiate athletics (cf. Funk, 1991; Sperber, 1990; Zimbalist, 1999), and consequently producing various proposals for reform (cf. Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2004; Gerdy, 1997; Knight Commission Foundation, 1993; 2001; National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes, 2004).

Mahoney et al.’s (1999) study on NCAA Division I violations and penalties between 1952 and 1997 is one of the rare investigations that have examined the consequences of NCAA violations on athletic departments and their respective programs. They found that athletic programs under NCAA sanctions have various financial losses due to a reduction of income as a result of game forfeits, returned revenue, and a reduction of future competitions. Mahoney et al. also asserted that a reduction in competition opportunities potentially harmed player development and reduced the University’s and program’s chances to “garner positive public relations through the success of the team” (p. 63). They also found that a program under NCAA probation had a minimal impact on team performance. Teams on 1 to 3 years of probation averaged approximately .500 winning percentage.

Limited empirical research and theoretical understandings exist that document stakeholder experiences in dealing with a specific case of academic corruption within the context of an intercollegiate athletic sport program. Critical to furthering our understanding of how academic corruption affects specific organizational members of an intercollegiate sports program, it is important that researchers examine the impact of corruption on central stakeholders, that is, team members. Research on how the players are affected by an instance of academic corruption is important as it may reveal insider perspectives and experiences of coping with the respective consequences. First-hand narrative accounts also not only expand the sport management disciplinary boundaries (Reinhart, 2005) through multiple research strategies but also answer crucial kinds of research questions that have not been previously addressed in the corruption literature. Furthermore, enhancing our understanding of the nature of student-athletes’ experiences might assist athletic programs and their
respective sport administrators who are assigned the staggering task of managing an instance of academic corruption (Hughes & Shank, 2005). The purpose of this study was to examine the impact the instance of academic corruption had on the University of Minnesota’s MBB student-athletes to generate a substantive theory of student-athlete suffering and dealing with academic corruption. In the next section we provide the contextual features of the case of academic corruption, which is followed by the methodology. An overview of the theory of student-athlete suffering as a result of corruption and its respective concepts is then provided. Last, theoretical concepts in relation to the literature are discussed.

**Contextualizing the Case of Academic Fraud**

Between 1994 and 1999 the University of Minnesota MBB program was involved in one of the most significant cases of academic fraud in the history of intercollegiate athletics (NCAA Infractions Committee, 2000; Wertheim & Yaeger, 1999). In this case, corruption was the result of academic fraud conceived of and supported by the Head Men’s Basketball Coach, his staff, the team’s academic counselor, and the sport’s secretary (NCAA Infractions Committee, 2000). The NCAA infractions report (2000) stated that the former secretary in the Academic Counseling Office had written approximately 400 pieces of course work for at least 18 men’s basketball student-athletes. Course work completed included homework assignments, preparing take-home exams, typing, and composing theme papers. The academic counselor assigned to men’s basketball arranged and supported the academic fraud. He organized several tutors to write over 40 papers, type assignments, and complete various homework assignments for several of the men’s basketball student-athletes. Investigations by both the NCAA and the University of Minnesota determined that numerous rules violations (including extra benefits, academic eligibility, unethical conduct, and lack of institutional control) had occurred, with academic fraud being the most serious. Furthermore, the NCAA reported that the violations were “significant, widespread and intentional” and “undermined the bedrock foundation of a university” as relates to realizing institutional integrity (NCAA Infractions Committee, 2000, p. 2).

As a result of the severe rules infractions, several self-imposed and NCAA sanctions were mandated on the men’s basketball program and athletic department (NCAA Infractions Committee, 2000), which are listed in Table 1. Four MBB student-athletes were dismissed from the University for their involvement in the fraud. Several University employees were also dismissed or forced to resign. The resignation of the head coach was obtained and the contracts of the respective assistant coaches were not renewed. The secretary, academic advisor, associate athletic director of men’s sports, and compliance director’s contracts were not renewed. The resignation of the men’s athletic director and vice president for student development and athletics were obtained.3

The estimated financial cost to the university was over $4 million4 (including $350,000 from the athletic department budget returned to the NCAA; $685,000 head coach’s contract buy out;5 $1,876,000 investigation costs; and $319,000 for a coinciding inquiry into sexual misconduct allegations). The data also showed that there was a decline in attendance and thus gate revenue.6
Table 1  University of Minnesota Self-Imposed and NCAA-Imposed Sanctions (NCAA Infractions Committee, 2000)

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<th>University of Minnesota Self-Imposed Sanctions</th>
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<td>2. Evaluation days were reduced from 50 to 40 for each of the next 3 academic years (2000–01–2002–03).</td>
<td>2. Official paid visits were reduced by six for the 2001–02 through 2002–203 academic years (six total visits were permitted per year) and the number of evaluation days was reduced by 25% which allowed 30 appraisal days.</td>
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<td>3. Reduction of official visits from 12 to 8 for the subsequent three academic years (2000–01–2002–03).</td>
<td>3. University records regarding the former head coach and the men’s basketball team were revised to reflect the expunged records.</td>
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<td>5. Reduction of the number of in-person recruiting contacts for each prospect from five to four for each of the next 3 academic years (2000–01–2002–03)</td>
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<td>6. Reduced the number of coaches permitted to evaluate off-campus during the summer from three to two over the next 3 years (2000–2003).</td>
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<td>8. Return to the NCAA 90% of the monies the university actually has received or is scheduled to receive from the Big Ten Conference as a result of its participation in the 1993–94, 1994–95, and 1996–97 NCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Championship Tournaments with student athletes identified as ineligible by the university’s investigation (NCAA Infractions Committee, 2000, p. 20–21).</td>
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In an effort to regain institutional control, major organizational restructuring and enhanced institutional governance were implemented. Increased faculty oversight was employed through the formation of an additional faculty oversight committee and changes in reporting lines for academic counseling, compliance, and the athletic department were established. The University of Minnesota MBB program is a member of the elite Big Ten Conference. During the seven years following the academic fraud, the program has averaged approximately 16.5 wins per season and 6.2 wins in the Big Ten, made four National Invitational Tournament appearances, and made one NCAA tournament appearance (Fuller, 2006).

Research Design

A single case study and grounded theory approaches were employed as the aim of the research was to generate a substantive theory of student-athlete suffering and dealing with academic corruption within the context of an intercollegiate MBB program. Generation of substantive theory is generally carried out through the examination of a particular empirical sociological and organizational inquiry of study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Investigating deviant cases can provide significant theoretical insights through the identification of new categorical concepts and description of respective properties that yields propositions (George & Bennett, 2005; Glaser, 1992). Grounded theory also has particular utility as a methodology for examining previously understudied social phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); and is particularly appropriate for researching and captioning the complexity of organizational behavior (Locke, 2001). Three characteristics underpin grounded theory research: contextual, inductive, and procedural (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory generation is founded from a context-based and process-orientated explanation of social phenomenon, which is illustrated through representative examples of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theory generation is an inductive process where data collection and analysis are emergent processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) where the intent is build from local understandings that without inquiry remain implicit and unexplained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While conceptual frameworks exist relating to intercollegiate athletic reform (e.g., Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2005; Gerdy, 1997; National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes, 2004), these frameworks address prevention rather than provide detailed theoretical accounts of the influence that corruption has on organizational stakeholders. As a result the reform literature is less applicable to providing explanatory insights into postscandal experiences. Given that nominal theory exists about the impact of corruption on organizational stakeholders in an in intercollegiate athletic setting this combined approach was used to theorize about the consequences of academic corruption.

Participants and Procedures

The first stage in data collection, coding, and analysis was negotiating access. One of the coauthors negotiated access with the University of Minnesota’s MBB Head Coach to conduct the study. Negotiations lasted approximately three months and subsequently the lead author and one of the coauthors gained further permission from the athletic director. Institutional Review Board ethics approval was then
obtained as all guidelines were suitably met. One of the assistant coaches served as an “ally” in acquiring the participation of the other assistants. Another assistant served as a separate ally in securing the participation of former student-athletes. The various kinds of support provided by the two assistant coaches were a crucial aspect of the access process. While the assistants did not serve as formal gatekeepers in the traditional sense, their help represented Morrill, Buller, Buller, and Larkey’s (1999, p. 52) description of the different aspects of gatekeeping, where fieldworkers must “negotiate ‘everyday access’ to informal groups and individuals within organizations.”

Data Sources

Grounded theory is “discovered from the data” and thus great emphasis was placed on setting aside “preconceived” notions of potential findings before and during theory building (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). An extensive reading of the substantive literature before data collection was avoided as this practice “unduly influences the pre-conceptualization of the research” (Glaser, 2004, p. 12). A narrow literature review was conducted that provided the researchers with a broad understanding of the phenomenon of corruption within the context of intercollegiate athletics and business corporations. While negotiating entry we engaged in an extensive search of various media documents (newspaper articles, popular sports magazines, and news magazines) and official reports (NCAA and institutional) that reported about the scandal. This initial data were openly coded and organized into major categories (e.g., negative treatment and sanctions) and subcategories (e.g., public criticism and humiliation, loss of records, and band on post season competition). Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), categories were delineated based on properties (attributes) and dimensions (location on a dimensional continuum). Based on this preliminary literature search, our original research question posed was “how was the MBB program impacted by the incidence of academic corruption?” Further data collection and analysis were steered by identifying the gaps in respective categorical properties and dimensions.

From this point, theoretical sampling guided the simultaneous processes of data collection, coding, and analysis (Glaser, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The aim of theoretical sampling is to select participants and sources of data that can extend theory development (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theory development requires two essential operations: first, the asking of effective questions that will advance our understanding of theoretical issues; and second, making comparisons. Therefore, based on our initial research question, three broad, open-ended interview questions drove primary data collection: What happened after the scandal was exposed? What were the specific consequences of the scandal? How did these consequences impact individuals and the overall BB program? It was in one of the initial interviews with one of the coaching staff that we started to learn that the student-athletes “suffer” and are the most impacted by a case of fraud. This interview and subsequent document data led us to refine the primary guiding interview questions and ask: How were MBB student-athletes treated by faculty and the student body after the scandal broke? How did the media treat the MBB student-athletes after the scandal broke? How did the MBB student-athletes react? What was it like playing on the team the following
season? What did you think about the sanctions? How did the sanctions impact the team? Individuals who had first hand knowledge and were willing to speak about the consequences of the scandal and how these consequences impacted them and the MBB program were invited to participate. In total, semistructured face-to-face and phone interviews were conducted with 19 participants, including MBB coaches ($N = 4$), former MBB student-athletes ($N = 2$), athletic department and University administrators ($N = 5$), compliance staff ($N = 1$), Academic Counseling Services for Intercollegiate Athletics staff ($N = 3$), and faculty ($N = 4$). Two participants who resided in distant geographical regions from the research site warranted the use of phone interviews (Patton, 2002). The interviews allowed participants to provide their firsthand experiences and perceptions during the postcorruption period and it also allowed the researchers the flexibility to pursue unexpected paths and cues suggested by theoretical sensitivity in theory development (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This data collection process yielded more refined research questions and thus required constant revising of interview questions and collecting of documents to make comparisons, to enhance explanations of respective categorical dimensions and properties, and to assist with determining relationships between and among categories. These research question revisions ensured that our inquiry would help elicit information to finely discriminate and differentiate among the categories. Interviews ranged from 45 to 120 min in duration, were audio-taped, and transcribed verbatim.

Participant observations were a secondary source of data (nonetheless important) in the collection process. One of the researchers participated as a complete insider role (Creswell, 1998) working within a support unit for intercollegiate athletics and specifically with the MBB program. Observations were guided by the broad initial research questions and the emergent categories during theory generation (Patton, 2002). Informal and formal interactions with players, coaches, and faculty, planned activities (student tables, road trips, meetings), and communications (with student-athletes, faculty, support staff, coaches, and administrators) were documented during the duration of data collection (i.e., one year). As the research progressed, our refined questions shifted observational foci to assist in defining categorical properties and dimensions as well as determining relationships among categories. Observational data were therefore compared with the interview and textual data and contributed to the saturation of categories and subcategories. In all, the multiple sources of data collection occurred over a 10-month period, which produced over 300 single-spaced pages of interview text, over 200 pages of documents, and 30 single-spaced pages of observational text.

**Analysis and Writing**

Through the progression of data collection and analysis, questions were posed that would further our understanding of the concepts/categories that were emerging and would help explain in-depth their respective properties and dimensions. Data collection was subsequently an evolving process that was based on concepts that emerged from the analysis and were germane to the evolving theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) of student-athlete suffering and dealing with academic corruption. For example, the category-negative treatment and related subcategories—the student body’s perceived associative guilt of MBB student-athletes—was initially
generated by the student-athlete participant interviews. This led to collection of various news media documents to assist in providing a detailed explanation of the properties and dimensions of the concept of student-athlete negative treatment. Another example using multiple sources of data to assist in saturating properties and dimensions of categories was illustrated when one participant shared his experience and perception of how the student-athletes felt marginalized from the hiring process of the new head coach. We were able to gain further understanding by verifying his story through newspapers, documents, and interviews with other informants. Theory-building research requires multiple sources of data (Glaser, 2004; Yin, 2003) and the triangulation of the multiple sources of evidence provided stronger substantiation of categories and propositions.

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), where throughout the study a systematic process of data collection, interpretation, and reflection of the evidence to formulate categories and propositions relating to the theory generation of suffering and corruption was used. First, data were openly coded where codes were conceptualized by inductively labeling phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The data were microanalyzed and codes were named based on what was suggested by the context in which an event, action/interaction, and object occurred and through in vivo coding. Examples of conceptualized codes were dual consciousness, racism, dysfunctional relationships, stakeholder separation, conflict, anger, and empowerment. In vivo code examples included “suffer,” “hurt,” “felt bad,” “bothered me,” “disappointment,” “embarrassed,” “pretty bad,” and “real uncomfortable.” Incidents were then compared with create categories and delineate properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Comparison of incidents was carried out at the dimensional or property level until we reached a point of theoretical saturation where no new properties, dimensions, consequences, conditions or actions were evident in the data. Axial coding was then performed to determine how the categories were linked (themes) and to further demarcate properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, the category “sense of loss” and respective subcategory “step-father syndrome” was examined to determine the relationship with specific harmful outcomes. The loss of a father affected the team dynamics because the student-athletes were angry that they now had a “new” father that they did not know or trust which in turn created conflict between the new coaching staff and the former coach’s players. These theoretical comparisons allowed for an in-depth understanding of critical postscandal incidents and participants’ perceptions of their experiences of these events. Theoretical notes were kept throughout the analysis process where documented thoughts about the data and the conceptual connections between categories were recorded (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Note taking assisted in the elevation of the data to a conceptual level where properties and dimensions of categories are defined. Finally, selective coding was performed where various categories were integrated at the dimensional level to formulate our theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Validation of statements of relationships among concepts and completion of categories that required further refinement were then carried out. As a result a theoretical diagram (see Figure 1) was developed illustrating a substantive theory of student-athlete suffering and dealing with academic corruption with representative categories and propositions.
Findings

An incidence of academic corruption impacts the individuals within a MBB program, athletic department, and an institution at varying levels and degrees. While many constituency groups are harmed by a scandal of this magnitude, our study focused on theorizing about how MBB student-athletes who were not involved in the scandal are impacted. The first section presents a conceptualization of the core category—MBB student-athletes’ suffering. The main categories and respective subcategories will then be identified and discussed as interrelated concepts to help demonstrate theory construction. We conclude with a discussion of the categorical and subcategorical findings in comparison with existing literature.

“The Kids Suffer The Most”

One of the most dramatic and overlooked consequences of academic corruption in an intercollegiate athletic program is the impact on the team members who were not directly involved in the scandal. Based on the data, it was overwhelmingly evident that in a case of academic corruption “the kids suffer the most.” The substantive theory generated from the data revealed that as a result of academic corruption, student-athletes are subjected to and endure enormous and assorted forms of suffering. Suffering is defined as the pain inflicted on team members due to harmful effects created by the specific consequences of the corruption. The respective categories of consequences and harmful outcomes of the academic corruption for the MBB student-athletes are depicted in Figure 1.

In essence, student-athletes suffer three main consequences (subcategories) as a result of academic fraud: 1) negative treatment inflicted by different University constituency groups; 2) sanctions; and 3) a sense of loss, which leads to various respective harmful outcomes (subcategories) including distrust, dysfunctional relationships, embarrassment, stakeholder separation, anger, stress, conflict, and noncompliance. Team members will experience a broad range of emotions in dealing with the incident itself, the negative treatment, the sanctions, and loss, and as a result become “an emotional mess.” The consequences also produce opposing positive outcomes through the notion of a dual consciousness of corruption in the form of displaying resiliency and seeking empowerment. The suffering is most acute at the exposure of the academic fraud and during the subsequent 12–24 months. As time passes the intensity of the anguish felt by the student-athletes dissipates; however, the consequences of the corruption (i.e., negative treatment) appear to linger into the current postscandal period where they will continue to experience distrust, ostracism, and embarrassment. While individuals are able to cope with their suffering, it appears that the program can never be restored to its original health as the program will eternally be linked to the instance of fraud. The academic corruption and its effects remain dormant until triggered by another event, positive or negative (such as NCAA tournament appearance, recruiting an impact player, firing of a coach, negative media, or poor team record), which causes the anguish to resurface and develop various intensified feelings of suffering.

Next, a more detailed overview of the theoretical components and their relationships is provided.
Figure 1 — Sources, consequences, and harmful outcomes of academic corruption on student-athletes.
Negative Treatment

Negative treatment in the form of associative guilt, limited communication, a lack of support, and public criticism and humiliation will be inflicted from certain faculty, students, university and athletic administration, and the media (Figure 2). As shown in Figure 2, the disparaging treatment results in student-athletes suffering by experiencing harmful feelings of distrust, embarrassment, dysfunctional relationships, and a dual consciousness of corruption where they seek empowerment and display a sense of resiliency. The intensity of the negative treatment is most pronounced immediately following the announcement of the scandal. As time lapses the disparaging treatment gradually lessens in intensity and frequency. Long-term negative treatment predominately emanates through university faculty associative guilt—distrust and stereotyping.

Negative Treatment: Associative Guilt

Through the notion of guilt by association, the remaining players not involved in the fraud are unfairly associated with the reported corrupt practices. This associative guilt generates differential treatment by certain faculty members through acts of prejudice and labeling. MBB student-athletes are prejudged and labeled as “cheaters” and experience unfair treatment in class. For example, the scandal was exposed a week before finals and some of the faculty who had MBB players in their class treated them differently by closely monitoring them during final exams. The respective faculty or a graduate assistant strategically sat next to or positioned themselves near the players to prevent them from cheating. Examples of the associative guilt described by participants included:

I was in a class, and I had a professor and a student teacher that were flanked on my side. One stood right next to me, one sat right behind me, and the whole time I was taking a test they were just rotating positions. Standing next to me, standing besides me, and making circular patterns around me … whether that was their intentions or not that was just the way that we felt because everything now was everybody that was involved with the basketball program were cheaters. (Student-Athlete interview, May 18, 2005)

One senior gave the example of a professor during his freshman year asking him to sit for a final in a different room under the watchful eye of a graduate assistant …. (Participant observation)

The stereotyping of MBB student-athletes and student-athletes in general by certain faculty members continues in the postscandal years. On the whole, student-athletes are considered to be a “bad taste” in the mouths of many academic circles (Participant observation). Common faculty perceptions of student-athletes are that they continue to receive academic privileges beyond the scope of the regular student, or are considered poor students and must cheat to earn passing grades. In dealing with some professors, it was noted through participant observations that faculty attitudes would range from “typical poor academic behavior” by a student-athlete, particularly basketball, to “good work despite their challenges.”
Figure 2 — Negative treatment: sources, its consequences, and harmful outcomes on student-athletes due to academic corruption.
Negative treatment in the form of associative guilt, public criticism, and humiliation creates feelings of embarrassment and leads to ostracism on campus. Players will experience a “quiet shame” for being associated with the scandal. The barrage of public criticism as a result of corruption threatens the players’ sense of belonging, which further add to their affliction. In addition to having to overcome societal stereotypes about MBB players’ academic abilities in general, the student-athletes will be further condemned for being associated with a team that was engaging in fraudulent acts. This condemnation leads to feeling unwelcome, lonely, and uncomfortable on campus, which affects the players’ sense of school pride. In addition, a sense of awkwardness is also experienced in dealing with other individuals who were publicly disaffectionate toward the MBB players. Examples selected from our data to illustrate these feelings of embarrassment included participants who said:

It was pretty embarrassing because everyone thought you were a cheater. Your peers thought you were a cheater, and they always looked at you and would say, “Oh, he cheats because he was on the team.” It was bad enough at the University … because the perception is that there are a few athletes that just use the system. Everyone has their stereotypes of student-athletes and stupid jocks . . . that is one of the things [his academic accomplishments] I wanted to take pride in. (Student-Athlete interview, May 16, 2005).

People started treating you differently around campus. The school newspaper came out with damaging things. There was one article that said the basketball program should be extinct, they should just completely get rid of it because of all the things that had happened. They started pointing out personal things about different guys on the team saying what kind of bad people they were.

The participant went on to explain:

You were an embarrassment to the University and by some people you were treated as such because there’s always that group of students that don’t like the athletes and believe that the athletes . . . receive special treatment . . . and that gave them reason to say . . . see we told you. Then they would see you walking down the street you would hear whispering . . . it got pretty bad and real uncomfortable. (Student-Athlete interview, May 18, 2005)

The negative treatment imposed by many of the University’s student body also comes in the shape of public scoffing that can lead to further ostracism of the players. Public scoffing included players being ridiculed about their academic abilities, not doing their own homework, and questioning their academic and personal moralities. Ostracism by the student body was displayed through distancing themselves from the players when they were on campus. Public criticisms and student body distancing is most frequent and severe immediately following the announcement of the fraud and continues until the resignation of the head coach. Student-athletes’ feelings of quiet shame can also continue several years after the fraud. A participant explained their suffering due to the public scoffing:
The situation opened a flood gate for everybody who was involved in the basketball program to be attacked . . . just a complete invasion of your privacy, your character; everybody was judging your character. It became honestly . . . personal attacks on everybody that was involved in the situation. (Student-athlete interview, May 18, 2005)

Negative treatment imparted on the players also exists in the form of excessive media attacks where, for example, they were overtly ridiculed in the University student newspaper. Media attacks will include an assortment of perspectives about the privileges that student-athletes receive, criticisms about their academic abilities, and the state of corruption within intercollegiate athletics (e.g., Dowling, 1999; Kindred, 1999; Schortemeyer, 1999; Soucheray, 1999; Wertheim, & Yaeger, 1999). In this case, the University student newspaper identified one of the former MBB players by name and stated that he “probably couldn’t pass a high school graduation test. Anyone who ever had a class with him knows this: He’s not a bright guy” (Schortemeyer, 1999). Media scrutiny and the scandal itself further perpetuates the “dumb jock” stereotype, which some players indicated that they had worked relentlessly to thwart. Similar to the student public scoffing, the media attacks were most acute when the fraud was announced. The intensity of the attacks subsided in the subsequent months but continued until the head coach resigned.10

The nature of the players’ suffering as a result of mistreatment is divided around racial lines. The African-American players are publicly ridiculed and stereotyped—the only reason for their special “admit” into higher education was for their labor and entertainment purposes. Such overt ridicule is most notable in the local media (racially derogative articles and cartoons) where, for example, the two newspapers were competing to provide coverage and had a history of discrimination toward African-American males in leadership positions at the University (Brackin & Ison, 2002). In instances when race was mentioned by the media it was perceived as critical and discriminatory toward only African-Americans involved in the case. The participants led our data collection to a cartoon printed in a local newspaper titled “The Plantation” where an all African-American team is seemingly playing in front of a predominantly, if not all-white audience where the caption reads “Of course we don’t let them read or write” (see Figure 3). While some (i.e., employees of the newspaper in question and some community members) felt that the editorial cartoon challenged people to rethink the University’s role of exploitation of men’s basketball players, the cartoon was perceived as racially offensive and highlighted the perceived inequity of coverage by the African-American MBB players, African-American football players, several University officials, as well as many members of the Minnesota African-American and white communities. Examples of individuals’ speaking out and/or opposition to the perceived media’s racist coverage included the African-American football players’ refusal to speak to the media in protest of the racist content of the cartoon; the University president and Chairman of the Board of Regents wrote to the newspaper pronouncing their outrage as the “cartoon was a racial slur” (Clark, 1999); and a radio broadcast was also held that provided the community an opportunity to discuss their perspectives of the media’s coverage of the corruption (Yates Borger, 1999).

White players’ suffering, on the other hand, represents mostly associative guilt (“cheaters”) and harsh scrutiny from students and faculty for the scandal itself.
Participant interviews indicated a history of racism existed on campus and that the University did “not know how to deal with us.” Furthermore, the majority of study participants did not feel comfortable in addressing race as it was “like the elephant in the room and no one wanted to discuss the problem.” Participants who would discuss race either spoke in a racial code and were reluctant to elaborate on the topic, did not perceive the issue as racial, or acknowledged the racism but lacked the language to effectively address the issue.

**Negative Treatment: Lack of Support**

Suffering is also generated through the University and athletic administrators’ perceived negative treatment through their lack of support. A lack of support is defined as the MBB student-athletes receiving insufficient emotional comfort from University administrators as well as their dismissing of the players’ anguish. At the onset of the scandal administration will offer support and guidance for the MBB players with regard to providing updates about the impeding investigation and handling the media. As the investigation proceeds, however, the players appear to be “orphaned” by the University. It was perceived that the University offered little in the way of consoling the MBB players in managing the negative treatment they received, talking to and counseling them, or providing encouragement and emotional support in surviving the whole ordeal. Discrepancies exist between University administrators and the student-athletes as to whom was most affected during the aftermath of the academic fraud. The players felt that in the public’s eyes they represented “Minnesota” and the basketball program, and thus they were the focus.

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**Figure 3** — Public humiliation, embarrassment, and racism (Pioneer Press, May 18, 1999, p. 8A).

Note: Due to rights limitations, this item has been removed.
of media stories and felt the brunt of public criticisms. The players perceived that University administrators dismissed their feelings of hurt and embarrassment, and neglected to consider how the players were coping. A participant explained:

The “thing” that was going on involved us . . . and they say that it did not. That it affected the whole University but we were the ones that were feeling all the repercussions whether it be from the media, from the students . . . it was Minnesota Basketball and that is who we were, as players, we were Minnesota Basketball and that is who was under attack. But they never took into effect our feelings and how this was bothering us. No one ever, ever talked to us about how we were handling this situation; how we were handling the pressures . . . we were basically a lost cause. (Student-athlete interview, May 18, 2005)

No, no, nobody said anything to us. We were just on our own. No one . . . we were never asked once how we were doing or how we felt until we went in there and made some noise [went to the media]. . . . No-one really took into consideration the players and the people that were involved. (Student-athlete interview, May 16, 2005)

Lack of support by university and athletic administrators causes suffering through feeling unvalued and uncared for, which generates anger.

**Dual Consciousness of Corruption**

In combination, limited communication and lack of support led to the remaining MBB student-athletes experiencing a dual consciousness of corruption. A dual consciousness is where the players show resiliency and empowerment. Resiliency after suffering from the affects of academic corruption is the process of successful adaptation to the sequence of events, despite their challenging circumstances of dealing with the sanctions and being associated with the case of fraud. Resiliency assisted the players in coping with the sanctions and having faith in their abilities. Examples from the data illustrate the players’ resilient attitudes:

We have a lot to prove, a student athlete said. We feel like there’s a lot of people doubting us and thinking we’re going to be a flop this year, but we believe in ourselves and I think we’re going to surprise a lot of people. (Student-athlete quoted in Wicker, 1999a).

I think the day that came out, I told them that we have life now, but it doesn’t do any good if you don’t live that life . . . and that is something that I think our team has been very motivated to try and do. (Quoted in Mitchell, 2001)

Empowerment relates to the student-athletes striving to gain a certain degree of control when they perceived that the University and athletic administration was not including them in decision-making nor keeping them abreast of investigative events. A participant stated:

They [administration] never would do anything until we reacted. That is what it came down to . . . myself and another player, and other guys that were leaders on the team, we went and we would raise a “stink.” It got to the point
that everything that we found out that was going on we found out through the newspapers and through the internet. So we got to the point where we got fed up and we went to the newspaper and reversed it on them [administration] a little bit to have our voices heard. (Student-athlete interview, May 18, 2005)

In this particular case, empowerment was in the form of utilizing the media, which was perceived by the players as a strategic means to: a) become active participants in the new head coach hiring process; and b) act as a catalyst for the administration to openly communicate with them.

Suffering a Sense of Loss and the Stepfather Syndrome

Student-athlete suffering was also caused through the loss of a central figure and experiencing the stepfather syndrome. The stepfather syndrome is defined as losing their coach (father figure) and having to deal with a “stepfather” (the replacement coach) and his children (new coaches’ recruits). Their “father” was an instrumental male influence—role model—in their lives who taught them how to be men, and what it meant to play for the “Gophers” and represent the University. The participants described the emotional stress in losing their coach as “devastating” as they had “lost a great coach, a great friend, and a father figure.” A student-athlete stated, “I remember that day. I was in tears all day. I think about it today and I get teary-eyed. I was supposed to play for him for four years” (quoted in Wicker, 1999a). The hurt and pain felt by the remaining MBB student-athletes interfered with their ability to develop a positive relationship with the new coaching staff. Participants explained their experiences:

You get to practice and you are with guys that do not want you because you were not the guy that brought them in here . . . I felt like I was a step-dad coming in after a divorce. . . . It’s just no matter what you do or what you say it’s not going to make any difference.” (Coach interview, September 20, 2004)

[I]t is like your dad and mom get a divorce and then you are forced to take on a new stepfather . . . because you loved your dad and now someone is coming in trying to take his place. (Student-athlete interview, May 18, 2005)

Suffering and the stepfather syndrome also impacted the overall team dynamic as the new staff had to develop a bond with the former players, which is usually established during the recruiting process. Relationship development is further impeded by the MBB players that were recruited by the former coach dealing with a sense of loss and because of the perceived betrayal by the administration and uncertainty in whom to trust. The issue is additionally compounded as performance expectations of the team are extremely high in competing in the Big Ten Conference, which adds another layer of stress. It took approximately two years for the team to repair relationships.

Suffering and Sanctions

Whereas the University and the athletic department have endured several setbacks as a result of the sanctions, the student-athletes are directly affected by specific
sanctions. These restrictions hurt the individuals who were either not involved in the corruption or were abiding by the rules. While the self-imposed and NCAA sanctions were aimed at holding those involved in the corruption accountable, these penalties, however, generated feelings of “devastation,” “disappointment,” and “hurt” to the remaining team members as they are the individuals who must endure the brunt of postseason penalties. Participants believed that the sanctions unfairly punish individuals for “a crime they did not commit.”

We’re innocent victims here. It’s not really fair that we get penalized and the guys who did it get nothing . . . the people who did things wrong are gone. But we’re stuck with the punishment. It feels like we shouldn’t be the ones. It’s just something we’ve got to deal with. (Student-athlete quoted in Wicker, 1999b)

The 1-year ban on post-season play is painful. In a sense, it does not seem fair. But there is nothing we can do about it. You take the card that has been dealt and you go from there. But certainly it is disappointing. (Student-athlete quoted in Wicker, 1999b)

The sooner we get it behind us, the better. None of these kids are involved in the wrongdoing, and they’re the ones who are paying the price. (Coach quoted in Gustafson, 1999).

The perceived injustice of the penalties generates anger, distrust, and a sense of disrespect for authority by the players. Noteworthy, the student-athletes also demonstrated a dual consciousness of corruption by exhibiting resiliency and pride in their attitudes. Their internal strength appeared to promote resilient attitudes, which was demonstrated through their ability to cope with the sanctions, the ordeal itself, and by placing the whole situation behind them, moving on, and focusing on normalcy—playing and winning basketball games. Dual consciousness was also demonstrated by the student-athletes’ sense of pride displayed through representing the University and belonging to something “special”—the team. A participant stated:

[We] heard that line, “You guys are playing for nothing,” but we had a pride within ourselves and even as badly as we were treated by the University, we still had pride playing for the University of Minnesota and playing for the Maroon and Gold. To this day, I love the Gophers. (Student-athlete interview, May 18, 2005)

Being a member of the team and being associated with the “maroon and gold” was an important part of the players’ identities.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings described in the previous section were derived through a process of inductive analysis and the constant comparative method leading to a theory of student-athlete suffering and coping with academic corruption. The subsequent step in theory generation entailed the comparison of our findings with previous literature. The inductively derived scheme of interrelated concepts, categories, and
subcategories (see Figure 1) was contrasted with existing theories and research in the areas of consequences of corruption, trust and betrayal, loss, divorce, racism, and sanctions, and is discussed in the next section.

**Negative Treatment**

The generated theory demonstrates that student-athletes not involved in the fraud will experience negative treatment. The category of negative treatment (see Figure 2) is composed of several concepts (i.e., sources, types, and harmful outcomes) and subcategories (e.g., sources—student body and university faculty) suggesting that different organizational stakeholders influence the type of repugnant behaviors experienced (associative guilt, lack of communication and support, and public criticism) and subsequent harmful outcomes (e.g., anger, dysfunctional relationships, and embarrassment) felt by the student-athletes. In this particular intercollegiate context, student-athletes, in contrast to typical employees, are unpaid workers (i.e., considered amateurs), are generally young adults, and experience an enormous power differential with their superiors, which sits outside of the common “assumptions” about the nature of employees within the corruption literature. Previous research has identified that in general corruption causes specific types of harm on organizational stakeholders including loss of reputation, shame through public disgrace, and financial loss (Miller et al., 2005; Zahra et al., 2005). Building on the existing literature and in the substantive area of academic corruption we were able to first identify the individuals who are the sources of negative treatment, the specific type of negative treatment imposed on the players by respective individuals, and the forms of suffering experienced. For example, we conceptualized that university faculty and the student body will assume associative guilt and engage in various forms of public criticism and humiliation. In turn, these behaviors will lead to various harmful outcomes including the MBB players feeling distrust, feeling uncomfortable, feeling embarrassed, and being ostracized. While the literature acknowledges that individuals will experience shame through public disgrace (Miller et al., 2005) and feel insulted by management distrust through increased oversight (Cialdini et al., 2004), our theory provides the interrelation between the specific individuals and types of negative treatment that lead to this form of suffering. Second, we were able to theorize the intensity in addition to the duration of negative treatment that influences student-athlete suffering. The negative treatment is most acute immediately following the revelation of the fraud and slowly dissipates over time. Much of the empirical data illustrates the long-term impact of corruption on an organization rather than providing an explanation of the amount and length (Baucus & Baucus, 1997; Hughes & Shank, 2005; Luo, 2004). Significant toward our understanding of how academic corruption impacts student-athletes not involved in fraud are the multiple forms and deep rooted suffering as a result of the diversity of negative treatment. University and athletic administrators, coaches, and support personnel need to consider how these kinds of hurtful actions can be prevented or what kind of communication and support services could be provided to assist student-athletes in coping with the various kinds of suffering identified.

Third, an interesting outcome of the negative treatment caused by University and athletic administrators is the players’ dual consciousness of corruption. Absent in the corruption literature is a recognition and account of how organizational
stakeholders respond to an instance of corruption in their own organization. Our theory asserts that student-athletes appear to cope with their various feelings of suffering—embarrassment, anger, shame, uncomfortable, and sadness—through seeking empowerment and showing resiliency. Empowerment is deemed a necessary means to regain a certain degree of control and a strategy to having their voices heard in what appears to be an uncontrollable situation. In addition, resiliency seems to be an effective coping mechanism to regain some sense of normalcy and dignity. Engagement in extracurricular activities contributes to fostering resilient behaviors as it provides individuals the opportunity to participate in prosocial groups and achieve recognition as well as receiving encouragement from their coaches (Alvord & Grados, 2005). Athletic administrators and coaches can assist student-athletes in coping with an instance of academic corruption by openly and honestly communicating with them, providing appropriate support, and encouraging them to continue to represent the program.

Fourth, the corruption literature overlooks how race factors into the public criticism, humiliation, and the suffering felt by African-American individuals not involved in fraudulent acts. The negative treatment category and respective subcategories of media, public criticism, and humiliation—racism indicate that academic corruption can lead to deferential treatment based on racial lines. When the central actors implicated in corruption are African-American our theory suggests that student-athletes’ of color experiences with public ridicule will vary to their white teammate’s experiences. The media’s discriminatory nature in reporting a high profile case of corruption is another example where African-American student-athletes perceive that they are treated differently than their White counterparts when mistakes are made (Singer, 2005). Public ridicule of this kind can lead to minority student-athletes’ feelings of embarrassment, anger, and emotional hurt. The extent of this suffering is most intense upon its occurrence and seemingly has lasting affects on the afflicted (that is, the players will always remember the experience). The racialized discourse also illustrates that the speech context influences what type of racial talk is appropriate in the “frontstage” or public arena (Eliasoph, 1999). The “Plantation” cartoon was deemed a suitable frontstage means for critically discussing the African-American MBB players involved in the fraud and to question their role within the academy. Beliefs and values about what racial talk is acceptable and where it is acceptable was also demonstrated in this case. As Eliasoph (1999) points out, individuals express their racist beliefs in civic life through various structures such as to the extent that they speak about race and racism in the public (frontstage) and private (backstage) sphere. It is this type of structural expression of racism that Eliasoph (1999) and Kubal (1998) suggest we should question in our research, writing, and teaching.

Last, the notion of distrust is an apparent harmful outcome of corruption for two sets of organizational stakeholders—citizens and employers. Corruption erodes citizen trust and potentially encroaches upon ongoing contractual ties with employees and customers (Lewis, 2003; Luo, 2004; Neil, 2004) and leads to management distrust (Cialdini et al., 2004). It is theorized that an instance of significant academic fraud is a result of betrayal, which leads to extensive distrust, conflict, and anger by certain organizational stakeholders. Conversely, we also theorize that in the intercollegiate context, student-athletes not involved in fraud will experience distrust of university and athletic administrators due to negative treatment (i.e.,
lack of communication and support), loss, and sanctions. Interestingly, student-athletes will display a tendency to continue to trust authoritarian figures (to a certain degree) on their word even when they believe they had been previously betrayed. Research on mistrust and betrayal indicates that intense betrayal destroys the fabric of relationships and thus impacts productivity (Reina & Reina, 1999). Important for coaches and administrators is that student-athlete distrust affects team dynamics—between the players and the newly hired coaching staff—as well as players’ ability to trust authoritarian figures. Betrayal influences an individual’s capacity to trust others (Reina & Reina, 1999) and in our study the players felt that the betrayal “made it a lot harder to trust people, especially people in authoritative positions. You couldn’t trust whoever was in that [leadership] position” (Student-athlete interview, May 18, 2005). This inability to trust individuals in leadership positions affects team dynamics for an extensive period of time (approximately two years). The extensive amount of time required to rebuild relationships and trust is also affected by the overall emotional suffering experienced as a result of corruption. It is crucial that coaches and other athletic team personnel understand the nature of betrayal and its relationship to trust when attempting to repair relationships and develop trust between the team members and staff. Trust in one’s leader is also a strong predictor of athletic performance (Dirks, 2000) and our findings indicate that a strong argument can be drawn that the team’s performance was impacted by their mistrust of authoritarian figures in addition to dysfunctional relationships and overall emotional suffering as the team had a losing season the subsequent year after the incident occurred. Future research should be conducted that examines players’ trust in authoritarian figures after corruption and the respective impact on performance and team relationships.

Loss

The corruption literature suggests that individuals experience various forms of loss in terms of one’s reputation, finances, or struggle to seek alternative employment (Miller et al., 2005; Zahra et al., 2005). In addition to coping with the defiling of the team and players’ reputations, an academic scandal of an extreme magnitude will result in a sense of loss felt through the players experiencing the step-father syndrome and dealing with the dispersion of their team. This sense of loss can emotionally overwhelm players as their grieving happens at several levels—the loss of their team, their coach, and their reputation while collectively coping with feelings of shame, feelings of betrayal, anger, and stress brought on by the negative treatment and sanctions. In a case of academic corruption several individuals involved with the team (e.g., players involved in the fraud, coaching staff, and certain support staff) will leave the program for various reasons. The players will use several coping strategies in attempting to overcome these losses and resulting feelings such as maintaining loyalty to the former coaching staff and program, “banding” together as a team, and striving to represent the program in a competitive manner. This sense of continued commitment, integration, and goal alignment is reflective of Adler and Adler’s (1988) concept of intense organizational loyalty which is related to MBB players’ domination by the previous coach and their identity being so tightly linked to their membership with Minnesota basketball.
Dealing with the stepfather syndrome within the context of academic corruption causes varying degrees of suffering differing from instances when a head coach leaves a program. First, the administration’s negative treatment and resultant student-athletes’ feelings of distrust will hinder the development of relationships and trust with their new step-father figure (head coach). Grief literature indicates that when individuals grieve they will experience a variety of emotions in a roller coaster fashion (Braza, 1993). Players require sufficient time to grieve the loss of their former coach and even though they had indicated that the sanctions allowed them to move on and “live life,” suffering from the step-father syndrome nonetheless made moving on difficult as there are constant reminders (media reports, new policies and procedures, negative treatment, new staff) of their loss. Second, when suffering is not acknowledged in a case of corruption then an individual’s suffering is compounded. The extreme incident of corruption described in this study required an acknowledgment of the players’ grief and subsequently allowing the players time to deal with their anger and sadness. The Institution and new coaching staff could also have assisted the players through the grieving process by listening and providing support. Third, a new coaching staff will naturally instill a new on-the-floor and off-the-floor philosophies that will disrupt the equilibrium of the former coach’s players. As one coach indicated, “you would go to practice and you were with guys that do not like you because you were not the guy that brought them in here.” Team restructuring will alter the returning players’ roles, responsibilities, and expectations and can take an extensive amount of time for adjustment and might lead to rebellious behaviors (e.g., missing class, lateness, conflict, disrespectful behaviors, and ultimately leaving the program). Both players and coaching staff will need extraordinary patience and persistence to allow for the implementation and execution of change.

Research on young adults who experience divorce shows that after the separation they are exposed to a series of transitions and household adjustments, and the entering of a new parent causes a disruption to the newly formed family (Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Arrasteh, 1988; Hines, 1997). It also suggests that children in stepfamilies that have large numbers, and in blended families (i.e., new players and former players and a team of 12–14 members), will have more difficulty in adapting to the new family situation (Hetherington, 1993). Coinciding with the research on children responding to a new step-parent and a new set of siblings (Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Arrasteh, 1988; Hines, 1997), the current study identified certain players having difficulty in adjusting which was displayed through challenging of authority and acting out. Research is necessary to explore the generalizability of dealing with the various transitions with a new coaching staff and combining team members after a case of extreme academic fraud, or if it is to be viewed as a variable (as opposed to relating to another form of corruption) associated with any unwanted coaching change. Also examining the extent that turnover of coaching staff as a result of academic corruption magnifies the transition is important to assist coaches in building team relationships.

Sanctions
Management fraud typically leads to financial losses due to penalties (Miller et al., 2005); however, in this context loss occurs through expunged records and a
ban on postseason play. The concept of suffering and sanctions represents anger, disappointment, and hurt because of the belief that the innocent have been punished for a crime they did not commit. Noteworthy, players not involved in the fraud are able to separate themselves from the individuals involved in the fraud and believe strongly that they should not be held accountable. The concept of negative treatment by university officials presumably overlaps with the concept of sanctions. Anger and disappointment can be augmented in circumstances where University officials are not forthcoming regarding the extent of imposed sanctions. Consistent with other situations where sanctions are imposed, the consequence of such actions causes the innocent to suffer (Christiansen & Powers, 1993). This category of student-athlete suffering due to sanctions reflects that individuals not involved in the fraud and who were upholding organizational rules and regulations are subject to and endure harsh punishments for crimes they did not commit. The student-athletes believed that the severity of the sanctions should be proportional to the offense (Bagaric, 2004). While the impact of sanctions and deterrence sanctions on sport organization stakeholders has not been extensively examined in sport management, research suggests that increased monitoring and compliance is more effective to deter future systematic deviant acts (Miller et al., 2005; Nielson, 2003; Wells & Carozza, 2000) and serves, as well, as a function of a perceived risk of being apprehended (Hopkins, 1980). Future research should reexamine the criteria in determining the fairness of the principles that guide the NCAA’s penalty structure as the challenge is determining whether incapacitative and deterrence sanctions are just for nonoffenders.

In conclusion, in this study we aimed to develop a substantive theory of suffering and dealing with academic corruption regarding individuals within an intercollegiate context that were not involved in fraudulent acts yet, assume the responsibility to participate within a Division I MBB program. The theory generated provided an enhanced understanding of how individuals cope with a specific type of corruption and in a particular setting endure much affliction as a result of several consequences. The next step recommended in theory development is the generation of a formal theory where future research should a) examine how academic corruption affects other institutional stakeholders; b) explore how assorted types of corruption affects student-athletes in other intercollegiate athletic programs; and c) investigate how different types of corruption affect different stakeholders across multiple athletic and sport contexts. Gaining access is extremely challenging and thus might prove a difficult barrier to contributions to knowledge in this line of research. Corruption in sport is not atypical and understanding the complexities of how corruption affects organizational stakeholders would assist sport managers and coaches in managing their programs in the postcorruption years.

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Notes

1. These are recorded major infractions of academic fraud dating back from the year 1953.
3. Before 2002, the University of Minnesota Intercollegiate athletic department had separate men’s and women’s athletic departments.
4. Figure does not include costs related to human resources expenditures for the removal and replacement of certain university personnel (university and athletic department administrators, coaching staff, and athletic department staff) or decline in men’s basketball season ticket sales.
5. The former head coach had negotiated a $1.5 million buy-out agreement when his resignation was originally accepted. However, based on the University's internal investigation and NCAA's infraction report where he was found to be dishonest about the fraudulent acts he was ordered by the Court to repay the University $815,000 (Southall, Nagel, Batista, & Reese, 2002–2003)
6. From 1999 to 2005 the program has experienced a gradual decline in attendance. Attendance has decreased from an average of 14,000 attendees in 1999–2000 to approximately 11,000 attendees per game in 2004–2005. Despite the decrease in average attendance, the MBB program has still managed to maintain an average attendance figure that ranks in the top 10% of NCAA institutions (NCAA, 2005).
7. The authors acknowledge the different methodological perspectives between Glaser (1992, 2004) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). Although drawing from both Glaser, and Strauss and Corbin, our grounded theory methodology relied more on Strauss and Corbin (1998).
8. Confidentiality agreement between the researchers and participants entailed that since the University name was identified that the researchers would only identify the participants by general position (e.g., a coach, a student-athlete, or an administrator) and that no demographic information would be included in the findings.
9. Traditionally, gatekeepers in social science research generally refers to individuals who have formal authority to grant access to a field site (Morrill, Buller, Buller, & Larkey, 1999).
10. The head coach resigned approximately three months after the scandal was released (Minnesota; Haskins accepts contract buyout, 1999).
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