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The Impact of Scandal on NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Fan Consumption and Team Success

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Scandal in sport violates fan assumptions and can have a detrimental impact upon success both in winning percentage and financial bottom line (Prior, O'Reilly, Mazanov, & Huybers, 2013). Division I NCAA Women's Basketball faced a flurry of incidents involving coach sexual misconduct with players during the 2015-2016 season. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how three distinct cases of coach sex scandal in women's basketball impacted fan support and team success. To accomplish this purpose, this study examined fans' message board posts in the months following three incidents at three separate Division I institutions through the lens of attribution theory as well as attendance and win-loss percentage of the programs enduring scandal. Fan responses were different at each institution, suggesting scandals can be perceived differently as contextual factors differ. However, attendance tended to remain stable at all three institutions, indicating women's basketball fans can be fairly immune to scandal and may support their team regardless of the indiscretion of the coach.

Division I National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Women's Basketball faced a flurry of incidents involving coach sexual misconduct with players during the 2015-2016 season. University of Maryland assistant women's basketball coach, Bryce McKey, was charged with third-degree sexual abuse of a former player from the institution by which he was previously employed, Xavier University, of inappropriately touching her during a visit to his house (Grasha, 2016). Legendary former University of Tennessee head women's basketball coach Pat Summitt's son, Tyler Summitt, voluntarily stepped down from his position as head coach of the Louisiana Tech women's basketball program as he admitted to an inappropriate relationship with one of his Louisiana Tech players (Voelpel, 2016). First-year Florida International University (FIU) head women's basketball coach, Marlin Chinn, was fired after an article surfaced describing sexual misconduct allegations as well as multiple NCAA amateurism rules violations regarding one of his players at FIU (Neal, 2016).

Sport scandals violate spectators' assumptions of expected behaviors and can impact an athletics team or program's success and popularity from financially impacting the organization's bottom line, to losing loyal, lifelong, highly identified fans integral to the life of the program (Prior, O'Reilly, Mazanov, & Huybers, 2013). The negative actions of an organization, or of one person within an organization, can be absolutely devastating to the entity and parties it represents. Monetary value of athletes and sports teams are critical to revenue generation and enhancing this revenue are challenged and oftentimes destroyed in the event of scandal (Knittel & Stango, 2014).

The existing literature on the influence of scandal within sport consumption is minimal, with most sport scandal literature instead involving managerial or associated brand reactions to scandal (Prior et al., 2013). However, the specifically highly identified fans of women's basketball have the tendency to be committed to the program no matter the situation (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002). Women's sport fans exhibit particular characteristics and behaviors (Koo, Andrew, & Kim, 2008) not reflective in men's sport fans, including women's college basketball fans citing higher aesthetic motives than men's college basketball fans (James & Ridinger, 2002) and fans of women's professional sports exhibiting higher socialization motives than men's professional sport fans (Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2003). With the uniqueness of the women's college basketball fan as well as the growing popularity of women's college basketball (Koo et al., 2008) comes a necessary consideration of the influence of scandal on the qualities and decision-making avenues specifically applied to the sport. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine, through an exploration of three distinct cases, how women's basketball fans respond to women's basketball coach sex scandals, how scandal impacts fan attendance, and how scandal impacts winning percentages. Results should provide a better understanding of how these typically loyal women's basketball consumers deal with scandal and how it can impact program success.

Review of Relevant Literature

Scandal in Sport

The history of sport shows there is a significant relationship between scandal and sport, with demands high for winning and consequences severe for losing. The global commercialization of sport coupled with intensity and pressure to win has resulted in scandalous behavior being reported more frequently (Connor & Mazanov, 2010). Scandal in sport is found to incorporate three distinct characteristics including: 1) an action that is either illegal or unethical, 2) an event or action involving multiple parties over a period of time, and 3) an action that impacts the integrity of its associated sport (Hughes & Shank, 2005). Benoit's (1997) research on image repair developed the idea that "perceptions are more important than reality" (p. 178). Regardless of whether the act was in fact offensive or not is irrelevant, rather, the belief that the act was offensive or not is what matters.

While each specific scandal in sport varies in impact and severity, the potential of the effects on society have, at times, reached the status of national importance (Rowe, 2013). The implied notion of sport's requirement to abide by rules of not only the game, but of society, add to the perception of sport authenticity. The level of scandal severity as perceived by the consumer increases perceptions of untrustworthiness and incompetence (Sato, Ko, Chang, & Kay, 2018). The misbehavior or transgression leading to scandal in sport does not need to occur within the sporting arena to influence consumer perceptions, as actions outside the domain of sport can affect all stakeholders linked to the transgression (Kelly, Weeks, & Chien, 2018). The social institution of sport and the benefits expected to be received by participants, spectators, and organizations adds to the responsibility of sport to shape ethical, whole people (Rowe, 2013). The impending let-down after sport scandal is thus felt strongly by all afflicted.

In the wake of scandal, maintaining integrity is paramount to retaining consumers (Chien, Kelly, & Weeks, 2016). Fink, Parker, Brett, and Higgins (2009) found the denouncement of the devious act as inconsistent with the team's behavior to be vital in mitigating the loss of fan identification with the team. Releasing a statement condemning the acts can suffice in an organization's separation from the scandal itself or parties involved; however, the severity of the act is what determines fan retention (Chien et al., 2016).

Consumer attitudes in regard to the scandal are integral to brand decision making. Hardwicke-Brown (2014) evaluated consumer attitudes in the wake of sport scandal and found the severity of a sport scandal did not influence consumer decision-making, noting that due to the frequency of sport scandal, consumers may be becoming desensitized. The severity of the scandal was less important of an attributing factor to consumer decision-making than factors and specifics of consumers loyal to the brand (Hardwicke-Brown, 2014).

Trust in an organization is vital to its relationship with consumers, with research supporting its link to fan loyalty and identification (Wu, Tsai, & Hung, 2012). The management of trust, therefore, is important to establishing and building long-term bonds affecting willingness to attend or purchase (Wu et al., 2012). Trust in an organization or team, then, will allow a fan to identify through a scandal, specifically when the behavior is enacted by a specific individual associated with the organization or team.

There can be differences in reactions to transgressions, however, depending on the position of the responsible party within the organization (Pace, Corciolani, & Gistri, 2017). Famous, well-known, or familiar parties benefit from stronger and more positive attachment of consumers whereas lesser-known members of the organization often do not have anchored reputations with consumers to encourage rationalization or coupling reactions (Pace et al., 2017).

Scandal and Highly Identified Sport Consumers

Chien et al. (2016) found that response to a scandal in sport varies depending on consumer identification. Specifically, highly identified consumers tended to have favorable attitudes toward their team despite evidence of scandal. They posited that this effect was due to fans wanting to protect their group identify. Sato, Ko, Park, and Tao (2015) also viewed differences in reactions to scandal depending on fan identification, finding high involvement consumers to be more defensive in their opinions of the scandal, while less involved consumers tend to blame the accused for their transgressions more harshly (Sato et al., 2015). Psychological commitment to a team, depending on level of fan identification, can be resilient to negative connotations (Neale, 2010). The more highly identified the sport fan, then, the less likely he or she will be to change their behaviors. Highly identified sport fans possess innate attributes that prove them likely to claim reflected glory, yet reject reflective failure (Wakefield, 2007).

In today's society, an ethical crisis or scandal provides an opportunity for debate through social interaction via social media (Pace et al., 2017). With the assistance of social media, consumers can now interact with one another through discussion around ethical violations, shifting from inner ethical reasoning to overt conversation, interaction, and collective understanding (Pace et al., 2017). This process challenges consumers to expand upon their otherwise narrow, individual positions by being confronted by other consumers' ideas and arguments (Pace et al., 2017). Brand communities, which can represent sport fans of a specific team, often engage in a community-wide elaboration of ethical decision-making and can exert pressure on the team's brand (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009). A consumer's understanding, critique, and future actions after scandal can therefore evolve through social interaction and discourse. Taking advantage of a scandal to support the brand reduces scandal threat and allows the brand to rather embrace the scandal by framing messages around the product (Connor & Mazanov, 2010).

Scandal in the NCAA

The unfavorable actions of a single individual in sport or a handful of members of a specific team can cause a ripple effect through an entire athletic department or university (Chien et al., 2016). The existence of corruption and scandal at NCAA Division I schools is not necessarily a byproduct of innate moral or ethical evil, but rather, the unrealistic and solely focused pressure to win at all costs, as monetary stakes are high for athletic departments across the country (Cullen, Latessa, & Byrne, 1990). Although Cullen et al. (1990) primarily addresses scandal involving cheating and unfair advantages incorporating different moral boundaries than sexual abuse scandals, athletic departments often face similar backlash regardless of the specifics of the transgression. The University of Colorado faced a blow to its reputation as a University and athletic department in the wake of the sexual abuse allegations it failed to properly address and report,

losing alumni and fan support as well as an estimated $900,000 in potential revenue (Hughes & Shank, 2005). Charitable giving, a major lifeline in revenue sourcing for many athletic departments, is another factor influenced by scandal, as Hughes and Shank (2008) reported that Cal State Fresno's annual charitable giving dropped over $600,000 in the aftermath of their athletic department's improper recruiting and academic fraud scandal in 2003.

Separate from financial blows faced by athletic departments and universities are potential NCAA sanctions, fines, and bans. The notorious NCAA "death penalty", shutting down all functions of a member team, has been implemented only once throughout its history. However, it has been considered multiple times for punishment of exceedingly scandalous and flagrantly unprecedented situations such as the University of Alabama booster scandal of 2002 or the Penn State child sex abuse scandal of 2012, where they suffered a $60 million fine, four-year post-season ban, and loss of scholarships (Edelman, 2014; Smith, 2015).

Smith (2015) argues that formal punishment imposed by the NCAA includes sanctions that do not harm the teams or athletic departments, particularly in terms of revenue, and categorizes benefits of rule breaking as immediate and vast. Average fans were found to be without knowledge of NCAA sanctions of their team, leaving directly affected parties and highly identified fans as the sole parties facing detriment (Smith, 2015). This finding supports that winning is more valuable than ethics. For example, in the aftermath of the Sandusky scandal, Penn State turned to public relations firm Ketchum, who had previously worked with major corporations such as IBM and Kodak, who encouraged them not to change the image or restructure the athletic department, but rather, to save its brand (Proffitt & Corrigan, 2012). Simply releasing a statement in the case of Penn State would have been deemed severely inadequate, however, an overhaul was also unnecessary. Brand rescue included diverting from losses of alumni donors and sponsors and placing emphasis on retaining big donors.

Despite their negative nature, some scandals have generated positive outcomes. In many cases, organizations may benefit from the added publicity scandals generate (Gorse & Chadwick, 2010). From an interest standpoint, a scandal's generation of conversation and buzz incentivizes press without costing a cent to sports teams (Connor & Mazanov, 2010). Depending on the controversy's context, organizations can take advantage of the inevitability of scandal to pursue certain niche fan groups (Connor & Mazanov, 2010). Many programs and teams embrace the inevitability of scandal and pursue free advertising, regardless of transgressions (Gorse & Chadwick, 2010).

Further, the way an organization responds to a scandal can impact consumers' opinions. Hardwicke-Brown (2014) found consumers expressed positive attitudes toward a brand that took action and terminated a contract in the aftermath of scandal. As such, trust is sensitive to scandal, but if managed correctly, trust can prove to be lucrative in the long-term.

Scandal and NCAA Women's Basketball Consumers

Specific to women's collegiate sport, Maxwell and Lough (2009) argue that the maintaining of a consistently wholesome image is expected. Women's basketball fans have been shown to be attracted to a greater degree to the wholesome, family-oriented atmosphere provided at games as opposed to its men's counterpart which promotes strength, aggression, and violence (Ridinger & Funk, 2006). The fan reaction to scandal in men's basketball may differ to reactions to scandal in women's basketball depends upon its wholesome imagery. As such it can be

expected that scandal in women's sports could be more shocking and in turn more detrimental to their image and ultimately consumer behaviors.

On the other hand, loyalty to women's basketball game attendance has been found to be higher than that of men's basketball (Fink et al., 2002). The more often women's basketball fans attend games, the more bonded they are with the team and the more important their involvement is with the team's performance and atmosphere (Kerstetter & Kovich, 1997). As prior research has shown, loyal customers are more likely to dismiss negative information about the company than less loyal customers (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). In addition, more loyal customers remain loyal to an unsuccessful team (Wann & Branscombe, 1990), and show greater dislike for outside groups regardless of performance (Branscombe & Wann, 1992). Given these factors, it is likely that women's basketball fans' resilience through scandal, regardless of fluctuations in winning percentage will be high and will not waver whatsoever, but instead, could potentially increase.

Conceptual Framework

Consumer Ethics and Motivation

There has been an exceptional devotion in marketing literature to ethical issues (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985; Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Ferrell, Gresham, & Fraedrich, 1989). The majority of the available literature, however, exists primarily from the seller's perspective (Vitell, 2003). The consumer, however, is often the side of the equation that must evaluate their ethical position and execute decision-making processes (Pace et al., 2017). If an outcome is expected by the consumer to be stable and consistent, the same outcome is expected in the future (Kim & Jeong, 2015). When a public figure, influencer, or seller violates moral norms as expected by the consumer, individuals will have various reactions (Pace et al., 2017).

A consumer's ethical judgements and decision-making processes are likely functions combining both the deontological and teleological evaluations of the given situation (Vitell, 2003). The consumer will either prioritize the violated ethical principles and criticize the seller, or adopt a moral coupling of integrating judgement on product performance and morality (Lee & Kwak, 2016). Vitell and Muncy (1992) proposed a four-factor solution of ethical beliefs, including 1) active benefit from illegal activity, 2) passive benefit from illegal activity, 3) active benefit from deceptive or questionable practices, and 4) no harm, no foul. Moral rationalization often occurs, as the consumer justifies unethical behavior through reconstructing immoral behavior as less immoral and more acceptable to continue support for the immoral party (Bhattacharjee, Berman, & Reed, 2013).

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory, originally developed by Heider (1958), assumes events have a cause and integrates locus of control and analysis of action to judge why a particular incident occurred. Allocation of responsibility of the attributions made by the perceiver guides the subsequent behavior thereafter. Attribution also involves expectations about actors and their behavior in various situations and settings (Kelley & Michela, 1980). Weiner (1979) evolved the original two dimensions into three, including controllability, locus of causality, and stability. Attribution

theory research was focused and supports significant implications in the educational setting (Weiner, 1972; Zuckerman, 1979) and the commercial setting (Robertson & Rossiter, 1974), but evolved into the sport setting shortly thereafter (Roberts, 1982).

Although often difficult to clearly identify in the context of sport (McAuley & Gross, 1983), a major dimension of attribution theory, controllability, often influences judgements of responsibility and the emotions of anger or sympathy (Weiner, 1996). Research has found that when an error is perceived to have been controllable, consumers feel more anger than when the error is perceived to been uncontrollable or accidental (Folkes, 1984). Feelings of anger have been found to lead to consumer drop-off and lessened brand repurchase intention (Strizakova, Tsarenko, & Ruth, 2012). Conversely, sport fans often attribute successes to control and stability (Wann & Schrader, 2000).

Controllability is a particularly important dimension in mishaps and wrongdoing as it influences perceptions of responsibility as well as subsequent emotions and feelings of punitiveness. Responsibility, or the role and action of the company throughout their role in the incident, also influences consumer judgement (Jorgensen, 1996). Controllability and responsibility are both highly linked to negative reaction (Jorgensen, 1996). Punitiveness, or the extent to which a company should be either punished or pardoned for an error, has been linked to consumer purchase and investment intentions (Jorgensen, 1996). Responsibility and negative emotion surrounding the error both influence punitiveness (Jorgensen, 1996). Punitiveness has been used in research as a measure of attitudes, emotions, and intentions after a mishap or scandal (Jorgensen, 1996).

The second dimension, locus of causality, affects a person's reactions (Martinko, Gundlach, & Douglas, 2002) and evaluates whether the cause of the event is attributed internally or externally (McAuley, Duncan, & Russell, 1992). Causes of events are either internal to the person or actor due to things like ability, mood, and knowledge, or external to the person or actor due to things like luck, bias, or environment (Weiner, Nierenberg, & Goldstein, 1976). Individuals often assume greater personal controllability and responsibility for internal causes than external causes (Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015).

The third dimension of stability affects and determines expectancies an event will re-occur (Martinko et al., 2002). Stability refers to whether the cause of the event is variable or changeable (McAuley et al., 1992). Stability is measured by relative endurance, with factors along a spectrum of ranges of fluctuation possibilities (Weiner et al., 1976). Structure leads to stability, whereas unpredictability leads to instability, and the less stable, the less control a person has, particularly in an external environment (Wang et al., 2015).

Attribution theory has been applied to sport psychology research primarily in the context of how athletes or participants explain outcomes of behavior (Rejeski & Brawley, 1983). Controllability, proposed by Rees, Ingledew, and Hardy (2005) to be the primary dimension of attribution theory, is impacted by how it generalizes over time, how it is situated, and how people influence emotions, expectations, and performance. Kim and Jeong (2015) examined the role of causal attributions on sport consumption and found internal control and stability to significantly predict consumer pride and shame, with external control predicting gratitude and anger. Additionally, emotional intensity of the consumer was greatest when the event was considered to be controllable, leading to how consumers then attribute the response to the outcome (Kim & Jeong, 2015). Wann and Schrader (2000) found highly identity to lead to self-serving bias. Additionally, when controllability is attributed to the organization within which an

individual belongs, it is likely that any actions of the individual will reflect upon the organization (Kim, Eisenschmid, & Cavanah, 2018).

Specific to fan behavior and identity, attribution theory has been used to measure fan perceptions of control of wins and losses (Wann & Shrader, 2000), perceptions of locus, stability, and control of the performance of quarterbacks by race (Murrell & Curtis, 1994), and consumer perceptions of athlete celebrity endorser drug scandal attribution (Kim et al., 2018). Attribution theory was applied to this particular study to evaluate the causal attributions of scandal in the women's basketball context, to better understand how the unique fanbase of women's basketball designates controllability and responsibility of such behaviors, and to examine how women's basketball fans perceive punishment of such transgressions. To address the purpose of the study of examining how women's basketball fans respond to coach sex scandals, the following research questions are presented.

RQ1: How do women's basketball fans respond to coach sex scandals?

RQ2: How has coach sex scandals at women's basketball programs affected attendance and winning percentage?

Method

To investigate the effects of sport scandal on fans' perceptions and consumption of women's basketball, a qualitative, integrated case study was used to evaluate the impact of scandal on both fan consumption and team success. A content analysis was used to evaluate message board threads obtained from three Division I online discussion forums pertaining to women's basketball within one month of the scandal's occurrence. Three schools were identified: 1) The University of Maryland, 2) Louisiana Tech University, and 3) Florida International University, all of which encountered various scandals initiated by a member of their respective coaching staffs. The three schools were chosen for specific reasons, as they are current, involve different levels and success rates of Division I women's basketball, and represent different severities of situations. Each team's identified fan base is of different size and level of support as indicated by attendance, and the schools represent significant geographical differences. Therefore, these three cases allow the content analysis to provide a wide range through analysis of impact through consumption intentions and team success. Additionally, quantitative data on attendance and winning percentage were evaluated to examine tangible effects stemming from the scandal. Data on attendance and winning percentage were pulled from the three institutions' respective websites two seasons prior to the scandal, the season containing the scandal, and two seasons after to provide perspective. This data provides practical contexts to the individual cases and depicts a quantitative understanding of both fan behavior and team success both before and after scandal.

Instrument & Procedure

Content analysis is an effective tool to analyze communication content as a means of quantifying qualitative data (Kassarjian, 1977). In order to do so, researchers identified

categories based on the message board posts (Ruihley & Greenwell, 2012). A message was then determined to be pertaining to a specific category regardless of its length or overall content. It is typical for social media activity to peak in reactions in the time immediately following the transgression (Pace et al., 2017). Therefore, message board posts uploaded within one month of the transgression were analyzed. Data on attendance and winning percentage were compared over a five-year period to provide numerical context on the impact of the scandal.

Data Analysis

Codes were deduced from previous literature analyzing consumer reaction to company-related mishaps (Jorgensen, 1996; Weiner, 1986). To identify how message board authors attributed blame to the athletic department, messages were coded in relationship to attribution themes of controllability, responsibility, and punitiveness consistent with previous studies (Murrell & Curtis, 1994; Kim et al., 2018; Wann & Schrader, 2000). Additional themes related to doubt and recruiting also emerged from the analysis. The data were reviewed carefully and thoroughly to ensure the codes represent the data accordingly. To ensure training and intercoder reliability, the researchers acted independently while sorting data into categories and cross-referenced categorizations. Whenever researchers disagreed on categories, a reflection of the definition of themes followed by discussion occurred to designate the appropriate decision to most accurately categorize the message board post. Cohen's kappa was calculated as a measure of inter-rater reliability.

Results

The content analysis of message boards produced 162 relevant and usable comments, including 33 comments for Maryland, 92 for Louisiana Tech, and 37 for Florida International. To address how blame was attributed to the athletic department, responses from each scandal were categorized as to whether the author of the comment (a) thought the athletic department had a degree of controllability over the scandal and (b) thought the athletic department was responsible for the scandal. Further, responses from each scandal were categorized as to whether the author of the comment (c) felt the athletic department should be punished, (d) indicated doubt over the accounts of the scandal, and (e) were concerned about the scandal's effect on recruiting. Researchers agreed on coding for over 90 percent of the items, indicating a high level of inter-rater reliability (Cohen's kappa = .84). Results for controllability and responsibility are found in Table 1. Results for punitiveness, doubt, and recruiting are found in Table 2.

Table 1

Controllability and responsibility

School	Comments	Under control		No control		Responsible		Not responsible	
Maryland	33	2	6.1%	0	0.0%	1	3.0%	2	6.1%
Louisiana Tech	92	20	21.7%	7	7.6%	17	18.5%	7	7.6%
FIU	37	20	54.1%	3	8.1%	19	51.4%	5	13.5%

Table 2

Punishment, doubt and recruiting

School	Comments	Punished		Not punished		Doubt		Recruiting	
Maryland	33	3	9.1%	2	6.1%	1	3.0%	20	60.6%
Louisiana Tech	92	20	21.7%	3	3.3%	13	14.1%	4	4.3%
FIU	37	21	56.8%	1	2.7%	3	8.1%	1	2.7%

The University of Maryland comments produced the lowest percentages of comments attributing controllability and responsibility to their program at 6.1% and 3.0%, respectively. It is interesting to note all but one University of Maryland fan comments pertaining to responsibility were designated to lack thereof and deflected from the women's basketball program, citing McKey's previous school as the responsible party, for example:

> This supposedly happened when McKey was at Xavier, so it's not so much a Maryland issue. Looks like it may turn out to be a she said, he said issue, unless someone else comes forward.
> If something did happen, wouldn't it be outside of this University? It's unfortunate but I'm not sure if it's 'another big setback'.

In the Louisiana Tech case 21.7% of the comments indicated the athletic department had some controllability of the situation, and 7.6% of the comments suggested a lack of controllability. Two examples of message board posts referring to controllability are the following:

> The chances of this happening increase dramatically when you hire a 23-year old coach to be the primary authority figure over a bunch of young women aged 18 to 24, who depend almost solely on his guidance and leadership.
> This was a stupid hire to begin with, and some people just couldn't see it. Anytime your school has to hire a babysitter to mind your head coach, it ain't good.

The idea that the athletic department was responsible for the situation was mentioned in 18.5% of comments and lack of responsibility was mentioned in 7.6% of comments. Two examples of message board posts pertaining to responsibility are as follows:

> No AD should want to even talk to her about a job. Especially Tommy Mac [the Louisiana Tech Athletic Director at the time], whose own job status should very much be in question right now. Can you imagine that idiot hiring another coach who causes another scandal in about two years!?

> No one knew or expected this was going on? Really? While that is possible, it does not say much for the judgment or intuition of any of the staff at this point, DeMoss included.

Florida International had the highest percentages across all categories, with 54.1% of comments indicating the program should have had control, 8.1% indicating no control, 51.4% of comments indicating the program was responsible, and 13.5% indicating the program was not responsible. Two examples of Florida International message board posts indicating control are as follows:

> If this is true, Chinn's career is toast. Berg should probably be fired, too. Maybe PG becomes a casualty as well. This simply can't be tolerated. FIU better get on this pronto. FIU Athletics love taking the big "L" and this is a big one.

Controllability and responsibility, as indicated by Jorgensen (1996) are closely related but not mutually exclusive; therefore, many, but not all, comments fell under both categories. Below are two examples of controllability and responsibility comments from the Louisiana Tech message board:

> Regardless of the situation, I still do believe that a 22/23 year-old should not have been hired as our head coach, regardless of lineage or endorsement... too young and too little personal accomplishments.

> I thought this was an April Fool's joke when I first read Tech had hired this kid. Turns out it was. Tech was the fool and he was the joke.

The opinion of whether or not the program should be punished was discussed frequently on the message boards. The University of Maryland comments were closest to breaking even, with 9.1% of comments encouraging punishment and 6.1% expressing otherwise (Table 2). With Louisiana Tech, 21.7% comments identified some sort of punitiveness and 3.3% indicated non-punitiveness at. Florida International had the highest number of comments indicating punitiveness, with 56.8% of comments indicating the program should be punished and 2.7% indicating otherwise. Maryland comments mentioned doubt in the scandal at 3.0%, with Louisiana Tech comments mentioning doubt 14.1% and Florida International at 8.1%. Below are two examples of punitiveness comments from the Florida International message board:

> I agree that she seemed to be avoiding her responsibilities and that is a problem. Not a fireball offense but a clear demerit. The 2nd point I wholeheartedly agree with you. PG [the Athletic Director] should be fired for not doing the #1 job assigned to an AD. Hiring the right people. Cristobal, Turner, Thomas (basketball), Evans, Chinn, Thomas (baseball). Complete failures.

> I hate to say this but, if we can use this to push PG and the rest of his team out, so much the better. There may be casualties along the way, so be it, as someone once said: 'the means justify the ends".

An emerging and sport-related category, recruiting, was discussed in the message board posts, as fans were concerned with the long-term impact of the scandals and how they could impact relationships with prospective student-athletes. Recruiting was mentioned in Maryland

comments at a rate of 60.6%, in Louisiana Tech comments at 4.3%, and in Florida International comments at 2.7%. Below are two examples of comments on recruiting from the University of Maryland message board:

> Can't be no worse than the hire of Bryce McKey! There is more than one way to milk a cow!! It's evident Coach Frese needs help recruiting a pg [point guard], just saying. Any thoughts out there on possibly even [hiring to replace McKey] a former player out there who might be able to relate well with recruits?

Attendance

Through analysis of average home game attendance of the three cases, not much seems to have changed. After the Maryland scandal during the summer of 2015, attendance dipped by .02% during the 2015-16 season, but increased by 9.7% in 2016-17. Louisiana Tech's attendance fell 1.5% after the scandal during the 2016-17 season then rose by 20.7% during the 2017-18 season. Florida Internationals attendance numbers rose, albeit slightly, throughout their scandal recovery, with a 9.2% increase during the 2016-17 season and another 15.5% during 2017-18. Attendance figures pre and post scandal are found in Table 3.

Table 3

Average Home Attendance

School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Maryland	4881	5236	5228*	5735	5537
Louisiana Tech	1918	2061	1954	1925*	2323
FIU	403	311	366	400*	462

* First season after scandal

Win Percentage

The University of Maryland has been a historically successful program since the inclusion of women's sports in the NCAA, won a national championship in 2006, and has a reputation of national success, particularly recently, boasting winning percentages of .800 in 2013-14 and .918 in 2014-15. Immediately following their scandal in the summer of 2015, Maryland posted a winning percentage of .914 during 2015-16, but did experience a decrease in winning percentage from .914 in 2016-17 to .765 in 2017-18. Prior to scandal, Louisiana Tech winning percentages were poor to marginal, posting a .375 winning percentage in 2013-14, .536 in 2014-15, and .467 in 2015-16. Louisiana Tech's win percentage has increased steadily since their scandal in 2015-16 from .467 to .563 in 2016-17 and .613 in 2017-18. Prior to scandal, Florida International saw a sharp decrease in win percentage, going from .455 in 2013-14 to .103 in 2014-15. Florida International's win percentage has recovered slowly each year after scandal, from .133 in 2015-16 to .172 in 2016-17 and .276 in 2017-18. Overall, changes in winning percentage were marginal after the scandal. Winning percentages pre and post scandal are found in Table 4.

Table 4

Winning Percentage

School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Maryland	.800 (28-7)	.918 (32-5)	.886* (31-4)	.914 (32-3)	.765 (26-8)
Louisiana Tech	.375 (12-20)	.516 (16-15)	.467 (13-17)	.563* (18-14)	.613 (19-12)
FIU	.455 (15-18)	.103 (3-26)	.133 (4-26)	.172* (5-24)	.276 (8-21)

* First season after scandal

Discussion

Given the difference in situations and details in each case's scandal, it is not surprising that consumers' reactions fluctuated so greatly. The content analysis did fall in line with Weiner's (1985) achievement-based contexts caused by locus, stability, and controllability. Punitiveness followed suit, as the University of Maryland's percentage of comments expecting administration to be punished were low, followed by Louisiana Tech and Florida International, respectively. Through analysis of average home game attendance of the three cases, not much seems to have changed. From a winning percentage perspective, coaching change has not been found to significantly impact win production, as Pierce, Johnson, Krohn, and Judge's (2017) research implies coaching change produces only one more or less win over three years following a change in coaching in Division I women's basketball.

University of Maryland

Very few of the message board comments regarding the University of Maryland scandal were related to controllability and responsibility. In other words, fans posting on message boards felt the coach's actions were not within the control of the university athletic department and therefore did not ascribe much responsibility toward them. This finding may be reflective of their identification with assistant coach Bryce McKey, as his tenure as an assistant coach was short-lived. In this case, consumers were not heavily impacted due to the time and situation of McKey, an assistant coach without even a full season of tenure at the University of Maryland. Instead, message board posters tended to focus on recruiting, as 60.6% of their posts were concerned with how the scandal would affect recruiting. In sum, University of Maryland women's basketball consumers were more interested in how the scandal would affect the performance of the program going forward than assigning blame for the scandal.

After Maryland's scandal during the summer of 2015, attendance dipped .02% during the 2015-16 season, but increased by 9.7% in 2016-17, indicating the scandal had little effect on attendance. The team's winning percentage dropped slightly the year after the scandal but rebounded the next year, also suggesting the scandal had little effect on the program.

Louisiana Tech

Message board posts surrounding revelations of Head Women's Basketball coach Tyler Summitt's actions pointed fingers at the Louisiana Tech Athletic Department administrators and decision makers. Comments focused primarily on the athletic department's lack of concern for Summitt's age and its proximity to the student-athletes for whom he was responsible, the lack of due diligence the athletic department enacted during its hiring process of Summitt, as well as its lack of subsequent monitoring of his behavior and relationships during his tenure as head coach. Additionally, message board posts pointed to the athletic department's hiring of a new women's basketball coach to be of utmost importance to the future success or demise of the program as a whole.

Louisiana Tech had a greater percentage of comments assigning controllability (21.7%) and responsibility (18.5%) to the athletic department. These comments tended to be directed at administration for hiring a young, inexperienced Head Coach in Tyler Summitt. This relationship indicating an increase in perceived control results in increased responsibility and punitiveness is consistent with prior studies (Holfeld, 2014; Jeong, 2007; Kim et al., 2018; Um, 2013). The media attention surrounding Tyler Summitt's resignation was the most prominent of the three cases, as his mother, Pat Summitt, was a legendary Hall of Fame women's basketball coach. The Summitt "brand", speculated to be a large reason for Tyler Summitt's initial hiring at Louisiana Tech, faced negative publicity and embarrassment causing considerable anguish to fans and supporters, particularly during a time when Pat Summitt was deteriorating from early-onset dementia, Alzheimer's type (Voepel, 2016). The actions of Tyler Summitt, attributed to inexperience, being too close in age to his players, and being promoted due to his last name, tarnished the work his mother did during her legacy as a champion for women's rights and opportunities in sport (Mattioli, 2016).

It is also important to note that 14.1% of the respondents expressed doubt over whether or not the incident happened as reported, while only 8.1% expressed doubt at Florida International and 3.0% expressed doubt at Maryland. Examples of message board posts expressing doubt include: "I could just say it, but I'm hoping it's a bad rumor", "This is a sad situation and no one has a clue exactly what is going on", and "No telling where they got that tidbit/rumor, assuming it is one. Did they just make that up? Not starting another rumor, just stating things are all over the place." This could be attributed to the effect of in-group bias, or the unwarranted trust often associated with fan identification of an organization or individual even after scandal (Chien et al., 2016). It is possible that consumers had a degree of disbelief that someone of Summitt's pedigree could be responsible for such a scandal. Having the Summitt name may have created a halo effect where his mother's celebrity in the world of women's basketball influenced fans' perceptions of him. When consumers identify with celebrities, they are more likely to believe in the celebrity's innocence in the face of scandal (Um, 2013). As such, his celebrity name positivity within the women's basketball community may have caused some fans to be cautious about believing the story. Celebrity status can also impact the situation adversely, as even the smallest indiscretion can attract an abundance of attention (Osborne, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2016).

Subsequent to the scandal, Louisiana Tech's attendance fell by 1.5% after their scandal, however, then rose by 20.7% during the 2017-18 season. This attendance boost coincides with Martinson, Schneider, and McCollough's (2015) work indicating fan consumption can be

renewed in an unsuccessful women's basketball program by bringing in a new coaching staff. After Summitt resigned, Louisiana Tech hired Brooke Stoehr, a former women's basketball student-athlete and alumna of the University, citing family, passion, service, and accountability as values to success during her introductory press conference (Isabella, 2016). Replacing male Tyler Summitt with female Brooke Stoehr aligns with Cook and Glass's (2014) research indicating occupational minorities, including white women, are more likely to be coined as saviors, getting promoted as leaders of weakly performing corporations. The "glass cliff" (Ryan et al., 2015) occurs within athletics departments as well, as Penn State hired Sandy Barbour in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky sexual abuse scandal (Moyer & McMurphy, 2014) and Rutgers hired Julie Hermann as athletics director in the wake of the Mike Rice abuse came to light (Sargeant, 2015). Additionally, the tendency for women to be more likely than men to be appointed to risky leadership positions, like the head coach at Louisiana Tech in the aftermath of the Tyler Summitt scandal, is indicated to gain more acceptance within the organization than re-hiring a male (Ryan et al., 2015). This could be attributed to the attendance spike in Stoehr's tenure as head coach.

Florida International University

The frustration expressed on the FIU message boards was not primarily directed at the women's basketball program, but rather the athletic department as a whole. More than half of the comments felt the scandal was within the athletic department's control (54.1%) and felt the athletic department was responsible (51.4%). This relationship indicating an increase in perceived control results in increased responsibility and punitiveness is also consistent with prior studies (Holfeld, 2014; Jeong, 2007; Kim et al., 2018; Um, 2013). There are two possible explanations for why this finding was so much more pronounced than in the other cases. First, media accounts had provided significant details about the account. The increase in information may have made it less likely for consumers to give administrators the benefit of the doubt. Secondly, many of the message board posts referenced past shortcomings of the athletic administration. This lack of trust in the athletic department's abilities meant administrators were less likely to be able to insulate themselves from the scandal. These two themes were closely tied to punitiveness as 56.8% felt the athletic department deserved some punishment for the actions. This finding was starkly different from the other two cases in that fewer than 10% of the comments in those cases suggested some sort of punishment. Message board posts blaming the athletic department included: "We're talking about the athletic administration at FIU, the gang that can't get anything right", and "[Athletic Director Pete Garcia] should be fired for not doing the #1 job assigned to an AD. Hiring the right people."

After the scandal, Florida International Women's Basketball attendance numbers rose, albeit slightly, throughout their scandal recovery. FIU Women's Basketball saw a 9.2% increase during the 2016-17 season and another 15.5% increase during the 2017-18 season. This attendance boost coincides with Martinson et al.'s (2015) results indicating fan consumption can be renewed in an unsuccessful women's basketball program by bringing in a new coaching staff. The school also replaced Coach Marlin Chinn with a female head coach, Tiara Malcolm, as the athletic department was likely in need of acceptance and support from consumers (Ryan et al., 2015).

Implications and Conclusions

This study examined three different cases related to sex scandals in women's intercollegiate basketball. Despite the initial similarities in the cases, the results were quite different for each program. Results in the three cases of scandal in women's basketball in 2016 had varying differences due to various contextual factors such as the coach's tenure with the program, coach's position, and perceptions of the athletic department. In sum, fans' responses to scandal may greatly vary according to a number of factors, and it cannot be assumed that similar situations will generate similar responses in the future.

Each respective case delves into different situations and responses to scandal, indicating the response of an athletic department to a women's basketball scandal can vary. For a particularly competitive program like the University of Maryland, it may be effective to focus on recruiting, as a dip in win percentage two seasons after the scandal can be an indication of an impact felt through recruiting, particularly since the fan base was concerned with how recruits and their relationships with the Maryland coaching staff would react to the scandal. Louisiana Tech, a program with mediocre recent success, showed what can go wrong when an athletic department hires a young male coach based on legacy and not on performance; therefore, athletics departments might want to avoid doing so in the future. Florida International, a program with marginal to low success, shows a scandal even in a program not heavily supported can reflect poorly on the athletic department and produce punitive expectations by fans.

In terms of attendance, results showed women's basketball fans to be fairly immune to scandal and support their team regardless of the indiscretion of the coach. Despite each scandal, attendance tended to remain stable and winning percentages did not fluctuate much. While fans were concerned over the impact of the scandal, they tended to continue their support of the organization. This finding is consistent with Chien et al., (2016) who found highly identified fans were likely blame the perpetrator, but stand by their team. Fan identification, therefore, can likely be preserved through scandal in women's basketball.

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