



## Are College Athletes Cheaters? What do Faculty Think?

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*This study used intergroup contact hypothesis as a framework to understand faculty perceptions of college athletes. Faculty at four NCAA Division I institutions located in the SEC and Big Ten conferences were surveyed to examine their views of college athletes' academic behavior. Faculty were randomly assigned to answer questions about either men's football, men's baseball, or women's basketball. Overall, faculty had low perceptions of college athlete normative deviance. However, when looking at group differences, faculty had the most negative perception of deviance among men's football college athletes and the least negative perceptions about women's basketball college athletes. In addition, the more familiarity or accessibility faculty have to college athletes the less likely they are to have negative perceptions.*

*Keywords: academic deviance , cheating , college athletes, faculty perceptions*

College athletes are a special subpopulation of students on campus because they represent the university as a whole in activities that bring the university a lot of attention. They are often associated with the image or brand of the university due to athletic success and visibility to the public through the media (Hanson et al., 2019). Through the media's focus on college athletes, institutions may be more visible to the public. This attention allows for athletes' classroom achievements and involvement in the community to be highlighted. Additionally, they bring diversity, especially in the sports of football, basketball, and track and field to the campus community, which may increase the educational experiences for all students on campus (Hirko, 2009).

However, college athletes also have the opportunity to make the university look bad by participating in academic deviance, like cheating on an exam or getting credit for work that is not their own. Regular students could partake in these same activities, but the image/brand of the university is not at the same level of risk as it is for an athlete's partaking in academic misconduct and getting caught, because of the limelight that generally surrounds this high-profile group. Specifically, the frequency of these behaviors for athletes may not be that different if compared to the student population as a whole. However, these behaviors, when performed by athletes as opposed to non-athletes, are more newsworthy because of their status on campus.

Negative incidents may influence attitudes towards athletes, both among the public and among people on campus, including other students and faculty. For example, one prestigious university and sports program that has recently received a lot of media attention for academic fraud is the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigated UNC's African and Afro-American Studies Department for having phantom courses that distributed inflated grades to students (Tracy, 2014). These classes had a significant number of men's football and basketball athletes enrolled, with reports that academic advisors encouraged their athletes to take the classes knowing minimal work would be required. While ultimately UNC was not punished by the NCAA, its reputation was tarnished, and the focus on African and Afro-American Studies enhanced negative perceptions of Black athletes especially.

Faculty and instructors also have a stake in the image or brand of the university, as employees who work hard to advance the institution through research, grants, and instruction. Faculty may care a lot about how the university is perceived, because it could impact their own careers. If they believe that athletes are somehow different from other students and that they reflect on the university, and if these opinions are negative, instructors may be more inclined to dismiss them as serious students and possibly treat them differently.

Professors have a direct impact on the lives of students, including the athletes they encounter through their classes, and their perceptions and attitudes toward students based on their athlete status (good or bad) may influence how they treat them. For example, a faculty member who "worships" a university's football team may be inclined to give a football player more breaks on grades or attendance than they might if the student were not on the team. In contrast, a professor who believes that athletes are not good students or get perks they do not deserve may be harsher toward athletes in their classes (Simons et al., 2007). More research is needed to determine whether faculty perceptions or attitudes are linked to treatment of athletes in their classes.

This study used Allport's (1954) intergroup contact hypothesis as a framework to understand faculty perceptions of college athletes. The purpose of this study was to determine what, if any, attributes of both college athletes and faculty influence perceptions of athletes as

academic deviants by faculty. Faculty at four NCAA Division I institutions located in the Southeastern (SEC) and Big Ten conferences were surveyed to examine their views of college athletes' academic and criminal behavior.

## Literature Review

The general public's perceptions of college athletes and intercollegiate athletics is often controversial (Eitzen, 2012). Some believe these students add to the atmosphere and pride of the university (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). Some see it as an opportunity for athletes to receive funding and an education they may not otherwise have the opportunity to receive (Toma, 1999). However, opponents of intercollegiate athletics may believe athletic programs value winning at any cost (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). For example, many people fear the integrity and intellectual environment of institutions are severely affected by the commercialization of NCAA Division I athletic programs (Watt & Moore, 2001). Athletes may be recruited to play college sports and receive an undergraduate education regardless of their academic ability, background, or motivation. If so, these factors may increase the perception among the general public that athletes do not belong and lead to beliefs that they are more likely to be deviant.

The oldest stereotype of student athletes is that of the "dumb jock," which reflects some level of academic deviance (Coakley, 1990). The "dumb jock" stereotype has been around since the beginning of sports in 500 BCE, where the Greeks believed athletes were useless because they neglected their intellectual development and had dull minds (Coakley, 1990). Today, this stereotype persists with several media reports of universities lowering academic standards for athletes, lower athlete graduation rates compared to the rest of the student body, and high-profile academic fraud cases (Eitzen, 2012).

### *Faculty Perceptions of Athletes' Academic Deviance*

However, the general public is not the only group that may have negative perceptions of college athletes. Faculty are one group of individuals who are part of the campus community who may also have negative attitudes and beliefs about athletes. Faculty attitudes matter because they are a critical part of the undergraduate student experience, including that of athletes. Faculty are a primary source of learning in college, and they directly impact the success of students. Research shows that faculty attitudes and perceptions of students can have an effect on students' engagement in the classroom, motivation for learning, and self-concept (Arbaugh, 2001; Comeaux, 2012; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). That is, faculty can affect behavior and outcomes of students. Studies in the education literature also show that children rise to the expectation of their teachers (Brophy, 1982; Jussim, 1989; Rubie-Davies, 2006, van den Bergh et al., 2010). College athletes can be acutely aware that faculty might be biased against them due to their ascribed athlete status, resulting in what Steele (1997) refers to as a "stereotype threat," where athletes can feel a negative stereotype and conform to it.

Given the possible consequences of negative faculty opinions on athletes, it is important to investigate what factors contribute to perceptions of college athlete deviance. A majority of the research that exists focuses on faculty satisfaction with control and administration of athletic programs (Cockley & Roswell, 1994; Engstrom et al., 1995; Lawrence et al., 2007). These studies indicate that faculty at Division I institutions, also known as "big time" sports programs, are less satisfied with the control and administration of athletic programs compared to faculty at Division II or III institutions. Some of these studies ask faculty questions about athletes' being academically prepared enough for college, academic performance, and motivation, but these

questions are not the main focus of the study (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom et al., 1995; Lawrence et al., 2007).

What we do know about faculty perceptions from the academic research is that faculty hold more prejudicial attitudes towards both male revenue and non-revenue athletes compared to other students and female athletes (Engstrom et al., 1995). Engstrom et al. (1995) sampled faculty at a large public university with a NCAA Division I athletic department using the adapted Situational Attitude Scale (SAS). This scale is used to measure prejudice and differential attitudes towards certain groups (e.g., different gender, racial/ethnic groups, student groups). The scale in Engstrom et al.'s (1995) study was revised to measure faculty attitudes towards athletes (revenue and non-revenue producing male sports) and non-athlete students. The researchers found that faculty members had higher levels of disapproval for athletes who receive full scholarships and are admitted with low SAT scores. The respondents also expressed more surprise and concern about cheating in situations where athletes earned A grades in a class compared to the same achievement by a non-athlete student. These findings may support that faculty label athletes as “dumb jocks.” However, it does not tell us whether faculty believe athletes engage in academic deviance (e.g., cheating) to pass or obtain A grades in their classes.

Lawrence et al. (2007) in collaboration with the Knight Commission conducted a Faculty Perceptions of Intercollegiate Athletics Survey among NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) universities. Although the primary focus of the survey was to examine faculty satisfaction with intercollegiate athletics and activities that would create meaningful change on their campuses, there were some questions regarding academic integrity and performance of athletes. Most were satisfied with the academic integrity (63%) and level of responsibility (61%) of athletes in their classes. They also found that their satisfaction with academic performance was significantly lower for football and basketball students than other sports.

There is also research indicating that athletes experience the “dumb jock” label from faculty (Rubin & Moses, 2017). Rubin and Moses (2017) interviewed athletes and asked them about how they are perceived by others at their institution and received mostly negative feedback. Specifically, female athletes felt instructors discouraged them from their courses based on the amount of travel. Male athletes felt that faculty had negative perceptions of their academic ability (Rubin & Moses, 2017). Martin et al. (2010) interviewed African American male college athletes at several academically rigorous universities about their academic achievement. The participants constantly felt they had to prove they were worthy of being a student at the prestigious university to professors and other students. Comeaux (2012) also found that college athletes believed some of their professors held negative stereotypes about their motivation and academic drive.

The athlete label itself may also be connected to the “dumb jock” stereotype. Yopyk and Prentice (2005) found when priming athlete respondents with their athletic identity (i.e., called them athletes when they took the questionnaire), compared to their student identity (i.e., calling them students) or no identity (i.e., not indicating an identity), they had lower self-regard and performed most poorly on a math examination. This is concerning because “dumb jock” labels may lead to self-fulfilling prophecies with low academic achievement and academic integrity issues, which is referred to as stereotype threat in the literature (Feltz et al., 2013; Steele, 1997). In the context of this study, this means that if results show that faculty characterize athletes as participating in deviant behaviors and create a negative label or stereotype of them, the implications may be that these athletes may in turn be at risk for confirming this characteristic or worse.

## *Theoretical Framework*

This study used Allport's (1954) intergroup contact hypothesis as a framework for understanding faculty perceptions of college athlete academic deviance. The intergroup contact hypothesis suggests the more contact different groups of people have with each other the less prejudice and better social relations there will be between the groups (Allport, 1954). According to Allport (1954) there are four conditions that are ideal for contact to occur between groups: equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and support by social and institutional authorities. Faculty and athlete contact involves cooperation, a common goal of education, and support of positive contact by social and institutional authorities. However, because there is a hierarchical relationship between instructors and students, faculty and athletes do not share equal status when in contact. Because the two groups are coming together at an unequal status, faculty may not have positive intergroup attitudes towards students (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). According to research, the three conditions that are met in this situation are all strongly associated with reducing prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

## *Research Hypotheses*

The following hypotheses are based on the idea of intergroup contact in social psychology (Allport, 1954). As applied to this study, the researchers believe any opportunity faculty and athletes have to create more contact will lessen the perception of athlete deviance.

- H<sub>1</sub>: Older faculty will have lower perceptions of athlete academic deviance. This is based on the idea that they have had more time to interact with athletes throughout their careers. Additionally, older faculty will have more opportunity to become fans of their university sports program.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Faculty affiliated with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) disciplines will have increased perceptions of athlete academic deviance compared to faculty in other disciplines. This hypothesis is based on research regarding academic clustering of athletes, which shows athletes are more likely to be overrepresented in non-STEM majors (Fountain & Finley, 2009).
- H<sub>3</sub>: Faculty involved in service to athletics will have lower perceptions of athlete academic deviance than faculty not involved in service to athletics.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Faculty with higher levels of fandom will have lower perceptions of athlete academic deviance.
- H<sub>5</sub>: Faculty who attended more university sporting events will have lower perceptions of athlete deviance.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design*

*Selection of Institutions.* Faculty at four universities were sampled for this project. The initial institution was based on the site where IRB approval was received. The universities were

selected from two regions of the country, the Midwest and South. The sampling frame of universities is based on the following criteria to help narrow down the four universities ultimately selected for administration of faculty surveys: *U.S. News & World Report* Top 25 Public Universities Ranking (2016), university in the Midwest or South regions of the country, NCAA Division I status, FBS status, Big Ten or SEC status, and comparable undergraduate and faculty populations. The other institutions were based on comparable rank and size to the initial institution, one within the same athletic conference, and the other two in another Power 5 conference.

### *Sample Procedure and Recruitment.*

*Target population.* The target population of the study is faculty members at four large Division I institutions in the SEC and Big Ten. Therefore, this study's results cannot be generalized to smaller NCAA Division I, II, or III institutions, because faculty experience with athletic programs and athletes may be very different.

*Sampling frame.* The sampling frame includes a list of all faculty listed on department directory websites at the four institutions selected. Each institution approved for the researchers to gather faculty information using its public staff directory. The sampling frame involved in this study includes faculty members at four NCAA Division I institutions ( $N = 7,680$ ). More specifically, 1,649 faculty from the first SEC school, 1,712 from the second SEC school, 2,314 from the first Big Ten school, and 2,005 from the second Big Ten school. Only faculty listed on university departments' websites with an available email address were contacted to participate in the study. Additionally, faculty listed as emeritus/retired or adjunct were not included in the sampling frame.

*Recruitment and data collection procedures.* Recruitment of participants followed the guidelines of Dillman et al. (2009) for Internet surveys. After receiving Institutional Review Board Approval, faculty participants were sent three emails by the researcher: an introduction email, an email containing the survey link, and a follow-up. The researcher chose to send the emails at the beginning of the Fall 2016 semester, because it would be more likely that faculty would be available (compared to the summer months, for example). In both the second email providing the survey link and follow up email participants were provided a link to an anonymous Qualtrics survey.

*Sample characteristics.* The total sample size for the study is 1,100 responses. There were 212 respondents from the first SEC school (23.8%), 223 from the second SEC school (25.1%), 266 from the first Big Ten school (29.9%), and 189 from the second Big Ten school (21.2%). The general response rate of the survey was 14.3%.

## *Measures*

*Independent Variables.* These include respondent age, sex, race, academic rank, tenure status, administrative position, academic discipline, time at current institution, service involving athletics, sports fandom, contact with athletes, and perceptions of athlete gender and race. The age variable is a scale measure based on the number the respondent indicated as their age. However, two respondents' age responses were coded as missing because they entered 0 and 16 years old for their age, which do not appear to be plausible ages for faculty. The sex variable was dummy coded (male = 1, female = 0). The race variable was also dummy coded (White = 1, non-White = 0). Academic rank is measured in several dummy variables based on the answer option categories from the instrument (lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor, and other). The tenure status, administrative position, and service for athletics variables were

made into dummy variables (tenure = 1, non-tenure = 0; administrator = 1, non-administrator = 0; athletic service = 1, no athletic service = 0). The academic discipline measure was also made into a series of dummies based on the answer option categories (architecture, arts and humanities, business, education, engineering, law, life sciences, medicine and health sciences, physical sciences and mathematics, social and behavioral sciences, and other). Years at institution is a scale variable created by using the number faculty provided for the years they had been at their current institution.

The Sport Fandom measure consisted of three items developed by Wann (2002) to measure fandom. The Sport Fandom variable was created after running a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) using varimax rotation of the three fandom items. These items represented one component (one Eigenvalue greater than 1.0). This construct was used to create the index measure, in which the three items were added up then divided by three. The Sport Fandom scale consists of three items, with components ranging from 0.94 to 0.84. Additionally, the scale had high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. The scale ranges from 1 to 6, with higher scores indicating stronger fandom.

The "student-athlete contact" measure was adapted from the Knight Commission Survey (Lawrence et al., 2007). The variable was created after running a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) using varimax rotation. The items indicated that these three items represented one construct (one Eigenvalue greater than 1.0), with components ranging from 0.94 to 0.93. This construct was used to create the index measure, where the three items were added up then divided by three. Additionally, the scale had high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating more interaction with college athletes.

The faculty perceptions encompassed the gender and race of college athletes on their campus. Scale variables were created based on the numeric percentage faculty estimated of athlete characteristics. Therefore, there are 12 variables for faculty perceptions (percentage of male, female, Black/African American, White/Caucasian, Latino/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, other racial group, MFB, MBA, and WBB athletes).

*Dependent Variables.* The academic deviance variables reflect two constructs: general cheating and relying on others for work. The academic deviance items were adapted from Lin and Wen (2007). Participants were asked how many times in the last year a particular sport group (men's football, baseball, or women's basketball) of athletes on their campus engaged in a variety of academic deviance behaviors. Respondents were randomly assigned one of three teams by Qualtrics to determine if faculty hold different attitudes about athletes based on the sport they play. Only three sports were included in the survey to keep the survey length reasonable. Additionally, the researchers wanted to prevent an ordering effect of presenting questions regarding more than one sport at a time. Qualtrics random assignment of sport groups to respondents is beneficial to eliminate any systematic bias.

Principal Components Analysis (PCA) using varimax rotation was conducted to determine emergent constructs. The general cheating scale included six items from the combined sample, with factor loadings ranging from .75 (falsified athletic travel letters to postpone exams or assignments) to .91 (passed answers to other students during a test). More specifically, the general cheating items included: passed answers to other students during a test, used prohibited notes, obtained the test questions illegally, used unauthorized equipment on a test or assignment, provided a paper or assignment for another student, falsified athletic travel letters to postpone exams or assignments. The scale values range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher perceptions of general cheating.

The second academic deviance scale, relying on others for work, was made up of three items, with loadings ranging from .89 (did less of their share of work in a group project) to .83 (got extra help on an assignment from a tutor) for the combined sample. The three items for the “relying on others for work” scale include: got extra help on an assignment from a tutor, did less of their share of work in a group project, and worked on an assignment with others when asked for individual work. The component loadings for the three sporting teams were also consistent with the combined sample. The scale values range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher perceptions of relying on others.

## Results

### *Descriptive Statistics*

First, as shown in Table 1, faculty respondents’ ages ranged from 26 to 85 (mean = 49.95; median = 50). A majority of the sample was male (n = 608; 58.2%). The racial composition of the sample was a majority White (n = 920; 87.0%), 4.4% Asian/Pacific Islander (n = 46), 3.2% Black/African American (n = 34), 2.6% Hispanic/Latino (n = 27), 1.3% Mixed Race/Biracial (n = 14), and 1.5% Other (n = 16). However, to allow for comparison throughout the study between Whites and non-Whites, the group non-Whites was comprised of Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Mixed Race/Biracial, and Other, which represented 13.0% of respondents (n = 137). The composition of university faculty surveyed were 29.9% from Big Ten school 1 (n = 266), 21.2% Big Ten school 2 (n = 189), 23.8% SEC school 1 (n = 212), and 25.1% SEC school 2 (n = 223).

Faculty respondents’ average years at their institution was 14.1 (SD = 10.47). The academic rank composition of faculty who participated in the study was a majority full professor (n = 407; 39.0%), 25.1% associate professor (n = 262), 19.8% assistant professor (n = 206), 11.7% lecturer (n = 122), and 4.4% other (n = 46). A majority of the sample also were tenured (n = 670; 66.2%), 19.7% were not yet tenured (n = 199), and 14.1% were not in tenure track (n = 143).

A majority of faculty surveyed were not in administrative positions (n = 800; 76.9%). However, 10.1% were department or program head, 0.4% were assistant deans (n = 4), 1.7% were associate deans (n = 18), and 10.9% said they had other administrative positions (n = 113). Faculty specified “other” administrative positions as associate director, director of center, associate chair, chair of undergraduate studies, teaching coordinator, graduate coordinator, and program coordinator. A majority of faculty had not participated in service for athletics (65.9%, n = 681). However, faculty who did participate in service for athletics specified the type of service, with most faculty claiming teaching athletes and filling out progress reports for athletics as service. Additionally, only 3.8% (n = 39) of faculty indicated they served in an institutional governance role for athletics.

Social and behavioral sciences (20.5%) and arts and humanities (18.7%) were the most common academic disciplines reported by faculty. After that, faculty reported the following disciplines: 13.0% life sciences, 10.7% physical sciences and mathematics, 9.0% engineering, 8.1% other, 7.9% education, 5.9% business, 4.3% medicine and health sciences, 1.4% architecture, and 0.4% law. Faculty specified the other disciplines as advertising, public affairs, agriculture, crop science, food science, environmental studies, horticulture, construction management, textiles, city and regional planning, urban planning, and sport management.

The mean of the Sport Fandom scale was a 3.86 (SD. = 1.60). The scale ranges from 1 to 6, with higher scores indicating stronger fandom. Therefore, most faculty were between the



Table 1  
*Descriptive statistics (N = 1,100)*

Age	Mean =	SD = 11.80	Discipline		
Sex			Architecture	1.4%	15
Female	41.8%	437	Arts and Humanities	18.7%	194
Male	58.2%	608	Business	5.9%	61
Race			Education	7.9%	82
White	87.0%	920	Engineering	9.0%	93
Non-White	13.0%	137	Law	0.4%	4
Black/African American	3.2%	34	Life Sciences	13.0%	135
Latino/Hispanic	2.6%	27	Medicine and Health Sciences	4.3%	45
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.4%	46	Physical Sciences and Mathematics	10.7%	111
Mixed Race/Biracial	1.3%	14	Social and Behavioral Sciences	20.5%	212
Other	1.5%	16	Other	8.1%	84
University			Years at Institution	Mean= 14.10	SD = 10.47
Big Ten 1	29.9%	266	Service for athletics		
Big Ten 2	21.2%	189	No	65.9%	681
SEC 1	23.8%	212	Yes	34.1%	353
SEC 2	25.1%	223	Institutional Governance Role for athletics		
Academic Rank			No	96.2%	996
Lecturer	11.7%	122	Yes	3.8%	39
Assistant Professor	19.8%	206	Faculty Athletic Representative	0.4%	4
Associate Professor	25.1%	262	Campus Advisory Board	1.4%	16
Full Professor	39.0%	407	NCAA Certification		
Other	4.4%	46	Team	0.5%	5
Tenure Status			Other	1.6%	18
Tenured	66.2%	670	Sport fandom	Mean = 3.86	SD = 1.60
Not yet tenured	19.7%	199	Attendance at MFB events	Mean = 1.86	SD = 1.26
Not in tenure track	14.1%	143	Attendance at MBA events	Mean = 1.35	SD = 0.76
Administrative Position			Attendance at WBB events	Mean = 1.26	SD = 0.68
No	76.9%	800	Student-athlete interaction	Mean = 2.47	SD = 1.31
Department/Program Head	10.1%	105	Estimate % of male SAs	Mean = 42.48	SD = 21.83
Assistant Dean	0.4%	4	Estimate % of female SAs	Mean = 35.47	SD = 18.50
Associate Dean	1.7%	18	Estimate % of Black SAs	Mean = 34.71	SD = 17.34
Other	10.9%	113	Estimate % of White SAs	Mean = 45.73	SD = 19.66
			Estimate % of Hispanic SAs	Mean = 9.10	SD = 6.15
			Estimate % of Asian SAs	Mean = 4.90	SD = 3.96
			Estimate % of Other SAs	Mean = 4.75	SD = 4.17
			Perceptions of general cheating	Mean = 1.93	SD = 0.66
			Perceptions of relying on others for work	Mean = 2.76	SD = 0.81

somewhat disagree or neither agree nor disagree range for fandom of their university's teams.

The average percentage of male athletes estimated by respondents was 42.48% and females was 35.47%.<sup>1</sup> The average percentage estimated by respondents of athletes' racial groups was 32.71% Black/African American, 45.75% White/Caucasian, 9.10% Latino/Hispanic, 4.90% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4.75% other.

Regarding the dependent variables, the mean of the perceptions of general cheating academic deviance scale for the combined sample was 1.93 (SD = 0.66), meaning faculty rarely believed athletes cheat generally. The mean for the perceptions of relying on others academic deviance scale for the combined sample was 2.76 (SD = 0.81), meaning faculty sometimes believed athletes rely on others to cheat.

### *Factorial ANOVA*

**General Cheating.** A factorial ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of university and sport group and the interaction effect between university and sport group on perceptions of general cheating and academic deviance (Table 2 and Figure 1). University included four levels: SEC school 1, SEC school 2, Big Ten school 1, and Big Ten school 2 and sport group consisted of three levels: men's football (MFB), men's baseball (MBA), and women's basketball (WBB). The interaction effect was not significant, but the main effects for university and sport were significant.

The main effect for university yielded an F ratio of  $F(3, 401) = 4.47, p < .01$ , indicating a significant difference between SEC school 1 ( $M = 2.02, SD = 0.64$ ), SEC school 2 ( $M = 1.83, SD = 0.68$ ), Big Ten school 1 ( $M = 1.86, SD = 0.70$ ), and Big Ten school 2 ( $M = 2.08, SD = 0.63$ ). Significant differences using Tukey HSD found that faculty from SEC school 2 were less likely to perceive athletes as general cheaters compared to faculty at Big Ten school 2.

The main effect for sporting group yielded an F ratio of  $F(2, 401) = 12.74, p < .001$ , indicating a significant difference between MFB ( $M = 2.08, SD = 0.68$ ), MBA ( $M = 2.01, SD = 0.63$ ), and WBB ( $M = 1.72, SD = 0.62$ ). Significant differences using Tukey HSD found faculty believed WBB athletes were less likely to be perceived as cheaters generally compared to MFB and MBA athletes.

**Relying on Others.** A factorial ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of university and sporting group and the interaction effect between university and sporting group on perceptions of relying on others academic deviance (Table 3 and Figure 2). The interaction effect was not significant, but the main effects for university and sport were significant.

The main effect for university yielded an F ratio of  $F(3, 415) = 4.31, p < .01$ , indicating a significant difference between Big Ten school 1 ( $M = 2.68, SD = 0.83$ ), Big Ten school 2 ( $M = 2.80, SD = 0.71$ ), SEC school 1 ( $M = 2.97, SD = 0.78$ ), and SEC school 2 ( $M = 2.72, SD = 0.84$ ). Significant differences using Tukey HSD found faculty at Big Ten school 1 had significantly lower perceptions of athletes' relying on others compared to faculty at SEC school 1.

The main effect for sporting group yielded an F ratio of  $F(2, 415) = 13.99, p < .001$ , indicating a significant difference between MFB ( $M = 3.01, SD = 0.80$ ), MBA ( $M = 2.75, SD = 0.76$ ), and WBB ( $M = 2.52, SD = 0.80$ ). Significant differences using Tukey HSD found faculty believed WBB athletes were less likely to rely on others as a form of cheating compared to MFB

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<sup>1</sup> An issue with this measure using the Qualtrics software was that it did not force the respondent's answers to add up to 100%.

and MBA athletes. Additionally, faculty believed MFB athletes were significantly more likely to rely on others compared to both MBA and WBB.

Table 2  
*Factorial ANOVA of university and sport group for perceptions of college athlete general cheating*

Source	Subjects	df	MS	F
Model	17.81	11	1.62	3.84***
Intercept	1520.35	1	1520.35	3608.16***
University	5.65	3	1.89	4.47**
Sport	10.74	2	5.37	12.74***
University*Sport	3.01	6	0.50	1.19
Residual	168.97	401	0.42	
Total	1739	413		

Note. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

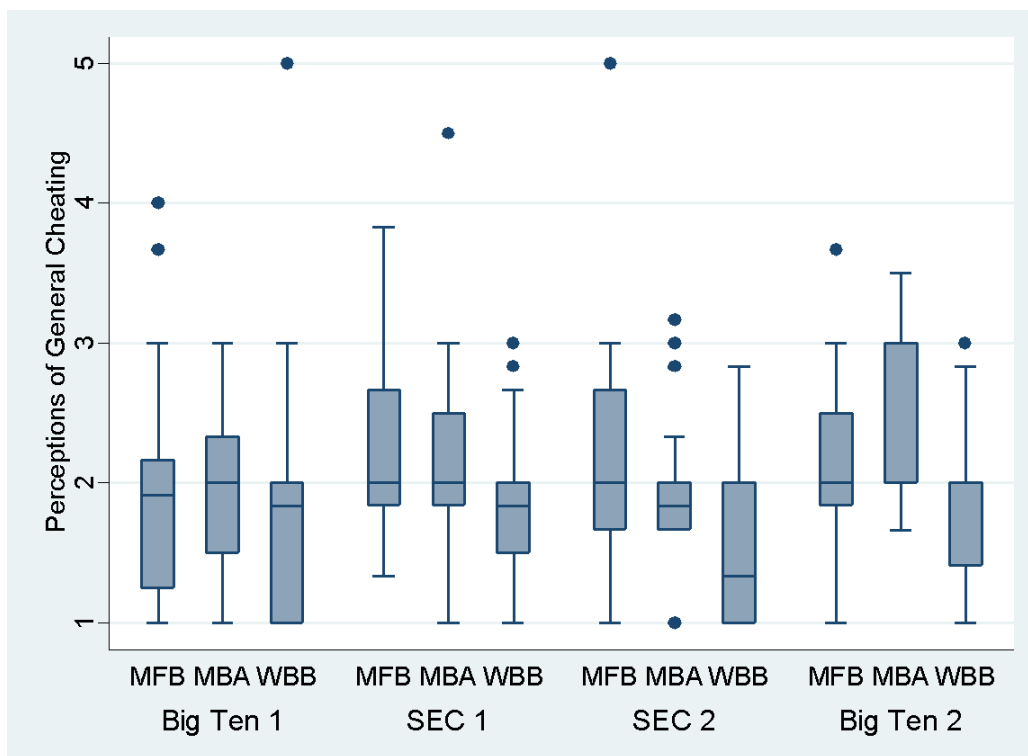


Figure 1.  
 Boxplot university\*sport group for perceptions of college athlete general cheating

Table 3  
*Factorial ANOVA of university and sporting group for relying on others*

Source	Subjects	df	MS	F
Model	27.83	11	2.53	4.27***
Intercept	3192.58	1	3192.58	5389.52***
University	7.66	3	2.55	4.31**
Sport	16.57	2	8.29	13.99***
University*Sport	3.99	6	0.67	1.12
Residual	245.83	415	0.59	
Total	3580.78	427		

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

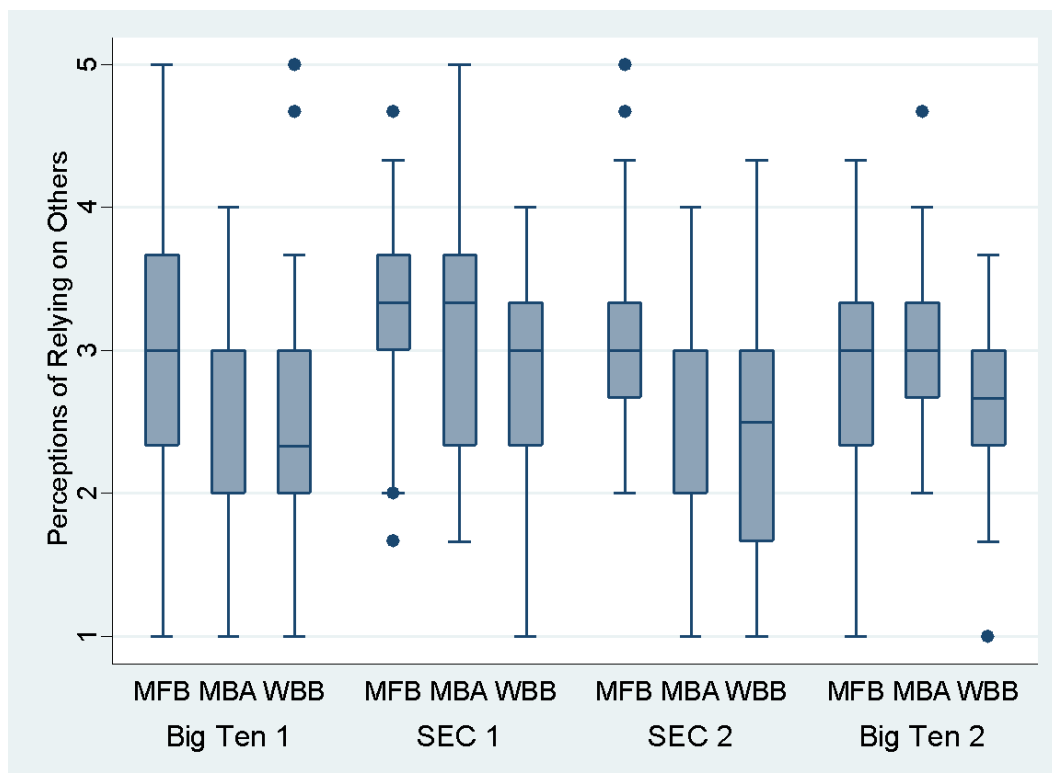


Figure 2.  
 Boxplot university\*sport group for perceptions of college athlete relying on others

### *Bivariate Relationships for the Entire Sample*

Bivariate correlations were run for the two academic deviance scales (general cheating and relying on others) and the independent variables (Table 4). Following the correlational analysis, ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions were run for any variables correlated at the bivariate level for the entire sample.

**General Cheating.** For the general cheating scale, faculty age, academic rank (lecturer status), participation in service involving athletics, sports fandom, attendance at MFB and MBA events, contact with student athletes, Big Ten school 2, MFB sporting group, and WBB sporting group were significantly related to perceptions of athletes' general cheating.

More specifically, older faculty were less likely to perceive athletes as general cheaters ( $r = -0.11, p < .05$ ). Faculty at Big Ten school 2 were more likely to perceive student athletes as general cheaters than faculty at the three other universities ( $r = 0.11, p < .05$ ). Lecturers were less likely to perceive athletes as general cheaters compared to faculty of other ranks ( $r = -0.11, p < .05$ ). Faculty involved in service to athletics were also significantly less likely to perceive general cheating among athletes compared to those who had not participated in service to athletics ( $r = -0.11, p < .05$ ). Faculty who were bigger fans of their university sports program were less likely to perceive athletes as general cheaters ( $r = -0.22, p < .001$ ). Additionally, faculty who attended more MFB events were less likely to perceive athletes as general cheaters ( $r = -0.13, p < .01$ ). Finally, faculty with higher attendance at MBA events ( $r = -0.12, p < .05$ ) and those who had more contact with athletes ( $r = -0.12, p < .05$ ) were less likely to perceive them as general cheaters.

Two of the manipulation variables were significantly related to general cheating at the bivariate level, MFB and WBB (Table 4). Faculty who were randomly assigned MFB athletes were significantly more likely to perceive general cheating compared to faculty assigned MBA or WBB ( $r = 0.16, p < .001$ ). Additionally, faculty who were randomly assigned WBB athletes were significantly less likely to perceive general cheating compared to faculty assigned MFB and MBA ( $r = -0.23, p < .001$ ). No perceptions of athlete attribute variables were significantly related to the general cheating scale at the bivariate level.

**Relying on Others.** There were several variables significantly associated with the "relying on others" scale (Table 4). These included: faculty age, race, academic rank (assistant and full professor), tenure status, time at current institution, sports fandom, attendance at MFB events, SEC school 1, MFB sporting group, WBB sporting group, perceptions of female athletes, and perceptions of Black athletes.

More specifically, older faculty were less likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others ( $r = -0.13, p < .01$ ) (Table 4). White faculty were significantly more likely to believe athletes are reliant on others compared to non-White faculty ( $r = 0.09, p < .05$ ). Faculty at SEC school 1 were more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others compared to faculty at the three other universities ( $r = 0.13, p < .01$ ). Full professors and those with tenure status were less likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others compared to faculty of other ranks ( $r = -0.12, p < .05$ ) and non-tenure status ( $r = -0.10, p < .05$ ). However, assistant professors were more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others compared to faculty of other ranks ( $r = 0.09, p < .05$ ). Faculty who had been at their current institution longer were significantly less likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others ( $r = -0.11, p < .05$ ). Faculty who were bigger fans of their university sports program were less likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others ( $r = -0.20, p < .001$ ). Additionally, faculty who attended more MFB events were less likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others ( $r = -0.14, p < .01$ ).

Faculty randomly assigned the MFB sporting group were more likely to perceive the athletes relying on others compared to faculty assigned MBA or WBB sporting groups ( $r = 0.22, p < .001$ ). Faculty randomly assigned the WBB sporting group were less likely to perceive relying on others compared to faculty assigned MFB or MBA ( $r = -0.22, p < .001$ ). Faculty who estimated a smaller percentage of female athletes on their campus were more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others ( $r = -0.11, p < .05$ ). Faculty who also estimated a larger percentage of

Table 4

*Correlations of academic deviance and independent variables*

	General cheating	Relying on others
Age	-0.11*	-0.13**
Gender (Male = 1; Female = 0)	-0.01	-0.01
Race (White = 1; Non-white = 0)	0.06	0.09*
University		
Big Ten 1	-0.08	-0.09
Big Ten 2	0.11*	0.01
SEC 1	0.07	0.13**
SEC 2	-0.09	-0.04
Academic Rank		
Lecturer = 1	-0.11*	0.01
Assistant Professor = 1	0.05	0.09*
Associate Professor = 1	0.08	0.02
Full Professor = 1	-0.05	-0.12*
Other = 1	0.04	0.03
Tenure status (Tenure = 1; Non-tenure = 0)	0.02	-0.10*
Administrative position (Yes = 1; No = 0)	-0.05	-0.07
Academic Discipline		
Architecture = 1	0.00	0.06
Arts and Humanities = 1	0.03	0.03
Business = 1	0.03	0.02
Education = 1	-0.09	-0.07
Engineering = 1	-0.06	0.00
Law = 1	-0.01	-0.08
Life Sciences = 1	0.01	0.01
Medicine and Health Sciences = 1	-0.05	-0.02
Physical sciences and mathematics = 1	0.06	-0.02
Social and Behavior sciences = 1	0.01	0.04
Other = 1	0.03	-0.04
Time at current institution	-0.05	-0.11*
Service involving athletics	-0.11*	-0.02
Sports fandom	-0.22***	-0.20***
Attendance at MFB events	-0.13**	-0.14**
Attendance at MBA events	-0.12*	-0.08
Attendance at WBB events	-0.10	-0.08
Contact with student-athletes	-0.12*	-0.06
Estimate % of student-athlete gender		
Male	0.00	-0.07
Female	-0.05	-0.11*
Estimate % of student-athlete race		
Black	0.08	0.18***
White	0.03	-0.06
Hispanic	0.04	0.02
Asian	0.07	0.04
Other	-0.09	-0.06
Sporting group assigned		
MFB	0.16***	0.22***
MBA	0.07	-0.01
WBB	-0.23***	-0.22***

Note. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

Black athletes on their campus were more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others ( $r = 0.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### *OLS Regression Models for the Entire Sample*

*Predicting General Cheating.* OLS regression models were run predicting the general cheating with independent variables that were significant at the bivariate level. Additionally, the models included the manipulation variables of university and sporting groups. These independent variables include age, academic rank (lecturer), service involving athletics, sports fandom, attendance at MFB events, attendance at MBA events, contact with athletes, Big Ten school 2, SEC school 1, SEC school 2, MFB and MBA sporting groups (Table 5).

Table 5  
*OLS regression predicting general cheating academic deviance*

	b	SE	B
Faculty status attributes			
Age	0.00	0.00	-0.08
Academic Rank (Lecturer = 1)	-0.06	0.09	-0.03
Service involving athletics	-0.03	0.07	-0.02
Sports fandom	-0.06*	0.02	-0.14
Attendance at MFB events	0.03	0.03	0.07
Attendance at MBA events	-0.10*	0.04	-0.13
Contact with student-athletes	-0.04	0.03	-0.07
University			
Big Ten 2	0.24**	0.09	0.15
SEC 1	0.29**	0.09	0.20
SEC 2	0.00	0.08	0.00
Sport group			
MFB	0.34***	0.07	0.25
MBA	0.29***	0.08	0.21
Constant	2.26***	0.18	
R-square		0.14	
df		12	
F		5.25***	
N		392	

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

The overall model predicting general cheating was significant ( $F = 5.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.14$ ). Several variables remained significant after controlling for other variables, which include sports fandom, attendance at MBA events, Big Ten school 2, SEC school 1, MFB and MBA. The bigger fans faculty are of their universities' sports programs the less likely they were to perceive athletes as general cheaters ( $b = -0.06$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The more MBA events faculty attended the less

likely they were to perceive athletes as general cheaters ( $b = -0.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Faculty at Big Ten school 2 and SEC school 1 were significantly more likely to perceive athletes as general cheaters compared to faculty at Big Ten school 1 (Big Ten 2:  $b = 0.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ; SEC 1:  $b = 0.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Additionally, faculty who were assigned MFB and MBA were significantly more likely to perceive athletes as general cheaters compared to WBB (MFB:  $b = 0.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ; MBA:  $b = 0.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

*Predicting Relying on Others.* An OLS regression model was run predicting the relying on others with faculty status attributes that were significant at the bivariate level. These independent variables include age, race (White), academic rank (assistant professor and full professor), tenure status, time at current institution, sports fandom, attendance at MFB events, estimates of Black athletes, estimates of female athletes, Big Ten school 2, SEC school 1, SEC school 2, MFB and MBA sporting group (Table 6).

The overall model predicting “relying on others” academic deviance was significant ( $F = 4.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.19$ ). Seven variables were significant after controlling for other variables, which included race, sports fandom, SEC school 1, perceptions of female athletes, perceptions of Black athletes, MFB and MBA. White faculty were significantly more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others compared to non-White faculty ( $b = 0.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Faculty who were bigger fans of their university sports program were significantly less likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others academically ( $b = -0.10$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Faculty at SEC school 1 were significantly more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others compared to faculty at Big Ten school 1 ( $b = 0.30$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Faculty who estimated higher percentages of female athletes on their campus were significantly less likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others ( $b = -0.01$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, faculty who estimated higher percentages of Black athletes on their campus were significantly more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others ( $b = 0.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Additionally, faculty who were assigned MFB and MBA groups, were significantly more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others (MFB:  $b = 0.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ; MBA:  $b = 0.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## Discussion

This study finds that faculty overall have low perceptions of college athlete academic deviance. However, there are some group differences, which may have implications for those working in athletics and with athletes. Relating back to the hypotheses, we found some support for the variables representing intergroup contact theory. There was a significant bivariate relationship between faculty age and athlete academic deviance, where older faculty had lower perceptions of athlete general cheating and relying on others ( $H_1$ ). However, the relationship did not remain significant after controlling for other variables in the regression models. There was no support for faculty in the STEM disciplines having increased perceptions of athlete academic deviance ( $H_2$ ). There was a significant bivariate relationship between faculty service to athletics and athlete academic deviance, where faculty involved in service to athletics had lower perceptions of athlete general cheating and relying on others ( $H_3$ ). However, the relationship did not remain significant after controlling for other variables in the regression models.

The variable that was consistently a predictor for both academic deviance scales was sports fandom, which supports our fourth hypothesis. Faculty who were bigger fans of their university sports programs were significantly less likely to perceive academic deviance by college athletes. This shows support for the intergroup contact hypothesis, where the more contact different groups of people have with each other the less prejudice and better social relations there will be between the groups (Allport, 1954). Faculty who are fans have



Table 6  
*OLS regression predicting relying on others academic deviance*

Variable	b	SE	B
Faculty status attributes			
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.10
Race (White)	0.30*	0.13	0.12
Academic Rank (Assistant Professor)	-0.12	0.13	-0.07
Academic Rank (Full Professor)	0.03	0.11	0.01
Tenure status (Tenure)	-0.08	0.13	-0.05
Time at current institution	0.00	0.01	-0.05
Sports fandom	-0.10**	0.03	-0.22
Attendance at MFB events	0.03	0.04	0.05
University status attributes			
Big Ten 1	0.09	0.11	0.05
SEC 1	0.30**	0.11	0.18
SEC 2	0.12	0.11	0.07
Perceptions of student-athlete attributes			
Gender (Female)	-0.01*	0.00	-0.12
Race (Black)	0.01***	0.00	0.21
Student-athlete status attributes			
MFB	0.38***	0.09	0.24
MBA	0.25*	0.10	0.15
Constant	2.88***	0.33	
R-square		0.19	
df		15	
F		4.39***	
N		306	

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

opportunities to see athletes in a positive light through their sport, which lessens the perception of athlete deviance.

Although faculty generally reported low levels of fandom, another possible explanation for fandom being a consistent predictor of lower perceptions of academic deviance may be the idea of sport hero worship. This is where fans are loyal followers of individual athletes based on the positive marketing of the athlete (Shuart, 2007). The sports industry (e.g., NCAA or the individual universities) markets athletes to identify with fans and increase their brand (L'Etang, 2006). According to Schwarz (1973), through marketing and public relations of the sports industry, the athlete becomes a symbol of success for the group in which they belong to. However, this success is only based on their performance "in the game" and not in other areas of life, like the classroom or the community. Therefore, sport fans tend to place athletes on a pedestal, which may lead them to think athletes are less deviant, compared to someone who is

not a consumer or fan of athletics. Fandom that is hero worship is extreme, but fandom that results in improved relations and understanding between the groups is beneficial. Institutions could eliminate special services and academic resources for athletes so all students have equal access to these supports, aligning more with their educational missions. Yet, the current system of intercollegiate athletics at the highest level is unlikely to deter institutions from promoting athletic teams and developing fans for the pursuit of academic prestige.

The fifth hypothesis was also partially supported. Increased attendance at men's baseball events was negatively related to perceptions of general cheating for the entire sample. Therefore, faculty who attended more men's baseball events in the last year were less likely to perceive athletes as general cheaters. Again, the intergroup contact hypothesis could be one explanation for these relationships, where faculty who watched athletes at their sporting events were able to see athletes in a positive light, which decreases misconceptions about them. Adding to the explanation for this relationship is that baseball has a different eligibility system than other college sports, where they can play professionally right out of high school. Athletes in other sports (football and basketball) do not have that option. If faculty are aware of this difference, it may lead faculty to believe baseball players are more serious students that want to complete their degree, because they chose to come to college rather than play professionally right out of high school (Billings, 2012). Therefore, faculty who attend their baseball events, might be reminded of the fact that these students chose college over the professional route when they think of these athletes.

The sport of the athlete remained a significant predictor of academic deviance while controlling for other variables. Faculty have the most negative perceptions of academic deviance among men's football athletes and the least negative perceptions about women's basketball athletes. Other research has found faculty to have more negative views towards male revenue and non-revenue athletes than female college athletes (Comeaux, 2011; Engstrom et al., 1995). This study is consistent with those and highlights the perception of academic deviance for male athletes compared to females among faculty.

Another interesting finding was that White faculty and those who estimated a higher percentage of Black athletes on their campuses were significantly more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others to commit academic deviance. Therefore, faculty may have created a coding scheme for the dumb jock stereotype, which generally focuses on Black athletes. This finding is supportive of an implicit race bias, which is when a person stereotypes or judges another race outside of conscious awareness or control (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). Therefore, even if faculty say White and non-White students are equally good students, it is possible that they unintentionally associate needing to rely on others academically with non-White students. In this case, it was White faculty and those who have perceptions of athletes generally as Black, who were more likely to perceive athletes as reliant on others. The education literature shows similar findings to this, where minority students are more at-risk for negative expectations and implicit prejudiced attitudes by teachers compared to White students (van den Bergh et al., 2010). Additionally, this research claims these negative teacher expectancy effects contribute to poor student performance (van den Bergh et al., 2010). Implicit race biases are concerning because several studies have found them to contribute to the perpetuation of discrimination (Bertrand & Malainathan, 2004; Green et al., 2007; McConnell & Leibold, 2001). Although this research did not examine the effect of a stereotype threat for athletes, it does imply that faculty may have detrimental stereotypes about specific athlete groups.

### *Limitations*

Although the current study is a step forward in understanding how deviant labels form for athletes on college campuses, the study has several limitations. First, data were gathered using an online survey. While internet surveys provide flexibility, timeliness, convenience, and a low cost of administration, there are also weaknesses to their use (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Internet surveys could easily be perceived as junk mail to respondents, which may be an explanation for why the response rate for this survey was low. Second, respondents may have had concerns about their privacy, even though responses were anonymous. Faculty may have been concerned about their anonymity and either not responded truthfully or participated in the survey at all. Finally, the survey had many items with forced response options. Respondents may not feel like their attitudes and perceptions of athletes were accurately reflected by these answer options.

Another limitation is the low number of grouping variables sampled, which only included four universities. We were not able to use aggregate data in the regression models because of collinearity issues. This is a common issue in aggregate data (Allison, 1999). In addition, because the number of groups were so small, we could not use hierarchical methods to account for aggregate data, which most require at least 35 groups (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992).

The number of sporting groups asked about is another limitation of the survey. Faculty were randomly assigned only one of three sporting groups about which to answer questions. This approach was used to prevent any ordering effects of asking about more than one and to keep the survey length reasonable. However, some faculty indicated to the first author in email after taking the survey that they wanted to comment on other athlete groups and were concerned about the one they were randomly assigned because they did not have many opinions on that group. By only including three groups in the study, there may be different results for other sporting groups that were excluded.

### *Directions for Future Research*

Future research on this topic should consider interviewing faculty to get their responses to these issues and questions. In addition, faculty could answer questions for more than one sport group, or select a sport group out of specific options to keep in mind for their survey. It would also be beneficial to include women's sports in a future study to see if faculty perceptions of athlete deviance differ by sex as a variable. Since all of the institutions in this study represented the most elite level of college sports (Power 5 football programs), future studies should also include faculty from different institutional types (e.g., private versus public), NCAA divisions (i.e., NCAA Division I Group of 5, Football Championship Series, and No Football, Division II, Division III), and sport governing body (e.g., National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics [NAIA], National Junior College Athletic Association [NJCAA]).

### *Implications for Practice*

Research in social psychology also shows support for decategorization, recategorization, and subcategorization as ways to reduce intergroup conflict (Brewer, 1996). Decategorization is the idea of creating interactions that are personal or individualized rather than interactions where people are category-based members of a group to decrease outgroup biases (Brewer & Miller, 1984). In this setting, decategorization would include creating opportunities for athletes to connect with faculty members on an individual basis, not as a member of their sport team. There are programming efforts at certain universities which may be making a difference in perceptions

of athlete deviance because the athletes are only being presented to faculty as part of their athletic team, instead of as individuals. It may be that activities where athletes are singled out from other students and presented as a member of the outgroup make them stick out to faculty creating negative perceptions. Perhaps athletic departments should find ways to minimize singling out athletes from the normal student population. For example, one faculty member indicated in an open response question in the survey about their interactions with athletes, “I know that I have athletes because we receive requests from their counselors about their progress, but none of these students have seen me directly.” A decategorization technique could be for athletes to meet with faculty as their own person, rather than as just an athlete.

A second technique to improve intergroup relations is recategorization, which involves enhancing the salience of a common team identity between the two groups to improve intergroup contact (Brewer, 1996). For the present study, this could include both faculty’s and athletes’ being seen as members of the overall university and local community. Athletic departments can promote stories of team or individual student service projects in the community or involvement in campus leadership positions. Also, promotion of a college athlete’s major or college can also create a team identity. For example, highlighting a player as a member of the football team and College of Education can create a common identity between faculty and students.

Finally, subcategorization is the idea of creating positive and cooperative experiences through distinct social identities to improve attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). This is achieved by highlighting the distinct roles each group has to work towards a common goal. For example, the common goal faculty and athletes share is education, but the roles each group has are different to obtain that goal. The role of faculty is to teach, and the role of athletes is to learn. Therefore, it may be beneficial to create opportunities for athletes to show faculty their role as learners. Activities that may promote the student role of the athlete to faculty could be studying abroad, service-learning activities, and getting involved with faculty research.

## Conclusion

The findings from the current study emphasize the importance of increasing contact between faculty and college athletes, as well as finding ways to expand the knowledge base and general contextual knowledge of athletes among faculty. Again, variables that were associated with the intergroup contact hypothesis seemed to have the biggest effect in perceptions of academic deviance. Specifically, fandom was the most consistent predictor of perceptions of deviance. Therefore, athletic departments should work to promote fandom among faculty to improve the relationship with their athletes. Activities that promote fandom in college football include tailgating, but could also include free tickets to games, “meet the team” nights, etc. (Koch & Wann, 2013).

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