Exploring Social Identity Theory and the 'Black Sheep Effect' Among College Student-athletes and Non-athletes

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Guided by social identity theory (SIT), we set out to explore the degree to which collegiate student-athletes and a comparison group of non-athletes would demonstrate in-group favoritism and out-group bias. We also examined whether student-athletes' in-group favoritism could be reversed to create a 'black sheep effect' (BSE). Using an experimental 2 X 8 factorial mixed design, participants (athletes/non-athletes) read four brief scenarios in which athletic status of the main character (athlete/non-athlete) and the combination of aggression (high/low) and context (high athletic/low athletic) was manipulated. Multivariate analyses revealed an overall leniency effect for student-athletes compared to non-athlete participants, regardless of the main character's athletic status rather than the hypothesized in-group favoritism. In terms of out-group bias, separate main effects for participant athletic status and main character's athletic status indicated higher punishment and higher negative reflections to the university if the main character was described as a student-athlete compared to a non-athlete student. There was limited support for the BSE in one condition where athlete participants assigned more negative ratings on some dependent variables when the main character was identified as an athlete compared to a non-athlete. The results shed light on how students' athletic status and context relates to judgments of deviant student-athletes.
Keywords: social identity theory, black sheep effect, intergroup dynamics, collegiate student-athletes

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From the 1919 Black Sox scandal to the recent incidents involving high profile college football programs (e.g., University of Southern California, The Ohio State University, and University of Miami) and professional football players (e.g., Michael Vick, Brett Favre, and Ben Roethlisberger), headlines over the last century have shown that athletes find the spotlight for reasons other than their success on the field. These types of headline grabbing scandals often shed light on interesting social psychological questions. For instance, how do fellow teammates and other non-athletes react to misbehavior from an athlete?

In the case of Michael Vick, there was a huge public outcry denouncing his involvement in dogfighting and the National Football League (NFL) suspended him for violating the league's personal conduct policy. While the media and others publically denounced him, some of Vick's teammates openly showed support for him, suggesting a degree of exoneration by his fellow teammates despite his actions. The same could not be said for National Hockey League (NHL) star Sean Avery. Avery was suspended by the NHL and denounced by both his coach and teammates for making remarks about his ex-girlfriends who were dating other hockey players in the NHL. Although Avery was no stranger to the spotlight for his actions on and off the ice, the NHL commissioner noted that his behavior was "detrimental to the league" ("NHL suspends Sean Avery," 2008) and his coach remarked that, "Sean crossed that line" ("Avery suspended," 2008). One of his teammates explained that Avery's actions were "just so disappointing for guys who have been around here for a long time and have taken a lot of pride in how this organization has been perceived" and another commented that, "it's basically a fundamental—you don't embarrass the team" ("Avery suspended," 2008).

These two incidences involved athletes attracting negative publicity to the league, team, and other athletes. Even though both athletes were criticized by the public media, one of the differences between these two cases was the reaction Vick and Avery received from their teammates. In Vick's case, some teammates supported him despite potential backlash for their actions. Although there are numerous factors (e.g., personal history, race/ethnicity, culture of the individual sport), which could explain how fans, the media, and fellow athletes respond to a deviant athlete, a potential rationale for some of the reactions received by Vick and Avery may be due to a psychological response known as social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SIT occurs when group members favor fellow in-group members based on a shared group membership. That is, athlete teammates or other similar athletes may be inclined to view a deviant member of their in-group more favorably than other non-athletes outside of the group because of their degree of identification with the group. In this case, Vick's teammates may have evaluated him less negatively because he was a teammate and his actions did not violate any team-specific rules.

Compared to Vick, who had a few supporters despite a heavy media onslaught, Sean Avery's coach and teammates publicly denounced him for his actions. In reaction to Avery's transgressions, the league, his coach, and teammates demonstrated a social psychological response known as the 'black sheep effect' (BSE; Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). BSE occurs when group members display extreme negative judgments towards a fellow group member who makes the group look bad. Thus, Avery's violation of group-specific norms (e.g., don't publically bad-mouth other teammates' girlfriends), may have led his fellow group members to turn away from him.

Guided by the tenets of SIT and BSE, we set out to explore the degree to which both SIT and BSE could be elicited from collegiate athletes and non-athletes. Several authors have pointed out that student-athletes tend to be perceived as belonging to a separate group, their own subculture, within the college campus (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Leonard, 1980; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Compared to non-athlete students, intercollegiate athletes tend to be somewhat segregated from the general student population because they spend more time with other athletes during practice, tend to have similar experiences as other athletes, and have access to special athletic facilities. This type of segregation may foster team solidarity, but it opens the door for several questions regarding athletic identity and potential for bias from other non-athlete students. Given the high profile role collegiate athletes play on some campuses, it is important to consider the potential costs of such identification.

In particular, we were interested in exploring the conditions that could elicit in-group favoritism and out-group bias from student-athletes and non-athletes as well as the degree to which we could reverse the pattern (i.e., BSE) for student-athletes. The tenants of SIT and BSE have been evaluated in numerous contexts, but to date there is no research that has experimentally examined these theories in the context of intercollegiate athletics. College athletics subjects athletes to an intensive socialization experience, which socializes them to meet the physical and mental demands of their sport, but tends to separate them from the general student body. This separation creates a form of social categorization on college campuses—a division between non-athlete students and student-athletes. We felt this division would be strong enough to elicit both in-group favoritism and out-group effects when presented with a variety of scenarios describing either a deviant athlete or non-athlete student.

Collegiate athletes

Research supports the view that athletes may be inclined to identify themselves based on their athletic role on campus. In terms of group identity, Prentice, Miller, and Lightdale (1994) examined differences in attachment and similarity between common-bond (attachment based on the degree to which an individual feels similar to other group members) and

common-identity (attachment based on an individual's commitment to a group identity) groups on a college campus. Their results showed that common-identity groups (e.g., sports teams, performing arts groups) reported stronger attachment to their group than fellow group members, but common-bond groups (e.g., social clubs, fraternities) showed no difference in their type of attachment. Thus, the tendency for common-identity groups such as athletes to favor the group identity rather than an individual suggests that some of the tenets of SIT may extend to the context of intercollegiate athletics.

Researchers have demonstrated the tendency for athletes to exhibit an in-group bias when presented with athletes and non-athletes. Michael et al. (1984) found that evaluations of a female college student were influenced by their athletic status. Specifically, researchers found that simply describing a college age woman as an athlete or a non-athlete was sufficient enough to produce bias. Athletes rated the female athlete as more likable compared to a female non-athlete, but there were no differences in ratings among non-athlete students. Their results suggest that similarity of athletic involvement has the potential to influence athletes' evaluations of an individual, perhaps to the degree that athletes are inclined to demonstrate in-group favoritism towards another athlete.

Athletes may be particularly inclined to show strong levels of attachment to the group rather than any one individual. An extensive 5-year observational study of a men's college basketball team found from the time players set foot on the court, they undergo a process of reshaping that encourages the development of group identification (Adler & Adler, 1988). In particular, players have to "get with the program," by aligning their identity, commitment, and goals to those of the team (Adler & Adler, 1988). Adler and Adler (1988) commented that both athletes and military units reprogram their recruits to substitute the organization's values in place of their own personal interests. The authors found that athletes' experiences on the basketball court allowed them to develop a strong sense of group solidarity with their program and other athletes, but their time away from the general student body tended to isolate them from other non-athlete students. Time spent with other athletes, common goals, and values specific to athletes tend to separate athletes from other non-athlete students, such that "athletes often have an identity and career commitment wrapped up in their athletic role" (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991, p. 189). Athletic identity can also influence areas in a student-athlete's life such as general competence and self-esteem (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Killeya-Jones, 2005). Indeed, athletics can have a strong psychological significance for an athlete.

Athletes are not the only ones who have a tendency to associate their identity primarily with their role on the field instead of the classroom. Research with collegiate faculty and non-athlete students has found that both faculty and students express negative perceptions

of student-athletes regarding admissions, academics, press exposure, and athletic privileges such as tutoring (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1995; Knapp, Rasmussen, & Barnhart, 2001; Simons & Bosworth, 2007). Engstrom et al. (1995) surveyed faculty from a Division I-A university and found that a revenue sport athlete (e.g., football) driving an expensive sports car elicited more negative reactions from faculty compared to a non-revenue sport athlete (e.g., wrestling) or non-athlete student. These findings were replicated with faculty from a Division II-A institution, yet the type of sport did not influence the decisions; all athletes, playing revenue and non-revenue sports, were judged more negatively than non-athlete students (Baucom & Lantz, 2001).

Non-athlete students also tend to express negative attitudes towards athletes, particularly related to academic performance (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Knapp, Rasmussen, & Barnhart, 2001). Engstrom et al. (1991) found that students hold negative perceptions of athletes such as: a) being more suspicious of an athlete who receives a high grade compared to a non-athlete student, b) less favorable about having a student-athlete as a lab partner, and c) disapproving of certain athletic privileges (e.g., athletic tutoring). Knapp et al. (2001) found similar negative attitudes towards student-athletes from non-athlete students in terms of academics and perceptions of more favorable treatment than the general student body.

Student-athletes are not oblivious to the perceptions of university faculty and other non-athlete students. Simons and Bosworth (2007) surveyed over 500 collegiate athletes and found that about one-third felt they were perceived negatively by faculty but more than half of the athletes sampled felt that other non-athlete students held negative perceptions of athletes. Some of the negative comments by both faculty and non-athlete students related to the dumb jock stereotype, academic motivation, and receiving underserved benefits and privileges. Simons and Bosworth (2007) asserted that student-athletes are stigmatized in higher education such that faculty and students may associate athletes with negative academic behaviors. Student-athletes may behave similarly to other non-athlete students, but their behavior may be highlighted in certain contexts because they confirm a negative expectation held by either faculty or non-athlete students (Simons & Bosworth, 2007).

Researchers suggests that both non-athlete students and student-athletes are aware of the social division on campus. In terms of potential in-group favoritism, athletes have demonstrated the tendency to rate a fellow athlete more likeable compared to a similar non-athlete student. Additionally, non-athlete students have shown a tendency to hold negative perceptions of student-athletes regarding areas such as academics, press exposure, and athletic privileges. Given the gulf between athletes and non-athletes and the research demonstrating the potential for favoritism and bias from these two groups, we hypothesized that this combination of factors would create a perfect condition to investigate the presence

of two well-known social psychological phenomena—social identity theory (SIT) and the 'black sheep effect' (BSE).

Social identity theory

Multiple field and laboratory studies have demonstrated that individuals have a tendency to evaluate in-group members more positively than similar out-group members even under minimal, short-lived situations (Marques, Abrams, Páez, & Martinez-Taboada, 1988; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992; Tajfel, 1982). Two or more people sharing a similar social identity "identify and evaluate themselves in the same way and have the same definition of who they are, what attributes they have, and how they relate to and differ from people who are not in their group or who are in specific out-groups" (Hogg, 2006, p. 115). Because an individual's identity is partly composed of their membership in a variety of social groups, there is a strong need to feel good about one's group and maintain that self-esteem by adopting strategies to protect the value of the group membership. This has been shown in the legal context, where jurors tend to be less punitive towards an individual labeled as an in-group member if there is uncertainty about a defendant's guilt (Kerr, Hymes, Anderson, & Weathers, 1995). In-group members protect their own self-esteem by showing favoritism and leniency towards other in-group members, despite their transactions. Overall, group members will tend to favor fellow in-group members more than out-group members, but there are additional factors that moderate the propensity towards favoritism.

Self-categorization theory, the cognitive basis moderating SIT (Hogg, 2006; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) posits that as people categorize their world based on social groups, their self assimilates towards a group prototype. "Prototypes embody all attributes that characterize groups and distinguish them from other groups, including beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors" (Hogg & Terry, 2000, pp. 123-124). Those who embody the group prototype are liked not as individuals but as characterizations of a hypothetical ideal group member. Attractiveness of group members is positively related to their perceived prototype compared to other group members, thus individuals are liked more when they embody the group norms (Abrams, Marques, Brown, & Henson, 2000). Therefore, the degree to which an individual matches the prototypical norm plays a role in the expression of judgments based on SIT.

Categorization is also influenced by the psychological salience of the environment (Hogg, 2006). "Group membership requires interpretation of the context and carries meaning within that context" (Abrams & Rutland, 2006, p. 49). People draw on accessible categorizations and the normative fit with behavior to make sense of their social environment. Individuals will evaluate others based on the correspondence between behavior and the

stereotypical properties of their categorization. Thus, the salience of the fit between context and norms moderate the expression of SIT favoritism and/or bias.

The combination of norms and context can enhance the probability that a group member will recognize and identify with a fellow in-group member and vice versa with an out-group member. In turn, this combination may also enhance the probability that in-group members will want to disassociate with a fellow group member. Although group members are motivated to positively categorize fellow in-group members, they also recognize those who do not act in accordance with the prototypical norms. Those who do not behave accordingly are less likely to be perceived as someone the group would want to remain in their circle. When a group member crosses the line and deviates from acceptable norms, the benefits of in-group favoritism give way to a more punitive condition known as the 'black sheep effect' (BSE).

'Black sheep effect'

As much as group members can be disposed to show favoritism and leniency towards a fellow in-group member, they are also apt to display harsher treatment toward one of their own whose actions bring negative attention to the group. BSE refers to the tendency for in-group members to evaluate unlikable and non-conforming members more negatively than unlikable or non-conforming out-group members (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). This tendency to evaluate deviant in-group members more harshly than out-group members is enhanced when a deviant's behavior violates a specific group norm compared to a general norm (Marques, Abrams, Páez, & Hogg, 2001).

Individuals expect a "fit" between their prototype and the members of their group, yet the decision is not always cut and dried. Deviance is not painted with a broad brush; decisions are subjective, often influenced by the degree of deviance as well as context. For instance, Abrams and colleagues found that pro-norm deviants (e.g., individual supports the group's ideal but deviates from the group norm) and anti-norm deviants (e.g., individual does not support the group's norms and deviates from the group norm) will both be evaluated less positively than a normative example, but pro-norm deviants tend to be evaluated less harshly than anti-norm deviants (Abrams, Henson, Marquez, & Brown, 2000; Brown & Abrams, 2003). The authors suggested that the pro-norm deviants are perceived more favorably because they tend to be viewed as more typical and compatible with group norms, despite their wrongdoings. Context also plays a role in subjective group dynamics. Individuals judge others not on their objective actions but by the implications of those actions within a specific group context (Abrams & Rutland, 2008). Those who deviate from the group's norm in one context may be evaluated quite differently in another.

Given that college student-athletes sometimes find the limelight for undesirable reasons, we were interested in exploring the degree to which unflattering attention influences responses from both non-athlete and athlete students. In particular, we wanted to evaluate the impact different situations and contexts play in the ratings given to a deviant individual.

Current study

The goal of the present study was to investigate the role that SIT and BSE play in the judgments of college students and student-athletes. The literature suggests that student-athletes perceive other athletes as in-group members, while non-athlete students will perceive athletes as out-group members. With this in mind, we hypothesized that when asked to make judgment on a deviant individual:

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): Non-athlete students would be more punitive towards a main character described as a student-athlete.
- Hypothesis 2 (H2): Student-athletes would assign fewer negative judgments to a student-athlete.
- Hypothesis 3 (H3): Student-athletes would assign more negative judgments than non-athlete students to a main character described as a student-athletes in the high aggression, high athletic context scenario.

Method

Participants

A total of 245 participants were included in this experimental study. The sample of students included 174 non-athletes and 71 student-athletes from a large Southwestern university. The mean age of all participants was 19.7 years ($SD = 3.3$) and the majority of the sample (62%) was male ($n = 150$). Non-athlete students were recruited through introductory psychology classes. Student-athletes were specifically recruited from the men's football team, but there were additional athletes present in the introductory psychology classes who also participated (i.e., three female student-athletes). All students completed an informed consent form and research credit was provided to student participants if needed to fulfill their course research requirement.

Consistent with the demographics of the university, the self-identified ethnicity of non-athlete participants was: Mexican-American (75.9%), Caucasian (12.1%), African American (3.4%), Mexican National (3.4%), and other (5.2%). The majority of the non-athletes were freshmen (59.2%), followed by a large percentage of sophomores (28.2%) and a smaller percentage of upper-classmen (10.9% and 1.7% were juniors and seniors, respectful-

ly). Within the non-athlete sample, the numbers of males and females were almost equivalent, with slightly more females than males ($n_{females} = 91$; $n_{males} = 82$; $n_{sysmiss} = 1$).

In the student-athlete sample, their self-identified ethnicity was: Mexican-American (21.1%), Caucasian (29.6%), African American (40.8%), Asian American (1.4%), and other (7.0%). There were no self-identified Mexican Nationals within the sample of student-athletes. The majority of the athletes were freshmen (38%), but there was a diverse combination of sophomores (21.1%), juniors (16.9%), seniors (21.1%), as well as graduate students (2.8%) represented in the student-athlete sample. Given the differences between the samples, gender was compared across groups to evaluate equivalence across groups. Across the four experimental scenarios, we included gender as an additional fixed factor. Although one condition would not converge, there were no significant effects in the three converging experimental conditions when gender was included in the analyses (smallest $F(1, 241) = 3.60$, $MS_{error} = 5.37$, $p = .06$). Ethnicity was not evaluated given the unbalanced groups within each sample and amount of diversity between the two samples of students.

Design

This study incorporated a 2 (between subjects: participants' own athletic status) X 8 (within subjects: four aggression/context scenarios for each type of main character) factorial mixed design. Participants varied in terms of their own self-identified athletic status at the university (student-athlete vs. non-athlete) as a between subjects factor. Every student, regardless of his or her own self-reported athletic status, received a packet with eight brief scenarios (detailed below) for the within subjects (repeated measures) factor. Within their packet of eight, each participant received four *experimental* scenarios that varied by the combination of aggression and athletic context depicted in the scenario. There were a total of four aggression/context scenarios: 1) low aggression – low athletic context, 2) low aggression – high athletic context, 3) high aggression – low athletic context, and 4) high aggression – high athletic context. Participants read each of the four aggression/context scenarios, but within each scenario, the main character's athletic status was randomly varied (student-athlete vs. non-athlete). That is, there were eight total experimental scenarios (one for each type of main character), but participants scenarios were randomly assigned by main character. For example, all participants received a high aggression and athletic context scenario, but participants were randomly assigned *either* a student *or* an athlete main character. The remaining four *context free* control condition scenarios were constant across all participants and counterbalanced within the experimental scenarios. Control conditions depicted non-athlete main characters in low aggression, low athletic environments.

In sum, all participants read and evaluated a total of eight scenarios (four control and four experimental), all of which were counterbalanced to control for any potential order effects. Every participant read four experimental scenarios, but the main character depicted in each of the scenarios varied within-subjects. Compared to other similar research studies, our design allowed us to evaluate participants' ratings across several types of scenarios rather than a single between subjects scenario.

Materials and Procedure

Participants were informed that they were in a study to establish university student norms and investigate students' judgments about other students' behavior. They were told that the researchers wanted to learn their perceptions of the degree of seriousness and the appropriate punishment for students who break rules of conduct.

Experimental scenarios. As mentioned above, participants were given a packet with eight brief scenarios, four of which were randomly assigned, counterbalanced, experimental scenarios that varied by the degree of aggression and the environmental context. The following paragraphs describe how aggression and environmental context were operationalized for our scenarios.

In terms of aggression, high aggression scenarios described a situation in which the main character assaults a police officer. Although the physical force depicted in these scenarios may be more accurately described as violence, we have chosen to label these scenarios as high aggression in order to keep the terminology consistent. Low aggression scenarios described a situation in which the main character plagiarizes material for a class. The two aggression dichotomies were chosen based on the literature regarding non-athlete students' negative perceptions regarding academics (e.g., cheating) and the desire to create an extreme example of deviant behavior for a football player (e.g., physical aggression). Context was included in the scenarios in order to enhance the degree to which participants identify with the main character as well as enhance the main character's status on campus. For instance, high context scenarios with a student-athlete main character described a situation specific to student-athletes, such as access to an athletic tutor's paper or the football locker room. Low context situations described environments common to all university students, such as attending an off-campus party or plagiarizing material off the Internet.

All participants read four experimental scenarios, but the main character depicted in the scenario was varied within subjects. In addition to aggression and context, experimental scenarios manipulated the athletic status of the main character (athlete vs. non-athlete student). Although there were a total of eight experimental scenarios (e.g., four for each main character), participants were randomly assigned scenarios based on the main charac-

ter so they only read four of the eight possible conditions. That is, every student read four experimental scenarios but not every student had the same combination of main characters. Four control scenarios were also included in the packet given to students. These control conditions were identical across all participants and they were randomly disbursed within the packet to control for any potential order effects.

Dependent variables. Consistent with previous research on evaluating deviant behavior (e.g., Kessler et al., 2010), participants were asked to rate their attitudes towards the main character following the incident summary. Participants were presented with three questions as well as three statements and asked to indicate their perceptions of the main character in the scenario. The six outcome measures were (a) how serious is this event, (b) how does this event reflect on the university, (c) how much should this person be punished, (d) I would want to work with this person either in a group or on a team, (e) this event reflects poorly on me personally, (f) this behavior is typical of students/student-athletes. Participants rated each dependent variable on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Results

Each of the four experimental scenarios was subjected to a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to explore the interaction between the independent variables—an individual's own athletic status (student-athlete or non-athlete), the main character's group membership (athlete vs. non-athlete), and the aggression/context combination (e.g., high aggression – athletic context) on the 6 dependent variables. Each scenario was evaluated separately because the experimental design did not create a fully within-subjects design (i.e., participants did not rate all possible scenarios). Participant means and standard deviations for each experimental scenario combination are presented in Table 1. Willingness to work with the main character is reverse coded, so higher scores indicate more unwillingness.

For each of the conditions, we first evaluated MANOVA results from the two groups (student-athletes and non-athletes) for a significant omnibus interaction between the main character's athletic status and the aggression/context combination depicted in the scenario. The presence of an interaction was particularly important for the BSE, indicating that the combination of the athletic status of the main character and the particular scenario elicited different responses from student-athletes and non-athletes. If the interaction was significant, follow up analyses were conducted to evaluate each of the six measures. When the interaction was non-significant, we then examined the main effects and the subsequent follow-up results from the six outcomes if the main effects were significant. Because there were only two groups rating the six measures (student-athletes and non-athletes) it was not necessary

Table 1

Composite means for scenarios by participant and main character's athletic status

	Main Character: ATHLETE				Main Character: NON-ATHLETE			
	H/A	H/F	L/A	L/F	H/A	H/F	L/A	L/F
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Participant: ATHLETE								
Seriousness	5.97 (1.21)	4.38 (1.45)	5.06 (1.37)[3]	5.44 (1.73)	5.23 (1.44)	4.36 (1.42)	5.32 (1.36)[3]	5.59 (1.21)
Reflections on university	5.92 (1.25)[1]	3.84 (1.61)[2]	3.90 (1.16)	4.82 (1.45)	4.94 (1.45)[1]	3.36 (1.74)[2]	4.76 (1.51)	4.32 (1.51)
Punishment	5.22 (1.35)	3.42 (1.34)[2,3]	4.24 (1.32)[3]	4.56 (1.35)[3]	4.69 (1.23)	3.31 (1.34)[2,3]	4.58 (1.35)[3]	4.51 (1.07)[3]
Work With (1.66)[3]	4.97 (1.56)	4.69 (1.49)[3]	5.00 (1.35)	4.97 (1.31)[3]	5.26 (1.32)	4.26 (1.33)[3]	4.66 (1.63)	5.08
Reflection on me	3.75 (1.98)[1]	2.97 (1.49)	3.03 (1.76)	3.59 (1.86)	2.62 (1.72)[1]	2.82 (1.60)	3.42 (1.88)	3.32 (1.86)
Typical	2.50 (1.38)	3.81 (1.48)	3.18 (1.45)	3.12 (1.59)	2.82 (1.59)	3.49 (1.76)	3.22 (1.55)	3.46 (1.37)
Participant: NON-ATHLETE								
Seriousness	5.81 (1.10)	4.71 (1.48)	5.51 (1.30)[3]	5.93 (1.20)	5.72 (1.23)	4.61 (1.34)	5.58 (1.37)[3]	5.88 (1.30)
Reflections on university	5.75 (1.36)	3.79 (1.97)[2]	4.51 (1.86)	4.61 (1.74)	5.85 (1.43)	2.81 (1.70)[2]	4.43 (1.16)	4.74 (1.84)
Punishment	5.28 (1.33)	4.23 (1.56)[2,3]	4.78 (1.46)[3]	5.10 (1.34)[3]	5.39 (1.31)	3.53 (1.30)[2,3]	5.07 (1.32)[3]	5.30 (1.23)[3]
Work With	5.48 (1.28)	4.94 (1.52)[3]	5.38 (1.53)	5.37 (1.44)[3]	5.49 (1.38)	4.93 (1.33)[3]	5.49 (1.29)	5.43 (1.39)[3]
Reflection on me	3.07 (2.05)	3.32 (2.19)	3.16 (2.06)	3.09 (2.15)	3.43 (2.03)	2.48 (1.71)	3.13 (2.16)	2.87 (1.76)
Typical	2.68 (1.56)	3.17 (1.84)	2.90 (1.67)	2.97 (1.64)	2.55 (1.57)	3.52 (1.67)	3.42 (1.51)	3.17 (1.46)

Note: H= high aggression; L= low aggression; A= athletic context; F= context free. Dependent variables were coded so larger numbers mean greater or "more of" the variable and/or more negative reactions. The work with variable is reverse coded so that high scores indicate more unwillingness to work with the main character; [1]Interaction between participant and main character's athletic status was significant at $p < .05$; [2]Main effect for main character's athletic status was significant at $p < .05$; [3]Main effect for participant's athletic status was significant at $p < .05$

to control for family-wise Type I error rate on the follow up analyses, thus all results were evaluated with $\alpha < .05$ criterion.

Low aggression. In the low aggression, low athletic (context free) scenario, MANOVA results indicated non-significant omnibus effects for the main character's athletic status and the interaction between the main character and participant's athletic status, but a significant main effect for a participant's own athletic status (Wilks' lambda = .945, F (6, 234) = 2.25, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$). Specifically, there were differences in overall judgments based on whether or not participants' identified themselves as an athlete or a non-athlete student. Follow-up univariate analyses found significant differences between groups on the variables *punishment* and *working with the main character* (smallest F (1, 239) = 6.82, $MS_{error} = 12.67$, $p = .01$), $\eta^2 = .03$). Athletes assigned lower punishment ($M_{student} = 4.92$, $M_{athlete} = 4.42$, $d = 3.75$) and indicated more willingness to work with the main character ($M_{student} = 5.44$, $M_{athlete} = 4.84$, $d = 4.19$) compared to non-athlete students.

When the context highlighted athletics, the only significant omnibus multivariate effect was a main effect for participant's own athletic status (Wilks' lambda = .925, F (6, 234) = 3.16, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$). Main effects for the character's athletic status and the interaction between participant and character status were non-significant. Follow up analyses found differences between groups on the variable *punishment* and *seriousness* (smallest F (1, 239) = 4.33 $MS_{error} = 7.56$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Compared to non-athlete students, athletes assigned less punishment for the main character ($M_{student} = 5.20$ and $M_{athlete} = 4.54$, $d = 5.23$) and felt the situation was less serious ($M_{student} = 5.91$ and $M_{athlete} = 4.52$, $d = 2.84$). Both of these scenarios found main effects for the individual participant making the judgments. Overall, athletes tended to be less punitive and more willing to work with an individual despite their academic transgressions.

High aggression. Analyses of the high aggression, low athletic (context free) condition indicated significant main effects for both the main character's athletic status and participant's own athletic status (smallest Wilks' lambda = .948, F (6, 234) = 2.16, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$), but a non-significant interaction. Follow up analyses for the main character's athletic status revealed significant differences for the variables *punishment* and *reflections on the university* (smallest F (1, 239) = 4.11, $MS_{error} = 8.20$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Participants' punishment ratings ($M_{student} = 3.42$ and $M_{athlete} = 3.83$, $d = 2.83$) and perception of negative reflection on the university ($M_{student} = 3.08$ and $M_{athlete} = 3.80$, $d = 3.89$) were higher when the main character was described as an athlete.

Follow up examination of the participant's own athletic status found significant differences on the variables *punishment* and *working with the main character* (smallest F (1, 239) = 5.31, $MS_{error} = 10.86$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Non-athlete students assigned higher punishment

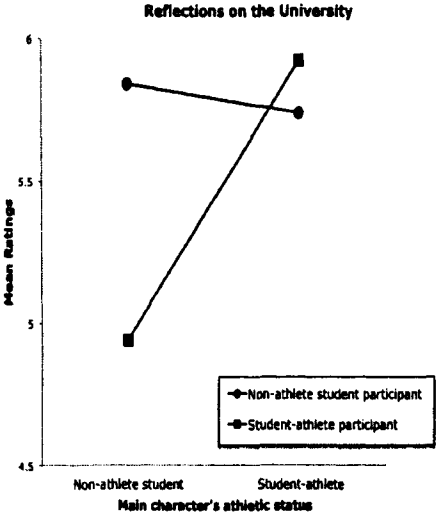

Figure 1. Mean differences for the statement, "How much does this event reflect on the university," in the high aggression/athletic scenario. Higher values indicate more negative perceptions (i.e., hurts the universit

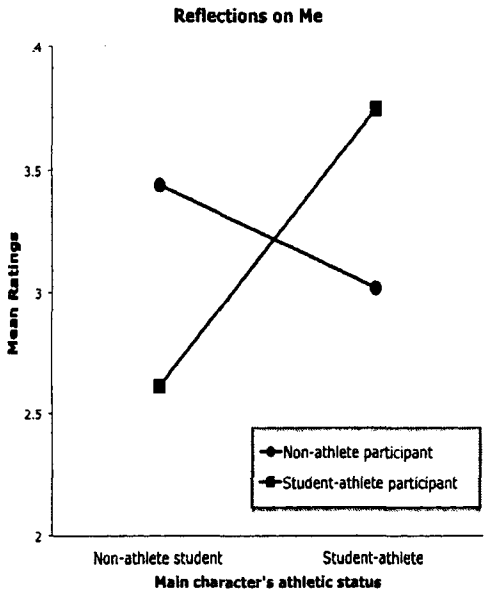

Figure 2. Mean differences for the statement, "This event reflects poorly upon me," in the high aggression/athletic scenario. Higher values indicate more negative perceptions (i.e., agreement with the statement).

than athletes ($M_{student}$ = 3.88 and $M_{athlete}$ = 3.36, d = 3.63), but athletes indicated more willingness to work with the main character ($M_{student}$ = 4.94 and $M_{athlete}$ = 4.47, d = 3.28). Overall, both non-athletes and fellow student-athletes judged an athlete displaying high aggression more harshly. However, student-athlete participants tended to be less punitive and more willing to work with the main character despite their actions.

Analyses of the high aggression, high athletic context condition found a significant interaction between participant's own athletic status and athletic status of the main character (Wilks' lambda = .930, F (6, 233) = 2.94, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .07$). Main effects for character athletic status and participant athletic status were non-significant. Follow up analyses showed significant effects for the variables *reflections to the university* and *reflects poorly on me* (smallest F (1, 238) = 7.50, MS_{error} = 14.45, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$). As shown in Figures 1 and 2, athletes were more inclined to indicate another athlete's poor behavior had more negative reflection on the university ($M_{athlete\ X\ athlete}$ = 5.92 and $M_{athlete\ X\ student}$ = 4.94, d = 4.17; see Figure 1) and themselves ($M_{athlete\ X\ athlete}$ = 3.75 and $M_{athlete\ X\ student}$ = 2.61, d = 3.37; see Figure 2). The results from these two variables tentatively suggest that some aspects of in-group favoritism may be reversed in cases where deviants threaten the positive social identity of the group.

Discussion

Based on social psychological theory and past research, we predicted that identifying a deviant individual as a student-athlete would be a distinction sufficient enough to produce out-group bias based on SIT (H1). We found slight evidence for SIT out-group bias in the high aggression, low athletic context scenario. In this scenario, the results showed separate main effects for the main character's athletic status and the athletic status of the participant. Both non-athlete and student-athlete participants indicated higher punishment and higher negative reflections to the university if the main character was described as a student-athlete compared to a non-athlete student. Yet, it seems as though athletes were slightly conflicted with their judgments in this scenario because there was also a main effect for the individual participant. Although both athlete and non-athlete participants assigned higher punishment for a main character described as an athlete, there was a systematic difference in the overall level of punishment assigned by the two groups. Athlete participants tended to assign less punishment and indicate more willingness to work with the main character compared to non-athlete participants.

We also hypothesized that student-athletes would exhibit in-group favoritism towards main characters described as student-athletes (H2), however our results revealed an overall leniency effect for student-athlete participants in three of the four scenarios regardless of

the main character's athletic status. For instance, in both low aggression scenarios, athlete participants assigned less punishment towards the main character regardless of the main character's athletic status. Additionally, results from both the low and high aggression, low athletic context scenarios indicate student-athlete participants were more willing to work with an individual compared to non-athlete students. Although we did not find our predicted in-group favoritism and leniency, this pattern suggests that more research is needed to fully understand the degree to which student-athletes may be more or less lenient than other non-athlete students. It is possible that student-athletes' experiences with sports, teammates, and competition may lead athletes to be more willing to accept mistakes and work with others despite differences.

We also hypothesized that an extreme example of deviance from a student-athlete could reverse the tendency for athlete participants to exhibit favoritism in a high aggression, high athletic context scenario, thus evoking a more punitive evaluation towards a fellow in-group member (H3). Results from the high aggression, high athletic context scenario lends some limited support for this hypothesis. There was a significant interaction between the main character's athletic status and participant's own athletic status; student-athlete participants were more critical towards their fellow in-group member. In this particular scenario, a student-athlete who read about a deviant athlete indicated the event had higher negative reflections on the university as well as themselves. Although only two of the follow up analyses were significant, it was promising to find effects for these two variables in the most extreme scenario. This was especially interesting given that in 3 out of the 4 scenarios, athlete participants were inclined to assign less punishment and/or indicate more willingness to work with the main character.

Overall, our results did not conclusively find support for either SIT or BSE, but we found some areas that may be of interest for further research. For instance, we found an overall leniency effect with student-athletes as well as some indication that student-athletes may react more negatively when a student-athlete engages in highly deviant behavior within an athletic context. Although not all of our measures were significant, we feel the results are promising and encourage further exploration.

Limitations. Although the laboratory setting and experimental design allowed us to control for numerous factors, it also constrained some of our ability to understand the phenomena. For instance, the length of the scenarios provided to participants and our operalization of aggression and context may not have fully captured the complexity of real world situations enough to evoke the responses predicted by these social psychology theories. It is possible that longer scenarios or quasi-experimental settings might elicit stronger effects. Additionally, there were some potential ceiling effects in some conditions. Specifically, fre-

quency distributions from the high aggression, high athletic context scenario were negatively skewed. It seems as though the event was so extreme that the majority of the participants agreed the situation was serious and the main character deserved to be punished, thus reducing the variability and our ability to find significant effects.

Another possible limitation of the present study is the unequal sample size of the athlete and non-athlete samples. Although one of the benefits of our study is the actual student-athlete data, we limited our sample to primarily football players in order to control for any potential difference due to gender and type of sport (e.g., individual vs. team sport). Despite the good-sized sample of athletes (i.e., about 50% of the football team) the experimental design limited the number of between group ratings for the main character. A larger sample of student-athletes would have provided more power to detect significant effects between the scenarios.

Potential contributions. Though further work is required to understand the dynamic social environment between non-athlete and athlete students, our work contributes to social psychological, athletic, and college student development literature in several ways. First, it further expands the social categorization and intergroup dynamics literature by exploring the impact of athletic status on decision-making. To date, we know of no other study that has manipulated athletic status and context to explore the impact on judgments from both athlete and non-athlete students. Second, this study was the first to explore athletes' perceptions of a deviant student-athlete. This manipulation is important because of the increasingly high profile status of athletes on college campuses and the public media. Student-athletes represent a highly diverse set of individuals with different needs than the rest of the student body, yet more research is needed to understand athletes and their role within the campus community (Gaston Gayles, 2009).

Most importantly, the results of this study provide a glimpse of the interpersonal environment between student-athletes and non-athlete students on the college campus as well as suggest potential areas for further research. Even though our results may not be generalizable to all college campus settings, because athletes and non-athletes may experience different dynamics depending on the type of institution, there is value in understanding the interpersonal environment between students and student-athletes (Aries, McCarthy, Salovey, & Banaji, 2004). College administrators, counselors, and athletics staff can hopefully use this research to better understand some of the potential stereotypes student-athletes might elicit from other non-athlete students. Additionally, athletes could be made aware that some of their actions may be more salient to non-athlete students and advised to be aware of these potential preconceived notions. Overall, both university and athletics staff may use this type of research to create programs to encourage both athletes and non-athlete students to see themselves as part of the larger university community.

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