Distributive Justice and Perceptions of Fairness in Team Sports

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DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND PERCEPTIONS
OF FAIRNESS IN TEAM SPORTS

A Thesis Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Psychology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
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December 2000
DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS IN TEAM SPORTS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Justice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural Justice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity Theory</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive Justice</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages of Punishment</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Punishment</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of Punishment on Individuals</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of Punishment on Observers</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Study</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario Development</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulus-Rating Study</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bivariate Correlations</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multivariate Analysis of Dependent Variables</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Variance of Dependent Variables</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Analyses</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns and Future Research</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Data Collection Protocol</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Stimulus-Centered Rating Study Data Collection Protocol</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Correlation Coefficients for the Four Dependent Variables</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Analysis of Variance for Fairness</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Analysis of Variance for Deterrence</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

Distributive justice refers to the perceptions of fairness of outcomes received by individuals for their efforts in organizational settings. Punishment is frequently used to eliminate offensive or undesirable behavior in organizations. The present study was based on distributive justice theory and assessed the effects of severity of punishment and the application of distributive justice rules in a sports team setting. Eight scenarios were developed combining two levels of distribution of punishment (consistent or conditional), two levels of severity of misconduct (severe or moderate), and two levels of severity of punishment (severe or moderate). It was hypothesized that consistent punishment across all team members, including the star player, would be perceived as more fair than conditional punishment. It was also hypothesized that more severe punishment would act as a greater deterrent to future offenses than moderate punishment. Each participant responded to one scenario and was asked to rate the following: the fairness of the punishment to the player, the fairness of the punishment to the rest of the team, the likelihood that the punishment will deter the player from future misconduct, and the likelihood that the punishment will deter the other players from future misconduct. The results indicated full support for the first hypothesis and partial support for the second.
Distributive Justice and Perceptions of Fairness in Team Sports

Employees are concerned with both the fairness of the outcomes they receive for their work and the fairness of the decision processes used to determine how rewards and punishments are allocated to them. Organizational justice is the term used to describe the role of fairness as it directly relates to the workplace. "Specifically, organizational justice is concerned with the ways in which employees determine if they have been treated fairly in their jobs and the ways in which those determinations influence other work-related variables" (Moorman, 1991, p. 845). There are two different components of organizational justice: procedural justice and distributive justice. Procedural justice is the term used to describe perceptions of fairness of the processes used to determine reward and punishment allocations. Distributive justice, on the other hand, describes the perceptions of fairness of the outcomes received by the employee(s). Moorman (1991) concluded that if employees believe they are treated fairly, they would be more likely to have positive attitudes about their work, their work outcomes, and their supervisors. Both procedural and distributive justice are important factors in the determination of employees' perceptions of fairness and meaningful organizational outcomes (Williams, 1999).

The present study will focus on distributive justice outcomes of punishment in team settings. Punishment is often used in organizations to deter misconduct. The researcher will assess the effects of the severity of punishment and the distributive justice rules (i.e., whether punishment is consistent or conditional). Outcomes include whether
the punishment deters team members from committing the same or a similar offense in the future and fairness perceptions of the punishment.

The literature on organizational justice will be reviewed to explain the underlying dynamics of justice perceptions. This explanation will be followed by a brief discussion of procedural justice. Equity theory, the predominant theory underlying distributive justice, will be discussed next. Distributive justice will then be more fully explained. Finally the literature on punishment in organizational settings will be reviewed.

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is concerned with the fair treatment of employees in organizations. Within an organization there are competing goals and objectives. An example of this competition is found in the context of personnel selection. Applicants seek employment with an organization. The organization, on the other hand, has the role of offering employment to some applicants and denying employment to others (Muchinsky, 1997). The decision to offer employment or withhold it is frequently based on an assessment of the applicants. Both the outcome of the selection decision (i.e., who was offered a job and who was not) and the process (i.e., how the assessment was conducted; interview, selection test, etc.) can be evaluated in terms of fairness. Did the organization reach a fair and just decision by using fair and just methods of selection? This question, the basic one of organizational justice, has been addressed through two major constructs.

The two major constructs of organizational justice are distributive justice and procedural justice. Distributive justice refers to the fairness of the results, outcomes, or ends achieved and is heavily predicated on values. These values are rules or standards by
which judgments of fairness are achieved. Three distributive rules -- equity, equality and need -- have been proposed. Procedural justice is the fairness of the means or processes used to achieve the results. This construct includes the perceived fairness of the policies and procedures used to make decisions (Muchinsky, 1997). The difference between these two justice concepts is the difference between content and process.

In modern society there are systematic interdependencies and exchanges among people and social units or an exchange. People expect to receive benefits, goods, and services that are equivalent in value to those benefits, goods, and services they contribute and provide. Individuals like to be treated fairly in their social exchanges with others and develop norms about what constitutes fair and unfair treatment. The workplace is a perfect example of the type of situation in which people experience the ups and downs of fair and unfair exchanges for their efforts, talents, and ideas for both economic and non-economic benefits (Pinder, 1998). Both procedural and distributive justice theories help to explain individual perceptions of fairness in terms of organizational justice in the workplace.

**Procedural Justice**

Procedural justice is defined as “... the perceived fairness of the procedures used in making decisions” (Folger & Greenberg, 1985, p. 142). Procedural justice deals with how decisions are made for significant organizational outcomes such as pay raises, performance evaluations, and dispute resolution, etc. This component of organizational justice is different from distributive justice in that distributive justice deals with the content, consequences, or outcomes that result from the formal decision making processes of procedural justice. Organizational studies have illustrated that the processes
used to determine outcomes may be as important to employees as the actual outcomes themselves (Williams, 1999).

The earliest focus of research on procedural justice was to determine the processes needed to resolve disputes in the workplace (Pinder, 1998). More recently, researchers have expanded their studies to address procedural justice issues dealing with many different workplace proceedings such as reward allocation, performance evaluation procedures, personnel selection, compensation systems, discipline procedures, and participatory decision-making systems (Pinder, 1998). Greenberg argued there were two components of procedural justice: (a) the presence or absence of distribution procedures such as involvement in decision control (also known as process control) and (b) interactional justice or the explanations employees receive about formal procedures (as cited in Williams, 1999). Concerning the first procedural justice component, Thibaut and Walker (1975) suggested the amount of process control (i.e., control in the decision-making process used to resolve the dispute) an individual has in offering procedural inputs or influencing decision processes has an effect on his or her perceptions of fairness. Research on the second component, interactional justice, has indicated that providing employees with justification of the decision processes used can affect the results associated with decisional outcomes. Both of these procedural justice components are thought to increase a recipient’s perceptions of fairness concerning decisional outcomes (Williams, 1990).

Thibaut and Walker (1975) proposed a framework, the dispute-resolution process, which examines various dispute resolution procedures in terms of the decision control they afford the disputants (Folger & Greenberg, 1985). This process consists of two
stages: the process stage where evidence is presented and the decision stage where that evidence is evaluated to resolve the dispute. Thibaut and Walker (1975) conceptualized disputes as involving three parties, the two disputants and an intervening third party such as a judge or referee (Folger & Greenberg, 1985). This framework illustrated that the amount of process control employees possess influences their perceptions of fairness. Fairness perceptions will increase when employees are allowed to offer procedural inputs or to influence decision processes that will affect them (Williams, 1999). Studies on the interactional justice component indicated that providing justification or explanations of the decision making processes can positively influence justice perceptions associated with outcomes from those processes (Williams, 1999). In sum, allowing employees to take part in the decision-making process and giving them an explanation for the outcome they receive is believed to increase the probability that employees will perceive an outcome as fair and just.

A second component of Thibaut and Walker’s (1975) framework includes decision control, which refers to the extent that any one of the participants may independently determine the outcome of the dispute. For example, a referee may influence the calls made during a game but not the final score or outcome (process control). A competition judge, on the other hand, assesses the quality of a performance but does not influence the process of the performance itself (decision control). A typology of dispute-resolution procedures resulted from combining the different forms of process control and decision control. These procedures are (a) autocratic procedures- where the third party has control over processes and decisions; (b) arbitration procedures- where the third party has control over decisions, but not processes; (c)
mediation procedures- third party has control over processes, but not decisions; (d) moot procedures- third party shares control over processes and decisions with disputants; and (e) bargaining procedures- third party has no control over processes and decisions (Folger & Greenberg, 1985).

Leventhal (1976) differed from Thibaut and Walker (1975) in his conceptualization of procedural justice as a consideration in the dispute-resolution process. Leventhal referred to procedural justice as “procedural fairness.” He suggested procedural fairness is an aspect of reward allocation that has been disregarded (as cited in Folger & Greenberg, 1985). The basic nature of Leventhal’s conceptualization was that different procedural elements are used to form evaluations and perceptions of fairness. He identified seven different procedural elements, each of which represented a procedural aspect considered in perceptions of fairness: (a) selection of agents- procedures for determining who makes allocation decisions; (b) setting ground rules- procedures for determining and evaluating potential rewards, and the behaviors necessary to attain them; (c) gathering information- procedures for obtaining and using information about reward recipients; (d) decision structure- procedures for defining the structure of the allocative decision process (e.g., the successive ordering of individual and group decisions); (e) appeals- procedures for seeking redress against unsatisfactory decisions; (f) safeguards- procedures for ensuring that the decision-making body does not abuse its power; and (g) change mechanisms- procedures enabling allocation practices to be altered (Folger & Greenberg, 1985).

Leventhal, Karuza, and Fry believed that information gathered concerning each of the seven procedural elements could be used to evaluate the fairness of the procedure
itself (as cited in Folger & Greenberg, 1985). The researchers formulated six procedural rules for evaluating the fairness of the procedures. They are (a) *consistency rule*- allocation procedures should be consistent across persons and over time; (b) *bias suppression rule*- personal self-interest in the allocation process should be prevented; (c) *accuracy rule*- decisions must be based on accurate information; (d) *correctibility rule*- opportunities must exist to enable decisions to be modified; (e) *representativeness rule*- the allocation process must represent the concerns of all recipients; and (f) *ethicality rule*- allocations must be based on prevailing moral and ethical standards (Folger & Greenberg, 1985).

There are a number of similarities and differences among the researchers and their frameworks of procedural justice. Leventhal’s approach is more structured; he argued that before the establishment and maintenance of distributive fairness a precondition of procedural fairness must be met (as cited in Folger & Greenberg, 1985). In contrast, Thibaut and Walker believed that procedural and distributive justice can be separate from each other. The researchers claimed that although procedural justice often leads to distributive justice, it is possible for distributive justice outcomes to be achieved without implementing any special procedure (Folger & Greenberg, 1985).

In sum, procedural justice is the perceived fairness of the process or procedure used to determine work-related outcomes. Research has indicated that the means by which outcomes are determined may be just as important to the individual employees as the outcome itself (Williams, 1999). The next section focuses on the equity theory, the basic premise of distributive justice, and the basis for the underlying assumptions related to perceptions of distributive fairness in the workplace.
**Equity Theory**

The premise of the equity theory is that people hold beliefs about the value of their contributions at work and how well these contributions are recognized and compensated (Pinder, 1998). Individuals form their beliefs in a social context in which they compare how well they are being treated in comparison with how others are being treated. When people believe that they are being under-recognized or underpaid compared to others, they become unhappy and are therefore motivated to restore equity or a balanced situation. The cognitive process in equity theory is essentially that proposed in Festinger’s (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance theory proposed that (a) discrepant cognitions produce psychological tension within the individual, (b) tension is unpleasant for the individual, and (c) individuals will take action to reduce the tension.

Equity theory is the most common variation of dissonance or balance theory in the examination of work motivation. Adams (1965) proposed the equity theory of work motivation, drawn from the social comparison principal. Equity theory states that how hard an individual is willing to work is a function of social comparisons of his or her input/outcome ratio to the input/outcome ratio of others. Adams suggested that motivation had a social origin since it was a function of how a person saw him or herself in comparison to other people (as cited in Muchinsky, 1997).

Adam’s (1965) equity theory is based on the following three assumptions (a) people develop beliefs about what is a fair and equitable reward for their contributions to their job; (b) people tend to compare their relationship with their employer with what they perceive to be the nature of a relationship others have with the employer; and (c)
when people believe their own outcomes are not equitable compared with those outcomes of a referent other, they will be motivated to do something to change it. Individuals have perceptions of the value of the contributions they make to their work. These are referred to as inputs. Inputs can be anything the individual feels he or she personally contributes in a given work setting and can include such things as education level, experience, intellectual abilities, or seniority. Individuals combine their perceived inputs into a total value they believe they contribute to their job (Pinder, 1998).

The equity theory also states that individuals hold beliefs about the nature and quantity of the consequences they receive as a result of doing their work. These consequences are called outcomes and include all the factors that the individual perceives as having some personal value — such as pay, fringe benefits, status, promotion, job satisfaction, and opportunities to learn (Pinder, 1998). According to this theory, outcomes will be perceived as fair when the ratio of outcomes to inputs is equal across individuals (Harder, 1991). People evaluate their outcomes relative to their inputs and form individual opinions about how well they are being treated (Pinder, 1998).

The most important aspect of this social comparison process is the belief that inputs and outcomes are evaluated in ratio terms, otherwise known as equity ratios. In other words, people consider their own inputs and outcomes relative to the perceived inputs and outcomes of others (Pinder, 1998). Individuals can tolerate another person earning more money and other benefits if they believe that person is contributing more inputs to the job. Equity ratios can be represented as follows: Person 1’s beliefs about his or her own outcomes and inputs compared to Person 1’s beliefs about Person 2’s outcomes and inputs.
An important issue to consider is whom do individuals choose to compare their input/outcome ratios against? This issue is also known as choosing a referent other. Researchers have suggested that individuals often experience equity or inequity in relation to the degree of balance they perceive between their own inputs and outcomes compared to some internalized standard (i.e., referent other). Social comparison theory predicts people will compare their beliefs and attitudes with others they perceive as similar to themselves (Pinder, 1998). Inequity will exist when the input-outcome ratios between the individual and the referent other are unequal. Inequity is suggested to create tension which motivates the individual to try to restore equity (Harder, 1991). Equity can be restored in the following ways: (a) Changing Effort to Restore Equity: when an individual feels they are being inequitably treated they will increase or decrease their effort level, depending on the type of inequity they are experiencing. Feelings of underpayment may lead to reduced levels of performance or feelings of overpayment may lead to an increase in productivity to be consistent with the individual’s pay rate. (b) Cognitive Reevaluations of Outcomes: when reality cannot be changed, the perceptions that influence the motivational force will be altered. For example, an individual may reevaluate any or all of the inputs or outcomes he or she has considered. The person could investigate and learn that a co-worker who seems to be better compensated may have a better set of credentials than the person originally thought. (c) Dysfunctional Reactions to Perceived Equity: according to Greenberg (1990; 1993), one reaction that individuals may have to being inequitably treated is to steal from their employers. In terms of equity theory, theft of property, ideas, information, or money from an employer creates an increase in the outcomes an individual takes away from the job, just not the
one the employer had in mind. (d) Silence: a consequence of perceived injustice is employee silence. Employees can remain silent, neither protesting nor attempting to voice their views. The individual will withdraw but remain with the organization (Pinder, 1998).

Justice is thought to exist in organizations when people receive the outcomes they deserve or feel entitled to. These outcomes include pay raises, transfers, suspension, or bonuses. Not all outcomes are seen as favorable. As stated above, people hold beliefs about their individual contributions at work and how well these contributions are recognized and rewarded. Their beliefs are formed in a social context in which people compare how they are being treated or compensated with how they believe others are being treated and compensated for their inputs (Pinder, 1998). The basic premise of the equity theory is that when individuals believe they are being under-compensated for their time and effort compared to others around them they experience dissonance and are motivated to do something to reduce it.

Distributive justice is primarily based on the equity theory of motivation. Distributive justice will be explained next followed by a discussion of punishment in the workplace.

Distributive Justice

Like all forms of justice, distributive justice is heavily based on values that refer to the rules or standards by which judgements of fairness are created (Muchinsky, 1997). Much of the literature on fairness has focused on the allocation of resources among multiple parties (Farwell & Weiner, 1996). As previously stated, the three rules or standards commonly distinguished as the basis for distributive justice are the equity
distribution rule, the equality distribution rule, and the need distribution rule. The *equity distribution rule* follows from equity theory and suggests that individuals should receive rewards that are consistent with the contributions they make or bring to the work situation. The *equality distribution rule* suggests that all individuals should have an equal chance of receiving the same outcome or reward, regardless of different inputs or personal characteristics such as ability. Finally, the *need distribution* states that rewards and outcomes should be allocated on the basis of individual need. Any special consideration the needy individual receives would be seen as the basis of fairness (Muchinsky, 1997).

Distributive justice, the manner in which organizational rewards or sanctions are distributed to employees, is based on the equity theory. Distributive justice deals with the distribution of rewards and sanctions among people and addresses questions such as who is to receive what, how much of it, and how fairly are these outcomes distributed (Pinder, 1998). If employees believe they are being treated fairly, they will most likely hold more positive attitudes about their supervisors, their work, and their work outcomes (Moorman, 1991). One focus of the research on distributive justice has been on the relationship between justice perceptions and work behavior. Past and present work on equity theory has shown that employee job performance may increase or decrease in relation to employee perceptions of equitable or inequitable outcomes (Moorman, 1991).

Research on the topic of distributive justice has focused primarily on the equitable distributions of monetary rewards. Fair distributions are those in which input-output ratios are perceived to be equal to that of a referent other and which have resulted in positive psychological and behavioral outcomes (Ball, Trevino, & Sims, 1994). Past
studies have consistently shown that distributive fairness is important in predicting individually derived outcomes such as job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and turnover intention (Welbourne, 1998).

This review of the literature thus far has identified and differentiated between the two major components of organizational justice, procedural and distributive justice. The present study will address distributive justice perceptions as they relate to punishment in organizations. Thus, the focus of the literature review will now be directed toward research on punishment and its perceived fairness in terms of distributive justice.

**Punishment**

The use of punishment has been discouraged in organizations because it is thought to produce undesirable behavioral side effects such as aggression (Trevino, 1992). Despite the negative remarks made in past reviews on this topic, the use of punishment is relatively common in organizational settings (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980). Punishment can be defined as either the removal of positive, rewarding outcomes or the presentation of aversive events following an undesired behavior in order to reduce the frequency of that behavior (Ball, Trevino, & Sims, 1993). In organizational settings, punishment is formally delivered by managers and supervisors via actions such as written and verbal warnings or reprimands, suspensions, and terminations (Greer & Labig, 1987). 

Disciplinary action is usually taken to reduce or eliminate an undesirable behavior (Ball & Sims, 1991). Arvey and Ivancevich (1980) stated that punishment may be either primary or conditioned. The first, termed the primary aversive event, involves the administration of an aversive event (e.g., electric shock) after a response in order to reduce the likelihood of the response being repeated in the future. This approach includes
removing positive rewards or outcomes after an undesired response has been made. Examples would include punishment taking the form of the withdrawal of privileges, being ignored, or not being considered for promotion. A secondary or conditioned aversive event involves a stimulus that becomes unpleasant through repeated pairings with an already aversive event (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980). Most of the aversive events that take place in organizational settings are of the secondary or conditioned type. Examples include verbal or written reprimands, nods, and gestures.

**Disadvantages of Punishment**

Historically, punishment has been viewed unfavorably by organizational psychologists for several reasons consistently cited throughout the organizational literature (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980; Ball & Sims, 1991). The reasons are as follows:

(a) It is thought that the use of punishment by an employer will result in undesirable emotional side effects and behavioral consequences (e.g., anxiety, aggressive acts, or withdrawal). (b) The use of punishment is thought to be unethical and non-humanitarian. (c) Punishment is said to never really eliminate undesirable responses. The effects of punishment are said to be only temporary, that is, the undesirable response is only temporarily suppressed and will return full force when the threat of punishment is removed.

Despite these arguments against the use of punishment in organizational settings, it has been and continues to be used in the workplace. Bandura pointed out that punishment is a frequent, naturally occurring event that shapes much of human behavior. Undesirable consequences following undesirable responses, such as sliding from driving too fast on icy roads or getting burned when touching a hot stove, can increase the speed
of learning desirable behaviors. It has been suggested that we should focus on using punishment as a constructive learning tool (as cited in Ball & Sims, 1991).

Although much of the literature on punishment has been viewed in a negative context, punishment is widely used in organizations. There are a number of factors that influence the effectiveness of punishment for both the individual receiving the punishment and for others or co-workers who witness the implementation of punishment. These factors are discussed in the following sections.

Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Punishment

There are certain variables believed to influence the effectiveness of punishment (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980). They are as follows: (a) *Timing of Punishment*- Aversive stimuli can be introduced at different times during punishment applications (e.g., while punished responses are being emitted, immediately following the punished response, or sometime after the response has occurred). The effectiveness of punishment increases when the aversive event is delivered close in time to the punished response. (b) *Intensity*- Laboratory experiments have consistently shown that punishment achieves greater effectiveness when the aversive stimulus is relatively intense. The implication of these findings is that punishment should start out at a relatively high level of intensity in order for it to be effective. Contrary to lab results, Arvey and Ivancevich (1980) suggested that moderate levels of punishment would be more effective because high intensity punishment can potentially cause anxiety and inhibit the learning process. (c) *Relationships with Punishing Agents*- Punishment may be most effective where supervisors have established close relationships with respect from and for employees.
(d) **Schedule of Punishment**- The schedule of punishment is as important in correcting the unwanted behavior as the nature of the aversive event. Punishment should occur after every response (i.e., on a continuous schedule) to be most effective. (e) **Provision of Rational**- Punishment would be more effective if a clear rational or explanation is provided for the punishment process, consistent with the principles of procedural justice. (f) **Alternative Responses Available**- The effect of punishment is greatly enhanced if subjects have an alternative desirable response available.

The timing, intensity, relationships with punishing agents, schedule of punishment, provision of rationale, and alternative responses are all factors that influence the effectiveness of punishment. The following section discusses the effects punishment can have on the individual or employee being punished and those witnessing the allocation of punishment in terms of their perceptions of fairness, attitudes, and behavioral reactions.

**Effects of Punishment on Individuals**

Bennett (1998) proposed that the two consequences of punishment (i.e., a change in the response that is being punished and the negative emotional and behavioral reactions of dissatisfaction, anger, and retaliation) actually result from two independent components of the punishment experience: the magnitude of punishment and the consistency of the allocation of the punishment. Bennett proposed that the magnitude of punishment impacts the undesired response since high levels of aversive outcomes result in a greater amount of behavioral changes than do low levels of aversive outcomes. The magnitude of the punishment is expected to have an inverse effect on the frequency of the punished behavior. The consistency of the allocation procedure is proposed to impact
emotional and behavioral reactions to the punishment. Individuals are concerned with both the outcomes they receive and the fairness with which that outcome was distributed. Ball et al. (1994) found that punishment viewed as appropriate in magnitude and consistent with what referent others had received resulted in an improvement in the employee's performance. Other field research supports the finding that employees dislike inconsistent and overly harsh punishment and become angry and distrustful of those implementing it (Arvey et al., 1984).

Ball et al. (1994) used distributive justice theory to focus on the fairness of punishment allocations. They proposed that punishment events that are perceived to be distributively fair would be related to positive outcomes. The two distributive characteristics investigated were the severity of and the equity of the punishment. Individuals compare their punishment to those of others that have committed similar acts. In this study, equity referred to the perceived appropriateness of a punishment compared to what others received. In addition to these outside comparisons, individuals judge fairness by comparing what happened to them with their beliefs about what is just. Severity appropriateness refers to the perceived appropriateness of the punishment relative to the misconduct or offensive behavior (Ball et al., 1994). The results indicated that for subsequent performance to improve, it was important that subordinates perceived that the punishment matched the misconduct and was consistent with what others have received in similar situations. In an earlier study, Ball (1991) proposed that employees would evaluate punishment outcomes in terms of the intensity of the punishment in relation to the punishments referent others had received and the misconduct itself. Ball et
al. (1993) found perceived fairness of a punishment is a powerful underlying force that influences an employee’s reaction to the punishment events.

Ball et al. (1994) investigated previous organizational justice research to explain subordinate reactions to specific punishment events. According to Furby, the term perceived justice is an evaluation or judgement about the rightness or fairness of the treatment of an individual by others (as cited in Ball, et al., 1994). An individual’s reaction to a punishment event should be related to his or her justice perceptions (Ball et al., 1994). The conceptual framework used in the Ball et al. study focused on a punished subordinate’s perceptions of the procedural and distributive aspects of a specific punishment event (Ball et al., 1994). The framework also proposed that the subordinate’s personality should predispose the individual to certain perceptions and the subordinate’s perceptions of the punishment event would influence subsequent outcomes. Ball et al. investigated two personality characteristics, belief in a just world and negative affectivity, which are believed to be theoretically relevant to subordinate perceptions of punishment events.

*Belief in a just world* refers to an individual’s belief that people get the rewards and punishments they deserve. Individuals high in their belief in a just world have preconceived ideas of appropriate punishments for particular situations. As a result, when they engage in behaviors that oppose organizational rules, norms, and policies, they expect to be punished a certain way and believe that they deserve the punishment (Ball et al., 1994). In this case, individuals are more likely to view the punishment as just. However, individuals high in negative affectivity indicated the opposite, and felt the punishments to be harsher.
Negative affectivity refers to an ongoing negative self-concept that influences the interpretation of information (Ball et al., 1994). In other words, individuals high in negative affectivity tend to focus on negative attributes in themselves, their jobs, the world around them and, in general, view punishment events as less equitable and much harsher than do others. The organizational justice-based explanation for this finding is that positive outcomes in employees’ behaviors and attitudes resulted because the subordinates perceived the punishment to have been appropriate for the misconduct and to have been fair and just (Ball et al., 1994).

Past research has shown that the consequences of punishment may actually result from both the magnitude of punishment and the consistency of the distribution of punishment (Bennett, 1998). This result is expected to have an inverse effect on the frequency of the punished behavior. Researchers have found that punishment viewed as an appropriate amount and consistent with what referent others have received resulted in improvement in employee performance. Two distributive characteristics that relate to an employee’s reaction to punishment are the severity and equity of the punishment. Punishment will be seen as more fair when its severity is appropriate to the misconduct and when the punishment is consistent with what others have received for similar behaviors. The following section discusses the effects of punishment on “observers” (co-workers or others) who take an interest or witness the punishment.

Effects of Punishment on Observers

Most of the research on punishment in organizations has focused on the direct effects of punishment on an individual. Trevino (1992) took this research one step further and developed a framework with which to study the effects of punishment on
“observers” who are other organizational members showing an interest in the punishment of a co-worker (Trevino, 1992). The premise was that punishment viewed in a social context or as a social event may serve to uphold social norms, to signal appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, to deter misconduct from other group members or observers, and to create perceptions of the supervisor and the organization as just or unjust (Trevino, 1992). Based on social learning research, Trevino proposed that subjects who observe another co-worker or group member being punished are less likely to engage in similar misconduct. Trevino also considered two aspects of distributive justice, the intensity of the punishment in relation to the given misconduct (severity appropriateness) and in relation to what similar others have received (consistency).

Severity appropriateness refers to how observers may evaluate punishment outcomes in relation to the specific misconduct or violation committed. This relationship or comparison is similar to a “just deserts model” based on observers beliefs about levels and intensity of punishment that fit specific violations (Trevino, 1992). Research in both organizational and criminal justice areas have found that observers prefer more severe punishments than do the offenders, which suggests that the observers use different methods of evaluation than those used by the individual implementing the punishment. A retributive justice perspective, another relevant justice concept, suggests that observers desire to protect the group and its values. Retributive justice is a social justice concept that involves observers’ evaluations and judgements regarding the fair distribution of punishment. This concept is based on the idea that people have mechanisms for dealing with misconduct and expect to see punishment follow the violation of rules and norms.
The retributive justice perspective suggests that observers are in fact motivated to see rule violators punished (Trevino, 1992).

*Consistency* refers to observers' perceptions of the fairness of the punishment outcomes, which also can be based on social comparison processes (Trevino, 1992). In accordance with equity theory, consistency suggests that observers want to know if the punished individual had been treated in like manner as others who had engaged in similar misconduct in the past. Those punishment outcomes perceived to be consistent across employees can be expected to be perceived as more fair than outcomes that are more severe or more lenient than those others have received (Trevino, 1992).

The direct influence of a punishment outcome on observer's behavior can be explained by *deterrence theory* as well. Deterrence theory suggests that characteristics of a punishment event will influence deterrence effectiveness. Supporters of this theory argue that subsequent misconduct in observers of punishment is deterred primarily by increasing the perceived risks of the punished behavior (Trevino, 1992). If an employee believes a particular behavior will be punished and the punishment will be severe enough to outweigh the potential benefits of the misconduct, that individual is more likely to refrain from engaging in the misconduct. Organizational punishment researchers have related the severity of the punishment to the formation of punishment expectancies and found that only severe punishment of misconduct influenced observer's punishment expectancies. This finding implies that individuals have preconceived beliefs or expectations concerning different punishment situations based on their own past experiences. Thus, a severe punishment may be required in getting their attention and influencing their future behaviors (Trevino 1992).
Implications for theory, research, and practice follow from Trevino's framework:

(a) This framework shifts from the behaviorist approach of past research to a broader theoretical view of punishment as a social phenomenon that influences both observers' cognitions and actions, as well as those of the individual engaging in negative behavior.

(b) By shifting the focus to observers and social contexts, this framework suggests a more complex view of punishment as an event with both positive and negative meaning for the co-workers, team members, or observers depending on their understanding of the event.

(c) This framework extends the organizational justice theories to punishment, which is a relevant and important construct for future organizational research. (d) This research focused on the observers' reactions to specific manager-imposed punishments. Future research should expand on this idea to evaluate justice perceptions and evaluations of less explicit manager-imposed or work-group imposed punishments (Trevino, 1992).

In sum, the severity and consistency of punishment in organizational settings effects not only the punished individual but his or her co-workers as well. In organizations, managerial judgements regarding the severity of particular misconduct and the determination of appropriate punishment events have important implications (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974). Employees' willingness to change their behavior and obey organizational rules and norms in the future may be heavily influenced by their perceptions that they have been treated fairly. Rosen and Jerdee examined the influence of individual and organizational factors on disciplinary judgement by manipulating the severity of organizational consequences for rule infractions and various characteristics of the individuals. They found that individuals assigned greater responsibility and recommended more severe punishment to an actor of unacceptable behavior when the
organizational consequences were more serious and when that employee was disadvantaged or poorly compensated compared to others, thus indicating a relationship between equity and discipline.

Greer and Labig (1987) explored employee reactions to the use of disciplinary actions in the workplace. Their results indicated that several features of the disciplinary setting, such as intensity or severity of the punishment, were associated with employee reactions. The more severe the punishment appeared to be was related to a greater reduction of undesired behaviors. According to Ball et al. (1994), perceived harshness is a distributive characteristic of the events that combines concerns about consistency and severity appropriateness of punishment. Perceived harshness indicates that, for subsequent performance to improve, it is important for an employee to perceive the severity of the punishment as matching the misconduct and as consistent with what others have received. Ball et al. (1994) stated that a subordinate's evaluation of the distributive aspect of the punishment, severity or harshness, is the most important factor influencing punishment effectiveness.

Summary of the Literature

Organizational justice research has demonstrated that when employees believe they have been treated fairly they will have positive attitudes about their work, work outcomes, and supervisors. Both procedural and distributive justice characteristics influence perceptions of fairness. Equity theory, the basis for distributive justice, holds that employees who feel undercompensated or unfairly treated will experience dissonance and may engage in undesirable behavior to restore equity. Punishment is frequently used to eliminate undesirable behavior in the workplace. Research has shown that the
appropriateness of the punishment to the misconduct will influence an employee’s perception of fairness. More severe punishments have been shown to deter others (i.e., those individuals witnessing a co-worker’s punishment) from engaging in similar misconduct.

Present Study

The present study focused on perceptions of fairness of punishment in a sports team setting. The rationale behind the use of sports teams is that it is a group setting that is amenable to the target perceptions of fairness to both the individual being punished and the other members of the team. Sports teams are pervasive in our society, and most people are at least somewhat familiar with them. This study attempted to determine if principles derived from business organizations will generalize to sports teams. Specifically the researcher investigated the effect of two levels of severity of misconduct (severe and moderate), two levels of severity of punishment (severe or moderate), and the equity of the distribution of the punishment (consistent (equitable) or conditional (inequitable)) in a sports team setting. Consistent punishment indicates that each member of the team is treated equally and receives similar punishment for similar offenses. Conditional punishment indicates differential treatment of the team’s star or most valuable player. The dependent variables were perceptions of fairness to the punished athlete and to others on the team, and the deterrence of the punishment to future misconduct. It was hypothesized that

Hypothesis 1: Consistent punishment across all team members, including the star player, will be perceived as more fair than will conditional punishment. This hypothesis is based on the equity theory and individuals’ comparisons of their
outcomes to referent others. Hypothesis 2: More severe punishment will act as a greater deterrent to future offenses than will moderate punishment. This proposed outcome follows from the research on the severity and intensity of the punishment and its effects on the individual being punished and its effects on others witnessing the punishment (Ball et al., 1994).
Method

Scenario Development

Hypothetical scenarios were developed representing severe and moderate team infractions and punishments. Two levels of the distributive justice variable, two levels of the punishment variable, and two levels of the offense variable were combined to create eight scenarios. All eight scenarios may be found in Appendix A. The two levels of the distributive justice variables were consistent and conditional punishment. The two levels for the punishment were moderate and severe, and the two levels of the offense were moderate and severe.

Stimulus-Rating Study

A stimulus-rating study was conducted to obtain severity ratings of possible team offenses and punishments to be used in scenarios. An initial list of violations and punishments was generated by the researcher. This list was refined by two intercollegiate basketball coaches from two different universities, resulting in a list of 17 infractions and 11 punishments. A questionnaire was distributed to 28 intercollegiate athletes and eight coaches at two universities as well as to 39 undergraduate students from a third university. The instrument consisted of the 17 infractions that were rated on a five point scale ranging from 1=not severe to 5=extremely severe. The instrument also included the 11 punishments for violation of team rules that were rated on the same five-point scale. The mean ratings and standard deviations for the infractions and punishments may be found in Appendix B. Demographic information indicated participants had a variety of
athletic experience, (6 Recreation League, 2 Intramurals, 21 High School Varsity, 28 NCAA Intercollegiate); the sport(s) the respondent played varied and included basketball, tennis, track, soccer, and cheerleading. The participants were 15 males (20%) and 60 females (80%) ranging in age from 18 to 43 years, and the mean age was 20.2 years (SD = 3.96). Of these participants, 22.7% reported they were African American, 72% were White, 1.3% Hispanic, and 2.7% reported as other.

Based on the findings from the stimulus-rating study, a moderate and severe violation and punishment were selected for the scenarios. The severe punishment -- that is, dismissal from the team -- was clearly rated the most severe by all three subject pools. The moderate punishment -- that is, suspension from practice -- was the punishment rated closest to the midrange and was also the median for this variable. The two most severe offenses were clearly failing a drug test and committing a felony. Failing the drug test was selected for use in the scenarios. For the moderate offense, the median response in all three subject pools, unsportsmanlike conduct, was selected.

The eight different scenarios were created using combinations of all three of the independent variables. The severe and moderate punishments and offenses, as rated by the three subject pools, were used in conjunction with either a consistent or conditional distribution of the punishment.

Participants

Undergraduate students enrolled at a mid-sized southeastern university participated in the study. An initial sample of 240 participants completed the scenario-based questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire was a manipulation check to ensure that the participants understood the dynamics of the scenario situation.
Participants were asked to indicate the status of each independent variable. The data for any participant who incorrectly reported the status of any independent variable were dropped from the analyses.

The resulting sample consisted of 164 participants. The average age of the participants was 26 years (SD = 7.51). Of the 164 participants, 29.3% were male and 70.7% were female. Close to one third (31.7%) of the participants participated in high school varsity athletics, 23% participated in sports at the recreation league level, 12% participated in intercollegiate athletics, and 7% played at the intramural level. A majority of the 164 participants (86.9%) were white, while 9.5% were African American, 1.5% were Asian, .5% were Hispanic, and 1.5% listed Other ethnicities.

Procedure

Each participant received a questionnaire containing a scenario. Participants read the scenario and then rated the fairness of the distribution of the punishment and whether or not the punishment is likely to deter individuals from engaging in the same or similar misconduct in the future. All respondents were asked to respond to the same four questions following the scenarios. Specific response options were provided for each question. The questionnaire may be found in Appendix A.

The scenarios and questionnaires were distributed to the participants during the last 30 minutes of their class and took approximately 25 minutes to complete. The participants were asked to read and respond to the hypothetical scenarios as if they were a member of the team in question.
Results

The design of this study was a 2 (offenses: severe, moderate) x 2 (punishments: severe, moderate) x 2 (distribution rule: consistent, conditional) fully crossed factorial design. Bivariate correlations were conducted between the dependent variables. As seen in Table 1 all four dependent variables were significantly correlated with each other.

Table 1
Correlation Coefficients for the Four Dependent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fairness to Player</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fairness to Team</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Deter Player</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Deter Team</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All correlations are significant at p < .01.

Consequently, a 2 (distribution: consistent or conditional) X 2 (punishment level: moderate or severe) X 2 (violation level: moderate or severe) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the four dependent variables. The results indicated a significant Wilk’s Lambda for the model (F (4) = 1095.54, p < .001, Eta Squared = .97). Univariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to further explore the significant MANOVA.
A 2 (distribution) x 2 (punishment level) x 2 (violation level) ANOVA with fairness to player as the dependent variable found a significant main effect for distribution of punishment (F(1, 157) = 151.59, p < .001). Consistent punishment (M = 4.59, SD = .77, N = 93) was rated significantly higher than was conditional punishment (M = 2.38, SD = 1.49, N = 71). As seen in Table 2, none of the other effects reached significance.

A 2 (distribution) x 2 (punishment level) x 2 (violation level) ANOVA with fairness to other team members as the dependent variable was also conducted. The analysis found a significant main effect for distribution of punishment (F(1, 157) = 979.66, p < .001). Consistent punishment (M = 4.60, SD = .72, N = 93) was rated significantly higher than conditional punishment (M = 1.31, SD = .58, N = 71). As seen in Table 2, none of the other effects reached significance.
Table 2

Analysis of Variance for Fairness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Fairness to Player</th>
<th>Fairness to Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Of Punishment (DP)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>151.59****&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>979.66 ****&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of Punishment (SP)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td>.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of Violation (SV)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>.859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP x SP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.291</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP x SV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.346</td>
<td>.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP x SV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.527</td>
<td>.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP x SP x SV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.279</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>(1.274)</td>
<td>(.439 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Value in parentheses is Mean Square for Error

**** = p < .0001

<sup>a</sup> Eta<sup>2</sup> = .49

<sup>b</sup> Eta<sup>2</sup> = .86

The results for the first two ANOVAs indicate that Hypothesis 1, that consistent punishment would be perceived as more fair than would conditional punishment, was supported.
A 2 (distribution) x 2 (severity of punishment) x 2 (severity of violation) ANOVA with deterrence to player as the dependent variable found a significant main effect for distribution of punishment (F(1, 157) = 139.09, p < .001). Consistent punishment (M = 3.90, SD = 1.17, N = 93) was rated as a significantly greater deterrent than was conditional punishment (M = 1.76, SD = 1.15, N = 71). A significant main effect was also found for violation level (F(1, 157) = 6.20, p < .001). The moderate violation (M = 3.16, SD = 1.64, N = 87) was rated as a greater deterrent than was the severe violations (M = 2.77, SD = 1.48, N = 77), although the Eta\(^2\) for this effect was only .04. None of the other effects reached significance (see Table 3).

A 2 (distribution) x 2 (severity of punishment) x 2 (severity of violation) ANOVA with deterrence to other team members as the dependent variable indicated a significant main effect for distribution of punishment (F(1, 157) = 229.51, p < .001). Consistent punishment (M = 4.09, SD = 1.00, N = 93) was rated as a significantly greater deterrent than was conditional punishment (M = 1.83, SD = .94, N = 71). The analysis also found a significant main effect for punishment level (F(1, 157) = 10.58, p < .001). Severe punishment (M = 3.37, SD = 1.50, N = 78) was rated as a greater deterrent than was moderate punishment (M = 2.87, SD = 1.44, N = 86), although the Eta\(^2\) was only .06.

The results of these ANOVAs indicated that Hypothesis 2, that the more severe punishment level would be more likely to deter future offenses, was only partially supported. Severe punishment was rated as more likely than moderate punishment to deter other team members but not the offending player.
Table 3

Analysis of Variance for Deterrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Deterrence to Player</th>
<th>Deterrence to Team Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>139.09****&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>205.81****&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>10.57 ***&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.21*&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP x SP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP x SV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP x SV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP x SP x SV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>(1.328)</td>
<td>(.897)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Value in parentheses is Mean Square for Error

<sup>a</sup>\(E_{\eta}^2 = .47\)

<sup>b</sup>\(E_{\eta}^2 = .04\)

<sup>c</sup>\(E_{\eta}^2 = .59\)

<sup>d</sup>\(E_{\eta}^2 = .06\)

**** = p < .0001

*** = p < .001

* = p < .05
Additional Analyses

Bivariate correlations were conducted between the demographic variables and the dependent variables to investigate potential relationships. The results indicated that gender was significantly correlated with deterrence to other team members. More specifically, women demonstrated a greater tendency than men to rate that the athlete’s punishment would likely be a deterrent to others ($r = .17, p < .05$). A significant correlation was found between gender and athletic experience; men tend to have more athletic experience than women do ($r = -.31, p < .01$). Gender and athletic experience were not significantly correlated with any other variables.
Discussion

The results of this study indicate support for the author's first hypothesis, that consistent punishment would be perceived as more fair than conditional punishment. Hypothesis One was rooted in both equity and distributive justice theories, particularly the equality distribution rule which implies that all individuals should have an equal chance of receiving the same outcome or reward, regardless of different inputs or personal characteristics such as ability. In this study, the scenarios that distributed consistent punishment implied that everyone on the team would be treated equally regardless of how many points they scored. Punishing the star player in the same manner as any other member of the team is a straightforward example of the equality distribution rule in effect.

The results also support punishment theory in that consistency of the allocation of punishment impacts an individual’s emotional and behavioral reactions to the punishment itself. Researchers have found that consistent punishment of individuals resulted in improved performance. The perceived fairness of punishment is a cogent force that can effect an employee’s reaction to the punished events (Ball et al., 1993) and influence their future behavior. Past field research has also found that employees dislike inconsistent punishment and become distrustful of those implementing it (Arvey et al., 1984).

Hypothesis Two stated that the more severe the punishment level the more likely it would be to deter future offenses. This hypothesis was based on the magnitude/severity aspects of the punishment theories. The results indicated the severe
punishment was more likely to deter other team members but not the offending player from future offenses. One possible explanation for the finding that severe punishment was not a stronger deterrent to the player may follow from the fact that the severe punishment was dismissal from the team. A “dismissed” player would not have the opportunity for future violation if he or she were no longer on the team; thus the punishment could not deter future rule violation. The lack of a significant effect for deterrence for the player may have been the result of the wording of the item assessing this variable. Re-wording the item to state “if player were still on the team . . .” may illicit different responses that would support the hypothesis regarding the deterring effects of severe punishment. It is not possible to make this determination from the present results, however this point should be investigated in future research.

These results support the principle behind the effects of punishment on observers. When punishment is viewed in a social, organizational, or team context it may serve to uphold social norms within a group. The researcher’s results support Trevino’s (1992) theory that individuals who observe another co-worker, or in the context of this study another team member, being punished reported they would be less likely to engage in similar misconduct. The results show support for and can be explained by the deterrence theory, which suggests that subsequent misconduct in observers of a punishment is deterred primarily by increasing the perceived risks of the punished behavior. If an employee or team member believes that a particular behavior will be punished and the punishment will be severe enough to outweigh the potential benefits, then the individual is more likely to refrain from engaging in the misconduct.
A significant main effect was found for distribution of punishment for all four of the dependent variables. These results support the literature in that consistency in the distribution of punishment should be seen as more fair. Consistent punishment is seen as more fair for both the individuals engaging in the misconduct as well as for the other team members witnessing the punishment. Consistency of punishment also had a significant main effect on the deterrence of players and other team members from future misconduct. These results support the literature in that punishment consistent with what others have received will result in an improvement in behavior or act as a deterrent to subsequent misbehavior. Team members’ willingness to obey social rules and norms in the future is heavily influenced by their perceptions of fair treatment. The results show that consistent punishment significantly impacts these fairness perceptions.

A significant main effect was also found for the severity of violation when deterrence to the player was the dependent variable. Interestingly, moderate violations were rated as a greater deterrent than severe violations. When deterrence to the other team members was the dependent variable, a significant main effect was found for both the distribution of punishment and the severity of the punishment. Consistent distribution of punishment and the more severe the punishment itself were both found to be greater deterrents to subsequent misconduct of other team members. This finding is consistent with the effects of punishment on observers literature in that observers want to know that the offender was punished similarly to others engaging in the same offense and that the severity of the punishment was appropriate to the offense committed. According to the literature, an employee’s evaluation of perceived harshness, a distributive characteristic that combines the consistency and severity of aspects of the punishment, is an important
factor influencing the effectiveness of punishment (Ball et al., 1994). In the context of this study, effectiveness of punishment would be deterring an individual from committing the same offense in the future. The results indicate support for this point.

The results of the study found that gender was significantly correlated with deterrence to other team members. Women, more often than men, reported others would be deterred by the punished behavior. This result could possibly be attributed to the differences in social rules and norms between males and females in any social or team setting. These gender differences could be an interesting topic for further research in this area. The analyses also indicated that there was a significant correlation between gender and athletic experience, in that men tended to have more athletic experience than women do. This outcome is an accurate reflection of the higher rate of participation in athletics by men.

**Implications**

The results of this study lend further support to distributive justice and punishment theories, particularly for the effects of the consistency of punishment on perceptions of fairness to the player and team and on deterrence of future misconduct for both the player and team members. The finding that consistent punishment was rated most favorably is consistent with equity and distributive justice theories in that individuals want to be treated fairly in relation to how referent others are treated. If the punishment they receive for a specific behavior is similar to what another individual has received, they will feel they are receiving fair and just treatment. The present results also follow from punishment theory. Specifically, consistency in allocation of punishment is expected to impact emotional and behavioral reactions to the punishment. Consistent
punishment should help to ensure that individuals will perceive the punishment as fair and prevent them from reacting in a negative manner.

Another implication of this study is that the more severe the punishment, the more it will deter observers from engaging in similar misconduct. Having team members (or co-workers) witness the distribution of a severe punishment may be required to uphold team or group norms concerning what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Concerns and Future Research

There are several potential limitations of the present study. Using hypothetical scenarios is one of the most common and most feasible methods for conducting research. While this method has advantages, there are some disadvantages or limitations as well. In this study participants were asked to imagine themselves in a hypothetical situation that some of them, particularly those with no athletic experience, may never have encountered. Results may have been different if the study had targeted only those individuals with prior athletic team experience.

Some of the participants may not have fully understood the directions or they may have failed to comprehend the situation. The manipulation check in this study eliminated 71 out of 240 participants. The eliminated participants were unable to answer straightforward questions about the brief scenario they had just read.

Future researchers interested in the area of distributive justice and the fairness of punishment may want to pursue a different approach to collecting data. A sample of intercollegiate athletes may produce different and more representative results because all of these individuals would have real life experience with situations similar to those in the scenarios. Interviewing athletes about a time when they were affected by the misconduct
and punishment of another team member rather than using a hypothetical situation may provide more insight into the actual feelings of fairness and the implications of punishment.

Conclusion

The results of this study revealed that consistent punishment is perceived by individuals to be the most fair when dealing with misconduct and the most likely to aid in the deterrence of future offensive behavior. It was also noted that the severity appropriateness of the punishment to the misconduct was an important factor that influenced both perceptions of fairness and the likelihood of deterring future misconduct. These findings were consistent with the organizational justice and punishment literature.

Punishment has been and will continue to be used effectively in a variety of social settings such as sports teams, organizational environments, and in the classroom to improve performance and deter inappropriate behavior. Future research efforts in the areas of distributive justice and punishment theories should examine gender differences in team or social settings. Further research in the area of this study should sample actual athletes to obtain more representative results of their perceptions of fairness and their reactions to punishment in a competitive sports team situation.
References


APPENDIX A

Data Collection Protocol
TEAM FAIRNESS STUDY

This research is studying perceptions of fairness in a team setting. Fairness is concerned with the just treatment of individuals in group settings. Fairness is important because people want to be treated fairly. The researchers are also interested in whether there are differences in opinions of different groups of individuals such as athletes versus non-athletes, males versus females, older versus younger individuals, etc. In order to answer these research questions, we need the demographic information requested on this part of the questionnaire.

Please do NOT put your name anywhere on this material.

1. Athletic Experience (check all that apply)
   _____ Recreation League (e.g., YMCA, church league, etc.)
   _____ Intramurals
   _____ High School Varsity
   _____ NCAA Intercollegiate

2. Gender: _____ Male   _____ Female

3. Age: _____ years

4. Ethnicity:
   _____ African American   _____ Hispanic
   _____ White             _____ Asian
   _____ Other

DIRECTIONS:

On the following page is a hypothetical, but realistic scenario depicting a situation involving an intercollegiate basketball team. Please carefully read the scenario and answer the questions that follow it. When you have completed the questionnaire please wait until everyone else has finished. The researcher will then collect all of the questionnaires. Again, please read the scenario and questions carefully.
**Scenario:** Chris is an intercollegiate basketball player at State University. Chris is the star of the team and averages 23 points per game. During the last game Chris engaged in unsportsman-like conduct. The team rules state that the punishment for this type of team infraction is suspension from the next practice. Because the rules are applied equally to all team members, the coach suspended Chris from the following practice even though Chris is the star player.

Please answer the following 7 questions concerning the scenario described above. For the first 3 questions, please fill in the blanks based on the information in the scenario.

1.) In this situation what rule was violated? ________________ (fill in the blank)
2.) In this situation what punishment was implemented? ________________ (fill in the blank)
3.) Was the punishment in accordance with team rules? (circle one)  Yes  No

Punishment can be viewed from 2 perspectives, that is from the perspective of the punished player and from the perspective of the other players on the team.

4.) In terms of fairness to the player who violated the rule, the way the coach handled this disciplinary situation was:

```
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
  1  extremely unfair unfair neither fair nor unfair fair extremely fair
```

5.) In terms of fairness to the rest of the team, the way the coach handled this disciplinary situation was:

```
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---|---|---|---|---|---|
  1  extremely unfair unfair neither fair nor unfair fair extremely fair
```

In some cases, punishment will deter the misconduct, that is, punishment will make that behavior less likely to occur in the future in similar situations.

6.) How likely is the discipline in this situation to deter the player who committed the rule violation from violating this rule in the future?

```
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
  1  extremely unlikely unlikely uncertain likely extremely likely
```

7.) How likely is the discipline in this situation to deter the other players from violating this rule in the future?

```
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
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```

(m/m/s/1)
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Please answer the following 7 questions concerning the scenario described above. For the first 3 questions, please fill in the blanks based on the information in the scenario.

1.) In this situation what rule was violated? ________________________________ (fill in the blank)

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Please answer the following 7 questions concerning the scenario described above. For the first 3 questions, please fill in the blanks based on the information in the scenario.

1.) In this situation what rule was violated? ____________________________ (fill in the blank)

2.) In this situation what punishment was implemented? ____________________________ (fill in the blank)

3.) Was the punishment in accordance with team rules? (circle one)  Yes  No

Punishment can be viewed from 2 perspectives, that is from the perspective of the punished player and from the perspective of the other players on the team.

4.) In terms of fairness to the player who violated the rule, the way the coach handled this disciplinary situation was:

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   extremely unfair neither fair nor unfair fair extremely fair

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In some cases, punishment will deter the misconduct, that is make that behavior less likely to occur in the future in similar situations.

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   1  2  3  4  5
   extremely unlikely uncertain likely extremely likely

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   1  2  3  4  5
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Please answer the following 7 questions concerning the scenario described above. For the first 3 questions, please fill in the blanks based on the information in the scenario.

1.) In this situation what rule was violated? _________________________________ (fill in the blank)

2.) In this situation what punishment was implemented? __________________________ (fill in the blank)

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   1 2 3 4 5
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   (m/s/d/4)
Scenario: Chris is an intercollegiate basketball player at State University. Chris is the star of the team and averages 23 points per game. Chris failed the most recent drug test administered to the team. The team rules state that the punishment for this type of team infraction is suspension from the next practice. Because the rules apply equally to all team members, the coach suspended Chris from the following practice even though Chris is the star player.

Please answer the following 7 questions concerning the scenario described above. For the first 3 questions, please fill in the blanks based on the information in the scenario.

1.) In this situation what rule was violated? ________________________ (fill in the blank)
2.) In this situation what punishment was implemented? ________________________ (fill in the blank)
3.) Was the punishment in accordance with team rules? (circle one) Yes  No

Punishment can be viewed from 2 perspectives, that is from the perspective of the punished player and from the perspective of the other players on the team.

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SCRIPT FOR DATA COLLECTION:

You are being asked to participate in a study concerning perceptions of fairness of punishment in a team setting. This study is part of my Master's Thesis research. Fairness is concerned with the just treatment of individuals in group settings. Fairness is important because people want to be treated fairly. This study concerns misconduct and punishment in a team setting.

For this research you will be asked to read a hypothetical, but realistic scenario. The context of the scenario is that of an intercollegiate basketball team where a member of the team has violated a team rule. You will be asked to assume the role of a member on the basketball team in the scenario. After reading the scenario, you will need to respond to the questions that follow it. These questions ask for your opinions about the fairness of the punishment.

(Distribute Informed Consent forms) First, I will pass out an informed consent form to each of you. Western Kentucky University requires that these forms be read, signed, and collected before we can begin the study. Please read and sign the form. When you have finished, please pass the forms forward. Once the informed consent forms have been returned, a questionnaire will be distributed to each of you. (Collect informed consent forms)

(Distribute Questionnaires) You should now carefully read the directions and respond to the questions that follow. To ensure that all participants receive the same directions I will read them to you so please follow along on your questionnaire. (Read directions on the demographics page) It is important to the success of this research project for you to pay close attention to the scenario and respond to each of the questions that follow. When you have completed the questionnaire you will need to wait until everyone else has finished and then I will collect the questionnaires. Reminder: Please read the scenario carefully before answering the questions that follow it.

Are there any questions?

Thank you for your time and participation.
I consent to serve as a subject in the research investigation entitled: Distributive Justice and Perceptions of Fairness in Team Sports. The nature and general purpose of the study have been explained to me by Leslie Specht from the Psychology Department.

I understand the purpose of this research is to investigate perceptions of punishment in team settings and that the research procedures involve a hypothetical, yet realistic scenario to be read with several questions following the scenario.

There are no potential risks to participants in the project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that all information is confidential and my identity will not be revealed; I am free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time; any questions I may have about the project will be answered by the researcher named below or by an authorized representative.

Western Kentucky University and the investigator named below have responsibility for ensuring that participants in research projects conducted under institutional auspices are safeguarded from injury or harm resulting from such participation. If appropriate, the person named below may be contacted for remedy or assistance for any possible consequences from such activities.

On the basis of the above statements, I agree to participate in this project.

Participant’s signature

____________________________________

Leslie L. Specht (Researcher)
Dr. Betsy Shoenfelt (Faculty Advisor)
246 Tate Page Hall
745-2695
APPENDIX B

Stimulus Centered Rating Study
Data Collection Protocol
### Means and Standard Deviations For Stimulus Rating Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violations</th>
<th>Students (N = 39)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Athletes (N = 28)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Coaches (N = 8)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late to Practice</td>
<td>2.49 .82</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.71 1.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.50 .53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late to Team Workout</td>
<td>2.72 .97</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.04 1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.50 .53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Profanity</td>
<td>2.85 .78</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.18 1.19</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.13 .99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking Curfew before a game</td>
<td>3.08 .96</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.86 1.15</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.25 .89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipping Team Study Hall</td>
<td>3.10 .99</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.71 1.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.87 .83</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Disrespectful to Dorm Supervisor</td>
<td>3.28 1.19</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.68 1.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.50 .53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late to Team Bus</td>
<td>3.31 1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.89 1.31</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.88 .99</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.79 1.23</td>
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<td>4.50 .53</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3.89 1.13</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.50 .76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.77 1.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.93 1.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00 .53</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3.21 1.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00 .53</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Talking Back to Coach</td>
<td>3.90 .91</td>
<td></td>
<td>*3.56 *1.15</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.38 .74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Team Bus</td>
<td>3.97 .96</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.57 1.35</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.50 .76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting With Teammate</td>
<td>4.05 .65</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.39 1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00 1.07</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Charged with a Misdemeanor</td>
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<td>4.32 .98</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.62 .74</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.57 .96</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00 .00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Failing a Drug Test</td>
<td>4.77 .74</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.46 1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00 .00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Scale Values (Violations)

1 = Not Severe, 2 = Moderately Severe, 3 = Severe, 4 = Very Severe, 5 = Extremely Severe

* n = 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punishments</th>
<th>Students (N = 39)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Athletes (N = 28)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Coaches (N = 8)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M SD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Study Hall</td>
<td>1.67 .81</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.57 .57</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.00 .93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean Locker Room</td>
<td>2.08 .90</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.61 .57</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.75 .89</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Run Laps or Stadium Stairs</td>
<td>2.10 .82</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.46 .92</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.38 .74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Reprimand</td>
<td>2.31 1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.00 1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.63 .92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 am Workout</td>
<td>2.44 1.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.36 .99</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.63 .74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Conditioning</td>
<td>2.44 .94</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.68 1.19</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.38 .74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Team Gear</td>
<td>2.87 1.22</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.68 1.19</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.88 1.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension from Practice</td>
<td>2.97 1.22</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.36 1.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.88 1.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revoke Starting Position</td>
<td>3.46 1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.86 1.15</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.13 .64</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspension from Game</td>
<td>3.72 1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.93 1.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.13 .35</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dismissed from the Team</td>
<td>4.77 .48</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.71 .85</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00 .00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Scale Values (Punishments)

1 = Not Severe, 2 = Moderately Severe, 3 = Severe, 4 = Very Severe, 5 = Extremely Severe
Discipline in Athletic Teams Questionnaire

Most athletic teams have rules that guide the athlete’s behavior outside of the game situation and which athletes are expected to follow. Below you will find listed in random order a number of team rule violations (i.e., infractions) that athletes might commit. Please evaluate each infraction in the context of a NCAA Division I Intercollegiate Athletic Team. Think in terms of the implications of the infraction for the individual athlete and the team as a whole. Please use the following rating scale and circle the rating for each infraction that reflects your opinion of the severity of that infraction.

1 2 3 4 5

1 Not Severe 2 Moderately Severe 3 Severe 4 Very Severe 5 Extremely Severe

Circle the Number that Reflects Your Rating of Each Infraction

1 2 3 4 5 Late to practice.
1 2 3 4 5 Skipping a scheduled team workout.
1 2 3 4 5 Failing a drug test.
1 2 3 4 5 Disrespectful to instructor in class.
1 2 3 4 5 Use of profanity in front of coaching staff.
1 2 3 4 5 Charged with a felony crime.
1 2 3 4 5 Skipping scheduled team study hall.
1 2 3 4 5 Late to the team bus to/from game, holding up the team.
1 2 3 4 5 Breaking curfew the night before a game.
1 2 3 4 5 Fighting with a teammate.
1 2 3 4 5 Talking back to a coach during practice.
1 2 3 4 5 Missing the team bus to/from game, holding up the team.
1 2 3 4 5 Unsportsmanlike conduct.
1 2 3 4 5 Charged with a misdemeanor crime (e.g. shoplifting)
1 2 3 4 5 Disrespectful to supervisor in dormitory.
1 2 3 4 5 Late to a scheduled team workout.
1 2 3 4 5 Missing practice for reason other than emergency or medical reason.
Most athletic teams have “punishments” that are administered to athletes that violate team rules. Below you will find listed in random order a number of disciplinary actions (i.e., punishments). Please evaluate each punishment in the context of a NCAA Division I Intercollegiate Athletic Team. Think in terms of the implications of the punishment for the individual athlete and the team as a whole. Please use the following rating scale and circle the rating for each punishment that reflects your opinion of the severity of that punishment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Severe</td>
<td>Moderately Severe</td>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Very Severe</td>
<td>Extremely Severe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circle the Number that Reflects Your Rating of Each Punishment

1 2 3 4 5 Suspension from the next game.
1 2 3 4 5 6 am workout.
1 2 3 4 5 Extra Study Hall.
1 2 3 4 5 Dismissed from the team.
1 2 3 4 5 Suspension from practice.
1 2 3 4 5 Stay after game and help managers clean locker room, etc.
1 2 3 4 5 Not given team gear (e.g., shoes, sweatsuits, etc.); required to wear own gear.
1 2 3 4 5 Additional conditioning.
1 2 3 4 5 Revoke starting position for next game; required to re-earn starting position.
1 2 3 4 5 Verbal reprimand.
1 2 3 4 5 Run laps or stadium stairs after practice.

The researchers are interested in whether or not there are differences in opinions of different groups such as athletes versus non-athletes, males versus females, older versus younger individuals, etc. In order to answer these research questions, we need the demographic information requested below.

1. **Athletic Experience**: (check all that apply)
   - Rec League (e.g., YMCA, church, city, etc.) Sport(s)
   - Intramurals Sport(s)
   - High School Varsity Sport(s)
   - NCAA Intercollegiate Sport(s)

2. **Gender**: __Male__ __Female__
3. **Age**: ___ Years
4. **Ethnicity**: ___ African American ___ Asian
   ___ White ___ Hispanic
   ___ Other: _______________________________________

Thank you for your time and thoughtfulness in completing this questionnaire!