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DEVELOPING A THEORY OF SUFFERING AND ACADEMIC CORRUPTION IN SPORT

Lisa A. Kihl

Overview

The generation of a theory of suffering and academic corruption was initiated by asking how organisational stakeholders are impacted by corruption. At the time, within the academic business literature, a growing dialogue featured a macro-level organisational analysis about the consequences of corruption (e.g., impact on firm performance). However, I was employed at an institution that had experienced one of the most extensive cases of academic corruption in the history of intercollegiate athletics (National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Infractions Committee, 2000). I noticed a reoccurring theme of the effect of the corruption on various programme stakeholders (e.g., sanctions, negative reputation and consistent reference to the case). I therefore sought a micro-level organisational analysis to gain an understanding of how specific sport organisational stakeholders who were not involved in corrupt acts but were required to perform their roles and responsibilities post corruption were affected. I engaged in a conversation with a fellow university colleague, who at the time was my doctoral student and worked as the academic counselor for men’s basketball (MBB), about my observations and how the MBB programme at the University of Minnesota was impacted by the 1999 case of academic fraud (details of the case are presented later in the chapter). The result of that conversation was his offer to ask the head coach if he would grant us access and participate in a study about how the programme was impacted by the academic corruption. Three months later we were granted access to conduct our research!

While negotiating entry, I engaged in a literature review to learn about the consequences of corruption. As a result of the review, I discovered a lack of theory and empirical research about the consequences of corruption on organisational stakeholders not involved in malfeasant acts. While conceptual frameworks exist in the business literature relating to organisational models of corruption (e.g., Ashforth and Anand, 2003; Luo, 2004), these frameworks mostly provided a macro-level overview of corruption’s antecedents, consequences and reform efforts in general, rather than detailed theoretical accounts of the micro-level consequences of corruption on organisational stakeholders and how specific types of corruption impact stakeholders. The corruption literature was therefore limited in providing explanatory insights into post-corruption experiences and the implications for management. Furthermore, the sport management literature
was absent in documenting micro-level explanations of the impact of corruption on sport organisational stakeholders. At this point, I realised that I needed to generate a theory that addressed my research question, which required using grounded theory methodology. The theory is called suffering and academic corruption and conceptualises the consequences of academic corruption on organisational stakeholders within an intercollegiate setting. This chapter documents the process used to generate this theory using a qualitative methodology – grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Fundamental characteristics of grounded theory, and the methods used to develop the theory along with its application, and future directions are presented.

**Process**

The process for developing a theory of suffering and academic corruption involved first defining theory in relation to grounded theory, then understanding grounded theory methodology and its key methodological characteristics. The methodological procedures were then followed to generate a theory of suffering and academic corruption.

**My understanding of theory in relation to grounded theory**

To generate a theory of suffering and academic corruption required a firm understanding of what is meant by theory, how theory can be generated, and how theory can be applied. Post-positivists’ definitions generally conceptualise theory as seeking causes, deterministic explanations, predictions and emphasising generality and universality (Creswell, 2014). From this perspective, theory is created by verifying theoretical relationships of operationalised variables through hypothesis testing with the end result of providing reductionist explanations of the world. In contrast, my conception of theory is based on Hage (1972), who defines theory as a ‘set of well-developed categories (themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some phenomenon’ (p. 34). Corbin and Strauss (2008) adopt Hage’s definition and add that cohesive theory ‘occurs through the use of an overarching explanatory concept, one that stands above the rest . . . and incorporated with other concepts explains the what, how, when, where, and why of something’ (p. 55).

Theory generated through grounded theory assumes ‘theory as process’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 32), meaning that concepts (categories) are derived from the data and systematically produced through the research process. Grounded theory can generally generate two levels of theory: substantive or formal (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Substantive theory is founded on research from one specific area and does not seek explanations outside the existing area of study (e.g., suffering from academic corruption). Formal theory is more applicable to a wider range of disciplinary concerns and less related to a specific group or context. Glaser and Strauss maintain that substantive theories are used as ‘a springboard or stepping stone to the development of a grounded formal theory’ (p. 79).

**Grounded theory methodology**

Grounded theory is a ‘general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 273). It has utility as a methodology for examining previously under-studied social phenomenon and is useful in researching and capturing the complexity of organisational behaviour (Locke, 2001), such as how corruption
can impact a men’s basketball programme. Grounded theory methodology has three main characteristics: contextual, inductive and procedural (Corbin and Strauss, 1998, 2008). Grounded theory is generated from a context-based and process-orientated explanation of social phenomenon, which is illustrated through representative examples of data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Theory generation is an inductive process where data collection and analysis are emergent processes where the intent is to build from local understandings that, without enquiry, remain implicit and unexplained. Theory generation is procedural in that the researcher alternates between data collection and analysis that involves systematic abstraction and conceptualisation of empirical data to generate, develop and verify concepts. The end product is conceptual theory that fits, is relevant and can be used in practice.

The essential distinctive characteristics of grounded theory are the systematics in the methodology (including theoretical sampling, data analysis process and theoretical sensitivity) and the constant comparative method, which are explained next.

**Theoretical sampling**

Theory generation from data requires theoretical sampling. It is a data collection process where emerging theory guides collection of data, analysis and posing questions to assist in formulating categories and their properties and dimensions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The aim is to select sources of data that can extend theory development (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) and thus, after initial data collection, the continued process of data gathering is guided by seeking categorical saturation and the development of a substantive theory. This makes grounded theory data collection different from conventional qualitative data methods because theoretical sampling is a circular process of data collection, analysis and categorical development; category development leads to question regeneration, which guides further data collection. The researcher asks what data sources (e.g., people, places, situations, archival documents) will help lead to a point of theoretical saturation where all concepts and their properties and dimensions are defined and explained (Corbin and Strauss, 1998, 2008).

**Data analysis process**

The key to grounded theory data analysis is a process of conceptualisation: thinking about what the data mean, learning to think abstractly and assigning words that describe conceptually what the data means (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Conceptualisation is carried out through coding where concepts are extracted from raw data to develop conceptual categories and their respective properties (characteristics) and dimensions (location on a dimensional continuum; Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 159), and an explanation of the generalised relationships between each category. A category is ‘a conceptual element of a theory’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 36) and ranges in level of abstraction from higher level to lower level. Lower-level categories are grouped under higher-level concepts according to their shared properties.

Grounded theory coding involves three hierarchical coding processes: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Corbin and Strauss, 1998, 2008). These coding processes all entail using the constant comparative method, where codes, categories, properties and dimensions are constantly compared to identify variations, similarities and differences in the data (Corbin and Strauss, 1998, 2008). Open coding involves a line-by-line reading of the data where they are broken down analytically into categories and subcategories. During this process, incidents (i.e., events/actions/interactions) are compared with other incidents together to establish fundamental likenesses and differences to delineate the categories and their respective properties and
dimensions. Axial coding involves conceptualising how the categories and subcategories are related to each other. Categories are compared with more incidents to generate new theoretical categorical properties. The purpose is theoretical explanation and categorical saturation through property development. Selective coding occurs in the latter phase of analysis and involves unifying all the categories around a core category. The core category represents the central phenomenon of the study – in this case, the core category was suffering. Categories are compared with other categories to further explain the theory. Identifying a core category is one of the most challenging aspects of conceptualisation and unique to grounded theory analysis. Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 14) suggest consideration of the following to assist in identifying the core category: ‘What is the main analytic idea presented in this research? If my findings are to be conceptualized in a few sentences, what do I say? What does all the action/interaction seem to be about? How can I explain the variation that I see between and among the categories?’ Diagramming is an important analytical strategy that helps map out the core category and its relationship with the other categories and subcategories.

Theoretical memoing is another important strategy that is performed throughout the conceptualisation process. Memoing is ‘theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships’ as they come to the researcher’s mind (Glaser, 1978, p. 83). A detailed account of conceptual ideas, associations and theoretical reflections related to the categories, properties and dimensions are kept throughout the analytical process.

**Theoretical sensitivity**

Theoretical sensitivity is the ‘ability to generate concepts from data and to relate them according to normal models of theory in general’ (Glaser, 2004, para. 43). Sensitivity requires the researcher to have disciplinary professional knowledge and analytical competence (Corbin and Strauss, 1998, 2008). Typically, sensitivity is frowned upon in data analysis as we are taught to be objective, or qualitative researchers are taught to present our researcher stance (Marshall and Rossman, 2010). However, grounded theory generation requires ‘a personal and temperamental bent to maintain analytic distance, tolerate confusion and regression while remaining open, trusting to preconscious processing and to conceptual emergence’ (Glaser, 2004, para. 43). Analytical competence requires developing theoretical insights, conceptualising and organising, and making abstract connections from the data. Theoretical sensitivity therefore requires entering a research project with little to no predetermined hunches in order to generate a theory from the data.

**Generating a theory of suffering and academic corruption**

In an effort to generate a substantive theory of suffering and academic corruption within the context of an intercollegiate MBB programme, I used a grounded theory research approach within the boundaries of a single revelatory case study (Yin, 2014). This afforded me the opportunity to observe and analyse the impact of the University of Minnesota’s case of academic corruption and thus generate a substantive theory.

**The case of academic corruption**

Between 1994 and 1998, the University of Minnesota MBB programme was involved in one of the most extensive cases of academic fraud in the history of intercollegiate athletics (NCAA Infractions Committee, 2000). Broadly conceived, academic corruption is the abuse of authority and misuse of trust by a public official and/or private actor for personal or material gain. In this
case, academic fraud was conceived of and supported by the Head Men’s Basketball Coach, his staff, the team’s academic counsellor and the sport’s secretary. The infractions report (NCAA Infractions Committee, 2000) stated that the former secretary in the Academic Counseling Office had written approximately 400 pieces of coursework (homework assignments, preparing take-home exams, typing and composing theme papers) for at least eighteen MBB. Both institutional and NCAA investigations found copious rules violations (e.g., extra benefits, academic eligibility, unethical conduct and lack of institutional control) had occurred, with academic fraud being the most serious. Furthermore, the violations were deemed ‘significant, widespread and intentional’ and ‘undermined the bedrock foundation of a university’ as relates to realising institutional integrity (NCAA Infractions Committee, 2000, p. 2). Numerous sanctions were imposed by the University and the NCAA on the MBB programme and the athletic department as a whole. In an effort to regain institutional control, major organisational restructuring and enhanced institutional governance were implemented. A new basketball staff was hired four months after the corruption was exposed and was assigned the challenging task of overcoming the corruption.

Data gathering and initial data analysis

As previously noted, prior to data collection I conducted a brief review of the literature to gain a general understanding of the theoretical and empirical consequences of corruption. Gaining an understanding of the phenomenon within the context of intercollegiate athletics and business organisations was included in this review. Based on the literature search, the original research question posed was: ‘how was the MBB programme impacted by the incidence of academic corruption?’ Theoretical sampling steered preliminary data collection and analysis of documents. An extensive search of archival documents about the Minnesota case of academic corruption was then conducted and included newspaper articles, popular sports magazines, news magazines, institutional meeting minutes and official reports from both the NCAA and institution.

Initial data were openly coded and organised into major categories and subcategories. Major categories (and their respective subcategories) at this point in the analysis included: (a) negative treatment (public criticism and guilt by association), (b) sanctions (recruiting, loss of records and ban on post-season competition) and (c) reform policies (increased University oversight, University restructuring and increased academic assistance policies and procedures). Research team members consulted with each about the initial codes, categories and subcategories, and written memos they had developed. Discussions aimed at gaining clarity about the meaning of the data. The biggest challenge for the researchers was focusing on conceptualising the data and not describing the data. That is, it was important to centre on what the raw data represented and how these representations were connected. This conceptualisation process was challenging, as we naturally wanted to describe the data, which is not an aspect of grounded theory methodology.

Using the constant comparative method, the initial categories (i.e., negative treatment, sanctions and reform policies) were further delineated. Memo writing, for example, focused on developing paragraphs of conceptual thoughts of the respective characteristics of each category, including what humiliation meant, who was humiliated, how they were humiliated and the intensity of the humiliation. This theoretical sampling activity led to asking more research questions, requiring additional data collection and further analysis. Based on the preliminary data collected and initial open coding, the following four questions were posed: How did the instance of academic corruption impact the newly hired MBB coaching staff? How did the instance of academic corruption impact the players not involved in the corruption? What were
the specific consequences of the academic corruption on both the newly hired MBB coaching staff and the players? And how did the consequences of the academic corruption affect the newly hired MBB coaching staff and the players?

Data collection and analysis from this point on was steered by identifying and seeking to refine the gaps in the respective categorical properties and dimensions. For example, each piece of raw data was read and re-read. Memos were written where they were first labelled with a concept name and then reflections were made about what the data meant. I asked questions such as ‘what types of consequences were evident?’ ‘Who experienced the consequences?’ ‘Did the athletes and coaches experience similar or different consequences?’ And ‘did the consequences differ among athletes and coaches?’ As the data-guided memo writing was assessed I answered these questions. I initially identified that athletes and coaches experience different consequences as a result of the corruption. Consequences were a higher-level concept and the specific type of consequence that either athletes (e.g., negative treatment) or coaches (e.g., sanctions) experienced were lower-level concepts. Athletes experienced negative treatment (associated guilt, lack of communication, lack of support and public criticism and humiliation, including racism) and coaches experienced sanctions (unknown and recruiting). However, based on this particular cycle of data collection and analysis, the concepts were underdeveloped in terms of their properties and dimensions. Coaches experienced recruiting sanctions, but it was not evident what type of sanctions impacted the coaching staff and how, the degree of impact, the consistency of impact across coaches and how long the sanctions impacted the coaches. Future data collection and analysis therefore aimed to delineate the respective properties and dimensions of the concept recruiting.

Theoretical sample

Participants and sources of data that could extend theory development were identified. Interviewee selection criteria included: (a) first-hand knowledge of the consequences of academic corruption, (b) willingness to speak about the consequences, (c) ability to help explain categorical properties and dimension, and (d) ability to clarify any relationships between emerging categories. Semi-structured face-to-face and phone interviews were conducted with nineteen participants, including MBB coaches ($n = 4$), former MBB student-athletes ($n = 2$), athletic department and university administrators ($n = 5$), compliance staff ($n = 1$), academic counselling services for intercollegiate athletics staff ($n = 3$) and faculty ($n = 4$). Given that interview participants were not involved in the academic corruption but experienced the post-corruption first-hand, overall they were open to share their experiences. For certain participants, sharing their stories appeared to be a form of therapy because they had withheld their experiences and rarely opened up to outsiders about what they were enduring. Participants negatively portrayed in either the public or media also requested that we tell the truth. One athlete specifically asked, ‘you will tell the truth, right?’. Interviews ranged from 45–120 minutes in duration, were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, and a summary research report was submitted to all participants. Noteworthy, when the head coach received the research report, he called me and thanked me for telling the truth.

Data collection

Interview questions were posed that would advance categorical development. Based on our initial four research questions, interview participants were asked three open-ended questions: what happened after the scandal was exposed; what were the specific consequences of the scandal;
and how did these consequences impact individuals and the overall MBB programme? The data generated from these interview questions prompted the development of novel categories and subcategories. For example, in relation to coaches’ suffering, the categories of stakeholder separation (i.e., team and university units) and managing multiple roles (i.e., publicly dealing with issue, meeting athletic and academic expectations, and media and public scrutiny) were established. Athlete suffering categories and subcategories identified were sanctions (loss of records and ban on post-season play) and loss (step-father syndrome, team and reputation).

The higher-level category (harmful outcomes) and respective categories and subcategories were also identified in analysing the raw data during this cycle of data collection and analysis. For example, the coaches’ category (stakeholder separation) and its associated subcategories (team and university units generated harmful outcomes including anger, associated guilt, conflict, distrust, disrupted team dynamics and insular behaviour) emerged. In addition, the data collected helped delineate initial categories identified from the previous cycles of data collection and analysis. Examples include coaching staff consequences, such as sanctions, and athlete consequences, such as sources of negative treatment and negative treatment.

Following this next round of data analysis, it became evident that the interview questions needed further revision to enhance our understanding about coaches and student-athlete suffering. The lower-level concepts related to coach and athlete higher-level concepts (consequences and harmful outcomes) required further delineation. It needed to be determined explicitly what kinds of harmful outcomes were associated with which particular lower-level consequences. Therefore, interview questions from this point on involved asking how coaches suffered. Questions included: how had the corruption affected the coaches’ relationships with faculty, administrators, players and the media; what was it like coaching the team the season after the incident occurred; what was it like coaching the team in subsequent years; how did the sanctions impact the coaching staff; and how did the recruiting sanctions impact the coaches’ ability to carry out their jobs? Student-athlete suffering questions included: describe what it was like immediately after the story broke; describe what it was like being on the team that first year with Coach; and describe what it was like being a student and going to class.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews also allowed the flexibility in pursuing unexpected paths and cues suggested by theoretical sensitivity in theory development (Corbin and Strauss, 1998). For example, in one of the initial interviews with one of the coaching staff members, we learned that the student-athletes suffer and experience the brunt of negative treatment by a case of academic fraud. This interview and subsequent document data collection led to asking questions about: how were MBB student-athletes treated by faculty and the student body after the scandal broke; how did the media treat the MBB student-athletes after the scandal broke; how did the MBB student-athletes react; what was it like playing on the team the following season; and how did the sanctions impact the team? The result of this particular theoretical sampling and analysis was delineating the category of athlete negative treatment, which included a subcategory of public criticism and humiliation that had racial overtones (Kihl, Richardson and Campisi, 2008).

Theory building required seeking multiple sources of data (e.g., documents, observations and interviews) that assisted in the conceptualisation process. Two examples help illustrate. First, the category negative treatment and its related subcategory – associative guilt of MBB student-athletes – were initially generated by the student-athlete participant interviews. This led to the further collection of various news media documents to assist in providing a detailed explanation of the properties and dimensions of the concept of student-athlete negative treatment and associative guilt. Second, interview, archival and observational data were sought and analysed to thoroughly delineate the category coaching harmful outcomes and the relationship (i.e., axial coding) with the
consequences subcategory managing multiple roles. The data analysis involved identifying what kinds of harmful outcomes were related to the coaches experiencing by managing multiple roles. Three concepts were identified, including distrust, insular behaviours and stress. Each type of data was analysed through comparing incidents with incidents to help abstract this harmful outcome concept and further explain the nature of suffering in terms of understanding who and why they distrusted individuals, how they reacted and how the stress impacted carrying out their day-to-day operations.

One of the researchers served in a participant observation role as a complete insider working within a support unit for intercollegiate athletics, specifically with the MBB programme. Research questions and emergent theoretical categories as shared above directed his observations. Observations were guided by both the broad initial research question initially posed and the additional research questions that evolved as a result of data collection and analysis, which aimed at explaining the emergent categories found during theory generation. Informal and formal interactions with players, coaches and faculty; planned activities (student tables, road trips, meetings); and communications (with student-athletes, faculty, support staff, coaches and administrators) were documented for the duration of data collection (one year). As the research progressed, the refined questions shifted observational foci to assist in defining categorical properties and dimensions as well as determining relationships among categories. Observational data were therefore compared with the interview and textual data and contributed to the saturation of categories and subcategories. In all, data collection occurred over a twelve-month period that generated an extensive amount of data, including over 300 single-spaced pages of interview text, 200 pages of documents and 30 single-spaced pages of observational text.

Analysis and writing

All data were downloaded into the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti (Scientific Software Development, 1997). Data were coded both by hand and using the software. First notes were written by hand and then coding was carried out using the software. Data were then openly coded where codes were conceptualised by inductively labelling phenomenon. The data were micro-analysed and codes were named based on what was suggested by the context in which an event, action/interaction and object occurred and through in vivo coding. Examples of conceptualised codes for student-athlete suffering were dual consciousness, racism, stakeholder separation, anger and empowerment. Coaches’ conceptual codes were conservative recruiting, dysfunctional relationships and insular behaviours. Student-athlete in vivo code examples included suffer, hurt, felt bad, bothered me, disappointment, embarrassed, pretty bad and real uncomfortable, and examples of coaches in vivo codes were the virus, negative recruiting and behind the eight ball. The constant comparison method of comparing incidents with incidents to help define categories and delineating properties and dimensions was carried out at both the dimensional and property level until a point of theoretical saturation was reached where no new properties, dimensions, consequences, conditions or actions were evident in the data.

Axial coding was then performed to describe the relationship between the core categories and respective subcategories and to further demarcate properties and dimensions. The various categories and subcategories were conceptually integrated to explain the theoretical conditions, actions and consequences of how a MBB programme is affected by an instance of academic corruption. For example, the category sanctions and respective subcategory recruiting were examined to determine the relationship with the specific harmful outcome of recruiting challenges for coaches. A limitation on the number of days a prospective student-athlete can be evaluated and official on-campus visits alters a coaching staff’s recruiting philosophy that
leads to conservative recruiting. These theoretical comparisons allowed for an in-depth understanding of critical post-corruption incidents and participants’ perceptions of their experiences of these events.

Theoretical memoing was performed throughout the analysis process, where documented thoughts about the data and the conceptual connections between categories were recorded. This sample memo shows my thoughts about how the sanctions impacted the coaching staff:

Coaches’ perspective – until working within the post scandal period one might underestimate the magnitude of how the sanctions, reform policies and the scandal itself will affect one’s working conditions and relationships with co-workers within the respective athletic department units, athletic administration, faculty oversight committees and the student-athletes.

Held to a higher standard – MBB staff impacted as it is perceived that they are held to a different standard – success, academic assistance and conservative compliance and interpretations.

Note taking assisted in the elevation of the data to a conceptual level to help define properties and dimensions of categories. Selective coding was lastly carried out where categories were integrated at the dimensional level to identify a core category (i.e., suffering) and refine the theory. Validation of statements of relationships among concepts and completion of categories that required further refinement was important during this process. A theoretical diagram (see Figure 4.1) was developed, illustrating the major concepts, subcategories and their connections leading to a substantive theory of a MBB programme’s suffering and academic corruption, conceptualised next.

A theory of suffering and academic corruption

In the context of intercollegiate athletics and the occurrence of extreme academic fraud, team personnel (i.e., student-athletes and coaches) who were not involved in the corruption are subject to, and endure, enormous and assorted forms of suffering that are produced by various consequences and subsequent harmful outcomes (Kihl and Richardson, 2009). The respective consequences and harmful outcomes on team personnel are depicted in Figure 4.1. The nature and degree of suffering experienced will vary in relation to one’s role on the team, time elapsed after the corruption is exposed, who initiated the suffering and the various consequences of the corruption itself. The players and coaching staff will generally experience distinctive consequences (e.g., players – negative treatment, and loss; coaching staff – stakeholder separation, reform policies and managing multiple roles). These consequences, however, appear to produce both similar and unique forms of suffering for both coaches and players as reported in Kihl et al. (2008). Coaches and players will experience similar harmful outcomes of distrust, anger, conflict, disrupted team dynamics and stress. Unique forms of suffering experienced by players will include devastation, embarrassment, ostracism, feelings of discomfort, stereotyping, pain and disappointment. Coaches, however, experience unique harmful outcomes of associative guilt, insular behaviour, micromanagement and a lack of stakeholder separation where different university units and players showed a reluctance to trust the MBB staff, which can lead to stress and dysfunctional team dynamics.

In general, sanctions and media scrutiny will affect both stakeholder groups; however, the penalties and public examination will impact them both through different means, which subsequently generates contrasting forms of suffering. ‘The suffering is most acute at the
Figure 4.1 A theory of suffering and academic corruption
exposure of the academic fraud and during the subsequent 12–24 months’ (Kihl et al., 2008, p. 283). In time, the ‘intensity of the anguish felt by the athletes dissipates’ and to some degree the coaching staff’s anguish lessens; however, the consequences of corruption (i.e., negative treatment, stakeholder separation and reform policies) appear to linger well into the post-corruption period where the coaches and players continue to experience distrust, ostracism and embarrassment (Kihl et al., 2008, p. 283). While individuals are able to cope with their suffering, it appears that the coaching staff hired to fix the mess can never restore the programme to its original health.

### Extensions and applications

Quality grounded theory is evaluated in terms of fit, workability and relevance (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The categories created in the theory of suffering and academic corruption should fit and explain conceptually all data collected. The theory must also be relevant in terms of accurately explaining the phenomenon of how academic corruption impacts a MBB programme post-corruption. The theory must also work or have practical application that would first add to coaches’ and administrators’ knowledge base, as well as assist decision-makers to develop policy and change practice to provide support for individuals as they deal with the after-effects of academic corruption. Assuming that the theory generated from the data meets these criteria, I have not sought to alter or revise the theory of suffering and academic corruption.

Through conversations with my colleagues about the theory, I have learned that several use the Kihl and Richardson (2009) article in qualitative methods courses. The article is used to help their students learn about grounded theory as a methodology. They learn how to do it, how data collection and analysis differs between grounded theory and other types of qualitative methodologies (e.g., phenomenology and case studies), and it provides a good example of the write-up of grounded theory categories and conceptualising of a theory. It has also been shared with me that the article has practical implications for athletic administrators, coaches and student-athletes, in that it is used to understand the nature and impact of academic corruption in the context of intercollegiate athletics. In particular, understanding the types of consequences and harmful outcomes a coaching staff and their players might endure post-corruption can assist athletic administrators in providing the necessary support and resources to help them overcome their respective suffering. Furthermore, the theory can help explicate to coaches and players the types of consequences they might encounter and how they might be managed.

I have also discovered that the Kihl and Richardson (2009) study has been cited in several publications to document unethical behaviour in sport (e.g., Bell-Laroche, MacLean, Thibault and Wolfe, 2014), in discussions about what constitutes grounded theory in the field of Kinesiology (e.g., Weed, 2009), in connecting theory and practice through qualitative research (Nite and Singer, 2012) and as an example of developing good theory (Doherty, 2013). Of note, what I find important about these citations is that my research is drawn upon to help discuss and debate how to improve our field of sport management in terms of theory, research and practice.

### Future directions

To date, I have not had the opportunity to extend this substantive theory to develop a formal theory. This is partly due to the challenges in gaining access to organisations to conduct research, and particularly issues of corruption. However, my plan is to conduct research in different sporting contexts (governing bodies, international contexts, sports) that would examine different forms,
types and extent of corruption cases across the different contexts. The main aim in carrying out this process is to develop a formal theory of suffering and corruption. A formal theory would be at a higher level of abstraction that extends beyond a specific stakeholder group and/or organisation to generalise across a discipline.

In practice, I hope faculty members continue to use my work as a teaching tool for students to gain an understanding of the grounded theory generation process. Ultimately, I would also like to see the theory assist sport programmes in managing the challenges caused by academic fraud. However, realistically, the practical application of the theory would require first re-writing it into a more accessible/user friendly language and format for athletic administrators. In its current form, I am not so sure if it is as useful as it could be.

Notes

1 This chapter is a reflection on Kihl, Richardson and Campisi (2008), Kihl and Richardson (2009), and the works related to them.
2 The authors acknowledge the different methodological perspectives between Glaser (1992, 2004) and Corbin and Strauss (1998, 2008). Although drawing from both Glaser, and Strauss and Corbin, the grounded theory methodology relied more on Corbin and Strauss (1998).
3 A detailed account of the Minnesota case and the sanctions is outlined in Kihl et al. (2008).

References

Applying the theory of suffering and academic corruption in sport

Calvin Nite

I was first introduced to Dr Kihl’s work when I was a doctoral student searching for research topics. Given my background in intercollegiate athletics, I was drawn to her work investigating the effects of the scandals at the University of Minnesota. I was specifically interested in her research that looked into how academic corruption affected college athletes and coaches (Kihl and Richardson, 2009). As my research has evolved, I have also incorporated her work regarding morality within athletic departments into my research (Kihl, 2007). I have drawn upon her work as the foundation for much of my understanding of the complexities of athletic programmes on college campuses. Further, I have found Dr Kihl’s work on corruption and morality to be invaluable in the classroom. Although she has specifically situated her research in college athletics, I have found her grounded theories of academic corruption to be transferrable to other managerial, and even marketing, contexts outside of intercollegiate athletics.

Dr Kihl’s research on corruption and ethics has been influential in shaping my own research from a foundational standpoint. As my research interests have evolved since my time as a doctoral student, I have drawn on Dr Kihl’s work in a variety of ways. First, her work provides an excellent example and guide to implementing grounded theory. Second, I have consulted her work in both research and classroom settings as I have sought to further understand the complexities of intercollegiate athletics. Specifically, her work has informed my understanding of how athletes as well as athletic department employees are affected by the competing ideas within the institution (Nite and Bopp, 2015). Although I have not directly built upon her theory of suffering and academic corruption (Kihl, Richardson and Campisi, 2008; Kihl and Richardson, 2009), I have used her research as a reference point for suggesting that competing logics within organisations may result in ethical dilemmas for employees and manifest into hardships for both employees and athletes alike (see also Kihl, 2007). In future research endeavours, I envision coupling research of competing institutional logics with Kihl’s research of corruption and ethics as means for better understanding how and why organisational scandals come to fruition.

Dr Kihl’s research has also proved useful in a variety of classroom activities. I have found her studies of academic corruption (Kihl et al., 2008; Kihl and Richardson, 2009), along with her research into leader morality (Kihl, 2007), to be impactful across a variety of contexts and disciplines. Although much of her work is situated within the context of college athletic
departments, it translates well into teaching the impacts of corporate scandals on organisational employees and organisational reputation. I have implemented her work to demonstrate to students how corruption within the leadership of an organisation can have lasting consequences that may result in years of recovery efforts. This also shows students that the actions of a few can damage the entirety of the organisation. Incorporation of Dr Kihl's research into the classroom has been an effective teaching tool for students in my classroom.

Note

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References


