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Strategies to Mitigate Negative Social Media Communications in Collegiate Athletics

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MBA, Midway University, 2012

BA, University of Kentucky, 1981

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

Harmful social media communications in collegiate athletics are challenging, compelling athletic administrators to implement strategies to mitigate costly damage to the university. Grounded in framing theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may cause problems resulting in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college. Participants were 4 collegiate athletic administrators located in the southeastern United States, who had a social media policy and strategies to successfully mitigate inappropriate social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, policies, and other school documents. Data analysis involved thematic coding and Yin's 5-step analysis process. The 4 themes that emerged were education, communication, monitoring, and disciplinary actions. A key recommendation is for athletic administrators to recognize the importance of positive framing of the social media policy and strategies to get compliance and understanding from the student-athletes to use social media responsibly to eliminate personal and professional reputational damage to their schools. The implications for positive social change include the potential for athletic administrators to create social media guidelines framed positively to mitigate risks, job, and financial loss, increase reputational branding for student-athletes, and promote adherence to the policy along with social media civility.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family: my mother, Anna Parks; my baby brother, Marty Parks; my late father, Wallace Parks, Sr.; my late brother, Wallace Parks, Jr.; and all my nieces and nephews. Without my faith and all your love, encouragement, prayers, and support, this chapter in my life would not exist. Mom and Marty, you give me the strength to face another day and anything that comes my way. To my nieces and nephews, you are my sunshine after the rain, the children I never had. Always trust God, have faith, pray, and believe in yourself. Your auntie is validation that you can do anything you set your mind to do. I believe in you; reach for the stars. Dad and brother, there is not a day that goes by that I do not think of you. I miss you so much every single day that you have been gone, but I feel your love and presence with every beat of my broken heart. I know you are smiling down, and that makes me smile with gratitude for the time God gave us. Thank you all for always believing in me and being there through all my challenges and victories, cheering me on. You have helped me to be the person that I am today. I am forever grateful and thankful to have you all in my life and to call you my family. I love you.

-Jennifer

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First, I give thanks to God Almighty, who is my Savior and the source of my life. Without Him, I would not exist. He gives me hope for the future. I believe I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13). Next, I extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my chair, Dr. Nattress, for all the guidance, help, and support she provided during this doctoral journey. Your dedication and commitment to excellence mean the world to me. You constantly inspired and motivated me to strive to improve daily and to complete this study and graduate. I will be forever grateful that God brought you into my life to assist with this endeavor by offering your warmth, knowledge, expertise, and guidance. I could not have asked for a better mentor and support system than what I received in you. Thank you from my whole heart. May God bless you greatly with all that is good. In addition, I would like to thank my 2nd chair, Dr. Jaime Klein; Dr. James Savard; Dr. Morris Bidjerano; Dr. Debra Dean; the Walden faculty and staff; and my colleagues for their help and support. I would be remiss if I failed to thank my family and friends for their love, support, and understanding. I would not be here if it were not for you. You inspire me to continue to reach for the stars, soar like an eagle, and win the day. You all bring out the best in me because you are the best of me. Thank you and God bless you all.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Social media research in athletics is increasing. Although social media communication is prominent in sports marketing and the attention of researchers has increased (C. Lee & Kahle, 2016), limited research exists on negative social media in the collegiate sports industry. The reach of social media is broad in scope and increasing in the sports industry. Organizations use social media as a brand-building tool and a means for athletes and coaches to connect with their fan base, representing a new area (C. Lee & Kahle, 2016). Researchers postulated that athletes are arguably the leading sports stakeholder group significantly affected by social media researchers (Browning & Sanderson, 2012; Sanderson & Kassing, 2011). Although it is liberating for athletes to express more of their personality via social media networks, it may also foster judgments and negative consequences (L. R. Smith & Sanderson, 2015). Negative social media communication by student-athletes and coaches can be a liability, causing severe repercussions for a university (Sanderson, Snyder, Hull, & Gramlich, 2015). Consumers use social media to express their opinions, both positive and negative, and learn more about brands. Collegiate athletic administrators, like other organizational leaders, must learn how to mitigate and respond to negative and/or inappropriate communications on social media to lessen the negative impact on their brand to avoid financial loss, sanctions, and fines.

Background of the Problem

Negative social media communications or online firestorms by collegiate student-athletes and coaches are problems for collegiate athletic administrators who want to

protect their reputational asset and brand equity. In 2011, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) charged the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill (UNC) with several violations, including inadequate and inconsistent monitoring of the social media network activity within their football program (Snyder, Hutchens, Jones, Jeffrey, & Sun, 2015). The NCAA has bylaws regarding the conduct of their member institutions, which indirectly impact social media; however, the NCAA lacks a social media monitoring policy, which leaves member institutions uncertain about how to deal with a nonexistent policy. Colleges and universities are concerned about their public image, tort liability, and the safety of the student-athletes. Colleges and universities must develop a social media monitoring policy that is not an infringement on the rights of free speech or social media privacy laws (Hopkins, Hopkins, & Whelton, 2013). Collegiate athletic administrators find it necessary to have some type of social media communication policy in the student-athlete handbooks.

Administrators seem conflicted over whether to monitor or how to monitor athlete and/or employee social media platforms, which raises more questions than answers and is a topic of debate. Presently, collegiate sports teams use a variety of tactical methods to monitor, regulate, and police social media platforms (Hopkins et al., 2013). However, not enough research exists on successful strategies to manage negative social media communications.

Problem Statement

People form and propagate negative opinions about products, companies, organizations, and individuals on social media within hours via thousands or millions of

other people (Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014). Sanderson, Snyder, et al. (2015) reported that 50% of 450 sports information directors had to remove negative social media posts or tweets from student-athletes or coaches during the 2012-2013 academic school year. The general business problem was that some colleges or universities are being negatively affected by inappropriate social media communications or online firestorms, which results in financial loss, NCAA sanctions, and fines for the college or university. The specific business problem was that some collegiate athletic administrators lack strategies to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications from their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate their student-athletes' and coaches' negative social media communications or online firestorms that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. The target population included athletic administrators from four schools located in the southeastern United States who had successfully mitigated negative social media communications to prevent reputational damage to their brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. The implications for positive social change included the potential for athletic administrators and business leaders to understand the importance of having a social media communications strategy for mitigating negative social media communications from their

student-athletes, employees, and consumers. Other implications for positive social change included the potential for athletes, fans, employees, and consumers to act with civility, personal responsibility, and good manners by being a positive force when communicating on social media. This study may encourage people in companies, organizations, and society to think twice before posting something derogatory or negative. Also, social media users may be encouraged to share more positive information through social media networks, potentially mitigating personal and professional reputational damage, job loss, financial loss, cyberbullying, and suicides.

Nature of the Study

The three methodologies considered for this study regarding strategies collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college were (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed methods. The methodology of choice for this study was qualitative. Researchers use qualitative methods to explore a phenomenon, strategies, or themes that emerge by talking to individuals and looking for explanations and patterns in the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2017). The primary focus of the current study was to explore strategies from the perspective of athletic administrators; therefore, a qualitative method was appropriate for this study. In contrast, researchers using a quantitative method to test a theory or hypothesis by examining the relationship between variables while collecting and analyzing numerical data (Benard, 2013; Hoare & Hoe, 2013). Given the differences in

these two methodologies, the qualitative method was more appropriate to explore successful strategies collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate their student-athletes' and coaches' negative social media communications that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. Mixed-methods researchers use quantitative and qualitative methodologies to study a phenomenon (Vink, Van Tartwijk, Bolk, & Verloop, 2015). The mixed-methods approach is appropriate when a researcher cannot achieve a complete understanding of the study topic using one method (Jang, Kim, & Jung, 2016). A quantitative or mixed-methods approach was not suitable for the current study because I intended to explore new constructs instead of collecting and analyzing numerical data.

The following four research designs were considered for this study: (a) ethnography, (b) narrative, (c) phenomenology, and (d) case study. Researchers use ethnographic designs to explore cultural beliefs (Fields & Kafai, 2009). The current study did not address cultural beliefs. Researchers study the life history of single individuals in narrative designs (Paschen & Ison, 2014), which was not appropriate for the current study. Researchers use phenomenology to collect information about the participants' personal experiences and beliefs (Assarroudi & Heydari, 2016). The phenomenological method was not a suitable design because strategies were the focus in the current study. The preferred methodology was a multiple case study design addressing contemporary real-life experiences and strategies gathered from numerous sources (see Yin, 2017). Case study researchers explore contemporary real-life experiences about a decision or a set of decisions and look at data from multiple sources (Merriam & Kee, 2014; Yin,

2017). Sarma (2015) explained that researchers perform a comprehensive exploration to probe a contemporary phenomenon in a real-world setting through data collected from several sources; therefore, a multiple case study design was appropriate for my study.

Research Question

The overarching research question that guided this study was the following: What strategies do some collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate negative and/or inappropriate social media communication by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and or fines for the university or college?

Interview Questions

The purpose of my interview questions was to ascertain what strategies some collegiate athletic administrators used to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communication by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college. The questions used to conduct the interviews were as follows:

1. What type of social media communications policy or strategy have you implemented for your student-athletes and coaches to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?
2. What strategies do you use to combat negative or inappropriate social media communications by your student-athletes and coaches that may result in

reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?

3. What strategy would you say was the most effective to help prevent or mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications by your student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?
4. What strategies worked the best when you successively put together your social media communication policy for your student-athletes and coaches that prevented or mitigated reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?
5. What strategic plan to mitigate negative social media communications that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college have you put into effect first and why?
6. What barriers have you come across when you tried to implement strategies to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications by your student-athletes that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?
7. What barriers have you come across when you tried to implement strategies to mitigate negative or inappropriate communications by your coaches that may

result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?

8. What other information would you like to share about strategies that could help minimize negative or inappropriate social media communications by student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?

Theoretical Framework

In this qualitative multiple case study, framing theory provided the conceptual framework. Goffman (1974) introduced framing theory. Frames are based on helping people organize what they view in everyday life (Borah, 2011). The central premise of framing theory is that a situation can be viewed from various perspectives and have implications that imply multiple values or considerations (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Framing is the process in which a person develops conceptualizations of an issue or reorients their thinking about a specific topic (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The occurrence of framing happens when media sources emphasize certain aspects of a news story to promote a thorough understanding and interpretation with their audience (Entman, 1993; Reese, 2001; Sanderson et al., 2015).

Gitlin (1980) defined frames as devices that facilitate how a journalist organizes large amounts of information and packages them effectively for their audience. Although the theory of framing is prominent in media, media are not the only entities that engage in framing (Sanderson et al., 2015). Sanderson et al. (2015) ascertained that with the arrival

of the internet and social media, framing is now a part of the public domain, advocacy groups, and/organizations such as intercollegiate athletics. Regarding social media policies in collegiate athletics, how the athletic department frames social media can send messages designed to produce a particular interpretation and understanding with student-athletes. Goffman's (1974) framing theory aligned with the current study to explore strategies that collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and or fines for the university or college.

Operational Definitions

Facebook: Facebook is a social networking site where participants interact, share photos, and upload videos. Participants indicated a preference for an organization by clicking a Like button (Green, 2016).

Instagram: Instagram is a relatively new social networking site predominantly used to share photos among its users. Instagram is an application that facilitates photo taking, storing, and sharing on cellphones (Ting, de Run, & Liew, 2016).

Negative social media or online firestorms: Negative social media or online firestorms are the sudden discharge of large quantities of messages containing negative word of mouth and complaint behaviors against a person, company, or group on social media networks (Pfeffer et al., 2014).

Twitter: Twitter is a social networking site where participants can send 280-character messages or tweets to followers (Nahili & Rezeg, 2018) and is one of the fastest growing social broadcasting sites (Rui, Shi, & Whinston, 2014).

YouTube: YouTube is a social media site for video sharing (Yates & Paquette, 2011).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are unverified facts that a person believes are true (Marshall & Rosman, 2016; Yin, 2016). A researcher cannot control assumptions, but assumptions are necessary to the relevance of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Several assumptions were made to complete this research. I assumed that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Snapchat will continue to exist as social media tools. Another assumption was that I would locate different university stakeholder athletic administrators willing to participate in this case study. A third assumption was that stakeholders with successful strategies would be willing to share their successful strategies. A fourth assumption was that the athletic administrators would be truthful about the strategies that they use to mitigate negative social media communications from their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college. The final assumption was that I would discuss relevant topics during the interview process and that I would collect relevant secondary data to complete this study.

Limitations

There were limitations to this study. Limitations are potential weaknesses in a study that are not in the researcher's control (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Munthe-Kaas et al., 2018). There were potentially three limitations to this study. The first limitation was that some participants might not consent to participate in this study. The second limitation was the participants might not disclose all of the successful techniques they used to manage negative or inappropriate social media posts that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and or fines for the university or college. The final limitation was that athletic administrators' strategies may change over time.

Delimitations

Delimitations are in the researcher's control and refer to the bounds or scope of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). When all possible participants do not have an equal opportunity to be included because the researcher restricts the capacity of a study, it is called a delimitation (Jolley & Mitchell, 2010). Participants for this study were segmented stakeholder groups from colleges or universities in the southeastern part of the continental United States. To include stakeholders outside of the United States would have required resources beyond the scope of this research. Another delimitation was that this study included athletic administrators from Division I, Division II, or Division III schools that are members of the NCAA or the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). I did not interview student-athletes, coaches, or NCAA or NAIA administrators, but only the collegiate athletic administrators. This study was limited to

successful strategies used by collegiate athletic administrators to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college. Also, only athletic administrators who spoke English were included in the study.

Significance of the Study

A robust academic study is based on a need to extend the field of study or fill a gap practically and/or theoretically. This study extended the field of study of communications with the relatively new medium of social media communications in relation to collegiate athletics. The significance of this study was that the findings may help schools mitigate risk and increase reputational branding for student-athletes, coaches, teams, and schools.

Contribution to Business Practice

This study added to the body of literature on negative social media in sports marketing and communications. Successful strategies on how to mitigate negative social media may fill a gap in the communications and marketing literature for business leaders and managers. The results of the study may be beneficial to business leaders and/or organizations who are seeking to learn how to manage or mitigate negative social media communications in their businesses to protect their brand, avoid reputational damage, and mitigate financial loss.

Implications for Social Change

Society may benefit by learning information that helps them make better informed decisions about a brand and understand the importance of using best practices for

positive, responsible, and effective social media communications. From the results of the study, business leaders may learn successful strategies to mitigate negative social media communication to protect their personal and professional reputational brand, distinguish fake news from the truth, and reduce cyberbullying and suicides. People who are in leadership roles may gain insight regarding how to foster better communications practices and be an example for their partners, children, coworkers, employees, and customers. Managers in organizations may find the information helpful to implement a social media policy or strategies within their organization as a guide for their employees to follow to enhance their communication channels, improve brand marketing strategies, and mitigate negative social media communications that can be detrimental to their brand and consumer buying intentions.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of the literature review was to examine the existing body of knowledge and affirm the problem of negative social media communication by student-athletes and coaches that affect the brand image of universities and athletic administrative departments. I explored strategies that collegiate athletic executives used to mitigate negative social media communications by student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. I start the literature review section by discussing the conceptual framework and related conceptual framework theories, which were the cornerstone of this study. After examining and describing the conceptual framework, I review and synthesize the supporting and rival theories associated with the framework.

I then examine social media communications and the social media platforms that are part of the current communications and marketing segments in the world. The history of social media platforms, social media in sports, the NCAA and social media monitoring, the arguments opposed to social media monitoring, and the positive and negative social media communications are a part of the review of the literature section. Also, I address the topics of communication processes, themes, and strategies and how they relate to successful social media communications. This comprehensive approach was intended to provide insight into successful strategies athletic administrators use to mitigate negative social media communications and content by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college.

In this study, I obtained sources primarily from probing management and business databases in the Walden University online library. The literature review has 115 sources. Within the literature review, I used one conference paper, one government website, three dissertations, six seminal books, 87 peer-reviewed journal articles, nine non-peer-reviewed journal articles, and eight other references that were relevant to this study, such as survey research, websites, and university social media policies. Of the 115 sources, 80 were published between 2014 and 2019, and 98 were published between 2012 and 2019. I organized the literature review using 13 subsection topics. To identify relevant literature, I used the Walden University library databases; local libraries in Harrodsburg, Danville, and Lexington, Kentucky; and the University of Kentucky library. I researched communications, media, business, marketing, communications, and sports journals

containing information on social media and monitored current events on the sports industry and social media networking sites. Other databases used include ABI/INFORM, BSC/Premier, EBSCOhost, Emerald, Google Scholar, ProQuest, SAGE, Science Direct, and Thoreau. Keywords included the following: *framing theory*, *agenda setting theory*, *priming theory*, *brand image*, *brand equity*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Intercollegiate student-athletes*, *negative social media or online firestorms*, *reputation management*, *social networking sites*, *LinkedIn*, *SnapChat*, *Twitter*, and *YouTube*.

Framing Theory

In this qualitative multiple case study, the theory used in the conceptual framework was framing theory. I used framing theory to explore the research phenomenon in a comprehensive and structured manner. In 1974, Goffman (as cited in Knudsen, 2017) introduced framing theory to conceptualize daily processes of categorizing experiences, ideas, and beliefs into loosely structured social frameworks. Goffman (as cited in Cassilo & Sanderson, 2018) argued that framing occurs when a person defines a situation by emphasizing certain aspects surrounding it. According to Sanderson, Browning, and Schmittel (2015), framing is a role of the mass media wherein mass media report information in specific ways to generate a particular interpretation to their audience. Framing results from media organizations that emphasize specific aspects of a news story to enhance the understanding and interpretation from their audiences (Entman, 1993; Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015). Goffman (as cited in Cassilo & Sanderson, 2018) observed that individuals change their definition of social situations by looking for social cues within those contexts. Goffman (1974) surmised that people

interpret the world around them through their primary framework. Framing theory was based on the premise that anything presented to a broad audience (i.e., a frame) affects the choices that people make and how they consider the information.

Framing is part of the public domain, social media platforms, and organized groups. Although framing is a prominent element in media, media are not the only entities engaging in framing (Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015). Porter and Hellsten (2014) provided an example as an analysis of interactions from participants on YouTube who enacted framing from messaging in response to climate change. Holton, Lee, and Coleman (2014) provided an example of forum participants who enacted framing in their messaging schemes. Furness (as cited in Stefanik-Sidener, 2013; Zhang, Jin, &Tang, 2015) used reframing of medical conditions and framing as a persuasive strategy concerning public health issues and discussed how the presentation of the health issues information impacted the public. Cassilo and Sanderson (2018) discussed media framing in sports, and Sanderson, Weathers, Grevious, Tehan, and Warren (2016) conducted research that revealed 11 frames used to discuss injuries of two National Football League (NFL) quarterbacks. Also, fans can introduce alternative framings to counteract framing by the mainstream media (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010; Sanderson, 2010).

Goffman (1974) and Gitlin (1980) were the first to discuss how the use of frames helps to organize information for journalists and the consumers of media. Knudsen (2017) contended that these frameworks mirror and mold shared understandings of the world through a process of selection, deselection, and emphasis of relevant and irrelevant

traits to form coherent worldviews. Goffman surmised that people interpret the world around them through their primary framework. People can form, shape, and share their worldview by framing their own dialogue.

There are many meanings of *frame*, *framing*, *media framing*, or *frame as a framework*. Knudsen (2017) defined frames as a cultural, sociological, communicative, or linguistic phenomenon. Gitlin (1980) described media frames as persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation of selection, emphasis, and exclusion by which symbol handlers organize communication. Etman (as cited in Knudsen, 2017) refined Gitlin's definition by describing a frame consisting of several predefined frame elements determined by function rather than content. M. J. Carter (2013) described frames as organizing principles that are social, shared, and persistent over time, and that work symbolically to structure the social world. There has been criticism of framing theory because of the somewhat vague definition (Knudsen, 2017), the broad range of perspectives on the precise nature of frames, and the diversity of research approaches (Van Gorp, 2007).

Scheufele (2000) noted that frames allow people to construct causal relationships about a subject or issue to understand how it coincides with what was already known to them. Framing is powerful and is an illustration of the influence the mass media has in shaping how an audience receives information (Stefanik-Sidener, 2013). Chong and Druckman (2007) postulated that framing could change how the public interprets a story. If repeated enough by various media groups, the perception a person has of frames is that the information is a fact (Billings & Eastman, 2003).

To provide a better explanation of framing, researchers often break framing theory down metaphorically (Beaulieu, 2012). Patterson (as cited in Beaulieu, 2012) equated a frame to a cognitive window through which a person views a news story. When a person applies a window or a picture frame to a subject, only so much of the subject will fit into the picture frame (Beaulieu, 2012). Beaulieu (2012) related the framer to an artist or photographer who chooses what to include or exclude in the frame. In addition, when a person draws a window or picture frame around information that delimits the subject matter, the focus of attention is on the key elements in the frame (Hallahan, 1999). Beaulieu (2012) stated this analogy supports Entman's theory that the process of framing includes not only inclusion and exclusion but also emphasis. Entman (1993) provided a summary of the process of framing as involving selection and salience. Also, Entman described four functions of the framing process:

> Frames, then, define problems- determine what a causal agent is doing and the costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of cultural values; diagnose cause- identify the forces creating the problem; make a moral judgment- evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies- offer and justify treatments for the problem and predict their likely effects. (p.55)

Entman explained that a single sentence might perform more than one of the four framing functions. A frame included in a specific text may not include all four of the framing functions. These researchers recognized the power of frames to accentuate certain issues or situations and diminish other issues, enabling a person to craft the way the audience receives the information.

The basic idea of framing theory is that problems can be viewed from various perspectives and be construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Framing is the procedure of forming social facts and steering ideas about problems employing diverse communicative tools (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Scheufele, 1999). These tools may include an assortment of communicative appliances like conventional print media, broadcast media, advertising attempts, and political lectures (Sant & Mason, 2015). Information uniformity and stability are foremost in society, particularly for those attempting to set up social standards. Framing could be the primary measure of institutionalizing societal standards (De Bruijn & Janssen, 2017). With the arrival of the internet and social media, framing is now a part of the public domain, advocacy groups, and organizations such as intercollegiate athletics (Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015).

Framing is used by mass media to present data in certain ways to produce a viewpoint for their viewers (Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015). Framing takes place when media personnel highlight certain facets of a news story to support a specific comprehension and explanation for their viewers (Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015). The basic premise of framing theory is that the media focus attention on certain issues and place the issues within a field of meaning (Goffman, 1974). One theory commonly used in research that supports framing theory and is viewed by some researchers as an expansion of framing theory is agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). However, there are other theories besides agenda setting theory that support framing theory, such as priming theory. With the arrival of the internet and social media,

framing is now a part of the public domain, advocacy groups, and organizations such as intercollegiate athletics (Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015). The main concept of framing is how information is packaged and presented, shaping the interpretation of information and playing a crucial role in scientific controversies (J. M. Smith & van Ierland, 2018).

Related Theories

Agenda setting theory. There is a close relationship between framing theory and agenda setting theory (Borah, 2011; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 2017). Both framing theory and agenda setting theory set the agenda by drawing public attention to a topic. However, framing is a step toward how the news media present and create a frame for the information (Scheufele, 1999).

Agenda setting theory was developed in the early 1920s when Lippman (2017) established the relationship between events that happen in the world and images in public. Lipmann noted that the news media are the primary source for the pictures in people's heads about the larger world of public affairs, a world in which most citizens are out of reach, out of sight, and out of mind. People's knowledge and worldview are based on what the media reports to the public (Cohen,1963). The media agenda becomes prominent in the minds of the public. However, Cohen asserted that the media might not be successful all the time when telling people what to think but are successful in telling their readers what to think. Cohen asserted that different people look at the world differently because of what the map writers, editors, and publishers draw in the papers they read. The ideas of Cohen later led to the formulation of agenda setting theory

(Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Scheufele, 2000). McCombs and Shaw (1972, 2017) explored the ideas of Lippmann and Cohen to examine the agenda of media.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) developed agenda setting theory to raise awareness of the issues presented by the news media. Another name for agenda setting theory is agenda setting function of the mass media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), as the media sets the agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Although the intention of earlier agenda setting theory research was for news media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), because of social media communications, Wenner (2014) assessed emergent communication and sports research agenda. The basic assumptions of agenda setting theory are

1. The media and the press do not reflect the actual reality; rather, they tend to shape and filter it.
2. The intention of media to focus especially on specific subjects and issues will lead the public to consider only those issues as more crucial than other issues that might be even more important (Kazun, 2017).

There is a general query regarding the relationship between the agenda setting theory and framing theory. McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey (1997) discerned that framing could be an extension of the agenda setting theory wherein their interpretation depicts the fact that frames act as a special type of macro attribute in the agenda setting model; this is due to their characteristics of defining the problem, interpreting the causes, and proposing a solution. However, some researchers who have attempted to combine the agenda setting and framing theories revealed that the single integrated model of agenda setting and framing would complicate the uniqueness of the

theories (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997). Price et al. (1997) discerned that agenda setting is about story selection as a determinant of public perceptions of important issues, and indirectly through priming. The focus of framing is not on which topics or issues are selected for coverage by the news media, but instead on the ways those issues are presented (Price et al., 1997).

Priming. Another related theory to framing and agenda setting theories is priming theory. Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder (1982) created priming theory and referred to it as the priming effect. Priming is the predecessor or an extension of agenda setting and is an essential concept in media effect and political communication research (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). In political communication literature, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) defined *priming* as changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations. Researchers used priming to evaluate the media effects on audiences (Entman, 2007; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). When the news media use their content to suggest to the news audience that they should use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments, this is an example of priming (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The media place importance on the news or news stories so that the audience has the impression that they are the most critical information. The news media do this by carrying a story as headlines news, breaking news, or special news features using expert opinions. The media prime the news by repeating the news and giving it more importance.

Priming is related to framing theory. People use framing to shape and alter an audience's interpretations and preferences through priming (Entman, 2007). Target

audiences are encouraged to think, feel, and make decisions in a particular way (Entman, 2007). Entman acknowledged Gross's personal communication that priming is a name for the goal, the intended effect, of strategic actors' framing activities. Gross suggested that scholars often seem to choose among the three terms based less on theoretical distinctions than on the dependent variable of interest (Entman, 2007). Since introducing these three models, framing, agenda setting, and priming, scholars have placed a significant amount of attention on them (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Although several models are related to framing theory, there are also competitive theories to framing theory.

Competitive Theories

There are similar models to framing theory, such as agenda setting and priming models; there are also rival or competitive theories in the published literature. Two rival or competitive theories to framing theory are communications privacy management (CPM) theory and uses-and-gratification theory (UAG). However, for this study, the focus is on CPM theory.

Communications privacy management (CPM) theory. CPM is a practical theory and is a way for researchers to understand the everyday practices of privacy. Communications privacy management theory or CPM theory is to elucidate the borders amongst and between individuals (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). Petronio (1991) developed CMP theory, known initially as communication boundary management, to explain how individuals manage private information. Petronio (2013) reported on three main rules of CPM:

- People control their privacy boundaries that include revealing or concealing personally or collectively.
- There are boundaries when two or more people share information.
- Once disclosure occurs, groups create coordinated, collective management. Hammonds (2015) showed that when individuals sense that a private matter aligns with a current conversation, they are likely to disclose the information.

In various studies, researchers (Browning & Sanderson, 2012; Hopper, 2017; Jeong & Kim, 2017; Li, Lin, & Wang, 2015; Petronio; Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015; Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015; Snyder, 2014) applied CPM theory to social media, intimate interpersonal relationships (Thompson, 2011), and interpersonal peer relationships (Chen, Ping, Xu, & Tan, 2015). The use and validation of CPM were evident in the studies on how the implementation of NCAA Division I social media policies by athletic departments created privacy issues of social media use by NCAA Division I student-athletes (Browning & Sanderson, 2012; Hopper, 2017; Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015; Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015; Snyder, 2014). Chennamaneni and Taneja (2015) effectively utilized CPM theory to study the impact of individual motives, practices of communication, and concerns related to privacy in the quantum and depth of information disclosed by individuals on social media sites. Sanderson (2011) used CPM theory to evaluate the NCAA schools' social media policies, review challenges related to privacy between academic advisors and student-athletes interpersonal associations (Thompson, 2011), and evaluate the privacy management of student-athletes on Facebook. Yang, Pulido, and Kang (2016) researched the impact of

privacy concerns among college students on social media, especially on Twitter, testing privacy management using CPM.

Social Media Communications

There are various definitions and descriptions of social media. Researchers described social media as a way people interact to create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Katona & Sarvary, 2014). Other researchers referred to social media as websites that allow users to create profiles and use them to connect and interact with other individuals (Topolovec-Vranic & Natarajan, 2016). Social media services are online web-based applications with embedded Web 2.0 features that enable users to express themselves, build relationships, play, and share in a networked environment (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Recent researchers described social networking sites (SNS) as an electronic service or account, involving the electronic exchange of content, including videos, photographs, blogs, video blogs, podcasts, instant and text messages, email, online services, or Internet Web sites (Snyder, Hutchens, Jones, & Sun, 2015). This study's social media platforms are social media platforms used by friends, fans, celebrities, athletes, and coaches to communicate, collaborate, and brand.

Social media use has exploded in the past ten years, changing how people communicate, share information, stay abreast of current events, and perceive the world (Chen & DiVall, 2018). However, there are limited studies on the impact of social media use within communications for college athletics' and the communicators' viewpoints on social media. Stoldt (2012) emphasized that there is a need to evaluate the way

communicators of college athletics perceive the impact that social media has on their institutions, the specific traits of social media, the association between conventional mainstream media and social media, and the measures that institutions are undertaking and initiating to evaluate the impact of social media.

Social Media Platforms

Social media usage and social media sites are growing exponentially. According to the latest data from the Pew Research Center (2018), 86% of U.S. adults aged 18-29 use social media, 80% of adults aged 30-49 use social media, and 69% of U.S. adults are currently social media users (See Appendix A). Duggan and Smith (2013) explored the growth, trends, and patterns that shaped the social media landscape over the past decade; and today, approximately seven in ten Americans use social media for connecting, engaging in news content, sharing information, and entertaining themselves (Pew Research Center, 2018). Many well-known social media platforms exist today, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Google+, Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube, Flickr, Tumblr, Reddit, and more (Katona & Sarvary, 2014; Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga, & Bronner, 2018). Although many variations and types of social media exist, the expectation was that people actively use and engage with various platforms differently based on the unique characteristics that each offers in terms of functionalities, interface, and content (Voorveld et al., 2018). In the recent research of The Pew Research Center's survey of U.S. adults, Smith (2018) described how the social media landscape in early 2018 revealed a mix of long-standing trends and new emerging narratives (see Appendix A). Information derived from the Pew Research Center survey was

- Most Americans today use Facebook, YouTube.
- Snapchat and Instagram are wildly popular with the 18-24-year-old age group.
- Facebook remains the primary and the most widely used platform, with 68% of U.S. adults.
- The 18-24-year-old group frequently embraced and used various platforms, with 78% using Snapchat, 71% using Instagram, and 41% using Twitter.
- Approximately three-quarters of Facebook users and six in ten Snapchat and Instagram users visit each social media site daily.
- There was substantial reciprocity across eight major social media platforms, with the median American using three of the eight social media platforms (see Appendix A; Pew Research Center, 2018; Smith, 2018).

Facebook is the most popular and largest social media network, reaching one billion users in 2012 (Facebook.com, 2018). In 2019, Facebook had an average of 1.47 billion daily active users and over 2.23 billion monthly active user accounts as of June 2018. (Facebook.com, 2018; Statista, 2018). Twitter, an online news and social media site, rapidly became a phenomenon in the sports arena, displaying how quickly new media can mobilize fans (Kassing & Sanderson, 2015). According to Twitter Inc. executives, Twitter had an average of more than 326 million registered users, generated more than 500 million tweets per day, and 500 billion tweets per year (Aslam, 2019; Grothaus, 2018; Internetlivestats.com, 2019; Twitter, 2019). As one of the largest social networks worldwide, Twitter had more than 336 million monthly active users worldwide (Statista, 2018; Twitter, 2018). President Trump, a frequent Twitter user, is known to post

controversial tweets (Enli, 2017; Francia, 2018; Kreis, 2017) intended to provoke conflict with an opponent (Francia, 2018), may contribute to the worldwide Twitter appeal. Facebook is a social network; Snapchat is an instant photo messaging platform; Instagram is a photo-sharing application; Twitter is a microblogging application; LinkedIn is a business and employment-oriented social networking service; Google+ is an interest-based social network, and Pinterest is a catalog of ideas or photo-sharing site; all of which represent different types of social media, each with unique architectures, cultures, and norms (Van Dijck, 2013). Some researchers determined that educational institutions, sports organizations, athletes, and teams are known to largely utilize existing platforms of social media such as Twitter and Facebook to initiate and engage in constructive dialogue with the objective to forge new associations with their audiences (Blaszka, Burch, Frederick, 2012; Clavio & Walsh, 2014). Twitter is a social media platform that transformed how communication occurs between athletes, fans, teams, and organizations.

Social Media Communications in Sports

A prominent foundational scholar of media and sports, Wenner (2015), proclaimed that there could not be a big-time sport without big time media and created the term *mediasport* (Wenner, 1998; Wenner, 2015). The media's key is how they framed, understood, enacted, and transacted sports information (Wenner, 2015). Wenner asserted that the frame is more important than the game, and with the advancement of new digital and social media, much change is likely for *mediasport*. The scholarship on sports and social media is still relatively new (Billings & Hardin, 2014). The growth of

social media in intercollegiate athletics is evident daily through college network tweets, the number of users who follow both an intercollegiate athletic department and student-athlete social media channels, and live streaming of comments from social media users during athletic events (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). Researchers are showing more interest in social media's growing role in sports (Clavio & Walsh, 2014; Korzynski & Paniagua, 2016; Sanderson, 2011; Sanderson, 2014; Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015; Stavros, Meng, Westberg, & Farrelly, 2014). Social and behavioral scientists Hutchins (2014) and Pedersen (2014) are intrigued by the interrelationship dynamics between sports and social media. However, despite the growing use and adoption of social media communications amongst sports organizations, little is known about the social media's impact on the sports industry and business or how to use media tools for branding reasons (Parganas, Anagnostopoulous, & Chadwick, 2015). Hutchins argued that although social media development is still unfolding, the popularity and acceptance by athletes, coaches, managers, teams, leagues, fans, events, and sport governing bodies is widespread. Published research on social media and sports has significant growth (Pedersen, 2014). However, there is a lack of formal articulation and an absence of empirical evidence on the current state and historical evolution of social media scholarship in sports management research, warranting further study to gain a better understanding of the role that social media has in the sports business (Abeza, O'Reilly, Séguin, & Nzindukiyimana, 2015; Sanderson, 2011).

Essential players in sports communication are social media technologies (Sanderson, 2011b; Browning & Sanderson, 2012). New digital and social media are

important aspects of communication dynamics concerning sports (Wenner, 2014). Intercollegiate athletic department administrators, sports information personnel, coaches, and student-athletes use Twitter to communicate with others in the university community (Jensen, Ervin, & Dittmore, 2014). Twitter is the social media platform at the forefront of the sports market and with sports stakeholders (Jensen, Ervin, & Dittmore, 2014). Intercollegiate network tweets, student-athletes social media streaming of comments from social media users during athletic contests, and the number of users who choose to follow intercollegiate athletic departments freely are all suitable occurrences where the athletic administration can measure the extent to which student-athletes are using social media platforms (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015).

Benefits of Social Media Communications in Athletics

There are many benefits of social media in sports. Sometimes, harmful incidents surfacing from student-athletes' posts overshadow social media benefits (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). Like large corporations, athletes can use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to interact with their current fans and attract new ones (Korzynski & Paniagua, 2016).

To keep up with new technologies, new communication mediums, and remain abreast of the current social media trend, university athletic departments need to understand social media's relevance. Delia and Armstrong (2015) discussed how social media benefits sports programs for marketing, branding, and fan engagement. Korzynski and Paniagua (2016) addressed the relevance of social media and sports performance in global sports stars' market value. The researchers presented an empirical analysis to

reinforce their argument that social media and professional performance are relevant for public figures' contract value. Korzynski and Paniagua argued that the highest-paid athletes, such as Bryant, who was in fifth place on the list of the most popular players on social media, had online popularity assets that led to a higher salary. Korzynski and Paniagua developed a framework of three social media powers that may prove useful for leaders, influencers, and global athletes: the power of informing, interacting, and the power of inspiring on social media. Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2014, p.345) identified in *Sports Marketing* that social media is a useful tool in athletics for these reasons:

- To build an audience of fans to interact within real-time.
- To engage fans in ways they want to be engaged (special offers, breaking news, websites, sweepstakes, etc.).
- It is viral.
- It drives behavior that drives business.
- People not only want to interact with brands on social media but also want to buy from brands.

Because of the unlimited information available on the internet and the broad reach, social media is an excellent tool in many aspects, especially for athletes to build their personal brand.

From high school to the professional ranks, athletes on all levels benefit from using social media as a communication tool. Lebel and Danylchuk (2014) postulated that when an athlete on an amateur or professional level tweets, there is an ability to generate massive amounts of interactivity that gives athletes unprecedented power and influence.

Pegoraro (2010) noted that athletes and fans are attracted to the idea of connecting without the red tape of the media, who sometimes spin or frame how an athlete truly feels about a topic. The fans experience social interaction with athletes when they reach out to the fans directly and solicit them to attend an event or perform an action (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010). Athletes use the social media platform Twitter to create positive exposure, engage with their fans, and increase their visibility (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010). Schiffer (2015) noted how athletes use social media networks to communicate widely without relying on the media and sports organizations as go-betweens. Fans can connect with their favorite athletes, engage in open dialogue with athletes, and feel a greater sense of connection with them by using social media features to add, like, or follow (Schiffer, 2015).

Social media is a beneficial tool for athletes. Researchers identified social media as an essential tool for building their personal brand (Taskiran, 2019). Lee (2015) denoted those famous football players such as Ronaldo or Messi, as well as not so prominent players, used social media frequently by uploading selfies (i.e., hand-held portraits of themselves from their camera phone), updating their whereabouts, thanking their fans, giving opinions, airing grievances, or just posting daily thoughts of life as a football player. The main objective was to create fan engagement and loyalty and increase the player's personal brand's value ahead of the next contract negotiations with their team or sponsors (Lee, 2015). Some athletes and coaches hire a third-party company to handle their social media activities by posting messages for them. The objective is the same as they are for football players; to engage fans, build loyalty, and increase the

athletes' brand value (Lee, 2015). One of sports' biggest stars, Bolt, has over 16 million fans on Facebook and 3.75 million followers on Twitter since 2008, while football player Ronaldo has 106 million likes on Facebook and 37 million followers on Twitter (Lee, 2015). University of Kentucky head basketball coach Calipari has 1.3 million followers on Twitter (Calipari, 2015), which is the most followers of any college coach (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). In 2018, Calipari had 1.78 million Twitter followers (Calipari, 2018), and in 2019 the followers only reduced to 1.64 million (Calipari, 2019).

Social media users can showcase themselves positively in the way they like, express their interests, follow, and make connections with others across time and space boundaries (Sanderson, 2018). Student-athletes have a rare opportunity to show the person outside the athlete and lead to fans' additional avenues to identify and communicate with their athletic standouts (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). The student-athlete can also communicate and stay in touch with family and friends that live away from their school area. The administrators of intercollegiate athletics use social media predominately for promoting and marketing products, creating revenue opportunities, and branding the universities (Blaszka, Cianfrone, & Walsh, 2018; Browning & Sanderson, 2012; Dixon, Martinez, & Martin, 2015; Jensen, Ervin, & Dittmore, 2014). Social media benefits student-athletes from a networking viewpoint, connecting with others and developing their career objectives now and in their future (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). The University of Central Florida administrators used Facebook to promote their football team's game-winning defensive play against the University of Houston to sell more tickets and put more fans in the stands (McClellan, 2014). Sanderson, Snyder, et al.

(2015) noted that athletes could avoid journalistic framing, fight detractions or allegations, post commentaries, and foster more direct contact with fans with social media. Athletes now can create their narrative or frame their own story the way they like (Billings, Moscowitz, Rae, & Brown-Devlin, 2015; Cranmer & Sanderson, 2018) rather than allow critics to frame their worth in sports (Browning & Sanderson, 2012).

Negative Social Media Communications in Athletics

Although there are many benefits to social media, there are also negative aspects to social media in athletics. In addition to social media platforms being a huge asset for student-athletes and collegiate athletic departments, they can also be a public forum for scrutiny and a place where one can document undesirable behavior (Lewis & Hugg, 2015). Because of negative social media incidents, athletic departments encounter tremendous negative media attention and scrutiny from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Snyder et al., 2015). A negative aspect of social media is that everything an athlete says publicly is subject to public consumption and scrutiny (Sanderson, 2018). The negative incidents usually arise from the content of student-athlete posts on social media (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). Sanderson (2011a) explained social media as a conundrum in the world of sports because even though there are benefits of social media like fan interaction, team awareness, marketing, and promotional opportunities; organizations and athletic administrators now have to deal with the reality of controversial and inappropriate posts by student-athletes and coaches.

Numerous social media incidents resulted in widespread negative media attention. Some student-athletes made social media posts that got them in trouble following the

recent presidential elections. The University of Texas athletic administrators dismissed football player Burnette from the team for posting a derogatory and racist comment about newly elected President Obama in 2008 on Facebook (Han, Dodds, Mahoney, Schoepfer, & Lovich, 2015; Mayo, 2017). The head football coach of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette suspended a group of the football players for posting a video of them making lewd gestures and singing the rap lyrics to a song called FDT, an acronym for f**k Donald Trump (Behrmann, 2018; Johnson, 2016). Wake Forest administrators dismissed a student-athlete from the football team because the student-athlete threatened to blow up the campus by bringing a loaded gun to the school (Havard, Eddy, Reams, Stewart, & Ahmad, 2012; Snyder et al., 2015). In 2011, players for the golf team at Bethany College received a suspension from tournaments because of posting inappropriate pictures on Facebook (Bentley, 2012; Mayo, 2017). In another incident, Western Kentucky University administrators suspended a star football player after the student-athlete posted a critical tweet about their team (Paulson, 2012). In 2013, a football player at Ohio State University caused negative media attention when the student-athlete posted on Twitter, "Why should we have to go to class if we came here to play football, we ain't come to play SCHOOL. Classes are POINTLESS. [sic]" (Behrmann, 2018, p.71). In 2014, a player from Kent State University posted a series of offensive tweets using gay slurs about an openly gay football player, Sam from Missouri, which resulted in indefinite suspension (Meriwether, 2014). The mainstream media people report via television and blogs about social media mishaps or highly visible student-athletes' gaffes. For example, Satterfield (2016), a marketing manager with Sysomos Company, published a blog titled

Athletes Who Got in Trouble with Social Media (Appendix B), and FoxSports (2016) reported a story on the 13 Most Perplexing Gaffes on Social Media (see Appendix B). Once again, Complex.com, an online magazine, an American New York-based media platform for youth culture, published its third annual edition of The Worst Social Media Fails of 2017 (Appendix B; see Olojede, 2017).

Individuals can publish a single post, tweet, or comment on a social media platform that can quickly be popularized by many users that may influence a person's image and cause damage or social marginalization to a business or an individual (Korzynski & Paniagua, 2016). Reputational damage, harm, or loss are possible from a single tweet (Korzynski & Paniagua, 2016). An example of the type of backlash a university and individual experienced was at Kent State University when wrestler Wheeler tweeted an offensive comment about the University of Missouri football player, Sam using anti-gay remarks toward the NFL draft prospect's defenders (Santus, 2016). The story went viral, and Kent State immediately rebuked Wheeler's comments and punished the student-athlete with an indefinite suspension from the team. Student-athletes need to be careful about posting inappropriate or questionable information on social media platforms. Age is a concern when considering what is or is not inappropriate information because what a 17-year-old college student deems inappropriate is most likely going to be infinitely different from what a 55-year- old administrator deems to be inappropriate (Sanderson & Browning, 2013).

When student-athletes share unsuitable material on social media, the problematic posts are often the topic of conversation amongst media constituents (Sanderson,

Browning, & Schmittel, 2015). One ill-advised or ill-conceived post, tweet, or comment by a student-athlete can have serious consequences resulting in the loss of their scholarship, hurting their future career opportunities, or mitigating the worth of an individual and/organization (Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015). In three different studies, researchers (Han, Dodds, Mahoney, Schoepfer, & Lovich, 2015; Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015; Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015) discussed the incident regarding Wheeler, a student-athlete at Kent State University who was suspended indefinitely for an anti-gay Twitter post about the media coverage of Sam, the first openly gay football player drafted into the National Football League. In another incident, the coach at Penn State, Hand, tweeted that they would no longer recruit a prospect because they demonstrated their character with their social media presence (Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015).

Other challenges athletic administrators experience are the social interactions student-athletes have with their fans. Researchers noted how fans attacked student-athletes with hostile and demeaning language on Twitter (Sanderson & Traux, 2014). Sanderson and Traux investigated an incident in 2013 when the University of Alabama football player, Foster, received negative messages after the team lost to rival Auburn University. The researchers found that the most common negative behaviors were belittling, mocking, sarcasm, and threats (Sanderson & Traux, 2014; Sanderson et al., 2015). Browning and Sanderson (2012) explored the positives and negatives of Twitter and how student-athletes use the social media medium to respond to negative tweets. Browning and Sanderson noted that student-athletes are aware of negative information

about them on social media, and they have adverse emotional and psychological effects. In an investigation by Browning and Sanderson (2012) on how student-athletes responded to receiving negative tweets, they concluded that Twitter was a challenge for student-athletes because it made them susceptible to harsh criticism. They wanted to respond but were forbidden by administrators to engage in such behavior. David, Powless, Hyman, Purnell, Steinfeldt, and Fisher (2018) corroborated the extant literature when student-athletes reflected on both advantages (e.g., avenue for advocacy and moral support and promoting team cohesion) and disadvantages (e.g., receipt of critical tweets and detrimental performance implications) of using the microblogging platform and providing a more balanced perspective of Twitter's resulting impact. Sanderson (2018) suggested that rather than framing social media negatively, the administrators should help the student-athletes see social media's benefits through education. Athletic departments and athletes have a lot to contend with in the face of a complex, challenging environment with social media misuse from student-athletes and coaches (Sanderson, 2018).

The NAIA and NCAA

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) are two separate collegiate sports governing bodies. The NCAA members consist of 1117 colleges and universities, 100 athletic conferences, 40 affiliated sports organizations, over 460,000 student-athletes, and three Divisions (Division I, II, III) (NCAA, 2018d). The NAIA consists of 250 schools, 21 conferences, and 65,000 student-athletes (NAIA, 2017). The NAIA website compares

the NAIA organization to the NCAA Division II and Division III schools (NAIA, 2017). It is not uncommon for NAIA teams and NCAA Division II and III teams to compete.

The NAIA and the NCAA each have their own rules and regulations for student-athletes at member schools to abide by and follow. There are governing rules for recruiting, admission, athletic eligibility, and financial aid for the student-athletes with expectations for member schools to abide by and follow (NCAA, 2018a). The NAIA has an official policy handbook titled The NAIA Official Handbook and Policy Handbook, which contains the constitution, bylaws (including casebook examples), and other legal information covering the structure and governance of the organization (NAIA, 2017). Each year the NCAA adopts new legislation, publishing a manual by Divisions and rule books by sports, and having an annual convention and regional rules seminars (NCAA, 2018d). The NCAA regional rule seminars are on NCAA legislation, athletics compliance, and associated issues educational forum for the benefit of athletics administrators, coaches, and other campus administrators in the areas of financial aid, registration, and admissions from Division I, II, and III member-schools and conferences (NCAA, 2018d).

The relationship between the NCAA and student-athletes is sometimes polemic. Heintzelman (2017) described the relationship between the NCAA and student-athletes as being contentious and controversial. Because social media is an open domain for the public, the NCAA can also view student-athletes' social media activity (Lewis & Hugg, 2015). When student-athletes express themselves on social media, the words they use can cause headaches for public relations and compliance offices at universities and the

NCAA (Hernandez, 2013). Blohm (2012) stated there is confusion among member institutions regarding social media expectations and the seemingly harsh or arbitrary punishments imposed by the NCAA. The popularity of social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are appropriate resources for the NCAA to implement disciplinary actions against student-athletes and the institutions they attend for internet activities (Sanderson, 2013a). While the NCAA administrators affirm an inherent responsibility to regulate social media, they have not enacted a universal social media policy for collegiate sports (Blohm, 2012). NCAA regulators rules on the use of social media are directed explicitly at recruiting (Blohm, 2012; Heintzelman, 2017; NCAA, 2018d) and mentioned only in their Division I & II manuals' bylaws article 13.10 titled publicity (NCAA, 2018a; NCAA, 2018b), and in their Division III manual bylaw article 13.2.11 under electronic transmissions (NCAA, 2018c). The NCAA regulators believe that social media is acceptable if it complies with their existing recruiting guidelines (Blohm, 2012; Heintzelman, 2017). The NCAA administrators placed the burden to police student-athlete social media use on their member institutions (Heintzelman, 2017). However, Hernandez (2013) suggested that the NCAA has a substantial incentive to place limitations on student-athletes using social media. There are three main ways typically used by athletic administrators to regulate social media: bans, guidelines without monitoring, and monitoring policies (McCoy, 2014). Without a central or uniform social media policy or strategy set by the regulating organization, the NCAA, academic institutions are on their own in deciding what the best method is to prevent or regulate the social media communications of their student-athletes.

Social Media Communications Policies

From checking online school sites, most schools seem to have some type of social media policy today. Most schools include their social media policies in their university student-athlete handbook. Syme and Dosh (2014) revealed in a survey that 43% of athletic departments regulate student-athlete social media through departmental policies. The increased usage of social media by student-athletes created risks for multiple intercollegiate athletic stakeholders causing many athletic departments to develop social media policies to reduce risks (Hooper, 2017). The increase of technology and instantaneous communication through social media sites create public relations issues for collegiate athletics and student-athletes (Delia & Armstrong, 2015). The development of social media policies within the student-athlete handbooks by athletic departments is for controlling (a) implementation of privacy rules (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015), (b) creating shared communication boundaries between the school athletic departments and student-athletes (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015), and (c) developing privacy boundaries as being co-owned and mutually managed through boundary coordination between the student-athletes and the athletic administrators (Snyder, 2014).

Schools do not require a social media policy (Heintzelman, 2017; O'Connor, Schmidt, & Drouin, 2016). Even though it is not a requirement for schools to have a social media policy, the NCAA instructed its member institutions to be aware of any suspicious social media behavior by their student-athletes on the various social media sites (Santus, 2014; Heintzelman, 2017). With an institution's reputation at stake, some schools, under the NCAA membership, implemented special policies for student-athletes

regarding social media because students can post comments and photos on various social media sites (Heintzelman, 2017). Norlander (2012) discussed in an article on CBSSports.com the argument by schools that student-athletes can create a compromising predicament for themselves, their team, their coach, the athletic program, and the school if they post or tweet a disrespectful commentary. Online information is a permanent digital footprint, not truly erased, and puts schools at risk (Langenfeld & Batra, 2017; Van Namen, 2012). To simply alter or eliminate digital content will not reliably erase the footprint (Langenfeld & Batra, 2017). The athletic compliance administrator's social media usage and knowledge increased due to creating social media policies and the growth of student-athletes social media use (Sanderson & Browning, 2013; Snyder, 2014). Even though there may be some similarities of social media policies amongst schools, they are not standard and are different in severity, breath, and sanctions. The repercussions for violating the policies can range from written reprimands, warnings, education, counseling, team suspensions, loss of scholarships, or dismissal. The student-athlete must remove the post or face reprimands (Santus, 2014). Some examples of repercussions for student-athletes are in school social media policies (see Appendix C). Some policies included stipulations about freedom of speech (see Appendices D and K) with words such as do not have a false sense of security about your rights to freedom of speech or understand that freedom of speech is not unlimited (Santus, 2014, p. 1). Many policies include stipulating that participating in college sports is a privilege and not a right (Penrose, 2014a, p. 463; Santus, 2016, p. 2; see Appendix E). Some athletic departments have policies with lists of reputational concerns that forbids student-athletes

from posting content that includes offensive or foul language that could embarrass or ruin their reputation, family, team, the athletic department, or the university (Penrose, 2014a; Santus, 2016). Student-athletes are responsible and accountable in some school policies for content posted on their site by other people (Santus, 2016; see Appendix F). On the website recruit.com, Enright (2017) provided a generic example of a collegiate, athletic, social media policy (see Appendix G).

The percentage of university athletic departments that have social media communications policies vary. The range of school social media policies for student-athletes is broad, from no policy to very restrictive (Heintzelman, 2017). Heintzleman postulated that the range lacks continuity, proving how controversial social media policies can be. In the interviews, Heintzleman conducted with college athletic programs, some schools strongly believed in having a social media policy while other schools vehemently avoided them. One school even took great pride in not having a social media policy because they wanted to promote free speech and not worry about liability. O'Connor, Schmidt, and Drouin (2016) found that 64% of NCAA Division I athletic programs have social media policies, while only 69% of NCAA Division I, II, and III have social media policies in place. In similar research conducted by Heintzelman conducted similar research interviewing 10 Division I universities. Sixty percent had a social media policy as a part of their student-athlete handbooks; none had password-monitoring software; 40% had coaches monitoring the social media of their players or added players as friends to monitor social media activity, and 20 % believed there should be an NCAA uniform social media policy instituted. Sanderson (2011b) found that 64%

of NCAA Division I athletic departments had social media policies. In later research, Sanderson, Snyder, et al. (2015) found that 69% of NCAA Division I, II, and III athletic departments had social media policies. O'Conner et al. (2016) noted that social media policies are seemingly prevalent on college campuses; however, there is scant research on this phenomenon. Research on social media policies and legislation in intercollegiate athletics is minimal because of the continuously underrepresented social media guidelines by athletic departments (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, these social media policies are ambiguous and notably confusing, with student-athletes lacking awareness and or understanding of their university's social media policy (O'Connor et al., 2016). Students must comprehend the social media policies at their college; even more so, collegiate institutions must provide clear guidelines for the use of social media and examine students' knowledge-base about campus policies related to the appropriate use of social media (O'Connor et al., 2016). However, Heintzelman (2017) stated that the research from compliance directors helped frame the argument as to whether the NCAA or its member schools should institute social media policies. Heintzelman argued that the NCAA and the member schools should not have any form of social media policy because of First and Fourth Amendment issues and the potential liability for both the NCAA and its schools. Heintzelman recommended that schools use social media policies for student-athletes as an education tool, not to limit the students' constitutional rights. Heintzelman further explained that student-athletes should have the freedom to use social media at their leisure without imposing restrictions by the NCAA or its member institutions. Although public and private colleges and universities

have existing social media policies, some of these institutions have different monitoring methods, execute their policies, or allow student-athletes to freely use social media networks (Browning & Sanderson, 2012). Because some athletic teams are more high profile, such as football and basketball than other groups, schools may have team-specific social media guidelines, such as the team by team social media guidelines for the University of Georgia (Santus, 2014; see Appendix H). There may be additional requirements for some athletic teams besides student-athletes just signing the social media agreement. Santus explained how players on a men's basketball team were encouraged to make their Facebook account private and sign an agreement with the coach to allow or disallow Twitter at any time. Whereas the women's golf team members had a list of 11 rules, with only one reference to social media, which was about the monitoring of their accounts, the men's basketball team had more expectations and advice on appearance, proper behavior, sexual violence, cell phone bans, and dorm inspections (Santus, 2014). The men's policies are more restrictive, specific, and detailed than women's guidelines.

Social Media Monitoring

There are arguments for and against university athletic administrators monitoring social media communications by their student-athletes. Athletic departments try to avoid controversial posts by imposing restrictions on student-athletes social media usage, even to the point of monitoring their online conversations (McCarthy, 2017). Unlike professional athletes, student-athletes have strict monitoring and severe consequences for their Twitter use (Sanderson, 2011b). Barocas (2015) suggested that the NCAA member

schools, and student-athletes would all be better off by stopping the practice of social media monitoring. Most colleges and universities do not have a policy on monitoring the social media accounts of student-athletes. However, in an NCAA (2012, p.12) public infractions report against the University of North Carolina (UNC; see Appendix I), the responsibility to do so may emerge as part of an institution's heightened awareness when it has or should have a reasonable suspicion of rules violations. The allegation by the NCAA in 2012 was that the UNC administrators did not adequately and consistently monitor the social media communications of their student-athletes, which was a visible illustration of potential amateurism violations within the football program (NCAA, 2012, p.1). UNC's NCAA investigation results were probation and a ban on the football team from competing in a bowl (Snyder et al., 2015). Although the information from the social media post was only a small part of the violations discovered at UNC, the NCAA committee, through the infractions report, cautioned other schools to be wary of student-athlete social media usage (McCoy, 2014). The NCAA placed the burden to police student-athlete social media use on their member institutions (Heintzelman, 2017). Although the NCAA has not promulgated any official social media monitoring policy, the allegations against UNC demonstrated that a sports program could be subject to potential sanctions because of student-athlete's social media activity (Snyder et al., 2015). The NCAA case against UNC was exposure to the severity of improper use of social media and how it can harm a collegiate athletics program (Lewis & Hugg, 2015) and resulted in many institutions creating and or revisiting their social media policies. After the NCAA sanction, UNC department of athletics changed their social media policy

for their student-athletes, requiring them to select at least one coach or administrator responsible for having access to, regularly monitoring the content of, and receiving reports about players' social media sites and postings (UNC Policy on Social Networking and Media Use, 2018, p.2; see Appendix I). At some schools and UNC 2018 Policy (see Appendix I), the student-athletes' policy requirement is to provide their usernames on various social media sites (Santus, 2014). Other schools have since followed suit or used similar approaches for monitoring.

Because of what transpired at UNC, the associate athletic director for communications and public relations at the University of Massachusetts, O'Mara stated, that it is crucial to monitor and educate student-athletes on social media (Lewis & Hugg, 2015). Epstein (2012) provided arguments for and against monitoring student-athletes social media use, while Hernandez (2013) argued that the NCAA has complete discretion in regulating social media and the right to ban student-athletes' social media use. Behrmann (2018) provided arguments against social media bans' constitutionality, fights for the constitutionality of social media bans, and concluded that an outright prohibition on student-athletes 'social media use seemed unconstitutional.

Since the NCAA does not provide rules or regulations for monitoring student-athlete social media activity, the decision and responsibility to do so or not lies with each institution. Several strategies used by athletic departments to monitor the social media use by their student-athletes range from limited oversight at some schools to extensive monitoring and regulation by other institutions (Snyder et al., 2015). In some policies (see Appendix F), there are warnings that administrators monitor various social media

networks and not just Facebook and Twitter (Santus, 2014). Some schools use third party companies and social media monitoring software. Some companies that schools use to monitor their student-athletes social media accounts are Varsity Monitor and UDiligence (Barocas, 2015; Roscorla, 2018; Santus, 2014; Snyder et al., 2015). Other private companies used by universities are JumpForward (Santus; 2014) or Geo Listening (Roscorla, 2018). Another company that athletic administrators use to educate, and monitor student-athlete social media is Fieldhouse Media (Roscorla, 2018). These companies use software to monitor student-athletes' social media accounts, which automatically notifies the coaches or compliance office of any inappropriate or prohibited content. Heintzelman (2017) noted that some of the school administrators interviewed were not interested in social media monitoring software because it has various liability and legal issues. Heintzelman described the student-athletes at the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville as having a stricter social media policy to tweet what they wanted. Still, the compliance department receives an alert to any inappropriate words or phrases. In the interview with the compliance director, Heintzelman learned that the University of Maryland's policy does not allow monitoring software because that type of policy violates state law. The athletic administrators feel the policy would be an invasion of privacy.

Some institutions decided to ban their student-athletes from using social media (Behrmann, 2018; Santovec, 2014). When athletic departments impose a ban, student-athletes cannot use social media, or their social media use is limited (McCoy, 2014; Mayo, 2017). Some schools that issued bans on their student-athletes social media usage

at one point in time include the following: Mississippi State University, University of New Mexico, University of Miami, University South Carolina, University of North Carolina, University of Las Vegas, University of Missouri, Kent State University (Hopkins, Hopkins, & Whelton, 2013; Penrose, 2013; Umar, 2015), University Minnesota men's basketball, Connecticut women's basketball, Clemson University (Mayo, 2017; Umar, 2015), Boise State University, University of Iowa, University of Kansas, Florida State University, and the University of South Carolina (Behrmann, 2018; Umar, 2015). Santovec discussed the social media legal issues with Judge, a sports attorney and president of Sports Law Associates LLC, who worked with more than 300 colleges and universities educating student-athletes on the risks of using social media irresponsibly. Santovec posited that bans are appropriate if they are responsible, specific, and narrowly tailored to serve an institution's legitimate, content-neutral interests. Groves (2018) inferred that it is a legal problem when private colleges promulgate rules prohibiting or interfering with a student-athlete's speech. Groves referred to a new proclamation from the General Counsel's office of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) that private institutions with athletes on scholarship will now have difficulty lawfully prohibiting athletes from activities such as making social media comments. The litigation that Groves (2018) analyzed led to the conclusion that student-athletes are employees of their university employer. Therefore, the National Labor Relations Act limits schools' ability to prohibit or interfere with student-athletes' self-organizing speech and activities. This relationship status between student-athletes and private institutions first became a legal issue when football players who received grant-in-aid scholarships at

Northwestern University, a private institution, formed a college players' association and requested legal status as employees under the NLRB (see Appendix C).

While useful, bans could also lead to legal problems with free speech and privacy (McCoy, 2014). Bans are also a protection mechanism from scrutiny by the media, fans, or rivals for student-athletes (McCoy, 2014). Gay (2012) suggested that public universities 'social media bans could violate the First Amendment rights of student-athletes. Administrators need to consider the consequences and limitations of banning social media (Santovec, 2014). Judge postulated that it is inappropriate to restrict social media usage throughout the entire sports season at a public school (Santovec, 2014). Still, it was okay to ban if a student-athlete is on the coach's time, such as the bus to and from a game when emotions run high and temptations are great, or during practice (Santovec, 2014). Bentley (2012) suggested that university representatives could implement a narrowly tailored social media ban to protect their reputations and respect their student-athletes' rights. Despite different approaches of school officials on whether to monitor student-athletes posts or ban their social media use, reputation management is vital for student-athletes, the sports programs, and the universities (McAdow, Jung, Lambiase, & Bright, 2017). To date, there are no known legal cases of a student-athlete challenging the bans or restrictions placed on social media (Behrmann, 2018), so school administrators may feel it is worth the risk of a potential legal battle rather than have their university embarrassed or reputation tarnished by inappropriate social media activity by their student-athletes. Behrmann said it is unlikely a student-athlete would challenge a social media ban. Student-athletes would risk their careers and jeopardize their eligibility and

scholarship to participate in sports (Gay, 2012). Playing sports is more important to a student-athlete than a social media network (McCoy 2014).

Fieldhouse Media Group: Monitoring Services

Hiring a media group specializing in social media is one of the strategic ways that athletic departments try to mitigate negative social media and educate their student-athletes and coaches. Fieldhouse Media, founded by DeShazo in 2011, is a company that university administrators use for social media monitoring and educational purposes (Fieldhousemedia.net, 2018; Roscorla, 2018). Fieldhouse Media executives monitor student-athletes' public posts with no intention to invade student-athletes' privacy (DeShazo, 2013; Roscorla, 2018). The cost for universities is approximately $3,400 to $5,000 for educational services and $8,000 to $10,000 for a combination of educational and monitoring services from Fieldhouse Media (Fieldhousemedia.net, 2018; Roscorla, 2018). DeShazo (2018) reported being on the campus of over 170 schools, educating over 100,000 student-athletes, and having 30 universities and athletic conferences using their athletics departments (Fieldhousemedia.net, 2018).

According to their website, Fieldhouse Media is an award-winning company with dedicated executives helping university athletic organizations get the most out of their social media efforts by educating student-athletes, coaches, and administrators on positively using social media and providing an overall social media strategy in a less invasive way (DeShazo, 2013; Fieldhousemedia.net, 2018). Shear, a credentialed lawyer whose expertise and specialties are in digital and social media law, has an opinion about the education claim with social media monitoring being less invasive by Fieldhouse

Media (Shearsocialmedia.com, 2018). Shear (2017; see Appendix J) has successfully defended and advised students accused of inappropriate online behavior; and believes that Fieldhouse Media executives could create millions of dollars in legal liability for NCAA athletic institution's conduct (Shear, 2013; shearsocialmedia.com, 2018). Shear (2013) reported that state legislatures around the United States are banning public and private schools from utilizing social media monitoring companies to track the personal digital accounts of their athletic department personnel and student-athletes.

At least 11 states have laws that ban schools from verifying the social media usernames and passwords of their coaches and student-athletes (Shear, 2013). Congress introduced bills in 36 states to protect schools and students from businesses that are: (a) selling monitoring services to NCAA schools, (b) claiming leadership status in social media monitoring, and (c) educating student-athletes on proper social media use (Shear, 2013). Shear (2013) argued that common sense and due diligence prove otherwise. According to Shear (2013), Varsity Monitor, UDiligence, JumpForward, and Fieldhouse Media executives sell social media monitoring services that schools in at least 11 states may not utilize to track the personal social media accounts of coaches or student-athletes because of the new laws. Institutions that use these businesses' social media monitoring services could be fined hundreds of thousands of dollars or sued for violating the student's first and or fourth amendment rights or lose millions of dollars in federal funding (Shear, 2013).

Other researchers, Harvard et al. (2012), looked more in-depth at the monitoring services provided by UDiligence that provides institutions with software to monitor the

profiles of online social network activities of student-athletes by searching and flagging for inappropriate buzz words. Long, founder of UDiligence claimed that their monitoring service is a mentoring and teaching tool that can help preserve the institution's reputation and the student-athletes but also prevent current and future incidences (Havard et al., 2012). The main concern is whether the monitoring companies and how they conduct their services are legal or violate the state social media laws, student-athletes', and employees' privacy rights, and violate their First and Fourth Amendment rights. The possible repercussions for the schools that use the social media monitoring services of these companies are potential fines in the hundreds or thousands of dollars, sued for violating their student-athletes first and or fourth amendment rights, and or the loss of millions of dollars in federal funding (Shear, 2013; Shearsocialmedia.com, 2018). Shear stated concerns with Varsity Monitor, UDiligence, Jumpforward, and Fieldhouse Media services, claiming that their services are less invasive than other monitoring companies. Shear suggested that school administrators perform their due diligence, use their common sense, and not let these companies fool them (Shear, 2013). Shear's alert and warning were that anyone selling services to monitor personal social media accounts is selling a legal liability time bomb (Shear, 2013). If an institution hires a company to monitor their student or employee social media accounts and misses an indication that there may be a crime committed, the institution's cost may be more than $100 million (Shear, 2013; Shearsocialmedia.com 2018). Shear asserted that the guilty verdict Penn State Coach Sandusky received was proof that administrators of NCAA institutions should not hire social media monitoring companies to spy on their student-athletes or employees. McCoy

(2014) recommended that universities use third-party monitoring companies with caution. Institutions need to know the laws on monitoring social media in their state, investigate any company they chose to do business with, and get legal advice before employing a monitoring company.

Public information from the website of fieldhousemedia.net (2018) showed that Fieldhouse Media conducted surveys to document student-athlete social media usage called the Fieldhouse Media study for the past five years. Each year from 2013-2018, Fieldhouse media group polled approximately 500 student-athletes or more on their social media use (fieldhousemedia.net, 2018). Some student-athletes were from major DI schools and mid-majors, while nearly half were from DII or DIII schools. The data were that student-athletes are embracing social media with a major increase in social media use and participants in the study each year (fieldhousemedia.net, 2018). As early as 2012, DeShazo (2013) reported the social media use of student-athletes in the Fieldhouse Media survey (see Appendix J) resulted in 72% of athletes surveyed had a Twitter account with 97.4% of them tweeting daily; 93.5% had a Facebook account with 99% of them with one post a day, and 64.81% had an Instagram account with 94% posting daily. Some athletes were using social media as of 2016, but 52% said they had had no social media training (Fieldhouse Media Survey, 2016; see Appendix J). A survey conducted by the College of Sports Information Directors Association (CoSIDA) showed that 56% of the universities surveyed do not provide training, and 43% did not have social media policies (CoSIDA, survey, 2014; see Appendix J). In the recent Fieldhouse Media survey of 2018, 98% of student-athletes had a Facebook account; 95% had a Twitter account; 99% had an

Instagram account, and 93% had a Snapchat account (fieldhousemedia.net, 2018; see Appendix J). The data showed that 71% of student-athletes spend at least one hour a day on social media; 49% said they had no social media training; 33% said they had posted something on-line in which they regret, 39% believed their athletic departments monitor their social media accounts, and 15% reported that a coach or administrator disciplined them for a social media post (DeShazo, 2018). Only 64% of respondents in the CoSIDA survey (2014) had goals or strategies for using social media (see Appendix J).

Strategies to Mitigate Negative Social Media

Athletic administrators need to have a strategic plan or strategies to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches. McAdow et al. (2017) showed that 36% of athletic departments reported having no social media strategies and a lack of consensus in incorporating social media into the overall communications strategy (Syme & Dosh, 2014). First and foremost, all athletic departments need to have a social media policy for their student-athletes and coaches (McAdow et al., 2017; Sanderson, 2018; Sanderson & Browning, 2013). Also, student-athletes should receive education on social media use and their school's social media policy (McAdow et al., 2017; Sanderson, 2018; Sanderson & Browning, 2013). Student-athletes feel athletic administrators are not prioritizing the student-athletes' time efficiently and should spend more time on education about Twitter and other social media platforms instead of waiting for them to have a mishap on social media (Sanderson & Browning, 2013). McAdow et al. (2017) researched social media policies for student-athletes at universities, and the three strategies or themes the researchers derived from the

study are: (a) educate through real-life do's and don'ts, (b) establish relationships, and (c) know social media. According to Lewis and Hugg (2015), general principles or best practices when dealing with social media that deserve consideration are:

> (a) remember that you represent your family, your team, and the institution on social media, don't embarrass the program!; (b) tell your story, build your brand, and be accountable; (c) don't add to the noise; bring value; (d) keep in mind that it's all reportable and it's all on record; and (e) before you post, consider: what would your grandmother say if she read this? Would a future employer hire you? (p.3)

Although athletic administrators are trying to stop social media misuse, student-athletes continuously post, tweet, and Instagram inappropriate content that can generate negative or positive public relations issues (Sanderson, 2013a). The central theme to mitigate negative social media by student-athletes is to educate them on using social media effectively and positively to build their brand and promote their school, team, and talents. The goal is to help mitigate negative social media communications to protect the college/university from reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines.

Transition

Section 1 included the study's foundation, including the background information, the purpose statement, and the nature of the study. Section 1 also included the research problem on the need for strategies to mitigate negative social media communications in collegiate athletics that can cause reputational damage to the brand, financial loss, and

sanctions for the university or college. In section 1, I discussed the conceptual framework and concluded with a review of the literature.

Section 2 contained a description of the study participants, the researcher's role, a discussion of the study's methodology and design, the population and sample size, ethical considerations, data collection, and data analysis information. Section 3 included presenting the findings, the application to professional practice, the recommendations for action, and future research on this topic. All three sections relate to the overarching research question of the study: What strategies do some collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate negative social media communication by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college?

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I restate the purpose of this study, address my role as the researcher, describe how the participants were selected, and explain the research method and design. Next, I describe the population and sampling, ethical research practices, data collection instruments, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques. I conclude Section 2 by explaining how I ensured reliability and validity of this study and provide a transition to Section 3.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate their student-athletes' and coaches' negative social media communications or online firestorms that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. The target population included athletic administrators from three universities located in the southeastern United States who had successfully mitigated negative social media communications to prevent reputational damage to their brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. The implications for positive social change included the potential for athletic administrators and business leaders to understand the importance of having a social media communications strategy for mitigating negative social media communications from their student-athletes, employees, and consumers. Other implications for positive social change included the potential for athletes, fans, employees, and consumers to act with civility, personal responsibility, and good manners by being a positive force when communicating

on social media. People in companies, organizations, and society may think twice before posting something derogatory or negative; may make better informed brand decisions when sharing more positive information through social media networks; and may mitigate personal and professional reputational damage or job loss, financial loss, bullying, and suicides.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was to explore the literature of the research topic, identify the research design, and select and inform participants regarding the research process. I also collected the data, analyzed the data, and synthesized the information related to the business problem to mitigate negative social media communications by student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college. The researcher's role is to present the participants' experiences in the study, understand the significance of the business research problem, and be mindful of personal values and potential biases (Siegle, Rubenstein, & Mitchell, 2014). In this qualitative multiple case study, I was the data collection instrument. In qualitative research, the researcher is often the primary data collection instrument (Yin, 2013). According to Abma and Stake (2014), in a qualitative multiple case study, the researcher's role is to create in-depth descriptions and analysis based on one or multiple cases. The goal in the current study was to present the results and recommendations in an organized and objective manner.

Although I have many years of experience in the marketing and communications fields, I did not have a business or personal relationship with the participants, and I was

not affiliated with or worked directly with any of the participants. I did not know any of the study participants personally or professionally. Living in the age of social media, I observed the challenges that many universities experience when trying to regulate instant communication outlets on many avenues. My interest was to explore the problems in the sports industry because of the social media communications phenomenon. I was a student-athlete in high school and college with a passion for sports. I have a keen interest in how social media communications and marketing impact the collegiate sports industry today. I have more than 30 years of sales and marketing experience, including teaching an introductory marketing course at a university. I have had extensive involvement and participation in sports as a coach and a collegiate student-athlete. I also served as a member of the Board of Directors for the Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame. This background helped to establish credibility and passion for this topic and area of interest. Also, I taught at the high school level, competed on the college level, and owned and operated a national marketing company. With my experience and background, I was qualified to analyze the results of this study with limited bias.

In addition to teaching marketing, I have been a sales and marketing executive and consultant and have served as Deputy Executive Director of Communications and Public Outreach for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Working as a consultant with businesses in the public and private sector taught me to conduct situational analyses with little personal bias. Therefore, I felt qualified to conduct a qualitative study to explore successful strategies used by collegiate athletic administrators to mitigate negative social media communications by the student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational

damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college.

Most of my professional research experience was with qualitative methodology, including my master's thesis. I have conducted numerous personal and professional interviews with business customers throughout my career. I was able to apply my interviewing skills in this study because of my work experience. I also have sales, communications, and marketing experience, which enhanced my preparation to complete this doctoral study.

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) published the Belmont Report, which provides ethical guidelines and principles for human beings' protection. In the current study, I followed the basic ethical principles described in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979), which are (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and, (c) justice. Decker, Kipping, and Wadhwani (2015) ascertained that a study is ethical and responsible when the researcher safeguards the identity of the participants, uses an informed consent process, and stores the data securely. It is vital to protect the confidentiality of the participants by removing their personal identifiers from published information and research reports. I adhered to the Belmont Report by treating the participants as autonomous individuals and granted them protection as required.

A researcher's concern is to preserve research integrity by mitigating personal bias. Decreasing the potential for bias in qualitative research includes removing

emotions, listening attentively to the responses of the participants, and asking focused questions (Yin, 2013). Adderley and Mellor (2014) argued that genuine personal respect and interest are essential. I controlled my emotions, respected the participants, listened intently to them, and followed the interview protocol (see Appendix L) of the study. According to Treloar, Stone, McMillian, and Flakus (2015), using interview protocol adds to the consistency and reliability of the research data.

To mitigate personal bias in this study, I used a disciplined process referred to as bracketing to avoid any preconceived notions about this research topic. Bracketing helps to prevent bias during the data collection and analysis phases (Overgaard, 2015). I also used methodological triangulation, which involved collecting data from multiple sources (see Yin, 2013). The use of multiple data sources enhanced the credibility, trustworthiness, and strength of the study.

As the researcher, I was accountable to the ethical standards required by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Oder & Pittman, 2015). I adhered to the University's ethical guidelines stipulated by the IRB to ensure research quality and reported the data and findings without bias. Walden University's IRB approved the study before I began the data collection process.

Member checking is used by researchers to increase the accuracy of interpretations following transcriptions (Andraski, Chandler, Powell, Humes, & Wakefield, 2014). Researchers use member checking to ensure the correct meaning and choice of words (Archbold, Dahle, & Jordan, 2014; Forber-Pratt, 2015; Fusch & Fusch, 2015). I used member checking to reduce personal bias and allow the participants to

analyze and comment on my interview interpretation process. I conducted member checking by interpreting the data provided by the participants and sharing the results in a summary of the critical information with the participants. The process enabled each participant to comment on the interpretation and provide feedback on the findings.

Yin (2014) recommended the use of a protocol to guide the collection of data. Bond et al. (2014) insisted that researchers follow the same interview protocol with all participants. The semistructured interview protocol (see Appendix L) for this study included prepared questions, identified themes, and flexibility for participants to introduce new information while ensuring consistency of the research project and the quality of the data collection (see Brown et al., 2013). Adderley and Mellor (2014) found that semistructured interviews are useful in improving processes and strategies. The interview protocol and interview questions (see Appendix L) allowed each athletic administrator to describe strategies to mitigate negative social media communications.

Participants

Participants were selected for this study using a purposive sample technique. Researchers choose purposive sampling to collect data for a variety of reasons (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to obtain a broad range of information and knowledge about the research topic (Elo et al., 2014). The type of purposeful sampling used in the current study was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is used to identify cases of interest from sampling people who know people who have similar characteristics and are knowledgeable about the research topic (Patton, 1990). Snowball sampling was used when I contacted college/university administrators

with knowledge and expertise in mitigating negative or inappropriate social media communications that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college and asking them to refer other participants to the study. Based on their knowledge and expertise, the administrators helped expand the pool of potential participants.

The rapid adoption and use of social media by student-athletes created risks for athletic department personnel tasked with developing policies for the protection from negative or inappropriate communications on social media, which may result in financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the college or university (Sanderson, Snyder, et al. 2015). The eligibility criteria for the participants in this study were athletic administrators who used successful strategies to mitigate negative social media communications by student-athletes and coaches that may have resulted in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. The athletic administrators, sports information directors, or communications directors were required to be currently working at universities or colleges that are members of the NCAA or NAIA. Also, the athletic administrators had to have a bachelor's degree and had to have worked in the athletic department with some experience in strategies to mitigate negative social media communications at a Division I, II, or III university or college.

When selecting the study participants, I contacted Division I, II, or III athletic departments listed as member institutions of the NCAA or the NAIA. I also consulted with a former athletic director who had career knowledge in this area and could make recommendations regarding who had successful strategies and were potential contacts.

Then, I contacted eight athletic departments by phone or email to recruit a minimum of four athletic directors, sports information directors, or communications directors who were successful in mitigating negative communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. In qualitative studies, researchers contact participants face-to-face, by email, or by telephone (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015; Oltmann, 2016). I contacted the athletic departments by emailing the consent form to authorizing representatives of the athletic department to determine the interest and willingness of athletic directors, communications directors, or information directors to participate. I searched university websites, LinkedIn, and Google to obtain email addresses and read the employees' profile information. I emailed the consent form to the employees who met the inclusion criteria. In the research protocol, it is essential to establish and define selection criteria (Elder, 2014). Palinkas et al. (2015) affirmed that eligibility requirements increase trustworthiness and ethical qualities in research. To be eligible to participate in this study, the participants must have been an athletic director, sports information director, or communications director in an athletic department in the United States who consented to participate in the interview process representing their university or college. The criteria for inclusion were athletic administrators who developed and implemented successful strategies to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. Participants who met the criteria and signed the

consent form were eligible to participate in the interview process. Robinson (2014) noted that in qualitative research, the participants should meet specific requirements to answer the research question.

Prior to selecting the study participants, I obtained permission from the Walden IRB to collect and analyze data. Before I interviewed the participants, I ensured that I met the ethical standards and had the participants sign the consent form. In the document, I informed the participants about the voluntary nature of study and the option to withdraw at any time. I did not provide any incentives to the participants and kept their identities confidential by providing a code name for each participant (e.g., P1, P2, P3). I did not collect data until the IRB granted permission.

After IRB approval, I selected and invited three athletic administrators and one sports information director to participate in this qualitative multiple case study through interviews to learn more about their strategies to mitigate negative social media communications. Lucero et al. (2018) and Yin (2014) explained that a qualitative researcher should use a single unit or multiple units for analysis when conducting a case study. Kazadi, Lievens, and Mahr (2015) argued that using a purposeful sample for a limited number of cases facilitates collecting valuable knowledge and enhances the data identified in the literature review. A small sample size is adequate to gain rich insight and information into participants' thoughts and experiences (Crocker et al., 2014; Yin, 2014).

Four athletic administrators or sports information directors were selected to participate in this study. All participants had successfully applied strategies to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches. Effective or

successful strategies were determined by athletic administrators who had not experienced any severe problems with social media communications from their student-athletes or coaches.

To gain access to the participants, I scheduled a phone meeting to open communication lines, develop a working relationship, and explain the study's purpose. In a qualitative research study, researchers must establish a relationship with participants (Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2014; Yin, 2014). I stressed that the lines of communication are always open and shared the research protocol.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) claimed that participant engagement and trust in the researcher increase when they understand the study's purpose. Trust, respect, and consistent communication are essential aspects of building a relationship between the researcher and the participant (Abma & Stake, 2014; Siegle et al., 2014). To develop the relationship and establish trust, I discussed the business problem, the study's background, and the study's purpose, and answered all the participant's questions about the study. I provided the informed consent form, explained the interview process, and scheduled the interview at each participant's convenience to build trust and a working relationship with the participant. Having an adequate procedure for the interview process that includes the consent form helps promote an effective and trustworthy relationship with the qualitative research participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014).

I enhanced the working relationship by emphasizing the interview process, the research protocol of maintaining the confidentiality, and sharing the research with the participants. I promoted building a significant relationship with the participants by having

adequate procedures for the interview process. Also, I provided my personal information to the participants to contact me with questions, always keep the communication lines open, and establish trust and enhance the working relationship.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

I considered three types of research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. I chose the qualitative methodology for this study. Researchers use a qualitative method to explore strategies or themes that emerge from conversations with individuals and look for explanations and patterns from the data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). This study's focus was to explore strategies collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate negative social media communications from their student-athletes and coaches, which may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, or fines for the university or college.

Researchers use the qualitative method for interviews to understand how and why questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2014). Therefore, a qualitative method was the best research method. Researchers use the quantitative method to test a theory or a hypothesis by examining relationships between variables or predictors to explain a phenomenon (Barnham, 2016; Benard, 2013; Norris, Plonsky, Ross, & Schoonen, 2015). Researchers also use a quantitative approach to collect and analyze numerical data (Hoare & Hoe, 2013). Quantitative researchers test numerical data by comparing or finding correlations and generalize numerical data to the populations to explain a phenomenon (Haneef, 2013). Mixed methods are a combination

or mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodologies that researchers use to study a phenomenon (Vink, Van Tartwijk, Bolk, & Verloop, 2015). A mixed-method approach is suitable when one method does not provide a complete understanding of the study topic (Bak, 2011).

I did not use a quantitative method or try to verify a theory in this study. I did not test theories, collect numerical data, or measure variables; therefore, quantitative and mixed methods were not appropriate research methods for this study. This study was qualitative versus quantitative or mixed-methods because I explored strategies and focused on the experiences of participants concerning social media communications management of their student-athletes and coaches, that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, or fines for the university or college, rather than testing hypotheses for existing theories.

Research Design

I considered the following four research designs for this qualitative study: (a) ethnography, (b) phenomenology, (c) narrative, and (d) case study. Researchers explored cultural beliefs using the ethnography design (Fields & Kafai, 2009; Letourneau, 2015; Petty et al., 2012; Reich, 2015). Not explored are cultural beliefs; therefore, an ethnography research design was inappropriate for this study. Researchers use phenomenology to identify the essence of human experience (Gill, 2014). In this study, identifying the essence of human experience was not explored. In a narrative design, researchers study single individuals' life histories and form a narrative (Benard, 2013; Paschen & Ison, 2014). The intention of a narrative design is for a researcher to learn

biographical information about a person's experience or events (see Petty et al., 2012). A study of the life history of single individuals was not a part of this research. A narrative design was not appropriate for this study. Researchers explore activities, processes, or events more in-depth in case studies (Cronin, 2014; Dasgupta, 2015; Yin, 2014). Case studies are flexible, providing the researcher with multiple ways for collecting data such as interviews, observations, and analyzing existing documents (Petty et al., 2012). Researchers using case studies can elicit details from multiple participants and data sources, allowing for triangulation (Hyett et al., 2014). The ability to use multiple sources as evidence is a significant benefit and strength of the case study (Yin, 2014; 2016). Participants willfully provided various organizational documentation such as social media policies, student-athlete's handbook, NCAA, or NAIA information as data to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources to enhance data credibility. Houghton et al. (2013) stressed that case studies with multiple sources of evidence are of higher quality than studies with only a single source of information.

There are four categories reported for case study formats: (a) single case study, (b) multiple case study, (c) option for either a single or multiple case study, and (d) opportunity for multiple-case study only (Yin, 2013; 2014). Researchers examine activities, processes, or behaviors in multiple contexts in a natural setting in multiple case studies (Merriam & Kee, 2014; Vohra, 2015; Yin, 2014). In multiple case studies, researchers interview participants and explore the differences within and between the cases (Dasgupta, 2015; Yin, 2014). The research findings are more robust from a multiple case design than single-case design studies (Vohra, 2014; Yin, 2014).

A multiple case study design was best for this study because I explored contemporary, real-life experiences and strategies from multiple research sources. Multiple athletic administrators shared strategies to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches, and I collected secondary information from the organization. A multiple case study design was the format chosen to conduct this doctoral study.

Researchers accomplish data saturation when they cannot identify new codes, new information, or new themes in their research findings (Bowen, 2008; Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017). Qualitative researchers may have a small sample size, but no new codes should arise from participants' interviews for data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Reaching data saturation is necessary to ensure data sufficiency and validity with sustainable research findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Multiple data collection methods are essential to ensure data saturation in a case study design (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011).

Population and Sampling

According to Merriam (1998), there are two types sampling types: random sampling and purposeful or purposive sampling. Researchers conducting qualitative studies use purposeful sampling as the sample selection method to obtain a broad scope of information and knowledge about a research topic (Elo et al., 2014; Morse & McEvoy, 2014) and to generate data validity and credibility based on the phenomena presented in the research study (Palinkas et al., 2015). I selected a purposeful sample for this study by choosing participants who were knowledgeable about the subject. Patton (1990)

identified 16 types of purposeful sampling. The type of purposeful sampling used with this study is snowball sampling, in which an identified participant recruits other informants or participants for multisource studies for the researcher (Marcus, Weigelt, Hergert, Gurt, & Gelléri, 2017). The sample for this multiple case study consisted of athletic administrators from four different universities or colleges located in the southeastern region of the United States. The sample was appropriate for understanding what strategies the participants used to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches, resulting in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college.

Researchers use purposeful sampling to identify and select information-rich cases relating to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Researchers may purposefully narrow the participant's pool to answer descriptive research questions, focusing on a single person or group (Morse 2015). The athletic administrators' professional experience and ability to describe strategies, situations, or trends narrowed participants' selection. Researchers gather an abundance of beneficial information from case studies that include small, targeted selection sets (Suri, 2013). I conducted interviews with each collegiate athletic administrator via Zoom video conferencing calls.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) posited that researchers continue data collection until reaching a point of data saturation. Characteristics for reaching data saturation include no new data, themes, or coding, and that there is enough information to replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Koelsch, 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Walker, 2012). Guest et al (2006) ascertained that researchers obtained data saturation when additional coding is

no longer feasible, and there is no new information (Guest et al., 2006). When and how a researcher obtains data saturation was a determinate of the research design. In this case study, multiple data collection methods were used, including using a semistructured interview technique, asking each participant the same questions, and using a small sample size to reach data saturation. In qualitative research, quality (rich) is more important than quantity (thick) data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017). Failure to reach data saturation affects the research quality and hinders content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Ethical Research

Scholarly researchers must adhere to an ethical protocol. Social scientists' ethical protocol includes a process of informed consent, privacy, and accuracy, with no deceptions (Connelly, 2014). When conducting ethical research, the researchers create and abide by a set of prescriptive standards as an ethical requirement of the research design (Suri, 2013; Zohrabi, 2013). Researchers must adhere to ethical standards when researching by placing the highest importance on treating human participants in an equal manner (Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2014; Harriss & Atkinson, 2015; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Each participant in this study was treated in an equal, respectful, and ethical manner while protecting their privacy and confidentiality. To ensure the highest ethical standards, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Web-based training course, Protecting Human Research Participants, was completed, and a certification number was received. The Walden University IRB approval number for this study is 04-09-20-0502335.

The IRB's role is to protect human participants and verify that the research complies with federal regulations (Abbott & Grady, 2011). The IRB has the responsibility to oversee and monitor research, assess risks and benefits, approve participant selection procedures, and oversee the informed consent process (Cook, Hoas, & Joyner, 2013). As required, permission was obtained from Walden University IRB before the collection of data began.

To ensure ethical requirements, I confirmed the participants' willingness to participate in this study before the video conference interviews. The study participants received an informed consent form with a detailed explanation of the participation requirements, details of how their confidentiality and privacy were protected by coding each participant as participant 1 (P1), participant 2 (P2), and so forth. I provided my contact information for any questions they may have about the study. The participants made an informed decision on whether to participate in this research study. Informed consent is an integral part of the research process in protecting the participants (Kumar, 2013). Each participant received their consent form via email. The informed consent process was an element of the study required to ensure an ethical research process.

Providing specific guidelines and detailed information informing participants of their rights is paramount in research. It is important to ensure the participant understands that participation in the study is entirely voluntary and without influence, as stated in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Each participant had the right to participate, not participate, or take a break from the study without repercussions. The participant

could withdraw from the study at any time. I advised each participant that their information would be shredded/erased without prejudice if they withdrew from the process. The participants did not receive any incentives, gifts, or payments to participate in this study, as their participation was entirely voluntary, with their information kept private and confidential. Each participant and/organization were assigned an alphabetical code for confidentiality as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), and Participant 4 (P4). I explained the process whereby all data were password-protected, stored in a locked safe in my home, and destroyed five years after the study.

Data Collection Instruments

This study was a qualitative multiple case research study. Researchers collect data in multiple ways when conducting qualitative case studies, such as interviews, direct observations, documentation, and historical records to provide an in-depth analysis (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2015) or understanding of the participant's experience (Petty et al., 2012). In qualitative case study research, interviews are standard or primary data collection sources (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014; Peters & Halcomb, 2015). Researchers use interviews as a collection tool to reach data saturation quickly (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument for collecting data for the interview process in the case study design (Rowley, 2012; Xu & Storr, 2012; Yin, 2014). I used various methods for collecting data, including semistructured interviews and a review of any public and internal documents provided by the directors of the athletic establishments for the data collection process. Conducting semistructured interviews

included detailed information from the participants for data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I used semistructured interview with multi-level, open-ended questions as the primary data collection source (see Appendix L) with four collegiate athletic administrators or sports information directors of an NCAA Division I, II, III, or an NAIA university or college.

I used the semistructured interview approach to guide the interview protocol (see Appendix L) and answer the overarching research question. Each study participant was permitted to contribute to information that was beneficial to the research. Before conducting the interview, each participant was sent an informed consent form by email to reply, "I consent." For assistance during the data collection process, additional instruments used included a recording device to record the interview, a laptop computer, and a notebook to write interview notes. Bernard (2013) ascertained that using a recorder during an interview helps the researcher memorialize the interview data. The eight interview questions were the same for all participants to abide by interview protocols (see Appendix L). Researchers use interview protocols for guidance and consistency when conducting interviews (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Jacob & Fergerson, 2012). Marshall and Rossman (2016) posited that an interview protocol enhances reliability and validity. I asked the participants if there were any additional information they would like to provide.

Data were collected by conducting semistructured interviews and analyzing secondary data or official documents for methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation is when researchers use more than one method to collect data (Heesen, Bright, & Zucker, 2019). Joslin and Müller (2016) posited that by triangulating,

researchers hope to overcome weaknesses or intrinsic biases and mitigate research designs problems using a single data source. I asked the participants to share all relevant secondary data relating to the university's social media strategies to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. Using secondary data as a collection tool adds to understanding organizational processes and outcomes (DeMassie & Kotlar, 2014). The secondary data consisted of their school's student-athlete handbook, student-athlete social media policies, and any information relevant to analyzing the research study's performance outcomes and relate to the critical information shared in the interview process. I asked the participants to send all public or private documents electronically to ensure confidentially and so I could save each encrypted document in an electronic file. Using multiple data sources enhances credibility (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014; Patton, 1990). Once the data were collected during the interview and transcribed, I permitted the participants permission to read the summaries to ensure that I did not misrepresent the interview information.

I used member checking to increase reliability and validity. Member checking is a validation method used to ensure that the researcher accurately interpreted the participants' answers to the interview questions (Harvey, 2015; Heale & Forbes, 2013; Yin, 2014). Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) ascertained that when a researcher performs member checking, she or he validates, verifies, or assesses the trustworthiness of qualitative results. Member checking was used upon completion to

allow the participants to review how the researcher interpreted the information and confirm the transcription of the data represented and depicted their answers to the interview questions.

Data Collection Technique

Researchers use a qualitative method to explore strategies or themes that emerge from conversations with individuals and look for explanations and patterns from the data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). Researchers need to ensure that collected data aligns with the research question (Cridland et al., 2015). This study's research question was what strategies do athletic administrators use to mitigate negative social media communications from their student-athletes and coaches, resulting in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and fines for the university or college? The primary data collection technique was a semi-structured interview protocol using open-ended questions that were audio-recorded. Knight (2012) posited that consistent, open-ended questions allow for the flexibility of having follow-up questions. This qualitative analysis data was a collection of the participants' responses to the open-ended questions from the interviews. Researchers use qualitative research interviews because they are a targeted, insightful, and highly efficient means of collecting rich, empirical data (DeMassie & Kotlar, 2014). Interviews are the most common method researchers use to collect data in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Bryerss, 2014).

I called each participant to schedule a convenient date and time to conduct the interview. I conducted the interviews using Zoom video conferencing. I ensured the participants received the background of the study and understood the research topic. I

also asked each participants to provide any documents, such as their social media policy, student-athlete handbook, and any other relevant documents supporting the strategies used by their athletic department to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches. The researcher used two or more data sources such as interviews, social media policies, and school documents, along with reflective journal notes, internal and external information such as websites, and other public documented information to gather data for this study. Gelhorn et al. (2016) postulated that qualitative research data could comprise interviews, observations, and documents. The use of two or more data collection techniques or sources enhances the ability to perform methodological triangulation to corroborate the findings from each source, thereby improving the credibility of the data and confirmability of the study (Houghton et al., 2013; Petty et al., 2012; Yin, 2014). Tibben (2015) described triangulation as a data collection technique used in research to increase the validity, credibility, and accuracy of a study. The data collection technique used in this study was methodological triangulation. Besides interviews, the other sources of evidence used to perform methodological triangulation were: (a) student-athlete's handbook, (b) social media policies, (d) NCAA or NAIA information, (e) online public information, and (f) records or artifacts. Yin (2014) claimed that case studies with multiple evidence sources are higher in quality than studies with only one source.

I informed each participant of the background, purpose, and potential benefits of the study and asked for their permission to record the interview in its entirety. I used two recording devices, a laptop, notebook, pen, interview guide sheet, and had the signed

informed consent statement on hand. I confirmed the participants consented to participate in the study before commencing with the interviews. I turned on the digital audio recording devices to record the participant responses before the first interview question. The interview questions consisted of eight open-ended, exploratory questions (see Appendix L). By using this approach, the participants could expand on their responses to the questions, and this permitted the researcher to ask follow-up questions to gather more in-depth responses (Pettigrew, 2013). I spent 30-45 minutes interviewing and recording the participants' responses and used Happy Scribe software to transcribe the interviews verbatim, and manually checked each interview transcription to ensure accuracy.

Upon completing the analysis, I returned the data summaries to each participant via email for member-checking to ensure the interpretation analysis reflected in the responses was accurate. According to researchers, member checking is the participant's review of the researcher's interpretation and accuracy of their answers to the interview questions (Yin, 2014). Member checking helps to ensure the dependability and creditability of the data (Morse, 2015). In addition to emailing the participants a one-two page summary of the interview, I contacted them by phone to review the interpretation of their responses in the interview. Member checking was complete when each participant reviewed and emailed the acknowledgment noting their approval of the interview summary.

Data Organization Technique

Data organization is an integral part of the data collection process when conducting research. Theron (2015) defined data organization as transcribing interviews,

sorting, and arranging data. In qualitative research, the researcher is responsible for accurately organizing the data and storing it in a secure location throughout the data collection process. In case studies, the researcher must organize information continuously, exploring and interpreting the data (Yin, 2014). Researchers can access organized data when necessary (Basurto & Speer, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; Korhonen, 2014), and the analysis phase is more efficient and reliable (Mneimneh et al., 2013). Researchers who implement proper data organizational techniques preserve the reliability of the data and enhance the integrity of the research (Anyan, 2013). Additionally, it is the researcher's responsibility to protect the participants' privacy in the study (Rowley, 2012). Researchers use coding methods, such as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), and so forth, to protect the identity of the participants and to recognize and/organize emerging themes (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013; Pierre & Jackson, 2014; Rosenfeld, Gatten, & Scales, 2013).

To gain rich, qualitative data, researchers use reflective journals as a valid method to collect data (Everett, 2013; Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012). Reflective journals are documents that researchers create when thinking about various concepts, events, or interactions over a certain period to gain insight (Davies, Reitmaier, Smith, & Mangan-Danckwart, 2013). Davies et al. (2013) described reflective journals as having value in research. Researchers use reflective journals to help identify and understand key concepts from the data (Houghton et al., 2015) and as critical interpretive tools for conducting analysis (Slotnick & Janesick, 2011). Researchers use reflective journals to reduce biases (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). I used a reflective journal to help organize the research,

capture written information, and identify emerging themes in the data. Also, I recorded the date and time of each interview, the participant ID, and any key themes or new information discovered during the interviews.

I collected data from interviews by using two recording methods to video and audio tape each participant, and then transcribe the data verbatim by typing the participant's responses on a laptop into a Microsoft® Word document. Yin (2014) used audio recording devices to ensure the accuracy of transcriptions. Transcribing interviews verbatim highlights each exact word said by the participants, which allows for more robust qualitative research and may enhance engagement by the readers (Butler, 2015). Using an alphanumeric coding system was to protect the identity and confidentiality of each participant. The alphanumeric coding began with P1, then, P2 and continued to increase in number with each participant's unique code. For member checking purposes, each participant reviewed their summary information. After transcription, the data was organized and uploaded into NVivo ™ software to code common themes. Zhao, Peiwei, Ross, and Dennis (2016) suggested using NVivo ™ because of its ability to organize, code, and maneuver the data. Researchers used data coding to apply a descriptive meaning to represent data (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Coding is essential for analyzing, sorting, and/organizing data to clarify the research (Theron, 2015).

To ensure the data security, I loaded data on a flash drive and stored it in a locked safe, where I will be the only one with access. To enhance the participants' confidentiality, I deleted any names or identifying information used in the interviews and observations. Also, I maintained the confidentiality of the participants' personal

information and responses by storing all data in a secure, protected area for five years. I will destroy all data information by deleting all files from electronic storage and shredding all sensitive documents and information about this research after five years.

Data Analysis

Yin (2014) stressed the importance of understanding the data collected in a research study. Elo et al. (2014) recommended that researchers use a meticulous process to ensure data credibility, including data analysis. According to Petty et al. (2012), the researcher analyzes the data collected to interpret the meaning of the participants' responses. Researchers identified data analysis as a means to collect relevant data to support the conceptual framework, then coding, discovering, identifying and selecting themes, organizing the themes in hierarchical order, and linking themes into the phenomenon under study (Petty et al., 2012; Silverman, 2013). According to Yin, data analysis is a means by which the researcher can discover meaningful patterns, themes, and descriptions.

Triangulation is a method researchers use to establish validity within research by capturing viewpoints from various evidence (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Marshall and Rossman (2016) described triangulation as a strategic plan to help the researcher affirm data interpretations are valid. The methodological triangulation strategic plan for this study included a semistructured interview protocol, school's internal and external documents, reflective journal notes, and other public documented information to explore strategies athletic administrators used to mitigate negative social media communications from their student-athletes and coaches, that may result in reputational damage to the

brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. Methodological triangulation uses multiple types of data sources researchers use to investigate the research question (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Cope (2014) used triangulation as a method for comparing multiple data sources to draw conclusions. Researchers who use methodological triangulation with multiple data collection methods may obtain a complete understanding of the phenomenon, ensure trustworthiness, and verify credibility in a case study (Denzin, 2012; Yin, 2014). The use of methodological triangulation was relevant in this study. According to Mata and Portugal (2015), methodological triangulation is a suitable analysis tool for researchers who use interviews and multiple data collection methods to analyze an organization's internal and external documents.

I analyzed the data collected and interpreted the meaning of the responses from the participants. I used NVivo software to analyze the data, review data for redundancy by manually checking for accuracy, and searched for and identified themes within the data using Microsoft Word and Excel. DeMassie and Kotlar (2014) used NVivo software to bring rigor to the data analysis phase to organize, analyze the data for coding, and explore patterns across cases. Additionally, DeMassie and Kotlar noted how NVivo is a supportive tool used by researchers to manage the analysis work of developing categories, tracing linkages between concepts, and understanding relationships among categories. Using NVivo software during the analysis phase reduced the time for thematic coding, analyzing the data, and categorizing the data. DiMassie and Kotlar revealed steps the researcher took before the analysis process. Before analyzing, researchers prepared

information collected through case study methods by relying on data reduction, data display, data categorization, and data contextualization techniques. Data reduction involves selecting, focusing, condensing, and simplifying the collected material to ease analyzing the case study evidence (DiMassie & Kotlar, 2014). I guided the process by thinking about the data which best answered the research questions. Data display involves creating an organized, compressed way of arranging data, such as diagrams, charts, matrixes, images, or texts (DiMassie & Kotlar, 2014). The aim was to make the information as accessible as possible to identify themes and conclusions. This step usually involves data coding, where the researcher marks passages of text (or parts of images or sections of a video, etc.) that have the same message or connects in some way and then writes an accompanying explanation of what the selected passages have in common. Data categorization involves distinguishing and grouping the data (DiMassie & Kotlar, 2014, p.22). For this data analysis phase, a three-step process was used by inputting the data into the Nvivo software to enhance the data analysis process, reviewing the data for redundancy by manually checking the accuracy, and searching for and identifying themes from the data. NVivo software is a beneficial tool researchers use to analyze interview transcripts and facilitate data management (Castleberry, 2014; Cridland et al., 2015). To analyze the data, some researchers use the five steps by Yin (2014). Yin's five steps I used included (a) compiling data, (b) dissembling data, (c) reassembling data, (d) interpreting data, and (e) reaching conclusions. Additionally, researchers use NVivo software to reduce personal bias and increase the transparency of individual thoughts about a specific interview, participant, or topic in reflective

journaling (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014). Finally, after identifying codes and themes using NVivo software, I linked the themes, interviews, internal and external documents, and reflective journal notes to this study's conceptual framework, framing theory.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are the main criteria for evaluating business and management research (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). Measuring validity and reliability are essential qualitative research components (Grossoehme, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research has improved in rigor because researchers have addressed these two problematic areas of reliability and validity (Grossoehme, 2014). Qualitative researchers must conduct multiple safeguards to establish research validity, reliability, credibility, and dependability (Yin, 2014).

Reliability

It is important to establish quality in their research projects. The essence of qualitative research reliability lies in the procedures (Leung, 2015; Noble & Smith, 2015; Ramamurthy, Danasu, & Tamilselvi, 2015). Researchers referred to reliability or dependability as the extent to which the results are replicable with the same or similar results by future researchers (English, 2015; Grossoehme, 2014; Yin 2013). Yin (2015) referred to dependability as the degree to which the study results reflect reality and persist through time and in different conditions. Two ways to deal with dependability and credibility in interview methods are triangulation and respondent validation or member checking (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walters, 2016). Triangulation is the search for confirmation of several data sources (e.g., interviews, observations, and archival

documents; see Yin, 2014). There are limitations to triangulation because one data source's accuracy seldom reveals the inaccuracy of another source (Yin, 2015). An advantage of triangulation is the researcher's ability to use multiple sources to corroborate the findings to strengthen qualitative research (Yin, 2014). The procedure to ensure reliability or dependability of research using semistructured interviews for collecting data was uniform and standardized for all participants. I used the same format for collecting data and the same questions for all participants in semistructured interviews.

Dependability

For the assurance of dependability, I conducted member checking to enhance the dependability of this study. Member checking involves asking each participant to view and comment on the accuracy of the interpretation of their responses (da Mota Pedrosa, Naslund, & Jasmand, 2012). Gossoehme (2014) concluded that member checking enhances validity. When analyses were complete and a final model developed, I shared the findings with the participants in a summary. Member checking is a way to support the dependability process (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Patton (1990) recommended using both member checking and triangulation to ensure credibility in a research study. I used member checking in this study by returning the analyzed data to the participant for validation.

Validity

Validity is an essential component of a study. Validity in qualitative studies means: (a) appropriateness of the tools, processes, and data; and (b) whether the research

question is valid for the desired outcome; (c) the choice of methodology is appropriate for answering the research question; (d) the design is valid for the methodology; (e) the sampling and data analysis is appropriate; and finally, (f) the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context (Leung, 2015). Validity refers to whether the final product, usually referred to as a model, truly portrays what it claims to represent (Gossoehme, 2014). Researchers described validity in terms of the integrity and application of the methods used and the precision by which the findings accurately reflect the actual data (Noble & Smith, 2015). In qualitative studies, for a researcher to ensure validity, the research question and the method accurately measure the intended research (van Manen, 2014). In qualitative studies, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation indicate validity (Yin, 2015) and are ways to confirm rigor in qualitative research studies (Houghton et al., 2013). These strategies are essential to qualitative research being transparent, reliable, and authentic (Cronin, 2014).

Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which the results are believable (Yin, 2015). Member checking the collected data for accuracy is a way of establishing credibility (Grossoehme, 2014; Kronbluh 2015). I used member checking to establish credibility by validating the participants' information to ensure an accurate summary of their responses.

Confirmability. I developed an outline to help to determine the rigor of the research. Confirmability in qualitative research is developing an audit trail to achieve rigor (Houghton et al., 2013). The audit trail outlines all the decisions made throughout the research method, which provides a rationale for the researcher's methodological and

interpretative judgments (Houghton et al., 2013). Confirmability is the degree to which the readers can confirm that the researcher made accurate conclusions from the research data (see Yin, 2015). Using triangulation ensures confirmability and decreases researcher bias (Sarma, 2015). The type of triangulation used in this study was methodological triangulation involving more than one option to gather data, such as interviews, public or online information, and participants' documents. As described in the subsection reliability, researchers achieve triangulation by using multiple data collection methods to gain a different perspective of the phenomenon (Cope, 2014). Using triangulation ensures the researcher is studying the entire phenomenon (Yu, Abdullah, & Saat, 2014). Confirmability was established by conducting semistructured interviews to collect data and review the university athletic department's social media policies and other online documents relevant to this study.

Transferability. Transferability is when researchers apply other settings and establish that the findings are useful in future studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Transferability can transfer the researcher's results into a broader theory or different population (Yin, 2013). Marshall and Rossman (2014) described transferability as the degree to which researchers can generalize or transfer the qualitative study results to other settings. I included precise, robust detail of the study findings to ensure the information is easily and readily transferable for future readers and researchers.

Data saturation. Another way to enhance reliability in a qualitative study is through data saturation by demonstrating commonalities in the data (Yin, 2014). The researcher must reach data saturation to establish validity in the research (Fusch & Ness,

2015). A researcher accomplishes data saturation when no new themes or information emerges, and the researcher can no longer code the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). El Hussein, Jakubec, and Osuji (2015) described data saturation as when the researcher no longer hears or sees new information from the participants. To accomplish data saturation, I asked the participants the same interview questions in the same order, triangulated the collected data using multiple sources for this case study, and conducted the interview coding process in stages until further coding was no longer feasible. I coded the data carefully and appropriately until no new themes emerged to ensure I achieved data saturation.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included a reiteration of the study's purpose, including the qualitative multiple case study design and sharing the specifics of the data collection and analysis process. Section 2 ended with a discussion on the reliability and validity of the research study. In Section 3, I used semistructured interviews and archival document data to uncover and identify common trends and themes. Within this qualitative analysis, I created qualitative illustrations and outlined all findings so that readers of this study can recognize the trends and themes that surfaced from the data. Sharing the research question results was next, along with the application of the findings to professional practice. Then, providing the implications for social change enabled me to make recommendations for action and future research. Finally, I shared reflections and conclusions of this study on the strategies used to mitigate negative social media communications in collegiate athletics that may help other organizations and businesses.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some collegiate athletic administrators used to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college. Data were collected from reflexive journal notes, semistructured interviews, student-athletes' social media policies, and public records (e.g., student-athletes' handbooks) from four athletic departments in the southeastern part of the United States. The interviews, along with the school documents, were used to reach data saturation and to triangulate the data for analysis to reveal the findings of the study. NVivo 12 software was used for thematic coding and organizing following Yin's 5-step process to analyze the data to identify emergent themes. From the data analysis, four overlapping core themes emerged: (a) education, (b) communication, (c) monitoring, and (e) disciplinary actions that led to the outcome of understanding of the strategies. Section 3 includes a presentation and discussion of the findings along with a description of the applicability to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, researcher reflections, and a conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question that guided this study was the following: What strategies do some collegiate athletic administrators use to mitigate negative and/or inappropriate social media communication by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions,

and/or fines for the university or college? Four athletic administrators were interviewed from four different universities or colleges in the southeastern United States to reach data saturation. The participants were labelled P1, P2, P3, and P4 for confidentiality and privacy. The demographics of the participants are presented in Table 1. Table 1 shows that three participants were athletic directors, and one was a sports information director. Two schools were member institutions of the NAIA, and two were members of the NCAA. The participants' race and gender are also noted in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics

Participant	Gender	Race	Association	Administrative title
P1	Male	Black	NAIA	Athletic director
P2	Male	White	NAIA	Athletic director
P3	Male	Black	NCAA	Sports information director
P4	Male	White	NCAA	Athletic director

Following the interview transcription, I sent each participant a summary of my interpretation of the data for member checking to verify the accuracy of their responses to the interview questions. I also collected their school documents such as their student-athlete social media policies and student-athlete handbooks for data analysis. I reviewed and analyzed all the university and college documents along with the interviews to look for patterns and themes regarding strategies used to mitigate negative social media

communications. Progressing through the data analysis phase, I eventually observed little to no new information emerging from the data to supplement the findings; therefore, I concluded that data saturation had been achieved. I used NVivo 12 qualitative software to code and organize the data collected from the interviews and the schools' student-athlete social media policies. The policies and interviews were coded together and separately. The NCAA and the NAIA schools' policies and interviews were coded together and separately to find the similarities and differences in the schools' athletic associations. I used thematic coding, aggregating the codes, and examining word frequency to discover the themes. Yin's 5-step approach was also used in the data analysis process. Four categories were identified with the analysis of the data: (a) four core overlapping themes, (b) one specific policy provision, (c) one major outcome, and (d) six sub outcomes.

The four core themes or strategies that the athletic administrators used to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches were (a) education, (b) communication, (c) monitoring, and (e) disciplinary actions. The one provision highlighted in the policy and other school documents was that being a student-athlete is a privilege, not a right. The one major outcome that emerged from the data analysis was understanding. The outcome of understanding had six sub outcomes, as shown in Figure 1. Framing theory suggests that how a person presents (frames) information to others influences the interpretation and the choices they make when processing the information (Goffman, 1974).

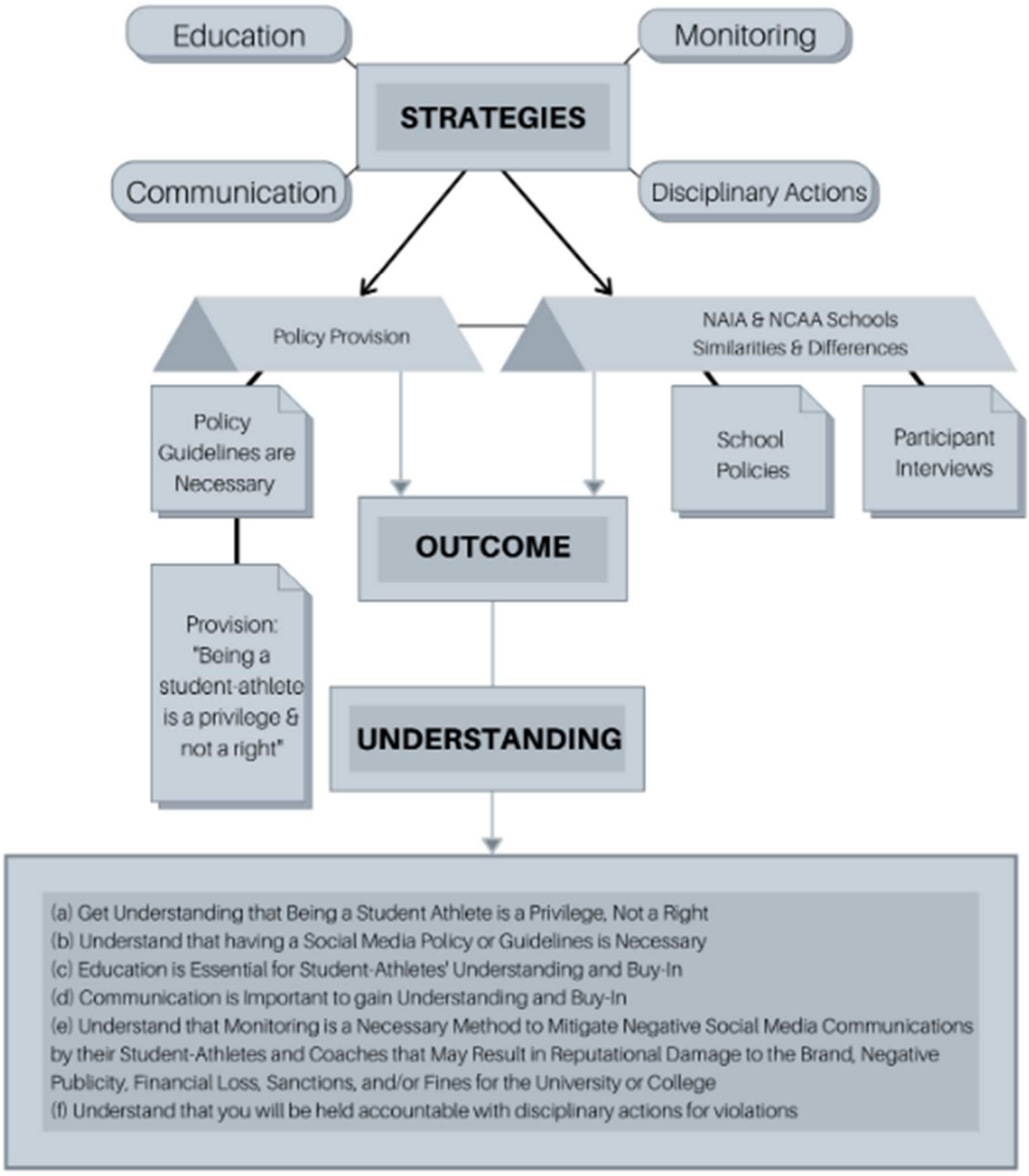

Figure 1. Presentation of the findings diagram.

Core Themes

The four core themes in this study were the strategies used by the athletic administrators to mitigate negative social media communications in collegiate athletics. These four strategies, shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, provided the answer to the

research question: What strategies do some athletic administrators use to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college? The four strategies were education, communication, monitoring, and disciplinary actions. All four participants used each of these strategies to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches. All four participants had a written social media policy or guidelines for the student-athletes to follow and confirmed that a social media policy or guidelines are necessary. Data analysis of the two NAIA schools and two NCAA schools provided additional information regarding similarities and differences between the strategies used to mitigate negative social media communications in collegiate athletics.

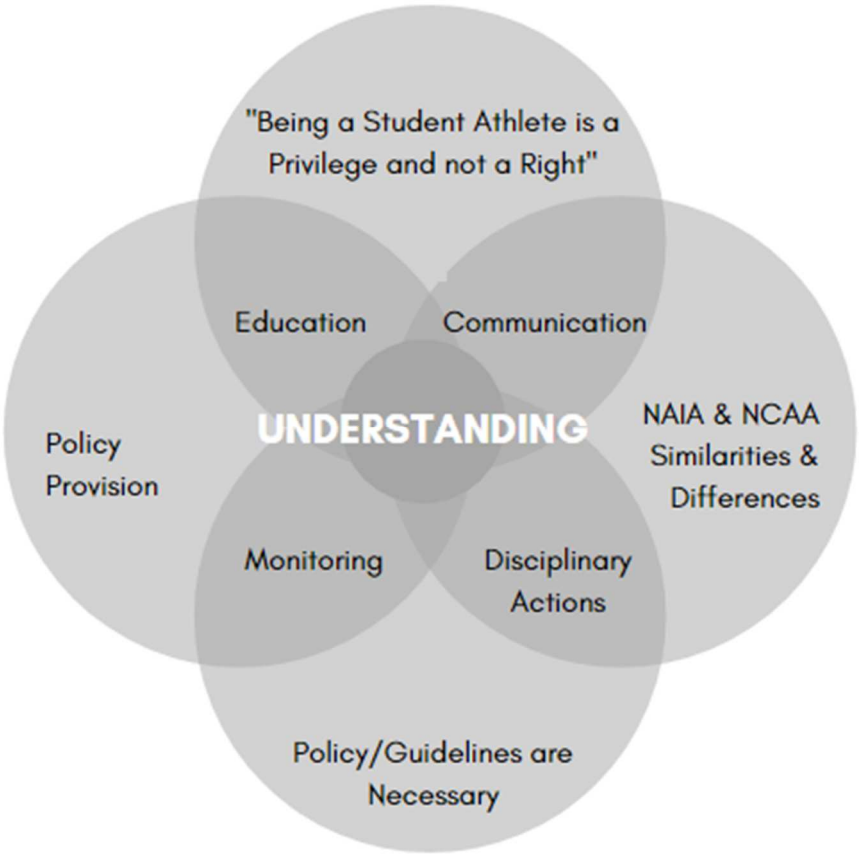

Figure 2. Four core overlapping themes.

Emergent Theme 1: Education

The first theme that emerged from the data was that education is essential for student-athlete understanding and buy-in. As shown in Figure 3, education was mentioned 36 times in the interviews. The interview data, the social media policies, and the student-athlete handbook showed that education is essential for student-athletes' understanding of responsible use of social media and why the athletic administration has a policy of guidelines. Sanderson, Browning, and Schmittel (2015) confirmed that student-athletes desired to have social media education and need a new way of learning social media. DeShazo (2019) found that 53% of student-athletes said they had not

received any social media training and that there was still a significant need for education and training on social media use for student-athletes. Burns (2018) called a lack of training in intercollegiate athletics a problem with social media and suggested that most of the problems are preventable with the proper training and attention. Collegiate athletic departments also stated they need to offer more social media training and education (Coche, 2017).

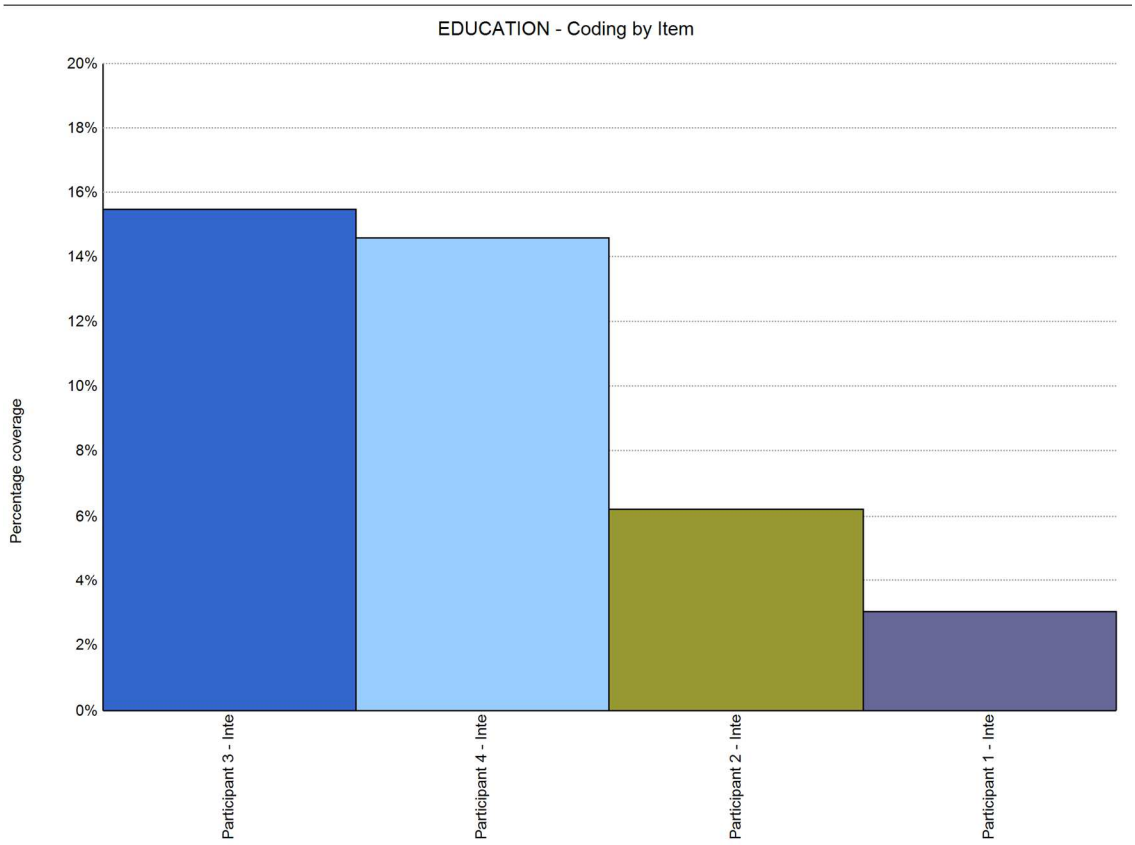

Figure 3. Theme 1: Education.

The P3 handbook referred to education 45 times and included additional information to educate the student-athletes on items such as success skills, nutritional supplements, calendar planning, how to write a resume, speaking with professors, and preparing for

and taking exams. P4 referred to education 25 times, P1 24 times, and P2 12 times. P4 had other educational programs, resources, and events to enhance the welfare and promote the personal development of student-athletes, including continuing education and training to all athletics personnel. The P4 handbook and policy were the longest documents of the four.

All participants support and create an educational environment for continual learning to help student-athletes and coaches understand the guidelines for social media use. Education was the most effective strategy to mitigate negative social media for P3 and P4, communication was the most effective for P2, and losing playing time was the most effective for P1. The P1 strategic plan was educating and reminding student-athletes and coaches about using social media responsibly. When asked what strategies they use, P4's response was "education, having them sign their initials beside the policy, having our staff follow all of their accounts and they have to reveal all of their accounts and stuff, disclose all of their accounts to us." P2 contributed that "the biggest thing you can do is try and get them to learn.". All participants used the phrase "get them to understand." P3 said "the biggest thing is to educate, and the first thing is education." P4 added that

> education is the number one thing that we can do and share with our student-athletes. Educating them on how, again, as their athletic career is just growing from a high school athlete to a college level, that analysis of their comments continues to grow. That microscope for them continues to grow.

Also, P4 stressed "education is very, very important. I think educating them that their comments, I think again, start to become a brand." P4 said

> I think education creates 'buy in'. Like, I can't, I'm not holding the athlete's phone every day, they're on their own. And so, I have to, we have to educate them to buy in to the importance of adhering to the policy. If they don't buy into that or they don't agree with that, or don't see how one comment could impact their life 10 years from now negatively we'll never, never get them to do it. You know, so that's why education is the most important in explaining the rationale and the reasons why we have this policy in the first place. If you can achieve the education piece, in essence, you've achieved the buy in. And nothing is more powerful than the buy in. They agree with the policy and understand how important it is for them personally and for the university's brand.

Buy-in is the acceptance of and willingness to support and participate in a proposed plan or policy actively (Hsia, 2017). Because student-athletes tend not to be informed on social media policies and do not understand the implications of privacy protections and free speech rights, O'Connor et al. (2016) suggested more education in both areas is necessary. However, researchers have not examined what education policies the coaches are adhering to (Reichart Smith, Smith, & Blazka, 2017). P4 confirmed that their coaches are not required to sign and initial the same things that their student-athletes are and added that the school is looking at implementing the requirement this year. P4 was the most detailed when describing their step-by-step social media process and explained that their systematic approach is education based. Coaches and staff should be

held accountable for their actions and held to the same standards on social media, striving to act as role models while educating athletes on proper social media use (DiVeronica, 2014; Epstein, 2012).

Better, more, and continuous social media education and training is needed for student-athletes who have grown up on this communications medium with no formal training. The participants reported that they wish training on social media could start at the high school level. Athletic administrators cannot assume the student-athletes fully understand the medium or the policy even though they are required to read and sign the policy. There should be extensive, consistent, and continuous social media education and training for student-athletes and coaches. The athletic administrators should also find a way to allow the student-athletes to participate in constructing the policy and the educational and regulatory components to help them better understand why certain items are included and why their athletic department has social media guidelines. Also, as P4 suggested, the coaches should do what athletes are required to do by signing in order to educate by example, demonstrate solidarity, gain trust, and help to increase buy-in with their student-athletes. Theme 1 aligns with the published literature and the conceptual framework that more education and training on social media is needed and that framing occurs in collegiate athletics (see DiVeronica, 2014; Epstein, 2012; Fuduric & Mandelli 2014; Han, Dodds, Mahoney, Schoepfer, & Lovich, 2015; Mayer, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2016); Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015; Snyder, 2014).

Emergent Theme 2: Communication

The second theme that emerged from the data was communication. Communication is essential to gain understanding and buy-in from the student-athletes. As shown in Figure 4, communication was prevalent in the data mentioned 56 times in the interviews. The participants' data support the importance of communicating with the student-athletes about using social media platforms responsibly. The word communication or some form of the word is prominent throughout the participant's student-athlete handbook, indicating and confirming its importance in their athletic departments. Participant 1 handbook contains communication 6 times, P2- 9 times, P3–16 times, and P4-19 times.

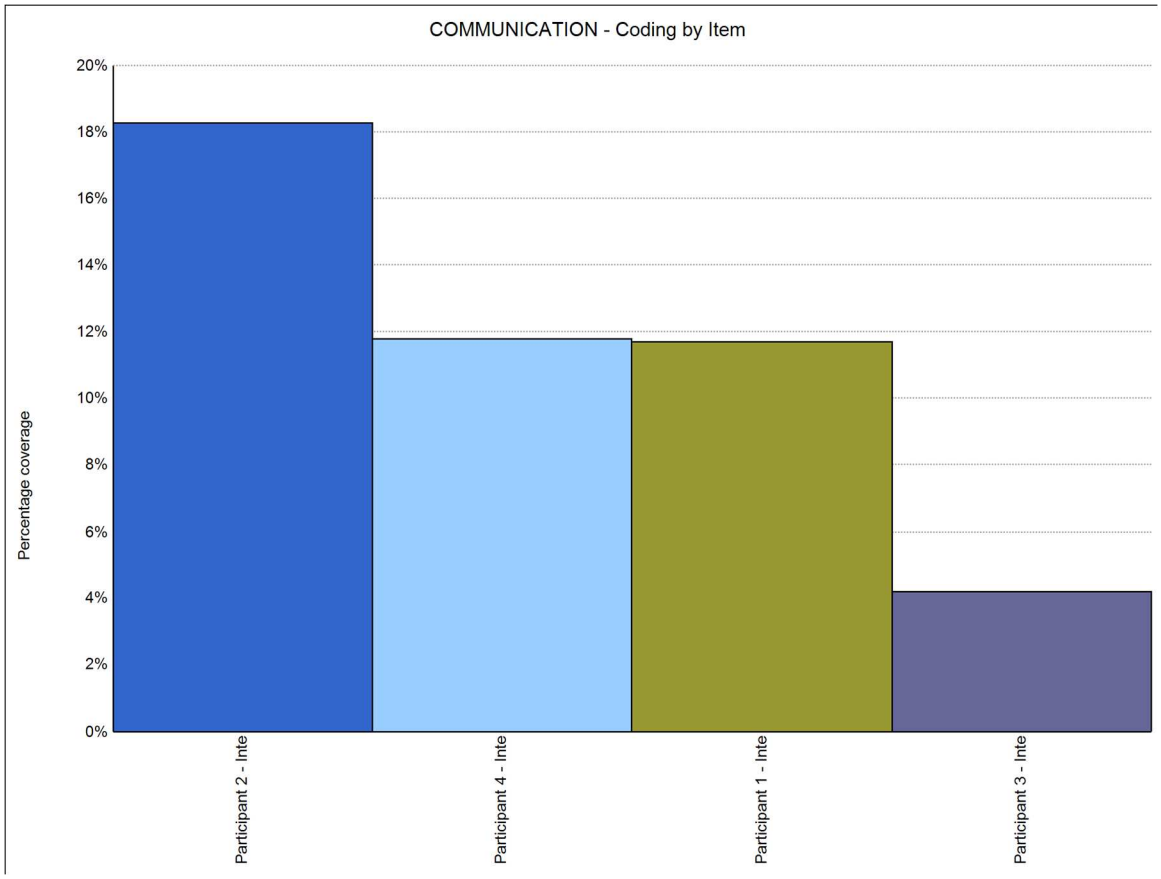

Figure 4. Theme 2: Communication.

The data analysis showed that athletic administrators identified communication as one of the first strategies used in their strategic plan to mitigate negative social media communication by their student-athletes and coaches. The participants also identified communication was one of the most effective strategies, along with education. The participants shared that obtaining buy-in from their student-athletes was important during the communication process, like in education. Having constant, two-way, open, in-person communication was perceived as the preferred and most effective way to gain buy-in with the student-athletes and give them a chance to ask questions. All the participants used communication as one of the strategies to mitigate negative or inappropriate social

media communications by the student-athletes and coaches. Communication was evident in data analysis. All the participants considered communication to be the best strategy their school used to mitigate negative social media posts by their student-athletes. P4 said that communication and monitoring were the best strategies they used. P1 recommended early, frequent, and consistent communication between student-athletes, faculty, and coaches. P2 had communication as the most effective and best strategy. The P3 school had in their handbook that "communication is key."

Buy-in. Participants discussed the need to get student-athletes to buy-in to their strategic plan, rules, and regulations set by the athletic departments. Communication is essential to gain buy-in. Participant 4 said, "I think education creates buy-in," and "we have to educate them to buy-in to the importance of adhering to the policy." Participant 4 added, "if you can achieve the education piece; in essence, you've achieved the buy-in. And nothing is more powerful than the buy-in." Matthews and Crocker (2016) discussed obtaining buy-in as an important criterion of success, emphasizing the need to secure buy-in for implementation instead of forced compliance.

Free speech. Participants 1, 2, and 4 support and encourage an individual's expression of free speech, expression, and association, including the use of social networks, as stated in their handbooks. P3 stated that when student-athletes speak the truth, "you can't tell them not to say anything when what they are saying is truthful." P4 discussed, "it's important as a university that we do not project that we are against freedom of speech but that we project that as representatives of X University, representatives of their teammates, and their coach that there are brand impacts and

responsibilities that fall upon them." If a problem arises from negative social media posts that impact the athletic department in a negative or hurtful way, Nite (2017) posited that the communication strategies employed by institutional actors are likely key to maintaining and/or repairing institutions. When asked what strategy worked best when the athletic administrators put together their social media policy, Participant 1 replied, "when we have our in-person communication with our athletes and give them opportunities to ask questions." Participant 1 added, "I think it's that whole open communication piece. You know, the policy is one thing, but they can't ask a piece of paper a question. I think we make ourselves available to be able to ask answer questions and then give them real-life examples of how things can go array." Additionally, communications should be "constant." Participant 2 said communication was the first strategy, the most effective strategy, and the best strategy that their athletic department uses to mitigate negative social media communications in collegiate athletics. Participant 2 also thought that it was important to have a conversation, get the student-athletes' input. "I think the most effective thing is, I think it's just communication and talking with them, getting them to understand and having a conversation rather than them being talked at. I think you have that conversation and let them bring up some points to you and ask them, why do you feel it's okay to put yourself in a compromising position and putting it out on social media for people to see?" All the participants said they have face-to-face meetings with their student-athletes. P2 stated, "we also have two in-person meetings a year with our student-athletes to talk about the policy and refresh them about what that is, and what the expectation is."

Student-athlete handbooks. Communication is in the handbook of P4 seven times. The athlete handbooks also contain information about student-athletes 'organizations that the school has to facilitate another communication channel. P2, P3, and P4 have a student-athlete organization tasked with improving the communication lines between the student-athletes and the athletic administration. P2 has a student-athlete organization that acts as a liaison between the athletic department, coaches, and the NAIA. The goal is to provide the student-athlete population with an opportunity to communicate more effectively with their athletics administration, evaluate the school's programs, and make recommendations to the administration to improve the student-athlete academic, athletic, and social experiences. P3 called their group a student-athlete advisory committee. Their charge is to develop an effective line of communication between the athletic department and the student-athlete population. P4 has a student-athlete advisory committee as well. Their committee aim to promote efficient communication between the department of athletics administration and the student-athlete population. The student-athletes can provide suggestions on programs designed to serve their needs. This committee serves as the voice for the student-athletes. P4 also has a student affairs group where interaction and feedback from the student-athletes are encouraged.

Do not. Data analysis of the policies showed frequent use of the words *do not*. *Do not* do this; *do not* do that. Student-athletes, being predominately teenagers, may have a negative connotation of the policy, so it is key that the in-person communication, and the written communication, is conveyed in a positive, conversational manner that also

highlights and emphasizes positive viewpoints about social media use. P2 only included one *do not* in their policy. In the policy of P2, a significant amount of their student-athlete handbook centers around communication for understanding and resolving most issues. In P3's policy, 9 of their 11 guidelines included the phrase *do not.* P4 had *do not* in their policy 28 times. Information framing is critical to the interpretation of the reader.

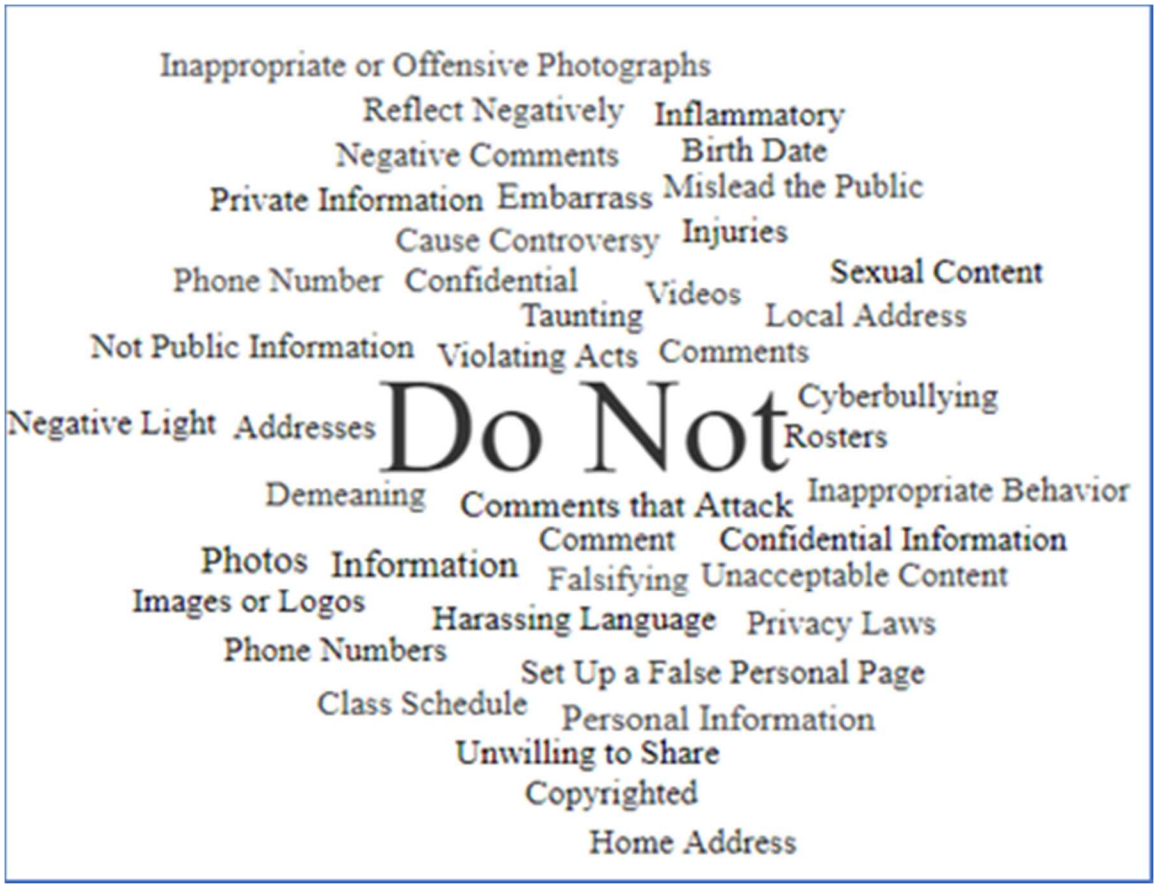

Figure 5. Word cloud for Do Not.

Rørbech and Skyggebjerg, (2020) discussed how the different designs may frame students' encounters with literature and how they link to paradigms in literature teaching and current discussions about text and/or reader-orientation within literature teaching. Some student-athletes may only see *do not* and interpret the negative frame and not read

on. Colleges and universities may consider rewording or reframing some of their literature to be more positive while still getting their message across.

Athletic administrators can modify communicative strategies to counteract potentially damaging messages to institutional scripts (Nite, 2017) but need to be mindful of how they frame the message. Nite found a progression of an athletic organization's likely framing strategies. It is important for athletic administrators to examine strategic communication and how framed messages likely aid in maintaining institutional power structures within sport management. The findings in the study have some signs of framing the written text and communication in the data. In a study by Nite (2017), the findings showed a progression of a sports organization's likely framing strategies. Theme 2, communication aligned with the published literature and the conceptual framework.

Emergent Theme 3: Monitoring

The third strategy that emerged from data analysis was monitoring. As shown in Figure 6, monitoring was mentioned in the interviews 14 times and is a necessary process for the athletic administrator's awareness of what is going on in their department. Monitoring is a strategy used by all four of the participant's athletic departments. Monitoring the student-athletes' social media platforms helps the collegiate athletic administrators to know what the student-athletes are posting to ensure they are not posting inappropriate information that could damage their brand or embarrass the student-athlete, the team, coach, or the university/college.

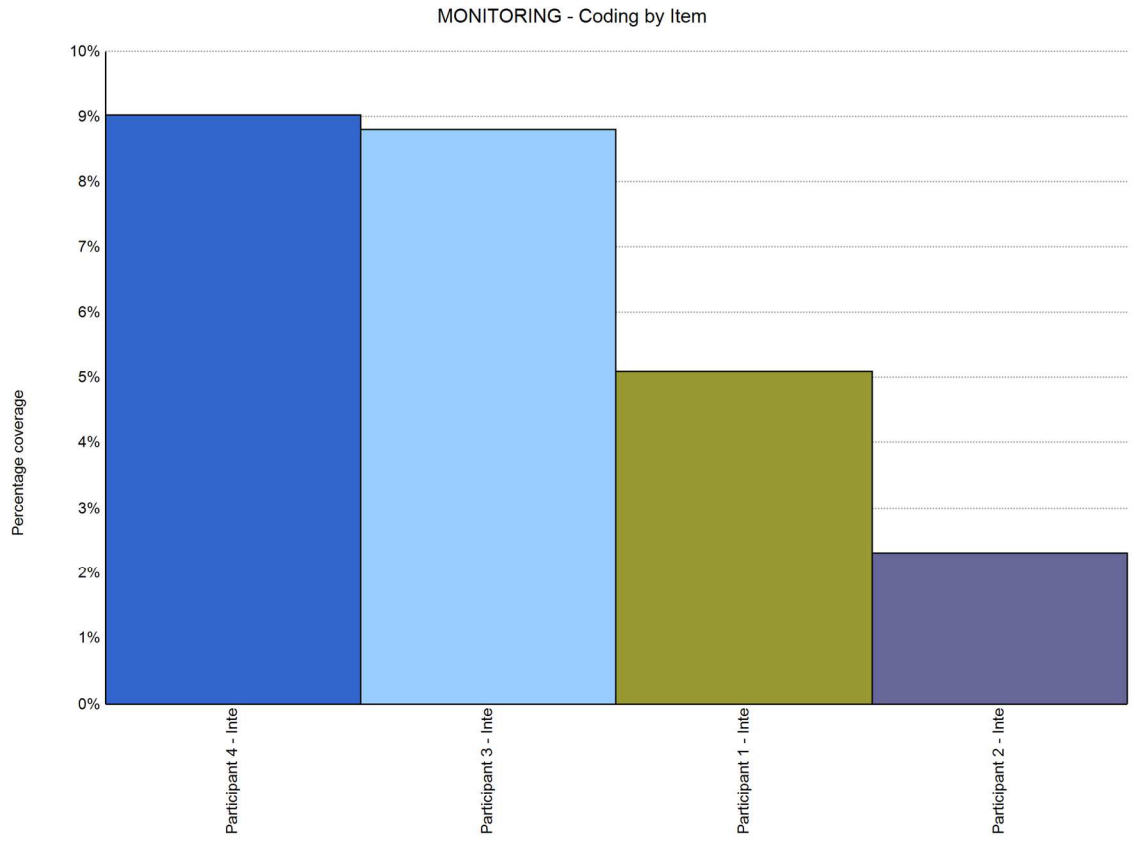

Figure 6. Theme 3: Monitoring.

To monitor or not to monitor remains a controversial strategic plan and topic for scholars (Shear, 2013; Hopkins et al., 2013). However, other scholars believe that monitoring is necessary or at least a tradeoff for what the student-athletes receive in return (Hopkins et al., 2013; Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015) confirming the data in this study. O'Connor, Schmidt, Drouin (2016) suggested that students are generally opposed to university disciplinary action for students' personal social media use. However, more students find it acceptable for a university to monitor student-athletes' accounts (Snyder, 2014). Therefore, some student-athletes understand their role as university representatives and the expectations incumbent upon them. The student-athletes realize

they are held to a higher standard, usually receiving financial assistance, and in return, may feel the assistance is justification for the extra scrutiny.

This study findings showed that all the participants consider the student-athletes as representatives of their prospective university or college, confirming research by Smith and Watkins (2018). Even on their personal social media pages, the content student-athletes create reflects their athletic department and the university (Smith & Watkins, 2018). Therefore, student-athletes should expect to have their social media communications monitored by the athletic department (Sanderson, Snyder, et al., (2015). These are some of the participants' responses provided regarding monitoring or as stated in their social media policies:

- P1's social media policy included monitoring stating, "The College's Department of Athletics has the right to monitor social media networks. Failure to comply with these standards may result in disciplinary action and possible loss of financial aid and/or eligibility for practice and competition."
- P2 does not state in their policy or handbook that they monitor their student-athletes handbook; however, in the interview, P2 stated, "…but we want them to know we are a private institution and we can monitor everything. We can discipline you for that."
- P3's handbook or policy did not mention monitoring, but in the interview, P3 explained that they "monitor their accounts." He had the student-athletes' "twitter decks up constantly monitoring every day." When asked what strategies his athletic department uses to mitigate negative social media

communications? P3 adamantly responded, “monitor” and elaborated on how they monitor.

- P4’s social media policy contained, “Coaches and Department of Athletics administrators can and do monitor these web sites.” Also, P4 stated that “all online postings are subject to monitoring” in their social media policy.

If done correctly, with legal guidance, educating, and communicating with the student-athletes and coaches on why the need to monitor, athletic departments can successfully mitigate unforeseen mishaps that could arise. How the collegiate department frames the information for monitoring through education, communication (written and two-way) is critical to understanding and buying-in with their athletes and employees to prevent legal ramifications. Framing theory is how message framing is an integral process of maintaining institutional structures and power arrangements (Nite, 2017).

Consulting with a lawyer on the wording and the process to monitor ethically is a recommended first step. P4 communicated that they consulted with their legal team as their first step in constructing their social media policy and monitoring. Monitoring is an effective means for mitigating student-athletes’ and coaches’ social media communication to prevent inappropriate postings. An often heard or taught business management adage is *you can’t manage what you don’t measure* (Moerman & Absalom, 2016), and this phrase can be applied to college athletics as you can’t manage what you don’t monitor. Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, and Pollack (2017) used a similar phrase or concept in their research, *can’t fix what you don’t look at*. The NCAA or NAIA do not have a formal social media policy or monitoring regulations for their member institutions.

Hopkins et al. (2013) stated, “The NCAA has made it clear that member institutions must monitor social media to some extent in order to protect against possible sanctions.” The NCAA confirmed that they still do not have a social media policy for student-athletes when contacted for this study. However, some athletic administrators are pivoting to a model where education, rather than monitoring, is the primary focus (Sanderson, Browning, & Schmittel, 2015). Theme 3 is in alignment with the published literature on monitoring and the conceptual framework (Hopkins et al., 2013; Nite, 2017; Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). Since the collegiate personnel monitors in so many other areas of athletics, it is reasonable to assume that they would monitor their student-athletes’ social media networks.

Emergent Theme 4: Disciplinary Actions

Disciplinary actions or discipline actions are actions by management that encourage and ensure compliance with the rules and regulations governing an organization’s smooth operation (Okolie & Udom, 2019). Awodele-Fayomi (2015) observed that management implemented disciplinary actions to improve employee performance by ensuring that the employee behavior was consistent with organizational goals. Dzimbiri (2016) posited that disciplinary action is an appropriate method for supervisors to use when correcting employees’ misdeeds and helping them attain performance levels that meet employers’ expectations. Okolie and Udom, 2019 deduced that the purpose of discipline is to correct behavior, not to punish or humiliate an employee. A positive approach may often solve the problem without further discipline (Okolie & Udom, 2019). For example, P4 explained that

> if there is a comment in which, you know, is outside of our policy, our typical stance is to communicate with that athlete one on one, to let them know, hey, this particular manner we believe is not in line with our social media policy and explain the reason why we feel that and then ask that individual, you know, to make the adjustment and take that, take the post down, as quickly as possible.

P4 added that

> quite often when we communicate to them and we let them know hey, this comment doesn't, we don't believe falls within our policies and we explain the reasons why, a lot of times the response of our athletes is, Oh, thank you for letting me know. I didn't view my comment in that way. And they're appreciative of that support."

Okolie and Udom (2019) suggested that when seeking reasons for unsatisfactory behavior, management must keep in mind that employees may not be aware of certain work rules. Such as in a business setting, some student-athletes may not be aware of certain social media rules or may not understand that what they say could be a violation.

Therefore, before initiating any disciplinary action, management must determine whether they have given their employees or student-athletes careful and thorough orientation in the rules and regulations relating to their jobs or policies. Okolie and Udom (2019) ascertained that the primary purpose of disciplinary actions is to ensure that employee (student-athletes and coaches) behavior is consistent with the firm's (school's) goals and encourages student-athletes and coaches to comply with established standards and rules so that infractions do not occur (preventive discipline). Disciplinary actions are

also a procedure used to discourage further violation of rules so that future acts follow or comply with the desired standards (corrective discipline) or goals (Okolie & Udom, 2019). Therefore, the premise for disciplinary actions is to be a teaching method, an educational process, and an improvement tool or training that molds behavior and strengthens desirable conduct.

Types of disciplinary actions in collegiate athletics. Figure 7 is a visual depiction of the emphasis of discipline actions by the participants. People use many words to describe types of disciplinary actions in collegiate athletics and the non-educational business industry. Okolie and Udom (2019) discussed the three approaches to disciplinary action, preventive discipline, progressive discipline, and positive discipline. The different forms of disciplinary actions in public and private sectors can range from warnings (i.e., verbal, written), suspensions, transfer, demotion, termination, or discharge (Awodele-Fayomi, 2015; Dzimbiri, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2016; Okolie & Udom, 2019). Some of the words the participants used when discussing disciplinary actions or what could happen if a student-athlete violated the social media policy, team rules, or their code of conduct were consequences, disciplined, dismissal, punishment, repercussion, reprimand, suspensions or expulsions, write-ups, sanctions, and consequences. Researchers described some of the consequences student-athletes could face for social media indiscretions as loss of scholarships, loss of eligibility, suspensions, dismissal from the team, university or college, and possible team sanctions from the NCAA (Browning & Sanderson, 2013; Hopkins, Hopkins, & Whelton, 2013, Sanderson & Browning, 2013; Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). Okolie and Udom (2019) concluded that disciplinary

actions could be a means of correcting or punishing misdeeds in an organization only if management learns to maintain discipline by applying standards consistently, fairly, and flexibly.

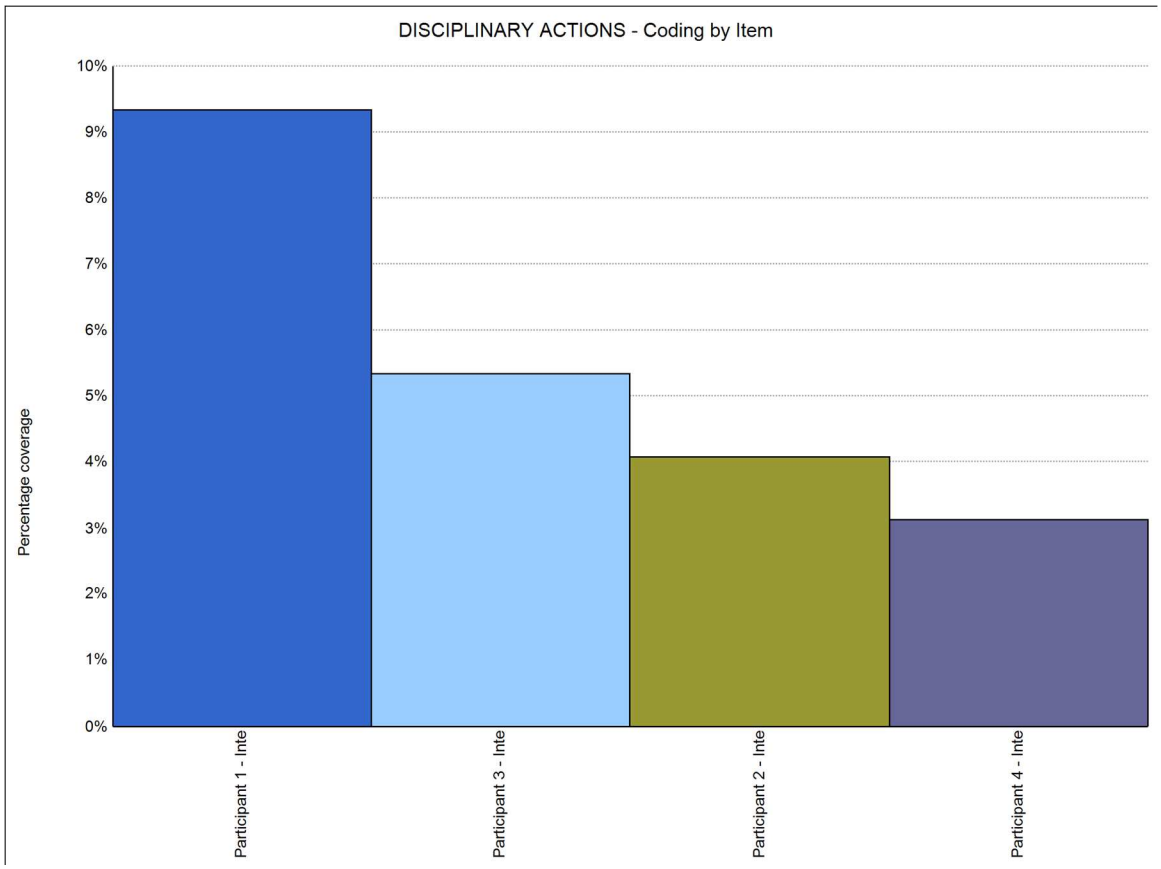

Figure 7. Theme 4: Disciplinary action.

How athletic administrators frame disciplinary actions in the social media policies, educational environments, and two-way or face to face communications is essential to how the information is processed and utilized by the student-athletes. Disciplinary actions framed with a negative connotation may not elicit the desired response and heighten the unfavorable behavior. As with the undesired behavior or communication, words have consequences and should be selected with care and

consideration to achieve the goal. Theme 4 is in alignment with the published literature and the conceptual framework. Disciplinary actions that athletic administrators enact in collegiate athletics are to ensure student-athletes comply with the rules and regulations of the social media policy.

Additionally, athletic administrators who implement disciplinary actions can improve student-athletes' performance to ensure that their student-athletes' behavior and code of conduct are consistent with the athletic department goals and their school. Disciplinary actions are an appropriate method for athletic administrators to use when correcting student-athletes' and coaches' misdeeds to help them attain performance levels that meet or exceed the administrator's expectations. O'Conner and Schmidt (2019) summarized that even academic personnel must be cognizant that their personal social media posts may not be free from university discipline, even at public institutions, and for those with tenure. As in business, to ignore social media and how employees use social media could lead to charges of negligent hiring and damages if improper employee messages are posted (Wheatcroft, 2016). Employees are responsible for remembering that certain messages considered "private" may still be used as evidence supporting disciplinary actions and could affect the firm's reputation and co-workers (Wheatcroft, 2016). As exemplified in this study, disciplinary actions such as a warning may be all that is needed to correct the undesired behavior or action. Because of inappropriate social media conduct or behavior, humiliation or punishment should not be used to describe or implement disciplinary actions (Okolie & Udomi, 2019).

Athletic administrators should consider positive discipline as a method in which the positive aspects of the student-athlete's actions are highlighted instead of focusing on the negative behavior and disciplinary actions. Teaching the student-athletes how to use social media positively and the beneficial aspects will likely enhance buy-in, understanding, and reduce undesirable behavior. Research based procedures on using positive discipline practices focus on increasing desirable behaviors, and the emphasis is on positive changes in learner's environment, rather than merely decreasing undesirable behaviors through punishment (Sibanda & Mpofu, 2017). Whether in the policy, education, communication, or monitoring, using a positive approach to address social media mishaps or firestorms wherever possible is a recommendation to get the desired results to mitigate negative social media communications by student-athletes and coaches in collegiate athletics.

Social media policy. All the participants had a social media policy in their student-athlete handbook. Every student-athlete received handbooks containing provisions in many areas of the education environment, the code of conduct, and the social media policy. The provisions are guidelines, rules, regulations, expectations, and requirements set forth by the university/college and the athletic department and designed to guide student-athletes throughout their academic pursuit and athletic careers. In the interviews, I asked the participants what type of policy or strategy they implemented for their student-athletes and coaches to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university and/or college? All the

participants indicated they had a social media policy or guidelines for their student-athletes. With 100% of the participants having an affirmative response, this finding confirmed previous research that some schools had social media policies and recommended the implementation of social media policies even though it is not a requirement (Heintzelman, 2017; O'Connor, Schmidt, & Drouin, 2016; Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015).

Analyzing the data included the student-athletes' social media policies from the participant's schools. As established earlier and confirmed by P4, student-athletes need education on the "rationale and reasons why we have this policy in the first place." This research confirmed that social media policies are necessary. One of the social media policy provisions and the handbook central to all the participant's policies and mentioned or implied in the interviews was that *being a student-athlete is a privilege and not a right*.

Having a social media policy is necessary. The finding in this study that social media policies or guidelines are necessary to govern or oversee social media communications in collegiate athletics is a confirmation in the literature, interviews, and data analysis. The strategies used to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications are a means to help students understand why a social media policy is necessary.

The word policy or policies was mentioned in the interview data 55 times. The data showed that all the schools provided a written social media policy and a student-athlete handbook that included a code of conduct section for their student-athletes and

coaches. Other sections varied on specific information provided but contained similar wording and topics in some sections.

Previous research showed that student-athletes feel the policies did not exemplify them and did not give them the opportunity to contribute or adequately express themselves (Burns, 2018; Sanderson, Snyder, Hull & Gramlich, 2015). The results implied that the NCAA schools' policies are restrictive, and the message about social media ownership is conflicting (Burns, 2018; Sanderson et al., 2015). Also, the policies framed social media as having a negative impact on the student-athletes' future, with most of the policies portraying social media as detrimental to future jobs, graduate school, and more (Burns. 2018). P4 explained that "annually all student-athletes will sign the statement below, acknowledging they have read the Code of Ethical Conduct and attesting to their willingness to adhere to the principles outlined in this document." The NAIA and the NCAA do not have a social media policy for the student-athletes and coaches but do provide social media recruiting guidelines for the coaches. Each school participant stressed the importance of having guidelines for student-athletes and coaches to abide by so that the expectations are explicit and understood. The language, length, and presentation of the policies varied but their overall concept to provide helpful guidelines for responsible social use was consistent. P1 said, "we currently have in our employee handbook for the athletic department as well as student-athlete handbook what our policy is, and we have each of our employees and student-athletes sign that. P2 stated, "we basically give out student-athletes guidelines to follow and that they have community standards and a student-athlete handbook in which they follow, and don't get

very specific." Whether called policies or guidelines, all the social media policies are in each participant's student-athletes' handbooks, including P3 and P4.

Regarding their policy, P4 provided more detail about the implementation process and described their policy as best practices in social media. P4 posited,

> On top of the policy, we have learned that we don't just rely on the policy within our manual. We require, we have a sheet that pulls out lots of items within our student-athlete handbook. And we require each student to initial those elements on the sheet so that we can show that we have not only provided the policy to them, but that they have initialized and recognize and understand our social media policy. And that's something new. Because when I first got here, we did not require our athletes to initial a lot of things out of the handbook. And we had some challenges that arose and in consultation with our legal team they expressed the importance of making sure that the area of social media that we have all 380 student-athletes every single year they have to initial their understanding that they have no questions about our social media policy. So that's an exercise that we do on top of the written policy, that every athlete has to do that every year.

Also, P4 added that they verbalize their policy to the student-athletes, "allow them to ask questions about the policy," and "explain the importance of it, and then as representatives of the brand." They do not have the coaches do the same but plan to incorporate the coaches' same signing requirements as they do their student-athletes. P1 and P4 both mentioned they had their student-athletes initial the social media policy contents, explaining that they read, understand, and agree to the policy.

This finding tied with the conceptual framework, framing theory, and recent literature. How athletic administrators frame the policy is important for clarification and interpretation by the student-athletes. When analyzing the schools' policy, P1 also included in their social media policy, their conference policy denoting social media expectations listed as *do nots* and the sanctions list for violating the conference social media policy. Since P2 is also a member of the same conference, they are also held to their conference social media policy's expectations even though their policy offered "tips and suggestions for using social media responsibly and effectively," including four specific guidelines. P2 framed social media by highlighting the positives and only included one *do not*. P2 did not include their conference policy. However, in their student-athlete handbook, it is understood that they would uphold the rules and regulations as set forth by their conference. P3 begins their social media policy with repercussions, stating that "it is the responsibility of all administrators, coaches, and student-athletes to adhere to this policy and any violation may result in punishment." P3 included the NCAA's social media recruiting guidelines for the coaches and then provided a social media guideline list of *do nots* for their administrators, coaches, and student-athletes to follow. The policy also included that although social media is "fascinating, this avenue can be dangerous if not used responsibly." P4 started their social media policy by declaring their "support and encourages its student-athletes' freedom of speech, expression, and association, including the use of social networks." P1, P2, and P3 also included a similar statement regarding either free speech or "everyone having the

right to express their thoughts and beliefs", or support for the "use of the various communication and networking tools."

All the participants referred to their social media communications expectations or requirements in their social media policy as guidelines. Each participant's social media policy offered some recommendations to the student-athlete on the proper use of social media networks, explaining the repercussions. P2 policy stated, "it is important" that their words should reflect themselves, their team, and the university or college. Even though student-athletes have the right to free speech, the expectation is to be cognizant that they are "not an island unto itself," P3 said. As "representatives of the university, student-athletes are held to a higher standard and are role models," as expressed in the P4 policy. The overall consensus is that the goal of having a social media policy is to provide guidance and guidelines to student-athletes to help them understand that it is important to portray themselves and their university or college in a "positive manner at all times," P4 referenced. How athletic administrators frame the policy is also important, so the student-athletes read and heed the university or college's message.

There are many criticisms of the framing theory in the communications field (Cacciatore, Scheufele, & Iyengar, 2016; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2014). Shulman and Sweitzer (2018) advanced the framing theory. Shulman and Switzwer (2018) argued that although from a communication view, it is interesting to study how message presentation alters peoples' opinions, from a public opinion perspective, the existence of framing effects is troubling. Constructing a student-athlete

social media policy framed positively may be more useful to understand how important the policy is and the message the schools are trying to convey.

The findings extended the knowledge in advancing the framing theory concept in the communications discipline. Shulman and Sweitzer (2018) ascertained that people are more likely to endorse the framed position advocated when favorable associations are easily accessed. Student-athletes are more likely to receive the information more favorably, endorse, or buy-into the positions advocated in the frame (policy) when favorable associations are easily accessed (Shulman & Sweitzer, 2018) and without out all the *do nots* and starting the policy with repercussions. A social media policy was a recommendation in other published literature discussed in this study with ties to the conceptual framework, framing theory.

Policy provision: *Being a student-athlete is a privilege, not a right*. The primary provision that emerged from the data analysis was *to get understanding* that *being a student-athlete is a privilege, not a right*. This phrase or similar wording of *being a student-athlete is a privilege, not a right* is documented in the student-athlete handbooks at all four colleges or universities and emphasized or implied in the interviews. Most student-athletes are on scholarship or get some type of student aid with their education being paid for by the university or college. The expectations are for student-athletes to abide by the athletic department's rules, regulations, and guidelines to uphold high standards of integrity, behavior, and sportsmanship as a representative of the collegiate athletic program and the school.

At the beginning of the P1 student-athlete handbook is written, “competing at any level is a privilege – not a right,” therefore, expecting responsible behavior by student-athletes when representing their school, the athletic department, and most importantly, themselves. The code of conduct section states that at the P1 school, “competing on a team is a privilege, not a right. The student-athletes are expected to maintain the highest standards of integrity, honesty, and morality.” P2 stated in their manual that “Having the privilege to represent” their university “through intercollegiate athletics is an integral part of the total college experience for the student-athletes.” In the P3 handbook, this phrase is cited two times by saying, “participation in intercollegiate athletics is a privilege and not a right.” The second mention of the phrase states that “Being a Student-Athlete is a privilege and not a right. As a student-athlete, you are expected to maintain the highest degree of integrity on and off the field, court and/or track.”

The phrase, *being a student-athlete is a privilege and not a right* was in the student handbook for P4 twice. P4 has a code of ethical conduct for student-athletes with the phase “Athletics participation is a privilege, not a right,” and in their policy or guidelines for the use of social media sites has “playing and competing for their university is a privilege, not a right.” All the participants framed this significant concept in a way to get the student-athletes to understand and buy-in to their agenda that *being a student-athlete is a privilege and not a right*. Because as representatives of the university or college, student-athletes are held to a higher standard and have expectations to uphold the rules, regulations, and policies set forth by their governing institutions, conferences, and athletic associations.

NAIA and NCAA Similarities and Differences

In this study, the four participant's schools are members of two collegiate athletic associations, the NAIA and NCAA. I examined and analyzed the two associations to determine if there were any significant differences in their strategies to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches. The analysis conducted included the following four parts: (a) interviews – NAIA versus NCAA schools, (b) policies - NAIA versus NCAA schools, (c) all four interview cases, and (d) all four policies cases. Descriptions of the two associations are in the literature review section of this study. Visualizations of the coding and the findings from the data analysis conducted of the NCAA and NAIA participant's schools' interviews and policies are in Figure 8 and Addendum M.

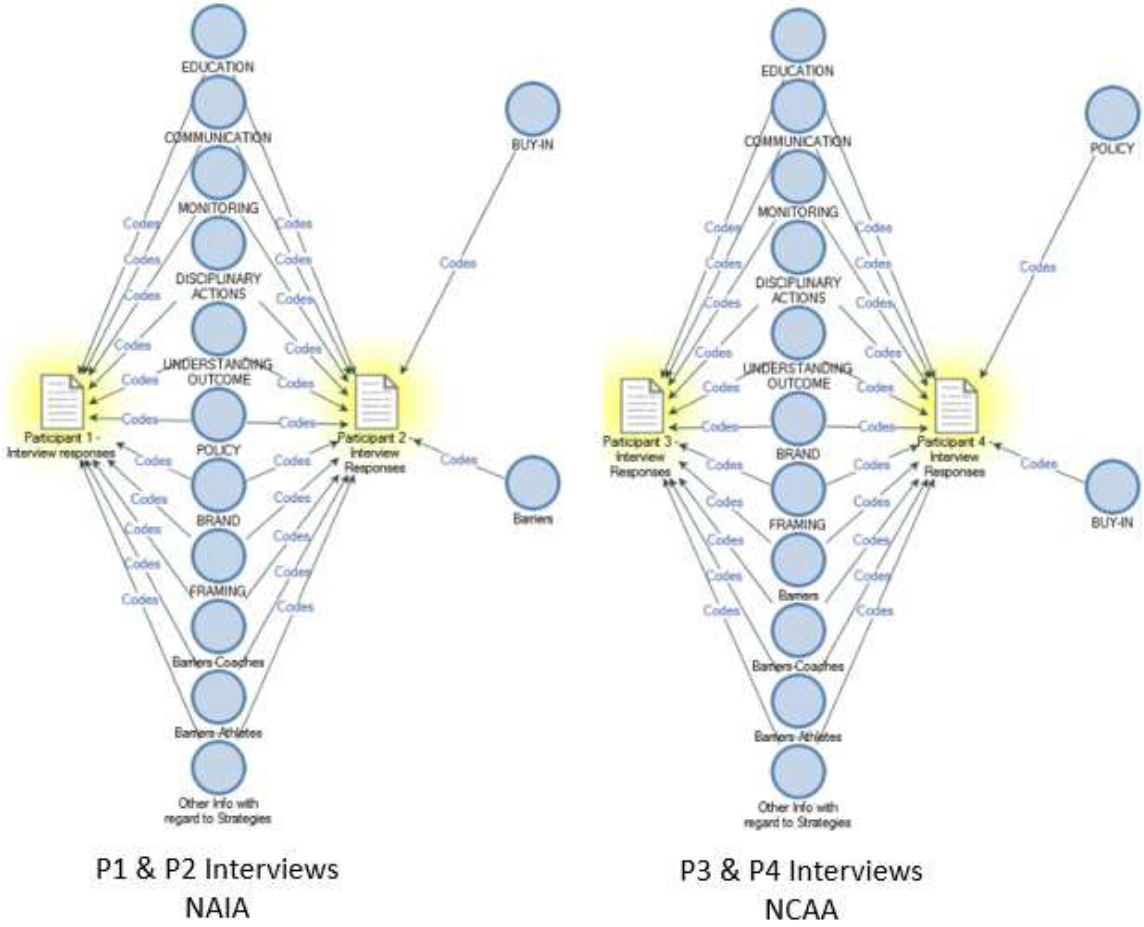

Figure 8. Participant interviews similarities and differences.

NCAA and NAIA similarities. Some of the similarities in language or wording in the policies and interviews for all four schools were that each school had a social media policy and felt the policies were necessary. All expected the student-athletes to follow acceptable behavior. All classified the student-athletes as representatives of their school. All supported free speech and did not restrict their athletes from using social media networks. All expressed that anything posted online is available to the whole world. Most importantly, all the participant's policies and interviews showed some signs

of framing the dialogue, either positively or negatively. Some of the similarities are in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Similarities in NAIA and NCAA participant interviews.

NCAA and NAIA differences. The findings were that there are more similarities than differences in how the NAIA and the NCAA schools viewed social media policies and student-athletes' use of social media as seen in Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10, and Addendum M. However, the focus of this study was not on the similarities and differences of the member governing associations. The focus was on what strategies the schools of these member associations used to mitigate negative social media communications in collegiate athletics. The findings showed that all four institutions used the same four strategies; therefore, the two governing associations are more alike than different. Neither the NAIA nor the NCAA had a social media policy for their member institutions' student-athletes. All the NCAA social media guidelines referred to the coaches recruiting on social media. They left the implementation of a social media policy and enforcement of the policy to the collegiate institutions. There were no significant

differences overall between the schools of each of the two governing bodies, as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Differences in NAIA and NCAA participant interviews.

Although barriers, buy-in, and policy showed as different, they were only different in that not all four participants mentioned the words frequently, and some mentioned the words more than others. Referring to Figure 8 demonstrated that at least one participant spoke each of these three words of both the NAIA and NCAA schools. Coding diagrams of the similarities and differences in the NAIA and the NCAA schools' policies are in Appendix M.

Participants' Additional Recommendations and Information

Participant one recommended attention to social media strategies start sooner; he suggested it begin in high school. The interview by P1 quoted below documented the need for social media education to start at an earlier age. P1 said,

> I would try to bring high schools into it to get them to understand at that level so that those habits have already been broken of putting things on the Internet,

> helping them understand that once you put it out there, you can't get it back. P4 also mentioned education starting at the high school level.

Barriers. There were minimal references to the coaches in the findings. Data analysis showed that most of the interview responses and the social media policies were about the student-athletes. When explicitly asked about the barriers athletic administrators encountered with their coaches, the consensus was minimal to none, suggesting they had no real issues with the coaches because coaches understand the importance of responsible social media use and mitigating negative social media communications. P1 mentioned that he thinks "the biggest thing is, that that's just another layer of work that they have to work on and monitor" and that "coaches, they have a singular focus. They want to go win games." P2 offered, "I think they understand and agree with why you put guidelines in. But I think a barrier is when you're gonna take their best player off the floor because they did something silly on social media," and that the "coaches have a problem with that part of it," but answered no problems with coaches posting something negative. P3 agreed they had no barriers or problems with coaches, "our coaches are doing a great job in making sure that they understand what, how to use social media." However, as far as the student-athletes, P3 postulated that

> one of the biggest barriers is sometimes you have kids that speak the truth. Whether you like it or not. And unfortunately, sometimes you try to make sure that they, you talk about the brand, that the brand is, you know, protected. Sometimes you can't protect it. You can't tell them, you know, not to say anything when what they're saying is truthful.

P4 explained that they have a separate social media policy for their coaches, “we do have a social media policy for our athletic coaches and staff that mirrors our that mirrors our student-athletes accounts to some extent. But the coaches don’t have to sign and initial the policy like the athletes.” P4 said their athletic department planned to implement that this year. He stated that, “I think coaches fall into an employee relationship and scenario” and concurred that there were no barriers with their coaches and only with the athletes.

A barrier with student-athletes that was mentioned by P4 concerned the First Amendment rights argument and the constitution. P4 explained that

> the greatest barrier is the first amendment rights. It’s in the Constitution. It’s my first amendment right to say what I want to say and what I personally feel. And you know what? That is correct. That you do have a First Amendment right to say what you want to say. However, I think what we try to explain to our student athletes is when you accepted a scholarship to come here, the university has, is providing you with academic aid. And that, that is different than someone, a student on our campus who’s paying their entire education, tuition, room and board on their own. They’re not receiving a scholarship at the university, academically or athletically. They’re doing that on their own. And you know, they are able to, they don’t have to sign a social media policy.

To eliminate barriers through education and communication, athletic administrator must clearly articulate and demonstrate why it is necessary to enact and enforce social media policies. The explanations must be positive and framed to show the student-athletes that they can build their personal brand to benefit them and the university

or college. The explanations and demonstrations should focus more on positive aspects *to get understanding* and compliance instead of monitoring, disciplinary actions, and repercussion to adverse behavior. Reframing the narrative can *increase understanding and gain buy-in* without getting much pushback from student-athletes on what the athletic administrators want to accomplish.

Name, Image, and Likeness. Name, image, and likeness (NIL) is the NCAA's new legislation expected by January 2021 (Meyer & Zimbalist, 2020). College presidents weighed in with their viewpoint on name, image, and likeness (McCarty, 2020a). Participant 4 mentioned how name, image, and likeness could potentially be problematic for athletic departments and indicated it could be a big positive for the student-athlete. Participant 4 responded to the question on any additional information he would like to add,

> I think the *NLI* thing is an important thing to add to this question. Name, Image, and Likeness, which is that name, image, and likeness legislation. I think that's going to have a huge impact in the area of social media in the future. And it could complicate.

When the NIL legislation becomes law in the college sports industry, the change in collegiate athletics will be phenomenal. The impact will be more than just student-athletes getting paid for their NIL (Meyer & Zimbalist, 2020). My prediction is it will change the game for college athletics, and the student-athletes, even the athletes not considered the elite superstars. Every student-athlete can take advantage of this opportunity to get paid off their NIL (Meyer & Zimbalist, 2020). McCarty (2020b)

agreed with my assessment by stating that most NIL opportunities will be accessible by virtually every college student-athlete and will involve social media and in-person events that even benchwarmers can cash in on the opportunity. McCarthy (2020) wrote in the *College Athletics and the Law* how attorney, Fedlam, President of Anomaly Sports Group, and Partner with Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP's Corporate Department, where he leads the Sports Law Practice Group viewed and explained NIL. Fedlam explained that big car dealership endorsements and making television commercials for brand-named athletic apparel would probably be for only the elite athletes, but there will be plenty of economic opportunities to take advantage of for all student-athletes (McCarthy, 2020). Fedlam added that even if a student-athlete is not the biggest star on the team or does not have the largest following on social media, student-athletes can expect to be approached by businesses willing to compensate them for posts on Instagram and TikTok videos. McCarty provided examples on how student-athletes can take advantage of name, image, and likeness opportunities, even the small time athlete and not just in endorsements, but also on student-athletes making in-person personal appearances and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Building a positive social media brand and avoiding social media firestorms or blunders are more important than ever for student-athletes. Student-athletes will want to make sure that they are cognizant and careful about what they post and the brand image they present to the public to take advantage of NIL. Student-athletes need to be sure to frame the information and image they present is appropriate and in a positive light.

Framing becomes increasingly more important and will also be to the advantage of the university or college they represent, if done correctly.

Although name, image, and likeness will be a tremendous opportunity for the student-athletes, it will not eliminate challenges. According to McCarthy (2020), Fedlam warned that some challenges could be time commitment and demands, decision-making skills when considering NIL deals, and academic or athletic obligations for the student-athlete. There could also be potential challenges or conflicts for the athletic institutions surrounding student-athletes, lending their NIL for pay benefits, as mentioned by Participant 4. Student-athletes should not be perceived to know how to navigate the NIL landscape and should receive education on what NIL could mean to them and how to take advantage of the opportunity. Educating the student-athlete on this business channel of NIL could benefit the student-athlete and the school they represent. Fedlam agreed with the assertion that education is a critical component of this dynamic (McCarthy, 2020). "The education has to start now so the student-athletes can be prepared. Education around NIL is the most critical component of what we're going to see over the next 10 months or so," Fedlam ascertained. "Student-athletes need to understand the totality of the name, image, and likeness environment. It's a matter of understanding all the responsibility that's going to come with it" (McCarthy, 2020). Knowing and ensuring compliance with NIL rules and regulations is an important component for student-athletes, coaches, and athletic administrators (McCarthy, 2020). Fedlam recommended five key areas in educating the student-athlete on NIL to protect them: (a) building a team of advisors, (b)

researching potential hires, (c) managing decisions, (d) managing finances, and (e) understanding deals (MCarthy, 2020).

McCarty, (2020) added that Fedlam recommended that athletic administrators lean on academic counterparts, such as professors with work experience in marketing, branding, and digital storytelling. Hiring a professional marketing expert would be beneficial for student-athletes and athletic administrators. Fedlam provided schools with a comprehensive curriculum and real-world practical perspective and education, all of which are also now available via virtual educational workshops accompanied by online resources that student-athletes can access on their schedule and refer back to later when the situation arises (McCarthy, 2002). Parents need education as well to understand the NIL process, which was also echoed by participant 4. This research confirmed the current literature on understanding for the student-athletes, parents, coaches, and athletic administrators.

Benefits of social media. Social media's benefits are important components when trying to mitigate negative social media communications by student-athletes and coaches. When all the parties know and understand how social media can be beneficial in their lives, they can positively and effectively utilize social media. There are benefits to social media that should be expressed positively in the policy, also through education and training on social media, and framed in the communication, both verbal and written. Some of those benefits for student-athletes are displaying their personality off the field or court, connecting with their fanbase, networking with prospective employers, developing their brand, and connecting with family and friends (Browning & Sanderson, 2012;

Sanderson, Snyder, et al., 2015). Other benefits may include increased relational closeness, relationship maintenance, networking, and personal branding (Smith & Watkins, 2017). Sanderson (2018) addressed some valid and important points about student-athletes' social media use and why they post what they do. He recommended that athletic administrators provide a forum to hear student-athletes' concerns about issues (e.g., social, and political) that are important them and those who desire to be public about these topics. Strategies for action could be discussed, along with conversations about implications for such self-expression. Many times, student-athletes just want to know that their feelings are valued and offering them a platform with these kinds of events may mitigate student-athletes' posting their frustrations on social media platforms (Sanderson, 2018). I witnessed the University of Kentucky, Duke University, University of Louisville, and other schools providing a platform for student-athletes to express their concerns on systemic racism, social injustice, and inequality in a video and marching in their communities. Student-athletes participated in these events that were on television and social media networks. The student-athletes expressed that these issues were important to them and showed solidarity in their team, support from their coach, and the universities. These types of platforms may have prevented the student-athletes from voicing their concerns out of frustration through social media networks and without the support and guidance they received from the athletic administrators' communications team of experts who helped them do so effectively.

Student-athletes need education on how to use social media in a positive way, such as a personal branding tool or to enhance their brand image. Research is growing

collegiate athletics, student-athletes, and social media that include insight and recommendations for student-athletes and knowledge for athletic administrators to help understand and navigate these phenomena to achieve more effective solutions (Sanderson, 2018). The findings in this study are suggestions that athletic administrators who use positive framing in education and communication of their social media policy guidelines, monitoring, and imposing disciplinary actions only when necessary, will be more equipped to elicit positive responses and actions by their student-athletes and coaches.

Outcome. The outcome of this study was understanding. The athletic administrators wanted the student-athletes to understand the importance of using social media platforms responsibly. Obtaining understanding from the student-athletes will help athletic administrators implement their strategic plan to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media posts by their student-athletes and coaches, which can cause reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college, and the athlete. *Understanding* was a frequent word used by all the participants throughout the interviews. As shown in Figure 11, some form of the word *understand* or *understanding* was mentioned 37 times in the interview processes.

Figure 11. Word cloud for Understand.

P1 said,

> I think getting a student-athlete to understand that they're not an entity unto themselves and understanding that their personality is now attached to the institution and things that they do can bring negative impact on not just them but their institution, helping them understand that you're a brand and you're wearing our logo on your chest or you're on our website.

Participant 1 used *understand* at least a dozen times in the interview. Referring to the student-athletes, P1 said they are "helping them understand private is not always private." Participant 2 explained that "we want them to learn and understand the why, of why this could damage their reputation, the school's reputation and who's looking at it." Participant 3 described how the student-athletes represent themselves and their families,

the university, and their program. Participant 3 added that "we need to make sure they understand just that and to do everything we can for them to understand that they no longer have a personal social media account." P4 described how they implemented their social media policy and acknowledged that the student-athletes needed to understand the policy. P4 stated,

> and we require each student to initial that, those elements on the sheet so that we can show that we have not only provided the policy to them, but that they have initialized and recognize and understand our social media policy." P4 further explained the process, "that they, through their initials, they are stating that they understand this policy and have no questions and or agree to abide by that policy. The sentences or statements of *understanding* that created Figure 11 are:
>
> - Get understanding that being a student-athlete is a privilege, not a right
> - Understand that having a social media policy or guidelines is necessary
> - Education is essential for student-athletes' understanding and buy-in
> - Communication is important to gain understanding and buy-in
> - Understand that monitoring is a necessary method to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college.
> - Understand that you will be held accountable with disciplinary actions for violations of the social media policy.

- The first and foremost goal of the athletic administrator is *to get understanding* from the student-athletes that being a student athlete is a privilege and not a right.
- The second goal of the athletic administrator is to get the student-athletes to understand why a social media policy is necessary in the first place and understand that the policy provides guidelines or a game plan for them to follow that helps to protect the brand image of the student-athlete and the school from social media mishaps.
- Athletic administrators can utilize the strategies, education, communication, monitoring, and disciplinary actions to help student-athletes understand their privilege, why the need for a policy, and understand the goals and vision of the college/university.

By using the strategies revealed in the findings of this study, collegiate athletic administrators can encourage student-athletes to understand that without a strategic plan to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches, there is no protection from potential reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college and the athlete.

The athletic administrators' first strategic goal was that education is essential to get student-athletes' understanding and buy-in to the university or college and the athletic department's vision, plan, and objectives. When coaches recruit athletes, the athletic department has a game plan for the student-athletes' educational experience and athletic contribution to the team. That is why they are called student-athletes, students first, then

an athlete. The goal is for the student-athlete to graduate while also participating in a particular sport.

The second strategy, communication, is vital to gain understanding and buy-in from the student-athletes. To educate, we must communicate. The participants shared that two-way communication is more important than merely talking to or talking at the student-athletes. Participant 2 contributed, "I think the most effective thing is, I think it's just communication and talking with them, getting them to understand and having a conversation rather than them being talked at." The athletic administrators stressed the importance of engaging the student-athletes in a two-way conversation, have them ask questions, and to feel free expressing their concerns. The athletic administrators who communicate and encourage two-way communications with their student-athletes are likely to create more trust, gain respect, and buy-in from their student-athletes. P3 stated that it is important for the student-athletes to trust them.

The third strategy is monitoring. Student-athletes need to understand why monitoring is necessary to help mitigate negative social media communication. Athletic administrators cannot measure what they do not monitor. Without monitoring, the athletic department could not be proactive to protect the student-athlete brand and the university or college. Without monitoring, the schools would be subject to potential embarrassment, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and or fines for the university or college. Explaining, while educating and communicating about the monitoring process is a way to be more transparent to help the student-athletes understand why monitoring is necessary.

The fourth strategy, disciplinary actions, is a means by which athletic administrators can help student-athletes understand that they will be held accountable for violating the social media policy. Disciplinary actions should be viewed as a preventive method and not as punishment or humiliation; instead, educate, communicate, and demonstrate that repercussions are accountability measures. Athletic administrators should educate student-athletes on the damage negative social media can cause for both them and the university/college and understand why they need disciplinary actions. Athletic administrators who share examples and educate the student-athletes on the positive effects of social media and illuminate the benefits while engaging in two-way conversation can help prevent social media blunders and disciplinary actions or decrease the severity of the action taken.

The sub outcomes of understanding were

1. Get understanding that being a student-athlete is a privilege, not a right
2. Understand that having a social media policy or guidelines are necessary
3. Education is essential for student-athletes' understanding and buy-in
4. Communication is important to gain understanding and buy-in
5. Understand that monitoring is a necessary method to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and or fines for the university or college.
6. Understand that you will be held accountable with disciplinary actions for violations of the social media policy.

The participants stressed that they had to get the student-athletes *to understand* the why on many levels, such as why there is a need to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications and why there is a need to have a policy and monitor. By having a: (a) policy with provisions to get student-athletes to understand that being a student-athletic is a privilege, and not a right, along with a strategic plan to provide (b) education, (c) communication, (d) monitoring, and (e) disciplinary actions when necessary to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications, athletic administrators can help student-athletes to understand and buy-in to the strategic plan and goals set by the athletic department and the university/college. The athletic administrators will also get more cooperation from the student-athletes, who will be knowledgeable and apt to understand and buy-in when the *whys* to their questions are answered and framed positively. Subsequently, the athletic administrators will help create trust by being forthcoming about their strategic plan to mitigate negative social media communications. The student-athletes and coaches will understand, buy-in, and adhere to the athletic department's social media policy rules and regulations and the university/college.

Framing

Framing happens in athletics (Cassilo & Sanderson, 2018; Lail, 2020). Negative framing in social media policy, education, communication, both written and verbal, to monitor and impose disciplinary actions is a discrepancy in obtaining the outcome the athletic administrators articulated they want to achieve, which is *understanding*. *To get understanding* is prominent throughout the dynamics of the study focus and culminated in the research outcome. Positive framing and reframing any negative connotation of

information conveyed is more effective and likely to produce more understanding conceptually. Framing theory was the conceptual framework used to identify how the information presented or framed can affect the information interpreted or processed by an audience and its choices.

Framing was apparent in the data in this study. There appeared to be a discrepancy between the stated outcome of the policy provision and implementation strategies to achieve understanding and the type of imperative mode of framing or command language used, *do not*. While the athletic administrators and school documents emphasized that being a student-athlete is a privilege and not a right, public opinion has moved in the opposite direction with the impending name, image, and likeness argument. The NCAA came on board with the NCAA Board of Governors in October 2019, voting to agree to allow collegiate athletes to get paid to use their name, image, and likeness. In August 2020, a group of senators led by Senator Cory Booker proposed a "College Bill of Rights" as noted in Appendix O. From the findings of this study and considering the new developments in collegiate athletics with the name, image, and likeness legislation, athletic administrators, should reframe the student-athlete handbooks and the policy provision. The information should not be couched exclusively in the language of *privilege* and *right*. Being a student-athlete might carry certain rights after all or at least they will have more rights going forward. The emphasis should be perhaps placed more on "understanding" of responsibilities and the potential negative consequences of social media misuse while educating and communicating with positive framing how social media can benefit the student-athlete and the schools.

This completes the findings section of this study. The findings in this research study are an extension of the recent literature discussed in this doctoral study and contribute to the disciplines of communications, business and management, marketing, and the social science of education, while also contributing to the world of sports and collegiate athletics. Research findings should apply to professional practice.

Applications to Professional Practice

Practically speaking, this doctoral study sheds light on the need for clearly articulated social media policies for colleges and universities. While there is much to say for acknowledging that college and university students are adults, it is no different from any other institution that wants to ensure their members, employees, and students adhere to a code of conduct. Without a written policy with explicit details framed positively that encourage compliance rather than a demanding and threatening tone, the assumptions are not explicit or will not be heard in an understanding way, but are a discrepancy in the outcome of obtaining understanding. The act of repercussion is not fair without clearly identified and defined expectations. The applications to professional practice that could help collegiate athletic administrators be more successful in making student-athletes understand their responsibilities regarding social media use included the following seven recommendations:

1. The social media policy should first be written at the highest level of clarity, not vague, confusing, or discrepancy by positively reframing the *do nots*.

2. Athletic administrators should adopt and engage their student-athletes using language with positive framing in their student-athlete handbook and social media policy, as appropriate.

3. The student-athletes or their student-athletes' organizations should be included in the process when constructing social media guidelines.

4. Athletic administrators should advocate their governing bodies, such as the NAIA and the NCAA, to provide fair, equitable, universal social media guidelines and education for all the member institutions' administration.

5. Frequent, continuous training and education with effective two-way communication are the best strategies to ensure all involved are engaged, aware, and understand the expectations.

6. All athletic participants, including administrators, and coaches should sign and initial each policy element indicating that they understand and agree to the specific expectations.

7. Monitoring and disciplinary actions are necessary to ensure adherence to the expectations, but not more important than frequent, continuous education, communication, and training on responsible social media use and how social media can benefit the student-athletes.

Implications for Social Change

Based on the findings and the discrepancy between the stated outcome, understanding, and policy framing, athlete administrators may be more intentional in their effort to get student-athletes to understand how to use social media responsibly. The

athletic administrators may also add more continuous education, training, and communication tools to teach the student-athletes how to use social media to build their brand to benefit them and the university or college. Society may benefit by learning information that helps them make better, informed decisions about a brand and understand the importance of using best practices for positive, responsible, and effective social media communications. From the results of the study, business leaders may learn successful strategies to mitigate negative social media communication to protect their personal and professional reputational brand and help to decipher fake news from the truth. Also, student-athletes and leaders may be an example for the general public to be cognizant of civility, be encouraged to use social media responsibly, potentially mitigating personal and professional reputational damage, job loss, financial loss, cyberbullying, suicides, and mental health issues. People in leadership roles may gain insight into to fostering better communication practices and being an example for their partners, children, coworkers, employees, and customers.

Managers in organizations may find the information helpful to implement a social media policy or strategies within their organization to guide their employees to follow to enhance their communication channels, improve brand marketing strategies, and mitigate negative social media communications. Not having a strategy or a written, clearly defined social media policy, the possibility of risks is detrimental to the institution or company's brand image, all personnel, and consumer buying intentions.

Recommendations for Action

These are recommendations for action for athletic administrators to consider. The recommendation is for positive framing of written, visual, and in-person education and communication used to articulate the information athletic administrators want adherence to by student-athletes and coaches.

1. Collegiate administrators and other stakeholders should revise and reframe student-athlete's handbooks, documents, and social media policy, emphasizing understanding rather than disciplinary actions and using prohibitive language.
2. Collegiate administrators and other stakeholders should advocate K-12 school administrators about this issue to start the dialog on incorporating social media training and education in school curriculums in the future. Since what student-athletes post online in high school can affect their college career and brand in the future, this will make students better prepared when they reach the college level and eliminate some of the problems collegiate athletics endure regarding social media. (This was also a recommendation and wish of the participants in this study.)
3. More research is needed to highlight how social media can contribute to cyberbullying, suicides, depression, and mental illness. P4 mentioned how social media could contribute to mental illness and depression, as well. P4 said they hired a psychologist strictly for focusing on student-athletes' mental health, which social media may also contribute to some of the problems.

Schools should consider employing mental health professionals for their student-athletes.

4. With the NAIA and the NCAA being governing bodies for the schools, the associations should take the lead on setting a uniform standard for providing universal guidelines for positive social media use and the benefits for the student-athletes. P3 provided the NCAA guidelines for social media use in recruiting for coaches. Schools are held accountable by their governing association to have reasonable knowledge and expected to monitor student-athletes social media platforms. With that regard, the governing associations should provide practical guidelines that are universal and fair for all member schools. Collegiate administrators can advocate for more help, recommendations, and guidance from their governing bodies.
5. The recommendation drawn from this study is that athletic administrators frame social media policies positively as a powerful tool and provide continuous, frequent education and communication training on the proper use of social media and how it can benefit them. This recommendation is especially important considering the NIL legislation set to pass in 2021 and the NCAA finally supporting NIL.
6. University and college administrators must take careful consideration when constructing a social media policy or guidelines. The recommendation is for the collegiate school to consult with an attorney to ensure they do not infringe upon the freedom of speech amendment and get the student-athletes and

coaches to sign each policy element to agree to comply with each policy element requirement voluntarily. P4 has already incorporated this procedure in their policy implementation process with their student-athletes, and plan to incorporate this process with their coaches, adhering to the same process with their separate social media policy.

7. Investing in hiring experienced, nimble personnel or consultants in marketing, social media communications, and mental health is paramount in providing the expert advice and knowledge needed to improve these critical areas of concern while also protecting the student-athlete, and the university/college.
8. Athletic administrators should think positive, be positive, and promote positivity in everything they do and say when communicating, educating, monitoring, disciplining, and training student-athletes on responsible social media use and life.

Recommendations for Further Research

The recommendations for future research could include a study on high school student-athletes' social media use. P1 and P4 said if they could add anything else to strategies to mitigate negative social media, it would be to start the education and training on social media at least at the high school level. Since all the participants were males, a recommendation is a study using female athletic administrators to see if females have a different worldview about student-athletes' social media use. The participants in this study were in the southeastern region of the United States. It may be interesting to determine if another area, such as northwestern school participants, would have similar or

different social media strategies and policies. California Governor Gavin Newsom was the first to sign the Fair Pay to Play Act (Senate Bill 206) for student-athletes to get paid off their NIL starting in 2023 (Meyer & Zimbalist, 2020). Other schools, divisions, conferences, and their associations may provide additional information or strategies and add to the current literature.

Another recommendation is a study separating student-athletes and coaches on their social media use. Most of this study's findings were about the student-athlete use and mishaps on social media and not the coaches. Future research with student-athletes as the participants to explore their perspectives about social media, social media policy, and the strategies of education, communication, monitoring, and disciplinary actions would add to this study's findings.

Also, all the participants said they did not have a problem with coaches posting inappropriate comments. The coaches are employees and seem to understand the ramifications of posting negative or inappropriate comments, which could mean the difference between being employed or unemployed. It would be interesting to interview just the coaches to see if their opinion on policy and strategies mimic those of the athletic directors who are their immediate bosses. Coaches usually are focused on winning games, and the social media issue could seem as if it is just another level of work for them, and they do not perceive this as being a real threat unless one of their prize players is involved, or inappropriate social media communication occurred with one of their top recruits. How do they feel about social media issues? Do they think what the athletic departments have put in place regarding student-athletes social media use is fair? Or how

would coaches navigate social media communications conduct by their student-athletes or potential disciplinary actions? Are most of them in favor of the current landscape, or would they approach strategies to mitigate negative social media and the policy differently? One of the limitations was that the strategies may change over time. A study in the future may uncover new strategies athletic administrators use, especially once the name, image, and likeness policy is the law.

Reflections

This journey was long, grueling, met with many life-changing challenges along the way. My task was to collect data during a once in a lifetime global pandemic, making it more difficult to get participants with the universities/colleges closed because of the coronavirus, known as COVID-19. Covid-19 impacted all our lives, including the student-athletes and collegiate athletics. I did not realize the focus, intensity, specifics, and attention to detail required to accomplish this goal. I enjoyed this journey; however, it was all-consuming. I am glad to get my life back, extrapolate what I have learned, and put into an action plan to contribute to my community's sports and business industries.

Social media is still a relatively new communications phenomenon that is continuously changing and evolving every day. New platforms are emerging fast and furious and are here to stay. When I started this journey, TikTok was not a social media platform; little research existed on social media and social media use in collegiate athletics. Scholars are now exploring social media communications and collegiate athletics more to see how it impacts various industries. I am proud to contribute to the literature and communications with this study.

I chose to write my study about the sports industry because I am an avid fan and love sports. I was a student-athlete in high school and college as a cheerleader and a participant on the girl's track team. I have also coached cheerleading and was involved in athletics on various levels. I know from personal experience what it is like to be part of a team competing. I have also been intrigued by the new communications medium, social media communications. I have read about the good and bad and witnessed the horror stories of collegiate student-athletes' and professional players' social media pitfalls. I was engrossed and consumed by this research study, and I am considering consulting, writing, and exploring opportunities in the field. I am intrigued by the name, image, and likeness legislation and seeing how impactful it will be in collegiate athletics. My worldview of this new dynamic is in seeing the beneficial aspects for the student-athletes and collegiate institutions. Traditional businesses may also benefit from this phenomenon.

The strategies revealed in this study confirmed my belief that student-athletes and all students should receive education on using social media platforms responsibly and taking advantage of its benefits. The education should start in middle school, where and when students begin to embrace social media, are more knowledgeable and intrigued by this communication medium. Some students are already figuring out how to become influencers on social media for companies. I did not expect the outcome of *understanding*, even when the strategies emerged. The potential for social media communication opportunities is a massive, ground floor opportunity, with no limit in sight. This experience was humbling and exciting to add to social media's sparse literature in collegiate athletics.

Conclusion

This study's main conclusion was to recognize and be cognizant that framing happens in collegiate athletics, and it is important to ensure that the framing is positive. How athletic administrators frame information or communication is essential. Negative framing impacts interpretation, and the choices student-athletes make about how to process and use the information. These participant schools have not had any serious social media problems since they have written social media policy guidelines within their student handbook, explaining the policy, using education and communication with their student-athletes to help them understand proper social media behavior and etiquette. The communications strategy for these participants is two-way communications, allowing the student-athletes' involvement to provide input, feedback, and ask questions. With these strategies, athletic administrators can gain buy-in, an essential component of the strategic plan. Without buy-in, the plans are not successful. The collegiate administrators need to monitor their student-athletes' social media networks and hold the student-athletes and coaches accountable with disciplinary actions only when necessary, as a positive approach may solve the problem without disciplinary actions. As per their schools' and associations' expectations, universities and colleges should be aware of what is going on in their athletic programs to avoid undue sanctions. More positive framing when using the strategies discovered in this study is critical to the success and effectiveness to gain student-athletes' understanding and accomplishing the goals set by the athletic administrators and their institutions.

Although social media is constantly evolving, with new platforms created frequently, social media is here to stay. Collegiate athletics programs with a strategic plan are in the best position to mitigate social media firestorms and damaging communications by their student-athletes. The study results showed that there were no barriers or problems in this area with coaches, as they are employees and understand the repercussions of inappropriate social media use.

Education, communication, monitoring, and disciplinary actions were the overlapping core strategies athletic administrators used to mitigate negative social media communications by their student-athletes and coaching. These are some of the strategies that are working for some universities and colleges. These participants' strategies can be an example of what other schools and athletic departments that may encounter problems could use as a model to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications in collegiate athletics to protect their brand, the student-athletes, and to avoid unnecessary sanctions or fines. These strategies may also be useful to other athletic administrators, businesses, or associations or provide an excellent place to start.

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doi:10.4304/tpls.3.2.254-262

Appendix A: Pew Research Center Social Media

- Social Media Fact Sheet

  http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/

- Social Media Use in 2018

  http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/

Appendix B: Social Media Mishaps, Gaffes, or Fails

- **Athletes Who Go in Trouble with Social Media**

  https://sysomos.com/2016/12/05/athletes-got-trouble-social-media/

- **The 13 Most Perplexing Gaffes on Social Media**

  https://www.foxsports.com/buzzer/story/perplexing-social-media-athlete-gaffes-033116

- **The Worst Social Media Fails of 2017 (Appendix B)**

  https://www.complex.com/sports/worst-sports-social-media-fails-2017/

Appendix C: Examples of Repercussions in School Social Media Policies

- 1https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087501-florida-state-policy.html#document/p2/a150072
- https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087503-kent-policy.html#document/p56/a150071
- https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087507-texas-tech-policy.html#document/p2/a150066
- **NLRB on Northwestern Case**

  https://www.nlrb.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/basic-page/node-3034/Northwestern%20Fact%20Sheet%202015-08.pdf.

Appendix D: Social Media Policies on Stipulations of Freedom of Speech

- https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087500-akron-policy.html#document/p1/a150073
- https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087501-florida-state-policy.html#document/p2/a150074
- https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087506-oklahoma-state-policy.html#document/p7/a150078

Appendix E: Policy Provision: A Privilege and Not a Right

- https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087503-kent-policy.html#document/p56/a150071 (Santus, 2014)
- Ohio State University Student-Athlete Standards of Conduct and Social Media Policy (Penrose, 2014a)
- http://s3.docu mentcloud.org/documents/ I 087505/ohio-state-policy.pdf (requiring student-athlete signature)

Appendix F: Policy with Reputation Concerns and Forbidden Behavior

- https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087504-missouri-state-policy.html#document/p1/a150076
- Warning About Monitoring
    - https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087505-ohio-state-policy.html#document/p3/a150077

Appendix G: Example of a College Athletic Social Media Policy

Dear Example University Student-Athletes,

As you begin participation in another athletic season, the Athletic Department of Example University wants to make sure you are aware of the revised social networking guidelines. Example University and the Athletic Department recognize and support the student-athletes' rights to freedom of speech, expression, and association, including the use of social networks.

In this context, however, each student-athlete must remember that playing and competing for Example University is a privilege. As a student-athlete, you represent Example University and you are expected to portray yourself, your team, and the university in a positive manner at all times.

Below you will find our social networking guidelines which provide the following guidelines for social networking site usage:

-Everything you post is public information – any text or photo placed online is completely out of your control the moment it is placed online – even if you limit Access to your site. Information (including pictures, videos, and comments) may be accessible even after you remove it. Once you post a photo or comment on a social networking site, that photo or comment becomes the property of the site and may be searchable even after you remove it.

-What you post may affect your future. Many employers and college admissions officers review social networking sites as part of their overall evaluation of an applicant.

Carefully consider how you want people to perceive you before you give them a chance to misinterpret your information (including pictures, videos, comments, and posters).

-Similar to comments made in person, the Example University Department of Athletics will not tolerate disrespectful comments and behavior online, such as:

Derogatory language or remarks that may harm my teammates or coaches; other Example University student-athletes, teachers, or coaches; and student-athletes, coaches, or representatives of other schools, including comments that may disrespect my opponents.

Incriminating photos or statements depicting violence; hazing; sexual harassment; full or partial nudity; inappropriate gestures; vandalism, stalking; underage drinking, selling, possessing, or using controlled substances; or any other inappropriate behaviors.

Creating a serious danger to the safety of another person or making a credible threat of serious physical or emotional injury to another person.

Indicating knowledge of an unreported school or team violation—regardless if the violation was unintentional or intentional.

The online social network sites are NOT a place where you can say and do whatever you want without repercussions. The information you post on a social networking site is considered public information. (Enright, 2017; RecruitLook.com, 2017).

Appendix H: Team Social Media Guidelines for the University of Georgia

- https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087509-uga-teams.html#document/p8/a150069
- Women's Tennis
- https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087509-uga-teams.html#document/p10/a150070

Appendix I: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Athletics

- NCAA Public Infractions Report Against the UNC
    - https://web3.ncaa.org/lsdbi/search/miCaseView/report?id=102358
- UNC 2018 Student-Athlete Policy on Social Networking and Media Use
- https://goheels.com/documents/2018/8/2/Department_of_Athletics_Policy_on_Student_Athlete_Social_Networking_and_Media_Use.pdf
- Policy Requiring Student-Athletes' Signature
    - https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1087507-texas-tech-policy.html#document/p2/a150066

Appendix J: Fieldhouse Media Surveys on Social Media Use

- http://www.fieldhousemedia.net/tag/social-media-student-athletes/
- 2019 survey on the social media use of college athletes

  https://www.fieldhousemedia.net/how-student-athletes-use-social-media-in-2019/
- 2018 survey on the social media use of college athletes

  http://www.fieldhousemedia.net/tag/social-media-student-athletes/
- 2017 survey on the social media use of college athletes

  http://www.fieldhousemedia.net/2017-survey-results-social-media-use-of-student-athletes/
- 2016 survey on the social media use of college athletes

  http://www.fieldhousemedia.net/social-media-use-of-student-athletes-2016-survey-results/
- 2015 survey on the social media use of college athletes

  http://www.fieldhousemedia.net/social-media-use-of-student-athletes-2015/
- 2014 survey on the social media use of college athletes

  http://www.fieldhousemedia.net/social-media-use-of-student-athletes-2014/
- 2013 survey on the social media use of college athletes

  http://www.fieldhousemedia.net/social-media-use-of-student-athletes-2013-survey-results/

- CoSida Survey

  https://cosida.com/news/2014/12/4/imported_1204142327.aspx?path=imported

- Shear Information on Social Media Law

  https://www.shearsocialmedia.com

Appendix K: School A Policy

School A – Do not have a false sense of security about your rights to freedom of speech The University of A Department of Athletics Social Network Policy for Student-Athletes Social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and other digital communication platforms and distribution mechanisms facilitate students communicating with other students. Participation in such online communities has both positive appeal and potentially negative consequences. It is important that University of A student-athletes be aware of these consequences and exercise appropriate caution if they choose to participate. Student-athletes are not restricted from using any online social network sites and digital platforms, however, users must understand that any content they make public via online social networks or digital platforms is expected to comply with federal government, state of X, University of A (UA), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), MidAmerican Conference (MAC), Western Intercollegiate Rifle Conference (WIRC, rifle), Mid-Atlantic Conference (MAC, rifle) and an individual sport program's team rules, regulations and laws. Facebook, MySpace, and similar directories are hosted outside the University server. Violations of University policy (such as harassing language, University alcohol or drug policy violations, etc.) or evidence of such violations in the content of online social networks or digital platforms are subject to investigation and sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct, Student-Athlete Code of Conduct and team policies. Student-athletes are also subject to the authority of law enforcement agencies. Social Network Guidelines for Student-Athletes The following guidelines are intended to provide the framework for student-athletes to conduct

themselves safely and responsibly in an online environment. As a student-athlete at UA, you should:

1. Be careful how much and what kind of identifying information you post to online social network sites. Anyone can access your page. It is unwise to provide information such as full date of birth, social security number, address, residence hall room number, phone numbers, cell phone numbers, class schedules, bank account information, or details about your daily routine. All can facilitate identity theft or stalking. Facebook and other sites provide numerous privacy settings for information contained in its pages – use these settings to protect private information. Once posted, the information becomes the property of the website. Please understand, privacy settings may help protect private information, but it is not a guaranteed safeguard. Any text or photo placed online is completely out of your control the moment it is placed online, even if you limit access to your site.

2. Be aware that UA employees, including coaches, faculty, and administrators, can access these sites just as easily as your peers. Current and future employers often access online social network sites for information. Many graduate programs and scholarship committees search these sites to screen applications. You should think about any information you post on Facebook or similar directories as it provides an image of you to a prospective employer. The information posted is considered public information. Protect yourself by maintaining a self-image of which you can be proud.

3. Do not have a false sense of security about your rights to freedom of speech. Understand that freedom of speech is not unlimited. Inappropriate postings on social network sites may easily result in serious repercussions.

4. Be cautious about what you share about your team. You may not post information about yourself, your teammates or your coaches that will put you or your team at a competitive disadvantage, including but not limited to injury reports, game plans and strategy, and recruiting information.

5. Do not post any information that is proprietary to the UA Department of Athletics which is not public information. Such proprietary information includes team schedules, practice plans, travel plans, itineraries, or any other information that is sensitive or personal in nature.

6. Be aware that you are personally liable for any copyright violations you may commit, whether intentional or inadvertent. Copyright violations may include posting photographs, audio, or video of people or things that are not you or your personal property, or for which you do not have express written permission to distribute. In addition, it is a violation of copyright laws to post various trademarks and other recognizable symbols of The University of A. PRR13-10-01-124 First Name Last Name - UA Athletics Social Network Policy for Student Athletes 000001

7. Be aware that you are personally liable for any violations of other students' privacy rights, including violation of rights protected by state and federal privacy laws. You will also risk sanctions by The University of A for violating various student codes of conduct or codes of computing ethics.

8. Understand that malicious use of online networks, including derogatory language or comments about any member of The University of A community, demeaning statements about, or threats to any third party, incriminating photographs or statements that depict private behavior, hazing, sexual harassment, vandalism, stalking, underage drinking, illegal drug use, or other inappropriate behavior will be subject to investigation and possible sanctions by the University and/or the UA Department of Athletics, as well as civil authorities.

9. Consider these recommended practices:

• Profile/privacy settings are set to only friends.

• Contact information is set to only friends.

• Be selective in what information your friends can share about you.

• Even though pictures are included in profile information, be very careful of what types of pictures you place on a social networking site.

• Be mindful of what pictures you are allowing to be taken that can be posted by friends.

Individual athletic teams may have a more restrictive social networking policy. You are responsible to be aware of your teams' policy and are subject to its guidelines.

Social Network Student-Athlete Agreement As a student-athlete, you are required to know, understand, and follow the standards contained in The University of A Department of Athletics Social Network Policy.

Appendix L: Interview Questions and Interview Protocol

1. What type of social media communications policy or strategy have you implemented for your student athletes and coaches to mitigate negative or inappropriate social media communications that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?
2. What strategies do you use to combat negative social media communications by your student athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?
3. What strategy would you say is the most effective to help prevent or mitigate in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?
4. What strategies worked the best when you successively put together your social media communication policy for your student athletes and coaches that prevent or mitigate reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?
5. What strategic plan to mitigate negative social media communications that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college have you put into effect first and why?
6. What barriers have you come across when you tried to implement strategies to mitigate negative social media communications with your student-athlete that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?

7. What barriers have you come across when you tried to implement strategies to mitigate negative communications with your coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?

8. What other information would you like to share with regard to strategies that could help minimize negative social media communications by student-athletes and coaches that may result in reputational damage to the brand, negative publicity, financial loss, sanctions, and/or fines for the university or college?

I. I will introduce myself to the participant.

II. I will present the consent form, go over the information of the consent form, and answer any questions or concerns from the participant.

III. I will provide the participant a copy of the consent form.

IV. I will obtain a verbal agreement from the participant to record the interview. I will turn on the recorder and ask the participant to again state their agreement to be recorded while the recording device on.

V. I will follow the procedure to introduce the participant with a pseudonym/coded identification (P1, P2, and so on) and note the date and time.

VI. I will start the interview with question #1 and follow through to the end of all questions.

VII. I will ask any follow up questions if needed.

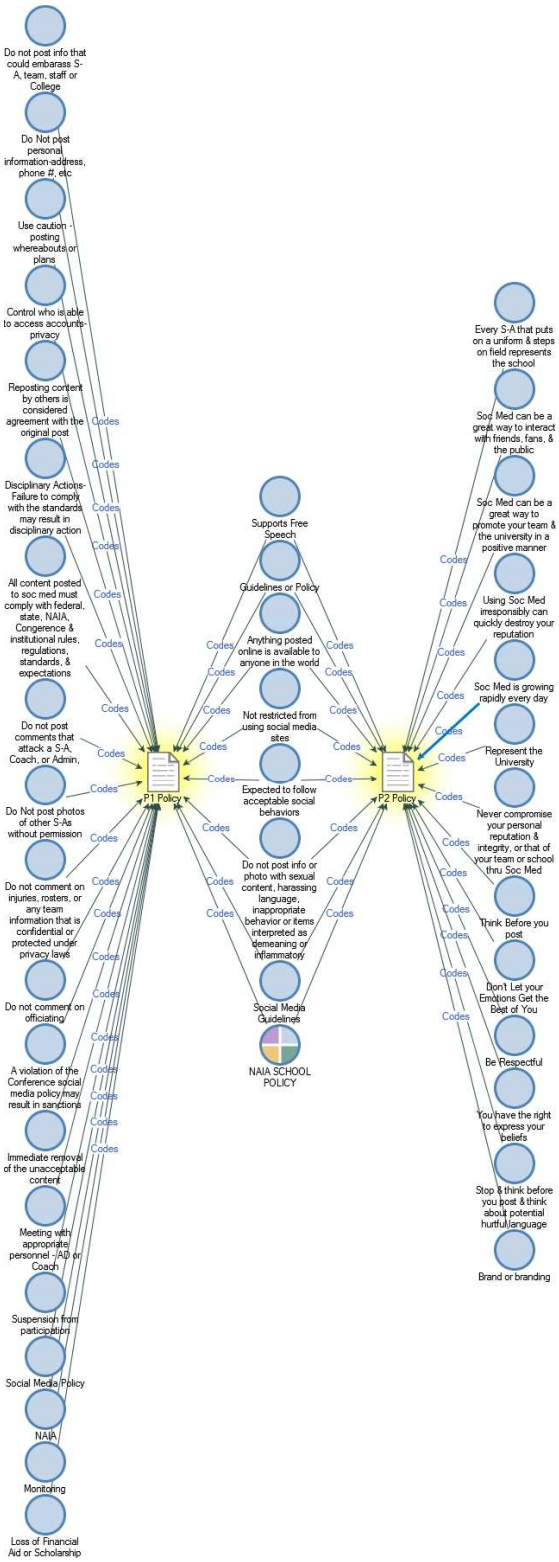
VIII. I will end the interview process by discussing member-checking with the

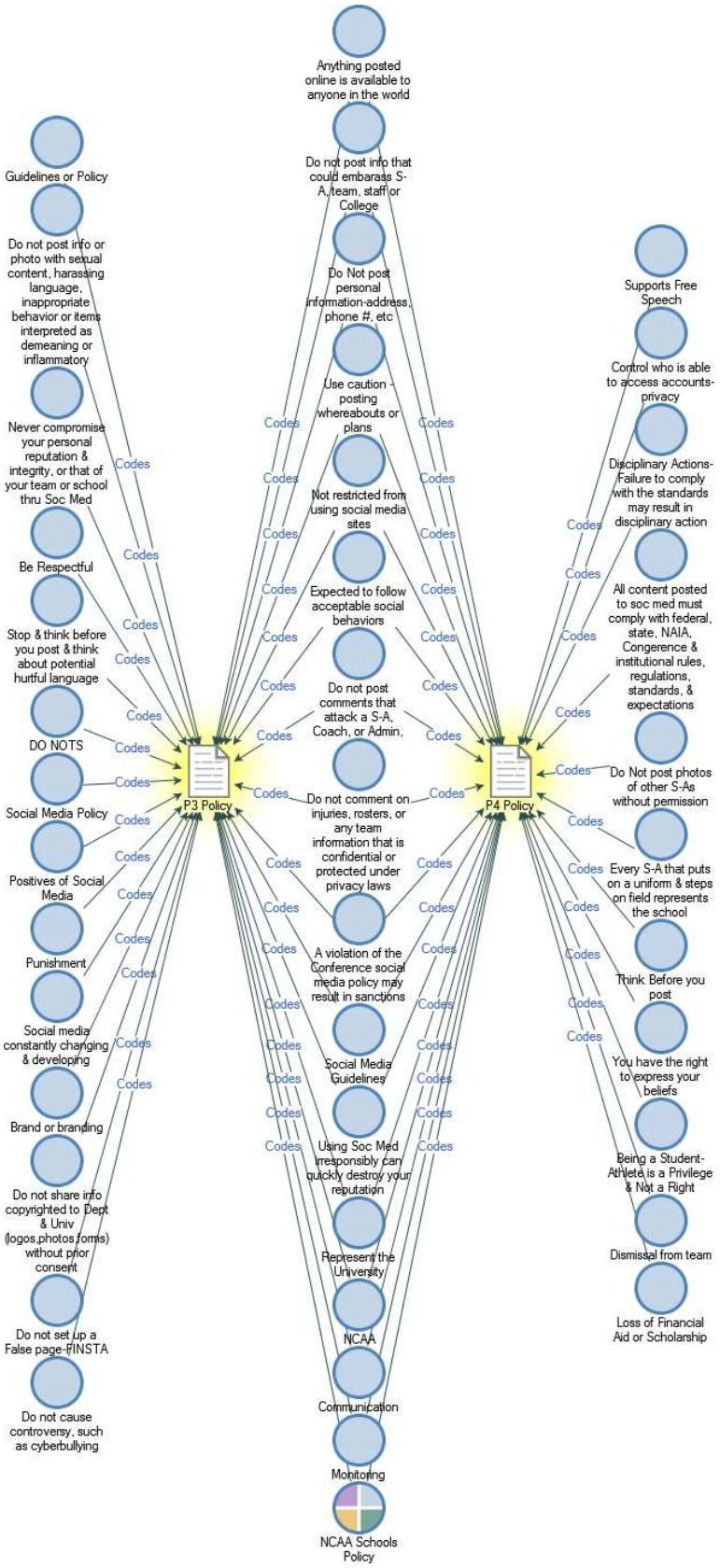
participant.

IX. I will thank the participant for their participation in the study and provide my contact information for any follow-up questions and concerns from the participant.

X. The end of the interview protocol.

Appendix M: NAIA and NCAA Similarities and Differences




Anything posted online is available to anyone in the world
Do not post info that could embarass S-A, team, staff or College
Do Not post personal information-address, phone #, etc
Use caution - posting whereabouts or plans
Not restricted from using social media sites
Expected to follow acceptable social behaviors
Do not post comments that attack a S-A, Coach, or Admin,
Do not comment on injuries, rosters, or any team information that is confidential or protected under privacy laws
A violation of the Conference social media policy may result in sanctions
Social Media Guidelines
Using Soc Med irresponsibly can quickly destroy your reputation
Represent the University
NCAA
Communication
Monitoring
NCAA Schools Policy
Guidelines or Policy
Do not post info or photo with sexual content, harassing language, inappropriate behavior or items interpreted as demeaning or inflammatory
Never compromise your personal reputation & integrity, or that of your team or school thru Soc Med
Be Respectful
Stop & think before you post & think about potential hurtful language
DO NOTS
Social Media Policy
Positives of Social Media
Punishment
Social media constantly changing & developing
Brand or branding
Do not share info copyrighted to Dept & Univ (logos,photos,forms) without prior consent
Do not set up a False page-FINSTA
Do not cause controversy, such as cyberbullying
P3 Policy
P4 Policy
Supports Free Speech
Control who is able to access accounts-privacy
Disciplinary Actions-Failure to comply with the standards may result in disciplinary action
All content posted to soc med must comply with federal, state, NAIA, Congerence & institutional rules, regulations, standards, & expectations
Do Not post photos of other S-As without permission
Every S-A that puts on a uniform & steps on field represents the school
Think Before you post
You have the right to express your beliefs
Being a Student-Athlete is a Privilege & Not a Right
Dismissal from team
Loss of Financial Aid or Scholarship
Codes

Appendix N: College Athletes Bill of Rights

https://www.booker.senate.gov/news/press/booker-senators-announce-college-athletes-bill-of-rights