

A BRAND NEW GAME: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
OF HOW STUDENT-ATHLETES AND MENTORS ARE
MANAGING PERSONAL BRANDING

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how student-athletes are guided and mentored to develop and manage their personal brands within their respective athletic departments. With the introduction of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) legislation across the United States, this has emerged as a pressing topic within collegiate amateur athletics for both student-athletes and university and athletic department administrators. Nineteen total participants split between current and former student-athletes and current athletics mentors from a middle-tier NCAA Division I, were interviewed in a semi-structured interview process about their perceptions and experiences in student-athlete personal brand development and management. Interview responses were evaluated using separate research questions for current and former student-athletes and athletics mentors. Research questions for student-athletes focused on whether they perceived they had a brand and if they believed they had the tools to manage their brand. Research questions for mentors centered on what they perceived their role in the brand management process was. One major theme that presented itself was that student-athletes either did not perceive themselves as having a brand or did not feel like they were given the tools to successfully build their own brand. However, student-athletes did respond that athletic academic mentors did shape the way they networked with alumni and impacted the academic achievements they strove for demonstrating that there was a component of brand building on-going within the student-athlete phase of life. In contrast to what student-athletes reported, many athletic academic mentors responded that they perceived they had little to no role in helping build a student's brand and most mentors believed other members of the athletic and academic

community should be responsible for training. This juxtaposition in thinking between student-athletes and mentors emerged as the main point of emphasis in the results of this study.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated...

To my family who worked so hard so that I could have the opportunity to be here today. From migrant farmers to a doctorate – this is for all of you. Your work ethic and grit inspire me and motivate me in everything that I do. I take pride in my last name and my Cherokee heritage knowing the amount of tenacity that paved the path for me to walk each step of the way. I hope I make you proud.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

<i>DI</i>	Division I
<i>ESPN</i>	Entertainment and Sports Programming Network
<i>GPA</i>	Grade Point Average
<i>NCAA</i>	National Collegiate Athletics Association
<i>NIL</i>	Name, Image, and Likeness
<i>SA</i>	Student-athlete
<i>SIT</i>	Social Identity Theory

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1. INTRODUCTION

Stone Wilson is a self-made celebrity from his social media content creation. Currently, Wilson has a subscriber count of 142,000 on YouTube and approximately 28,000 Instagram followers. Wilson gained popularity by posting relatable content to his target audience of his peers talking about daily life as a student-athlete. In one of his most-watched YouTube videos titled “NCAA can’t stop this: What happened to Stone Wilson?” he recounts his experience getting called to his team’s National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) compliance officer on the claim that his social media content was a violation of NCAA policy and that he was ineligible to continue playing unless he halted production of any new content until the issue was investigated. The video was posted on July 30, 2018 and has over 200,000 views.

In the video, Wilson gives his account of the situation, claiming it became an NCAA eligibility violation due to a video he created with another anonymous former student-athlete where he was accused of promoting said anonymous athlete’s page from which he makes money. Wilson also explained that he had been watched closely because compliance personnel were suspicious that he was profiting from his YouTube content as well. Wilson then explained that he had been cautious about monetizing any of his content from the beginning so as to not violate any of the policies that apply to his scholarship and player eligibility through his university and the NCAA. Ultimately, Wilson was able to illustrate that he did not intend to violate policy and that he only meant to share his life as a Division I (DI) walk-on kicker and punter at Florida International University in 2018 with his fan base because he enjoys the content creation process.

Wilson concludes the video by recounting his interactions with his coach and the compliance personnel. Wilson says that his coach “rings” him out and forbids him from posting on any social media platforms until the issue is resolved. Wilson refrained from posting for the remainder of the 2018 summer break, although he did admit to a few Instagram posts. He then recounts returning to pre-season meetings and having another coach pull him to the side and ask him why he had not posted any content all summer. After said interaction, Wilson describes feeling confused and misled about how he should have handled the situation and ended by saying, “I guess I was good the whole time” and visibly shrugging in the video.

Wilson’s story, while one of the more well-known, is not uncommon amidst the student-athlete community. Specifically, the incident in which the communication with his coach and compliance personnel is not clear and illustrates the inconsistencies in expectations compared to reality of what a student-athlete knows about managing their brand within the confines of NCAA and university policies.

Like Wilson’s athletics department staff, many athletics administrators and coaches struggle to keep up with the rules and regulations and conveying updated information to student-athletes. Because social media, media access, and the ideas governing the name, image, and likeness rules are constantly changing, it is difficult to manage both administrative duties and coaching duties while trying to stay up to date on the newest trends (Dittmore, 2019). Due to this difficulty, many athletics programs are developing departments and hiring staff to oversee the use of social media and help guide student-athletes on how to build and develop their personal brand and cultivate their image.

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand how student-athletes are guided and mentored to develop and manage their personal brands within their respective athletics

departments. Every year, more than 480,000 students compete as NCAA athletes (NCAA, n.d.). However, “just a select few within each sport move on to play at the professional or Olympic level” (NCAA, n.d.). Additionally, the likelihood of an NCAA student-athlete to earn a college degree is 86% for Division I sports (NCAA, n.d.). The NCAA is known for touting the phrase, “Student first, athlete second” in their programming to help ensure that their mission statement to have the “educational experience of the student-athlete [be] paramount” (NCAA Handbook, 2020) is carried out.

Name, image, and likeness, commonly referred to as the NIL, are three terms grouped to describe the legal concept of the “right of publicity” (Stark-Mason, n.d.). This research is important at this time because legislation is being worked on at the state and national governments levels to ensure that student-athletes can maintain their amateur status with the NCAA while also being able to profit off their Name, Image, and Likeness. NIL legislation is different than paying amateur athletes solely for their athletic accomplishments. This legislation is aimed at allowing players to be able to monetize their name, image, and likeness like the aforementioned Stone Wilson and his YouTube page (Murphy, n.d.).

Student-athletes are in a category all their own. Often, student-athletes act as ambassadors for their universities as well as the faces many people associate with the legacies at those colleges and universities (Hodes et al., 2015). The work does not begin on campus, though. As high school student-athletes reach their junior and senior years, the recruitment from colleges begins (“Recruiting,” 2019). The NCAA clearly articulates the eligibility requirements for students to be evaluated for recruiting (2019). The eligibility requirements include their grade point average (GPA), their rapport with coaches and teachers in the form of recommendation letters, as well as their performance statistics throughout their high school careers, and outward

presentation of self via interactions with recruiters and online. There is not a limit as to how many recruiters (colleges) are allowed to “scout” a student at any particular time, however, the attention to a student is closely monitored by the other interested colleges. Ultimately, these elements become factors used to measure the aspiring collegiate student athletes’ personal brand image and whether or not said image is determinate of the principles of the recruiting institution.

In season, the typical day of a Division I student-athlete begins between 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. depending upon the sport and the current practice or conditioning schedule. After practice and before their first class at 8:00 a.m., they are often required to eat breakfast. Typically, their class schedule has courses from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. with a half hour to an hour for lunch. In the early afternoon, they may have weight training, meetings, or tutoring before their afternoon practice which typically lasts for two hours. After practice, they eat dinner and head to the academic tutoring sessions or study hall to complete homework and prepare for their classes the next day. Sometimes these tutoring sessions or study hall hours do not end until 11:00 p.m. In addition to this rigorous schedule, student-athletes also travel across the country while in season to compete. Days off are few and far between.

Upon arriving to campus, and sometimes beginning on signing day, student-athletes are expected to act and exist as ambassadors for the university and conference brands (Hodes et al., 2015). Overnight, they are tasked with being stewards of their own reputations as well as their university. The NCAA uses the notion that student-athletes are amateur athletes to prevent them from getting compensated financially. The guise of amateur status restricts the student-athletes to their university-allotted stipend. In the event that, a student-athlete is compensated financially or profitably, they lose eligibility to play their sport.

The tradition of amateur athletics began with the NCAA as a safeguard for the organization as well as to provide access to higher education for those who may not have had the opportunities otherwise (Muenzen, 2003). Muenzen (2003) explains in early NCAA statements, amateurism was about intrinsic rewards rather than extrinsic rewards. While the definition has changed over time, the general principle remains defining amateur as an individual playing sports for pleasure and education not for financial gain (Muenzen, 2003). Until the 1950s, even financial aid and scholarships to attend the university were considered a violation of the rules and seen as a potential competitive advantage. Today, as more and more athletic programs are seen as the “front porch” of the college or university with the student-athletes as the host (University of Washington, 2012; McCollum, 2009), there is more room for discussion about the real role that student-athletes play on campus.

The NCAA has trainings in place to help student-athletes manage the transition to the rigorous athletic and academic schedule and increased academic demands. The NCAA-provided guidance includes guest speakers, conference style presentations, online guides, mentorship programs, and public speaking trainings to name a few (NCAA.org, 2020). Student-athletes are given an immense amount of responsibility when they are signed to their universities to play their respective sports with the demands ever increasing (Muenzen, 2003). However, the prioritization of these trainings varies from university to university and conference to conference. Further, looking at a typical schedule for a student-athlete, finding time to schedule an adequate training protocol for brand management success (for both student and university) is difficult to say the least (Matthews, 2017). In tandem with these trainings, student-athletes are often required to complete trainings similar to those of faculty and staff on sexual harassment, university procedural trainings, and the like in the midst of their already busy schedule (NCAA, n.d.).

One of the trainings that is often linked to brand management or self-presentation is the training to speak on media day or in post-game interviews. The caveat is that these trainings are often reserved for the high performing student-athletes and are not available to all student-athletes because the trainings are contracted out with third-party organizations like Sports Media Challenge (Reynolds, 2006). It is important to note that training to speak to media is different than training on social media management or professional self-presentation. One example of an external source for personal brand management and presentation strategies is Morgan Jones, a widely recruited collegiate basketball player at Florida State University from 2012-2016. Jones is the founder of a company called “Athletes to Visionaries” which specializes in helping collegiate female athletes prepare for life after college. Be it professional sports or career guidance, Jones works to guide students and give them a real-world perspective. Having been a collegiate and professional athlete herself, Jones uses her experience to lead. Beyond her work with student-athletes, she is a host and basketball analyst. Jones played in the Elite 8 game during her junior season in 2015. She played professionally during the 2015 Women’s All-Star League series. Jones is one college student-athlete who had a brand as a student-athlete and continued her brand into her professional career. Fortunately for Jones, her brand had a positive connotation to it from her extensive resume and accolades.

Unlike Jones, not every student-athlete has built a brand and those who have built a brand don’t have a positive connotation associated with their name. The NCAA provides all information regarding brand guidelines and training on its website: NCAA.org. Currently, the NCAA has “no standardized social media training program available for college student-athletes” (NCAA.org, 2020). The site goes on to stress the importance of digital media training to prevent “consequences of unsuitable content” to their reputation, eligibility, scholarships, as

well as future career prospects (NCAA.org, 2020). Just below the disclaimer there is a slide deck comprised of 12 slides highlighting the basics of social media literacy.

College students are tasked with managing a major shift in their identity as they move from high school athlete to collegiate student-athlete, a move that takes them away from home where they begin managing responsibilities on their own—likely for the first time. Student-athletes often move to college much sooner than traditional students and their schedules and responsibilities are much greater than those of traditional students (Saffici & Pellegrino, 2012). On average, student-athletes spend twenty hours per week playing or practicing their sport. Student-athletes carry the stress of a potential injury, their overwhelming schedule, their grades, and missing classes for sports related travel and competition (Watt & Moore, 2001; Wolverton, 2008). Athletics programs at Division I institutions have a satisfactory support resources to accompany the more demanding schedules and requirements (Gayles, 2009). However, there are still widespread concerns (Park et al., 2020; Bowen and Levin, 2003; Shulman and Bowen, 2001) about the overall wellbeing of collegiate student-athletes, their satisfaction with their collegiate experience, and their career preparedness post-graduation.

Since the establishment of the NCAA in the early 1900s, the role of the organization has adapted from a rules committee for safety and consistency regulations to a management system for collegiate sports programs nationwide. One of the longest standing contentions within the NCAA and its member institutions is that of the amateur status regulations for student-athletes. The NCAA has long insisted that college-student athletes are amateur athletes and should not be paid for their sports abilities outside of academic scholarship and university sanctioned stipends (Solomon, 2018). In November 2019 the State Legislature of California stated that student-athletes can earn money for use of their name, image, or likeness from a third-party as long as it

does not conflict with a university sponsorship agreement (McCollough, 2020). On April 29th, 2020 the NCAA Board of Governors announced that it supports allowing student-athletes to “receive compensation for third-party endorsements both related to and separate from athletics” (Booker, 2020).

While it may seem optimistic that student-athletes could be compensated for their effort, it is important to discuss the implications of the added responsibility of managing endorsement deals on top of the already arduous schedule. The NCAA website shares that they do not provide training to the student-athletes about managing their self-presentation (NCAA, n.d.) on social media and individual universities contract with outside companies to teach media etiquette (Reynolds, 2006).

Throughout 2020, several examples occurred suggesting the importance of understanding how student-athletes build their personal brands, how they manage them, and who supports them in their efforts. From the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic to the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor to the push to register new voters for the 2020 Presidential election, some student-athletes took to social media to voice their ideas, feelings, and opinions, thus attaching them to their self-presentation of personal brand. Given the unique circumstances of 2020, many student-athletes took to social media to make their voices heard about their perspectives on the social unrest in the United States following the killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Additionally, student-athletes used social media to assert their willingness to play with the #WeWantToPlay amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. As social media use becomes more prevalent, it is integral to understand of student-athletes perceptions of the impact that association with causes or outspoken opinions on the internet may occur. This type of online activism from

student-athletes is not new. In 2015 amidst the social unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, University of Missouri football players facilitated a strike using Twitter (Yan et al., 2017).

On February 23, 2020, Ahmaud Arbery was pursued and fatally shot by civilians in Georgia while jogging. On May 25, 2020, a police officer in Minneapolis knelt on the neck of a man named George Floyd for 8 minutes and 46 seconds suffocating him. These acts prompted protests in the city which turned into protests nationwide reinvigorating the Black Lives Matter movement. Earlier in the year on March 13, 2020, Breonna Taylor, was shot and killed in her home by Louisville Metro police officers. The recording of the 911 call made by her boyfriend was released on May 28, 2020 further invigorating protestors.

While professional athletes have been vocal about the Black Lives Matter movement, the incidents during summer 2020 coupled with the extra time due to Covid-19 allowed for a space for college athletes to speak out about police brutality and racism in the United States. In doing so, they have made it more possible for other student-athletes to step into roles of advocacy (Torres-Burtka, 2020). One example is Scottie Lewis, a University of Florida basketball player who led a protest in Asbury Park, New Jersey in June and another in Gainesville, Florida in August (Torres-Burtka, 2020). The protest included Florida soccer, volleyball, football and baseball players as well as community members (Torres-Burtka, 2020). Lewis is quoted saying, “I put myself in the shoes of all the people that have passed... the fact that it could have been me, and I could be in a different situation if I wasn’t dribbling the basketball ... I just know when something needs to be said, you say it.”

Beyond social justice issues and athlete activism, student-athletes have found a voice online to defend their ideas and opinions about what the NCAA and their member institutions do and do not allow. During the summer months of 2020 amidst Covid-19, universities across the

United States began making decisions on whether or not to participate in the 2020 football season. The NCAA and the member institutions did not consult the student-athletes in this decision thus sparking the #WeWantToPlay movement led by Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence on social media in an effort to make it known that the student-athletes wanted the season to go on and they were willing to do whatever was necessary to make it happen (Kercheval & Sallee, 2020). Lawrence explained his perspective in a Twitter thread inciting a wave of other players and fans to tweet using the hashtag. By that evening, the hashtag had developed into a discussion of a player's union amidst the Power 5 conferences bringing to light discussions of the real impact of college football and collegiate athletics as whole for university revenue structures. Lawrence as well as other athletes used their already established personal brands to initiate a discussion for a cause illustrating the significance of the need for a conversation about student-athlete personal brand development and management.

Amidst the turmoil of the protests and movement to continue playing collegiate athletics, student-athletes were also working to encourage young people to register to vote in the 2020 Presidential election. Using the hashtag #VoteReady, the NCAA had student-athletes across the country at member institutions to record a video on why voting is important to them (NCAA.com, 2020).

In the age where digital media overruns society and a historical event seems to happen every day, collegiate student-athletes find themselves between a rock and hard place for personal brand management. Student-athletes have no formal training or support in managing their personal brand and are greatly restricted on how and when they are able to use it. Often, student-athletes are unaware of their personal brand until some form of mismanagement, or what is deemed by the NCAA policy as mismanagement, occurs.

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand how student-athletes are mentored to build, develop, and manage their personal brands. This project will examine how mentors in American Athletic Conference Division I athletics departments facilitate and guide the student-athlete brand curation as well as what trainings are provided by mentors to the student-athletes. Additionally, this project will explore the perceptions of current and former Division I American Athletic Conference student-athletes on their own abilities to build, develop, and manage a personal brand given the time constraints of their daily schedules, the ever-changing era of social networking, and the accompanying risks related to the duality in developing and performing two simultaneous identities as both a student and athlete. Lastly, this project will examine how Division I athletics departments facilitate and guide the student-athlete brand management via policy handbooks developed and distributed by the athletics departments themselves. This is important as the age of social media is upon us, the NCAA has recently announced the approval for the payment for use of name, image, and likeness, as well as the up-and-coming notion of athlete activism.

This dissertation employs Goffman's (1959) Theory of Self-Presentation to understand how student-athletes present themselves and how others present them to their audiences. Further, this dissertation uses Chickering's (1993) Seven Vectors of Student-Development to link the perspectives of student-athletes and their mentors. Lastly, this dissertation uses the concepts of personal brand, image, and reputation to describe the types of impression management that student-athletes and their mentors engage in and understand as a part of development.

Chapter two of this dissertation outlines and describes the literature related to student-athlete self-presentation and identity development as well as personal brand development and management. Chapter three describes the qualitative approach to understanding the student-

athlete brand development and management processes from the perspectives of student-athletes and their mentors. Chapter four outlines the results of the interviews and analysis. Chapter five delineates the end of the document with the discussion and conclusion of the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to explore the complexity of the phenomenon that is personal branding for student-athletes. To do so, the literature surrounding personal brand, image, reputation, and student-development must be explored, beginning with the trainings and mentorship that student-athletes receive from athletics department staff. First, this chapter will provide an overview of the NCAA and the authority and influence the organization has over student-athletes by maintaining that student-athletes must stay categorized as amateurs. Additionally, this chapter will provide an overview of the perceived effectiveness of the programs and trainings on career preparedness which encompasses social media and personal branding within the NCAA.

Next, this chapter will discuss brand and personal brand as a derivative of identity as self-presentation. Personal branding is recognized as playing “an important role in establishing or boosting your career by helping communicate your unique identity to potential employers or clients, and anyone else who might be imperative to your career” (Lindemann, 2019). A personal brand is culmination of your values and beliefs as well as your unique skills and experiences (Lindemann, 2019). The theoretical and contextual background for the notion of personal brand comes from self-presentation theory (Goffman, 1959). Personal brand is linked to self-presentation because it is a way for a person to communicate information about themselves to another (Goffman, 1959). Self-presentation acts as the instrument by which an individual maintains their brand identity (Labrecque et al., 2011).

Next, this chapter will discuss the notion that student-athletes formulate a dueling identity using Chickering's Student Identity Development Theory (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and Schlossberg's Transitional Theory (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) expounded that just as "important to an understanding of multiple and intersecting dimensions of identity is discussion about the difficulty in studying complexity in social identity development" (p. 18). Evans and colleagues (2010) clarified, "Taking these multiple concepts into account, we define student development theory as a collection of theories related to college students that explain how they grow and develop holistically, with increased complexity, while enrolled in a postsecondary educational environment" (p. 6).

Lastly, this chapter will address the ways in which mentorship to student-athletes is vital to their success academically and athletically. It will illustrate how critical roles that mentors play for student-athletes in their daily lives can be for desired student-athlete outcomes.

National Collegiate Athletic Association

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a non-profit organization that manages the collegiate sports teams in the United States. The NCAA, originally the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS), was established through an order from President Theodore Roosevelt on March 31, 1906 to protect college athletes from the dangers associated with their respective sports (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2010). In 1910, the organization changed its name to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA.org, 2010). In its early stages the organization acted as a rules and regulations committee to establish consistency and safety standards for collegiate athletics (NCAA.org, 2010).

Since the establishment of the NCAA in the early 1900s, the role of the organization has adapted from a rules committee for safety and consistency regulations to a management system

for collegiate sports programs nationwide. One of the longest standing arguments with the NCAA is that of the amateur status regulations for student-athletes. The NCAA has long insisted that college-student athletes are amateur athletes and should not be paid for their sports abilities or use of their image for promotional business outside of academic scholarship and university sanctioned stipends (Solomon, 2018). In November 2019 the State Legislature of California stated that student-athletes can earn money for use of their name, image, or likeness from a third-party as long as it does not conflict with a university sponsorship agreement (McCollough, 2020). On April 29th, 2020 the NCAA Board of Governors announced that it supports allowing student-athletes to “receive compensation for third-party endorsements both related to and separate from athletics” (Booker, 2020).

With the influx of digital and mobile technology, especially social networking sites, student-athletes have become more accessible to their fans and the public (Gangdharbatla, 2007). Further, the sites have become popular vehicles for student-athletes to voice their opinions and concerns from the way a game was officiated to the existing political climate (Sanderson, 2011). The NCAA does not have a formal policy on social media due to the potential infringement of first amendment rights of student-athletes (NCAA.org, 2020). Thus, social media regulation has become the burden of the collegiate athletics departments (Witkemper et al., 2012; Browning & Sanderson, 2012). Previous studies have shown that student-athletes saw the policies implemented by their athletics departments and presented in their policy books to be vague and not followed up on as stated (Sanderson & Browning, 2013; Sanderson et al., 2015a). Additionally, student-athletes are seeking proper education for social media use (Sanderson et al., 2015a) as well as accepting that some form of surveillance is necessary (Snyder, 2014; Mayer, 2012).

One example of student-athletes who are allowed to use their personal brand for monetary gain are those not sanctioned by the NCAA: Cheerleaders. Cheerleading is not a sport governed by the NCAA, thus it does not have to abide by the amateurism rules making it possible for collegiate cheerleaders to sign endorsement deals and use their personal brand for monetary compensation without fear of losing scholarships or eligibility (DeMeyer, 2020). One example is Jamie Andries a former University of Oklahoma (OU) cheerleader turned influencer or “cheerlebrity” as commonly referenced (DeMeyer, 2020). Andries currently has 428,000 followers on Instagram and a net worth estimated between \$1 and \$5 million dollars from her influencer contracts. Because Andries was able to profit from her personal brand while simultaneously enacting her athlete brand to OU fans, she was able to learn the intricacies of personal brand management without the limitations other student-athletes face giving her a head start.

Impression Management Terminology

Brand, image, identity, and reputation are often used interchangeably in reference to impression management. However, each term has a succinct definition and purpose. Impression management was originally conceptualized by Erving Goffman (1959) to explain the conscious and subconscious processes in which an individual endeavors to influence the perceptions of others. Image is commonly defined as “the perception(s) of a person, group or organization held by the audience, shaped by the words and actions of that person, as well as by the discourse and behavior or other relevant actors” (Benoit & Hanczor, 1994, p. 40). Image as a presentation of the self is defined by Erving Goffman (1959) who explains that one performs the idealized self to their peers and social groups. Logically, then, the image that a student-athlete presents of their self becomes ingrained in their competitive identities. Following Goffman’s theory, the image is

then performed by the student-athlete. Image, when described as being dependent upon perceptions of a communicative entity shared by an audience (Benoit & Hanczor, 1994; Benoit, 1995; Brinson & Benoit, 1996, Moffitt, 1994), requires a clear understanding of exactly what said perceptions are based upon.

For crisis communicators, the perceptions are outcomes of the words and actions of the aforementioned communicative entity, be it an organization or an individual. In public relations literature, image often carries a negative connotation where reputation commonly carries a much more positive connotation (Brown, 2016). Formerly, reputation was used interchangeably with image. More recently however, marketing literature has pushed for differentiating between the two terms for several reasons. The scholars pushing for the separation of the two terms define reputation as, “the aggregate perception of an entity and approach reputation as a collection of images over a period of time” (e.g., Chun, 2005; Gotzi & Wilson, 2001; Gray & Balmer, 1998; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001; Brown, 2012). Gray and Balmer (1998) further explain that *reputation* is typically developed through consistent performances over time whereas *image* is developed more quickly via strategically curated messages.

Amidst the development process of one’s image, the individual is also formulating their identity. Identity formation is portrayed as the process in which individuals develop a personal identity. During this process, individuals internalize social expectations. By the end of the process, the individual will come to think of their self in a certain way. As individuals internalize other people’s reaction to them, the individual develops a “self” (Henslin, 2007). Self can be defined as, “the sense of identity individuals have of themselves as a distinct person; this sense, idea, or conception is acquired through social interaction” (Goffman, 1959, pg. 135).

The terms brand, personal brand, image, identity, and reputation used in the interview questions help provide the terminology into the conversation while allowing the participants to define and use the terms based upon their understanding. In allowing the participants to self-define and utilize the terms based upon their experiences, the research can examine the perspectives for a better understanding of the perceptions and understanding of the terms by mentors and student-athletes. By identifying correct and/or incorrect usage of terms, the analysis will provide insight into how terms are used within Athletics departments.

Understanding Brand and Personal Brand

Before diving into a definition of personal brand, one must first understand the conceptualization and origin of brand on its own. Branding typically refers to a reputation of a product or service. To put it in lay terminology, a brand is “a product or service or organization, considered in combination with its name, its identity and its reputation” (Anholt, 2007, p. 4). According to Anholt (2010), brand “captures the idea of reputation observed, reputation valued and reputation managed” (p. 20). The origin of branding is not founded in the advertising industry. Branding has long been a process used to showcase identity or ownership, like a brand on livestock. Originally, branding centered on differentiating and trademarking products and services (Blackett, 1998). The brand icon or image was created to signify the family or group of people who owned the products or provided the services. The icon or image was passed down from generation to generation (Khan & Mufti, 2007).

Much like the idea of a brand to represent a familial identity over time, a personal brand also represents one’s identity built over time based on certain accomplishments and one’s reputation. The fundamental assumption of personal brand is that each individual has their own distinct personal brand (Peters, 1997). Much the same as product or service branding, personal

branding requires pinpointing brand identity and positioning it in the market while considering the characteristics and needs of the target audience (Kaputa, 2005).

Cheney and Carroll (1997) further illustrate how the commodification of human beings as objects for monetary and capitalistic endeavors and gains existed prior to the digital infiltration of society. Understanding that the notion of personal brand value existed prior to the digital age is critical so as not to blame the influx of technology for the development in personal brand awareness and management for persons looking to measure and quantify their individual value.

Cheney and Carroll (1997) categorize the ways in which individual “real humans” (p. 593) have become objectified and labeled with monetary value similar to retail-like brands of products and services. Cheney and Carroll predicted the future of how humans would increasingly be made to quantify their value in terms of money. It is important to note that the terminology objectification is not in reference to actual sale of human people or violation of their bodies, but rather in an effort to describe the commodification of the human existence. Cheney and Carroll established five categories to depict the ways in which individuals were used as the “person as an object” (p. 593). The five categories are 1.) organizational operations, 2.) labor and employment, 3.) marketing and customer service, 4.) corporate governance and 5.) investor relations, and competition and market globalization. The authors proclaim that these five categories illustrate the ways in which human beings are not seen as people in the workplace, but rather as tools for monetary gain similar to products. In short, Cheney and Carroll support the perception of human resource management as the perpetrator for the growing evidence in human commodification and objectification in the workplace (1997).

Personal brand is, as previously mentioned, an area that was long used in self-help literature to better understand marketability on the job market. Marketing scholars assert that two

key concepts of product branding transfer to personal branding: differentiation and parity (Keller et al., 2002). In marketing and advertising differentiation refers to the way in which an individual product or service stands out to the target audience. For personal branding, differentiation comes when an individual is able to identify and highlight marketable characteristics of their brand to the target audience (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012). Parity, in product and service marketing, is the notion that ideas and values match the market or target audience ideas and values. For personal branding, parity suggests an alignment of target audience values and personal brand characteristics (Keller et al., 2002; Khedher, 2014) Often, personal brand self-help literature was written in a similar format as a feel-good television show that gave the audience a false sense of hope. However, the notion of personal brand is becoming exceedingly applicable for famous athletes, politicians, and Hollywood stars who exist in an inescapable realm of digital information. Similar to how a product or service must be positioned in the market through communication channels, personal brand positioning through communication channels like social media is critical to a successful personal brand (Parmentier et al., 2013).

The concept of personal brand has been less frequently used to understand the individuals who are not professional athletes or movie stars. The average Joes and Janes and anyone in between seem to be forgotten in the race of personal branding until they become slightly recognizable or are attempting to develop recognizability in one of the highly applicable areas like professional athletics or Hollywood. Labrecque and colleague's (2011) concluded that "people self-brand for many social reasons including dating, establishing friendships or simply for self-expression" (p. 39). With the presence of the inescapable digital information vortex, it is peculiar that more individuals are not concerned with defining their personal brand. Some individuals that do come to mind as potential interest groups for better understanding their

personal brand are student-athletes who may be noteworthy and recognizable within a certain geographic area and young professionals on the job market who aspire to be seen as an ideal candidate for a particular position.

Personal brand is the terminology used to describe an individual's value. Value in this instance can be described as attributes earned by an individual to qualify them for a particular position or role (Grant, 2008). These attributes might include education, prior experience or even their personality (Grant, 2008). The concept of personal brand is an understudied area that generally falls between identity formation and performance and product or service brands (Wheeler, 2013). To define and explain a personal brand, individuals are often used to relying on self-help style literature to understand the concept. These texts offer vague and incomplete descriptions of the concept of personal brand as they are not objectively researched prior to publication. Wheeler (2013) helps articulate the dimensions of what personal brand intends to do on an academic level by explaining how personal brand begs the questions of; who are you? Who needs to know? How will they find out? And [when they do] why should they care?"

A fundamental example of personal brand in action would be the hiring process for a new job. The same types of questions mimic those often used in interview processes. One type of hiring process is that of established celebrities as in casting calls. Another is the hiring process of academic faculty where individuals are expected to have met certain field specific numbers of publications or teaching hours depending upon the job for which they are applying. Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney (2005) examined how the procedures of communication and employment have changed and how personal branding has become an "extreme" (p. 308) response strategy to the aforementioned changes in how hiring processes were communicated. The authors explain

that this human objectification has become the norm due in part to the corporate culture in the United States (2005).

High school student athletes who aspire to be collegiate student athletes know well the amount of hard work and dedication they must put into their sport and academic performance to be successful based upon observations of other before them. This understanding comes from the long-standing public rules sanctioned by the NCAA (“Recruiting,” 2019). From the point that a student decides that they would like to attend college as a student-athlete, hypothetically and ideally, they understand they must begin to build a portfolio of information that illustrates their worthiness of receiving an acceptance letter to the university as well as a letter of intent to play their desired sport at a desired college or university. For example, some institutions require different academic standards for admission than others. Students who wish to attend some of these more prestigious academic institutions to continue their athletic and academic career need to make the concerted effort to improve their academic portfolio while also performing on the sports field. Furthermore, the stakes ideally are raised if the student expects some sort of monetary compensation in terms of scholarship to play sport.

To define the ideal internalization of what kinds of skills, accomplishments, and accolades would need to be kept in the portfolio, Aaker’s (1991) definition of brand equity outlines the list. Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as, “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers” (p. 14). In this instance, the brand, name, and symbol would be likened to an individual’s likeness, name, and image as discussed in the NCAA decision to pay student athletes beyond their scholarship agreements (Almasy et al., 2019). While Aaker’s brand equity definition is clearly for intangible items and services, the

applicability to high school student athletes is not as big of a stretch as it may seem. Aaker's brand equity model includes brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets (1991). Brand loyalty is defined as the consumer drive to repeat brand purchases (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness is defined as the general recognizability of the brand by the consumer (Aaker, 1991, p. 56). Brand associations are defined as the other products, services, images, or value that a consumer would associate with the brand (Aaker, 1991, p. 99). Other proprietary brand assets are defined as the holdings of the brand that delineate capital or value of the organization as whole (Aaker, 1991, p. 107).

Perceived quality, is arguably the most important element of brand equity for the aspiring collegiate student athletes as it provides actual terms that describe what quality means. Three that are applicable for both brands and personal brands would be the idea of performance, reliability, and responsiveness. For brands, these terms mean the performance, reliability, and responsiveness of a product or service. For aspiring collegiate student athletes, performance could be quantified as their statistics in their sport throughout high school as kept in public record through their school's athletic association. The students' reliability may be measured with their GPAs or their attendance to both school and sports practice. The students' responsiveness may be measured by their rapport with their coaches and teachers.

Self-Presentation as Personal Brand

As stated previously, the conceptualization of personal brand first occurred in business and self-help literature (Ries and Trout, 1980; Carnegie, 1982; Peters, 1997). The self-help genre, which focused on management communication, traces back to Dale Carnegie's (1982) "How to Win Friends and Influence People." Prior to Carnegie's (1982) book, Ries and Trout (1980) introduced the idea of individual branding in their text, "Positioning: The Battle for your

Mind.” Further, Kotler and Levy (1969) suggested that people could be marketed similarly to how products are marketed claiming: “Personal marketing is an endemic human activity, from the employee trying to impress his boss to the statesman trying to win the support of the public” (p.12).

However, some argue that the idea of personal branding was incidentally presented in Erving Goffman’s (1959) book, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.” In the text, Goffman perceives individual people as actors engaging in performances in various settings to different audiences. Goffman (1959) asserts that each individual is acting as if on stage and performing the character that will produce the most favorable impression from the audience. Self-presentation is described as a tool for delivering information to others. Individual persons tend to express or portray different identities depending upon their circumstances, allowing them to construct particular perceptions for the public’s benefit (Goffman, 1959). Goffman’s (1959) self-presentation theory has been commonly used to study the ways in which individuals present themselves on their social media (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016; Marshall, 2010). Personal websites and social media platforms have become important channels for people to communicate and express or present themselves to others. Many work to favorably present themselves to their audience, or friends and followers, emphasizing specific features of their identities they anticipate will please their audience and meet expectations (Park et al., 2020). The practice of curating one’s online self-presentation links back to Goffman’s (1959) observation of social interaction as dramaturgical performance (Park et al., 2020).

Goffman (1959) associated the methods of self-presentation with common theatrical terms of front stage and backstage as two types of “performance” (p.49) that individuals execute. Individuals who concern themselves with the perceptions of others and filter their words and

actions to meet the perceived expectations of the audience are enacting front stage performances (Goffman, 1959). Backstage performers are those who do not have an audience become more passive in their actions and behaviors. These individuals become more natural and honest in their actions, behaviors, and sharing of opinions (Goffman, 1959). This dichotomy illustrates why individuals are enacting different performances depending upon their perceived audience. Furthermore, Blasius explains that such internal scrutiny of self can prevent a need for “self-decipherment to others” (p. 199). Blasius explains that the individual self, upon personal criticism, exists as an object that should be managed only by the individual and not by the social constructions around them (1993).

Self-presentation has become favorable amidst sports management researchers as athletes are increasingly using social media (Park et al., 2020). One of the more popular platforms for athletes is Twitter where athletes use the site as a stage to present both their front and backstage identities (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; 2014). Previous research illustrated how athletes enacting front stage performances employed sport-themed profile pictures to curate favorable impressions about their athletic abilities to build their personal brand to the public and their fans (Hull, 2014; Lebel & Danylchuk, 2014; Li et al., 2017). Previous research also illustrated that athletes engage in backstage performance by posting instances and experiences of their private lives along with their personal ideas and opinions which would not normally be shared by traditional media outlets (Geurin-Eagleman & Bunch, 2016; Hambrick et al., 2010; Hull, 2014; Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012). These types of backstage performances being shared with fans and the public help athletes build and differentiate their personal brand from other athletes. For the purposes of this dissertation, Goffman’s illustration of self-presentation and Peters’ personal brand definition will be utilized to support the overall argument.

The terminology for personal brand was popularized by Tom Peters in his (1997) book, “The Brand Called You.” Peters (1997) likened personal branding to running a business saying, “We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You” (p. 26). Today, researchers recognize that brands can be human and have been studied in multiple fields such as celebrity brand (Lair et al., 2005 ; Thomson, 2006), athlete brand (Arai et al., 2013; Sanderson, 2011; Kunkel et al., 2015; 2020), CEO brands (Bendisch et al., 2013), political leaders and candidates (Hughes, 2007; Omojola, 2008), scholars on the academic job market (Close et al., 2010), as well as other professions and occupations more generally (Shepherd, 2005; Lair et al., 2005; Arruda and Dixson, 2007; Nessman, 2008; Parmentier et al., 2012). Existing literature has concentrated on athletes’ self-presentation in the professional context (Green, 2016; Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; Kunkel, 2016), elite athletes (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2017; Kunkel, 2016), and female athletes (Coche, 2014; Lebel & Danylchuck, 2014; Shreffler et al., 2016). An athlete’s use of social media in terms of Goffman’s (1959) two types of performances becomes a critical piece of how athletes develop their professional brands (Shreffler et al., 2016). Therefore, self-presentation theory should act as a relevant lens when exploring how student-athletes present themselves online and in person.

Arai et al. (2014) introduced the term “athlete brand” defining it as “a public persona of an individual athlete who has established their own symbolic meaning and value using their name, face or other brand elements” (p. 98). Originally, this definition served to describe professional athletes. As the significance of the idea of athlete brand has developed, so has the need to manage forms of self-presentation like social media (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2014) for student or amateur athletes. In a recent study, student-athletes were found to enact curatorial type

behaviors via their various social media functions to project their athlete identities in tandem with their authentic personalities (Park et al., 2020). Through social media, these athletes used imagery and text to illustrate the intentional appearance and enactment of the role that they perceived they should portray. Thus, exhibiting core components of Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory of front stage and backstage performances.

The central premise of personal branding is that everyone has a personal brand (Peters, 1997); however, most are unaware that they have a brand much less are they strategically, consistently and effectively managing their brand (Ramparsad, 2009). Currently, much of the information surrounding personal brand online is teeming with advertisements soliciting individuals to develop their personal brand through an online tool for a fee. Brandyourself.com and Influencermarketinghub.com offer courses on how to manage your personal brand as well as live chat consultation (Brandyourself.com, 2020; Influencermarketinghub.com). Websites like Forbes.com publish articles with titles such as: "10 Golden Rules of Personal Branding" (Chan, 2018) or "Personal Branding: Developing Your Brand to Support Your Career" (Michail, 2020) which take readers through the general principles of personal brand in a list or bullet point delivery system without getting specific with instructions or information. Another example comes from Harvard Business Review's website publish articles with titles like "Reinventing your Personal Brand" (Clark, 2011) or "Strategic Personal Branding - And How it Pays Off" (Rangarajan, et al., 2017) both requiring a fee to access the full article. A major promotion proposition for sites and articles is the fear that they instill in individuals if they do not manage their own brand (Kaputa, 2003). The webpages and articles like those mentioned above present as an intimidation to people (Kaputa, 2003). Kaputa (2003) writes, "If you don't brand yourself,

someone else will. You're giving the power to other people to brand you if you don't do it yourself' (p.11).

Self-Presentation on Social Media

As social media has become ever-present, the idea of personal branding has evolved as well. With the rise and takeover of social sites in a digital age, personal branding becomes a critical marketing task for average people (Shepherd, 2005). The dynamic and everchanging nature of social media and social networking sites has focused the notion of personal brand away from professional use to a more social function in the digital age (Shepherd, 2005). Building and managing one's personal brand online is progressively more important each day with the constant evolution of MySpace, Facebook, Youtube, Google, Twitter, Blogs, Instagram, Snap Chat, Tik Tok, LinkedIn, and so many more which have made it nearly impossible for an individual to not avoid having some sort of personal brand whether they planned to or not (Vasalou and Joinson, 2009; Marwick and Boyd, 2010; Way, 2011; Labrecque et al., 2011; David et al, 2018; Park et al., 2020). Amidst the development and social acceptance of social media a new idea concerning personal branding emerged as online personal branding (Belk, 2013). An individual, even those not formally educated in marketing, may engage in self-marketing not realizing they are doing so. Individual style and social interaction online can subconsciously initiate marketing of self and creation of personal brand platforms for communicating and creativity (Way, 2011).

Because social media has such a broad and efficient reach (Edmiston, 2014) the platforms serve as an effective tool to build a public image or perception (Marshall, 2010). The popularity of social media as a tool to reach vast audiences does not come without its own warnings, however. Those who can be categorized as digital natives have been cautioned to build a

professional online presence. College students engage in personal brand performance and curation on their social media platforms as they transition between school and career (Edmiston, 2014, 2016; Hood et al., 2014; Johnson, 2017).

One example suggests that college-aged students arrange their social media profiles and profile images bearing in mind that those in charge of hiring decisions will be inspecting them for incomplete or unprofessional content (Hood et al., 2014). While these suggestions are helpful, research suggests that student-athletes are not formally trained to organize their social media or their online personal brand (Park et al., 2020).

A number of articles have scrutinized elite and professional athletes' personal branding efforts online and offline and found that they were explicitly trying to present themselves in a certain way and curate their personal brands (Agyemang & Williams, 2016; Coche, 2014; Davies & Mudrick, 2017; Geurin, 2017; Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016; Green, 2016; Hodge & Walker, 2015). Professional athletes primarily use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to perform their identities and develop their personal brand (Green, 2016). The athletes felt that it was important to engage with their audience and understood that each platform had unique features to connect with various audiences more effectively, however few reported incorporating a strategic plan or design to their self-presentation (Green, 2016). In a study of elite female athletes, Geurin (2017) found that the primary use for social media was engaging with fans and sharing their personal stories. Geurin found that the elite female athletes cared about the sincerity of their posts, but again, no strategy was utilized to explicitly target and engage with followers. Another study of professional golfers found that they acknowledged the importance of curating and presenting their personal brand, but saw too many challenges like lack of knowledge, time and support, to create an effective personal brand (Hodge & Walker, 2015). The three

aforementioned studies illustrate a deficiency in athlete knowledge of online personal branding tools and strategies. This lack of knowledge of elite and professional athletes lends itself to suggest that student-athletes are also lacking this particular knowledge.

Student-Athlete Identity Development

While research often suggests that athletics and exercise can serve as a stress reducer (Hudd et al., 2000; Kimball & Freysinger, 2003; Kudlacek, 1997) other research asserts that participation in collegiate athletics adds stressors that traditional college students do not encounter or experience (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003; Papanikolaou et al., 2003). For instance, student-athletes bear the burden of losing their elite status they had in their high school sports arena, potential injuries, conflict with coaches and teammates, time management, for incoming students, they also must adjust to a different academic rigor than before among various other issues (Humphrey et al., 2000; Papanikolaou et al., 2003). Due to the aforementioned stressors, student-athletes likely have less time for academic organization and career planning (Adler & Adler, 1987; Bell, 2009; Broughton & Neyer, 2001).

Student-athletes represent a unique population on today's college campuses as their challenges are different than non-athlete peers (Gayles, 2009). Going to college presents its own set of challenges for traditional students as they work to develop their identity and self-presentation (Kayanan, 2017). On average, student-athletes are spending over twenty hours per week in practice or participating in related sports activities like games and tournaments (Watt and Moore, 2001; Wolverton, 2008). Along with the time commitment, student-athletes are potentially enduring and experiencing bodily fatigue and injury (Watt and Moore, 2001; Wolverton, 2008).

Identity is who one sees themselves as. Identity is a culmination of their values, beliefs and experiences. “Identity development [is] a largely unconscious process and holds identity to be influenced by the outside world, such that identity bridges one’s inner life and social roles” (Erikson, 1963, p. 148). In conducting research centered on student-athletes and their identity, the ideas of the inner self and social role are recurrent.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits that the groups to which individuals feel that they to belong is integral to one’s self-esteem and sense of belonging in the world (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The theory explains the importance of the belonging saying, “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). In essence, the feeling or sense of belonging to the group is just as important as the membership in the group itself.

The process of social identity formation starts with the placing ourselves into a category to better understand our fit in society (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Many studies have used Social Identity Theory to explain the devotion to team sports that many athletes feel (Hawley, Hosch, & Bovaird, 2014; Wells & Aicher, 2013; Beamon, 2012; Adler & Adler, 1991). SIT is defined as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). An individual’s identity is distinguished by the social dynamics in which they participate. Individuals who identify more closely within a particular social group develop feelings of identity and belonging with said group. These feelings of belonging incite positive reverence and esteem from their membership in the group.

A key tenet of SIT is that society is made up of social groups like race and religion. The theory suggests that the existing memberships in the social groups have an influence on the individuals' behavior in new group settings. In this sense, identity is “multifaceted with individuals having as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons with whom they interact and about whom they care” (Scanlon, Rowling, & Weber, 2007, p. 228). Seeing as it is possible to identify with more than one social group at any given time according to SIT, and individual can also enact multiple social identities at any given time (Deaux, 1996; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2014). College student-athletes work as an example of developing and sustaining a dueling social identity (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2014). “Student-athletes are involved in two primary and dominant social contexts: they are concurrently students and athletes. They are expected to have both student and athlete identities simultaneously (Sturm, Feltz, & Gilson, 2011)” (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2014).

A collection of studies investigating the intricacies of student-athlete life focused on the associations between athletic interests and responsibilities and academic interests and responsibilities. Several qualitative studies have been conducted to observe and explore the relationships between the two dueling identities (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1991; Meyer, 1990; Miller & Kerr 2002) finding that the two sets of responsibilities and interests were more often than not described as competitive.

When studying student-athlete identity it is critical to note that less than one percent of college athletes will sign a professional contract where the average career length is 2.66 years (Sports Illustrated NFL, 2018). Beamon (2012) asserts that athletes place their athletic identity at the forefront. Student-athletes have a strong sense of self as an athlete that has been reinforced for the duration of their career through praise and criticism of those around them (Beamon,

2012). Much of the student-athlete experience is put on display for public consumption. The commendations and criticisms they receive draw them closer to their athletic identity and where they discover their sense of self (Beamon, 2012).

One of the topics that is often overlooked and simultaneously the most criticized is the undergraduate experience of student-athletes (Gayles, 2009). College student learning and personal development are the preferred and anticipated outcomes of an undergraduate education (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Chickering & Gamson, 1987). The NCAA posts graduation rates that consistently show how student-athletes complete degrees at a higher rate than traditional students, however, when the numbers are broken down into sport, gender, and race the narrative of the data changes (Gayles, 2009). While student-athletes have been graduating in record numbers (Hosick, 2014) their career readiness skills are inferior to their non-athlete peers (Hook, 2012; Linnemeyer & Brown, 2010; Murphy et al., 1996). Research suggests that the skills learned in sport involvement can be applied to the workplace with favorable outcomes (Bolles, 2014; Mayocchi & Hanrahan, 2000).

Student-athletes have the distinct task of managing two roles during their time in college. To maintain eligibility, student-athletes must manage their grades and their relationships with peers and faculty. To earn clock or playing time, the student-athletes must exert enough effort to hone their skillsets and to train their bodies to perform and meet expectations of coaches and team members (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2016). Student-athletes formulate their identity within two primary social contexts, athletics and academics. Student-athletes are expected to perform these identities simultaneously (Sturm et al., 2011). Multiple scholars have explained the rigor that results from the continually competing identities of student-athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991; Meyer, 1990; Miller & Kerr, 2002). Scholars have also found that Division I athletes are more

likely to prioritize their sport and corresponding responsibilities like practice and team meetings over their academic responsibilities (Sturm et al., 2011). The ideas supporting student-athlete development must be reinforced by trusted sources. Those sources, according to Ragins and Cotton (1999) come from natural and planned mentors who understand the student-athlete experience.

Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student-Development

Chickering's Theory of Identity Development posits a process for students to develop their identity in higher education. 1. Developing competence, 2. Managing emotions, 3. Moving through autonomy toward interdependence, 4. Developing mature interpersonal relationships, 5. Establishing identity 6. Developing purpose 7. Developing integrity. The "vectors," as Chickering calls, them are meant to describe and explain the steps that students take and the actions and tasks that they encounter dealing with complex cognitive processes like feeling, believing, understanding, thinking, and the intricacies of relating to and with others.

Developing competence outlines the ways in which individuals develop their knowledge and hone existing or newly learned skills. The skills can be intellectual skills like reading, writing, and arithmetic, or they can be interpersonal skills such as holding a conversation or conducting a meeting. Chickering (1969) and later he and Reisser (1993) suggest that there are three kinds of competence that develop during the college experience: 1. Intellectual competence or the ability to think critically and problem solve be it in assignments or life situations, 2. Interpersonal competence or the abilities to listen to, understand and relate with other people be it peers or professors, 3. Physical and manual skills or the skills taught or refined in classes and extracurricular activities.

Managing emotions explains the process through which students learn to understand their emotions, why they may be experiencing them, and how to effectively cope with the array of emotions they may encounter. The central point of this vector is understanding the experience of emotion and developing healthy coping mechanisms to manage the emotions.

Moving through autonomy toward interdependence is an articulation of how students must move away from their need for affirmation and constant instruction to self-guided behaviors and action and independent critical thinking. Essentially, this vector is addressing the need for students to be able to be self-sufficient in their own success and the process of how they get to the point of autonomous action and reasoning.

Developing mature interpersonal relationships means learning the ability to appreciate the experiences of another and the opinions and beliefs that may be a result of those experiences. Further, it is the ability to establish closeness with others. This vector stresses the ability to share and listen with others.

Establishing identity is the process of becoming comfortable and confident with one's self. The authors list concepts like comfort with outward appearance, body, gender identity, sexual orientation, culture, lifestyle, self-responsibility and acceptance of feedback or criticism and ways in which the vector can be achieved.

Developing purpose is the act of defining and enacting intentionality on a regular basis. Once an individual has a set of goals and knows how to achieve them, they can act and behave in intentional ways to achieve that purpose. The authors categorize the goals as vocational goals, personal interest goals (like physical fitness, spirituality, or skills and talent development), and familial or interpersonal commitments.

Developing integrity is the process in which one establishes their values and beliefs. This vector is reliant upon the ordering of its elements of humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence. The authors explain that these occur in chronological order to fully develop an individual's integrity. Humanizing values is the act of understanding a more relative and less individualistic view of their space. Personalizing values is the act of determining their individual role within the space. Developing congruence is enacting the role within their space. This vector asserts that a fully developed identity will be able to allow the individual to approach situations with an open mind to consider their own assumptions and their impact on others.

Mentoring College Student-Athletes

The origins of the term mentor are deliberated among scholars. Some link mentorship to the novel *The Odyssey*, others to the middle ages, and some to French author, Francois Fenelon (Roberts, 1999; McKimm et al., 2007). A more recent and relevant definition of mentorship comes from Roche (1979) explaining *mentor* as an individual who plays a vital role in another's development. Typically, a mentor relationship involves two people, one experienced and one inexperienced. The relationship is often maintained until the mentee has reached a level of maturity where the mentor is no longer needed (Collin, 1979; Weaver & Chelladurai, 2002). Fruitful mentoring happens when a more experienced person provides support and guidance to an individual through acting as a role model, tutoring, guiding or acting as a companion (Bolton, 1980; Weaver & Chelladurai, 2002). A mentor-mentee relationship is generally long term and encompasses a notable emotional commitment from both parties (Shapiro et al., 1978; Weaver & Chelladurai, 2002). A prosperous mentor relationship results in the mentee achieving goals, a positive influence on the mentee's career success, and/or support during life obstacles (Weaver & Chelladurai, 2002).

Division I athletics lends itself to idolization of the athletic identity of student-athletes making it easy for student-athletes to be more inclined to enacting their athletic identities (Park et al., 2020). The inclination to gravitate towards their athletic identities is a product of wanting to be what they perceive society to value (Josselson, 1996). LaVar (2014) emphasizes that student-athletes need to feel empowered to cultivate their identity outside of athletics while in college. Athletics departments have a staff full of people who are tasked with helping student-athletes succeed in their courses and stay eligible to play their respective sport. The NCAA itself encourages athletics departments to participate in programs like its “Challenging Athletes Minds for Personal Success or (CHAMPS)” program. For CHAMPS, one of the critical intended outcomes is to reduce transitional stress for student-athletes between sport and career (NCAA, n.d.)

Baldwin (2018) asserts that administrators within athletics departments control the environment of academic and athletic success for student-athletes. Oftentimes, athletics programs use their universities’ mission statement and student code of conduct to guide their policies and procedures (Kuh et al., 2001). Mentors working with student-athletes then have a foundation for how and why they guide student-athletes the way that they do.

One example of a mentor-mentee relationship in collegiate athletics is a student-athlete and their athletic department academic advisor. Student-athletes most often seek guidance from trusted members of their in-group being those who understand their identity (Sanderson, 2011). A commonly recommended method of student-athlete mentorship is called constellation mentoring or mentorship from multiple sources (Kelly & Dixon, 2014) such as coaches, academic advisors, and faculty. Student-athletes inherently feel more connected to those that they perceive to understand, empathize, or share their experiences (Watson, 2015). Said mentors

are found within the athletic department due to the plethora of regulations that student-athletes and athletic department employees are expected to abide by.

Athletics departments and student-athletes are continuously dealing with the burden of compliance standards instituted by the NCAA (Sanderson, 2011). Amidst the efforts to understand the various policies and procedures for sports eligibility, academic requirements, and NCAA compliance standards, student-athletes often seek help from their advisors. Sanderson et al. (2015) found that student-athletes are openly interested in more training on the above policies and procedures, especially those policies focusing on or having to do with self-presentation and social media. Because coaches, athletic directors, compliance officers, and advisors are not traditionally trained as educators it is easy for the learning opportunities to get lost in the efforts to provide information and enforce the policies and procedures (Smith & Watkins, 2017). Seeing as student-athletes are drawn to individuals within athletics departments for guidance, it is important to understand the interworking's of the relationships between student-athletes and their mentors in order to more clearly understand the phenomenon of student-athlete personal brand building and management.

Study Rationale

The original compelling influence for this study was the discussion at the California legislature (McCullogh, 2020) regarding approval for collegiate student-athletes to profit from the use of their name, image, and likeness. The conversations focused on the implementation of the NIL focus on the ability to profit rather than discussing the skills and tools needed to facilitate profit for the student-athletes, as well as practices to protect student-athletes from potential risks or negative outcomes. Impression management is a probable area of focus to add to the conversation in order to enable student-athletes and athletics departments to understand the

aforementioned skills, tools, and practices that will be necessary to facilitate constructive and a reduced risk implementation processes for the NIL.

The current information on student-athlete personal brand management is inconsistent and subjective based on a number of different factors. With the continuing enforcement of rules regarding player eligibility and maintenance of amateur status (NCAA, n.d.), not much room is left for student-athletes to understand how to successfully manage their personal brand or who to look towards for guidance to learn the necessary skills (Ishaq & Bass, 2019).

Student-athletes are accessible to fans and critics alike due to social media. The social expectation for social engagement online (Cabodi, 2019) further expands their bandwidth of responsibilities. When treated as celebrities or public figures, individuals gravitate towards behavior exhibiting Goffman's (1959) description of front stage and backstage performance in self-presentation (Park et al., 2020). Noting that student-athletes seek guidance from athletics department staff in understanding the rules and regulations of their role as a student-athlete (Sanderson, 2011), it is important to generate more understanding of how student-athletes and mentors facilitate their relationship. By understanding how student-athletes and mentors work together, recommendations for preparedness can be developed to create a better picture of how to best direct athletics department staff and student-athletes alike in the brand building and management processes. Upon further review, literature lacks specific information about how student-athletes are trained and guided to build and manage their personal brand as well as who they are trained by to learn the necessary skills to develop and manage their personal brand. This study examined the relationship between student-athletes and mentors within their athletics departments to understand the phenomenon that is student-athlete personal brand.

Previous research has examined professional athlete brand, image, and reputation (Brown, Billings, & Devlin, 2016; Brown et al., 2015; Benoit & Hanzcor, 1994), but minimal research is published on student-athlete brand, image, and reputation; likely due to the current privacy and amateurism rules within the NCAA. Several studies have been conducted about student-athlete development and their processes moving through college (Navarro & Malvaso, 2015; Vermillion, 2014; Henry, 2019).

Little research has been completed regarding the idea that student-athletes seek assistance in building, developing, or managing their reputation from mentors. However, this study sought to bridge the gap of understanding the supplementary role of student-athlete mentors beyond academic and athletic success to their career and brand accomplishments. As social media and the notion of constant surveillance (both in-person and online) continue to grow in accessibility and usership, it is important for athletics staff to understand how these relationships impact student-athlete personal brand development in the ever-changing social arena, especially in light of recent and growing approval for Name, Image, and Likeness legislation in many states. In knowing and understanding the different ways in which personal brand management development and management works, mentors can be accessible resources for their student-athletes who need to navigate these types of processes. To understand how the relationships exist at this time and what may be longed for amidst the transition to NIL, the following research questions for student-athletes were specified:

1. Do student-athletes, both current and former, identify more closely with the student identity or the athlete identity?
2. Do student-athletes perceive that they have a personal brand?

- a. If so, do student-athletes have a positive or negative perception of their personal brand?
3. Do current or former student-athletes who perceive themselves as having a brand feel able to manage their own brand?
4. Do current or former student-athletes who perceive themselves as having a brand feel able to identify risks associated with personal brand management?
5. How do Division I student-athletes understand their own impact on their personal branding process?

To gain an understanding of the perspectives of mentors on student-athletes and their personal brand and management knowledge and abilities, the following research questions were specified:

1. How do Division I collegiate athletics mentors perceive their job as a role in the brand development of student-athletes in their current position?
2. How do Division I mentors interpret the student-athlete awareness of their brand?
3. How do Division I student-athlete mentors understand their impact on the personal branding process of student-athletes?
4. How do Division I mentors understand their student-athletes' and their perceived ability to manage said brand?

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This project employed a qualitative phenomenological approach, which was appropriate for several reasons. Qualitative research is chronicled through the curiosities of humankind over time and has become a formal discipline through the work of social scientists (Bogdan & Bilkin, 1982; Eco, 1994; Stake, 1978). Qualitative research involves a naturalistic, interpretive approach to the world by studying things in their natural settings while endeavoring to make sense of and decode phenomena in terms of the meanings that individuals bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Pradade (2005) explains that the “qualitative turn that has overtaken the social sciences in the last twenty-five years has yielded both a rich body of research using non-statistical methods and substantive amount of methodological advice on how to engage in qualitative inquiry” (p. 3). A qualitative approach was applicable to this study because it promoted a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of student-athletes and their mentors and their own personal perceptions of how they navigate and manage personal branding.

This dissertation investigated the roles that mentors play for student-athletes in the personal brand building, development, and management processes by conducting semi-structured interviews (Appendix D). Further, this project explored the ways in which personal brands were curated and managed by current or former student-athletes in [The ABC Conference] through semi-structured interviews (Appendix E).

Phenomenological Approach

The goal of the phenomenological approach for this dissertation was to examine the understanding of terminology for impression management, student-development theory, as well as the theory of self-presentation in relation to Division I student-athletes and their mentors through their processes of personal branding. This study used an interpretive strategy for understanding and explaining

human (both student-athlete and mentor) behaviors and experiences (Fossey et al., 2002). By employing a phenomenological design to collect data, participants were provided the space and opportunity to elaborate on their ideas, opinions, and experience that they thought most relevant to the research about student-athlete personal brand building and management.

Qualitative Research Approach

The purpose of this study was to understand how Division I student-athlete mentors impact the personal branding process of student-athletes as well as the perceptions of their self-brand and their perceived ability to manage said brand that current and former student-athletes may possess. This chapter describes the research approach and the design used to fulfill the objective of this study.

In total, there were 19 participants. Of the 19 participants, 12 identified as mentors and seven identified as a current or former student-athlete. Additionally, nine of the 12 mentors were former student-athletes themselves. Mentors could be broken down into the following categories: two faculty mentors, two compliance mentors, two communication mentors, two coaches, and one academic mentor. The participant pool consisted of 11 males and eight females. The racial background as reported by each participant was nine Black, eight White, and two Hispanic. Nine of the twelve member institutions in The ABC Conference were represented by at least one participant in the interviews. A qualitative research approach is particularly defensible when the nature of the research questions require exploration (Stake, 1995). The initial sources of information were collegiate mentors identified and purposively sampled based upon their years of experience and job title. The second source of information was current and former student-athletes whose contact comes from a personal recommendation of a participating mentor. A qualitative research question often begins with how or why, so that the researcher or researchers can gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being studied in the real-life context (Patton, 2002; Seidman; 1998; Yin, 2003; Swanborn, 2010).

Participants

The population for this study were mentors and student-athletes from the member institutions of [The ABC Conference]. Snowball sampling was employed to identify and recruit participants for semi-structured interviews. Next, phenomenological analysis of the interviews was conducted. Specifically, the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyze the data for constructs (temporary) and themes centered on student-athlete personal branding. To identify possible participants in this study, mentors within the conference were recruited via email for interviews based upon their job title and description corresponding with student-athlete development and/or brand management or communication as described on their department's website. Examples of job titles that were contacted include (a) Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Development, (b) Director of Athletics Communication, and (c) Sports Information Director. Participants were contacted via e-mail (Appendix B) requesting their participation as well as their willingness to suggest potential current and former student-athlete contacts. Those who agreed to participate signed letters of support committing to an interview and to sharing contact information of current and former student-athletes in the spring of 2021 (Appendix C) The inclusion criteria for all mentor interviewees was that they were (a) 18 years of age or older, (b) able to speak, read, and understand English, and (c) that they were employed by the Division I Conference for three or more years at the time of the interview.

In total, there were 19 participants. 10 identified as mentors and nine identified as a current or former student-athletes. Additionally, seven of the 10 mentors were former student-athletes themselves. Mentors could be broken down into the following categories: two faculty mentors, two compliance mentors, three communication mentors, two coaches, and one academic mentor. The participant pool consisted of 11 males and eight females. The racial background as reported by each participant was nine Black, eight White, and two Hispanic.

Student-athletes were contacted using purposive snowball sampling, asking mentors to share email contact information for three to four current or former student-athletes. Upon receipt of the contact information, current and former student-athletes were contacted via email. The current and former

student-athletes were asked about their interest in participating in the study (Appendix C). If the contact agreed, they were sent a letter of support to sign and send back as a commitment to a later interview (Appendix G).

The inclusion criteria for all current and former student-athlete interviewees was that they were (a) 18 years of age or older, (b) able to speak, read, and understand English, and (c) a Division I Conference student-athlete between 2010 and the time of the interview.

The interviews explored the experiences regarding the student-athlete brand building and reputation management process. In total, there were five mentor interviews conducted by phone call and five mentor interviews completed by video call. The interviews were conducted via video chat and over the phone. Of the nine student-athlete interviews, five were conducted via phone call, three were conducted via video call, and one was conducted via email. The participant who was only able to participate via email response provided detailed written responses to the interview questions as listed in the interview guide. Regardless, all interviews were recorded for audio so that they could be transcribed for analysis by a combination of a transcription service called Tape-A-Call and the researcher listening and transcribing interviews. If the participant did not wish to participate at any time or they were unwilling to be recorded, they were free to end the interview at will.

Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

The first source of information was sought-out mentors within the member institutions of the [The ABC Conference]. These mentors were identified based upon their job titles, job descriptions, and biographical information if available. Once the mentors were selected, the researcher sent emails to the potential participants requesting a commitment for an interview and contact information for three to four current or former student-athletes.

When the potential participants agreed to participate, both mentors and current or former student-athletes were provided the IRB approval form, consent form for participation agreement, as well as a letter of support to sign and return to the researcher. These mentors were identified based upon their job

titles, job descriptions, and biographical information if available. Once the researcher received the forms, the researcher and the participant arranged a time to meet virtually due to Covid-19. When the participant was reached by phone or video chat, with the exception of one participant who was only available via email. This participant provided detailed written responses to the interview questions as listed in the interview guide. Upon reaching the participant the first step was to review the consent form, confirm that the participant agreed to have the interview recorded, and address any questions or concerns. The participant was reminded that they were not required to do the interview, answer any of the questions, nor were they required to stay with the interview if they did not wish to do so. If the participant exclaimed that they did not want to participate or did not feel comfortable answering any questions, they were free to end the interview at any time. After student-athlete mentors were interviewed, student-athletes were contacted using purposive snowball sampling, asking mentors to share email contact information for three to four current or former student-athletes. Upon receipt of the contact information, current and former student-athletes were contacted via email. The current and former student-athletes were asked about their interest in participating in the study (Appendix C). If the contact agreed, they were sent a letter of support to sign and send back as a commitment to a later interview (Appendix G). The inclusion criteria for all current and former student-athlete interviewees was that they were (a) 18 years of age or older, (b) able to speak, read, and understand English, and (c) a Division I Conference student-athlete between 2010 and the time of the interview.

Semi-structured interviews were selected to collect data from participants. This style of interview gave the participant freedom to elaborate on their responses and to answer more on their own terms (May, 1997). Interviews are the best way to investigate complex or sensitive topics as it allows the interviewer to prepare the participant before asking the more difficult questions (Kumar, 2005). The informant interviews asked about student-athlete how they developed their brand or managed their reputation. Additionally, the interviews inquired about the role mentors play in the personal branding processes. During the interview process it is important to establish a sense of rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee (Esterberg, 2002). The main goal of an interview is to understand what the participant is

thinking and understand their perspective on their lived experience (Patton, 1980). It is critical for the interviewer to engage in active listening skills and present a nonjudgmental behavior to the interviewee (Patton, 1980).

The questions (see Appendix D for mentor questions and Appendix E for student-athlete questions) began as general open-ended questions about their experiences as student-athletes. From there, the questions got more specific about the aforementioned experiences as student-athletes or in mentorship roles. Questions for mentors tended to focus on what their time with student-athletes looked like, how they perceived their role in student-athlete brand management, and if they thought student-athletes were properly equipped to manage their own brands. Questions for student-athletes focused on whether or not they felt like they had a brand, whether or not they felt like they had the tools to manage their brand, and their perceptions of risks associated with managing a brand. Ultimately, the questions sought to find information about the ways in which the student-athletes and mentors understand the personal brand and self-presentation of the student-athletes and the societal impact of those images and identities. The interviewer inquired about the perception on the recently approved NCAA legislation to pay athletes for use of their likeness or image by third-party endorsements, the desire to participate in the events centered around the social unrest in the United States, stressors associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the general pressures for student-athletes where appropriate.

Once an interview was completed, it was transcribed verbatim and de-identified either by the researcher or the Tape-A-Call phone application. Each participant received a pseudonym for themselves, any other individuals identified during their interview, as well as their member institution. Their sport and year of study was the only information without a substitute for student-athletes while position title was unchanged for mentors. . The researcher and the dissertation committee were the only individuals to have access to the document where the original names of people and places were mentioned. Upon completion of the project, the records were deleted.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were selected to collect data from participants. This style of interview gave the participant freedom to elaborate on their responses and to answer more on their own terms (May, 1997). Interviews are the best way to investigate complex or sensitive topics as it allows the interviewer to prepare the participant before asking the more difficult questions (Kumar, 2005). The informant interviews asked about student-athlete how they developed their brand or managed their reputation. Additionally, the interviews inquired about the role mentors play in the personal branding processes. During the interview process it is important to establish a sense of rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee (Esterberg, 2002). The main goal of an interview is to understand what the participant is thinking and understand their perspective on their lived experience (Patton, 1980). It is critical for the interviewer to engage in active listening skills and present a nonjudgmental behavior to the interviewee (Patton, 1980).

The questions (see Appendix D for mentor questions and Appendix E for student-athlete questions) began as general open-ended questions about their experiences as student-athletes. From there, the questions got more specific about the aforementioned experiences as student-athletes or in mentorship roles.

The mentors were interviewed first. Upon agreeing to the interviews, mentors additionally agreed to try and provide contact information for two to four current or former student-athletes that they perceived to be qualified to discuss personal brand. For the mentor interviews, the conversation began with general ice breaker questions to ease the participant into the interview and build the aforementioned sense of rapport between the interviewer and the participant. These questions included simple inquiries concerned with understanding who the participant is and what their job entails. Next, the participant was asked to describe what their time with student-athletes typically looks like. Then, the participant was asked to describe their relationship to the student-athletes they work with. Next, the participant was asked about their responsibilities regarding the mentorship of student-athletes both in their job description and outside of their job description (i.e. more personal responsibilities). Next, they were asked if they have

seen a shift in student-athlete behavior in the digital age. From there, the participant was asked about their perceptions of student-athlete personal brand, mainly whether or not they perceive student-athletes to have a personal brand. Next, the participant was asked to recall an instance where a student-athlete's personal brand was noteworthy such as an instance where the personal brand was highly recognizable for good or bad reasons. Next, the participant was asked if they feel like they have adequate tools and preparation to assist student-athletes in the development or management of their personal brand. Next, they were asked if they have had direct experience with a student-athlete's personal brand development or management. From there, the participant was asked to describe what they perceive to be the biggest factor or contributor to student-athlete personal brand development. To conclude, the participants were asked who they see their students use as role models. Lastly, they were asked what advice they would give to their student-athletes about self-presentation.

For the current and former student-athletes, the questions first focused on their experience in their sport both before and during college. Next, the questions asked about their memories of being a student-athlete in college and around campus. Then, they were asked to recall the responsibilities they had or have as a student-athlete involving their sport, their academics, and other activities. Subsequently, they were asked about the rules and regulations that they had to or have to follow. Then they were asked about their experiences having social media while in college as a student-athlete. Following that, the participants were asked if they ever participated in training on how to present themselves as a student-athlete. Next, the student-athletes were asked whether they felt they had the tools they needed to present themselves. Then, the interviewer will shift to discussing their experiences with mentorship. First, the interviewer asked the participants who they sought out most often for advice or assistance. From there, the participants were asked to explain their relationship with the individual they identified as most helpful. Following the participant's response, the participants were asked if they recall an instance when their personal brand or reputation began and how they knew. To wind down the interview, the participants were asked if they recall an instance where their or another's personal brand was noteworthy for any reason, good or bad. If they recalled an instance, they were asked to describe the instance. To conclude

the interview, the participants were asked what they wish they had known about their self-presentation and whether or not they felt like they had the appropriate resources to manage their personal brand.

The questions sought to find information about the ways in which the student-athletes and mentors understand the personal brand and self-presentation of the student-athletes and the societal impact of those images and identities. The interviewer inquired about the perception on the recently approved NCAA legislation to pay athletes for use of their likeness or image by third-party endorsements, the desire to participate in the events centered around the social unrest in the United States, stressors associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the general pressures for student-athletes where appropriate.

Initial Analyses

Upon transcription completion of the interviews, the researcher inductively analyzed the data for emerging themes engaged in a “long-preliminary soak” (Hall, 1975) of the information gathered in the research process. The data was analyzed in two parts: the mentor interviews and the current and former student-athlete interviews. To analyze the data the researcher listened to and read the interviews and transcriptions through phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). For this study, it was useful to synthesize both the textual and technical meanings found in the data from the essences of the participants' shared ideas, opinions, and experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher recognizes that in qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument and what that individual brings to the investigation from their own background and identity should be treated as bias (Maxwell, 2005). However, social scientist researchers should actively attempt to recognize their own biases before conducting research and should understand them to help eliminate as much bias from the project rather than completely ignoring them (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017).

It is important to note for the purposes of trustworthiness and auditability that the researcher was previously employed at one of the included institutions within the athletics department as a tutor and mentor for student-athletes. The researcher may have had classes with some of the former student-athlete

participants, given the size of the institution. The researcher was not an individual tutor or mentor for the selected participants. On occasion, the participants would be in the academic tutoring center at the same time and were known on a first name basis to the researcher. One of the mentors interviewed was also an employee at the same institution in the academic tutoring center at the same time as the researcher. While this mentor was not a direct supervisor of the researcher, this mentor did work closely with the researcher's direct supervisor. All three relationships were professional relationships contained within the athletics department. While it is not possible to completely omit biases, the researcher recognizes the potential issues that may arise given the common circumstances. In an effort to omit as much bias as possible, the researcher used a transcription service for all interviews through the Tape-A-Call iPhone application rather than transcribing them by hand. Further, names were left out in as much of the analysis as possible.

The researcher of the study acknowledged that her personal experiences and work background could influence her interpretation of the data. The researcher's sports fandom and experiences as a student at three Division I institutions both generated a positive view of Division I sports, and an overall positive perspective of the NCAA. The researcher is aware that her work background as a student-athlete tutor and mentor at two different Division I institutions sparked the overall interest in this project, in part because she spent time with individual athletes during tutoring and mentor sessions. This generated a deeper understanding of their daily lives and the issues that they perceive to be positive and negative. Despite the researcher's knowledge of athletics departments and experience working with student-athletes and mentors, the researcher believes that she is able to minimize bias in the study.

Next, it is important to address the trustworthiness of the sampling procedures of the study. The participants were gathered by email request and social media snowball sampling. Those who were recruited through social media were referred by friends or colleagues of eligible current and former student-athlete participants. Upon referral, the potential participant was contacted directly by the researcher to share information about the project, the consent form, and gauge participant eligibility. To minimize bias, the researcher consulted resources, faculty advisors, and committee members throughout

the entire data collection and analysis process. Further, the researcher included ample quotes from the data to illustrate the findings (Maxwell, 2005).

4. RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to use qualitative methods to understand how student-athletes are guided and mentored to develop and manage their personal brands within their respective athletics departments. The data sources for this study were student-athlete handbooks written and distributed by athletics departments, semi-structured mentor interviews, as well as semi-structured current and former student-athlete interviews. The study examined the perspectives of current and former student-athletes and their mentors about who plays what role in the brand building and development processes for student-athletes as well as the understandings of what it means to curate and possess a personal brand. From there, the study juxtaposed the perspectives of the participants with the written policy handbooks to determine consistencies and inconsistencies in the understandings. This chapter will outline the research questions that were used to analyze participant responses, discuss participant demographic information, and discuss interesting themes and unexpected findings.

Demographic information of mentor participants

As described in the literature review, the term mentor can be defined as an individual who plays a role in another's development (Roche, 1979). The mentor participant demographics are detailed in Table 1. The information was obtained through interviews. Table 1 includes each participants pseudonym, job title category, member institution identifier, gender, race, and their former student-athlete status.

As indicated in Table 1, the majority of mentor participants were White (50%, $n=5$) and male (70%, $n=7$). All participants were included in the study.

Table 1**Mentor identifying information**

Mentor Name	Title	School	Gender	Race	Athlete Status
Mentor 1	Faculty	School J	M	White	No
Mentor 2	Communication	School B	M	Hispanic	Band
Mentor 3	Coach	School E	M	White	Yes
Mentor 4	Compliance	School G	M	White	Cheer
Mentor 5	Compliance	School K	F	White	Yes
Mentor 6	Coach	School J	F	Black	Yes
Mentor 7	Academic	School J	F	Black	Yes
Mentor 8	Communication	School I	M	Black	Yes
Mentor 9	Academic	School I	M	Black	Yes
Mentor 10	Faculty	School D	M	White	No

p=10

Demographic information of student-athlete participants

The mentor participant demographics are detailed in Table 1. The information was obtained through interviews. Table 1 includes each participants pseudonym, job title category, member institution identifier, gender, race, and their former student-athlete status. As indicated in Table 2, the majority of mentor participants were Black (55%, $n=5$) and female (55%, $n=5$). All participants were included in the study.

Table 2**Student-athlete identifying information**

Student-Athlete (SA) Name	Sport	School	Gender	Race
SA 1	Former Football	School L	M	Black
SA 2	Former Football	School L	M	Black
SA 3	Former Soccer	School G	M	Hispanic
SA 4	Current Basketball	School A	F	Black
SA 5	Former Softball	School K	F	White
SA 6	Current Basketball	School I	F	White
SA 7	Former Basketball	School J	F	Black
SA 8	Former Football	School J	M	Black
SA 9	Former Softball	School K	F	White

p=9

List of themes

Within the literature and interviews, several themes emerged and converged related to mentoring and branding. In this section, the overarching themes and sub themes are defined and described. The following list of headings illustrates the categories from list of themes:

Impression management themes

Impression management was originally conceptualized to explain the conscious and subconscious process in which an individual works to influence the perceptions of others (Goffman, 1959). As anticipated, discussion of impression management was a predominant topic in both the student-athlete and mentor interviews. The themes that emerged in the discussions of impression management were: a. Authenticity, b. Identity, c. Image, d. Personal brand, e. Reputation, and f. Presentation (both of self and by another). Authenticity is defined as the quality of being real or true (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). It is the recommended tactic in the practice of self-presentation as described in the theory (Goffman, 1959). Authenticity was discussed in both mentor and student-athlete interviews as an unspoken expectation and a key component to success. In the interviews, the mentors were asked what advice they would give to their student-athletes and many of them spoke on the importance of being authentic as a student-athlete both online and in-person. Image, in relation to impression management, was defined as a representation of the external form of a person and the general impression that a person presents to the public. Image is a common term in crisis communication, specifically within Image Repair Theory by William Benoit in 1995. Brand, including personal brand, was defined as a conscious and intentional effort to create and influence public perception where personal branding involves finding one's uniqueness, building a reputation on the things you want to be known for, and then allowing oneself to be known for them (Lair et al., 2005; Peters, 2007). Reputation is defined as

the beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something and whether or the not the object had a particular habit or characteristic (Veh et al., 2019; Höflinger et al., 2018).

For the purposes of this research, presentation referred to how people attempt to present themselves to control or shape how others, or the audience, view them. Presentation involves expressing oneself and behaving in ways that create a desired impression (Goffman, 1959).

Student Development themes

As anticipated, discussion of student development was a principal topic in both the student-athlete and mentor interviews. The themes that emerged in the discussions of development were: academic development, career and life after sport, identity, leadership, development of mental health, development of person, and development of One's voice. The development themes were all drawn from Chickering's (1993) Seven Vectors of Student Development. Each theme has a corresponding vector and the theme names were established in an effort to better articulate the meanings intended with each vector.

Academic development was defined as the discussion of or relating to knowledge, intellectual aesthetic, cultural sophistication, and higher order thinking. Academic development is likened to Chickering's vector developing competence which outlines the ways in which individuals develop their knowledge and hone existing or newly learned skills (1993).

Career and life after sport development was characterized by seeking answers to the following questions; Who is an individual going to be? Where is an individual going? How will an individual get there? Many of the participants, both student-athletes and mentors, made reference to the minimal chances for a student-athlete to go pro or move on to the next level of their sport, thus expressing the need to prepare them for life after sports. This theme was likened to Chickering's (1993) vector called developing purpose which is the act of defining and

enacting intentionality on a regular basis. Much of this conversation was centered around the time management skills that student-athletes have due to their intense practice, travel, and academic schedules.

Identity was defined as the fact of being who or what a person or thing is and what characteristics help determine who or what the person or thing will be. This theme was equated to Chickering's vector called establishing identity which is the process of becoming comfortable and confident with one's self. The authors list concepts like comfort with outward appearance, body, gender identity, sexual orientation, culture, lifestyle, self-responsibility and acceptance of feedback or criticism and ways in which the vector can be achieved. Examples for the study included how individuals established their identity by things such as photographs of oneself and their signature on memorabilia. This project also evaluated social identity using Tajfel's (1978) conceptualization of the term which states "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership."

Leadership was equated to Chickering's (1993) vector called developing mature interpersonal relationship abilities. Developing mature interpersonal relationships consists of learning the ability to appreciate the experiences of another and the opinions and beliefs that may be a result of those experiences. Further, it is the ability to establish closeness with others.

Development of mental health, like Chickering's (1993) vector managing emotions or body image thoughts, was defined as the discussions on developing healthy coping strategies and habits, controlling impulses, and developing appropriate responses. Development of one's person was described as the freed from the need for reassurance. Chickering's vector titled moving through autonomy toward interdependence was the foundation for this theme. In writing, this is

often referred to as “whole person” development including organization, problem solving, and decision-making skills. Development of one’s voice was characterized as developing clarifying, and rebalancing of personal values and beliefs and being able to speak about them. This theme is related to Chickering’s (1993) vector called developing integrity.

NCAA and college sports themes

Discussion of the NCAA and college sports was a major topic in both the student-athlete and mentor interviews. The themes that emerged in the discussions of the NCAA and college sports were: Name, Image, and Likeness, NCAA rules and regulations, paying players, and compliance. Name, Image, and Likeness are three elements that make up a legal concept known as “right of publicity.” Right of publicity involves those situations where permission is required of a person to use their name, image, or likeness to promote a brand, product, or idea. There was also some discussion in the interviews of whether or not to pay players to play their sport or to have income aside from their scholarship whether that be flat payments from an entity or a percentage of ticket sales. The NCAA and individual sports have very specific rules and regulations that apply to colleges who have NCAA sanctioned sports that are implemented by division. Moreover, within each sport, the coaches have authority to implement and enforce additionally rules and regulations. Compliance is a tool designed to help athletics department administrators ensure that their athletic department and student-athletes obeying NCAA rules and policies like amateurism and eligibility requirements. Both student-athletes and mentors perceived that the rules and regulations from the NCAA guided many of the actions that they took within their everyday lives to ensure that all of the minute rules were being followed. Since this code was dictating many of their daily actions, a majority of most interviews consisted of themes that harkened back to the NCAA in one way or another.

Athletics departments

Discussion of the inner workings of athletics departments was a main topic in both the student-athlete and mentor interviews. The themes that emerged in the discussions of athletics departments were: passing the buck, teamwork, and role of the mentor.

One idea that was consistently brought up by mentors was the concept of “passing the buck” which was defined as an individual passing responsibility to another individual.

Throughout interviews, this was observed when mentors would assume that mentors in other roles (both within their respective institution and outside) were doing these tasks or providing this information for student athletes and would “pass the buck” to others.

Teamwork was demonstrated in interview responses and presented as the opposite of “passing the buck.” These responses focused on how mentors and student athletes communicated and worked together to help find solutions for student athletes in need of guidance. The role of the athletic mentor was defined as someone such as a coach, advisor, professor, athletic administrator, or any similarly titled professional who works with student athletes. Each individual mentor that was interviewed described their role in the mentorship process with student athletes. The mentor/student athlete relationship was explored throughout the interview process and each student athlete and mentor gave their thoughts on the relationships they have built.

Guidelines and curriculum

Discussion of guidelines and curriculum was a major topic in both the student-athlete and mentor interviews. The themes that emerged in the discussions of guidelines and curriculum were: social media, media and press training, and other discussion of expectations and teachings regarding student-athlete actions and behavior. Social media was identified as a theme as it was a

common topic in the discussions centered around trainings on social media use or rules about using social media while a student-athlete is associated with an athletic program. Media and press trainings became a theme as the topic of how student-athletes were expected to interact with the press media (i.e. local newspaper, local sports network, or ESPN) while associated with an athletic program was discussed in both mentor interviews, student-athlete interviews, and the institution handbooks.

Other forms of trainings not falling into the categories above such as classes or workshops outside of the athletic department were also mentioned by participants in this study. Many interviewees expressed a wish or desire for a training that was not presented by an athletic department or a change in the structure of the trainings that were provided by athletic departments. One example brought up was resume building. Another form of training that was expressed in interview responses was one that focused on non-verbal presentation of self through behaviors and actions.

Each of these themes play a key role in understanding how student-athletes and mentors work through the personal brand development and management processes. The following sections illustrate specific and detailed instances of these fundamental themes and as findings to research questions.

Addressing mentor focused research questions

Mentor research question 1

The first research question considered when reviewing mentor interviews was “How do Division 1 collegiate athletics mentors perceive their job as a role in the brand development of student-athletes in their current position?” The responses varied depending on what type of role

the mentor was serving in. Those mentors that tended to faculty style role did not perceive themselves as having much impact on a student-athlete's brand.

As a professor, not really. I don't really get involved with their personal side of things. I make it a point not to even if they are coming to me with their personal side of things. [Mentor 10]

Additionally, most mentors perceived that brand development was more of a responsibility to others to help student-athletes navigate the world of social media:

I know high schools don't have the resources we do. But at the same time, hopefully their high school coaches have told them, their parents have told them tons about having a Facebook, a Twitter, and an Instagram before they get to orientation. [Mentor 1]

Conversely, mentors that served in roles on the communication side tended to believe they had a larger impact on student-athlete brand development:

One thing I think and know like I could just walk around and they kind of are curious. You know what I do with my job so they know I'm the marketing guy. So they're quite interested in that and that gives them an idea of what they can do after college athletics. That's kind of the position that I was in so I just kind of let them know that okay, you know a lot of you guys after you graduate don't know what you're doing. So, you know, you could use this as an Avenue for you.... And also it's in the sense of you know, what they can provide for under social media accounts. So, you know, we try to encourage them like, you know, obviously know that stuff. [Mentor 8]

Another mentor in communication perceived their role to be very important as well:

I'm talking to our freshman who are enrolling in the summer as well as those who are enrolling in the winter and doing a crash course on Brand building and kind of informative brand-building session as well as a protective brand-building sessions letting them know that they're high-profile people on campus. [Mentor 2]

Mentor research question 2

The second research question evaluated when reviewing mentor interview responses was "How do Division 1 mentors interpret the student-athlete awareness of their brand?" A common theme among most mentors was that students often times don't perceive they have a brand or do not think about their brand at all:

I don't think you inherently think about [your brand] as a student-athlete coming in here unless you're one of the higher-profile coming in here and people have kind of given you that pep talk. But I would say ninety percent of the team is not thinking about their personal brand with each move they make so I would put that on the harder scale of being a student-athlete.

One mentor did notice a recent trend that student-athletes were able to recognize their brand more so than students were able to in past years.

“I think this is picking up steam where they're getting educated in classes or outside of classes on how to build a brand with a consistent message across mediums. So that when somebody sees you, oh you're you are the swimmer or you are the basketball player.” [Mentor 10]

Further, it is important to note and to consider that the handbooks focus on how student-athlete brand becomes an extension of the university's brand.

Mentor research question 3

The next research question that was evaluated in regards to mentors was “How do Division 1 student-athlete mentors understand their impact on the personal branding process of student-athletes?” Many mentors did not perceive that their roles helped develop a student-athlete's brand, but they did discuss other ways that they did help student-athletes in general which is part of the brand building process:

I think social media is huge in that. Because it's an outward display of that but I still think a lot of work has to be done internally in like character development and in in helping young people figure out who they want to be and like this is a time where they figure it out, you know, they're away from Mom and Dad are learning things. [Mentor 5]

One mentor described how they thought that pushing student-athletes towards pursuing strong academic standings was a way that they could impact a student-athlete's brand:

As grades in terms of branding if you want to brand yourself as high-achieving academic All-American type of wage of a student-athlete. Um, and someone who I guess has sports is maybe one thing they do excellently in addition to other things that they do excellently. I think that's one way that grades play a role in it can help show like hey, I'm more than just my sport. [Mentor 4]

Again, many of the interviewees in the communication field did perceive they had a strong impact on a student-athlete's brand:

Let me know what kind of music do you guys want [for your media]? Like if there's anything I can fix it. Preferably go to your director obviously, but if you want to come to me, feel free to come to me. [Mentor 8]

Another expressed,

I think it's a lot about showcasing their personality until their personality is going to come through on their social profile. Show that they are chill or that they are funny. That they're serious. And kind of portray those personality traits based off of their post-game videos and text copy that accompanies it.... perception is reality because of people not getting to meet you and know who you are. So the perception that you've created on social media is a reality to so many people and if that's a great perception that they have of you it's going to bode well for, for you during your time here and after. [Mentor 2]

Above, the mentors express specific ways in which their job roles and duties, even as small as a song choice, have an impact upon the student-athletes they work with on a regular basis.

Mentor research question 4

The final research question used to evaluate mentor interviews was “How do Division 1 mentors understand their student-athletes’ and their ability to manage said brand?” One mentor went on to say that students are learning about brand development in their courses, but that they don’t necessarily understand all of the components:

But your target audience [in branding] I would say for student-athletes, I don't think they get it. I mean I teach the course I teach marketing I teach communication. I teach all these things about branding and brand image and they don't they even you know, the undergraduate students learning for the first time. Obviously, they don't get it yet, you know, they're learning it but they're not understanding all that... I don't think there there's much coordination among their own social media outlets as far as a message that would correlate or be in alignment with each other to constitute building a brand. [Mentor 10]

Although there may be a perception from mentors that students aren't always aware of the best way to manage their brand, they are noticing that students want to experience the brand management aspect of being a student-athlete. One mentor had the following to say about that process:

So these guys love to show off where they're at. They always want to be on camera this time. We have like Instagram takeover of the NCAA account where we can just actually make it like it's a day in the life of a student-athlete. [Mentor 8]

This example illustrates how the student-athlete perception of their ability to manage their own brand or that of another differs from mentor perspectives. [Mentor 8] being one of the younger former student-athletes and mentor interviewed illustrated how the difference in experiences may play a role in forming the perspectives of brand management ability. In this case, the participant's past experience as a student-athlete in the age of social media allowed them to have a unique perspective on the topic.

Student-athlete focused research questions

Student-athlete research question 1

The first research question used to evaluate student-athlete interview responses was "Do student-athletes, both current and former, identify more closely with the student identity or the athlete identity?". Some student-athletes were very adamant that they did not want to be known for the sport they played.

"I definitely didn't want to define it or find it in football. Like I said, I didn't want to be known as [individual's name] the football player." [SA 8]

Most of the student-athletes interviewed were more concerned about their identity within the sport they participated in. Some say that they noticed that was part of their identity starting in

high school. Further, some student-athletes were straightforward and simplistic with their explanations of their identity where others provided more emotional detail.

One student-athlete described her identity as follows,

My identity would just be the super tall volleyball player with blonde hair. That is how people describe me to other people if they had to. [SA 4]

Another likened their collegiate experience to their current professional experience and explained that their identity carried over saying,

I kind of developed the whole student-athlete identity when I was in high school actually because I was pretty much on a very similar schedule. [SA 3]

One student mentioned that they felt like they were more tied to their identity as a student- athlete and that the athlete identity dictated who they hung out with for the most part, saying,

You're not really going to be friends that much with people who are just there for like school and Military stuff. So I'd say my identity of an athlete would be like he's an athlete basically like he is on his own little section of athlete life. [SA 1]

One student-athlete's response stood out as it was clear that they had put thought into who they were and who they wanted to identify as saying,

Going into my freshman year, because I was always the energetic person. I was goofy, funny. I'm always there to make you smile, laugh or whatever – I'm the hype man. I'm all of that. So, I think that's one thing. That I was known for a definitely going into my freshman year with a lot of people. You know what I'm saying? Just been a people's [sic] person. [SA 7]

This student-athlete later explained how their perception of their identity had changed through their time in college. As external factors within their individual sports team changed during their time in school changed, so did their identity, their self-esteem, and how they presented themselves to others.

We had like coach transitions and nothing was like pretty stable at that time. I felt like I didn't have no one to talk to you know what I'm saying?... Your day-to-day basis is definitely different because like I said going into practice, you know from being that energy person I took so much of it on myself. I stopped being the energy person. I just stopped being the hype man, then I, I just stopped like I wasn't happy. So, I was like, okay, I'm not going to do this, you know. [SA 7]

This also lends itself to the impact on mental health that the rigors and uncertainties of collegiate athletics places on student-athletes. Of the mentor interviews the topic of mental health was addressed but not in detail beyond statements of having resources available. This presents a potential conflict between the often-mentioned aspiration towards “whole-person development” [Mentor 7, Mentor 9] for student-athletes by mentors. When discussed it appeared that the notion behind whole-person development was much more career focused than person focused. Many of the mentors made mention of the rigor of a student-athlete’s amount of responsibility, yet it seemed that the mentors, while sympathetic to the situation, rarely presented as being empathetic to the struggles of a modern student-athlete.

Student-athlete research question 2

The next research question asked by this project was “Do student-athletes perceive that they have a personal brand? If so, do student-athletes have a positive or negative perception of their personal brand?” Throughout the interview process, many student athletes referred to their brand as their reputation like the following excerpt about a student really understanding their brand of getting good grades even during the recruitment process:

For like women's basketball, for example, even like when I came in, they would do like a GPA ranking among sports and so we were always, you know, higher up on the list. I think that for the most part the reputation also came in during the recruiting process. [SA 6]

Most students did report that they recognized they had a brand of some kind, but the point at which they noticed it was different for many students:

I think honestly like with the type of personality that I need it was honestly going into my freshman year because I was always the energetic person. I was goofy funny. I'm always there to make you smile and laugh or whatever. I'm the hype man. [SA 7]

I think it really started for me my senior year [of college]... But yeah, I mean, you know, I had always had aspirations to go professional life and I made those things very clear in any interview. [SA 8]

Probably say my sophomore into my sophomore year in my junior year is when I started to feel like I knew everyone on campus and I could talk to basically most people. [SA 1]

The variations in time frame for student-athletes recognizing that they had a brand to uphold illustrate the flexibility in the overall student-development processes (Chickering, 1993). Different student-athletes get through different phases of Chickering's vectors at different times in their collegiate career and each student-athlete needs to be guided through the process.

Student-athlete research question 3

Another research question evaluated for student-athletes was "Do current or former student-athletes who perceive themselves as having a brand feel able to manage their brand?" A few students really did feel like they had support from their university to help them manage their brand:

I mean the [university] kind of does a good job of like keeping you from saying anything to you know, anything that would hurt your brand in a sense. I guess that we kind of don't have the freedom to just go out and speak freely all the time. [SA 1]

I think that they definitely communicated our image and how we want to be perceived...a lot of the men's programs when they travel to different games, they don't always match. And I think [the coaches] were like, little things like that our coaches took pride in. [SA 6]

There was a portion of students that noted that they wish they had received more help in communicating their brand to others:

I think probably one of the few things I would I wish that we learned is just you know little things have to deal with interviews just for example [SA 3]

This student-athlete is now playing in a professional league and later expressed how helpful it would have been to have trainings and teachings on how to manage personal brand, social media, and things like Name, Image, and Likeness.

Student-athlete research question 4

The fourth research question for student-athletes was “Do current or former student-athletes who perceive themselves as having a brand feel able to identify risks associated with personal brand management?” Some students reported instances where they knew that there were risks or perceived risks with some of their behaviors that they could have chosen or did choose.

One of the major topics discussed by student athletes was the risk associated with social media:

They made it clear to me how easy, you know future employers can't get access to your social media pages. It doesn't mean you have to tweak your life and you know be fake but be cautious of you know, how you put yourself out there... Yeah, we definitely have an image to uphold a reputation that we have to keep you know. [SA 8]

Other student athletes noted that they were aware of the risks of how they presented on the basketball court and even compared the result of an incident to how others might perceive them based on gender stereotypes:

There was one game where I stepped in to take a charge on a player and off the player actually, stuck their knee and my chest. And so, I couldn't when she did that, like I couldn't breathe. And so I shoved her off from of me and [I] ended up getting a technical for it. I guess you can be perceived as like, I don't know, like trying to start a fight... And sometimes I feel like, you know, like women shouldn't be aggressive or whatever. [SA 7]

Student-athlete research question 5

The final research question this project asked was “How do Division 1 students understand their own impact on their personal brand process?” Most of the students who were interviewed had some concept of their ability to impact their own “image.” The following quote

was from a student discussing how they could get to know themselves better to know how to make better decisions to define who they are every day:

I wish I would have known how to, like, spend more time with myself to, to, to be more self-balanced within myself you know spend a lot of personal time and figuring out who I am, and what like being secure within myself, as far as knowing what it is that I want and letting that push me every single day. [SA 7]

Several students were quoted as being aware of how they acted or presented themselves while being around others who could help them in future endeavors beyond collegiate athletics:

I mean being a college athlete, you're always being looked at and so I think like “oh, there's always donors around or coming to games or whatever.” And so, I think that there's always opportunities to network and you want to be able to present and express yourself as professional. [SA 6]

Again, the answers and perspectives varied based on life experiences that each student-athlete had. Further, personal ideas and opinions seemed to shape the way the student-athletes perceived their own impact on their personal brand. To summarize the entirety of the student-athlete interviews, it appeared that most student athletes were at least somewhat aware of their perceptions of themselves and how they wanted to portray themselves to others. It was very evident that the student-athletes were not at the same maturity level in being able to manage their brand or image and all students weren't afforded the same access to trainings and mentorship.

Interesting themes encountered in mentor interviews described

In addition to the themes that were anticipated prior to interviews, several themes stuck out and needed to be highlighted outside of those themes identified by the codebook.

Pass the buck

One of the central themes that emerged from the mentor interviews was the disassociation and relay of responsibilities within job roles called “Pass the Buck.” The most notable example of shifting responsibilities was when the conversations turned to personal brand

development and management. Academic mentors would expect that that sort of training and guidance came from another mentor like coaches, coaches expected the information to come from compliance officials or academic mentors, and compliance mentors expected the information to come from academic mentors for student-development or communication staff.

One academic mentor [Mentor 7] said,

I mean obviously we have a student athlete handbook, but the handbook doesn't go into details you know your brand I think that's kind of left up to some of the coaching staff to explain to their student-athletes about brand. I know when I had an intern that was one of the workshops he did, was you know for student-athletes on you know, having a brand and I think a lot of it is kind of left up for the coaches 'cause I see them every day, you know, like for us for academics you know if they do well their first year they're kind of out of our program per say, especially the academic piece, but they obviously would continue in the program with me to do more of the student development piece. And sometimes I think some of that gets kinda [sic] lost.

Here, this academic mentor describes their perspective of what a coach is and is not responsible for in terms of brand development and management guidance. Similar statements were made in other mentor interviews about expecting another department to be responsible for providing guidance on personal brand management. Interestingly, those who were quick to “pass the buck,” spoke confidently about which department or person was in fact responsible. In another instance, one compliance mentor [Mentor 5] explained that,

I would consider like the crisis communication and um kind of PR standpoint. That, I don't feel like that's where my education and training or specialties align.... I do feel like I would I would know who in my department I would probably consider so, to help with that ... [I'd go to] communications or strategic communications staff.

In this quote, again one individual is expressing that they would pass the responsibility to another individual or department. However, when asked, the communication mentors who had roles specific to content curation and creation immediately acknowledged their roles in the personal brand development and management for student-athletes. One communication mentor (Mentor 8) explained,

So, my job is essentially to you know, engage with them their likes and dislikes ... How can I promote them and market them on game day and you know create an ... atmosphere for them against the opposing team... My job [is to] market them like whether it's photo shoots, video shoots, putting them on graphics, tweeting about their stats, you know social media selling tickets, so I'm doing all aspects of branding.

This communication mentor recognized not only what it means to interact with the personal brand development and management process, but how their job directly connected to the individual brand building and curation.

Teamwork

A secondary theme from the mentor interviews was called “Teamwork.” The factors that illustrated teamwork were both positive and negative. For instance, one faculty mentor [Mentor 10] discussed how student-athletes approach them expecting a change in the course to accommodate the respective athletics schedule saying,

There're just too many instances where student-athletes come to the professor first before they would go to a coach and try to get us to move stuff around for them as opposed to the other way around. It's easy to shoot that down because I have 35-40 other students that are not athletes. And so, I you know it cannot, you know to keep integrity and non-biased, you know, the answer is an easy no. but I would say that other professors might feel that need to move things around even though it's stressed at the higher level by athletic administrators that you cannot miss classes due to practice it is yet there's practices always scheduled around classes. So it puts people in predicaments, but they try to do a good job of it. I think it's coaches. I think coaches, assistant coaches are not really understanding some of those policies or they just think it can be worked out. You know, just go talk to your professor and work things out as opposed to the other way.

In this example, the faculty mentor is expressing their frustration in the lack of communication, understanding, and teamwork between a professor and a coach. Similar to the faculty mentor's frustration with coaching staff, an academic mentor [Mentor 7], expressed frustration with faculty in regards to their channels of communication as well saying,

It's kind of challenging I again, I wish we could work more with them [faculty] to see the point. I say that, so like today for example a professor, after we had already printed the syllabus and went to the book store, well yesterday they updated their syllabi and there's all new books on the syllabus, that makes it hard for us, you know we gotta

[sic] go back to the bookstore, order the new books and so it's just a process and so I think people forget that you're making one change but there's a lot of channels that are being affected from this one change.

Here, another mentor is frustrated with the lack of teamwork and communication expressing a desire for more collaboration. Even when opposing mentors express an interest and desire to facilitate better communication and understanding, there is a tacit expectation to not disturb the balance.

Interesting themes recognized in student-athlete interviews

The student-athletes were all keenly aware of whether or not they had a brand as a student-athlete and that knowledge helped shape their impression management strategies. Some student-athletes were adamant that they were well known on campus and it was a pleasant experience being recognized. One student-athlete [SA 7] recounted,

It feels good, you know walking down your campus and someone across the way under by hey [Lizzie] or hey [Liz]! -- you know what I'm saying? It feels good, you know to be known and socializing. I feel like it holds you to a higher standard because so many eyes are on you. So, you know, you you're wanting to conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times because you never know who's watching you so I think yeah. Yeah, that was that was probably one of the best things of being a student-athlete.

When asked if they felt like a celebrity on campus, student-athlete (SA 6) said that at times she felt a little bit like a celebrity on campus but over time it fizzled out to more recognizability than celebrity. She explained saying,

I mean, in classes. You like, I was in the business school, for example. So, a lot of our I guess work was group projects and presentations. So, I guess in a way, like, when you work in a group, they're like, oh, you know, you, you're an athlete at [School I]. That's so cool, like, all this stuff, but once you get to know them, I guess it just. You just become their friend and your just more like a normal student. I don't, I wouldn't say like celebrity level but maybe just like the recognition that you're a student-athlete.

This student-athlete discusses the idea that she recognizes that the individuals around her have a preconceived idea of who she is and what she does. As Goffman (1959) explains, this feeling of recognizability becomes a factor in her self-presentation.

When asked what it was like to be a student-athlete on campus [SA 9] said,

I mean it's pretty great. Everyone pretty much knows like who lives in athlete's area. I mean, I know not even on purpose. ... Like, I am. You know, I think sometimes there's this stigma that student-athletes think that they're better than everyone else on campus. And so, I try not to wear as much as my athletic gear because I want to like be able to mingle I mean my backpack does [have] a volleyball on it. My coat does say volleyball on it, like all of Athletics and the same at [my old school]. Um so I mean uh it's awesome. That people know who you are, especially to because volleyball is a one of the bigger Sports on campus. You know, people not only on campus but, in the community know who the volleyball players are and it's, it's fun, you know, people wish you luck on game day and uh, it in a sense, I mean, not to the caliber of the basketball players or the football players of [my old school], but you kind of feel like a celebrity in a way and it's pretty cool.

Again, this student-athlete is addressing her knowledge of the perceptions that others around her have of her which influences the ways in which she presents herself. She specifically mentions changing her behavior when she wants to blend in by carefully choosing what clothes to wear.

On the contrary, some student-athletes said they did not perceive themselves to have a brand or that they did not feel like they had a brand until later in their collegiate career. One student-athlete (SA 1) explained saying,

I'd probably say my sophomore into my sophomore year in my junior year is when I started to feel like I knew everyone on campus and I could talk to basically most people.

Another student-athlete (SA 2) explained his perception of his brand saying,

I mean me personally, I kind of had a reputation when we had 'cause we had that when you were the Showtime show was on called Following the Team. It was my senior year and I was one of the players that was highlighted during that time. So, I guess that was around the time. I guess I had a brand if I had one and even then, I didn't, I never thought of myself as anything beyond just a Black dude. I've always been just as, just as

goofy just as kind of off-the-wall, just as crazy as anything else. But I guess like that's what people, I guess, sort of pay attention to, but I'm like, I'm still effectively and nobody by comparison.

Here, the student-athlete addresses the conflicting feelings about having a brand and the significance of his brand if he did have one. Again, the idea that an individual modifies their behavior based upon the audience perception is illustrated when he expresses how he thought of himself during the time he was featured in a television program. Additionally, this student-athlete illustrates his internal conflict with authenticity and his front stage versus back stage performance as he tries to organize his thoughts on whether or not he had a brand at the time of the show.

Alternatively, a common viewpoint was the desire to build a brand and be known as and for more than their sport. One student-athlete [SA 8] explained,

I never wanted to be you know, become so infatuated [with my sport]. Well not infatuated, but so saturated with football that I didn't know anything outside of it like the other students or the clubs and things that were going on campus so long. I sought to be more than student-athlete as far as you know how people knew me. That was my number one deal out there on campus, but also kind of get out of my get out of my box get out of the locker room and join a couple of organizations. I joined Association of Black Collegians and Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, and I didn't have any major roles in there. I really just tried to be that guy to kind of do whatever they needed me to do to help in any way I can.

This student-athlete's perspective, again, is driven by the way he perceived his audience to view him. He actively sought out ways to change his behavior to adapt to the idealized version he saw for himself based upon his understanding of his audience.

Comparison of perspectives on Name, Image, and Likeness

A majority of the participants shared opinions on the introduction of the Name, Image, and Likeness legislation. Some were positive, some were negative, and a few were impartial. Most, however, expressed uncertainty ranging from job security to student-athlete mental health

and time management. One faculty mentor [Mentor 1] stated, “But as someone that says, when you’re 18 we treat you as an adult, if you can go off to war you should be able to benefit off of your name, image, and likeness.... if the coaches are making all this money and the athletic director, I don’t have any problem with the athletes doing it.” One student-athlete [SA 1] justified his favorable perspective saying,

I thought it has always been a good idea to do that something like that because there's a lot you'll see even at like University of [Redacted]. They'll be like jerseys for sale, but they'll have like a certain player's number but no last name, but everyone knows who that player is that you're trying to buy and what the number is so I always felt like they deserve some money for that I mean because someone else is making money basically on their name.

Another student-athlete [SA 3] expressed his partiality saying,

I think it's something that I can't really see the harm in life when you're that kind of player. But, then again, a lot of people like me like, myself I was on scholarship. I was already getting paid like in stipends. So, I mean, I don't know I guess, I guess to an extent. I think it's, I think it's okay.

These quotes illustrate the optimistic perceptions of the potential outcomes that could result from the Name, Image, and Likeness legislation. Even beyond potential positive implications of NIL legislation, [SA 7] discussed what she believed boiled down to more of a human rights issue saying,

You know your brand is you. And your brand is pretty much why you doing what you're doing and you know the effect or legacy that you planning to leave is. And I don't think no one should get credit for telling your story but you, because it's your story.

In the same vein, [SA 2] described the physical sacrifice that student-athletes make and the limited return that they are able to walk away with from their Name, Image, and Likeness and how oppressive the current regulations feel to student-athletes.

The amount of stress that this level of athletics puts on the body is insane. Almost none of us really played with the hopes of making it to the NFL. Our whole lifestyle was

like “give everything you have now”. We’re beating ourselves up and you’re talking shoulder injuries, knee injuries., back injuries, whatever the case may be. I’m not saying compensation needs to be like insane, but you shouldn’t have a situation where you’re not able to make any money off your likeness because that’s like slavery right there.

Nevertheless, the uncertainty followed the positivity. [Mentor 1] also expressed his concern saying,

There’s a lot of that that’s good. But that also comes with enormous responsibility. How is the NIL going to transpire? Nobody knows.... The only think I can tell you is that it is going to change college athletics I doubt for the better of the institution but it will give a small select group of players more money or autonomy or higher status.

He directly addresses the ambiguity of the Name, Image, and Likeness changes that university athletics programs are going to see as the legislation moves forward. Much like [Mentor 1] suggests, former student-athlete [SA 5] expresses her disagreement to the change saying, “I do not agree with payment. I feel like your scholarship is your payment. Also, how will the payment be regulated? Will there be a “cap” for every school/athlete or will it promote unfair domination of certain programs?” The questions she poses further illustrate the ambiguity that the collegiate athletics community is experiencing as they await more information.

With the discussion of Name, Image, and Likeness, the participants were all eager to share opinions, but were also cautious to discuss the topic in too much detail. It was evident in multiple interviews that the individuals had a general understanding of what NIL might mean and what it might look like, however most of the participants expressed a “wait and see” perspective. The consistent hesitation to discuss the NIL seemed to outwardly illustrate the level of uncertainty that athletics departments and student-athletes alike are facing. A plausible concern with this uncertainty will be the overall success of the implementation and the accompanying risks that could follow an unsuccessful enactment. The hesitation illustrates, once again, the need for clarification on rules and regulations at each institution as well as the role of

each individual at said institution in the personal brand management and development processes for student-athletes. Without proper preparation and clarification, the likelihood of undesirable or potentially damaging impacts for student-athletes and their respective institutions seem to increase.

Interesting findings *beyond* research questions

Developing a Voice

Following the mayhem of the year 2020, the mentors participating in the interviews often addressed the changes they had seen over the course of this time frame. One mentor, mentor 6 who is a coach, explained that when they were a student-athlete they would not have been willing to speak up and speak out about their ideas, feelings, and opinions like current student-athletes do. Mentor 6 explained further saying,

[I see them] having more of a voice ... they're able to voice opinions and maybe go to administration with certain problems that they're having and not be afraid to, you know, just stand up for themselves and what they want like... they've been given a lot more freedom to do something they want to do.

Another perspective from Mentor 2 was that student-athletes should be authentic in showing who they are saying,

Be authentic. Authenticity is going to get you so far ahead when it comes to working with your own teammates, working with coaches. When I am posting on social and showcasing who you are and then you are trying to be the best version of yourself in those ways, being authentic is going to take care of you.

This mentor explained how authentic student-athletes help him, as a content creator for the athletics department, to share the tenacity and overall experience of student-athletes to followers and fans of the institution's social media pages.

Image, Brand, and Reputation Confusion

Image, brand, and reputation were often incorrectly used as synonyms by both mentors and athletes. Four mentors were able to sufficiently differentiate the terms (Mentor 1, Mentor 4, Mentor 5, and Mentor 10). It is important to note that Mentor 1 and Mentor 10 are tenured faculty members and Mentor 4 and Mentor 5 are both compliance officials. It is important to note that the varying mentor roles have a more accurate understanding than others may have due to their regular work content. Compliance officials within athletics departments are expected to know how to help student-athletes protect themselves from NCAA violations. Whereas the faculty mentors who were able to differentiate the terms are both business professors and thus would be likely to be familiar with the terms used from an industry standpoint.

In the student-athlete interviews the discussion of image often turned to the ways in which the student-athletes saw themselves as an extension of the team and university's image. Conversely, the mentors saw the image of the student-athletes as an extension of their reputation but with image as being more fleeting. One faculty mentor (mentor 10) explained:

I think reputation has more staying power if that makes sense. It's it's [sic] developed over time which images to but, image is a little bit more fleeting. I would suggest a reputation is built so it has more time built into it and maybe a little bit more resistant to change as opposed to image... I would say that the resistance to change commitment to a brand, you know reputation starts to be a little bit a little bit more holding power as opposed to image.

Image, in the eyes of this mentor, was much more individualized as opposed to being oriented to a group as student-athletes saw. One mentor, [Mentor 9] detailed his experience working directly with an individual student-athlete to help them manage their image. Mentor 9 described this instance saying,

I have a current student-athlete that I've been working with for quite some time. And when this particular student-athlete came in and he was very arrogant and immature, you know, rubbed a lot of people the wrong way and I told him in the beginning I said, you

know, I understand that, you know, you may have a lot of notoriety on social media and where you come from I said but, here you're just another student -- especially at you know, [School I] a very academic school and, you know, fame and notoriety being for being an athlete is not as widespread as a school who has had more famous student-athletes walking on campus and I tried to explain that to him and he just didn't get it and then as he started to mature and grow he started to see [what I meant] so I get to go back and do a lot of damage control with his image to show that really wasn't him or is not who he is currently that was the former version of himself and he's matured over the time that he's been here and it's great to see him grow as a young person and the same as a more mature individual rather than the immature kid he was when he first arrived.

In this example, the mentor is describing how they had to facilitate damage control for the student-athletes image that they were known for when entering the university. This mentor describes the ways in which they were attempting to help this student-athlete avoid damaging their image and the future reputation they were cultivating. Mentor 9 went on to say that in their area of work (Academic Advising) they saw their job as a more “continuous damage control” as opposed to one instance at a time.

The conflicting understanding of the impression management terms and how they apply to each role in an athletic department could be a potential issue in terms of widespread regulation for student-athlete branding under the NIL legislation. It is important that mentors be educated on industry specific language and understand the roles of their fellow mentors on a consistent basis for an effective implementation of NIL. Further, beyond helping prepare student-athletes for the NIL legislation, the terms are justifiably different as they describe specific instances of impression management.

Perceptions of resource allocations

Much of the conversation around academic development was seen by the mentors of being a responsibility of the student-athlete because of the plethora of resources available. One mentor [Mentor 1] expressed,

We have the same resources. If we have a student struggling with mental health resources, I have the same resources to get him or her help. Absolutely. We spare no money at [School J] getting our student-athletes any kind of help they may need in order to address problems or to be better in the classroom. Whatever it is, we try to acknowledge it and then try to alleviate that problem. So resources, although we are a small school, we do have the resources to help any SA that might need it.

Mentor 1 is suggesting that the student-athletes have the access to any of the resources they could possibly need based upon their knowledge of the programs and solutions offered to students through university funding.

On the contrary, when asked about what advice they would give to an incoming student-athlete, one student-athlete [SA 8] said,

Do something that you like, but also take you take full advantage of the opportunity that you're getting to further your education, you know, don't just go get, and I'm not saying anything bad, the lowest package degree that they classify as lowest level as far as you know coaches, but if you want to, you know become an engineer after you get done playing your sport. Take those engineer class[es]. If you want to become a doctor, do it, you want to become a freaking [carpenter] or whatever it is.... They have the resources in place to have the tutors ... They have the, you know the app that'll help you if you really believe that you want to do this whenever you get done don't let a coach discourage you because they want you to be eligible in order to play.

This quote illustrated that while the student-athletes agree and acknowledge that a plethora of resources are available, that other factors (beyond their feasible control) can inhibit them from taking full advantage of said resources in developing their academic skills.

Another student-athlete recounted their experience with mentor resources saying,

One of the most influential people at least for student-athletes was an econ professor and like a lot of people go to her because she is very empathetic but, she's also not going to like, lie to you, she was like, whatever you're doing like I'm like, like I want to help you out, but you gotta [sic] help you out.

This student-athlete's perspective illustrates the unspoken expectations of student-athletes having the wherewithal to seek assistance when needed, implying that student-athletes would be aware of their need for assistance.

Summary

This chapter presented the results from the athletics department mentors and current and former student-athlete interviews who associated with the ABC Conference in Division I athletics. First, the emergent and anticipated themes were addressed. Next the mentor focused research questions were addressed using interview and handbook data. Following that, the student-athlete focused research questions were addressed using interview and handbook data. After addressing the original research questions, additional themes and topics were discussed to provide insight into the juxtaposing opinions within athletics departments and between mentors and student-athletes.

5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In chapter 2 of this research study, multiple ideas were presented as having a relationship to student-athlete brand building, development, and management. The ideas gathered from existing literature included impression management, student-development, mentorship and NCAA collegiate sports rules and regulations. Chapter 4 of this research study provided the results of the conducted research. This chapter includes a detailed discussion of results and potential implications for a variety of stakeholders in collegiate athletics. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research in the areas of student-athlete personal branding and Name, Image and Likeness policy development and activation. Lastly, this chapter will provide the limitations and conclusions from this study.

Major Themes Revisited

Impression management

Goffman (1959) defined impression management as the conscious and subconscious processes in which an individual endeavors to influence the perceptions of others. This term was used as a blanket descriptor for the use of brand, personal brand, reputation, and image when categorizing the themes within the interviews and handbooks. The need for a blanket term was based upon the differing views of how to properly define and apply brand, personal brand, reputation, and image in daily conversation by the participants. Information from participant interviews illustrated that they perceived that some elements of impression management were present in the responsibilities of both student-athletes and mentors. The recognition and admittance of active impression management tactics and strategies varied among participants with no evident relationship why the inconsistency occurred.

Some participants specifically recalled instances in which they engaged in impression management while others could not recall an instance of active impression management. One participant who remembered a specific instance of impression management was a female basketball player. This participant described her experience in getting a technical foul called on her by one of the officials. Her coach removed her from game play and she described how she thought that she was going to be seen as “trying to start a fight” by her teammates, other teams, and fans or spectators. Her perception of being seen as aggressive was negative and she specified that she did not want to have that trait attached to her reputation with the justification that women are not supposed to be aggressive. This instance illustrated the depth to which some student-athletes take the ideas and opinions of others and internalize them. With so many of the student-athletes reporting that the mentors at the university are some of the most influential people in their lives, and with empirical evidence like this, universities should aim to train mentors from all areas to reinforce the ideas behind impression management.

In the handbooks and the mentor interviews, the major focus was strategically delivering curriculum and examples of what not to do to student-athletes as a form of brand management and development training. Multiple participants recalled an instance when they either built a presentation themselves or watched a presentation in which an athletics department official presented screenshots of the audience’s social media accounts with examples of poor impression management. While the participants who mentioned these presentations in their interviews saw them as an effective teaching tool, it can be argued that this approach only scratches the surface of effective brand development and management practices.

While it is constructive that there are trainings in place for student-athletes and mentors are partaking in the conversation, issues could present themselves if or when the student-athletes

and mentors find themselves needing more than elementary skillsets. The institutions that are already building and implementing curriculum centered on branding and brand management will likely find themselves a step ahead of the institutions who are waiting for further information. Lastly, in relation to the notion that mentors referenced as whole-person development, the branding and brand management education would likely be beneficial towards this development goal especially if the student-athlete plays their sport at the next level.

Even if all student-athletes are not impacted directly, some are. Likely, there are more student-athletes struggling to internalize their understanding of how others see them while trying to manage the impressions that are already existent. Student-athletes may not have a way to express this difficulty in managing their impression, or they may not know who to go to for help. Also, some student-athletes may not realize that the notion of wanting others to view you in a certain light is a common and valid desire. From a mentor perspective, if students are spending mental energy on figuring out their impression management strategies because they do not have the tools to do so, they are taking focus away from other responsibilities like their academic work, their mental and physical health, as well as the tasks associated with their respective sports.

Having student-athletes be trained in impression management could alleviate a certain amount of potential stress for some, if not all. By training student-athletes, they gain valuable experience to comfortably manage these situations like the one mentioned above, thus not taking their focus away from their already high amount of responsibilities that they expressed in the interviews. One of the most important takeaways from this research that institutions should be gleaning from this study is how they can set themselves and their student-athletes up by being proactive in seeking out experts in branding and image to come work with their mentors on

developing some of these deeper level courses and trainings for student-athletes. As important as it is for student-athletes, it is important for universities to stay ahead the curve on NIL legislation even in states that have yet to pass legislation. Schools that wait for legislation to pass in their region to prepare for NIL standards could find it difficult to maintain a competitive edge in recruiting if other schools have better plans in place to help student-athletes. Schools that fall behind in taking advantage of NIL industry standards could begin to see a negative result on the playing field.

Student Development

A majority of the discussion around student development was straightforwardly categorized using the Seven Vectors of Student-Development (Chickering, 1993). However, it is clear that the modern student-athlete experience is not summarized in total by the seven vectors alone. For example, one student-athlete interviewed discussed her identity in terms of how she perceived herself going into college and how that perception changed over the course of her four years at the university. This particular student expressed that she entered college seeing herself as the “Hype man” and “Energy” for her team. Over time, she described how changes in coaching staff and playtime impacted her overall perception of her role on the team and ultimately her identity as a whole. She addressed the feelings of needing to reassess who she was and what she wanted to be outside of sport.

This particular instance illustrated that the absolute nature of the seven vectors was not fully effective in all situations as the seven vectors imply a progressive change in development, like identity development, whereas this situation was expressed as a negative process and outcome for this student-athlete. Being that the seven vectors were first initiated in the 1960s, it

is clear that some of the modern difficulties cause student-athletes to not align with the experiences of students in that decade.

Because student-athletes must enact the role of student and athlete while navigating their identity development, it adds a series of elements to the process. First, it is important to note the admissions process for student-athletes and point out ways in which their process differs from a traditional student's process. A student-athlete must meet other requirements (their success in their respective sport) to be scouted or recruited through an athletic department at a university. Sometimes this process includes an assessment of their academic achievements, but for revenue generating sports, those elements are potentially overlooked. Because student-athletes are recruited and often admitted to the university based heavily, if not solely, on their athletic ability, their identity and potentially their entire purpose is inadvertently determined on their behalf. The application of the theory to my research lies in the statements in the Chickering and Reisser (1993) revision to the theory in which they explain that the process does not necessitate linear progression. On the assertion that student-athletes have a pre-determined or mandatory identity and purpose to enact when they arrive on campus, they may need to retroactively assess their vectors which may inspire reassessment of their original identity and purpose that they embodied.

One communication mentor explained his approach to content creation when using student-athletes as subject matter as an active part of developing their brand and wanting to make sure that his presentation of them fit with their understanding and perspective of their own identity. This mentor used the example of choosing which music to include in the media created by the athletics department as tangible evidence of the respective student-athlete's identity portrayal. This mentor recognized the importance of his role as a presenter of the student-athlete

in the development and management of that student-athlete's identity, personal brand, as well as their future goals.

In relation to the discussion of career development and life after sport, a commonly referenced measure of development and success was high academic performance and timely progress towards their degree. One compliance mentor discussed his perspectives on how student-athlete grades can be an additional part of their brand development and management. He described this as a way for student-athletes to illustrate that they are more than just their sport to their audience.

Even though there were many negative outcomes to the Covid-19 pandemic, one positive outcome is that student-athletes that had their spring 2020 senior sport season cancelled were able to come back and play their final year of athletic eligibility in the spring 2021 semester as long as they were pursuing a graduate degree. This prompted many students to try and obtain an additional degree that they may not have considered without the opportunity to continue their athletic careers. This is just one more way that student-athletes can set themselves apart academically from some of their peers.

The elements of student development that were discussed in the mentor and student-athlete interviews trended towards student-athletes being less aware of their development processes. While mentors recognized that their role contributed to the student-development process, most of the interviewed mentors seemed nonchalant about the importance of the overall development (as illustrated in the seven vectors) and more focused on the parts of development that closely related to their job descriptions. The role of academic development was grouped into the career development process as a stepping stone of sorts to the expected outcomes of a college graduate. Ultimately, the focus was overwhelmingly career and life after sport centered.

NCAA Rules and Regulations

A major theme that was brought up by both mentors and current and former student-athletes was the hectic schedule that student-athletes are faced with. It is not uncommon for student-athletes to leave their dorm before 6:00 a.m. and not make it back to their dorm or living space until early hours of the morning. Finding a balance between being a student and being an athlete was something that both student-athletes and mentors knew was a challenge. One mentor even went as far as to say that they felt that Covid-19 pushing classes online gave the impression to academic faculty that students were always accessible because there was a perception that class time they have unlimited time for classes since everything was online and they are connected to their devices at all times. That was not true for any students, and especially not so for student-athletes. That same mentor went on to say that there was also an internal struggle that student-athletes face. Although the student handbook for student-athletes at their institution clearly lays out that student-athletes are students first and that athletic team activities should be scheduled around academic affairs. However, there is a unique relationship dynamic between student-athletes and coaches where it can be easier for students to discuss schedule rearrangements due to class conflicts with athletic team activities with a professor than it would be to discuss schedule rearrangements with an athletics coach. The pandemic certainly did not create this odd dynamic, but it did exacerbate it due to coaches seeing students as readily available since there were few in-person classes for portions of the academic year.

Schedule concerns can have some additional consequences down the line. Student-athletes struggling to find a balance between their athletic endeavors and academic pursuits may feel like they do not have full control over their academic major. One student-athlete explained that student athletes may feel like they are forced into majors that are perceived to have less

intensive study schedules and may stray away from an engineering degree for example. This student-athlete mentioned that as he got to his junior and senior years, he wished he had done a major that would have been a more employment opportunities. Others may feel like picking a major that other student-athletes and teammates are in is their best option so that they can work together to stay caught up.

Curriculum and Guidelines

There were varying levels of education on managing brand and identity reported by student-athletes and mentors. Several students and mentors noted that most of their trainings consisted of meetings that were held with freshmen as they were first getting to campus. A few students went on to say that they had periodic updates on the “don’ts” of social media, but there was not extensive training on how to manage their personal brands. Most of the training discussed did focus on things that student-athletes should not do to stay out of trouble with the NCAA or what not to do to damage the university brand. Little to no training was done as what positive and proactive steps student-athletes can and should take to promote themselves for future endeavors. A few members of the academic mentor group said that there were some adjacent discussions on what brand and image were and that students could potentially connect the dots between what they were learning and how they could use it in a practical sense, but they did not say that there were trainings with students of any kind on how to manage their brand. This further illustrates the need for training on how to manage brand for student-athletes. Ideally, the mentor participants recognize the importance of building curriculum on impression management after their participation in the study.

There were a few additional training sessions that student-athletes and mentors thought would be a good idea to implement in the future, if the resources became available. One mentor

suggested a program in which they could make sure every student-athlete had a resume in order before they graduated. Her justification for this suggestion was that it would help them have a good starting point as they entered the work force. One student-athlete pointed out that they were asked to speak with the media on a few occasions, but they were never really taught the ins and outs of what to expect and how to react. That individual thought it would not be a bad idea for all sports to have their own training on how to deal with the media.

From the information above, the idea that a new curriculum needs to be developed at each institution to help guide student-athletes through the collegiate experience should not be a surprise. The status quo is not working for student-athletes and mentors alike. Curriculum should include updated information shared about student-athlete brand building process to fit the new NIL legislation and topics that student-athletes at the individual institution request. The curriculum for trainings should be evaluated each year to make sure that real life issues that student-athletes face are addressed. The problems students faced in 2010 are not always the same that students face in 2021. An ever-evolving curriculum would best serve student-athletes at all institutions. If the NCAA were to ever pass guidelines allowing NIL profits by all student-athletes in all member institutions, the curriculum for NIL could be built by their organization. Even if the NCAA were to do that, schools would still need to tailor the information to prepare their student-athletes for their collegiate experience on their specific campus.

Mentor Experiences and Relationship Interpretations

One interpretation that was repeated in the interviews was the idea that mentors were not always aligned with each other and that they did not always communicate effectively, especially across academic-leaning positions and athletic-department focused staff. In many of the interviews, it was communicated that certain trainings or guidance should be led by staff of

another area. Academic mentors thought marketing professionals within the athletics departments should handle certain initiatives such as branding and how to build a brand. Some mentors within the athletic department thought that branding and how to build a brand should take place in the classroom with academics. Responses for who should or did handle social media training were scattered. Some mentors thought that they should have even been given instruction and learned these things from their parents or high school counselors. In all of these discussions, the mentor would not know exactly who was handling continued trainings throughout a student-athlete's time in school or if they were even being offered. This appeared to be the result of a lack of communication between mentors in various departments across campus and the students were the ones who were feeling the negative effects of this issue.

Another issue of importance that was discovered is the lack of communication from mentor to mentor on their campus as well as a different understanding and practice of roles from university to university. For instance, one Faculty Athletics Representative expressed his joy and passion for engaging with student-athletes, and he wanted them to know he was on their side. However, the other Faculty Athletics Representative interviewed expressed that he took great care to minimize the relationships with student-athletes to keep his role as fair and professional as possible. The Faculty Athletics Representatives' main responsibility, as described by them, was to act as a neutral third party between student-athletes and the athletic department. They do not work for the athletic department, just for the university. To try and maintain that separation, the other two Faculty Athletics Representatives felt it was in their best interest and the individual student-athletes' best interest to treat the student-athletes the same way they treated every other student and remain in that neutral position.

Within the mentor discussions at specific universities, there was a clear distinction in how mentors interpreted their roles in relation to other mentors within and associated with their respective athletics departments. For instance, one mentor mentioned her frustration with the university bookstore and a professor who altered the syllabus just days before courses started. In many cases with nonstudent-athletes, this would be a conflict between the student and the professor. With the way student-athletes have their resources paid for, this issue falls back on the athletic academic advisor having to reallocate aid a different way to pay for the different book. The frustration stemmed from the lack of communication and consideration of how one small change can impact a lot for the student-athletes and then mentors. She expressed how tiring it is trying to get the university employees who do not regularly interact with student-athletes to understand the intricacies and rules of their daily lives. For instance, when a faculty member is not willing to communicate or consider the unique needs of a student-athlete.

It is important to note that this mentor is a 20-year veteran academic mentor at the same university in which she was once a student-athlete. Not all mentors were as aware of the intricate issues that student-athletes face. Another mentor made mention of the elite resources that his university had available for student-athletes. However, when asked in their interviews, the student-athletes from that same university were not aware of the resources that the mentor so confidently described and touted. This seemed to illustrate a misaligned understanding between student-athletes and mentors outside of those who the student-athletes have a closer or more consistent relationship with a specific mentor.

Student-Athlete Experience and Relationship Interpretations

One theme that emerged in the student-athlete experience and the relationships that they built was that student-athletes often pointed out academic advisors or individual professors as

some of the most influential people that they had built relationships with at their respective universities. Several student-athletes talked about how the academic mentors they had shaped their perceptions of themselves and what they could be in the classroom and beyond. The words of encouragement and ways that academic mentors pushed them had impacts on what student-athletes took pride in and, in a way, impacted part of the student-athlete's brand. Conversely, when mentors were asked if they thought they served a role in helping develop a student-athlete's brand, most responded that they did not feel like they had a hand in it and that mainly the marketing people handled that. It did not seem that many mentors, especially academic mentors, realized the impact they were having on student-athletes.

Another barrier between student-athletes and mentors from the student-athlete standpoint was that some student-athletes did not feel like mentors at their university were open or up front with all of the resources available to them

Almost every student-athlete expressed their frustration with the rigorous schedules to which they have to adhere. They noted that due to their schedules that it often made it hard to experience life as a "normal" student on campus and still maintain the identity as both a student and an athlete. One student-athlete explained that the nature of the schedules (most sports had afternoon practices) tended to group student-athletes on each individual campus together, which created little communities within the larger student body. Multiple student-athletes mentioned having an initial intent to avoid being grouped or branded as a student-athlete in their time in college, but due to certain elements of what they referred to as "understood expectations" the student-athletes understood for themselves they were not able to fulfill that goal.

Many student-athletes were able to recall the training that they received in their initial orientation to college or in supplemental workshops overtime, however, multiple student-athletes

asserted that they felt prepared but, wished that there were more in-depth opportunities and options aligned with their majors and sports. Although many student-athletes didn't specify exactly what they want in those trainings, they did voice that they did not always feel adequately prepared for all of the challenges being a student-athlete presented them. It should be important for athletic mentors to continually meet with students throughout the year to see what issues need to be addressed. These issues could vary from year-to-year, school-to-school, and sport-to-sport highlighting the need for mentors to be attentive to their student-athlete needs at all times throughout their time in school.

All but two of the student-athletes interviewed expressed their opinions on whether or not student-athletes should be paid simply for playing their sport. The majority was in favor of compensating athletes for their time and effort. The two naysayers both insisted that the scholarships student-athletes received were sufficient in terms of compensation. Those in favor of paying athletes made mention of the restrictions placed on student-athletes in terms of time and employment options depending on their schedules and coaches.

There was also some discussion on whether or not student-athletes should be paid just for participating in their chosen activity. There were more differing opinions on this topic than NIL, but the overall responses suggested that interviewees did believe that student-athletes should be able to be paid. There were a few dissenters, like the student-athlete discussed in the previous section, that detailed all of the benefits they received and expressed that they felt the benefits (i.e. course credit, housing, and books or other necessary materials for classes paid for by the university) more than made up for the time and effort they put into their sport. No identifiable patterns were present that would indicate why these individuals had different perspectives than the others. None of the dissenters were of the same gender, career, major, or sport. Two of the

dissenters were of the same race, but there is no indication that their race played a factor in their perspectives. It could be that these students were grateful for the opportunity that playing collegiate sports allowed for them to continue their education when they would not have otherwise had the opportunity to do so without their athletic scholarship. The trade-off of athletic participation for education itself could be seen as them upholding their portion of the contract and receiving what they signed on to receive.

Beyond the critiques of the inconsistencies in understanding impression management terminologies and the variation in understanding and communicating roles amidst mentors to mentors as well as student-athletes to mentors. The terms brand, image, and identity were used interchangeably throughout each individual interview. There was not a real consistent use of each term with one singular definition bound to each term with any of the student-athletes. Even within interviews with the same person, the terms got used to mean a variety of different things, although the way the terms were used allowed the researcher to identify the appropriate term that was being communicated. It is important to note the overwhelming camaraderie amidst all the participants. There seemed to be an implied respect for the general shared experience of collegiate athletics. Based upon interviewee responses to questions, student-athletes can feel isolated within their own group even on large college campuses. That appeared to engender a respect for the way they talked about all student-athletes whether they were talking about themselves, other student-athletes on their campus, or about student-athletes in general. Going hand-in-hand with the preceding conversation on the inherent respect between student-athletes, one factor that may contribute to those feelings is a shared feelings of restraint by the NCAA. Mentors and student-athletes alike made mention to the restrictive nature of collegiate athletics, but seemed to accept the restrictions as a part of the process and experience.

Social Justice Campaigns

It was anticipated that the discussion of the Covid-19 pandemic, the #WeWantToPlay initiative, and the social unrest of 2020 would have been more prevalent in the interviews. It is unclear if that was because student-athletes and mentors were not all that familiar with the social media campaign itself, if they did not feel connected to the campaign personally, or if they did not draw the connection between the concepts discussed and the #WeWantToPlay initiative. Based upon the responses and feedback to interview questions, the study did not seem to dive deep into the “We Want to Play” movement, the social unrest or the pandemic to address these anticipated topics as anticipated. However, the notion of developing a voice, a major theme expected out of the conversation of social justice, was discussed in a different way by a coach mentor who expressed her respect for her student-athletes speaking up to their coaches, professors, and university administrators to incite changes that they saw a need for at their respective university. The mentor coach gave an example that these students stood up to some potential changes that were rumored to come with the new coach. This mentor coach described how these student-athletes saw an issue at hand that was going to impact them, thoughtfully put together their ideas and opinions, and presented solutions professionally and respectfully to mentors for the betterment of all individuals. Although it wasn't for a cause of social justice, the steps taken by the student-athletes resemble what was observed by other student-athletes who were active in the #WeWantToPlay movement.

A potential reason that the topics of social justice, the pandemic, and the #WeWantToPlay movement could be that the participants did not connect the ideas behind impression management to the elements of self and other presentation that these three events inspired. Making the association between attaching one's image, brand, and reputation to that of

another entity should trigger an understanding that the entity to which that individual links to becomes a part of their presentation of self that they cannot control. The proposed lack of connection between the ideas of speaking out for a cause and the potential impact on personal brand, image and reputation exhibit further evidence that education on these topics are becoming increasingly necessary. Student-athletes in the study also may not have believed their brand was strong enough or their voice was important enough to lead change through social media. This could have played a role in them not thinking about speaking on the topic in the interviews.

Name, Image, and Likeness Discussion

Evaluating mentor and student-athlete perceptions of new NIL legislation was a major focus of this research. Both subsets of the study population had important thoughts on the direction of the legislation. Mentors interviewed, that did not specifically work within a communications and marketing background did not seem to be concerned with how the potential addition of the allowance of NIL profits by student-athletes could potentially impact their role in the student development process. Mentors consistently disregarded the idea that they would play any role in the NIL process for student-athletes. While comparing and contrasting the portions of the mentor interview responses and the student-athlete mentor responses, mentors do not always realize the impact they have on helping student-athletes build a brand.

The most notable instances of student-athletes highlighting how mentors help build their image or brand was one student-athlete discussing a mentor pushing them to try and become an academic All-American to help build a post-collegiate brand and a student-athlete who mentioned a mentor that helped them network with alumni that eventually led to an internship. Mentors that do not understand the role they truly play in helping student-athletes build their image and brand, even in indirect ways, could unknowingly harm the relationships they have

with student-athletes and could fail to set these mentees up in the best situation possible. It is likely that at least some of the mentors are unaware of all the ways that NIL legislation can impact every student-athlete they work with. Since most of the focus in the media surrounding NIL passage has discussed the opportunity for student-athletes to make money from endorsing products, it might explain why most mentors dismissed their role in the process. Educating mentors and student-athletes alike on new legislation will be important to make this effort successful for all parties involved.

While every student-athlete was in favor of NIL legislation being passed, there was some interesting discussion of the pros and cons associated with its passing. A few students made the comparison to other students on campus that were not student-athletes and their ability to make money off of their NIL in areas outside of sports. They did not believe that it was fair for the NCAA to limit what they could simply because of their student-athlete status. However, there were a few student-athletes that did not believe that NIL legislation would be appropriate for student-athletes. One student flat out said that the benefits that they receive for playing athletics at a Division I university such as free tuition, free meals, housing costs, and other included aid was sufficient for the work that they do as an athlete. Another student-athlete was for the passing of NIL in general as it pertains to student-athlete fairness with the rest of the non-athletics student body, but they were concerned about how it could potentially impact player relationships within a locker room. If one player was able to make considerably more money off of their NIL than the rest of the team, there was concern that this could potentially cause a rift in the locker room and team chemistry could suffer.

Name, Image, and Likeness laws have some other detractors. A few mentors expressed concern that the introduction of some of these NIL bills could help large Division I athletics

programs in the Power 5 distance themselves further ahead of smaller schools and conferences by being able to offer better advertisement deals to perspective student-athletes. They suggested that the schools with larger national brands could help student-athletes that signed to play athletics at their institution build a national brand better than a school with a less well-known brand could. The applicable outcome of this phenomena could be an even bigger disparity in the talent level of athletes between Power 5 schools and those schools in middle and lower tier athletic conferences.

Proponents of NIL legislation have a counterpoint. It is important to note that, while much of the national conversation surrounding NIL has centered on an individual student-athlete's ability to secure regional or national advertisement deals, there are many student-athletes like the Stone Wilson example from the introduction that are harmed by the lack of NIL legislation. Students, even those within the same universities as student-athletes, that are not participating in NCAA athletics are not bound to similar restraints. If a student taking an art class wants to sell their art and make money off of their product, they are free to do so. If a student-athlete creates a YouTube page in high school performing trick shots in their respective sport, they must choose between profits from their own craft through YouTube or playing NCAA athletics. It is very possible that the student-athlete mentioned above that believed their scholarship to attend school was enough "payment" for them playing a collegiate sport was also not aware of the full implications of NIL legislation. This is another reason why more thorough and clear education is needed on the topic of NIL.

Eventually, all student-athletes in every state will be legally allowed to profit off of their name, image, and likeness, but that isn't the case at this point. As mentioned earlier, only certain states have passed legislation and different schools within the same athletic conference are

operating under different rules. It will be worth tracking how the discrepancy in timing of when different states pass legislation impacts the athletics landscape over the next few years until either every individual state passes NIL legislation or the NCAA intervenes and sets a national standard for all member institutions.

Practical Implications for Stakeholders

The results of this study have implications for student-athletes, athlete mentors including faculty athletic representatives, professors, academic advisors, compliance officials, and coaches, as well as athletics department administrators. All of the aforementioned individuals should be considered stakeholders as well as university donors (both athletics and overall), university administrations, the NCAA, individual sports' team fans, as well as student-athlete parents and families.

As illustrated in the interviews and popular media discourse, the looming changes with Name, Image, and Likeness legislation is a major topic of conversation and generates a lot of questions that few, if any, feel comfortable or confident answering. Understanding the current perspectives of mentors and student-athletes on how they understand brand building, development, and management will provide insight for the decision makers in terms of both fiscal and personnel resource allocations. Further, beginning the transition away from using image, brand, and reputation as synonyms to understanding their unique definitions and applications sooner rather than later will likely play a role in risk assessment and management for the NCAA, individual conferences, their participating universities, teams, and individual players.

It should be noted that the stakeholders are likely a part of the group who will be making decisions on how to guide student-athletes through the changes in amateurism rules with the

implementation of the NIL. The mentor participants who were not able to adequately define the terms associated with impression management (i.e. understanding and ability to differentiate between personal brand, image, and reputation) will play a critical role in integrating the changes into the daily lives of student-athletes. This is a problem because the language has specific uses in academic research as well as in legislative documentation such as the NIL. It will be vital that mentors are adequately trained on how to appropriately use the terms when working with students.

There are certain steps that stakeholders can take to help lessen some of these pitfalls. As mentioned earlier in the discussion, being proactive in preparing trainings for both mentors and student-athletes will go a long way in making sure that stakeholders are not caught off-guard by the changes. Through the findings of this study, it seems that very few current mentors have a good idea as to what the future of student-athlete NIL outcomes do, will, or even should, look like. Bringing in industry experts to create material for trainings and help present the information should be at the forefront of every athletic department strategic plan. Specific training regarding the differences in impression management terms, what a student-athlete brand is or could be, the steps that student-athletes can take to build their brand, and ways they can leverage their brand into immediate or future returns in their careers (sport or non-sport) should be the minimum that is considered. The example from above about the student-athlete believing that they were being “paid” enough through their scholarship to make up for their athletic endeavors is a key example of why further education that is needed. Educating mentors and student-athletes on all implications of NIL legislation is of the utmost importance.

Another step that stakeholders should take to maintain concurrency with the changing NIL landscape is make sure that all stakeholders are getting the same and most up-to-date

information on the subject. It may be best for university and athletic department leadership to coordinate the effort as they are the natural fit for being the central party for creating and disseminating information. This would also give all stakeholders a defined place to take all questions, comments, and concerns about issues that arise.

That is not to say that university and athletic department leadership should just consult individuals within their university on how to remain current with the NIL information. It will also be imperative to monitor what other institutions are implementing to stay up to date on industry standards. As more states introduce and approve their NIL legislation, it is important for stakeholders to pay close attention to how the implementation process goes so that they can be prepared to improve the process as needed. One way to do this may be to conduct studies looking at how other individual institutions or other athlete conferences as a whole are evaluating and producing NIL trainings and information for their student-athletes. Specific recommendations for studies that could be relevant to universities will be discussed in the future research portion of the chapter.

There are numerous changes in NIL legislation coming over the next few years. One practical issue that could arise in the immediate future of NIL legislation is that schools with more monetary resources will have access to more tools to enact some of the suggestions above than schools with fewer monetary resources. Although monetary resource discrepancy will never go away, schools with fewer resources often learn creative new ways to do more with fewer resources. As this is new legislation and not much has been learned about how the NIL legislation will impact schools yet, the schools with fewer monetary resources could be starting from a disadvantageous position. Another institutional concern might be any Title IX issues that arise if the same resources are not afforded to student-athletes within male and female athletic

teams. For example, it may be perceived that male football players may have more earning power in the open market than female lacrosse players. However, individual university marketing teams will need to provide equitable earning opportunities within their institution for all athletes regardless of gender or sport. Violating Title IX codes would have impacts well beyond athletics competition. Not complying with Title IX standards could result in the loss of state and federal funding for areas ranging from student engagement to academics at a given University.

Theoretical Implications

As discussed in chapter two, the theoretical application of student-athlete brand development and management is a topic that has recently gained traction due to the discussion and implementation of legislation regarding use of student-athlete Name, Image, and Likeness. To address this topic, the Theory of Self-Presentation (Goffman, 1959) was employed as a tool to understand the structure of how student-athletes and their mentors currently understand their individual roles in the impression management of student-athletes. Self-presentation is based upon the idea that individuals intrinsically perform various versions of themselves to the respective audience at any given time. Goffman (1959) related the variation in performance as a metaphor to the front stage and back stage of a theatre. The performative nature that the student-athletes and mentors described in the interviews lined up with the principles of front stage and back stage performance.

Student-athletes referenced their feelings on how they desired to be viewed while playing their sports versus how they wanted to be perceived on campus or in classes. These variations in desired perception of others illustrated the front stage and back stage performance that Goffman (1959) asserted. While the theory is not new, the actions and desires of the student-athletes

desired perceptions of themselves by their audience shows the staying power and transferability across generations of Goffman's Theory of Self-Presentation. A point at which the theory could be improved is to apply the notions of front stage and back stage performance that student-athletes partake in to the digital nature of modern student-athlete self-presentation. Several scholars (Takahashi, 2011) have addressed the updates needed to apply Self-Presentation Theory to situations with digital mediation. However, the unique situation that student-athletes are in where they are actively switching between two roles as both students and athletes, representatives of their respective university and conference, as well as managing multiple social media platforms and potentially (under the NIL) a sponsorship contract to represent a product or service. In each of these roles that student-athletes perform there is active impression management. In these instances, student-athletes may be switching from front stage to back stage performances in a short amount of time or engaging in both simultaneously.

This study contributes to the existent literature by showcasing the unique cases of student-athlete impression management as an illustration of how quickly individuals need to be able to switch performances and potentially partake in both performances almost simultaneously. An example of the simultaneous front stage and back stage performance might be when a student-athlete is engaging with their peers while also texting their sibling. The student-athlete is performing the version that they expect the audience of their peers to want to see while synchronously communicating a much more intimate performance with their sibling. Arguably, student-athletes are quite skilled in impression management strategies and tactics. However, as discussed prior, student-athletes need guidance from their mentors.

Further, some students may begin their journey in higher education and perceive (fervently) that they know their identity and their life's purpose already as incoming freshmen.

There is no finite rule as to when a student should develop their identity. It is not as if a timer begins the moment they set foot onto a college campus. For instance, while it is a stereotype of the population, it serves to articulate the scenario above. Often, student-athletes have predetermined their identity and purpose prior to coming to college because there was likely some sort of official announcement about their commitment to their respective university. Further, prior to making that commitment to play sports at the collegiate level, they had to hone those skills to be eligible to be scouted or recruited for their sport. That process likely took a long period of time to complete, potentially a majority of their lifetime. In this scenario, their perception of competence, identity, and purpose are already habitual. When they set foot on campus, they may not be the All-Star they are accustomed to being, and, thus, they may need to reevaluate their competence of their sport which puts them back at Chickering and Reisser's (1993) first of seven vectors, which is developing competence.

As Erikson (1958, 1963) suggested in his theory of psychosocial development, individuals go through eight stages of development based upon their age range. To move from one age range to another Erikson (1958, 1963) the individual must go through a development conflict, or what he called a crisis. According to Erikson's stages, the 12-18 year old age group is going through their identity versus role confusion stage in which they work through understanding the foundations of their identity. As an 18-year-old, the detriment to the individual going through this conflict may induce some new emotions and generate conflict internally and between their peers or mentors. In this instance, the student is repeating vectors, reevaluating those once thought to be complete and potentially experiencing one or more vector for the first time.

Another notable issue with the vectors as described by Chickering and Reisser (1993) is the question concerning the technological advancements and changes in the college student experiences. Seeing as the vectors were first articulated by Chickering alone in the 1960s and the most recent update by the original author is from the 1990s, there is no explicit nod to the online element of university structure and the intrinsic motivation that is an element of all of the vectors in some form or fashion. Developing competence becomes more difficult when you do not have immediate access to assistance or if you are unable to articulate the root of the problem or question. Managing emotions is difficult alone. When students who seek post-secondary education through distance learning experience mental or physical stress or frustrations from their schooling, they likely do not have the same connection to peers as on campus students would. Developing interpersonal relationships in a mediated context adds an element of difficulty as well. When you do not have the ability to hear the tone of voice or to see the non-verbal cues, there is a barrier to connectivity. This is true for all students and not just student-athletes. However, it greatly impacted student-athletes over the course of the pandemic making them feel isolated from their educational experience and worth noting as a barrier to overcome when trying to fit in with new teammates and, in some instances, new coaches and mentors. It is notable that the development that comes from being in direct contact with peers and mentors was minimized due to Covid-19. Thus, much of the mentorship that student-athletes would have experienced organically or in a more structured format looked much different when the transition to much more use of technology occurred.

In tandem to the need for additional coverage of the adjustments in the student-development process due to technological and societal changes, this project also illustrates the need for a teaching tool for mentors who are expected to engage in the student-development

process. The mentor participants in this study grouped their understanding of student-development into one topic rather than addressing specific forms of student-development. However, the mentors, seemingly unknowingly, did discuss Chickering and Reisser's seven vectors in the abstract. One example of the vectors addressed would be developing competence where one academic mentor shared her goals to help her student-athletes keep their grades up to stay eligible to play their respective sports by assigning them study hall hours and an individual tutor. Another example is the student-athlete being guided by their head coach in "establishing identity" through a strict dress code enforced when their athletic team would travel. Although the specific language of "developing competence" was not used by the mentor and "establishing identity" was not used by the student-athlete, they were both clear examples of mentors helping a student-athlete progress through the vectors.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included: sample size and snowball sampling, Covid-19 restrictions and delays, access to only one mid-range athletic conference, and not all NCAA sanctioned sports being represented. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person interviews were not reasonably possible in order to protect the participants and the researcher. While phone, video chat, and email interviews were acceptable alternatives, the natural flow of person-to-person communication was minimized with the digital connection. Further, a customary inclusion in case study research is a period of observation by the researcher of the participants. In this instance, the observation likely would have taken place with the researcher visiting the athletics departments of the participating institutions to observe daily routines and communication practices of student-athletes and mentors. Again, for the safety of the participants

and the researcher this approach was disallowed by both the Center for Disease Control and The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB).

A potential limitation of the study was the semi-structured interview layout. By starting with a few certain questions and letting participant answers partially guide the direction of the interview, certain topics, such as social justice and the #WeWantToPlay, were not explored as thoroughly by student-athletes and mentors as originally anticipated. Even though these topics are important and could be explored in future research, the structure of the interviews did not lend itself to steering the direction of the conversations that way. The result of this limitation was the idea of voice development being explored through a different lens.

Another limitation to the study was the changing landscape of NIL legislation throughout the project. As the research began, there was lots of talk of how NIL legislation could be implemented by the NCAA, but when the Covid-19 pandemic took off those conversations ended. At that time, only one state (California) had passed NIL legislation at the state level. At the time of this writing, 18 individual states have passed NIL legislation while the NCAA has tabled negotiations on their own legislation (The Athletic College Sport Staff, 2021). The changing landscape during the study has slightly changed the conversation surrounding NIL legislation as more people have become aware of some of the benefits and downfalls of what some of this legislation might mean. And, to reiterate, the pandemic did put a hold on many discussions the NCAA had about association-wide legislation from the governing body itself.

While the research is thorough, the study could have been more generalizable for all levels of NCAA athletics if the study had participation from conferences across all different regions of the United States at varying levels of NCAA athletic competitions (high-major, mid-major, low-major). Another way that the research could have gained generalizability would be if

the research had been expanded to also include Division II and Division III NCAA member institutions. The smaller sample size was selected to narrow the scope of a broadly and relatively unexplored subject to something that was manageable for the researcher to evaluate. The initial sample was selected by searching for qualified participants and reaching out to them directly. Additional participants were selected utilizing snowball sampling of qualified participants from the initial pool. Although the sample was not truly random and represents a limitation of research, a specific population was needed to complete the study and the researcher obtained fair representation.

Another limitation to the study was that not all sports were represented within the conference and not every single mentor position available at universities was able to be included. Ideally, this project could have had a wider range of different participants. That being said, research continued and interviews were conducted until saturation was reached and many of the same themes were continuing to be addressed by each participant. Once this saturation point was reached and no new information was being provided on the major themes of the study was seeking answers to, the data collection process was ended and data analysis began. Even though saturation was reached, the potential participant pool could have been a little more diverse in both sports played by student-athletes and sports coached or mentor positions held by mentors.

This study was designed to explore the phenomenon of student-athlete brand curation and management, the researcher actively worked to make a case “distinguishing the phenomenon of interest from the studied unit or instance” (Shwandt & Gates, 2017, p. 345). Specifically, this study worked to distinguish personal branding as the phenomenon from the case of Division I student-athletes and their mentors and the ways in which their athletics departments handled the growing prevalence of student-athlete personal branding.

The researcher in a qualitative study is the primary instrument in qualitative research and what that individual brings to the investigation from their own experiences should be treated as bias (Maxwell, 2005). Social scientist researchers should actively attempt to recognize their own biases before managing a research project and should understand said biases to help eliminate as much bias from the project rather than ignoring them entirely (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017).

This study used a critical realism approach when analyzing the collected data. While critical realism can provide a foundational philosophical framework for social science research, the lack of a connection to a more common research methodology is said to limit the overall application (Oliver, 2011). The use of critical realism is justifiable in the case of this study as the intent of this study was to gain an understanding of student-athlete personal brand development, management, and mentorship from an academic and practical perspective. Pradade (2005) explains that the “qualitative turn that has overtaken the social sciences in the last twenty-five years has yielded both a rich body of research using non-statistical methods and substantive amount of methodological advice on how to engage in qualitative inquiry” (p. 3). Further, the critical realism approach “has been argued that critical realism can increase understanding of causal mechanisms and contexts that are needed in order to achieve outcomes from actions” (Fox, 2009, p. 465). Thus, a qualitative case study approach analyzing data from a critical realism perspective was applicable to this study because it encouraged a deeper consideration of the lived experiences of student-athletes and their mentors as well as their own personal observations of how they navigate and manage personal branding in the analysis process as what is objectively real and what is subjectively accepted as truth in the phenomena (Abdul, 2015; Taylor, 2018).

Future Research

Suggested future research would be to conduct more interviews with both student-athletes and mentors in both larger and smaller conferences. Specifically, student-athletes who are currently active in their eligibility should be sought. While the perspectives of the former student-athlete participants was incredibly valuable to the study, the current student-athletes are having much different lived experiences than previous student-athletes due to the after effects of the pandemic, the changing societal social expectations, as well as the NIL legislation. Additionally, it would be beneficial to conduct an analysis of student-athlete social media accounts to determine if their perspectives of what they think they are curating for their personal brand match up with the industry and academic understanding of brand development and management.

Another note for future research would be to conduct the same or a similar study as this research in a few years once NIL legislation has really had a chance to develop and more student-athletes are afforded similar opportunities to profit from their NIL. Just like any new legislation, there will be hidden benefits and unintended consequences that NIL brings. Being able to see how NIL has changed student-athlete self-awareness of their brand and image and their perceptions on their ability to manage them after universities are able to adjust their trainings to better benefit student-athletes would help progress this research even further.

It may also benefit the field of study to conduct separate research between “revenue generating” and “non-revenue generating” sports. Revenue generating sports is the title that is often given to football and men’s basketball at NCAA Division I member institutions (Loebner, 2014). Non-revenue generating sports would be all of the other sports offered at NCAA Division I member institutions. Most of the conversation for NIL has focused on student-athletes from

revenue generating sports and how they may be able to make more endorsement money than student-athletes that play sports that are not as popular nationwide. However, endorsement deals are just a small portion of benefits that NIL legislation could potentially bring to all student-athletes. That being said, it might help fill in some gaps of the research to see if student-athletes from revenue generating sports have differing opinions on NIL legislation compared to student-athletes participating in non-revenue generating sports.

Another valuable topic to research would be to focus on the differences in gender and race opportunism in light of the Name, Image, and Likeness conversations and changes likely already in occurrence within most athletics departments. It will be interesting to observe the ways in which sponsors or donors choose the student-athletes they would like to partner with under the NIL. Further, it will be important to understand if the legislation is written with intentional language regarding race and gender equality.

One specific area to focus on for race and gender equality is the discussion of Title IX laws and regulations. Many anticipate that the NIL legislation will increase the disparities that Title IX was designed to address. It will be important to monitor the discourse as the NIL implementations to evaluate any gender related biases in student-athlete NIL profit margins. Further, with the discussion of transgender athlete eligibility in early 2021 news, the NIL will spotlight the existent inequalities within NCAA operations.

Lastly, another recommended area of future research would be to conduct an in-person, traditional case study with multiple universities to compare and contrast the inner workings of their athletics departments in real time. Further, the inclusion of observation in this recommended study will allow future researchers to witness non-verbal communication and reactions to the conversations related to the study. By observing the daily lives of student-

athletes and mentors, the researcher may also notice actions and behaviors that the participants are not aware of or privy to how they impact their roles as student-athletes and mentors.

Conclusion

Regardless of the limitations, the purpose of this study was fulfilled in that it opened the door for a deeper discussion on how student-athlete and mentor relationships work as well as how other mentors view other mentor to student-athlete relationships. Additionally, through the analysis of the handbooks, the study unveiled the discrepancies between what was perceived as policy versus what was actually in the written and distributed policies. Further, the discrepancies in understanding what was and was not being taught and who was teaching it was also shown.

The topic of student-athlete personal brand management and mentorship is important because it is time to have a larger scale conversation outside of athletics about the archaic nature of the NCAA's amateurism rules and regulations. Further, it also presents a concern about the quality and usability of student-athlete education beyond sport. What are their transferable skills? Well, several mentors noted time management and public performance, however, in a fast-paced digital world, is that enough? A notable topic of conversation circulating the internet is the idea of student-athletes being able to major in "sport" where the activities they do like athletics department workshops or attending guest speaker lectures count for class credit so as to encourage more resource allocations to educating student-athletes with transferable skills for life after sport.

Although the research that was conducted did ask and answer all the questions in a relatively new area of study, there still are an abundance of new ideas and directions this type of research can extend to. Over the next several years, specifically after more states pass the NIL legislation, it will be worth monitoring the ever-changing landscape of student-athlete brand

building, development, and management perceptions as new legislation is introduced to ensure that student-athletes are afforded the best that the NCAA and individual member institutions have to offer to help make student-athletes more well-rounded individuals in whatever career it is they choose to pursue post-education.

Ultimately, the personal goal of this research study for the author was to seek information and start conversations about the implications of not having a plan moving forward with the increasing necessity to build and manage a personal brand in college athletics, specifically Division I. The necessity to build, develop, and manage a brand goes beyond the Name, Image, and Likeness in a digitally centric society. While it was concerning, from the perspective of having worked in an athletics department at two universities, that few of the participants had a solidified plan to assist their student-athletes in the transition from the former amateurism rules to the Name, Image, and Likeness legislation it is understood due to the amount of change seen since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the understanding of impression management as a whole should be a much greater focus for student-athletes. It is easy to forget that these elite players that are on ESPN every Saturday morning are 18, 19, and 20 year olds. These newly-recognized adults are put on a national stage becoming targets for feedback, both positive and negative, from anyone who chooses to participate in the audience of any given broadcast. While the handbooks address the ways in which student-athletes are expected to behave online and in-person as representatives of the university, the student-athletes interviewed often spoke about what they wish they had known and wish they had recognized as incoming freshman.

The student-athletes need resources and guidance. It is a common idea that college student should know how to act and behave as adults away from home (likely for the first time).

However, these young adults are coming from a high school structure in which they are given specific directions for almost every action they take. Further, as a society we are reaching the point in which the “digital natives” are matriculating into adulthood and the work force. It has become a common assumption that because this generation has so much more access to information that they are intrinsically able to understand, evaluate, and apply that information to their daily lives. Further, when there is a disconnect in the understanding of where the students are gaining their information by their mentors (i.e. “They probably learned that in high school, right?” (Mentor 1) perpetuating the notion of passing the responsibility to another. Passing the responsibility to another or assuming that the lessons have been taught likely inhibit student-athletes who come from a background with fewer financial and educational resources. For many, playing their sport was a ticket into college, so they may not have these skills and experiences that their mentors presume.

The hope is that any reader of this dissertation is provided with helpful information about how other Division I mentors and student-athletes are understanding and enacting the building, development, and management processes of student-athlete personal brands. Beyond the takeaways from the research findings, the hope is that this document will inspire more conversations centered on the true needs and wants of current student-athletes as they go through this change in real time. Ultimately, each mentor expressed a deep compassion and passion for their jobs and working with student-athletes. Ideally, this study allows those individual mentors and others like them to strengthen their argument in favor of student-athlete success.

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APPENDIX A

Theme List

Anticipated Themes:

- social media rules and regulations
- student behavioral conduct expectations
- notices of representation of university brand image

Catalogued Themes:

Overview: The purpose of this study is to understand how student-athletes are mentored to build, develop, and manage their personal brands.

Impression Management: the use of language regarding impression management.

- Authenticity
- Identity
- Image
- Personal brand
- Reputation
- Presentation
 - Of self
 - By another

Development (Chickering, 1993): the use of language regarding development.

- Academic
- Body image
- Career
- Leadership
- Life after sport
- Mental health
- Person
- Voice

NCAA/ College sports: Code the use of language regarding the NCAA and College sports.

- Name, image, and likeness
- College sport rules and regulations
- Compliance
- Paying players

Athletics Department:

- Passing the buck
- Mentor role defined/clarified
 - Mentor and student-athlete relationship
- Teamwork

Training: The use of language regarding training for media and/or networking.

- Social media
- Media press
- Networking
- Other forms of training i.e. classes, workshops (outside of athletics), guest speakers (outside of athletics)
- Professional Communication i.e. email etiquette, presentation etiquette and skills, writing skills
- Training from High School or Other
- Training needs and wants
- Training non-verbal and appearance (i.e. being early, no hoods in class, matching uniforms)

Race, gender, socio economic status – Code the discussion of race, gender, socio economic status.

Theme Descriptions:

Theme:	Characterizations:
Impression management:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity 	<p>The quality of being real or true.</p> <p>Recommended approach to self-presentation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image <p>Similar terms: likeness, public perception, identity, public impression.</p>	<p>A representation of the external form of a person or thing in art.</p> <p>The general impression that a person, organization, or product presents to the public.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal brand(ing) 	<p>The conscious and intentional effort to create and influence public perception of an individual by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Positioning them as an authority in their industry, -Elevating their credibility, -differentiating themselves from competition <p>...All in an effort to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advance their career -Increase their circle of influence

	<p>-Have a larger impact</p> <p>*Personal branding involves finding one’s uniqueness, building a reputation on the things you want to be known for, and then allowing oneself to be known for them.</p> <p>-Ultimately, the goal is to create something that a.) conveys a message, that b.) can be monetized.</p> <p>-Some self-help practices focus on self-improvement, personal brand defines success as a form of “self-packaging” – commodification.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation <p>Similar terms: name, character</p>	<p>The beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something.</p> <p>A widespread belief that someone or something has a particular habit or characteristic.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation • Self • Other 	<p>Self-presentation refers to how people attempt to present themselves to control or shape how others (called the audience) view them. Involves expressing oneself and behaving in ways that create a desired impression.</p> <p>Other presentation would be how another presents the subject at hand.</p>
Term:	Definitions:
Development:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic - Developing competence 	<p>Discussion of or relating to knowledge, intellectual aesthetic, and cultural sophistication, and higher order thinking.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career/ Life after sport -Developing purpose 	<p>Discussion of Who am I going to be? Where am I going? How will I get there?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity -Establishing identity <p>Including social identity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). 	<p>The fact of being who or what a person or thing is.</p> <p>The characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is.</p> <p>(Of an object) serving to establish who the holder, owner, or wearer is by bearing their name and often other details such as a signature or a photograph.</p> <p>Knowing who you are sexually, in self-image, in gender, in society.</p> <p>*often accompanies discussion of impression management.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership 	Developing mature interpersonal relationship abilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health - Managing emotions - Body image <p>Related terms: Self-worth, self-esteem</p>	Discussions on developing healthy coping strategies, habits and controlling impulses, developing appropriate responses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person - Moving through autonomy towards independence. 	<p>Freedom from the need for reassurance, organization, problem solving, decision making.</p> <p>Often referenced as “whole person” development.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice - Developing integrity 	Developing, clarifying, and rebalancing of personal values and beliefs and being able to speak about them.
Term:	Definitions:
NCAA/College sports:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name, image, and likeness 	“name, image and likeness” are three elements that make up a legal concept known as “right of publicity.” Right of publicity involves those situations where permission is required of a person to use their name, image or likeness.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College sport rules and regulations 	<p>Discussion of rules and regulations that apply to all colleges who have NCAA sanctioned sports.</p> <p>More of what they are being told to do (subjective)</p> <p>Can simultaneously be compliance</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance 	<p>A tool designed to help administrators ensure that their athletic department and student-athletes are in compliance with the NCAA legislation.</p> <p>Specific references to policy with consequences (objective)</p> <p>Can also be CSR&R</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying players 	Discussion of paying players to play their sport, or having income aside from their scholarship, or allotment of ticket sales.
Athletics department:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pass the buck” 	An individual in a mentor role (coach, advisor, professor, athletic admin., etc) passes responsibility to another mentor.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor role defined and/or clarified 	An individual in a mentor role (coach, advisor, professor, athletic admin., etc) describes and/or outlines their job duties and/or relationship with student-athletes.
Training:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media 	Any discussion of training on, or rules about using social media while associated with athletics.

• Media press	Any discussion of training on, or rules about press media while associated with athletics.
• Networking	Any discussion of training on, or rules about networking media while associated with athletics.
• Other forms of training	i.e. Classes or Workshops (outside of athletics department)
• Professional communication	i.e. email etiquette or presentation skills
• Training from High School or Other	Discussion of SAs receiving training in high school, parents, or another organization. *Often and assumption of training. Make annotations.
• Training Needs or Wants	Mentor or SA expresses a “wish” or desire for a different form of programming than what already exists. Could be an area of potential improvement to an existing program or curriculum. *Can make reference to a program that is working well, if so, ANNOTATION needed.
• Training – Non-verbal and appearance	Mentor or SA discussion on training about non-verbal presentation of self through behaviors and actions. *Often linked to impression management, developing identity, and CSR&R as listed above. *If this is coded, Impression management must also be marked.
•	

Term:	Descriptions:
Race, gender, socio economic status:	Any mention of a person’s race, gender, or socio economic status as traditionally defined, mark as a topic or discussion, point of reasoning. *Annotation likely needed.

APPENDIX B

Recruitment E-mail for Mentors:

Hi {Insert Name Here}

You are receiving this e-mail because you have been identified as a potential participant for a research study conducted by a student, Alyssa C. Adamson, at the University of Alabama in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations.

Key Information:

- Participate in a 1 hour interview about student athlete image and reputation management.
- Answer 15-20 questions
- No information collected that will connect identity with responses
- Participants will be compensated with a \$10 gift card to their choice of Starbucks or Dunkin' Donuts

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to better understand the who, what, when, where, and why of student-athlete image development and reputation management from the perspectives of those who have been student athletes as well as from the perspective of those who consistently interact with and mentor student athletes.

If you would like to participate in the study or have questions about the study or need to report a study related issue please contact:

Name of Principal Investigator: Alyssa C. Adamson M.S.

Title: Doctoral Candidate

Department Name: Advertising and Public Relations

Telephone: ###-###-####

Email address: acadamson@crimson.ua.edu

Thank you for your time,

Alyssa C. Adamson

APPENDIX C

Recruitment E-mail For Student-Athletes:

Hi {Insert Name}

You are receiving this e-mail because you have been identified as a potential participant for a research study conducted by a student, Alyssa C. Adamson, at the University of Alabama in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations.

Key Information:

- Participate in a 1 hour interview about student athlete image and reputation management.
- Answer 15-20 questions
- No information collected that will connect identity with responses

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to better understand the who, what, when, where, and why of student-athlete image development and reputation management from the perspectives of those who have been student athletes as well as from the perspective of those who consistently interact with and mentor student athletes.

If you would like to participate in the study or have questions about the study or need to report a study related issue please contact:

Name of Principal Investigator: Alyssa C. Adamson M.S.

Title: Doctoral Candidate

Department Name: Advertising and Public Relations

Telephone: 918-931-9364

Email address: acadamson@crimson.ua.edu

Thank you for your time,

Alyssa C. Adamson

APPENDIX D

Image Building Processes of Student Athletes – Semi-structured interview guide for Academic Advisors, Coaches, and Teachers/Professors (Mentors)

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your career.
 - a. How did you get this job?
 - b. How frequently do you work with student-athletes?
3. What does your time with student-athletes typically look like?
4. Describe your relationship(s) with your students.
5. What duties in regards to student-athletes do you perform outside of your job description?
6. How do you feel about their level of responsibility daily?
 - a. Too much/too little?
7. What do you think is the easiest part about a student-athlete's day?
 - a. The most difficult?
8. Have you seen a change in the ways in which your students act and learn in the last 3-5 years?
 - a. If yes, what do you think is causing the change?
 - b. If no, why do you think things have remained the same?
9. How would you define the image of a student-athlete?
 - a. Reputation?
 - b. Personal brand?
10. Have you ever had to handle an instance where a student-athlete's image was damaged?
 - a. Self-inflicted or otherwise.
 - b. What happened?
 - c. Did you know what to do?
 - d. Was there an existing policy or regulation in place to guide you?
 - i. Had you been trained for a situation like this?
11. Did you feel adequately prepared to help your student in this instance?
 - a. If yes, why did you feel so prepared?
 - b. If no, what would have made you feel more prepared?
12. Do you have a favorite student-athlete you've worked with?
 - a. If yes, tell me about them?
 - b. If no, next question.
13. How do you think the growth in social media use has impacted student-athletes?
 - a. Personally?
 - b. Professionally?
14. What do you think is the biggest factor in the development of a student-athlete's image?
15. Do you feel that you play a role in their personal brand/image/reputation development?
 - a. If yes:
 - i. Why? Explain, In what ways? (Can you provide some examples?)
 - b. If no: Who does? How do you know?
16. Who do you see your student-athletes use as a role model?
17. If you could give them all one piece of advice what would it be?

APPENDIX E

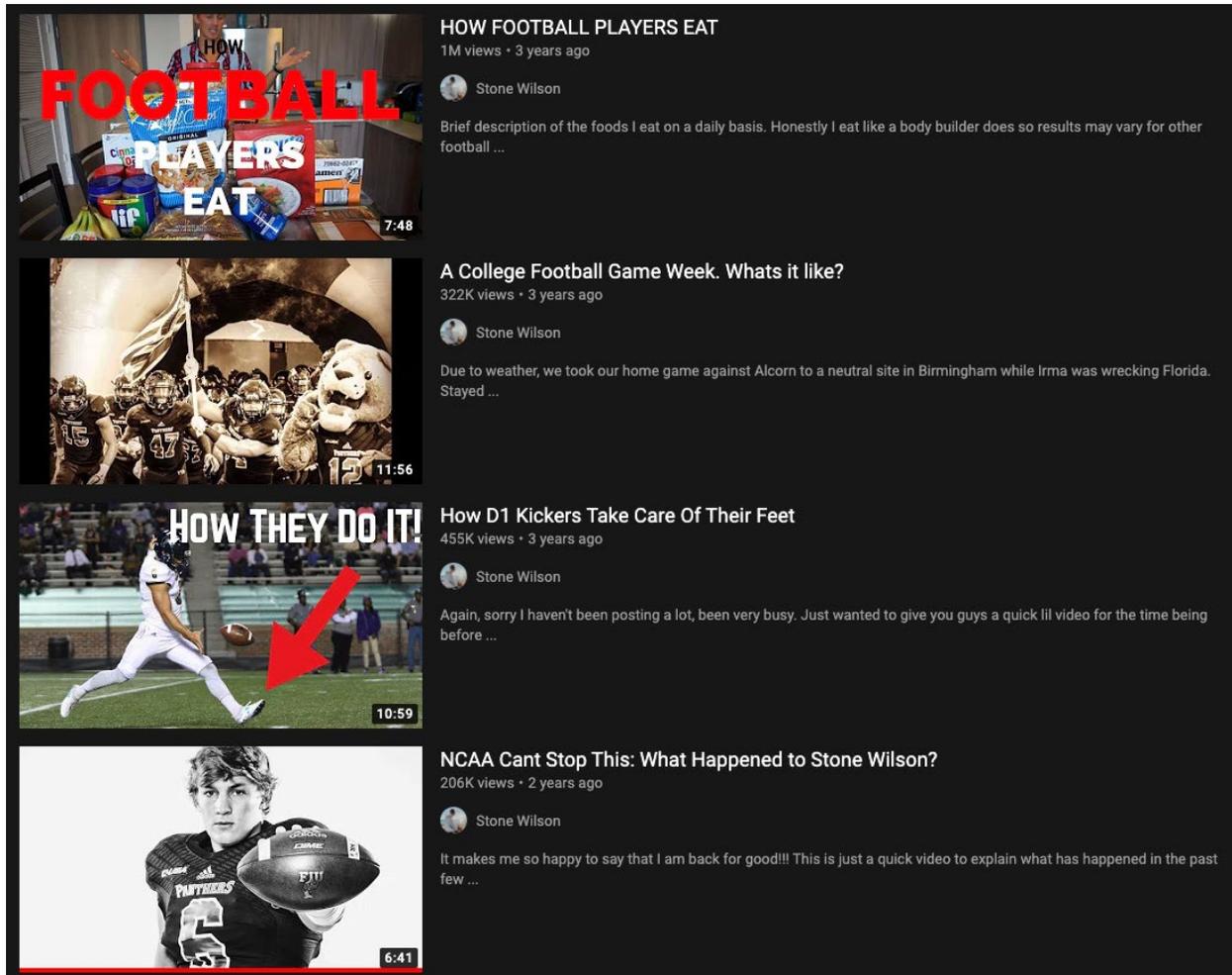
Image Building Processes of Student Athletes - Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Current & Former Student Athletes

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your time as a student-athlete.
 - a. Follow up questions if not answered in Q1 or Q2.
 - i. How long have you been playing _(insert appropriate sport)_?
 - ii. When did you decide you wanted to be a collegiate athlete?
 - iii. What was your favorite thing about collegiate sports?
 - iv. Were you involved in other activities in college?
3. Tell me your experience/ what you remember about being a student-athlete on campus.
 - a. How would you describe your identity as a student athlete?
 - b. If you are comfortable sharing, did you have a scholarship?
4. Walk me through the responsibilities you have/had.
5. What kinds of rules do/did you have to follow?
 - a. How did these rules and responsibilities make you feel?
6. Do you have social media? /While you were on campus did you have social media?
 - a. What did you use social media for most often while you were a student-athlete?
 - b. Were there rules and regulations for your social media use as a Student-Athlete?
7. Did you ever have any training on how to present yourself?
 - a. For media day?
 - b. For social media use?
 - c. In classes?
8. In hindsight, do you think the tools you had were enough to know how to present yourself?
Did you feel prepared?
9. Who would you say is your favorite mentor? Why?
10. Who did you turn to most often for help or advice?
11. Describe your relationship with your...
 - a. Academic adviser(s)
 - b. Coaches
 - c. Professors/Teachers
 - d. Other
12. Do you recall an instance when your reputation began or the first time you realized you had an “image” or “personal brand”?
 - a. If not you, do you recall someone else (a teammate or friend?)
 - b. When?
 - c. How did you know?
 - d. How did you feel about it?
13. Thinking about the responsibilities you have shared and the image you saw for and of yourself, do you recall a time with the image was violated or damaged?
 - a. Describe that instance.
 - b. How was the instance handled?
 - i. Were you/they told what to do?
 1. If yes, who told you what to do?
 2. If no, how was a plan formulated?

- c. Who was involved?
14. What do you wish you had known?
 15. Would you have done things differently?
 16. What do you think about the NCAA approving payment for use of likeness and image?
 - a. Do you think student-athletes should be paid?
 17. What piece of advice would you give to current student-athletes?
 18. Is there anything we didn't talk about that you would like to talk about?

APPENDIX F

Stone Wilson YouTube Channel Snapshot and Link:



HOW FOOTBALL PLAYERS EAT
1M views • 3 years ago
Stone Wilson
Brief description of the foods I eat on a daily basis. Honestly I eat like a body builder does so results may vary for other football ...

A College Football Game Week. Whats it like?
322K views • 3 years ago
Stone Wilson
Due to weather, we took our home game against Alcorn to a neutral site in Birmingham while Irma was wrecking Florida. Stayed ...

How D1 Kickers Take Care Of Their Feet
455K views • 3 years ago
Stone Wilson
Again, sorry I haven't been posting a lot, been very busy. Just wanted to give you guys a quick lil video for the time being before ...

NCAA Cant Stop This: What Happened to Stone Wilson?
206K views • 2 years ago
Stone Wilson
It makes me so happy to say that I am back for good!!! This is just a quick video to explain what has happened in the past few ...

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCabNrqvKdEwBEdqX6YS0BQ>

APPENDIX G

Redacted School Logo

Marketing & Promotions

To Whom It May Concern:

Redacted mentor name have agreed to participate in the dissertation research for Alyssa C. Adamson with the University of Alabama regarding mentor roles in student-athlete personal brand building and management. Please let this letter act as a statement of support for my participation and contribution to this project.

Sincerely,

Redacted mentor signature

Redacted School Contact Information

APPENDIX H



Office of the Vice President for
Research & Economic Development
Office for Research Compliance

January 11, 2021

Alyssa Adamson
Department of Advertising and Public Relations
The University of Alabama
Box 870172

Re: IRB # EX-20-CM-065-A: "Image Building Processes of Student Athletes" Dear Ms. Adamson:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has reviewed the revision to your previously approved exempt protocol. The board has determined that the change does not affect the exempt status of your protocol.

Please remember that your protocol will expire on February 25, 2021.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

SM, CIM, CIP

Compliance Office

Jessup Building | Box 870127 | Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127 | 205-348-8461 | Fax 205-348-7189 | Toll Free 1-877-820-3066

Informed Consent

Please read this informed consent carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Consent Form Key Information:

- Participate in a 30 minute-1 hour interview about student athlete image and reputation management.
- Answer 15-20 questions
- No information collected that will connect identity with responses

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to better understand the who, what, when, where, and why of student-athlete image development and reputation management from the perspectives of those who have been student athletes as well as from the perspective of those who consistently interact with and mentor student athletes.

What you will do in the study: Participants will be recruited using email and social media "snowball sampling" procedures. Once a participant agrees to participate, the PI and the participant will arrange a time to meet virtually via video chat or phone call. When the participant is reached by phone or video chat, the first step will be to review the consent form and address any questions or concerns. The interview will begin once the individual signs the consent form. The PI will ask the participant 15-20 questions. The main topics for the interview will include the individual and their experiences as a student athlete or working with student athletes. As well as their perceptions of image and reputation as elements of student athlete life. An attached interview guide provides information on specific questions. The participant will be reminded that they do not have to answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable and that they can skip a question at any time or end the interview at any time .

Time required: The study will require about 30 minutes to 1 hour (60 minutes) of your time .

Risks: There are no anticipated risks to this study.

Benefits: Mentor participants are offered their choice between a \$10.00 gift certificate to either Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts. The PI will record the

participant's choice at the time of the interview. The study may help us inform future student athletes and advisers, coaches, or teachers on how to be approach image building and management processes. The qualitative approach (semi-structured interviews) will allow time for more detailed information to emerge that cannot traditionally be collected through survey or experimental research.

Confidentiality: The information that you share in the interview study will be handled confidentially. All identifying information for you, colleagues or current or former students will be removed in transcripts and subsequent materials and will be assigned pseudonyms. The list connecting your name (and any other names mentioned) will be kept in a password protected file on a password protected computer. When the study is completed, and the data have been analyzed the list will be deleted. All notes, transcripts, and write-ups of research will be kept in a password protected file on a password protected computer. Your name or any names you share will not be used in any report. Once data has been thoroughly analyzed and the research project is complete, all materials with identifying information will be destroyed.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw from the interview, any audio or video recording taken will be immediately destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from this study, you may tell the interviewer you wish to stop at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

Compensation/Reimbursement: Mentor participants are offered their choice between a \$10.00 gift certificate to either Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts. Additionally, your unique insights will further develop research into the area of pets and social media.

If you have questions about the study or need to report a study related issue please contact, contact:

Name of Principal Investigator: Alyssa C. Adamson M.S. Title: Student
Department Name: Advertising and Public Relations Telephone: 205 -348-7158
Email address: acadamson@crimson.ua.edu

Faculty Advisor's Name: Dr. Jessica Maddox Department Name: Journalism and Creative Media Telephone: 205-348-8653
Email address: jlmaddox@ua.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, would like to make suggestions or file complaints and concerns about the research study, please contact:

Ms. Tanta Myles, the University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer at {205)-348-8461 or toll -free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at <http://ovpred.ua.edu/research-compliance/prco/>. You may email the Office for Research Compliance at rscompliance@research.ua.edu.

Agreement:

- I agree to participate in the research study described above.
- I do not agree to participate in the research study described above.
- I agree to be recorded on video (audio, photograph) in the research study described above.
- I do not agree to be recorded on video (audio, photograph) in the research study described above.

Signature of Research Participant Date

Print Name of Research Participant

Signature of Investigator or other Person Obtaining Consent Date

Print Name of Investigator or other Person Obtaining Consent

Informed Consent

Please read this informed consent carefully before you decide to participate in the study. Consent Form Key Information:

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Time required: The study will require about 30 minutes to 1 hour (60 minutes) of your time.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks to this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help us inform future student athletes and advisers, coaches, or teachers on how to approach image building and management processes. The qualitative approach (semi-structured interviews) will allow time for more detailed information to emerge that cannot traditionally be collected through survey or experimental research.

Confidentiality: The information that you share in the interview study will be handled confidentially. All identifying information for you, colleagues or current or former students will be removed in transcripts and subsequent materials and will be assigned pseudonyms. The list connecting your name (and any other names mentioned) will be kept in a password protected file on a password protected computer. When the study is completed, and the data have been analyzed the list will be deleted. All notes, transcripts, and write-ups of research will be kept in a password protected file on a password protected computer. Your name or any names you share will not be used in any report. Once data has been thoroughly analyzed and the research project is complete, all materials with identifying information will be destroyed.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary .

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw from the interview, any audio or video recording taken will be immediately destroyed.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from this study, you may tell the interviewer you wish to stop at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

Compensation/Reimbursement: You will receive no payment for participating in the study. However, participants are greatly appreciated for their time and effort. Your unique insights will further develop research into the area of pets and social media.

If you have questions about the study or need to report a study related issue please contact, contact:

Name of Principal Investigator: Alyssa C. Adamson M.S. Title: Student

Department Name: Advertising and Public Relations Telephone: 205-348-7158

Email address: acadamson@crimson.ua.edu

Faculty Advisor's Name: Dr. Jessica Maddox Department Name: Journalism and Creative Media Telephone: 205-348-8653

Email address: jlmaddox@ua.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, would like to make suggestions or file complaints and concerns about the research study, please contact:

Ms. Tanta Myles, the University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer at (205)-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at <http://ovpred.ua.edu/research-compliance/prco/>. You may email the Office for Research Compliance at rscompliance@research.ua.edu.