

BLACKBALLED:
AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF RACE, GENDER,
AND IDENTITY ON THE SPORTS IMAGE REPAIR PROCESS

by

STEPHEN WESLEY RUSH

KENON A. BROWN, COMMITTEE CHAIR
ANDREW C. BILLINGS
ARTHUR W. ALLAWAY
M. SCOTT PARROTT
MATTHEW S. VANDYKE

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ABSTRACT

The spectacle of sports in America has consistently been shown to be a financial powerhouse (PwC, 2019). However, when there is a huge potential for financial gain, there also comes the risk of a huge potential financial loss. When athletes commit an act that is deemed offensive or inappropriate, there is the possibility to incur millions of dollars in lost revenue (Rishe, 2016). So, understanding the most successful way at safeguarding or repairing the image of an athlete is important. However, the image repair process is not as simple as it may seem. Therefore, this dissertation empirically investigated how one's own identity influenced their reactions to the athlete image repair process. Using both Social Identity Theory and Image Repair Theory, this study explored how better understanding the identity of an audience could also lead to better understanding of the success of image repair strategies.

A national sample of 368 individuals participated in an online posttest only experiment. During the experiment, participants were randomly assigned to view one of eight message conditions. Following this, participants responded to a series of questions assessing account acceptability, athlete likeability, likelihood to repeat the act, willingness to share negative word of mouth (nWOM), role model perceptions, and supportive behavior of the athlete.

Results supported previous IRT literature in showing the mortification strategy to be the most successful strategy at repairing an athlete's image, Black participants actually rated athletes that used the denial strategy to be more likeable. Race was also seen to be a strong indicator for how each race condition viewed the athlete in terms of likelihood to repeat the act with White participants believing that the athlete in question was more likely to repeat the act than Black

participants or Other participants. White participants also showed slight in-group favoritism towards the White athlete. Another interesting finding was that White participants were more likely to share negative word of mouth about a White athlete regardless of response strategy used and regardless of gender. When looking at how gender impacted the image repair process, it was found that overall, male participants were more likely to accept the account of female athletes, consider female athletes to be more likeable than the male athletes, and believe female athletes were less likely to recommit the crime.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance statistical test
ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance statistical test
F	Fisher's F ratio
M	Arithmetic mean
SD	Standard deviation
α	Cronbach's alpha
p	Probability value
N	Sample size
η_p^2	Measure of effect size
$<$	Less than
$>$	More than
%	Percent
WOM	Word of Mouth
IRT	Image Repair Theory
SCCT	Situational Crisis Communication Theory
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
MLB	Major League Baseball
NFL	National Football League
IRB	Institutional Review Board

DEDICATION

To my wife, Amanda, who has been my rock and biggest supporter through this entire journey.

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Roll Tide!

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The spectacle of sports in America has consistently been shown to be a financial powerhouse with a projected revenue of \$73 billion in 2019 alone (PwC, 2019). As a multibillion-dollar industry, sports play a large role in shaping American society and culture. The stars of this spectacle, the athletes and coaches, are placed in the media spotlight, becoming role-models and cultural influencers (Biskup & Pfister, 1999). Because these men and women are considered influencers, their lives are filmed, analyzed, and discussed on television programming, talk radio, and in newspaper articles. While most of their actions are related to their athletic performance, it is their off-the-field conduct that, if deemed illegal or nefarious, can be fatal to their careers (Benoit & Hanczor, 1994).

For instance, LeBron James's off-court conduct has lately focused on his philanthropic endeavors and opening an elementary school for at-risk children (Green, 2019). Actions like this are deemed to be authentic and result in positive perceptions of the athlete. Off-court behavior and conduct of this nature does not necessitate a response in order to protect an athlete's public image. However, in the case of Pete Rose, it was his off-field conduct that resulted in some of his greatest difficulties (McDorman, 2018). At the time of his retirement from professional baseball, Rose had won three World Series rings in addition to numerous other accolades and awards. However, in February 1989, the MLB began an investigation into allegations that Rose was betting on baseball, violating a sacred rule of conduct (McDorman, 2018). It was found that Rose had bet on 52 games during the 1987 season which resulted in him being banned from baseball for life. Rose would deny any involvement with gambling until admitting that he was

guilty in 2004, a move which started a long road to regain his standing within the sporting society.

The actions of an athlete are also only one aspect to consider. This dissertation came about due to the implications and consequences that could arise from correctly or incorrectly protecting the image of an athlete when they experience some form of crisis beyond the behavior itself, understanding that there are other factors to consider. For instance, when observing these crises, one cannot look only to the strategies employed to mitigate PR damage. Researchers must also take into consideration the race and gender of the athlete in question and determine how these social identities may influence the reaction of audience members. For instance, Tredway (2019) argues that Serena Williams endures greater criticism due to her going against traditional gender roles as well as participating in a predominantly “White” sport (also see Douglas, 2005; Schultz, 2005). In the final round of the 2018 U.S. Open, Serena was accused of illegally receiving coaching advice. A series of disagreements with the chair official began which ultimately ended in her calling the umpire a “thief,” leading to a game penalty (Maine, 2018). Instances of athletes receiving illegal coaching is commonplace; a point that former tennis player, John McEnroe, made in Williams’s defense (Murphy, 2019). McEnroe went on to argue that the penalty was “motivated by sexism” (Murphy, 2019) while Tredway (2019) adds that this is also due to her race.

The Significance of an Athlete’s Image

Understanding athlete image repair is more important today than ever because of the increased visibility and access that social media and news coverage now provide. Even since the 1920s, reporters have continually portrayed athletes as celebrities who perform feats that are “larger-than-life” (Smart, 2005). Mass media and the creation of the television specifically have

further spread their feats. However, these pale in comparison to the speed and breadth of the Internet and social media. Through the creation of online content, there are websites and fan pages focusing exclusively on the coverage of teams, athletes, and even mascots. Social media has even made it feel as though audiences have a personal connection with the athletes who post on their social media accounts. As access to the personal lives of athletes continues to grow, so does the need for athletes to protect their image.

Ineffective attempts at repairing an athlete's image can have major financial repercussions. This is due to an athlete being considered an extension of the franchise itself, with their actions potentially being viewed as representative of what the franchise supports (Doyle, 2011). In order for the franchise to protect its own image, actions that are viewed as overly damning will result in heavy discipline from the team. Benoit (2015) analyzed the New Orleans Saints and their bounty program, an instance in which the team awarded bonuses to players who were able to intentionally knock out opponents. The head coach, Sean Payton, and the general manager, Mickey Loomis, were quick to utilize a mortification strategy as well as use corrective action and claim this would not happen again. However, in order to protect the reputation of the NFL, Commissioner Roger Goodell ultimately suspended the Saints' general manager, head coach, one assistant coach, the defensive coordinator, as well as five players.

Not only can these actions cost athletes when it comes to team contracts, but also when corporate sponsorships and endorsement deals are involved (Sato et al., 2019). These sponsorships and endorsement deals can have a huge financial impact on athletes since they sometimes generate more income than actual team contracts do (Smart, 2005). As these relationships between organization and athlete are deemed to be beneficial, they can last almost the entire career and post-career of an athlete. This can be seen in the relationship between Nike

and Michael Jordan, a relationship which has been in place since 1985. Because endorsement deals can link an athlete so strongly with a brand, any negative action committed by an athlete can also reflect negatively on the endorsing organization (Jones & Schumann, 2004; Yoon & Shin, 2017). Brazeal (2008) argued that the success of an endorsement deal boils down to the image of the athlete being endorsed (also see Westberg, Stavros, & Wilson, 2011). In fact, when audiences view news coverage that reveals negative behavior of an athlete, they are less likely to purchase the items that the athlete endorses (Yoon & Shin, 2017). In order to mitigate any damage caused to the brand, the endorsing organizations will end the relationship with the athlete so that purchase intention is not damaged further (Doling, 2003). In the case of Tiger Woods, however, brands such as Gatorade, AT&T, and Gillette all severed ties with the athlete when news broke of his infidelity (Kennedy, 2019).

As displayed, the continued growth of media has put the personal lives of athletes on display more and more. Having less privacy than what used to be, public relations professionals must understand how the image repair process works and also how to effectively handle crisis situations. They must also understand that an athlete's image also has a "market value" which must be protected in order to promote financial security (Brazeal, 2008; Smart, 2005). Increased negative media attention due to less privacy can severely damage the livelihood of athletes regardless if a negative event happened on or off the field. One such example can be seen when American swimmer Ryan Lochte received international media attention after he was caught in a scandal during the 2016 Summer Olympics because of his off-the-field antics (Rishe, 2016). This resulted in Forbes projecting that Lochte would lose "at least \$5-10 million in future lifetime income" (Rishe, 2016). Protecting the image of an athlete from increased negative media attention should be something that public relations practitioners should understand in

order to ensure these lifetime earnings are never in danger of being lost.

Purpose of the Dissertation

This dissertation was conceived in order to empirically test how one's own identity may influence their reactions to the athlete image repair process. In order to assess this, both Benoit's (1995) Image Repair Theory and Social Identity Theory will be used as the theoretical foundation. First, Tajfel and Turner's (2004) social identity theory will be utilized to help explore how audiences receive and interpret messages when the speaker is similar to themselves or different. Since individuals will instinctively categorize people into similar and/or dissimilar groups to make sense of their surroundings, it should come as no surprise that will act more favorably towards those deemed similar to themselves (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). These prejudices could lead audiences to view others in a negative light if they are deemed different than themselves. Television programming also contains and promotes stereotypes regarding different genders, races, violence, and crime within the United States that may further these beliefs (Dixon, 2007; Shrum, 1998). By assessing the stereotypes and prejudices that are currently promoted, this dissertation sought to see how the presence of those elements may influence the acceptance of image repair statements.

Secondly, since this study was concerned with the acceptance of attacks on an athlete's image due to an offense being committed, Benoit's (1995) image repair theory was used. When athletes commit an action perceived as being wrongful, stakeholders attack the image of the individual who performed the act (Fediuk et al., 2010). Other previous image repair research has shown the mortification strategy to be most effective at repairing an athlete's image (e.g., Brown, Dickhaus, & Long, 2012; Glantz, 2013; Walsh & McAllister-Spooner, 2011), while the denial strategy is considered ineffective (Benoit & Drew, 1997). Using both of these strategies allowed

perceived race and perceived gender of the athlete to be tested more accurately to see how it influenced the reactions that an audience may have to the image repair attempts.

While media coverage can influence audience perceptions surrounding a potentially negative issue for an athlete, an effective image repair strategy can help mitigate damage done to his or her image. If the correct strategy is used and the public accepts the response, then minimal damage will occur, resulting in minimal financial losses as well. However, the inverse of this is also true. If a strategy is used that proves to be ineffective, audiences will not accept the athlete's response to the event and major damages may then occur (Seeger, 2006). However, if influences beyond our control, such as perceived race and gender of the athlete, impact the response strategy of the athlete, then he or she must be able to recognize those underlying prejudices and adapt as necessary. Overall, this study then will examine if perceived race and perceived gender impact the effectiveness of an athlete's image repair strategy based on the social identity of participants. Previous IRT studies have examined how the race and gender of the athlete impacts acceptance of crisis responses (see Brown, Billings, Mastro, Brown-Devlin, 2015; Brown, Billings, Devlin, 2016; Brown, Dickhaus, Harrison, & Rush, 2019), however, no studies have observed how the gender and race of the participant influence IRT success.

Significance of the Dissertation

This dissertation will provide both theoretical and practical implications to public relations professionals. Firstly, this dissertation will further the experimental scholarship around athlete image repair. Historically, analyses of the athlete image repair process have used a rhetorical approach to observe how athletes have spoken to the public when responding to a scandal or negative event. Previous research has investigated the response strategies employed by different athletes (e.g., Fortunato, 2008; Pfahl & Bates, 2008; Glantz, 2010; Kennedy, 2010),

with a growing line of research being conducted to observe how the selected response strategies impact attitudes of the athletes (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Brown, Dickhaus & Long, 2012; Brown, 2016; Brown, Billings, & Devlin, 2016; Johnson, 2015). Specifically, Brown et al. (2012) investigated how different response strategies impacted people's opinions of LeBron James's image following ESPN's special "The Decision" in which he broadcasted his choice to stay with the Cleveland Cavaliers, his team at the time, and instead agree to a contract with the Miami Heat. The previous studies primarily looked at which image repair strategy is most effective at repairing the athlete's image, with some studies even testing if the type of transgression committed impacted the strategy used. This dissertation will build on these empirical studies, dedicated to image repair and its applications in the sporting world, by exploring how the perceived race and perceived gender of an athlete committing a negative act impacts the acceptance of their image repair attempts.

This dissertation will also offer a more nuanced understanding of IRT by overlaying it with SIT. By analyzing the intersectionality of one's own identity in terms of race and gender and how it influences an individual's acceptance of an athlete's crisis response, the current study seeks to test a new theoretical direction of IRT. Future research will be able to take a more holistic approach to studying crisis communication and examine not only the factors surrounding the athlete but also those surrounding the fanbase that will receive the crisis response.

Next, this research will offer some real-world advice for those responsible for managing or representing professional athletes. There are some researchers (Curtin & Gaither, 2005; L'Etang, 2006) who argue that more studies should be conducted in a way that marries both the practical and the theoretical in order to better aid public relations professionals working in sports. Given the need for practical information, the findings in this study may aid those who handle the

public relations for athletes. By understanding how the race and gender of audience members influence the success of a crisis response, this research will help those that work with all athletes better understand how to effectively create a crisis response.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation started off by explaining why athlete image repair and social identity should be examined together. The second chapter will review all pertinent literature that will help guide the current study. The third chapter will present all research questions that will be investigated, the operationalization of variables to be measured, as well as the methodology selected for this dissertation. Chapter 4 will contain the results found with Chapter 5 summarizing the results as well as presenting theoretical and practical implications. Limitations of this study and suggestions for future research will also be acknowledged and discussed.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Identity Theory

Originally, social identity theory was used in explaining and understanding how individuals constructed opinions about themselves and the groups to which they belong (Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Tajfel (1972) conducted the seminal research in this area and argued that it is "...the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (p. 292). Successive research began to think of social identity theory in terms of how social groups form based on the perceptions of oneself and those around them (Hogg, 2006). Groups in which members belong are established through a number of shared traits and perceived categories such as one's religious beliefs, certain behaviors, their race and associated prejudices, as well as a desire to elevate one's group over another (Hogg & Reid, 2006). It is because of this desire to elevate one's group over another that certain hierarchies are created, allowing each group to compare themselves with one another. Group composition is structured around similar individuals (in-group) while those that considered to be different are considered alien (out-group) (Hogg, 2018). This theory sets out to explain intergroup behavior and takes place almost unconsciously in many people as a means to understand how they should act (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Social identity also exists on the basis of perceived existence of group status, legitimacy of the group boundaries, and the perceived ability to move into different groups as they are deemed to be desirable (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The power of social identity theory stems from

its interactivity, whereby an individual's psychology embodies and melds with the relations differentiating groups (Turner, 1999).

To assess these differentiations, individuals will compare themselves with others to determine their standing. First discussed by Festinger (1954), social comparison theory seeks to explain how individuals make comparisons amongst themselves, others, and their ideal image. When groups begin to compare themselves with the actions or beliefs of others, an assessment is made to determine if their group is inferior or superior to the compared group.

Within social comparison, two different types of comparisons are commonly made; upward or downward comparisons. By making an upward comparison, individuals will observe an individual or group that is considered to be superior in some manner. This type of comparison will act as a means of providing insight into how one's group may improve or to aspire to emulate. On the other hand, downward comparisons are made with defensive or protective intent. By comparing one's group with another group that is considered to be inferior, self-evaluations can be made to make an individual feel better about themselves. Observing a group deemed to be worse off or inferior will in turn make an individual feel more secure in their current group situation.

Another way these comparisons can be made is through depictions on television. Seeing how certain groups are portrayed on television acts to reinforce and strengthen existing beliefs while potentially promoting biased message. This can be seen in mediated depictions oftentimes being more complimentary of Whites than other groups (Mastro, 2015). With one group being presented in a more favorable light than other groups, these depictions will act to increase the favorably depicted group's self-esteem (e.g., Mastro, 2003). Given that Whites are often presented in a more favorable light than other groups, when stereotypical depictions are

presented, this will increase the distance believed to exist between Whites and other races/ethnicities (Mastro, 2015). Social comparison when it concerns one's race/ethnicity is a challenge in that this is one aspect that group members cannot change. Instead they must find creative ways to establish their group as being favorable.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) noted that individuals who wish to change group associations or assessments made about their in-group will attempt strategies of positive distinctiveness. By reframing the held perception of a group, members will begin to more strongly promote the belief that "we" are better off than "them" (Hogg, 2016). Groups will celebrate and parade different attributes that makes the group distinct as an integral component of a diverse society (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). So, after an individual has categorized, identified, and compared themselves and groups, maintaining group membership or even increasing the position of their in-group becomes important. After all, membership in a desirable in-group determines behavior, beliefs, and even self-esteem. Cialdini et al. (1976), found that college students were more likely to wear sweatshirts and other apparel showing support for their university after their university's football team won a football game. The inverse of this was also found to be true, when a university's football team lost a game, students were less likely to wear clothing and apparel in support of the university. In this case, being a fan or student of a particular football team was how individuals wanted to be known and therefore, the in-group that they most identified with. This display of positive distinctiveness shows how individuals want to be associated with desirable groups. Morewedge, Tang, and Larrick (2016) conducted a study in which in-groups based on preferred U.S. presidential candidates, Major League Baseball teams, National Football League teams, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball teams, and NCAA hockey teams were asked to bet against their self-identified in-group. In the study, participants

were asked if they would bet for or against their in-group even if they knew that their team would certainly lose in the upcoming competition. Even when bets were as small as \$5, participants would not “sell-out” and bet against their team as this could bring into question the legitimacy of their in-group membership claims (Morewedge, Tang, & Larrick, 2016). When individuals strongly associate with their in-group, they will display a willingness to incur financial loss in order to display their support and claim of being an in-group member.

However, what happens if after assessing all the groups, one finds themselves in a less desirable group than what they prefer? Since social identity theory exists on the basis of group existence, boundaries, and mobility, now we will discuss how group members react when they find themselves in a group that is perceived as being lower in status.

The first thing an individual can do if they believe their in-group is less than desirable is called *social mobility*. Here, individuals may make a play at leaving their current in-group and attempting to move up in status to another group; leading an out group to become their new in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals typically only seek to move upward in perceived group status membership. Moving into new groups can mean taking on new mannerisms and attitudes in order to identify with members of the new in-group. However, this is just one tactic when it comes to dealing with an in-group when it has lower status.

Another thing that individuals can do when in a lower status group is *social creativity*. Social creativity exists when a group that is perceived to have less status attempts to reframe a trait or quality possessed by group members as desirable (Tajfel, 1978). This can be seen within the “Black is beautiful” movement. Here, the darker colored skin of one group was deemed undesirable by another group. Because of this, the group with darker skin reframed the discussion to promote the beauty of darker colored skin and therefore elevate the status of their

group. This differs from social competition in that social creativity holds that groups boundaries are strong.

However, when group boundaries appear weak, groups may use *social competition* in order to address their in-group status. In short, those belonging to lower status groups will attempt to attack the legitimacy of higher status groups. All the while, higher status groups will attempt to undermine lower status groups in order to quell any potential restructuring of group dynamics and group hierarchy.

Some of these group competitions may result in something known as *social identity threat*. This occurs when a group perceived as having higher status consistently attacks a group with perceived lower status. Sometimes this may be a minority group being attacked on the basis of race, religion, or gender. In a recent study, Saleem and Ramasubramanian (2017) found that Muslim-Americans, that is those that are both Muslim and American, wish to not identify as Americans or associate with those identified as Americans after viewing news media in which Muslims were depicted as being terrorists or nefarious. This shows how social identity can push people to attack others to the point where membership to a perceived higher status group loses desirability.

This can also be seen in in-group bias where members of the in-group prefer to associate and help other in-group members. Juxtaposed with this is out group derogation which in the inverse – in-group members push away and treat out-group members poorly. With in-group bias, there is just a tendency to favor those who an individual deems to be similar and in-group members. Out-group derogation is an active effort to treat others poorly that are deemed to be out group members. As the definition of who represents the in-group narrows, there becomes a greater number of out-groups and thusly, a greater number of people who are treated poorly.

Once individuals perceive themselves as being in-group members, all other out-groups become depersonalized, taking on simplified characterizations and stereotypical reductions (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Wann and Grieve (2005) argue that this sense of in-group and out-group relationships or identities can be explained by a sense of an *us versus them* dynamic. This dichotomous relationship establishes all in-group members as friendly and familiar while all out-groups are seen as different and sometimes hostile. Thinking such as this causes greater divisiveness that is only acts to strengthen group boundaries. Social comparison theory states that individuals will base their own sense of worth through comparing themselves with another group and determining the difference between each group. The distance between the two people is then applied to the larger group that each person belongs to, defining the in-group's standing compared with an out-group. These comparisons are made based on similarities and/or differences ranging from occupation, socioeconomic status, to race.

Stereotypes.

Stereotypes are perpetuated beliefs about a group of people that create gendered and race-based social categories. Sometimes these created categories can influence how group members perceive themselves as well as others (Hundhammer & Mussweiler, 2012). While some stereotypes may occasionally be reflective of a group (Allport, 1979), they are oftentimes mistaken and simplified caricatures of others (e.g., Pettigrew, 1979; Snyder & Swann, 1978; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Not to be thought of solely as a means to understand the world around us, stereotypes also perpetuate prejudices and discrimination commonly experienced by women and minorities in professional (Gaucher et al., 2011), educational (London et al., 2012), as well as social settings (Rudman & Glick, 2010). When considering that in-groups are oftentimes ethnocentric in nature (Brewer & Campbell, 1976), stereotypes act to reinforce the

separation and division of differing groups. In fact, research into how racial and ethnic biases are created is rooted in social identity literature (Reid, Giles, & Harwood, 2005; see Mastro, 2009).

Stereotypes are not created in a vacuum either, as there are many ways they can be formed. Not limited to, but offering specific examples, stereotypes can come from personal experience, styles of thinking, cultural traditions, and the attention of this dissertation: mass media (see Eagly et al., 2004). Even though stereotypes are in themselves neutral, the power they possess to unknowingly impact our thinking, attitudes, and perceptions is something to consider. Historically stereotypical and counter-stereotypical content presented in the media can act as a powerful agent in creating how audiences perceive themselves and others (Eagly et al. 2004). Therefore, by having negative stereotypical depictions in the media, these presentations will be accepted as representative of reality (Romer, Jamieson, & de Coteau, 1998), and act to reinforce negative beliefs about out-group members. For instance, repetitious stereotypical depictions in media, whether they are accurate or inaccurate, that focus on gender, race, violence, and crime can generate and perpetuate biased and erroneous thinking (Dixon, 2007; Shrum, 1998). An example of this stereotype can be seen in the depiction of White women in crime drama television series being portrayed as the ideal victim; a fact that contradicts real-world data (Parrott & Parrott, 2015).

The Intersection of Racial Identity and Criminal Activity in Sports

The effects of social identity and stereotyping can become apparent when intersecting with sport. Here, athletes must take into account the racial biases of others. Sports media and their impact on opinions of race have been widely studied, specifically with how sports media present race and ethnicity to viewers (Bruce, 2004). Rainville and McCormack's (1977) seminal

piece on the interaction of race and sports media presented how sports commentaries were affected by the race of an athlete. Until the past fifteen years, Black athletes were usually presented as being strong and physical athletes while lacking the intelligence seen in White athletes (Eastman & Billings, 2004). While this racialized message was the norm, this traditional view has begun to shift so that present-day sports commentators display less overt racism when discussing Black athletes (Billings, 2004; Byrd & Utsler, 2007). As time advances, those who write scripts and stories for sports media are slowly becoming aware that their word choice and story structure are important in creating media that does not promote racialized depictions and images to viewers and readers. The sport that has seen the greatest improvement in this regard is football. Other sports however, still have more racialized commentary.

The usage of more racial language can be seen when observing how Tiger Woods was discussed by commentators and sports writers. Billings (2003) states that “when Woods won, he was not portrayed as Black, but when he was not successful, he was more likely to be characterized using traditional stereotypes of Black athletes” (p. 35). Considering the following and viewership of golf as a sport, it varies from that of football. However, how Black athletes are discussed within the sport is different. This is but one example of how Black athletes are still having to combat stereotypes in other sports (e.g., Eastman & Billings, 2001).

While it appears that racial stereotypes decrease as a sport increases in popularity and fan viewership, smaller sports still appear to be bastions of racial depictions and stereotypes. These depictions are not solely reserved for discussions of athletic ability. Mastro, Bleca, and Seate (2011) found that Black and White athletes are depicted differently when committing similar crimes. They stated that when Black athletes committed a crime, coverage was “derisive, accusatory, and sympathetic to the victim” (p. 539), while White athletes who committed a crime

were covered in ways that “promot[ed] situational explanations for the criminal behavior” (p. 540). When considering how this impacts viewers and audiences, Mastro, Blecha, and Seate (2011) note that by promoting stereotypes within a sports media context, these depictions can bleed over and reinforce stereotypes in the larger society. While coverage within sports media is showing small steps to reduce racialized depictions overall, the racialized depictions of crime show no signs of slowing down.

But does race actually play a role in perceptions of guilt in criminal activity? These types of racialized depictions of crime are seen even more in the broader media (Mastro, 2009). These perceptions can also be seen when viewing the evening news in which Blacks are typically presented as the perpetrators of a crime or aggressive. For instance, Romer, Jamieson, and DeCoteau (1998) found that while news outlets depict Blacks and Whites equally when covering stories not related to crime, Black Americans are shown twice as often as White Americans when discussing criminal activity. Dixon, Azocar, and Casas (2003) also observed that “African-Americans are much more likely to be absent from network news, and when they do appear, they are more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators than as victims or officers” (p. 517).

Concerning Latino individuals, they are typically depicted on television as hotheaded individuals having conversations related to crime (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). News media treats Latinos similarly to how Black Americans are covered, as being perpetrators of crime at a higher rate than Whites (Dixon & Linz, 2000). Similar to stories of Blacks committing crime, news stories cover Latinos more when the victim is White (Dixon & Linz, 2002).

Romer, Jamieson, and de Coteau (1998) posit that when these depictions become routine, it can affect thinking patterns in viewers to believe this to reflect reality. Therefore, being

exposed to television and news content in which Black and Latino individuals are disproportionately depicted as criminals can create a sub-conscious belief that criminals will likely be either Black or Latino. This creates a sense of ethnic blame where others become seen as a threat to in-groups discussed under social identity theory. Once lines are drawn and an out-group is deemed to be the “other,” any problem that the in-group observes can be conveniently placed on the out-group being criticized. To this, Romer et al. (1998) claims that, “[b]y focusing on problems associated with the outgroup members, the discourse perpetuates the belief that the outgroup has interests or values that conflict with the ingroup and deserves to be blamed for those problems” (p. 287). If this is taken and applied to athletes and perceptions of guilt, one can easily see how minority races can receive a greater degree of blame and be presented as more aggressive.

The Intersection of Gender Identity and Criminal Activity in Sports

In the same way that minorities are diminished and marginalized through characterizations on television, female athletes face similar, if not greater, challenges (see Webster, 2009; Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013). In addition to this, women athletes also have to deal with greater objectification and be expected to behave in ways that perpetuate gender norms with no margin for error (Mean, 2013; Webster, 2009). This then becomes yet another layer of challenges that women athletes of color experience as they are also expected to fit racialized norms (Mean, 2013). Women athletes must also fight to gain representation and equality with televised coverage (Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013). To a degree, the importance of an event or spectacle is displayed by how much television coverage it receives. Billings and Young (2015) found that when comparing ESPN’s *SportsCenter* and Fox Sports 1’s *Fox Sports Live*, women’s sports were featured less than 1% of the time across both networks.

Cooky, Messner, and Hextrum (2013) conducted a longitudinal study that revealed that television coverage of women's sports was at 1.6%, the lowest it had been in over the previous two decades. However, even when women athletes received airtime coverage, they were not highlighted or celebrated for their "larger-than-life" feats of athleticism. Instead, the researchers found that when women athletes or women's sports were highlighted on television, it was typically accompanied with some form of controversy, violence, rule-breaking, or scandal. Crises that women athletes face is shown to be the bulk of airtime coverage allotted (Compton, 2013). Compton (2013) even concluded that while male athletes are applauded for their on-field physicality and aggression, "When a female takes it too far...it becomes national news" (p.263). Here, male and female athletes are held to two distinctly different standards with women having to behave and look a certain way (Allison & Pegoraro, 2018; Compton, 2013). In short, of the little televised analysis that is allotted to women's sports, it is less of a blessing and more of a curse.

Since media coverage is more focused on the behavior of women athletes, little room is left for discussion of their athletic performance (Compton, 2013). Juxtaposed to male athlete's, signs of aggression on the field of play and court is expected if not even encouraged, even when it is taken too far. One example that illustrates this is that of University of New Mexico soccer player Elizabeth Lambert. In 2009, Lambert was playing increasingly aggressive throughout an entire soccer match, culminating in her grabbing the hair of Brigham Young University's Cassidy Shumway and pulling her to the ground (Hays, 2009). This on-field display ultimately caused her to be suspended due to the public outcry over her aggressive actions. As a result, Lambert also received increased negative media attention which hurt her image and led the incident to be labeled as a "catfight" (Hays, 2009). Hays (2009) argued that describing this event as such stands as a "reminder that some segment of the population still [found] comfort in mocking the very idea of

women's competing with [that] level of intensity" (Hays, 2009, p. 1). Afterwards, Lambert quickly expressed regret of her actions, reiterated her good qualities, minimized the ordeal, and promised corrective action so that she would not act this way again. Even after all of this, the public had already made up their minds and her image was damaged.

This type of scrutiny and level of expectation is even more pronounced when considering professional female athletes such as Serena and Venus Williams. Both athletes are largely popular and have wide fan bases. They have also received various sponsorship deals and experienced great success on-court. However, some argue that they have been received with mixed feelings due to their defiance of what is considered the norm, both in terms of sexuality and femininity, in a predominantly "White" sport (Douglas, 2005; Schultz, 2005; Tredway, 2019). This has led to them receiving overwhelming and swift criticism after they commit any wrongfully deemed act. One example of this was when Serena Williams aggressively contested a call while competing in the 2009 U.S. Open. Her vocal outrage over the call was made immediately clear, resulting in a massive fine for unsportsmanlike behavior and a 2-year probation. More recently, Serena also found herself in a similar situation during the 2018 U.S. Open finals as well. While playing in the final round of the tournament, she was accused by the court umpire of illegally receiving aid and advice from her coach who was sitting in the stands. This first incident incurred a verbal warning from the court umpire. Later in the match, Williams broke her racket which resulted in a stronger repercussion, a one-point penalty. At this time, Williams questioned the umpire's decision in a conversation that escalated into an argument which ended in her calling the umpire a "thief" ultimately leading to a game penalty (Maine, 2018). While her behavior on both accounts is not excusable, the problem lies in how her male counterparts are treated when they respond in similar fashion. When male tennis players have

had an aggressive disagreement with an umpire, they can expect less of a reaction from both officials as well as spectators. For an example, look no further than the behavior of former tennis player, John McEnroe, who has admitted that his behavior during a match was oftentimes much worse than that of Williams and that it was unfair (Cronin, 2013; Murphy, 2019).

While McEnroe's admittance does not mean to completely overlook verbal outburst, it presents the challenges that women athletes, and women athletes of color even more so, must combat if their actions are deemed inappropriate. It is then with this in mind that women athletes must consider how sex and race-based dominant dogmas influence any attempt at repairing their image (Mean, 2013). In this sense, the very notion of femininity and their expected behavior becomes the benchmark of how a successful female athlete is defined (Webster, 2009), while perceptions of physicality and masculinity are reprimanded (Tredway, 2019). It should come as no surprise that after these events, people did not readily support Serena Williams (Brazeal, 2013).

If this is how audiences react when a female athlete commits an act that is only considered not appropriate, then the repercussions of committing a criminal act will be even more severe than their male counterparts. In 2007, Marion Jones, a Black American Olympic sprinter, admitted to lying under oath about using performance-enhancing drugs. Up until that point she had spent years denying this fact. So once she confessed, Jones received a sentencing of six months in federal prison. The sentencing in this case differs with how male athletes are sometimes punished. Now compare this with American cyclist Lance Armstrong and his doping scandal. At the time, Armstrong was the most decorated Tour de France winner with seven titles when it was uncovered that he had used performance enhancing drugs. Similar to Jones, Armstrong lied under oath about using PEDs; however, he has yet to face any criminal charges.

While neither of their actions are appropriate, a double-standard appears when comparing how men and women are treated, with women of color receiving even harsher punishments. In a similar crime, Tammy Thomas, a White female cyclist, was also found to be guilty of lying about doping allegations and received no jail time. Even though both female athletes (Jones and Thomas) committed similar crimes, they were both treated differently, showing that there is a lack of consistency with punishment for crime when considering gender.

Image Repair Theory

The previous literature concerning race and gender when discussing crime in sports should ultimately lead to the question of how these athletes will respond to negative claims made against them. This next section will discuss how athletes combat these slights through the means of Benoit's (1995) Image Repair Theory (IRT). As a theory, IRT has been primarily reviewed through rhetorical studies which focus on the opinions held about an individual. In an early content analysis, Avery et al. (2010) found that out of 11 articles focusing on the offenses of individuals, 10 of the articles used IRT as the theoretical lens with the other article using IRT along with Coombs (2007) Situational Crisis Communication Theory. Since then, Hambrick (2018) noted that most recent studies of sport-related image repair often focus on a single athlete and assess the employed image repair strategies. Because IRT has been shown to be more readily employed when focusing on an individual, it was selected for this current study. Initially, IRT was applied more to Benoit's political communication research and slowly grew to encompass athlete and sport image repair through several case studies (Brinson & Benoit, 1999).

Image.

Central to the study of IRT is the notion of one's image, however, understanding what image means can be difficult. When surveying the literature concerning image, one will find that

there are a number of descriptions of what it means, with some instances treating it as synonymous with reputation (Coombs, 2005; Grunig, 1993). With research in fields ranging from marketing to public relations, it has found that image will take on the definition of the field in which it is being studied (Fombrun & Rindova, 1996). However, this is problematic. While some have argued that image would do well to have a unified and agreed upon definition (Bromley, 2000), the definitions are still numerous. For instance, Bromley (2000) argued that image is the face or front an entity shows an audience while reputation is how that audience perceives the entity. A similar definition was presented by Brown et al. (2006) who stated image as being an amalgamation of different opinions which were created in order to charm stakeholders. Benoit and Hanczor (1994) however presented the definition of image to be how an audience perceives an entity as a result of the “words and actions of that person...and behavior of other relevant actors” (p. 40). As seen, Benoit and Hanczor’s (1994) definition is more concerned with the audience while Brown et al. (2006) is more entity-focused. Definitions as varied as this can lead to confusion when each paper claims to be discussing the same term.

Prior research argued that separating the image and reputation was futile because both terms together created a total impression of the entity being discussed (see Dowling, 1993; Caruana, 1997; Ind, 1997). However, it was Kennedy (1977) who had previously argued that if scholars were to use the two terms interchangeably, then they must ensure that any test participants understood the terminology so as to ensure the researchers were testing what they had planned. This would not last as some in public relations argued that the term image carried with it negative connotations (Bernstein, 1984). Later, it was seen how image had an image problem itself. Grunig (1993) and Botan (1993) later defined image as the altered and occasionally embellished depiction of an individual. This shows how image was perceived as a

negative thing only to be used when attempting to cover up the truth. It was because of this that both public relations professionals as well as researchers began to prefer the term reputation instead (Coombs, 2005).

This led researchers to begin separating the two terms to be distinct and more easily studied with reputation being deemed a perception of an entity that is assembled over time (e.g., Gray & Balmer, 1998). More specifically, reputation should be thought of as something compiled and constructed via a consistent and stable performance over time while image is amassed quickly (Gray & Balmer, 1998). Practically, devices typically utilized to disseminate information quickly (e.g. advertisements and press releases) impact image while intentionally and consistently using these devices in a particular manner over time would ultimately impact reputation. Using this distinction between image and reputation, empirical testing of a crisis response is would do better to measure one's image rather than reputation. Given the speed at which a crisis occurs and the response issued by an athlete, image can be more accurately measured, whereas a longitudinal study would be needed in order to assess one's reputation.

Image Repair Overview.

Image Repair Theory (IRT) came out of a need for individuals and entities to respond when claims of negative actions are brought against them (Benoit, 1995). Since all theory is derived from existing theory, Benoit (1995) relied on Rosenfield (1968) and his study on self-defense as well as Burke (1973) and his work on responding to experienced guilt after wrongdoing to help shape IRT. However, it was the research of Ware and Linkugel (1973) on apologia that was integral for the development of this theory. Their research on apologia steamed from the earlier work of Abelson (1959) which argued that when an individual has their character or image attacked, the public will expect the individual to defend themselves by

responding to these claims. Since one's own image is worth defending, the criticized individual will utilize any means within their ability to respond.

As a means to counter attacks made, Ware and Linkugel (1973) presented four strategies to be used in response. These strategies are attacks, denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). It was these strategies that helped Benoit The first strategy, denial, is when the attacked individual claims that they had no involvement with the offending incident, thus disassociating themselves with any negative connection. Bolstering is a strategy used when the attacked individual attempts to disassociate by attempting to present themselves as more favorable to the public. The third strategy, differentiation, attempts to make a clear distinction between the act and the respondent, showing that the act is offensive while the individual is guiltless. The last strategy, transcendence, attempts to present the negative act so that it appears more easily justifiable.

This early research provides the basis for one of the central tenants of IRT, that one's own image is important and worth defending when felt that it is being threatened or attacked. Benoit (1995) posits that the desire to repair one's image when experiencing assaults is something that is unavoidable due to four explanations. The first being our world is made up of finite resources, meaning there is only so far these resources can be distributed. This lack of available resources leads people to compete for greater portions, which inevitably leads some to become angry at how the resources are allocated. The second reason is that sometimes circumstances occur that are beyond our control that inhibit us from meeting our obligations. This can be as simple as heavy traffic making it so that we are late to or miss a meeting entirely. People, events, and our environment can have a significant impact on our behaviors and create problems, not just for us, but also for those who depend on us. Third, humans make mistakes all

the time, whether intentionally or unintentionally. We may forget something while running errands for a loved one or either act inappropriate while under the influence of a substance. Regardless of the reason, these instances show how it is human nature to make mistakes. The last reason why we would have a desire to repair our image is that each human is unique with their own personal goals and priorities that can foster conflict when met with the competing goals and priorities of another.

When such inevitable incidents occur, it is likely that others will attack or blame us and our behavior. And since protecting our image is vital, understanding these attacks on a person's image is paramount. These attacks are comprised of two basic components. The first of which is that an action has to have occurred that is deemed offensive or undesirable. After all, it is unlikely that actions deemed to be positive or helpful to the public will be disparaged. The second component of these attacks is that someone must be held accountable for these negative actions. Once the public have deemed an action negative, they will place the blame on an individual. The perception of guilt, even if the accused person is blameless, dictates that the person under scrutiny must formulate a response to these claims (Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 2007). In the same way, if an individual is not perceived as being guilty of the criticized deed, then there is no need for the individual to respond.

Benoit (1995) discusses two reasons as to the importance of maintaining a favorable image. The first of which is that a positive sense of self-image comes from a positive audience-facing image. Having others believe your image is more negative can bring about a number of undesirable outcomes such as fear, external pressure, and guilt; all of which will have a negative impact on one's wellbeing. This can also lead to negative decisions from the public such as prison sentences, which would obviously lead to greater negative self-image. The second reason

that maintaining a favorable image is that a preexisting positive self-image can help to persuade publics since in times of crisis, the credibility of an individual is called into question. Being able to use your already existing positive image can enable you to more easily present persuasive material. It was Aristotle that argued, “We believe good men more fully and more readily than others; this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely where exact certainty is impossible and opinions divided” (1954, 1356a6-8).

Originally referred to as image restoration theory, Benoit (2006) posited that it should instead be referred to as “image repair.” This is due to the earlier phrasing, image restoration, promoting the notion that someone’s image can always be successfully restored to how it was viewed prior to the event. Here the notion of image repair allows for the acceptance that an individual may only be able to repair some of the damage that has been done to their image. Another reason is that not all images of people are considered good. On the contrary, some may have a rather negative image before an event and thus there is little restoration that may take place (Benoit, 2006).

Since IRT is a communicated response to an event, there are two communication-based critical assumptions that provide the foundation of IRT. The first of which is that all communication is a goal-directed activity. This point has been argued since Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. Each person infuses their communication with their beliefs, goals, priorities, and motivations in order to achieve the outcome they desire. Clark and Delia (1979) provided three objectives that are imbued in every verbal transaction. The first goal of communication is that a response is not only expected but required. Secondly, communication helps to establish and maintain relationships and connections with those around us. Lastly, communication allows us to present our ideal self to others so that they might think more highly of us.

Image Repair Strategies.

When an individual finds themselves having to respond to an act of wrongdoing, there are a number of ways in which they can decide to reply in order to defend their image. Benoit (1995) took these responses, combined with current research on apologia and created a typology of image repair strategies. This typology contained within it 14 different strategy variations contained within five larger distinct strategy categories. Through this list of strategies, Benoit (1995) presented a comprehensive list of different response strategies one may take while attempting to repair one's image. This list will be discussed in the order in which Benoit (1995; 2015) has arranged his typology of image repair strategies.

The first main strategy that can be used to repair one's image is *denial*. In this strategy, the accused individual denies any involvement in the act that has been deemed wrongful (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). This can be seen in both denying that the accused individual was involved to even denying that the act even occurred. If the audience believes the speaker, then the accused is pardoned from any negative association (Benoit, 2015). Here, Benoit (1995) offers two variations to this strategy in order to provide a more detailed understanding of this response strategy. The first variation is a simple denial. This is when the individual claims that they had no involvement in the incident that has taken place. However, if the accused claims they had no part in the wrongful act when the act has clearly taken place, the accused may then choose to shift the blame. Benoit (2015) argues that this variation of denial may be more effective than the simple variant because it gives the audience a clear target to question and doubt.

If the accused individual is unable to deny their involvement in the act, then the accused may be able to avoid their liability through *evading responsibility*. Benoit notes that there are four variants that make up this strategy. The first variation is that of provocation, which was

once referred to as scapegoating (Scott & Lyman, 1968), however, Benoit (2015) argued that it was renamed so as not to be confused with the shifting the blame strategy. When an individual chooses to use the provocation strategy, they are claiming that their actions only occurred as a reaction to another person's wrongful act. The second variation of this strategy is defeasibility in which the accused states that an event occurred that was outside of his or her control and as a result, they accused should not be held responsible (Scott & Lyman, 1968). The third variant would have the accused claim that the wrongful event was an accident. Instead of denying the occurrence of the incident, the accused individual will reveal some detail that absolves them from responsibility. The last variation of evading responsibility has the accused claiming they acted in a manner of good intention (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). With this strategy, the accused argues that their responsibility for the act should be forgiven since they only intended for their actions to bring about good.

The third strategy laid out by Benoit (1995) is that of *reducing offensiveness*. This strategy has the most variations of all of them with six total variations. The first of which is bolstering. This variation will have the accused individual refer to previous acts that were deemed to be positive in order to help offset any resulting perceptions. The second variation is to minimize the act so that the public and/or media believes the act is not as serious as it is being portrayed. Another variation is for the accused to use differentiation (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). In this strategy, the accused will attempt to make their actions sound better than other similar actions. For instance, Otterman (2011) observed an instance in which two individuals who stole a large sum of money attempted to communicate that they were only borrowing the money since that appears better than being labeled a thief. Fourth of the variations is that of transcendence. Here, the accused will attempt to change the context of the act and therefore, place the action in a

favorable light. Here, Benoit (2015) offers the example of Robin Hood claiming to steal from the rich in order to help those less fortunate. Fifth, individuals may choose to attack those who have accused them. This attack by the accused to the accuser acts to restructure the field so that the accuser now has their credibility called into question. By doing this, the accused may be able to diminish the threat of the accusations that have been lobbed against him/her. The final variation that can be used is for the accused to provide some sort of compensation those who have been directly negatively impacted by his/her actions (Schonbach, 1980). By offering some form of repayment, the accused attempts to counterbalance any negative sentiment expressed towards them.

The fourth strategy that can be utilized when accused of a negative act is to perform some sort of *corrective action*. Here the accused vows to perform some action that will restore things to the way they were prior to the event or promise to not allow this event to happen moving forward. This can be through financial means or even promising the public that he/she will “change their ways.” While some (i.e., Goffman, 1971) hold that this is a component of an apology, Benoit and Lindsey (1987) presents that the accused is able to offer to correct the events that have transpired without having to admit any guilt for the act in question. This can be seen in the classic example of when Tylenol began initiating the use of tamper-resistant bottles as a response to the poisoning of customers due to bottles that had been tainted.

The fifth and final strategy of IRT is that of *mortification*. This strategy, same as with corrective action, does not have a variation. In the mortification approach, the accused may admit wrongdoing and ask for forgiveness. However, Benoit (2015) mentions that while this may appear to be the simplest strategy, there is no universal consensus on what language an apology should contain. For instance, there is a big difference between the sentiment of “I’m

sorry I hurt you” and “I’m sorry you feel that way.” While both of these statements contain the phrase “I’m sorry,” they are not equal in the sentiment they are trying to convey. Also, the mortification and corrective action strategies can be utilized as a multi-strategy approach to responding to an incident. Here, an individual who has committed some wrongful act will issue an apology followed by stating that this action or incident will happen again. See Table 2.1 for a summary of the different response strategies used within IRT.

Table 2.1

Benoit’s (1995, 2015) Response Strategies Based on IRT

Categories	Strategies and Explanations
Denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple denial • <i>Stating that the organization or individual did not perform the act in question</i>
Evading responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifting the blame • Provocation • <i>Scapegoating, claiming the actions were provoked by the actions of another person or organization</i> • Defeasibility • <i>Claiming the action was provoked by lack of information or misinformation</i>
Reducing offensiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accident • Good intentions • Bolstering • <i>Stressing the positive traits of the organization or individual</i> • Minimization • <i>Claiming the crisis is not as serious as the public or media perceives</i> • Differentiation • <i>Making the act seem less offensive than the public perceives</i> • Transcendence • <i>Places the crisis in a more favorable context</i> • Attack the accuser
Corrective action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation • Corrective action • <i>Promising to correct the problem</i>
Mortification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mortification • <i>Admitting the crisis was the organization’s or individual’s fault and asking for forgiveness</i>

Out of these five strategies, two are considered to be on either side of the response continuum, denial and mortification (Brown et al., 2019). Denial as a response has been examined mainly in rhetorical athlete image repair studies. Although sometimes employed, it is considered to be ineffective in garnering a positive response from audiences, especially in instances where the athlete is actually responsible (Coombs, Holladay, & Claeys, 2016). Juxtaposed to denial is the mortification strategy. This strategy has been found to be the most effective in a number of cases (Hambrick, 2018). While denial can be used as a sole response strategy, mortification is rarely used by itself. However, multiple researchers have stated that in order for athletes to have the most benefit out of this strategy, they need to apologize as early as possible (Blaney, 2016; Brazael, 2013; McGuire & McKinnon, 2013).

Mortification as a strategy is rarely used by itself, however. Instead it will be employed with another of the five strategies, typically corrective action or bolstering (Brown et al., 2017). While there are many different combinations that athletes could use with mortification, one discouraged combination is to use mortification and denial together. With those athletes that decide to use both the denial and mortification strategies being less successful at repairing their image than if they would have used the mortification strategy solely. Hambrick (2018) argues that both responses being used in tandem creates a conflicting message, making the athlete appear insincere.

Athlete Image Repair.

As IRT expanded, researchers began to apply this theory to athletes and the sporting world. Hambrick (2018) compiled all published image repair studies which focused on athletes between 1984 and 2017 and found that 38 studies had been published up to that point. A trend that has increased within the past decade (e.g., Glantz, 2010; Walsh & McAlister-Spooner, 2011;

Brown, Dickhaus & Long, 2012; Holdener & Kauffman, 2014; Hambrick, Frederick & Sanderson, 2015; Brown, 2016; Brown, Billings, Mastro, & Brown-Devlin, 2015; Brown et al. 2017). Societal progress, while a positive thing, can also bring new challenges. As such, the private lives of athletes become more transparent because of social media and messages spread faster and further than ever before (Valentini & Kruckeberg, 2016). It is because of this speed that messages are disseminated quickly and crises can get out of control (Valentini, Romenti, & Kruckeberg, 2017). Even when messages can travel rapidly online that an incident can become widely known before it is ever officially reported on the news (Valentini & Kruckeberg, 2012). Therefore, this illustrate the level of importance that should be placed on athlete image repair and the process of individual athletes fighting to protect their image (Allison, Pegoraro, Frederick, & Thompson (2019). This is even more true when considering how athletes can sometimes commit acts that are deemed to be criminal. The presence of social media can Kudlac (2010) stated that there has been an increase in media coverage of athlete criminal behavior, not necessarily due to higher than average rates, but due to the position and status that athletes hold. Since they experience celebrity status, the public believes that athletes should behave in an appropriate manner. Given their status and visibility, athletes are expected to defend any actions that may be called into question.

Initially, athlete image repair was studied through rhetorical analysis, with the first study being conducted by Benoit and Hanczor (1994). In this study, the researchers analyzed former American Olympic figure skater, Tonya Harding after her criminal offense against former teammate, Nancy Kerrigan. During analysis, the researchers observed that Harding utilized a multi-strategy approach. The strategies used were bolstering, denial of any involvement, and even attacking the accuser, Jeff Gillooly her ex-husband. As displayed with the resulting

sentiment expressed towards Harding by the public, the researchers stated that her efforts to repair her image proved to be ineffective. This fact, the researchers argued, was because when initially confronted about the attacks, Harding lied and claimed she was unaware. Once evidence began to come out, the proof of her involvement exposed the lie and made her appear even more guilty.

Harding was also not the only high-profile Olympic athlete to commit a wrongful act and have to respond to negative claims. More recently, during the 2016 Olympic Games, American swimmers Ryan Lochte, Jimmy Feigen, Gunnar Bentz, and Jack Conger were all involved in an incident in which the athletes claimed they had been robbed at gun-point by police officers at a gas station in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. However, once the incident was investigated, it was revealed that the athletes had embellished the events of the evening (Domonoske, 2016). The real events were that after a night out celebrating the swimming portion of the Olympics being over, the athletes stopped at a gas station and finding the bathroom locked, proceeded to urinate in the bushes near the building with Lochte also pulling down a framed poster (Auerbach & Brennan, 2016). Some security guards, who Lochte drunkenly mistook as police officers, approached the athletes with guns drawn and asked for the swimmers to pay for damages done to the building. Once the truth came out, Lochte, who most of the media attention had focused on, issued an apology via Instagram for his actions and that this event overshadowed the Olympics (Pierce, 2016). After Lochte issued a “half-hearted” apology (Czarnecki, 2016), he received a 10-month suspension from professional swimming (Auerbach & Brennan, 2016) as well as had all of his sponsors drop him. It was estimated that this incident at the 2016 Olympic Games cost Lochte between “at least \$5-10 million in future lifetime income” and caused others to claim that

“if they gave out Olympic gold medals for stupidity, Ryan Lochte would have won more hardware at the 2016 Rio Games” (Rishe, 2016).

Allison and Pegoraro (2018) investigated U.S. retired professional soccer player, Abby Wambach, and her off-the-field transgression. In 2015, Wambach retired from professional soccer after helping her team win the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup and being featured on the Time 100 list of most influential people of that year (Hamm, 2015). However, shortly after Wambach’s retirement, she was found guilty of driving while under the influence of intoxicants (DUII). Allison and Pegoraro (2018) analyzed Wambach’s Facebook posts following her retirement announcement and after her arrest to see how her fans and followers would react to see if there was any change in sentiment between the two posts. In her response, Wambach utilized the mortification and corrective action strategies, which garnered 56,312 reactions on the Facebook post. After analyzing the posts through Leximancer, the researchers found Wambach’s IRT response to be successful at repairing her image with some of her fans even coming to her aid and helping her do some image repair work for her (Allison & Pegoraro, 2018); an occurrence seen in previous studies on social media users (Brown & Billings, 2013; Brown, Brown, & Billings, 2015).

However, just the presence of incriminating evidence does not automatically indicate that attempts at image repair will fail. Walsh and McAllister-Spooner (2011) studied the incident in which a British tabloid featured a photograph of Michael Phelps, an American Olympic swimmer, smoking marijuana. Phelps, the most decorated Olympic swimmer in history, utilized the mortification strategy and said he was sorry and that he would not allow this to happen again (corrective action). Phelps also stated the he was still a young athlete and made mistakes (defeasibility) to combat this. By using a three-pronged approach, Walsh and McAllister-

Spooner (2011) argued that Phelps's attempts to repair his image were successful due to the resulting continued support from his corporate sponsors and the mostly positive media coverage he received after his response.

Benoit (2013) examined the strategies used by Tiger Woods after news broke of his marital infidelity. The strategies he chose to employ were mortification and corrective action when discussing his infidelity, and then using transcendence and attacking the accuser when appealing to his right to privacy and his desire for his family to be left alone. Benoit (2013) argued that Woods's selection of strategies was appropriate, however, too much time had passed between when the news broke and when he offered a reply. This led audiences to question the sincerity of his statements. These findings supported by a content analysis conducted by Husselbee and Stein (2012) in which the researchers found that newspaper coverage emphasized Woods's character flaws, claimed he had not fully accepted responsibility for his actions, and doubted his apology.

Benoit (2015) analyzed the New Orleans Saints and when it was revealed that the team awarded bonuses to players who were able to intentionally knock out opponents. The head coach, Sean Payton, and the general manager, Mickey Loomis, were quick to utilize a mortification strategy and assume responsibility for the bounty program as well as use corrective action and claim this would not happen again. As a part of their response, they also claimed that Tom Benson, owner of the Saints, was unaware of the program, and was innocent. This crisis also impacted the reputation of the NFL as a whole however and led Commissioner Roger Goodell to utilize the corrective actions strategy. This resulted in Goodell suspending the Saints' general manager, head coach, one assistant coach, the defensive coordinator, as well as five players.

As displayed above, the primary research conducted on IRT are rhetorical studies. This is due to rhetorical studies using IRT assessing each case from a source-oriented perspective. By using this approach, the studies were more concerned with how the accused party attempted to repair his or her image. These rhetorical studies have been incredibly beneficial in providing a base of information that helps us understand how individuals use different strategies while attempting to repair their image. However, for IRT to continue to develop, some scholars are argued that IRT should be looked at from a more audience-oriented approach. Burns and Bruner (2000) as well as Benoit (2000) pointed out that a more audience-oriented approach to IRT would be beneficial in advancing the theory. An audience-oriented approach means that the focus should shift to understand how audiences respond to different image repair strategies in different contexts. An advancement such as this requires a growth of empirical methods used to understand the effects on different publics.

In response to this, there has been a steady increase in experimental studies using athlete IRT as a basis (Brown, Dickhaus & Long, 2012; Brown, Billings, Mastro, & Brown-Devlin, 2015; Brown, 2016; Brown, Billings, & Devlin, 2016; Brown, Murphy, & Maxwell, 2017; Brown, Dickhaus, Harrison, & Rush, 2019). Brown et al. (2012) experimentally observed which IRT strategy would be most successful in repairing American basketball player LeBron James's image during the hourlong ESPN special "The Decision" in which he announced where he would be playing. The researchers stated that this particular case was studied not due to legal issues or a scandal, but due to his credibility being damaged while he was a free agent. Results reflected that only the mortification strategy proved to be effective at improving his image after "The Decision", while the shifting the blame and bolstering strategies further damaged his image. One recent experiment conducted by Brown et al. (2019) assessed how an athlete's response strategy

would be impacted by the athlete's race and by how much sports news participants consumed. The researchers manipulated the race (Black and White) of a fictitious athlete as well as the IRT strategy employed (denial and mortification). Results showed that participants who consumed more sports news were more likely to positively view Black athletes instead of a White athlete as well as accept a Black athlete's use of a denial response more so than that of a White athlete.

Research Questions

When athletes find themselves in the difficult position of responding to a crisis, their responses must be expertly delivered to mitigate damages done to their image. Noting the previous literature, athlete image repair is still not commonly tested through experimental design. Because of this, there are a number of areas in which athlete image repair has yet to be studied. One such area is that when an athlete responds to an incident, this response does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, these men and women will present their response to groups of people comprised of those who look, talk, and behave in similar and dissimilar ways. When considering how an athlete is expected to deliver a crisis response to in-group and out-group members, it becomes apparent that this is not an easy task. Understanding that out-group members may be less likely to show support, athletes are having to overcome greater challenges if a majority of the audience is comprised of out-group members. In this way, the interplay of an athlete's race, gender, and athlete image repair strategy should be considered in tandem with the race and gender of audience members in order to take a holistic approach to understanding athlete image repair. It is from this that the present study seeks to understand how the in-group, based on race and gender, of audience members will impact the image repair strategy of an athlete if he/she is an in-group versus an out-group member, based on race and gender.

In order to test the impact of identity on IRT, two image repair strategies will be used. Brown et al. (2019) argued that out of the five strategies, denial and mortification are considered to be opposite each other on the response continuum. On one side is denial, a strategy found to be least successful at eliciting a positive response for the speaker, especially when guilt of the wrongdoing is obvious (Coombs, Holladay, & Claeys, 2016). Sitting opposite to the denial strategy is the mortification strategy. Hambrick (2018) argues that this strategy has been found to be the most effective strategy at eliciting a positive response for the speaker, especially when issued quickly after the incident has occurred. Since these two strategies tend to have different outcomes from one another, they will provide the current study with an ideal manipulation to see if one strategy is least successful due to an interaction effect with the race and gender of the audience members with that of the accused.

Benoit (2016), when considering how to standardize the testing of IRT, posited six dependent variables that he argued were the most common variables measured when observing the growing body of image repair research. The dependent variables he offered are: *account acceptability*, *likability*, *blame and responsibility placed on the accused*, *offensiveness of the act*, *likelihood to repeat the act*, and *did the accused receive a punishment they deserved*. Brown, Zhou, and Xu (2018) however, tested these six dependent variables to see which dependent variables were more likely to predict a person's overall perception of the accused individual. After analyzing them, the researchers found that three of the six (*account acceptability*, *likability*, and *likelihood to repeat the act*), were more likely to predict an individual's overall perception of the accused athlete. This dissertation measured these three dependent variables.

For the first dependent variable, *acceptability of the accused's account*, measured if participants believed the response the athlete provided. Higher scores reflected a trust that the story presented was truthful.

RQ1: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the acceptability of the athlete's account?

RQ2: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the acceptability of the athlete's account?

Likability of the accused measured if the accused had a positive or negative perception in the eyes of participants. Since participants consider those that are more similar to themselves as being more favorable (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), this supports how SIT interacts with the image repair process.

RQ3: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the athlete's likability after facing a transgression?

RQ4: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the athlete's likability after facing a transgression?

Likelihood to repeat the act helped the researcher determine how participants felt about the athlete and if they should be emulated or not. After all, if participants believed that the accused was likely to recommit the wrongful act, then it may impact feelings of likeability as well.

RQ5: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence beliefs of the athlete's likelihood to repeat the act?

RQ6: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence beliefs of the athlete's likelihood to repeat the act?

Brown, Zhou, and Xu (2018) also used the six dependent variables to see which would be more likely to predict the behavioral outcome of negative word of mouth (nWOM). They found that two out of the three mentioned above (*likability* and *likelihood to repeat the act*) were more likely to predict if people would share negative messages concerning the accused athlete. This is important since Coombs and Holladay (2007) found that nWOM is a powerful force in affecting the opinions of others. Another outcome variable that was assessed was *role model perceptions* since this could determine if participants would be more likely to share negative instead of positive information about the accused. A final behavioral variable that was assessed as well was supportive behavioral intentions since this measured how likely it is that participants would still support the athlete after the incident occurs.

RQ7: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the participant sharing nWOM?

RQ8: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the participant sharing nWOM?

Arai, Ko, and Kaplanidou (2013) argued that by determining if an athlete was still found to have *perceptions of a role model* then it reflected on the accused still being marketable. This is an indication of a more successful image repair strategy. In order to measure this, the following research questions was asked:

RQ9: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence role model perceptions of the athlete?

RQ10: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence role model perceptions of the athlete?

In a similar manner as above, *supportive behavior of the accused* after the crisis was determined to be reflective of resulting sentiment of the wrongdoer (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer & Exler, 2008). By determining if participants would still be willing to support the athlete after the crisis response is issued helps to support the claim that a crisis response strategy was effective or ineffective. In order to measure this, the following research questions were asked:

RQ11: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence supportive behavior of the accused?

RQ12: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence supportive behavior of the accused?

CHAPTER 3 – METHOD

Experimental Design

When surveying all the athlete IRT studies, Hambrick (2018) noted that most are rhetorical studies with only a few studies experimentally testing IRT. This shows the great need for experimental investigation as well. Since the researcher desired to examine interaction effects in this dissertation, an experiment was determined to be the utilized methodology. This decision was made in part because of the need to advance the theory as well as the ability to look for cause and effect and experiments are the best way to determine causality in research (Abdi, Edelman, Valentin, & Dowling, 2009). This is due to the ability to have multiple conditions which are created through the random assignment of participants to different experimental conditions. While some argue that one may not prove cause-and-effect, experiments help to establish claims of causality due to the ability to control time-order sequence (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). As such, a 2 (athlete race: black vs white) X 2 (athlete gender: male vs female) X 2 (IRT response strategy: denial vs mortification) experiment was conducted in this study.

Another advantage of experimental design is that researchers have greater control over the variables used, participants, and sometimes the environment that the experiment is conducted in (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). However, in the case of an online experiment, control over participants' environment is lost. This is sacrificed so that the experiment may be administered to a wider group of people over a shorter time. Given the ease that an experiment can be administered as well as the level of detail that a researcher can have, experiments are also easily

replicable (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). This is important when attempting to replicate a study in order to find similar results. Researchers must be able to ensure they are consistent with previous studies.

However, in the same way that online experiments possess innate advantages, they also have some disadvantages. As mentioned above, given the online nature of this experiment, control over the environment in which participants viewed the stimuli is lost. Participants are able to complete the study while watching TV, and thus can be influenced by outside factors. This loss of control can damage internal validity but increase external validity (Wimmer and Dominick, 2014). In order to guard against this, the researcher included manipulation checks to ensure participants paid attention and could recall information from their randomly assigned stimuli. Since research should also attempt to be generalizable to a real-world setting, these challenges do not discredit the value to conducting an experiment.

Stimulus

The stimulus in each of the conditions featured a blog-style web post in which a basketball player was involved in a fight with another individual at a bar (simple assault) and then issued a response to their actions via Twitter. The story used the Tucson Buckets, a real semi-professional basketball team located in Tucson, Arizona. However, the story and athletes were fictitious so as to minimize bias. Each of the conditions contained an identical story, save for the athlete's race, athlete's gender, and response strategy which were manipulated per participants condition (see Appendix A). Participant race and gender were manipulated by changing the photo used in each stimulus for the athlete. Basketball was selected as the sport of the fictional athlete because basketball is a sport played by men and women of all races and has semi-professional teams.

Brown, Murphy, and Maxwell (2018) argued that domestic violence receives increased media attention due to its prominence and carries the notion of unequal power relationships. The unequal power structure portrayed in these stories could cause participants to view athletes in a more negative light. The researchers found that athletes who commit domestic violence are viewed more negatively than those that commit simple assault, regardless of image response strategy used (Brown et al., 2018). In order to remove any bias that domestic violence carries, a simple assault was chosen to be the transgression committed by the athlete as it assumes an equal power relationship with the victim.

The blog posts were short news stories resembling those commonly seen on *ESPN.com*. As of October 2019, *ESPN.com* received over 498 million unique visitors a month establishing *ESPN.com* as the most visited sports websites in the United States (“ESPN competitors”, 2019). A website was selected for the manipulations due to younger news consumers receiving their news from online sources rather than traditional news consumers (McCombs, 2018) which aligns with the typical age-range of Amazon Mechanical Turk populations, which tend to be younger than a general national population (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). A crisis response was embedded in the fictitious *ESPN.com* story as a Twitter post since this social media outlet has been found to be used by athletes to communicate with fans while circumventing traditional media outlets (Hambrick et al., 2010; Billings, Butterworth, & Turman, 2018). Appendix A contains the stimuli with embedded Twitter posts.

In order to manipulate the race and gender of the athlete in question, the image of the athlete was changed in each condition to reflect the desired criteria of (Black and White) and gender (Male and Female) of the athlete. Taylor Smith was also selected to be the name of the athlete name since it is both generic and not associated with any current popular athlete.

Independent Variables and Manipulation Check

Athlete race was operationally defined as the skin color, whether White or Black, of the athlete pictured in the photo of the story. The photo was embedded so that it appeared at the top of the story that participants read. This photo was switched so that the athlete in the image matched the race and gender of the randomly assigned condition.

Athlete gender was operationally defined as the apparent sex of the athlete in the image. There were two gender conditions, Male and Female. Similarly to athlete race, this was manipulated by changing the photo embedded in the stimuli to be either a Male or Female athlete. All photos were selected based on similarity of how the athlete was portrayed in each image. For example, in each photo the athletes were all taking a free-throw shot in a basketball game. None of them were giving aggressive expressions or appeared angry. The athlete was also the main focus of each shot so that no other athletes appeared in the photo with them. Also, athletes were either semi-professional players in the United States of American or professional European basketball players. However, the photos were also checked to ensure that no team logos were recognizable or present to ensure that each photo could work with the story presented in the stimuli of the athlete playing for the Tucson Buckets.

Response strategy was operationally defined as the wording and phrasing that the athlete in question utilizes to respond to the wrongdoing. This was altered so that participants received one of two strategy options, denial or mortification. Response strategies were embedded in a Tweet within each fictional *ESPN.com* article. These Twitter responses were also made to resemble how they normally appear in actual *ESPN.com* articles.

The next two independent variables were not manipulated; however, they were measured. Participant race was operationally defined as the race/ethnicity that an individual participating in

the study self-identified as while responding to demographic questions. Participant gender was operationally defined as the sex that an individual participating in the study self-identified as while responding to demographic questions.

As a manipulation check, participants were asked to recall the athlete's sport played, team name, race, and crime committed by via multiple choice response which was adapted from Sommers and Ellsworth (2000). This ensured each condition accurately elicited the desired race and gender of the fictional athlete from participants.

Dependent Variables

Acceptability of Image Repair Strategy. Acceptability of image repair strategy was tested using a 3-item, 7-point Likert scale to measure if the athlete's statement was (a) acceptable, (b) satisfying, and (c) fitting (Benoit, 2016) ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.75$, $\alpha = 0.93$).

Likeability of the Accused. Likeability of the accused was tested using a 3-item, 7-point Likert scale to measure if (a) the athlete is likeable, (b) the athlete would make a good friend, and (c) if I followed the athlete's career, I would like him/her (Benoit, 2016) ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.35$, $\alpha = 0.94$).

Likelihood the Accused Would Repeat the Act. Likelihood the accused would repeat the act was tested using a 3-item, 7-point Likert scale to measure if participants believed that the athlete would be involved in similar incidents in the future (Benoit, 2016) ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.33$, $\alpha = 0.97$).

Negative Word of Mouth. nWOM was measured using a 3-item, 7-point Likert scale to determine if participants would (a) encourage others to not support the athlete, (b) make negative remarks about the athlete, and (c) would tell their friends to not cheer for this athlete if they

attended a game. This scale was adopted from Coombs and Holladay (2007) ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.39$, $\alpha = 0.88$).

Role Model Perception. Role model perception was tested using a 3-item, 7-point Likert scale to measure if participants believed the athlete was (a) socially responsible, (b) a good role model for others, and (c) a good leader in the sports world (Arai, Ko & Kaplanidou, 2013) ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.22$, $\alpha = 0.88$).

Supporting Behavioral Intentions. Supporting behavioral intentions was tested using a 5-item, 7-point Likert scale to measure participants' willingness to support the athlete after reading his/her crisis response (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer & Exler, 2008) ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.28$, $\alpha = 0.90$).

Identification

Race identification and gender identification were assessed using an adapted measure from Luhtanen and Crocker (2002) which was developed to examine identification with a group. Participants completed the 4-item, 7-point Likert identification scale first for racial identity and then for gender identity. This scale generated an average score which was used to display the self-reported race ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.77$, $\alpha = 0.96$) and gender ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.74$, $\alpha = 0.97$) identification beliefs. By directly asking participants to respond to this scale, their responses were compared with how they responded to previous dependent variable measures.

Participants

Participants for this dissertation consisted of a national sample of 368 individuals recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is a web service in which individuals (called "workers") perform a variety of tasks (called "Human Intelligence Tasks" or "HITs") for monetary compensation (Paolacci, Chandler & Ipeirotis, 2010). In order to ensure that all participants were competent and answered authentically, only the highest-tier individuals

(called “Master workers”) were recruited to participate in this study. Master workers are those with a higher completion rate and accuracy than basic workers (MTurk, 2020). Although MTurk samples can vary, they are typically more diverse than college samples, particularly in terms of age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Mason & Suri, 2012; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014) and have even been found to pay better attention while participating in online studies (Hauser & Schwarz, 2016). All participants were asked for their consent and voluntary participation in the experiment. Also, all participants were over the age of consent.

Procedure

This online experiment was administered through the online survey system, Qualtrics. Once participants were recruited for this study, they were instructed to click on a web link that directed them to the study. Upon clicking the link to enter the study, participants first read and agreed to an informed consent statement. Once individuals agreed to participate in the experiment, they were randomly sorted into one of the eight conditions. All participants were then instructed to read their fictional story from *ESPN.com*.

Following exposure to their assigned message, participants proceeded to answer the manipulation check. As a part of the manipulation check, participants were asked if they were familiar with the Tucson Buckets and if they closely followed the team. Since the Tucson Buckets are a real team, if participants answered that they closely followed the Buckets, then they were removed from the study to remove bias. After this, participants completed a posttest questionnaire that assessed the following dependent variables: acceptability of image repair strategy, likeability of the accused, likelihood the accused would repeat the act, likelihood to spread negative word of mouth, role model perception, supporting behavioral intentions. Finally, basic demographic information was collected followed by a thank you and debriefing statement.

Statistical Analysis

Before analyzing the research questions in this study, the reliability of the manipulations and scales were tested. Chi-squares were used to measure the association between the independent variables and randomly assigned condition. Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure the reliability of the dependent variables for the experiment. Once reliability was determined, descriptive statistics were used to determine the demographic profile of the samples of both experiments.

Once manipulations and scales were tested, all research questions were analyzed. Factorial ANCOVAs were used to analyze all research questions because the independent variables have more than two levels and the researcher is analyzing if any interaction effect exists between independent variables.

Table 3.1

Research Questions, Variables, and Statistical Tests

Hypothesis/Research Question	Variable Levels	Statistical Test
RQ₁ : Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the acceptability of the athlete’s account?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Account Acceptability</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA
RQ₂ : Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the acceptability of the athlete’s account?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Account Acceptability</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA
RQ₃ : Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the athlete’s likability after facing a transgression?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Athlete’s Likeability</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA

RQ4: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the athlete's likability after facing a transgression?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Athlete's Likeability</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA
RQ5: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence beliefs of the athlete's likelihood to repeat the act?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Likelihood to Repeat Act</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA
RQ6: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence beliefs of the athlete's likelihood to repeat the act?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Likelihood to Repeat Act</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA
RQ7: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the participant sharing nWOM?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Sharing nWOM</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA
RQ8: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence the participant sharing nWOM?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Sharing nWOM</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA
RQ9: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence role model perceptions of the athlete?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Role Model Perceptions</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA
RQ10: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence role model perceptions of the athlete?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Gender of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Role Model Perceptions</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA
RQ11: Does the race of the audience member, the race of the accused, and the response strategy used influence supportive behavior of the accused?	<u>Response Strategy</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Audience member</u> : Categorical <u>Race of Accused</u> : Categorical <u>Supportive Behavior</u> : Continuous	Factorial ANCOVA

<p>RQ12: Does the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used influence supportive behavior of the accused?</p>	<p><u>Response Strategy</u>: Categorical <u>Gender of Audience member</u>: Categorical <u>Gender of Accused</u>: Categorical <u>Supportive Behavior</u>: Continuous</p>	<p>Factorial ANCOVA</p>
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CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

Chapter four of this dissertation is divided into three sections. The first section details the demographic information and composition of participants in this study. The next section details scale and manipulation reliabilities. The last section of chapter four shows the analysis of each research question with correct statistical analysis.

Demographic Profile

A national sample of 368 individuals was recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Of the respondents, 56.3 percent identified as male ($n = 207$) and 79.3 percent identified as Caucasian/White (292). The mean age of participants was 41.36 years ($SD = 10.912$ years). Participants also indicated the region where they currently live with 34.2 percent of the sample indicating they live in the South. Although different race/ethnicities were recorded during the demographic section, for analysis, race/ethnicity was grouped into three categories (Black, White, Other). Since the fictional athlete in the stimuli was with Black or White, this was done to specifically look at the responses of participants of the same racial in-group as the athlete. All other minority groups were placed into a separate group (Other). Table 4.1 displays the demographic data of the entire sample.

Table 4.1*Demographic and Personal Characteristics of Study Sample*

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	207	56.3
Female	157	42.7
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Black	23	6.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	29	7.9
Caucasian/White	292	79.3
Hispanic/Latino	13	3.5
Native American	1	.3
Mixed Race	7	1.9
Prefer Not to Say	1	.3
Other	2	.5
Region		
West	79	21.5
Midwest	77	20.9
South	126	34.2
Northeast	86	23.4

Scale and Manipulation Analysis

All scales had a Cronbach's alpha above 0.8, reflecting that all scales were reliable. See Table 4.2 for scales and their respective Cronbach's alphas and the number of items in each scale. The manipulation checks utilized also proved successful. Manipulation checks were used to ensure attention and awareness of gender, race, and athlete response strategy of each participant and their randomly assigned condition. Cross tabular analysis revealed there was a significant association between the athlete condition and race of the athlete ($\chi^2(7, N = 367) = 351.34, p \leq .001$), the gender of the athlete ($\chi^2(7, N = 367) = 329.53, p \leq .001$), and the response strategy of the athlete ($\chi^2(7, N = 368) = 304.61, p \leq .001$) used in the story.

After responding to the demographic questions and dependent variable scales, participants were then asked to respond to how important they believed their own racial and

gender identities were to them. Participants indicated that their gender identity ($M = 4.68, SD = 1.74$) was more important to them than their race identity ($M = 3.45, SD = 1.77$). A one-way ANOVA was run on participant race identification to analyze how important race was to each race/ethnicity group. Results showed a significant difference between race/ethnicity groups ($p < .001$). Bonferroni post hoc analysis showed a significant difference between African American/Black and Caucasian/White race/ethnicity groups ($p < .001$) and Other and Caucasian/White ethnicity groups ($p < .001$). There was no significant difference between African-American/Black and Other race/ethnicity group ($p > .05$). African American/Black participants rated their race/ethnicity to be most important to them ($M = 4.80, SD = 1.58$) when compared with the Other ($M = 4.20, SD = 1.69$) and Caucasian/White participants ($M = 3.21, SD = 1.72$). Because of this, it was decided to control for gender and race identification in all statistical analyses.

Table 4.2

Scale Reliabilities

Scale	α	N Items
Account Acceptability	0.93	3
Athlete Likeability	0.94	3
Likelihood to Repeat Act	0.97	3
Negative Word of Mouth (nWOM)	0.88	3
Role Model Perceptions	0.88	3
Supportive Behavior	0.90	5
Race Identification	0.96	4
Gender Identification	0.97	4

Research Questions

Account Acceptability.

The first research question asked if the race of the accused athlete, the race of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the audience's acceptability of the athlete's account. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete race, participant race) on the acceptability of the accused's account, controlling for the participant's level of racial identification. Response strategy used included two levels (Denial, Mortification), athlete race included two levels (Black, White), and participant race included three levels (Black, White, Other). The same levels for each independent variable were used for all racial and gender analyses. There was a significant main effect for athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 55.07, p < .001, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), with participants accepting the denial strategy ($M = 2.80, SD = 1.29$) less than they accepted the mortification strategy ($M = 4.76, SD = 1.60$). There were no significant main effects for participant's race ($F(2, 354) = 1.12, p = .327, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$) or the race of the athlete ($F(1, 354) = 2.48, p = .116, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). There were no interaction effects when looking between the race of the athlete and the race of the participant ($F(2, 354) = 2.01, p = .135, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$), the race of the participant and the response strategy used ($F(2, 354) = 0.20, p = .817, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or race of the athlete and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 0.17, p = .677, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Finally, factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the race of the audience member, and the race of the accused towards the acceptability of the athlete's account ($F(2, 354) = 0.03, p = .969, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Table 4.3 provides account acceptability scores based on the race of the participant, race of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.3*Smith's "Account Acceptability" Scores for Race*

Race of Participants	Denial, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Mortification, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Black/African American		
Black Athlete	2.20 (0.96)	3.73 (2.14)
White Athlete	3.19 (1.68)	4.83 (2.24)
White/Caucasian		
Black Athlete	2.90 (1.36)	4.72 (1.63)
White Athlete	2.64 (1.20)	4.74 (1.60)
Other		
Black Athlete	2.89 (1.45)	4.80 (1.30)
White Athlete	3.05 (1.42)	5.29 (1.23)

The second research question asked if the gender of the accused athlete, the gender of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the audience's acceptability of the athlete's account. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete gender, participant gender) on the acceptability of the accused's account, controlling for the participant's level of gender identification. There was a significant main effect for athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) = 13.32, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$), with participants accepting the athlete's account less when the denial strategy was used ($M = 2.80, SD = 1.29$) than when the mortification strategy was used ($M = 4.76, SD = 1.60$). There was also a significant main effect for participant gender ($F(2, 355) = 3.94, p = .020, \eta_p^2 = 0.02$) with males ($M = 3.94, SD = 1.72$) accepting the athlete's account more than female participants ($M = 3.57, SD = 1.77$). The main effect for athlete gender was also significant ($F(1, 355) = 3.93, p = .048, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$), showing male athletes ($M = 3.76, SD = 1.78$) having their account accepted less than female athletes ($M = 3.80, SD = 1.72$). There were no interaction effects when looking between the gender of the athlete and the gender of the

participant ($F(2, 355) = 2.13, p = .120, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$), the gender of the participant and the response strategy used ($F(2, 355) = 0.10, p = .903, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or gender of the athlete and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) = 0.43, p = .515, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Finally, factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the gender of the audience member, and the gender of the accused towards the acceptability of the athlete's account ($F(1, 355) = 0.000, p > .987, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Table 4.4 provides account acceptability scores based on the gender of the participant, gender of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.4

Smith's "Account Acceptability" Scores for Gender

Gender of Participants	Denial, $M(SD)$	Mortification, $M(SD)$
Male		
Male Athlete	2.88 (1.89)	5.04 (1.45)
Female Athlete	3.00 (1.43)	4.95 (1.47)
Female		
Male Athlete	2.51 (1.22)	4.53 (1.85)
Female Athlete	2.68 (1.22)	4.47 (1.62)

Athlete's Likeability.

Research question three asked if the race of the accused athlete, the race of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the athlete's likability after facing a transgression. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete race, participant race) on the athlete's likability after facing a transgression, controlling for the participant's level of racial identification. There were no significant main effects for participant's race ($F(2, 354) = 0.65, p$

= .522, $\eta_p^2 < 0.01$), the race of the athlete ($F(1, 354) = 0.12, p = .729, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or the response strategy used by the athlete ($F(1, 354) = 2.96, p = .086, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). There also were no interaction effects when looking between the race of the athlete and the race of the participant ($F(2, 354) = 0.11, p = .897, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), the race of the participant and the response strategy used ($F(2, 354) = 1.49, p = .227, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or race of the athlete and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 0.04, p = .847, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the race of the audience member, and the race of the accused towards the athlete's likability after facing a transgression ($F(2, 354) = 0.13, p = .876, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Table 4.5 provides athlete likeability scores based on the race of the participant, race of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.5

Smith's "Likeability" Scores for Race

Race of Participants	Denial, $M(SD)$	Mortification, $M(SD)$
Black/African American		
Black Athlete	3.33 (1.22)	3.20 (1.92)
White Athlete	3.13 (1.59)	2.94 (1.10)
White/Caucasian		
Black Athlete	3.16 (1.37)	3.41 (1.52)
White Athlete	3.00 (1.18)	3.58 (1.37)
Other		
Black Athlete	2.72 (1.38)	3.60 (0.84)
White Athlete	2.72 (1.25)	3.73 (1.02)

Research question four asked if the gender of the accused athlete, the gender of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the athlete's likability after facing a transgression. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete gender, participant

gender) on the athlete's likability after facing a transgression, controlling for the participant's level of gender identification. There was a significant main effect for athlete gender ($F(1, 355) = 4.26, p = .040, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$) indicating that male athletes ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.31$) were viewed as less likeable than female athletes ($M = 3.37, SD = 1.39$) after facing a transgression. The main effects of gender of participant ($F(2, 355) = 0.34, p = .713, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$) and response strategy ($F(1, 355) = 2.35, p = .126, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$) were not statistically significant. There was an interaction effect between gender of the participant and gender of the athlete ($F(2, 355) = 3.94, p = .020, \eta_p^2 = 0.02$). Further one-way ANOVA analysis revealed that there was not a significant difference for participant gender ($F(2, 355) = 0.30, p = .743, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), however there was a significance difference between athlete gender ($F(1, 355) = 4.04, p = .045, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$) with Male participants rated Female athletes ($M = 3.50, SD = 1.38$) as being more likeable than Male athletes ($M = 3.10, SD = 1.28$). Female participants also rated Female athletes ($M = 3.25, SD = 1.39$) as being more likeable than Male athletes ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.31$), however not to the same degree as Male participants. However, there were no interaction effects when looking between gender of the participant and athlete response strategy ($F(2, 355) = 0.17, p = .845, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$) or between gender of the athlete and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) = 0.53, p = .467, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the gender of the audience member, the gender of the accused, and the response strategy used towards the athlete's likability after facing a transgression ($F(1, 355) = 0.01, p = .945, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Table 4.6 provides athlete likeability scores based on the gender of the participant, gender of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.6*Smith's "Likeability" Scores for Gender*

Gender of Participants	Denial, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Mortification, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Male		
Male Athlete	2.87 (1.20)	3.40 (1.31)
Female Athlete	3.13 (1.34)	3.68 (1.41)
Female		
Male Athlete	2.89 (1.20)	3.48 (1.38)
Female Athlete	3.04 (1.38)	3.40 (1.41)

Likelihood to Repeat the Act.

Research question five asked if the race of the accused athlete, the race of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the athlete's likelihood to repeat the act. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete race, participant race) on the athlete's likelihood to repeat the act, controlling for the participant's level of racial identification. There was a significant main effect for participant race ($F(2, 354) = 3.35, p = .036, \eta_p^2 = 0.02$) indicating that White participants ($M = 4.87, SD = 1.29$) believed the accused athlete would repeat the act more so than Black participants ($M = 4.20, SD = 1.62$) and Other participants ($M = 4.67, SD = 1.33$). There was also a significant main effect for athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 13.36, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$) indicating that athletes who utilized the denial strategy ($M = 5.12, SD = 1.20$) were more likely to repeat the act than those that utilized the mortification strategy ($M = 4.48, SD = 1.38$). However, the main effect for race of the athlete was not significant ($F(1, 354) = 0.52, p = .470, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). There also were no interaction effects when looking between the race of the athlete and the race of the participant ($F(2, 354) = 1.47, p = .231, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), the race of the participant and the response strategy used ($F(2, 354) = 1.08, p =$

.340, $\eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or race of the athlete and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 0.26, p = .612, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the race of the audience member, and the race of the accused towards the likelihood that the athlete would repeat the act ($F(2, 354) = 1.10, p = .335, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Table 4.7 provides athlete likelihood to repeat the act scores based on the race of the participant, race of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.7

Smith's "Likelihood to Repeat the Act" Scores for Race

Race of Participants	Denial, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Mortification, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Black/African American		
Black Athlete	4.33 (1.58)	3.33 (2.01)
White Athlete	4.71 (1.93)	4.22 (0.81)
White/Caucasian		
Black Athlete	5.16 (1.09)	4.81 (1.44)
White Athlete	5.13 (1.22)	4.36 (1.26)
Other		
Black Athlete	5.33 (1.05)	3.90 (1.01)
White Athlete	5.13 (1.27)	4.29 (1.45)

Research question six asked if the gender of the accused athlete, the gender of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the athlete's likelihood to repeat the act. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete gender, participant gender) on the athlete's likelihood to repeat the act, controlling for the participant's level of gender identification. There was a significant main effect for participant gender ($F(2, 355) = 3.51, p = .031, \eta_p^2 = 0.02$) indicating that Female participants ($M = 5.00, SD = 1.27$) believed the athlete was more likely to repeat the act than Male participants ($M = 4.65, SD = 1.34$). There was also a

significant main effect for athlete gender ($F(1, 355) = 4.67, p = .031, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$) indicating that Male athletes ($M = 4.82, SD = 1.28$) were more likely to repeat the act than Female athletes ($M = 4.77, SD = 1.37$). However, the main effect for athlete response strategy was not significant ($F(1, 355) = 0.40, p = .530, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). There also were no interaction effects when looking between the gender of the athlete and the gender of the participant ($F(2, 355) = 2.51, p = .083, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$), the gender of the participant and the response strategy used ($F(2, 355) = 0.42, p = .656, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or gender of the athlete and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) = 0.68, p = .409, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the gender of the audience member, and the gender of the accused towards the likelihood that the athlete would repeat the act ($F(1, 355) = 0.01, p = .966, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Table 4.8 provides athlete likelihood to repeat the act scores based on the gender of the participant, gender of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.8

Smith's "Likelihood to Repeat the Act" Scores for Gender

Gender of Participants	Denial, $M(SD)$	Mortification, $M(SD)$
Male		
Male Athlete	5.06 (1.11)	4.29 (1.35)
Female Athlete	4.92 (1.31)	3.31 (1.42)
Female		
Male Athlete	5.31 (1.33)	4.63 (1.32)
Female Athlete	5.30 (1.17)	4.78 (1.34)

Sharing Negative WOM.

Research question seven asked if the race of the accused athlete, the race of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the participant sharing nWOM. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent

variables (response strategy used, athlete race, participant race) on the participant sharing nWOM, controlling for the participant’s level of racial identification. There was a significant main effect for athlete response strategy used ($F(1, 354) = 4.13, p = .043, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$) indicating that participants were less likely to share negative WOM when athletes utilized the mortification strategy ($M = 2.73, SD = 1.47$) than when they utilized the denial strategy ($M = 3.12, SD = 1.28$). However, there was no significant main effect for participant race ($F(2, 354) = 0.56, p = .570, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). There also was no main effect for athlete race ($F(1, 354) < 0.01, p = .978, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). No interaction effects were found between athlete race and participant race ($F(2, 354) = 0.37, p = .689, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), participant race and the athlete response strategy ($F(2, 354) = 1.88, p = .154, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$), or athlete race and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 0.23, p = .633, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the race of the audience member, and the race of the accused towards the participant sharing nWOM ($F(2, 354) = 0.93, p = .396, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Table 4.9 provides sharing nWOM scores based on the race of the participant, race of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.9

Smith’s “Sharing nWOM” Scores for Race

Race of Participants	Denial, $M(SD)$	Mortification, $M(SD)$
Black/African American		
Black Athlete	2.87 (1.91)	2.67 (1.45)
White Athlete	2.86 (1.97)	2.94 (1.69)
White/Caucasian		
Black Athlete	2.94 (1.20)	2.77 (1.65)
White Athlete	3.24 (1.23)	2.81 (1.38)
Other		
Black Athlete	3.75 (0.88)	2.23 (0.97)
White Athlete	3.13 (1.56)	2.43 (1.29)

Research question eight asked if the gender of the accused athlete, the gender of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the participant sharing nWOM. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete gender, participant gender) on the participant sharing nWOM, controlling for the participant's level of gender identification. There were no significant main effects for participant gender ($F(2, 355) = 0.98, p = .375, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), athlete gender ($F(1, 355) = 0.39, p = .532, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) = 0.04, p = .848, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). There also were no interaction effects when looking between the gender of the athlete and the gender of the participant ($F(2, 355) = 0.20, p = .818, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), the gender of the participant and the response strategy used ($F(2, 355) = 1.48, p = .229, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or gender of the athlete and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) < 0.01, p = .986, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the gender of the audience member, and the gender of the accused towards the participant sharing nWOM ($F(1, 355) = 0.03, p = .859, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Table 4.10 provides sharing nWOM scores based on the gender of the participant, gender of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.10

Smith's "Sharing nWOM" Scores for Gender

Gender of Participants	Denial, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Mortification, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Male		
Male Athlete	3.05 (1.42)	2.84 (1.54)
Female Athlete	3.08 (1.18)	2.86 (1.41)
Female		
Male Athlete	3.21 (1.27)	2.61 (1.49)
Female Athlete	3.25 (1.26)	2.55 (1.50)

Role Model Perceptions.

Research question nine asked if the race of the accused athlete, the race of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the role model perceptions of the athlete. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete race, participant race) on the role model perceptions of the athlete, controlling for the participant's level of racial identification. There were no significant main effects for participant race ($F(2, 354) = 0.01, p = .986, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), athlete gender ($F(1, 354) = 0.02, p = .901, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 2.32, p = .136, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). No interaction effects were found between athlete race and participant race ($F(2, 354) = 0.29, p = .748, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), participant race and the athlete response strategy ($F(2, 354) = 0.24, p = .790, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or athlete race and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 1.36, p = .245, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the race of the audience member, and the race of the accused towards role model perceptions of the athlete ($F(2, 354) = 2.34, p = .108, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$). Table 4.11 provides role model perception scores based on the race of the participant, race of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.11*Smith's "Role Model Perceptions" Scores for Race*

Race of Participants	Denial, <i>M (SD)</i>	Mortification, <i>M (SD)</i>
Black/African American		
Black Athlete	2.40 (1.09)	2.93 (1.77)
White Athlete	2.90 (1.44)	2.56 (1.33)
White/Caucasian		
Black Athlete	2.60 (1.30)	2.72 (1.36)
White Athlete	2.30 (0.96)	2.85 (1.22)
Other		
Black Athlete	2.14 (1.23)	3.10 (0.74)
White Athlete	2.77 (1.17)	2.82 (1.17)

Research question ten asked if the gender of the accused athlete, the gender of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence the role model perceptions of the athlete. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete gender, participant gender) on the role model perceptions of the athlete, controlling for the participant's level of gender identification. There were no significant main effects for participant gender ($F(2, 355) = 2.60, p = .075, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$), athlete gender ($F(1, 355) = 0.82, p = .367, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) = 0.18, p = .670, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). There also were no interaction effects when looking between the gender of the athlete and the gender of the participant ($F(2, 355) = 1.01, p = .365, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), the gender of the participant and the response strategy used ($F(2, 355) = 0.16, p = .855, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or gender of the athlete and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) < 0.01, p = .964, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the gender of the audience member, and the gender of the accused towards the role model perceptions of the athlete ($F(1,$

355) < 0.01, $p = .995$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.01$). Table 4.12 provides role model perception scores based on the gender of the participant, gender of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.12

Smith's "Role Model Perceptions" Scores for Gender

Gender of Participants	Denial, $M(SD)$	Mortification, $M(SD)$
Male		
Male Athlete	2.52 (1.11)	2.84 (1.16)
Female Athlete	2.68 (1.35)	3.01 (1.25)
Female		
Male Athlete	2.30 (1.04)	2.72 (1.38)
Female Athlete	2.19 (0.98)	2.63 (1.30)

Supportive Behavior.

Research question 11 asked if the race of the accused athlete, the race of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence supportive behavior of the athlete. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete race, participant race) on supportive behavior of the athlete, controlling for the participant's level of racial identification. There were no significant main effects for participant race ($F(2, 354) = 0.82$, $p = .441$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.01$), athlete gender ($F(1, 354) = 0.06$, $p = .802$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 1.21$, $p = .271$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.01$). No interaction effects were found between athlete race and participant race ($F(2, 354) = 0.85$, $p = .427$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.01$), participant race and the athlete response strategy ($F(2, 354) = 0.26$, $p = .773$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or athlete race and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 354) = 0.04$, $p = .847$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present between the response strategy used, the race of the audience member, and the race of the accused towards supportive behavior of the athlete ($F(2, 354) = 0.17$, $p = .843$, $\eta_p^2 =$

0.01). Table 4.13 provides supportive behavior scores based on the race of the participant, race of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.13

Smith's "Supportive Behavior" Scores for Race

Race of Participants	Denial, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Mortification, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Black/African American		
Black Athlete	3.00 (1.17)	3.04 (1.65)
White Athlete	2.80 (1.56)	2.60 (1.08)
White/Caucasian		
Black Athlete	2.79 (1.37)	3.10 (1.37)
White Athlete	2.63 (1.09)	3.10 (1.27)
Other		
Black Athlete	2.42 (1.53)	2.82 (1.03)
White Athlete	2.77 (1.43)	3.18 (1.08)

Research question 12 asked if the gender of the accused athlete, the gender of the audience members, and the response strategy used by the accused would influence supportive behavior of the athlete. A three-way factorial ANCOVA was conducted on the influence of three independent variables (response strategy used, athlete gender, participant gender) on supportive behavior of the athlete, controlling for the participant's level of gender identification. There were no significant main effects for participant gender ($F(2, 355) = 0.42, p = .658, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), athlete gender ($F(1, 355) = 2.34, p = .127, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) = 0.27, p = .606, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). There also were no interaction effects when looking between the gender of the athlete and the gender of the participant ($F(2, 355) = 1.07, p = .346, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), the gender of the participant and the response strategy used ($F(2, 355) = 0.05, p = .951, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$), or gender of the athlete and athlete response strategy ($F(1, 355) = 0.76, p = .385, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$). In addition, the factorial ANCOVA revealed that there was no interaction effect present

between the response strategy used, the gender of the audience member, and the gender of the accused towards supportive behavior of the athlete ($F(1, 355) = 0.04, p = .842, \eta_p^2 < 0.01$).

Table 4.14 provides supportive behavior scores based on the gender of the participant, gender of the athlete, and response strategy used by the athlete.

Table 4.14

Smith's "Supportive Behavior" Scores for Gender

Gender of Participants	Denial, $M(SD)$	Mortification, $M(SD)$
Male		
Male Athlete	2.76 (1.34)	3.09 (1.20)
Female Athlete	2.69 (1.36)	3.13 (1.33)
Female		
Male Athlete	2.77 (1.16)	3.05 (1.40)
Female Athlete	2.52 (1.16)	3.03 (1.23)

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

Years of research have looked at social identity and its impact on individual decision-making (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). A relatively new body of research has examined image repair through experimental methods instead of traditional rhetorical methods. Findings from this study support previous claims made by IRT research while furthering this body of literature by incorporating the lens of social identity theory to better understand the impact the social identity of audience members plays on the image repaired process.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. First, a summary of the results from statistical analysis will be provided. Next, the theoretical and practical implications of the study for the public relations discipline will be discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study and the need for future research in this area will be discussed.

Summary of Results

Respondents were primarily male (56.3%, $n = 207$) and Caucasian/White (79.3%, $n = 292$) with only 6.3 percent identifying their race/ethnicity as Black ($n = 23$). For ease of analysis, all remaining categories of race/ethnicity were combined into one category and accounted for 14.4 percent ($n = 53$). All scales had a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.8 or higher, reflecting high levels of reliability and all manipulation checks were successful.

Summary of Race Research Questions.

In the analyses conducted that looked at race in this study, findings all supported previous IRT literature of the mortification strategy being more successful than the denial strategy at repairing an athlete's image (e.g., Walsh & McAlister-Spooner, 2011; Hambrick, Frederick, &

Sanderson, 2015). This could be seen when looking at the variables of “account acceptability,” “likelihood to repeat the act,” and “sharing nWOM”. One variable of interest here that went against the previous literature was “athlete likeability.” Here it was found that Black participants actually rated athletes that used the denial strategy as being more likeable than those that utilized the mortification strategy. This was seen to be true regardless of athlete race; Black participants rated White and Black athletes to be more likeable if they used the denial crisis response strategy instead of mortification.

Another variable that was found to be significant that supported both IRT and SIT was “likelihood to repeat the act” when focusing on race. Once again, the mortification strategy was found to be more successful at repairing the athlete’s image after the crisis. However, with this variable, participants also rated the out-group racial condition as being more likely to repeat the act than their in-group athlete. In particular, White participants believed that the athlete in question was more likely to repeat the act than Black participants or Other participants. When looking at the scores in Table 4.7, White participants also showed slight in-group favoritism towards the White athlete. This supports previous literature of in-group bias and the creation of *us versus them* dynamic (Wann & Grieve, 2005).

Summary of Gender Research Questions.

Crisis response strategy was not found to be significant when observing the findings concerning gender in this study except for “account acceptability”. This was the only gender variable that showed a significant difference between when athletes used the denial strategy and the mortification strategy. However, this variable also showed that male participants are more willing to accept the account of the athlete than female participants. Female athletes though, are more likely to have their accounts accepted than male athletes.

Another variable of interest to the gender results was that of “athlete likeability” which reflected that female athletes overall are viewed as being more likeable than male athletes. When looking further into this however, male participants were more likely than female participants to rate female athletes as being more likeable than male athletes. Each gender in-group also showed higher likeability scores to the out-group when the mortification strategy was used. In short, male participants rated female athletes higher than males while female participants rated male athletes higher than females.

Female participants were also more likely to believe the athlete would repeat the act when compared to male participants. Also seen was the belief that the male athletes were more likely to repeat the act than female athletes. Concerning gender, these results showed that male participants are more likely to treat female athletes more favorably when it comes to accepting their accounts, considering them to be more likeable, and believing if they will recommit the act under criticism.

Implications

This study builds on previous SIT and IRT literature and provides promising implications by considering how nuances can influence both how individuals identify with groups and react to crisis responses. There are also practical recommendations for public relations practitioners or communication directors in the sports world. Understanding how SIT impacts the image repair process can allow more successful crisis responses to be created and issued for athletes.

Theoretical implications.

This study looked at the role SIT plays in the overall success of a crisis response and the image repair process. SIT appears simple on the surface but in reality, this theory has grown to be sizable with many branches in order to explain how individuals identify and group themselves

with others. It makes sense for a theory dealing with how people identify themselves to be complex; a point this study supports and displays. Initially, SIT sought to explain and understand how individuals constructed opinions about themselves and the groups to which they belong (Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). This theory grew to see that groups are formed based on perceptions of similarities with others, which become important to the individuals (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Hogg, 2006). It was also seen that the understanding of racial and ethnic biases was rooted in social identity literature (Reid, Giles, & Harwood, 2005; see Mastro, 2009). This study supports this when it was seen that White participants believed that the athletes were more likely to recommit the act than Black participants or Other participants, with White participants showing slight in-group favoritism towards the White athletes. These racial biases and group membranes are not completely rigid. The majority of participants indicated that their own racial and gender identities were not important to them. However, results from the study highlighted that an individual's identity does have some influence on how they response to an athlete's crisis response.

Because of this, one would expect to see that when an athlete of the same race or gender as the audience member was under scrutiny, that the athlete would be given support or even for the audience member to judge them more sympathetically. The results seen in this dissertation displayed that to not always be the case. On the contrary, it was found that White participants were more likely to share negative word of mouth about White athletes than they were Black athletes. These findings challenge the previous understanding of racial bias to favor those that are similar over those that are deemed to be out-group members. When faced with a White athlete, previous SIT literature would state that the White audience member would favor the White athletes since they are of the same race group. Instead, the negative act committed by the

athlete acts as a violation that leads White participants to be more likely to talk negatively about them in favor of an athlete of a different race-group. In previous race literature concerning Serena Williams, it has been argued that she has not been well received by audiences due to her defiance of what is considered the norm, both in terms of sexuality and femininity, in the predominantly “White” sport of tennis (Douglas, 2005; Schultz, 2005; Tredway, 2019). In some way, this could be seen as a slander against what it means to belong to a White in-group and therefore, the audience member must distance themselves from him or her.

These same results were seen when it came to gender in-groups and out-groups as well. Overall, male participants were more likely to view female athletes more favorably than male athletes, showing a more favorable of the gender out-group over the in-group. This out-group favor was also seen with female participants as well with male participants rating female athletes as being more likeable than male athletes and female participants believing male athletes to be more likeable than female athletes. While there were instances where the in-group was favored, these deviations from in-group members favoring other in-group members is the most interesting. In dealing with athletes, it was seen that audiences will sometimes suspend their bias and favor for in-group members in favor for out-group members.

Another focus of this study was to see how the many different identities that an individual possesses influences the image repair process. Since IRT is relatively young, the theory has only started to look at what other factors may influence reactions to a crisis response (see Brown, Dickhaus, Harrison, & Rush, 2019). IRT should no longer be considered a theory that can only consider the content and delivery of a message following a crisis, it must also begin to take into account the audience composition itself. For instance, crisis response strategy has been studied to understand which strategy is most successful at repairing an athlete’s image

based on audience reactions. While this study supports previous literature by showing that the mortification strategy was overall more successful than the denial strategy (Brown et al., 2019; Coombs, Holladay, & Claeys, 2016; Hambrick, 2018), there were also some results that should be emphasized when studying IRT in the future.

One result of interest showed male participants were more likely to accept the account of the athlete than female participants. Males also favored female athletes when it came to athlete likeability more so than male athletes. Therefore, when studying IRT, understanding the gender of the athlete being used, as well as the audience composition, may play a role in determining how successful a crisis response strategy really is. Researchers should know that if a participant pool is predominately male than they may show higher scores for athlete likeability than if the pool was mostly female. This should cause athlete selection for IRT stimuli to be developed intentionally in order to understand that a difference does exist when it comes to participant reactions to different athletes.

Another interesting result seen in this study was that Black participants rated athletes that used the denial strategy to be more likeable than if the athletes used the mortification strategy. In this finding, athlete race did not seem to impact responses. It should be taken into account that if a study is conducted and the participant pool is primarily Black, the denial strategy may appear to be most effective at making audiences like an athlete. This deviation from previous literature looking at the effectiveness of IRT response strategies should support the notion that there are countless other influences that can impact the image repair process. When it comes to IRT, research has primarily looked at the content of the message and how the message is delivered to an audience. While a simple approach is fitting to understanding the image repair process

initially, complexity needs to be introduced in order to further explore a topic when it deals with multifaceted individuals and the intersectionality of identities they possess.

Implications for Public Relations Professionals.

Since public relations professionals are responsible for managing the image for an athlete or organization, understanding the different external influences that are at play in the image repair process is essential. These influences can then multiply the effectiveness and success of the different IRT strategies. This study shows that public relations practitioners should consider not only the race but also the gender of the athlete they represent during crises as well as the primary gender and race of the audience receiving the message. If a public relations professional is representing an athlete, a more in-depth understanding of the impact of gender identity will help them guide their clients through the image repair process. Additionally, these practitioners can help their client to prepare for the barriers that will be inherently associated with the gender or race of the athlete.

By understanding the composition of the audience that an athlete is presenting to, the public relations professional can help tailor the message in order to achieve the desired outcome. This would be a combination of understanding who it is they represent and who they are presenting the message to. After taking this into consideration, only then could the public relations or communication director effectively craft a crisis response for the athlete in question. Given that some influences were seen with race and gender on how a crisis response is received, the communication specialists should consider that other variables may influence the reception of a crisis response more than simply choosing an effective response strategy.

Because behavior is impacted by gender identity from early stages in life (Rogers & Meltzoff, 2017), incorporating gender identity into image repair theory is essential. By

addressing gender and its impact on human behavior, public relations practitioners can more effectively navigate the image repair process. Helping students and educators develop awareness of this impact can lead to positive outcomes for both the practitioners as well as their clients. As indicated in this study, male audiences view female athletes as being more likeable than male athletes after responding to a crisis. In contrast, female audiences are consistent in their reactions to athletes after committing some negative act, regardless of gender. Identifying and confronting these barriers could lead to the best possible outcomes as it pertains to athlete likeability within the image repair process. This study supports that there are more considerations that must be taken into account when understanding a topic as complex as athlete crisis communication.

Limitations and Future Research

For future research of IRT within the sports context, there should be further study as to how the gender of participants and the gender of the athlete in question interact. Having homogenous groups concerning gender may also be easier to attain through a national sample. One glaring limitation with this study is the non-homogenous racial composition of participants for the sample. Given that 79.3 percent of all participants were Caucasian/White, it is impossible to say with confidence that race does or does not have an impact on how one's social identity, as it pertains to race, determines responses to sports crisis communication. After all, one-way ANOVA and post hoc analysis revealed that race/ethnicity identity was important to African American/Black and Other participants. It was expected that these results would reveal an interaction effect. All racial/ethnic minority groups indicated that they identified strongly with their race/ethnic groups, however, since a majority of survey respondents were Caucasian/White, it is believed that the lack of equal racial representation weakened measurable interactions. This

would also support why the only statistically significant interactions concerned participants gender identity. In order to remedy this, future studies should seek to have equal racial representation within the participant pool. Having this will allow researchers to make more confident statements of how one's race may influence their response to an athlete's crisis response. Also, the current study only looked at the black/white dichotomy for both participants and athletes. Future studies would should look into different racial categories and responses to athlete crisis responses.

Given that men are more likely to consider female athletes as being more likeable than male athletes, future studies should look at factors that may influence this, such as attractiveness of the athlete. By looking at attractiveness of an athlete and athlete crisis communication responses, it could be revealed that physical looks, in terms of beauty, of an athlete plays a larger role in the image repair process than originally thought. Future studies should look to see if more response strategies become more or less effective as an athlete is considered more or less attractive. Future studies should also utilize a pretest posttest method in order to see how participants change in their assessment and opinions of an athlete after seeing their image. Are audiences more forgiving of athletes considered to be more attractive than those that are considered to be less attractiveness? Since male audiences consider female athletes as being more likeable than male athletes, even after committing a crime, another future study should look at is there a difference in baseline of likeability between male and female athletes.

Future research should attempt to examine the extraneous variables which may serve as mediating or moderating variables in this relationship. In order to more thoroughly understand this relationship, it is imperative to better understand the potential innate barriers that athletes must overcome in order to repair their public image. These results should also inform public

relation practitioners as they work to develop effective crisis response strategies for athletes. For instance, individuals that were former athletes may have different reactions to an athlete's crisis response than an individual who has no interest in sports.

While IRT has been utilized for many years to understand how to effectively respond to crisis situations, this research has shown a need for a more nuanced understanding of IRT. Further, no existing studies have applied social identity theory to understanding the complex procedures of the image repair process. Results can help inform public relations educators, practitioners, marketers, and advertisers of the role one's identity can play in guiding perceptions.

Female audiences appear to be tougher critics on athletes, regardless of gender of the athlete, than male audiences. Future research should also look into why female participants are more likely to think athletes who commit a crime are less likeable than male participants. Researchers should also investigate why female audiences believe athletes are more likely to repeat a negative act than male audiences.

Conclusion

Racial and gender biases can be seen in different contexts around the globe with this study taking a closer look at one of those sectors, sports. This context is viewed by large groups of people that do not consider how biases influence their responses to sports and the athletes that compete. These biases can act to create or reinforce underlying prejudices. Ending all forms of discrimination and achieving equality is a basic human right. With both racial and gender equality being identified by the United Nations (2019) as one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030, urgent action is required to identify and dismantle systemic forces of discrimination. However, in order to achieve this, researchers and educators

must aim to increase understanding and awareness surrounding this pervasive issue that are clearly implied by the self-reported impact of identification in this study.

It is evident that men will view female athletes more favorably than male athletes and also believe that female athletes are less likely to repeat an offensive act than women.

Understanding how audiences react to a crisis response is important to understand no matter how nuanced it may be. Understanding how to craft effective crisis responses will help not only in the area of sports communication, but also concerning public relations professionals, marketing, and advertising. Studying how the social identity of audience members could serve to lessen or increase damage done to an athlete's image is an untouched area of research and this dissertation serves as the groundwork for an entire stream of research worth future investigation.

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APPENDIX A – MANIPULATIONS

Black Female Denial



The image is a screenshot of an ESPN mobile application interface. At the top, there is a red header with the ESPN logo on the left and a user profile icon with the word "SCORES" on the right. Below the header is a navigation bar with a basketball icon and the text "Home Scores Schedule Standings". Underneath are five social media sharing icons: Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, WhatsApp, and Email. A profile card for Jeff Borzello, an ESPN Staff Writer, is shown with a timestamp of 6:00 AM CT. The main article title is "Tucson Buckets forward arrested for parking lot brawl". The text describes an incident involving Taylor Smith, a forward for the Tucson Buckets, who was arrested after a fight at a bar. A photograph of Taylor Smith holding a basketball is included. A quote from Taylor Smith is provided, along with a brief biography of her playing for the Tucson Buckets.

Tucson Buckets forward arrested for parking lot brawl

Tucson Buckets' forward Taylor Smith was arrested early Sunday morning after a fight that seemed to have started over a bar tab bet.

Police and witnesses say that after last call at Sky Bar Tucson, Smith, along with two other people, were seen arguing with another group of bar patrons over a bet the two groups made on the Big TEN Championship Game. Smith was overheard calling the group out for not "owning up to the bet." The argument spilled into the parking lot, where witnesses say Smith took a foreign object out of her car and pursued the group, injuring one person's leg before police broke the fight up. Smith was arrested for assault.

Smith was released on bail Monday morning, and a representative for the Buckets stated that the team is investigating the incident, and will suspend and/or fine Taylor Smith if she is responsible for any role in the altercation. Smith decided to take to Twitter about the incident shortly after she was bailed out.

I didn't do anything. This whole story's bogus.
– Taylor Smith (@TaylorS3) December 9, 2019

Smith joined the Tucson Buckets after graduating from the University of Oregon in 2017. For the past two seasons, Smith has averaged 3.3 rebounds, 2.8 assists and 1.7 steals per game as well as leading the Buckets in scoring with 24.7 points per game.

Black Female Mortification

SCORES

Home Scores Schedule Standings



**Jeff Borzello**
ESPN Staff Writer6:00 AM CT

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All I can say is I'm sorry. This whole story's true.

– Taylor Smith (@TaylorS3) December 9, 2019

Smith joined the Tucson Buckets after graduating from the University of Oregon in 2017. For the past two seasons, Smith has averaged 3.3 rebounds, 2.8 assists and 1.7 steals per game as well as leading the Buckets in scoring with 24.7 points per game.

Black Male Denial

SCORES

Home Scores Schedule Standings



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ESPN Staff Writer 6:00 AM CT

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Black Male Mortification

 SCORES

 Home Scores Schedule Standings



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Smith was released on bail Monday morning, and a representative for the Buckets stated that the team is investigating the incident, and will suspend and/or fine Taylor Smith if he is responsible for any role in the altercation. Smith decided to take to Twitter about the incident shortly after he was bailed out.

All I can say is I'm sorry. This whole story's true.
— Taylor Smith (@TaylorS9) December 9, 2019

Smith joined the Tucson Buckets after graduating from the University of Oregon in 2017. For the past two seasons, Smith has averaged 3.3 rebounds, 2.8 assists and 1.7 steals per game as well as leading the Buckets in scoring with 24.7 points per game.

White Female Denial

SCORES

Home Scores Schedule Standings



**Jeff Borzello**
ESPN Staff Writer 6:00 AM CT

Tucson Buckets forward arrested for parking lot brawl

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– Taylor Smith (@TaylorS5) December 9, 2019

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White Female Mortification

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– Taylor Smith (@TaylorS5) December 9, 2019

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White Male Denial

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– Taylor Smith (@TaylorS14) December 9, 2019

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APPENDIX B – INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

INFORMED CONSENT

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to examine how people, like you, respond to crisis messages delivered by sports organizations and athletes.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate, you will be shown a story and message from an athlete and expected to fill out a brief questionnaire about your reactions.

TIME COMMITMENT: Your total participation should take no longer than 15 minutes. Approximately 400 other adults will be participating in this study.

RISKS: There are no known risks associated with participation in this study other than reading a story about a fight.

BENEFITS: There are no guaranteed benefits to you for participating in this study. However, potential benefits include providing a greater understanding of how sports organizations can accurately and ethically respond during times of crisis.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Once data collection is complete, your data will not be linked to your identity in any way.

COSTS/PAYMENT: Participants will not be paid or rewarded in any way for participation in this study.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW: You may refuse to participate and still receive any benefits you would receive if you were not in the study. You may change your mind about being in the study and quit after the study has started.

QUESTIONS: If you have any questions about this research project or if you think you may have been injured as a result of your participation, please contact: Stephen Rush at (205) 792-8091 or rush011@crimson.ua.edu anytime Monday-Friday. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at (205) 348-8461 or 877-820-3066, or email rscompliance@research.ua.edu. You can also visit <http://ovpred.ua.edu/research-compliance/prco/> to understand your rights as a participant.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.

BY CLICKING BELOW, YOU WILL INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT IN THE STUDY DESCRIBED ABOVE. BY CLICKING "NEXT" YOU ARE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT YOU ARE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER, AND YOU ARE AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS ONLINE EXPERIMENT.

APPENDIX C – DEBRIEFING AND THANK-YOU STATEMENT

ATTENTION!! PLEASE READ COMPLETELY!!

To the Participant:

I want to thank you for participating in this study. This study was designed to test your reaction to stories about athletes in the media. The story you read was fictitious and not reflective of the team discussed in the article. As stated on the consent form, your participation in this study was voluntary, and your identity will remain confidential and anonymous.

As a reminder, if you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Stephen Rush, at rush011@crimson.ua.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (205) 348-8461. If you wish to withdraw your participation from this study, please inform the investigator before you submit this questionnaire.

APPENDIX D – IRB APPROVAL FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA® | Office of the Vice President for
Research & Economic Development
Office for Research Compliance

December 9, 2019

Stephen Rush
Department of Graduate Studies
College of Communication & Information Sciences
The University of Alabama
Box 870172

Re: IRB # 18-OR-452-R1 “Race and Sports Crisis Communication”

Dear Mr. Rush:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your renewal application. Your renewal application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver of documentation of informed consent. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The approval for your application will lapse on December 8, 2020. If your research will continue beyond this date, please submit a continuing review to the IRB as required by University policy before the lapse. Please note, any modifications made in research design, methodology, or procedures must be submitted to and approved by the IRB before implementation. Please submit a final report form when the study is complete.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed consent form to obtain consent from your participants.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



Carpanato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer