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## How Sports Celebrities Handle Crisis: The Analysis of Social, Traditional and Controlled Media

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The University of Southern Mississippi

HOW SPORTS CELEBRITIES HANDLE CRISIS:

THE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL, TRADITIONAL, AND CONTROLLED MEDIA

by

Nicole Renee Hendricks

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2015

## ABSTRACT

### HOW SPORTS CELEBRITIES HANDLE CRISIS:

#### THE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL, TRADITIONAL, AND CONTROLLED MEDIA

by Nicole Renee Hendricks

August 2015

Professional golfer Tiger Woods and former professional cyclist Lance Armstrong were both involved in cheating scandals beginning in 2009 and 2010, respectively. In 2009, allegations of Woods' infidelity surfaced after Woods crashed his car and had an argument with his wife Elin outside their Orlando home. Woods remained quiet about the incident with his wife and about his alleged infidelity until a press conference was held months later. In the press conference, Woods apologized and admitted the cheating allegations were true.

Lance Armstrong was initially accused of doping and using performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) by a French sports newspaper in 2005. Unlike Woods, Armstrong adamantly denied the cheating allegations for over ten years. Armstrong was formally charged by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) with doping in 2012. In January of 2013, he admitted in an interview with Oprah Winfrey that he cheated and used PEDs.

A content analysis was performed to analyze the use of social media, traditional media, and controlled online media of these two athletes engaged in conflict. Results show public relations theories in play as the athletes attempted to handle their cheating scandals. Both athletes edited their respective Twitter accounts, resulting in positive media framing. The message tone on traditional media was not positive and reflected emotions of sadness and shame for Armstrong and Woods. The main subject of "attack"

on traditional media was the individual for Woods, meaning that he was the individual or person under attack. Traditional media blamed Woods for his cheating scandal.

A significant finding showed that Armstrong did not utilize image restoration on social media. Nike Corporation and LIVESTRONG apologized for this cheating and severed all possible ties with Armstrong. On traditional media, Armstrong was linked to denial. Woods did not use image restoration strategies on any media. However, reduction was a strategy that was connected to Woods on his traditional media. The most significant finding was discovering how the athletes were received on media they could not change or manipulate. Armstrong was perceived as a villain and athlete, while Woods was seen as a womanizer and athlete.

The results suggest that social media and controlled media can potentially help a person who is facing intense media scrutiny. Social media and controlled media can attempt to camouflage or mask a crisis. However, traditional media is a formidable force and will make the crisis public.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"I always turn to the sports section first. The sports page records people's accomplishments; the front page has nothing but man's failures."

- Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the United States

#### Problem Statement

In 1968, Warren famously acknowledged his enjoyment of the sports section for highlighting the successes and milestones in an athlete's career. Sports are an important facet of American culture. Media attention to professional athletes has grown exponentially with the advent of social media. Twitter is widely considered to be the most powerful social media platform accessible to athletes, sports critics and fans for several reasons.

A major reason Twitter has such widespread success is because it is both practical and desirable for the modern sports fan. With regard to practicality, the modern sports fan wants constant and up-to-date access to various types of sports information. This could mean having immediate access to the score of a football game directly after a touchdown was scored or finding out a player was suspended.

With regard to desirability, Twitter allows the modern sports fan the ability to circulate his or her own opinions and thoughts regarding the sports and athletes they follow. If a fan wants to tweet their like (or dislike) of how an athlete behaved or performed, Twitter is the catalyst for that. Twitter fulfills both a practical and desirable purpose for the modern sports fan.

Although a great tool for the modern sports fan, some professional athletes have not been as fortunate when it comes to using Twitter in a practical, beneficial way. For

example, if an athlete makes a bad decision or posts an offensive comment on Twitter, this can lead to the athlete facing intense media scrutiny. The bad news for the professional athlete is that social media can spread the news of the bad decision or Twitter comment immediately and also significantly faster than traditional media. As a result, the integrity and the accomplishments of some professional athletes have been questioned and their image tainted. This is problematic if and when it leads to a scandal or crisis for the athlete.

When professional athletes are involved in a scandal or crisis, crisis communication and image restoration strategies should be utilized. Lance Armstrong and Tiger Woods are examples of professional athletes who began their professional careers with positive reputations. At the height of their games, Armstrong and Woods were both considered the top athletes in their respective sports. Armstrong was the best cyclist in the cycling world, and Woods was the best golfer. However, both Armstrong and Woods made bad decisions that led to intense media scrutiny. Both Armstrong and Woods were accused of cheating. The result the cheating had on their respective careers is where the similarities end.

Armstrong was considered to be a national hero because he was a cancer survivor in addition to being a standout professional cyclist. As someone who rode bikes with President Bush and dated celebrities like Sheryl Crow and Kate Hudson, Armstrong appeared to have it all. Things changed when Armstrong was accused of cheating.

Lance Armstrong was accused of cheating in regard to his athletic performance, and this cheating affected Armstrong professionally. It affected him professionally because Armstrong made a career out of being a professional cyclist. After years of denying the allegations, Armstrong admitted he used Performance Enhancing Drugs

(PEDs) and doped when he competed as a professional cyclist. Doping and using PEDs is against the rules of professional cycling. As a result of his admission, Armstrong's reputation was damaged, and he was stripped of his cycling medals. Armstrong's bad decisions and his cheating ended his professional cycling career.

Like Armstrong, Tiger Woods started his career as a professional athlete with a positive reputation. He was a top golfer and was well-respected in the athletics community. Woods had a beautiful wife and children, and he appeared to be a family man. Like Armstrong, he seemed to have it all. And like Armstrong, Woods was involved in a media scandal that involved cheating. However, Woods' cheating had nothing to do with his performance on the golf course. Woods' cheating stemmed from allegations that he cheated on his wife. Woods' scandal involved cheating in his personal life; Armstrong's cheating involved cheating in his professional life.

Both athletes admitted to cheating in their respective ways. However, Woods is still playing professional golf and has multiple lucrative endorsement contracts. Armstrong's cheating ended his career as a professional cyclist, and he was forced to relinquish all things connected to his cycling career.

Lance Armstrong is one of the most famous cyclists in history—perhaps the most famous cyclist of all time. Further, Armstrong was considered a role model and an American hero because of the strength and perseverance he showed during his battle with cancer. Armstrong created the LIVESTRONG Foundation to help those affected by cancer and to further cancer research. From taking bike rides with then-President George W. Bush to flooding the country with his recognizable yellow LIVESTRONG bracelet, it seemed like Armstrong was the perfect American athlete with an unstoppable career.

For nearly 13 years, Armstrong denied the allegations that he cheated and used PEDs. In August 2012, he came clean and admitted to doping and using PEDs while he was a professional cyclist. The result of his cheating had dire consequences. Armstrong was stripped of all his titles, forced to resign from the cancer organization he founded, and lost endorsement deals with global corporations like Nike. The negative media coverage was seemingly everywhere. Although Armstrong told the truth, he had previously lied to the sports world and betrayed his fans for over a decade. Ultimately, Armstrong's career ended when he admitted he cheated.

On the other hand, Tiger Woods is still managing his career in the aftermath of his cheating scandal. In late 2009, accounts surfaced of professional golfer Tiger Woods' alleged infidelities with multiple women, and the story received substantial media coverage. In December 2009, Woods announced he would be taking an indefinite break from professional golf. Later, Woods gave a televised apology in February 2010. His apology was perceived by many sports critics to be insincere and too controlled.

Retired sportscaster Pat O'Brien criticized the Woods news conference and said, "He might as well have done this on YouTube...he's got to subject himself to some sort of question-and-answer at some point" ("Tiger Woods says," 2010). As a result of this "weak" apology, companies ended their endorsement deals with Woods. However, Woods' alleged cheating did not end or substantially inhibit his professional golfing career. He did not cheat at the game of golf, but he did break the vows he took to be faithful and honorable as a husband. Tiger Woods's cheating had different repercussions than Armstrong's.

Fans are still attending tournaments wearing Woods' trademark red golf shirt to show their support for him. He is considered one of the best professional golfers in the

world, and according to *Golf Digest*, Woods was the first athlete to earn over \$1 billion dollars (before taxes) in his career. His earnings from 2013 of over \$83 million helped him accomplish this and put him in the \$1 billion bracket (“Golf tour news,” 2014). Some scholars think Woods’ negative media coverage may have even *elevated* his celebrity status. It is important to ask, “Why did Armstrong’s cheating end his professional career,” and “Why did Woods’ cheating have no significant financial impact on his professional career?”

### Purpose of the Study

This study compared how former professional cyclist Lance Armstrong and professional golfer Tiger Woods handled a crisis. Specifically, the study compared how Armstrong handled a professional crisis with how Woods handled a personal crisis. Further, this study used three media types to examine how the athletes handled their crises. The three media types chosen were social media, traditional media and controlled media. The sources for the media types were Twitter, newspaper articles and press releases/press statements, respectively. These sources were chosen because of their relevance and connection to intense media coverage.

When an athlete is involved in a crisis or is at the center of a scandal, he or she is usually surrounded by intense media coverage. If handled correctly, media coverage can aid in restoring the athlete’s image and reputation. If handled incorrectly, media coverage can negatively affect, or sometimes end, an athlete’s career. Although he cheated on his wife, Woods’ cheating minimally affected his professional golf career. He lost million dollar endorsements and lost tournaments. However, Woods is still a billion dollar athlete, and he’s still an active, successful golfer. Armstrong’s cheating, conversely, ended his career as a professional cyclist.



This study examined and compared Lance Armstrong and Tiger Woods. Both athletes made bad decisions that involved intense media scrutiny. Both Armstrong and Woods were involved in a cheating scandal. The researcher chose Armstrong and Woods due to their high-profile nature and status. In addition, Armstrong was chosen because he was an early adopter of Twitter. Another element of this study was the unique element of comparing how an athlete or celebrity handled a professional crisis with how an athlete handled a personal crisis. This comparison has not been attempted in previous research.

Both athletes utilized social media and controlled online media in an attempt to repair their images. Social media has become an effective way for athletes to communicate with both their fans and critics during a scandal or crisis. Also, social media like Twitter and Facebook have shown that it is possible for fans to have two-way communication with the athletes they follow and/or support.

Lance Armstrong and his use of Twitter is a relevant example of this. Armstrong was an early adopter of Twitter from its inception and used his Twitter account to communicate with his followers before, during, and after his scandal.

Woods, although he joined in 2009, deactivated his Twitter account at the time of his scandal. So his current Twitter account, press releases, press statements and interviews were chosen for examination. He utilized crisis communication strategies in his press statements to handle his scandal and attempt to repair his image. According to Fearn-Banks (2001), "The process of crisis communication is the verbal, visual, and/or written interaction between the organization [or person] and its publics (often through the news media) prior to, during, and after the negative occurrence" (p. 480). When using crisis communication, the goal is to minimize the damage the person or organization

underwent (Fearn-Banks, 2001, p. 480). Woods minimized the damage he underwent by controlling and maintaining his social media and controlled media outlets.

Although Armstrong and Woods utilized different communication tools, both communicated with the media during their scandals. Armstrong's and Woods' Twitter accounts will be analyzed to determine how they were used as a social media tool to handle their scandals. The specific things each athlete emphasized and omitted will be examined using Goffman's (1974) framing theory. According to Goffman (1974), frames represented "schemata of interpretation" that help individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" events and situations that they witness or experience in their lives. The way in which each athlete composed his tweets, or how he "framed" his tweets, will be examined. For example, the tweets will be coded and analyzed to determine the way in which his crisis was framed on his Twitter page.

Cho and Gower (2006) noted, "...the public perceives not the objective fact of a crisis event but the fact constructed by the media or news releases from the party in crisis. The framing or the describing of a crisis may well influence the public's evaluation of organizational responsibility for the crisis event" (p. 420). Many public relations scholars contend that framing theory directly affects the public's perception of a crisis. This study will analyze how Armstrong and Woods' tweets were framed before, during and after their crises. This study will further examine episodic versus thematic content and influence on the response by the athletes' fans and followers.

Whereas Armstrong mainly utilized social media to handle his scandal, Tiger Woods chose to hold a press conference. However, he read his statement and did not allow members of the media to ask questions afterward. What Woods said in his statement was purposeful and pre-planned. Woods had a strategy for handling his crisis.

Armstrong also utilized an interview with talk show host Oprah Winfrey to communicate with his fans and critics. Woods' statement and Armstrong's interview are examples of crisis response.

### Significance of the Study

Before social media, traditional media and public relations practitioners worked together to cover stories and report news. The advent of social media changed that dynamic. With many newspaper reporters and other traditional media checking and using social media outlets like Twitter for information, it is important to acknowledge social media's impact on media coverage. Social media, in particular, can be a helpful tool for a professional athlete when a crisis develops. However, it can be a harmful weapon if used incorrectly.

Over the years, different types of crisis response strategies have been designed and evaluated through framing research (An & Gower, 2009, p. 107). Benoit (1995) composed a list of 14 strategies. They range from "simple denial" to "mortification" (p. 179). Crisis response strategies and crisis communication in general are specifically relevant in this study. The advent of social media platforms like Twitter can cause unwanted media attention on a celebrity or public figure. Crisis communication is a way to control or manage that media attention to avoid damaging a celebrity's reputation and career. So, crisis communication and social media are connected in that they are connected to celebrities and public figures. This is applicable to Woods and Armstrong.

Armstrong and Woods were chosen because of their high-profile nature, their household familiarity and celebrity status. Armstrong was an early adopter of Twitter; Woods had a Twitter account early on but deactivated it when news broke regarding his

personal crisis. Also comparing how an athlete handled a professional crisis with how an athlete handled a personal crisis has not been attempted in previous research.

Armstrong and Woods' Twitter accounts, press statements, and press releases will be analyzed to determine if crisis communication was used regarding their cheating scandals. The accounts, statements, and releases will also be analyzed to determine if the athletes utilized image restoration strategies. Newspaper articles in which Armstrong and Woods are the subject will be analyzed to determine the external perception of their scandals. Finally, both athletes' current professional and financial statuses will be examined in an attempt to understand how their scandals affected their careers and how they affected them financially.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CRISIS SITUATIONS

#### Athletes and Cheating

By nature, people are competitive. In basic competition, there is a winner and a loser. Not everyone can be a winner, and no athlete is perfect. All things considered, athletes compete to determine who is best, and the thrill of competition can be like a drug. Sometimes wanting to win can cloud the mind of even the most honorable and noble athlete.

The Association Against Steroid Abuse (AASA) claims that the use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) goes “as far back as the original Olympic Games, and attempts to increase testosterone were documented as early as 776 BC” (“Steroid abuse in sports,” 2014).

Athletes from all over the sports spectrum have had issues with PEDs, and many are failing drug tests. In almost all cases, an athlete who fails a drug test is penalized, though the levels of punishment vary according to the severity of the infraction and the governing body of the respective sport. Some athletes are suspended from playing and have to pay a fine. The punishment is more severe for Olympic athletes. They have to relinquish their medals. Many sports critics agree that a different set of rules have been applied (and do apply) for Major League Baseball (MLB) players. New York Yankee Alex Rodriguez is a unique case. He is facing a substantial penalty. Begley (2013) states the following:

The three-time MVP is facing a 211-game ban for violating baseball's joint drug agreement and collective bargaining agreement. [Rodriguez] is appealing the ban...the preliminary appeals process will begin soon. It is not expected to be

completed until November or December, so Rodriguez should be able to play through the end of the 2013 season. (Begley, 2013)

The big issue in Rodriguez's case is that he will remain eligible to play baseball even though he allegedly violated the MLB drug policy. Sports critics think allowing Rodriguez to play sends the wrong message about athletes and PEDs.

Although baseball players have received a substantial amount of coverage when it comes to PEDs, they are not the only athletes in the spotlight for cheating. Football players have also received attention. CBS's *60 Minutes Wednesday* broke a story that three Carolina Panthers players filled prescriptions for testosterone cream in 2003 and managed to evade the NFL's allegedly rigorous screening system. The story won substantial notoriety because the Carolina Panthers went to the Super Bowl Playoffs in 2004. As a result, NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue received a letter from the House Committee on Government Reform asking for documents connected to the NFL's drug policy (Cannella & Bechtel, 2005, p. 20).

Cyclists are another group of athletes who have been the source of significant coverage when it comes to PEDs. From the beginning, Lance Armstrong vehemently denied he used PEDS. In interviews and press conferences, he appeared angry when asked if he cheated. His endearing story of beating cancer coupled with his unblemished image in the sports media made it easy for the sports world to take Armstrong at his word. Things changed for Armstrong when the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) conducted a thorough investigation in 2012.

#### Lance Armstrong

The big issue surrounding the Lance Armstrong scandal is that he vehemently denied cheating during his cycling career. Specifically, he denied doping and using

performance-enhancing drugs. In January of 2013, Armstrong came clean and finally admitted to doping and using performance-enhancing drugs in an Oprah Winfrey interview. As a result, Armstrong was stripped of all the titles he won after August 1998 and “because of his lifetime ban, Armstrong is prohibited from participating in any event sanctioned by any signatory to the World Anti-Doping [WADA] Code.” Further, the USADA’s media relations manager stated, “The WADA Code rules dictate that a sanctioned athlete cannot compete in an authorized event during that athlete’s period of eligibility” (Rogers & Beaudin, 2014). For thirteen years, Armstrong denied using performance-enhancing drugs and denied doping. Armstrong went so far as to sue for libel when sports analysts wrote articles implying he cheated. He denied it for years, and many sports fans around the world supported him and took him at his word. It was a lie he told for over a decade.

In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, he admitted to taking banned substances, blood doping, and using blood transfusions to enhance his cycling performance. Some of the illegal substances he used included testosterone, cortisone and Human Growth Hormone. He also admitted that he used these substances and methods during all seven of his Tour de France victories. Armstrong told Winfrey he did not think it was humanly possible to win the race seven times without doping (“Lance Armstrong’s interview,” 2013).

Winfrey noted, “For 13 years you didn’t just deny it, you brazenly and defiantly denied everything you just admitted now. So why admit it?” Armstrong said he didn’t have a great answer, and then he acknowledged that he thought his telling the truth was

too late. He said it was his fault for waiting so long. “I viewed this situation as one big lie that I repeated a lot of times, and as you said, it wasn’t as if I just said no and moved off it” (“Lance Armstrong’s interview,” 2013).

Armstrong admitted that he should have told the truth and also acknowledged that he waited a substantial period of time to admit he cheated. Winfrey made that point evident and, once again, repeated that Armstrong was “defiant” and “called other people liars.” Armstrong responded as follows:

I understand that. And while I lived through this process, especially the last two years, one year, six months, two, three months, I know the truth. The truth is what was out there. The truth isn’t what I said, and now it’s gone—this story was so perfect for so long. And I mean that, as I try to take myself out of the situation, and I look at it. You overcome the disease; you win the Tour de France seven times. You have a happy marriage; you have children. I mean it’s just this mythic perfect story, and it wasn’t true. (Lance Armstrong’s interview,” 2013)

The Lance Armstrong case symbolizes how much people enjoy a story about a hero triumphing when faced with a challenge or when faced with defeating a villain. In Armstrong’s case, his challenge was overcoming cancer and going on to win seven Tour de France titles. The villain in his case, however, was the allegation that he used doping and performance-enhancing drugs. The Tour de France is a three-week race held in France during the summer and is considered one of the most grueling measures of athletic aptitude. For any individual to win it seven times was a monumental feat, and it led to Armstrong being placed on a sports pedestal. The narrative was especially compelling because Armstrong was often presented as an average guy from Texas who trained hard, beat cancer, and defeated popular European riders who were favorites. Because of his



achievement, he was seen as something of an athletic superhero. The world took notice and embraced him. However, they were embracing something that wasn't real ("Lance Armstrong's interview," 2013).

Winfrey asked Armstrong if it was hard to live up to the image he created for himself, and he said it was impossible. "Certainly I'm a flawed character, as I well know, and I couldn't do that." Armstrong said other people helped create the deceptive image that the world embraced, but he stated the following:

All the fault and all the blame here falls on me. But behind that picture and behind that story is momentum. Whether it's fans or whether it's the media, it just gets going. And I lost myself in all of that. I'm sure there would be other people that couldn't handle it, but I certainly couldn't handle it, and I was used to controlling everything in my life. I controlled every outcome in my life. ("Lance Armstrong's interview," 2013)

Armstrong said at the beginning of the interview with Winfrey that he did not think it was possible to win without doping. He affirmed that thought a second time in the interview but added that had to do with the cycling generation of which he was a part. Armstrong said that doping was part of the cycling culture and that he did not invent that culture. However, he said he did not try to stop the culture, and that was his mistake. Armstrong stated, "I didn't invent the culture, but I didn't try to stop the culture, and that's my mistake, and that's what I have to be sorry for...and the sport is now paying the price because of that. So I am sorry for that" ("Lance Armstrong's interview," 2013). Armstrong admitted fault for his lying and/or said he was sorry nine times in the first installment of his interview with Winfrey. One of the most compelling parts of the interview was that Armstrong did not think what he was doing was cheating. Winfrey

asked him if he felt in any way that he was cheating by taking banned drugs. Armstrong responded, “At the time, no. I kept hearing I’m a drug cheat, I’m a cheat, I’m a cheater. I went in and just looked up the definition of cheat, and the definition of cheat is to gain an advantage on a rival or foe that they don’t have. I didn’t view it that way. I viewed it as a level playing field” (“Lance Armstrong’s interview,” 2013). Even though he did not reveal the names of other cyclists who doped and used performance-enhancing drugs, Armstrong implied that a majority of the cyclists on his team or those competing against him were also doping and using performance-enhancing drugs. If a majority of cyclists were cheating, how is it possible to determine who deserves cycling titles and who does not? Armstrong retired from cycling in February of 2011 while facing a United States federal investigation into doping allegations.

Armstrong claimed that he stopped doping and using performance-enhancing drugs after he won his seventh Tour de France in 2005. Winfrey asked, “When you placed third in 2009, you did not dope?” Armstrong said that the last time he doped was in 2005. She next inquired, “Does that include blood transfusions? No doping or blood transfusions in 2009? 2010?” Armstrong responded, “Absolutely not” (“Lance Armstrong’s interview,” 2013).

This is difficult for critics in the sporting world to believe for a number of reasons. If Armstrong lied about doping for thirteen years, why would he tell the truth about not doping after that particular time period? However, he did place third in that Tour de France; whereas, from 1999 to 2005, he received first place seven consecutive times.

Armstrong came out of retirement in January of 2009 and finished third in the 2009 Tour de France. In 2010 and 2011, he raced with the Union Cycliste Internationale

(UCI) Pro Team that he helped create, Team Radio Shack. Armstrong retired in February of 2011 while he was facing a United States federal investigation regarding allegations of doping. In June 2012, the USADA charged him with having used performance-enhancing drugs. On August 24, 2012, Armstrong was stripped of all his cycling titles after 1998 and banned from professional cycling. A few months later, Armstrong finally admitted what he had done.

Television, social media and sports blogs support the idea that sports critics and fans alike are angry at Armstrong. This sentiment was echoed when professional baseball players Barry Bonds, Mark McGuire and Sammy Sosa admitting to using steroids. Sports critics contend the records broken and the achievements made by the steroid-using athletes should not count if they used performance-enhancing drugs. Famous baseball legends like Babe Ruth and Mickey Mantle could not (and did not) use drugs to break records and make baseball history.

Another key component to the Armstrong scandal is that Armstrong resigned as chairman of the LIVESTRONG Foundation in October 2012 and from the Foundation's board of directors in November 2012 as a result of the doping issue. This Foundation is one in which Armstrong created to help cancer patients. He is currently being asked to give back money he earned from winning the Tour de France, along with money he earned from endorsement deals connected with his cycling victories.

Figures provided by the Foundation to the ESPN media organization in October 2012 reveal that, despite the 2012 Armstrong doping controversy, revenues were up 2.1 percent to U.S. \$33.8 million through September 30, 2012—according to ESPN, this total represents a 5.4 percent increase from 2011 with a 5.7 percent increase in the average

dollar amount of those donations (from U.S. \$74.88 in 2011 to U.S. \$79.15 in 2012).

LIVESTRONG.org states the following:

Since our inception in 1997, the LIVESTRONG Foundation has raised more than \$500 million to support our mission to inspire and empower people affected by cancer. We have provided financial resources to more than 550 organizations that conduct cancer survivorship research or offer services to people affected by cancer, and 84 cents of every dollar raised has gone directly to support our programs and services for survivors. (Livestrong's Financial Information, 2013)

*Timeline of Events: Lance Armstrong*

*1993:* Armstrong wins first Tour de France stage.

*1996:* On October 2, Armstrong is diagnosed with advanced testicular cancer, which spread to his abdomen, lungs and brain; he undergoes aggressive treatment and beats the disease.

*1997:* Armstrong resumes cycling training and establishes the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

*1999:* Armstrong wins first Tour de France 33 months after battling testicular cancer and becomes only the second American to win the Tour.

*2000:* Armstrong wins bronze medal at Sydney Olympics.

*2001:* Armstrong wins third consecutive Tour de France.

*2002:* Armstrong wins fourth consecutive Tour de France and is appointed to the President's Cancer Panel.

*2003:* Armstrong wins fifth Tour de France. The Lance Armstrong Foundation Endowment is established, and LIVESTRONG.org is launched as an online resource for cancer survivors. The Foundation receives a five-year cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to address cancer survivorship in medically underserved populations.

*2004:* Nike and the Lance Armstrong Foundation join forces to create The LIVESTRONG wristband, and the Wear Yellow, Live Strong campaign begins. Armstrong becomes the first person to win six Tour de France titles.

*2005:* The French sports newspaper L'Equipe accuses Armstrong of doping and reports Armstrong used a performance-enhancing drug in 1999 to win his first of seven consecutive Tours de France. The Foundation sells more than 55 million wristbands. Seven thousand two hundred grassroots fundraisers raise more than \$7 million for the Foundation. The Foundation awards \$500,000 to help survivors affected by Hurricane Katrina.

*2006:* One hundred cancer advocates from all 50 states in Washington, D.C., and participants in more than 120 local events across the country urge Congress to make funding for cancer research and programs a national priority on LIVESTRONG Day.

*2007:* Armstrong helps unite support for the largest state-level initiative for cancer prevention in history in Texas. It provides \$3 billion for cancer research and prevention in Texas.

2009: The Lance Armstrong Foundation begins going by the name LIVESTRONG. Armstrong returns to professional cycling after winning his seventh Tour de France.

2010: Federal authorities investigating accusations that Armstrong and other top cyclists engaged in doping consider if they can expand the investigation to include fraud and conspiracy charges.

2011: For the first time in history, world leaders come together to tackle cancer and other non-communicable diseases at the UN Summit. Armstrong announces retirement for the second time.

\*\*\*2012: In June, Armstrong receives a letter from the USADA and is officially charged with doping. A federal judge dismisses Armstrong's lawsuit in August against the USADA. Armstrong says he will not fight the USADA's doping charges, meaning he will lose his seven Tour de France titles and all awards and money he has won since August 1998.

In October, the USADA releases detail about the Armstrong investigation and calls it the most sophisticated doping program in recent sports history. Armstrong steps down as chairman of LIVESTRONG, and Nike terminates his contract.

LIVESTRONG surpasses the 2.5-million-people-served milestone by helping a record number of people in 2012 through free, one-on-one cancer support services; LIVESTRONG raises \$48 million to support programs that serve people affected by cancer.

2013: Armstrong reportedly tells associates he may admit he used performance-enhancing drugs during his cycling career. In January, Armstrong confesses in an interview with Oprah Winfrey that he used performance-enhancing drugs during his cycling career. (“Lance Armstrong Timeline,” 2013)

### Tiger Woods

Sports analysts consider Tiger Woods one of the best golfers of all time. *Golf World's* “100 Best Modern Players,” a list of the top players on the PGA Tour since 1980, placed Woods at the top of the list and identified him as the best modern golfer. However, some critics disagree because Woods has not broken Jack Nicklaus’ record for most major wins. Others think Woods’ achievements speak for themselves. According to Kelley (2015), “Woods won more money titles, more scoring titles, more Player of the Year awards - more than [Jack] Nicklaus, more than anyone else. Woods has more total PGA Tour wins than Nicklaus. Woods has more seasons with five or more wins than anyone else...”

Regardless of who is the best golfer, it is fair to say Tiger Woods is a household name in the sports world. When one is a household name in an industry like sports, there is money to be made, and companies want to capitalize on the athlete’s popularity. The Nike Corporation, for example, continued to capitalize on Tiger Woods’ success and popularity even in the wake of the scandal.

Nike paid Tiger Woods \$40 million over a five-year period to wear and endorse its products back in the late ‘90s. When he won the Masters Tournament in 1997, the Nike swoosh on his signature red polo appeared on the television screen for almost 14 minutes. Advertising analysts called it the single best coverage of a corporate logo. That same year, Woods earned approximately \$24 million in endorsement deals. Only Michael

Jordan earned more with earnings of \$47 million. Professionally, Woods was an outstanding success.

Woods had the reputation for being a family man and had an unblemished image in the media and with the public. He, like Armstrong, was a national icon. Woods was an unusual golfer in terms of his race. He refers to himself as a blend of Caucasian, Black, American Indian, and Asian. By being so successful, sports critics contended that he eroded racial barriers that no other golfer had before. Woods achieved remarkable success at a young age. He also married a Swedish supermodel, Elin Nordegren, with whom he has two children. It seemed like Woods had the best of both worlds. He appeared to be a great success in both his personal life and his professional life. However, footage of Woods' wife Elin chasing him around with a golf club surfaced in 2010, and the story broke that Woods was having affairs with multiple women. The media gravitated to the relationship between Woods and his wife. There was talk that Woods' divorce would be one of the most expensive in sports history, and that intensified the media coverage.

Woods' wife divorced him and reportedly received a \$110 million divorce settlement. The couple has two children together, and the scandal tainted Woods' reputation as an athlete with a wholesome, respectable image. Woods' public relations team held a press conference, and Woods read a statement in which he apologized for his behavior. The press conference did not allow members of the media to ask Woods any questions. Immediately following the reading of his statement, Woods left. Many in the public relations world criticized him for not having two-way communication with the members of the media. Woods was also criticized for not appearing genuine and sincere when he apologized.



Woods' golf game suffered immediately following the divorce, but he bounced back shortly thereafter. He lost a few endorsement deals because of his scandal but not enough to even put a dent in his professional career. According to Fox Sports, at one time Woods tried reconciling with his wife. Elin Woods responded by asking that a \$350 million anti-cheating clause be added to their prenuptial agreement. The reconciliation was unsuccessful. Woods has an estimated \$600 million fortune.

*Timeline of Events: Tiger Woods*

**2008:** Woods has knee problems but wins the U.S. Open. He takes the rest of the year to recover from ACL surgery and misses the British Open and PGA Championship.

**2009:** Woods has six wins on the PGA Tour but blows a 54-hole lead at the PGA Championship. Allegations of infidelity surface when he has a fight with his wife Elin outside their home. Woods' image is damaged, and he retreats from the golfing world.

**2010:** Woods makes a return at the Masters wearing dark sunglasses. However, he "wasn't really a factor in many tournaments in 2010."

**2011:** Woods employs Sean Foley, a new instructor. However, he reveals at the Masters he was injured again. He fires longtime caddie Steve Williams.

**2012:** Woods struggles at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am and the Masters. Woods wins the Arnold Palmer Invitational, the Memorial and the AT&T National. Regarding the majors, however, he is 0-4.

**2013:** Woods receives a two-stroke penalty at the Masters; fans and critics think he should have been disqualified.

*2014:* This season is what many call the “bad back” portion of Tiger’s career. He has back surgery to repair a pinched nerve. (Reaske, 2014)

## CHAPTER III

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### The Sport Celebrity

A trend in media consumption reflects an insatiable interest in coverage dealing with professional athletes. A relationship exists between the media, professional sport, the players and fans of sports, and global public relations activity. According to Summers and Morgan (2008), “The amount of money invested in and made by professional sport today and the complexity of those revenue sources” has created a substantial and interdependent union (p. 176).

It is interdependent because each component needs the other in order to progress and evolve. Sponsors want their products to reach larger audiences, athletes want a larger salary, and fans want more coverage of their favorite athletes. “This constant demand and supply of information, competition and excitement breeds heroes, villains, celebrities and superstars” (Summers & Morgan, 2008, p. 176). It is here, scholars contend, that the “sport celebrity” is born.

There is a negative connotation that clouds the seemingly glittering image of the celebrity. Not everyone is impressed by fame and wealth. Carroll (2010) noted, “A person who is a ‘celebrity’ will often be referred to in tones of sneering condescension. There is something empty or frivolous about them. Their life is lived superficially, carried along on a froth of glitz and gold, a whirl of expensive clothes, Hollywood villas, and Gatsbyesque parties” (p. 489).

The term “celebrity” is a common term. Boorstin (1961) defined a celebrity as “a person who is well-known for his well-knownness.” Like professional athletes, celebrities

are constantly in the spotlight. This constant media exposure ensures that athletes and celebrities have a direct impact on their fans and their critics.

According to Goldsmith (2006), *People Weekly* reportedly paid \$4.1 million for newborn photos of Shiloh Nouvel Jolie-Pitt, the child of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt. The photos set a single-day traffic record for their website, attracting 26.5 million page views. The number of views suggests a general obsession with the consumption of celebrity news. Contributing to this obsession are the multiple ways in which celebrity news can be obtained. Websites are just one example of these ways. Murray (2006) said, “The growth in celebrity coverage in the past several years indicates an almost insatiable public demand for information on those who live, work and party under the spotlight of celebrity” (p. 4)

Many wonder from where this fascination with celebrities and athletes stems. One theory is that fans are fascinated by celebrities and athletes because they want to imitate them. Celebrities and athletes have a profound ability to influence and persuade people to imitate them. Fraser and Brown (2002) contended the following:

The way in which people acquire social values and behavior from media personae is a relevant research concern of mass media scholars and practitioners. During the past several decades, celebrities have had a growing influence through mass media. The proliferation of entertainment media worldwide has increased the exposure of celebrities to mass audiences and given them a powerful status. (p. 184)

Researcher Peter Adler conducted a study where he assumed celebrity status in his community. Adler assumed the role as a member of his university’s highly successful basketball team. Because of the team’s success, they were very visible and recognizable

in the community. The conclusion Adler came to regarding his research was two-fold. He examined his reflection on the celebrity status he achieved and the effects this had on both his data gathering and his overall sense of self. Adler (1984) stated the following:

Any time one assumes a role in a public setting, one becomes subject to the open scrutiny of the media. This can be very dangerous. I had to be constantly aware of what I did ... a slip at any time could have been disastrous. If I had made an error, either accidentally or through mistaken judgment, I would have risked losing everything. (p. 4)

His results enforce the idea that the media make a normal life impossible for a celebrity or professional athlete to live. All things considered, many scholars are unsympathetic. Mendelson (2007) wrote the following:

Celebrities, through actual or threat of physical force, legal action or denial of access, have power to control the way they are portrayed. Further... audiences internalize the debate from the perspective of the celebrity privacy. People empathize with the plight of the poor celebrities, ignoring the vast resources many of them command. (p. 180)

While Mendelson minimized the plight of a celebrity, other scholars chose to examine how powerful celebrities are. Brown, Basil, and Bocarnea (2003) conducted a study on celebrities and their effect on media consumption. Brown et al. found celebrities have a firm grasp on social influence. By promoting media consumption, celebrities are able to maintain a firm grasp on social influence (p. 589).

This grasp is not always considered positive. Scholars like Boorstin (1961) and Mendelson (2007) did not like celebrities or sympathize with them. Mendelson (2007) went further and posited celebrities are “all image and that there is nothing real there at

all.” Dyer (1986) said, “Celebrities are the ultimate example of media hype, foisted on us by the media’s constant need to manipulate our attention” (p. 15).

Although the overall opinion of a celebrity is low, non-celebrities still try to emulate them. Non-celebrities copy the way celebrities dress, the foods they eat, and the places they go in an attempt to be more like them. If people do not place celebrities in a high regard, then why do they want to be like them in the first place? According to Carroll (2010), the world was divided into three groups by the Greeks: “the gods, the heroes and the mere mortals.” The modern celebrity is similar to the hero (p. 490).

Professional athletes can be role models or heroes to the fans who follow them and cheer for them. Before his cheating scandal, Tiger Woods had a clean image and a good reputation. This contributed to him being embraced by both the public and the media. Carroll (2010) noted the following:

Tiger Woods...gained his celebrity by tapping into hero tropes: being exemplary, or super-human, at what he does (playing golf), being composed under the sort of competitive pressure that would turn normal mortals into quivering cowards, and being gracious and magnanimous in victory. (p. 490)

John Wayne achieved fame by playing a hero on the big screen in the American Western. However, Wayne was portraying a fictional character. He had no god-like traits. He was just a man. It is important to ask why people need to create heroes out of celebrities. One reason is that people want to be entertained. Carroll (2010) contended the following about people:

[They] seem to need to create a drama for [them]selves, played out at a self-protective distance, a drama in which we cast larger-than-life entities, ones that

look like us, and display some of our worst character traits. We then look on with a mixture of envy, fascination, titillation, and disgust. (p. 490)

On one hand, people want to be entertained. They also want to watch someone they cheer for and identify with (i.e. a celebrity) go through challenges and obstacles. It appears contradictory that someone who is a fan of a particular celebrity would want to see him or her struggle and go through a crisis. However, Carroll (2010) contended that there is the idea that a celebrity can handle a crisis or conflict because they are different from non-celebrities in that they are “free from the cares of normal life—by means of their fabulous wealth and their life of leisure, their private jets and yachts” (p. 490). So if the celebrity faces a crisis and suffers a fall from grace, then the tabloid magazines can reassure their readers that the life of a celebrity is not to be envied. (p. 490)

The bigger the celebrity’s ego, the more it hurts when his or her image is tainted or reputation is questioned. Carroll (2010) contended that being a celebrity has its own rewards and its own negatives. They agree that when a celebrity goes through a crisis or scandal, “the audience, via the gossip columns and lead news stories, takes enormous, almost erotic pleasure at the fall [of a celebrity]” (p. 490). Specifically, the scrutiny a professional athlete undergoes when he or she “falls” or goes through a crisis or scandal can be intense. This scrutiny can be directly linked to society’s longtime fascination with sports.

### Sport and Framing Theory

Sport is one of the oldest social institutions in society. The ancient Greeks are credited with creating the Greek Olympics, and it is estimated they took place in 776 B.C. in Olympia, Greece. The Greek Olympic Games inspired the modern Olympic Games (“Ancient Greeks,” 2014). The function of sport and its importance in society has

evolved. Large amounts of time and money are devoted to sports in the United States. There are thousands of Americans who are active in different community and job-based sports leagues, even with the exclusion of professional, collegiate, high school, and grade school athletes. Many fans read about sports online, and many subscribe to sports periodicals. Tens of millions of Americans go to sporting events each year. Even more sports fans watch sporting events on television (Neuharth, 2005). Fans are also tweeting about sports and watching games online. Sports are a media-centered phenomenon. Christopherson, Janning, and McConnell (2002) made this statement:

Sport provides a microcosmic representation of society, reflecting contradictory and paradoxical messages about the roles of women that are transmitted into other societal institutions. Media messages about the role of women in sport and society are communicated to millions of people via television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. (p. 87)

These media images play an important role in how athletes are framed and how they are perceived by the public. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) defined a frame as a “central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (p. 143). Gross (2008) took it further and posited that frames can shape the way an audience thinks and feels “by highlighting certain aspects of an event or policy... [frames can] guide audience members’ thoughts about that event or issue in predictable ways, to predictable conclusions” (p. 170).

Previous research affirms that the type of framing being used can impact and affect audience perception. The type of framing is especially important when a high-profile professional athlete is going through a scandal or crisis. The media’s interest in a



professional athlete who is involved in a scandal or crisis can be a serious threat to the athlete's career. As one might expect, money plays a significant role in the stakeholders involved in the scandal or crisis. Summers and Morgan (2008) noted the following:

The amount of money invested in and made by professional sport today and the complexity of those revenue sources has forged an important symbiotic relationship between the media, global PR activity, professional sport, and the players and spectators of sport. Each needs the other to sustain an existence far beyond simply providing televised coverage of a sport. (p. 176)

It is this symbiotic relationship that proves that professional sport is an important facet of public relations.

Previous literature has shown that widespread media coverage is beneficial to a professional athlete when the athlete performs well or does something positive. However, previous literature has also shown that widespread media coverage can be detrimental to a professional athlete when coverage on the athlete is unflattering or portrays the athlete in a bad light. According to Bruce and Tini (2008), "negative stories can seriously damage the reputation and popularity of an organization and affect the bottom line in areas such as attendance, merchandising, sponsorship, and endorsement deals" (p.108).

With regard to Tiger Woods' crisis, he remained quiet in the media and then issued a statement. Woods' statement was criticized for being vague and lacking in sincerity. According to an online article, "Woods' statement...doesn't say much: 'This situation is my fault... I'm human, and I'm not perfect... This is a private matter, and I want to keep it that way'" (Tate, 2009).

Armstrong took the denial route for as long as he could, and he utilized Twitter to defend himself. Armstrong tweeted using phrases like "witch hunt" and "vendetta" to

highlight how he felt regarding the case the USADA was building against him. However, in January 2013, Armstrong staged an interview on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* to tell his side of his scandal. During the interview, Armstrong admitted to using PEDs and appeared contrite and remorseful. Many in the sports community considered Armstrong's admission too little too late. He was stripped of all his Tour de France titles, and Armstrong joined Michael Vick as one of only two athletes to get fired by the Nike Corporation.

These “negative stories” often have the potential to evolve into a crisis or scandal, and this is when the use of public relations is critical. The profession of public relations was crisis-driven from the beginning. Fearn-Banks (2001) noted, “Most public relations programs are developed either to prevent a crisis or to recover from a crisis. As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are more aware of the importance of protecting organizations (including companies and public individuals) from a greater number and a greater magnitude of threats to their well-being” (p. 479). Widespread media coverage can elevate the professional athlete to celebrity status, or it can grind their careers to a halt. The practice of public relations is particularly relevant when it comes to widespread media coverage and professional athletes.

### Sports Public Relations

Professional sports and public relations have a distinct relationship despite the fact that little research exists (L'Etang, 2006). Desmarais and Bruce (2008) contended the following:

Professional sport is an unusual public relations field in that the mass media plays a pivotal role in how a sport is perceived by its publics. As a result, the public image of the sport is largely out of its direct control. In response to this situation,

sports public relations practitioners have developed a range of successful strategies for influencing media coverage; the most important of which is facilitating the work of sports journalists and broadcasters so that the event is framed the way they want (Clayton, Stoldt, Dittmore, & Branvold, 2006; Fortunato, 2000; Hall, Nichols, Moynahan, & Taylor, 2007). Nevertheless, the limits of public relations strategies must also be acknowledged because the framing of live sport is ultimately in the hands of the sports media. (p. 183)

The sports media is divided in its coverage of sport. Live broadcast sport, according to scholars, is a vehicle for positive public relations for sport and sports organizations. As one might assume, broadcasters are not going to cast a negative light on events they have paid large sums of money to promote and broadcast (Bruce & Tini, 2008, p. 95).

However, the newspapers and broadcast news media are the mediums that focus and highlight scandals and crises. Sports public relations practitioners take into account the combination of public interest and comprehensive media attention and alter the way they interact with the news media accordingly. This results in a majority of sports public relations professionals practicing reactive public relations, as opposed to proactive public relations. A majority of sports organizations focus their energies on responding to unexpected situations that may hurt their client's reputation and/or their image. A minor part of sports organizations' time and energy is spent on trying to positively influence public opinion (Bruce & Tini, 2008, p. 95).

Public relations practitioners do have control in terms of how their organizations, athletes or sports are represented in the media even though the media coverage is extensive and, at times, ruthless. Not to disregard that sports organizations depend on the

news media to send out their specific messages regarding their organizations, athletes or sports, several studies suggest an interdependent relationship between sports journalists and sports public relations practitioners (Bruce & Tini, 2008, p. 95). Lowes (1999) called it “a measure of control over what becomes sports news and how it is reported” (p. 49).

Another issue involves the use of sport league and sport team websites and how practitioners can control fan communication as well as media communication. Bruce and Tini (2008) further assert that many sport organizations operate without a well-developed communications plan: “It appears that many sports organizations, including those with professional full-time staff, continue to operate in a reactive or ineffective fashion rather than planning and preparing for the kinds of crises that can be predicted” (p.109).

Critics attribute this to practitioners not relying on theory and research but on intuition and instinct, lack of standards and more focus on good will and positivity. McGregor and Harvey (1999) contend a significant problem is that the work of public relations practitioners is being done by coaches, agents, managers and even players. They attribute this to the heads of the organizations not having respect for sports public relations. The overall need for sports public relations is also not acknowledged (p. 109).

This lack of planning and preparing for crises presents a significant problem for professional athletes who are involved in a crisis with widespread media coverage. Further, the advent of social media highlights the downside to not planning and preparing for a crisis.

### Social Media and Twitter

Twitter’s mission, according to its website, is “to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers.” Twitter has evolved to have more than 230+ million monthly active users who are sending 500 million tweets

per day in 35+ languages. The site, along with Facebook, is smartphone-friendly because 76% of Twitter users are accessing the site from a mobile device (<https://about.twitter.com/company>). These statistics are proof that society has embraced Twitter, leading to an extraordinary expansion.

Like any new technology, journalists and critics were skeptical about Twitter in its early development. *Time* magazine writer Steven Johnson (2009) said the following:

You hear about this new service that lets you send 140-character updates to your ‘followers,’ and you think, ‘Why does the world need this exactly?’ It’s not as if we were all sitting around four years ago scratching our heads and saying, ‘If only there were a technology that would allow me to send a message to my 50 friends, alerting them in real time about my choice of breakfast cereal’ (p. 269)

As millions of users have figured out, Twitter is much more useful than it appears.

Although many Twitter users utilize it for the instant access to breaking news stories, many use it as a tool to connect with others. The unique component of Twitter is that people can connect with a celebrity, or they can connect with someone they know personally.

Connecting with others and getting a glimpse into other people’s lives is the basis of what Twitter is all about. When a user reads a tweet from a celebrity athlete like Drew Brees saying that he just ate at Jimmy John’s, this connects the user to Brees and gives an oddly satisfying look at Brees the person, not at Brees the Super Bowl-winning quarterback. That connection and glimpse into the lives of others is what makes Twitter so compelling, and it also feeds what some users call their “Twitter addiction.” With active Twitter users in the hundreds of millions, it is easy to see how some individuals could be obsessed with checking Twitter and tweeting in general.

Started in 2006, Twitter has become the most powerful social media outlet regarding athletes, sports celebrities and their fans. The allure of Twitter is compelling and unique because it allows fans to directly communicate with the celebrities they follow, support and/or dislike. Twitter is a “two-way street; users can ask each other questions, comment on each other’s tweets or—as always with the Web—just fling poorly spelled invective at a far-off target” (ESPN Blogs, 2013).

The amount of activity that occurs on Twitter regarding a specific subject, person or event can be daunting. However, social media is a desirable, practical platform, and unlike other mediums that came before Twitter, fans sometimes get a response from the celebrity with whom they are trying to communicate. This is what makes Twitter stand out from other outlets and mediums. This is the fastest way a fan can directly and reliably communicate with a celebrity. The celebrity in this case can be an athlete, a sports broadcaster or sports analyst. Since social media has been embraced and utilized by the sports world to such a groundbreaking extent, this has allowed sports broadcasters and sports analysts to elevate their statuses to that of celebrities. ESPN personalities or ESPN celebrities specifically use Twitter in the following ways:

[A]nswer questions, offer thanks and sometimes call out haters. Some ESPNers are guarded on Twitter, while others freely banter with followers and share their personal lives as well as links to their work. (ESPN Blogs, 2013)

Athletes and sports celebrities have an incredible following on Twitter. Cristiano Ronaldo, a professional soccer player, has the most followers of any athlete with 24+ million followers. Some athletes use Twitter to talk about their days or plug restaurants they like, but others are using it “as business equipment, device for connecting with consumers, branding themselves, [or] moving a product” (“Twitter think piece,” 2011).

This resulted in Twitter changing the way an athlete can obtain an endorsement deal and how an athlete promotes something once he/she receives said endorsement deal. A major way that Twitter is changing sports is that athletes are “expected to have a Twitter, in which their private thoughts are broadcast to the world.” This can be good or bad for some athletes. Some athletes might tweet a picture of their dogs, but others might speak negatively about other competitors. Since the world of sports is a professional and sensationalized arena, tweeting *about* an athlete and even tweeting *to* an athlete are common. This is where problems begin (Johnson, 2013).

One issue surrounding athletes and Twitter is that an athlete’s Twitter account is accessible to both fans and critics or “haters.” According to Urban Dictionary, a hater is a person that simply cannot be happy for another person's success. So rather than be happy, they make a point of exposing a flaw in that person.” Haters of specific athletes often use Twitter to criticize athletes they don’t like, and this can be problematic when it comes to maintaining and protecting an athlete’s image. For example, if a hater tweets something offensive about an athlete and the athlete responds in an offensive way, then the athlete can be held accountable for the tweet. Haters are often anonymous and, hence, go unpunished for whatever inappropriate or insulting comment they tweet. However, one thing remains true for both athletes and non-celebrities: once someone posts a Tweet, and it is acknowledged by someone else or retweeted, the tweet is out on the Web forever. It can’t be altered or deleted (“Hater definition,” 2005).

For some athletes, this can improve their images or tarnish it. Johnson (2013) contends the following:

The minute a tweet is sent, it goes viral. Hiding is impossible in Twitter.

Everything is exposed. And athletes are baring everything. They’re meant to be

role models, but their Twitter paints a different picture.” A new trend among professional athletes is tweeting criticizing or insulting statements regarding their competitors. During the London Olympics, for example, Hope Solo made disparaging remarks about former U.S. soccer player Brandi Chastain (Johnson, 2013).

Hateful and insulting behavior is not a good look on anyone—regardless if they are professional athletes or non-celebrities. However, Twitter creates an aggressive and competitive environment among athletes. Confronting your opponent on Twitter is not something athletes are afraid to do—it’s also not something athletes are hesitant to do. Johnson (2013) posited the following:

This is what the world of sports has become. It’s less about what you bring to the field and more about what you say in a tweet. It all seems to be negative. The negative and aggressive environment Twitter created around athletes has resulted in a need for crisis communication to be used when conflict arises. (Johnson, 2013)

### Crisis Communication

Public relations practitioners use the expression, “expect for the best but prepare for the worst.” Public relations, a term that originated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is a field that is driven by crisis. Public relations scholars contend that public relations programs are created for two reasons: to prevent a crisis or to recover from a crisis. Further, scholars posit that public relations practitioners are keenly aware of the importance of protecting organizations, companies and individuals from threats to their well-being. The reason the threats to these groups are important is simple. If not handled in an appropriate



and timely fashion, “seemingly small threats can lead to a crisis” (Fearn-Banks, 2001, p. 479).

Technological advances and around-the-clock access to new outlets have escalated the speed in which consumers obtain news. The speed in which the media can deliver news to the public has also escalated. However, anyone with Internet access can blog and post his or her opinion on the Web for all to see and read. One issue scholars have with this is whether or not those who have not been trained to report the news are relaying their news messages accurately. Unfortunately, these messages are not always accurate. Additionally, these inaccurate messages can inflict damage to the organization, company or person they are about. According to Fearn-Banks (2001), “Whether the messages are accurate or not, they can be damaging enough to interrupt normal operations and, sometimes, put an organization out of business” (p. 479). In this case, one positive is that public relations practitioners are aware of the distinct positives and negatives associated with extreme media access and extreme media coverage.

In order to fully understand how a threat can develop into a crisis, it is important for one to understand what a threat is. Threats in public relations can be described as a situation that usually involves two sides and has the potential to be contained. If the situation can be contained or resolved in the beginning stages, a crisis can be averted. Containing and resolving a threat in the beginning stages are goals of a public relations practitioner.

Although threats are connected to crises, the two are significantly different. At the most basic level, a threat is an underdeveloped, less damaging version of a crisis. A crisis is a situation where a threat is involved that puts or has put a specific group in danger. Merriam-Webster defined a crisis as “a difficult or dangerous situation that needs serious

attention” (Crisis definition, 2014). A crisis can affect an organization, company or industry, as well as its publics, products, services and reputation. For example, when the Tiger Woods scandal broke, many sports analysts were concerned that it would negatively affect his endorsement contracts. Woods’ scandal, luckily for him, involved his personal life, and so it had minimal impact on his professional career.

Over the years, communications scholars have coined different definitions for crisis. Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (1998) defined crisis as “a specific, unexpected, and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organization’s high priority goals (p. 233). Dowling (2002) thought a crisis altered the social order and affected the relationship of the stakeholders with the organization. Coombs and Holladay (2004) defined a crisis as “an event for which people seek causes and make attributions” (p. 97). Seeger and Padgett (2010) stated that a crisis is an unpredictable situation that is negative or threatening. Later, Coombs (2012) defined a crisis as “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens the important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (p. 2). Despite the differences of definition, scholars agree that a crisis is an unpredictable event that has the potential to harm to an organization.

Scholars do not agree on a universal definition for a crisis, nor have they agreed on the best ways to handle a crisis. However, research has shown that what an organization says and does after a crisis, or crisis response strategies, aid in defending a reputation after a crisis. Schultz, Utz, and Goritz (2011) stated, “Crisis communication research mainly deals with the interrelationships between crisis situations, communication strategies, and crisis perceptions” (p. 20). Scholars have several different

recommendations and ideas on the subject of the best way to handle a crisis. Coombs (2006) thought it best to break down the strategies into three groups and named it Situational Crisis Communication theory (SCCT). It is a “theory-based, empirically tested method for selecting crisis response strategies,” and SCCT is “composed of three elements: (1) the crisis situation, (2) crisis response strategies, and (3) a system for matching the crisis situation and crisis response strategies” (Coombs, 2006, p. 243).

The crisis situation, according to Coombs (2006), is the nucleus of SCCT. He identified the crisis situation to be the time when the reputational threat is recognized. Coombs (2006) also stated that “the amount of reputational damage a crisis situation can inflict drives the selection of the crisis response strategy” (p. 243). SCCT contends that the level of possible reputational harm that can be inflicted is linked directly to crisis responsibility and other intensifying factors. Examining said factors is how crisis managers gauge the reputational threat posed by a crisis situation. Four factors are used to examine a crisis situation’s potential reputational threat: (1) the crisis type, (2) severity of damage, (3), crisis history, and (4) relationship history. It is important to acknowledge that SCCT examines the reputational threat or harm in a crisis situation in an attempt to choose the best or most appropriate crisis response strategy or strategies. The best or most appropriate crisis response strategy balances the level of reputational damage created by the crisis situation with what researchers call “the protective powers” of the crisis response strategies (Coombs, 2006, p. 245). Crisis response strategies are the actions an organization takes after a crisis occurs.

Schultz et al. (2011) noted there are six different types of crisis: economic, informational, human recourse, reputation, psychopathic and natural. Woods’s crisis involved his reputation. Most crisis responses utilize crisis communication or crisis

management strategies. Crisis communication can be described as a dialogue between an organization and its publics prior to, during, and after a crisis. Additionally, crisis communication is designed to minimize damage to an organization's reputation. Crisis management is the process of strategic planning for a crisis or negative turning point. It is a process that removes some of the risk and uncertainty from the negative occurrence and thereby allows the organization to be in greater control of its own destiny. It is important to acknowledge that crisis communication research emphasizes that "response strategies should be less defensive and more accommodative" (Schultz et al., 2011, p. 21; Utz & Goritz, 2011, p. 21). Fearn-Banks (2001) noted the following:

People today are increasingly aware that crisis management and communications are an important factor in the business mix. They know that organizations need to be prepared to cope with crises and need to prevent, if possible, the occurrences of crises. Support of stakeholders and public is crucial to an organization's existence. (p. 479)

However, just because a public relations team is prepared does not mean the crisis will be handled well. The way in which the Tiger Woods crisis was handled is a notable example.

Many media scholars thought Woods' public relations team handled the Tiger Woods' crisis poorly. Public relations theories are helpful to use in situations of crisis because public relations theories examine what will work, as well as when and how certain decisions should be made. Apologia theory, image restoration and reputation management are three theories that are closely associated with Woods' crisis. Apologia theory is best used when or if an organization is accused of a misdeed. In this instance, the public relations team reacts with an apology to defend the organization, company or

person's reputation. Woods apologized during a press conference. However, those who watched the press conference did not find Woods' apology sincere. Also, a press conference normally utilizes two-way communication between the speaker and the audience. Woods read his statement and then did not take questions from the members of the press. This also added to his press conference not being well-received ("Tiger Woods says," 2010). Woods should have used tactics and strategies that attempted to restore his image with the public.

### Image Restoration Theory

One of the charter studies conducted on sports public relations and image restoration analyzed former figure skater Tonya Harding. Benoit and Hanzcor (1994) analyzed the image restoration strategies Harding used after she was accused of plotting to injure and harm fellow figure skater Nancy Kerrigan. The results from their study showed Harding used denial, attack the accuser and bolstering strategies. Benoit and Hanzcor (1994) also found that the general public did not believe or accept Harding's apology. Further, they posited that Harding did not use the image restoration strategies effectively.

According to Benoit (1997), image restoration theory builds from apologia theory and attempts to identify what is threatening the organization, company or person's image or reputation. Further, image restoration theory analyzes the positive and negative coverage and also examines which publics need to be addressed. An aspect of image restoration theory that differentiates it from other theories is the amount of importance placed on the organization determining where it stands with its publics and key stakeholders. Sometimes, public relations practitioners make the wrong decision on

whether or not to stay silent or to tell their own bad news. Image restoration theory posits that this decision is a judgment call that should be made after careful research (p. 178).

An example of someone who used poor judgment was professional football player Terrell Owens. Brazeal (2008) analyzed the strategies Owens used to try to coerce the Philadelphia Eagles into renewing his contract. Owens held a press conference during which he criticized Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb and called the Philadelphia Eagles a “classless organization.” Further, Owens used strategies like attack the accuser, bolstering and mortification. Owens’ behavior in the media and the strategies he used ultimately “got him dismissed from the team” (p. 146).

An example of a sports public relations incident that was handled correctly involved Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps. A picture of Phelps smoking a marijuana pipe at a University of South Carolina party was published in a British newspaper and quickly went viral. Phelps “quickly acknowledged his poor judgment” and released this statement:

I engaged in behavior which was regrettable and demonstrated bad judgment. I’m 23 years old, and despite the successes I’ve had in the pool, I acted in a youthful and inappropriate way, not in a manner people have come to expect from me. For this, I am sorry. I promise my fans and the public it will not happen again.

(Crouse, 2009)

Phelps used mortification, bolstering and corrective action strategies. Instead of using denial or attacking the accuser like Lance Armstrong, Phelps immediately admitted what he’d done and apologized for his actions. In addition, Phelps reminded fans and critics of his success as an Olympic swimmer and promised he would not engage in the

behavior again. Public relation scholars agreed that Phelps used the image repair strategies successfully (Hambrick et al., 2013, p. 89).

The distinct difference in Armstrong's scandal versus Phelps' scandal is Armstrong stayed silent about his cheating for multiple years, and when he was accused, he denied it. When Phelps was confronted with the picture, he admitted the picture was authentic and quickly apologized. Similarly, Tiger Woods held a press conference, admitted what he did and apologized. In all three cases, the athletes' images were threatened. In all three cases, their images were somewhat harmed.

When an athlete's image is threatened, it can affect the athlete in a number of ways. For example, a threatened image can affect the athlete professionally and financially. A professional threat has the potential to ruin the athlete's reputation and could affect the athlete's job security. A financial threat only affects the athlete concerning income and revenue. Professional and financial threats are usually correlated in that if the athlete's image is harmed professionally, then he or she will suffer a loss financially in terms of contracts and endorsement deals.

Benoit (1997) noted that image is important to both individuals and organizations, and "even if we are moving away from a notion of image as a single impression shared by an audience, image is still a central concept to the field of public relations" (p. 177). Different approaches are used by public relations firms in terms of handling images that are threatened by scandals or crises. Preventative approaches try to stop a scandal or crisis before it surfaces. Restorative approaches are those that try to help an image after the scandal or crisis has surfaced (Benoit, 1997).

It is important to acknowledge that public relations firms take different approaches when dealing with the image of a company versus that of an individual.

Additionally, a large public relations firm has greater resources to utilize than a single public relations practitioner. According to Benoit (1997), “Attorneys may recommend that their companies eschew certain strategies to minimize the risks of litigation.

Nevertheless, the basic options are the same for both the individual and corporate image repair efforts” (p. 177).



## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The way in which Lance Armstrong handled his cheating scandal was different from the way Tiger Woods handled his cheating scandal. The communication each athlete used was spread across different types of media. The following research questions were designed to understand the crisis communication and image restoration strategies each athlete used on different media and to explore the interchange between social media, traditional media and controlled media.

RQ1: Is there a difference in Armstrong's and Woods' message format among social media, traditional media, and controlled media?

Message format dealt with the composition of each type of media artifact. With social media, or tweets in this study, each coder noted if the tweet contained text, a link, a photo, a video link, an audio link, or a non-traditional news source (like a link to a blog). Each coder also noted if the message format included social media. For traditional media, or the newspaper articles in this study, coders noted if the article contained a news link, a link to the athlete's blog or website, a photo, a video link, or an audio link. Message format coding for the traditional media section also noted if the artifact contained a link to a non-traditional news source or if it contained social media. For controlled media, or press releases and press statements in this study, the coders noted if the artifact contained a news article link, a link to the athlete's blog or website, a photo link or an audio link. Coders also noted if the artifact included a link to a non-traditional news source or if it contained social media. The next set of questions examined message framing among different media.

RQ2: Is there a difference in Armstrong and Woods' message frame (episodic and thematic) among social media, traditional media, and controlled media?

According to Iyengar (1991), an episodic news frame narrows its focus to individuals or specific events. Thematic frames place the events in broad, generalized contexts. Coders read the tweets, articles, press releases, and press statements to determine if the message frame was episodic or thematic.

RQ3: Is there a difference in Armstrong's and Woods' dominant frame (human-interest, conflict, morality, economic, and attribution of responsibility) on social, traditional, and controlled media?

Smetko and Valkenburg (2000) posited five prominent news frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic, human interest, and morality. Attribution of responsibility frame places the responsibility of an action or event on an individual, organization, or group. Tweets that placed the responsibility of Armstrong's cheating on his fellow cyclists or his coaches were examples of attribution of responsibility frame on social media. A press release from the LIVESTRONG Foundation that placed the responsibility on the USADA was an example of an attribution of responsibility frame on controlled media.

Conflict frame is used to show conflict between individuals, organizations, and groups as a way to gain attention or interest. Newspaper articles showing the conflict Armstrong was engaged in with the USADA were an example of the conflict frame in traditional media. A press release noting that Gatorade was severing their contract with Woods was an example of a conflict frame in controlled media.

Economic frame is used to show the event or situation as it relates to the repercussions it will have economically on the individual or organizations connected to

the individual. Newspaper articles that noted each athlete's loss of income as a result of their cheating scandal was an example of economic frame on traditional media. A press release that looked at how the cheating scandals impacted the Nike Corporation was an example of an economic frame on controlled media.

Human interest frame connects the reader to the subject of the story and emphasizes an emotional connection. This frame triggers a psychological response or reaction in people when a crisis occurs. Tweets that dealt with the Armstrong or Woods family was an example of a human interest frame in social media. Newspaper articles that reported how Armstrong's cheating was negatively impacting the families of cyclists connected to Armstrong was an example of a human interest frame in traditional media. A press statement from Woods, where he focused on his relationship with his family, is an example of a human interest frame in controlled media.

Morality frame puts the crisis in context of religious values, morals, and social standards. Tweets of what is right and how to behave are examples of a morality frame in social media. A newspaper article in which the focus was on how Armstrong and Woods should have behaved were examples of a morality framed artifact on traditional media. A press statement in which an organization noted that Armstrong's and Woods' actions were morally wrong was an example of a morality frame in controlled media. The next question examined if the cheating was discussed and/or mentioned on different types of media.

RQ4: Were Armstrong's and Woods' cheating scandals acknowledged on social, traditional, and controlled media?

If the cheating scandal was mentioned, then the artifact was coded "yes," and if it was not mentioned, then the artifact was coded "no." For example, if a newspaper article

mentioned the word “doping,” then it mentioned Armstrong’s cheating. That was an example of the cheating scandal being acknowledged on traditional media. Also, if a press release mentioned an endorsement deal that Woods lost because of infidelity, then the cheating scandal was mentioned. That was an example of the cheating scandal being mentioned on controlled media. The next set of questions examined the main issue (Hotlzhausen & Roberts, 2009) and types of messages among different media.

RQ5: Is there a difference in Armstrong’s and Woods’ main issues on social, traditional, and controlled media?

The main issue aided in determining trends or correlations among the different types of media. The main issue was related to positive and balanced stories, not just to negative ones (Hotlzhausen & Roberts, 2009). The coding categories were man, athlete, promoter, philanthropist, villain, and womanizer. For example, artifacts that focused on man-related issues, like being a father, were coded “man.” Artifacts that focused on athletic performance, like scores and placement, were coded “athlete.” “Promoter” was chosen if the artifact was promoting an upcoming event, like a golf match or cycling competition. If the artifact’s focus was connected to the athlete’s charitable efforts, then “philanthropist” was chosen. “Villain” was chosen if the artifact’s focus was negative or damaging to the athlete’s image. Artifacts highlighting the athlete’s connection or involvement with a female who is not his wife were coded “womanizer.”

RQ6: Is there a difference in Armstrong’s and Woods’ message type among social and controlled media?

Message type identified how the athletes utilized their Twitter accounts.

Hambrick et al.’s (2010) six categories of how athletes utilize Twitter were used. The six categories included interactivity, diversion, information sharing, content, fanship, and

promotional. An artifact was coded “interactivity” if the athlete was communicating with another athlete, fan, or critic. “Diversion” was selected if a distraction technique was used in the artifact. When information was shared in the artifact, “information sharing” was chosen. “Content” was selected if the artifact did not contain any text and only contained a video or audio link. If the artifact’s main focus was connected to a fan of the athlete, “fanship” was selected. “Promotional” was chosen if the artifact contained information regarding the athlete’s upcoming event.

RQ7: Is there a difference in types of message tone associated with Armstrong and Woods among social, traditional, and controlled media?

Message tone was categorized as positive, negative and neutral. Artifacts that contained positive information about the athlete were coded “positive,” and artifacts that contained negative information were coded negative. If the artifact was information-based or contained no distinct tone, it was coded “neutral.”

RQ8: Is there a difference in types of emotions associated with Armstrong and Woods among social, traditional, and controlled media?

Types of emotions were chosen in order to identify the dominant emotions connected to Armstrong’s and Woods’ crises, respectively. Emotion categories were happiness, sadness, shame, resentment, and no emotion.

RQ9: Is there a difference in the main subject of attack associated with Armstrong and Woods among traditional and controlled media?

The coding categories chosen were man, athlete, promoter, philanthropist, villain, and womanizer. Specifically, the main subject of attack was connected to the message tone and examined the way in which the artifacts were framed.

RQ10: Is there a difference in the IRS associated with Armstrong and Woods among social, traditional, and controlled media?

Benoit's (1997) five image restoration strategies were used to code the artifacts. Strategies chosen were denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of event, corrective action, and mortification. No strategy was also a coding option. If an artifact's focus was saying the athlete did not cheat, it was coded as "denial." "Evasion of responsibility" was chosen if the artifact contained information that shifted blame from the athlete to another individual, organization, or group. If the athlete's actions were minimized or downplayed in the artifact, then "reducing offensiveness of event" was chosen. "Corrective action" was selected if the artifact centered on what the athlete was going to do or had done to make amends for his actions. If the artifact contained an admission of wrong doing and/or a request for forgiveness, then "mortification" was selected.

## CHAPTER V

### METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions, content analysis was performed on the Twitter accounts, press releases and press statements of Lance Armstrong and Tiger Woods, as well as print news media coverage of the two athletes. Babbie (2010) described a content analysis as “the study of recorded human communications” (p. 333), suited for analysis of social media, newspapers, and other forms of modern communication. A suitable method for this study was one that allowed the researcher to analyze events that took place over time. Content analysis fulfills that requirement, thus it was the appropriate method. The social media pages included official Twitter account pages for Armstrong and Woods. The controlled online media analyzed were the press releases and press statements connected to Armstrong and Woods. The media came from corporations, organizations, and foundations that were professionally connected with the athletes. Newspaper articles represented traditional media coverage.

#### Sampling Frame and Method

The data collection for both Armstrong and Woods was a lengthy and extensive process for this study. Therefore, it was necessary to have a comprehensive crisis cycle although issues with the sampling frame were an issue for both athletes. The scandal for both athletes can be viewed as twofold: how the athlete dealt with the scandal from a crisis communication standpoint and how the athlete’s scandal affected him professionally. This study explored both areas. Exploring the way the athletes dealt with the scandal and the scandal’s evolution provided a thorough inquiry into the initial response and efforts to control the damage and manage the crisis when it began, while noting any patterns that emerged.

The timeline of sampling for Armstrong began with his oldest accessible Twitter post on December 13, 2011. The tweets collected involve three time frames: (1) pre-USADA investigation (January 1-June 28, 2012); (2) post-USADA investigation (June 29-December 31, 2012); and (3) Oprah Winfrey interview held in mid-January of 2013 (January 1-July 31, 2013). These time frames were examined as if they were independent sets of data, as the USADA investigation announcement and the interview with Oprah Winfrey were significant moments/events that occurred in the scandal regarding Lance Armstrong. Dividing Armstrong's Twitter use into groups allowed for an examination of possible changes in the way in which Armstrong communicated with his fans and critics. However, not all of Armstrong's tweets were available during data collection. For example, Hambrick et al.'s (2013) study reported 102 tweets for April 2012, yet only 64 were available on his Twitter page at the time of data collection for this study. The removal of tweets was a significant sampling problem for Armstrong's social media.

The timeline of sampling for Woods began November 29, 2009, and ended May 27, 2014. The starting day of sampling for Woods was the day of his car accident/golf club incident with his wife (the first signal of conflict in his private life). The car accident conflict had strong emotional and ideological undertones, which further emphasized the significance and delicacy of the beginning stages of crisis conflict management. However, soon after the car accident, Woods deactivated his Twitter account. This was problematic and contributed to an incomplete sample of Woods' social media.

Available content from November 2009 until May 2014 from Tigerwoods.com and Livestrong.org served as a connection to the athletes' official Twitter accounts. This measure ensured that only tweets from @lancearmstrong and @TigerWoods were included in analysis. The press releases and press statements for this study were drawn



from *Lexis-Nexis* searches and searches on Nike.com, LIVESTRONG.org, and TigerWoods.com. Like the social media sampling issue, not all of Armstrong's and Woods' controlled media were available at the time of data collection, and previous studies on the athletes reflected this. For example, a substantial gap existed on Nike.com's coverage of Woods, which overlapped with the time period of his cheating scandal (July 2009 through November 2011). Also, press releases the LIVESTRONG Foundation issued regarding Armstrong had been removed from LIVESTRONG.org at the time of data collection. Both issues made the controlled media sampling process incomplete.

Taking into account the incomplete social media and controlled media samples, all artifacts available during the time of data collection were included in the analysis. Traditional news stories were also obtained through the *Lexis-Nexis* search engine because of its reputable status for providing current and extensive searches. The sample was drawn using keyword searches for "Lance Armstrong scandal" and "Tiger Woods scandal."

The following terms were operationalized by the researcher as the unit of analysis in this study:

*Social Media:* Armstrong and Woods' posts on Twitter

*Controlled Online Media:* Online press releases, press statements, and interviews associated with Armstrong and Woods and their associated organizations

*Traditional News Media:* Print news stories from both domestic and foreign newspapers which surfaced as a result of the *Lexis-Nexis* search

## Units of Analysis

This study analyzed Armstrong and Woods because they were both professional athletes who dealt with a crisis that received intense media coverage. The two athletes were chosen because of their high-profile celebrity statuses and household familiarity. Armstrong and Woods were also chosen because their crises were similar yet distinctly different. Armstrong dealt with a professional crisis while Woods dealt with a personal crisis.

Because the study attempted to capture trends and compare among three types of media, multiple units of analysis exist. Social media units included accessible tweets during the selected sampling frame. Press releases and press statements fulfilled the controlled online media component. Newspaper articles served as the unit of analysis representing traditional media. Table 1 describes the units of analysis for Armstrong and Woods on social media, controlled online media, and traditional media. The units of analysis were the result of multiple online searches using the *Lexis-Nexis* search engine, Nike.com, LIVESTRONG.org, and TigerWoods.com. See Table 1 for clarification.

Table 1

### *Athletes by Total Media*

	Social	Traditional	Controlled
LA	3,229	749	17
TW	355	501	66

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

### Pretest and Reliability

A pretest was conducted to identify areas of question and issues related to the coding process and categories. The pretest aided in correcting coding schemes and operationalizing terms. Ten percent of the tweets, newspaper articles, and press releases were coded by the researcher and additional coder. Intercoder reliability was calculated using Holsti's (1969) coefficient of reliability formula for an overall reliability of 95% between the two coders.

### Coding Categories and Definitions

Each tweet on the athlete's Twitter account was coded and served as one unit of analysis representing social media. According to Sanderson (2013), a tweet is "a message that one creates and disseminates via the social media site Twitter" (p. 438). Each press release and press statement represented controlled online media, and each news story represented one unit of traditional media.

To answer the first set of research questions, the following sets of coding categories were presented. The *message format* in each unit was based on content. *Message format* was identified by a photo, video or audio clip, news article link, link to the athlete's official website, link to the athlete's foundation website, link to a golfing-related or cycling-related website, etc.

Next, the coders identified if the artifact utilized *episodic* or *thematic framing*. According to Iyengar (1991), an episodic news frame narrows its emphasis to individuals or specific events, while thematic frames place events into more general contexts. To further assess framing on social media, controlled online media and traditional media, the five dominant *message frames* identified by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) were

identified in each unit. They are human-interest, conflict, morality, economic, and attribution of responsibility.

*Human interest frame:* This frame placed a human face on a story or used an emotional representation in the story. During a crisis this frame triggers the psychological pulse in people. For example, a human interest frame could include tweets and/or news stories that deal with the physical and mental well-being of those affected and those involved in the scandal.

*Conflict frame:* This frame reflected conflicts between individuals, groups, and organizations as a way to capture interest. For example, a conflict frame could involve tweets and news stories that emphasize conflict between the athlete and individuals or groups connected to the athlete's sport, foundations, or corporations.

*Morality frame:* This frame put the person or event in context of morals, social, and religious tenets. A morality frame could be posts and tweets of what is right and wrong and/or how people or organizations should behave. This frame included pleas for help, prayers, and any kind of good deed.

*Economic frame:* This frame reported an event in relation to the consequences it would have economically on the individual involved in the scandal. For example, an economic frame could be a tweet and/or news stories that discussed the economic consequences of the athlete's scandal on the LIVESTRONG Foundation and or the Tiger Woods Foundation. This frame also included tweets discussing monetary support that was donated or pledged to LIVESTRONG or the Tiger Woods Foundation by individuals and organizations.

*Attribution of responsibility frame:* This frame attributed responsibility of an event or its solution to an individual, group, organization, or country. This included posts and

tweets that examined or emphasized the responsibility of organizations and individuals who were involved in the athlete's scandal. Woods is still under contract with Nike to wear his red golf shirt.

Main issue categories were created after reviewing the coding units prior to coding. This was executed in order to identify the dominant issues pertaining to Armstrong's and Woods' crises, respectively. The categories for main issue addressed were the man, the athlete, the promoter, the philanthropist, the villain, and the womanizer, similar to a previous study (Hambrick et al., 2013).

The message type identified how the athletes utilized their Twitter accounts. Hambrick et al.'s (2010) six categories of how athletes utilize Twitter were used. The six categories included interactivity, diversion, information sharing, content, fanship, and promotional. This was particularly useful to determine how the athletes communicated with both their fans and their critics. It also showed how the athletes communicated their own messages or agendas. Examples of this included reminding fans to attend a special event where the athlete will be signing autographs (promotional), posting a link to a team's official website (content), or simply responding to a fan's tweet (interactivity).

The presence of emotion was identified as yes or no, and the overall tone in each unit was identified as positive, negative, or neutral. Types of emotions were chosen after reviewing the coding units prior to coding. Like the main issue categories, they were chosen in order to identify the dominant emotions connected to Armstrong's and Woods' crises, respectively. Emotions expressed were happiness, sadness, shame, resentment, and no emotion.

The main subject of attack in each unit was identified as individual(s), policy, or organization. An individual referred to another athlete, fan, critic, etc. Policy refers to

morals or rules that affect the athlete. The organization was a group the athlete worked with or a group who had authority over the athlete.

Previous research has exclusively used crisis communication theories to examine organizations. For example, Benoit's (1997) theory of image restoration discourse is "an approach for understanding corporate crisis situations" (p. 9). However, this study used it to examine Woods as a professional athlete. This was appropriate because of the level of success Woods has reached. Because a person can employ multiple image restoration strategies at once, coders will determine the dominant strategy (Benoit, 1997) present in each unit of analysis, which include denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of event, corrective action, and mortification. No strategy was also a coding option. Finally, the date of each unit was also identified to observe the salience of the issue in the various types of media analyzed as the crisis unfolded.

## CHAPTER VI

## RESULTS

The cheating scandals Lance Armstrong and Tiger Woods were involved in affected them personally, professionally, and financially. Woods lost substantial revenue when prominent sponsors like Gatorade dropped him as their promoter. Woods' cheating scandal arguably led to his divorce, which resulted in him paying Elin Woods an expensive settlement. Armstrong's cheating scandal resulted in him having to relinquish his Tour de France titles and ultimately led to the end of his career as a professional cyclist. The first set of research questions examined message frame to determine the way in which the cheating scandals were framed by the athletes and by media.

RQ1: Is there a difference in Armstrong's and Woods' message format among social media, traditional media, and controlled media?

Concerning message format, all the tweets for Armstrong and Woods contained text. A significant association was found between athlete and link to article ( $\chi^2=19.343$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The majority of Armstrong's tweets did not contain links to articles (81%,  $n=2,618$ ). Likewise, the majority of Woods' tweets did not contain links to articles (71%,  $n=253$ ). Armstrong had virtually no photos, video links, or audio links in his tweets. Woods' tweets were similar in this regard. The majority of his tweets did not contain photos, videos, or links to audio in his tweets. All of Armstrong's and Woods' tweets did not contain a link to a non-traditional news source. However, 100% of both athletes' tweets contained social media. See Table 2 for complete comparison.

Table 2

*Message Format by Athlete – Social Media*

	Article Link	Photo	Video	Audio	NTN Link	Social
LA Yes	611(18.9%)	40(1.2%)	31(1.0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3,230(100%)
LA No	2,618(81.1%)	3,190 (98.8%)	3,199(98.8%)	3,230(100%)	3,230(100%)	0(0%)
TW Yes	102(28.7%)	12(3.4%)	11(3.1%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3,230(100%)
TW No	253(71.3%)	343(96.6%)	344(96.9%)	3,230(100%)	3,230(100%)	0(0%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Regarding message format for traditional media, neither Armstrong's nor Woods' newspaper articles contained photos, video links, audio links, links to non-traditional news sources, or social media. However, three of Woods' articles contained links to other news articles. See Table 3 for more information.



Table 3

*Message Format by Athlete – Traditional Media*

	Article Link	Photo	Video	Audio	NTN Link	Social
LA	Yes 0(0%)	Yes 0(0%)	Yes 0(0%)	Yes 0(0%)	Yes 0(0%)	Yes 0(0%)
	No 749(100%)	No 749(100%)	No 749(100%)	No 749(100%)	No 749(100%)	No 749(100%)
TW	Yes 3(0.6%)	Yes 0(0%)	Yes 0(0%)	Yes 0(0%)	Yes 0(0%)	Yes 0(0%)
	No 498(99.6%)	No 501(100%)	No 501(100%)	No 501(100%)	No 501(100%)	No 501(100%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Message format in the controlled media section revealed a majority of Armstrong's controlled media contained links to articles and links to non-traditional news sources. Only one of Armstrong's controlled media artifacts contained social media. In contrast, all of Woods' controlled media contained article links, photos, video links, audio links, and social media content. The only item Woods' controlled media did not contain were links to non-traditional news sources. This contrast showed that if the athlete was doing well professionally, his controlled media contained multiple message formats. Armstrong's controlled media highlighted different milestones in the end of his career as a professional cyclist. Woods' controlled media highlighted how his career as a professional golfer was continuing and progressing. See Table 4 for clarification.

Table 4

*Message Format by Athlete – Controlled Media*

	Article Link	Photo	Video	Audio	NTN Link	Social
LA Yes	17 (100%)	1(5.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	16(94.1%)	1(5.9%)
No	0(0%)	16(94.1%)	17(100%)	17(100%)	1(5.9%)	16(94.1%)
TW Yes	66(100%)	66(100%)	66(100%)	66(100%)	0(0%)	66(100%)
No	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	66(100%)	0(0%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

RQ2: Is there a difference in Armstrong's and Woods' message frame (episodic and thematic) among social media, traditional media, and controlled media?

Chi-square testing revealed a significant association between message frame (episodic vs. thematic) and media type ( $\chi^2 = 129.18$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The first frame category, message frame, was split into episodic or thematic framing. For social media, a tweet was coded as episodic if it gave information or made a statement. For example, "Happy Father's Day to all you fathers out there" was coded as episodic because it was a statement. A tweet was coded as thematic if it contained any contextual information or gave information as it related to other events or situations. For example, "The last time I played this golf tournament, I won. Today, I finished in tenth place" would be a thematic tweet because it gave background information. The same was applicable for traditional and controlled media. For traditional media, if the newspaper article gave information about the athlete, then article was coded episodic. For example, if the article stated that Armstrong was giving back his cycling titles, then the article was episodic. If the article

told a story or gave contextual background information, then the article was coded thematic. For example, if the article focused on another cyclist dealing with the controversy that surrounded Armstrong and recounted all the negative things connected to Armstrong, then the article was coded thematic. Regarding controlled media, if the artifact was informative and, for example, stated Armstrong was not allowed to participate in a swimming competition, then it was coded episodic. If the artifact gave background on the athlete and compared him to another, it was coded as thematic.

Episodic framing was dominant for both athletes in that they each used social media in informative ways. Armstrong used thematic framing more than Woods in that he would use context to structure his social media posts. Armstrong's social media posts contained more detail and were more personalized than Woods'. Woods' posts were safe in that there was no risk of his posts being misinterpreted. Episodic framing was the most common in all three media types. For example, the majority of Armstrong's tweets were episodic (95.8%,  $n=3,094$ ), as were Woods' (89.6%,  $n=318$ ). For traditional media, newspaper articles on Armstrong used episodic framing (95.7%,  $n=717$ ), as did Woods (81.2%,  $n=407$ ). Concerning controlled media, Armstrong used episodic (88.2,  $n=15$ ), and Woods used only episodic (100%,  $n=66$ ). See Table 5.

Table 5

*Message Frame (Episodic vs. Thematic) by Athlete and Media Type*

	Soc-Epis	Soc-Them	Trad-Epis	Trad-Them	Con-Epis	Con-Them
LA	3,094(95.8%)	136(4.2%)	717(95.7)	32(4.3%)	15(88.2%)	2(11.8%)
TW	318(89.6%)	37(10.4%)	407(81.2)	94(18.8%)	66(100%)	0(0%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Soc=Social Media, Trad=Traditional Media, Con=Controlled Media, Epis=Episodic, Them=Thematic

RQ3: Is there a difference in Armstrong's and Woods' dominant frame (human-interest, conflict, morality, economic, and attribution of responsibility) on social, traditional, and controlled media?

A significant association was also found between the athletes when it came to dominant frame and media type ( $\chi^2 = 458.60$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < .01$ ). On social media, Armstrong was most likely to utilize informative framing (42.7%,  $n=1,380$ ) and human interest framing (18.4%,  $n = 595$ ), whereas Woods used human interest framing more (53.5%,  $n=190$ ) than informative framing (25.1%,  $n=89$ ). An informatively framed tweet, for example, was, "I'm excited to host the ESPY awards," while a human interest framed tweet was, "As a parent of a seven-year-old, this school shooting really upset me." The informative frame is the safest frame for an athlete who is going through a crisis or scandal. However, human interest framing can be a helpful tool in connecting the athlete with their fans.

Concerning traditional media, articles on Armstrong involved informative framing (48.3%,  $n=362$ ) and conflict framing (26%,  $n=195$ ). For example, an

informatively framed artifact from traditional media was a story on Woods' next significant golf tournament. Again, an informative frame is a safe choice for an athlete who is going through a scandal or crisis. Conversely, conflict framing on traditional media was not safe and was a negative artifact for the athletes. An example of a conflict-framed artifact was a newspaper article in which the reporter used quotes from other athletes talking about how shameful Armstrong's actions were.

Informative framing (40.1%,  $n=201$ ) and economic framing (17.5%,  $n=88$ ) were utilized the most in articles on Woods. An economically framed artifact, for example, was an artifact linked to money or an action, event or situation that could impact the athlete. For example, a news story that discussed how much money Woods was going to lose because he was no longer the face of a golf video game would be coded as being economically framed. Economic framing was the second most used frame because of the all the endorsement contracts Woods had.

Philanthropic framing was the strongest category for Armstrong's controlled media (76.4%,  $n=13$ ) while informative framing was the strongest category for Woods' controlled media (90.9%,  $n=60$ ). Philanthropic framing was selected if the artifact was connected to a charity that the athlete was working with or connected to the athlete's foundation. For example, a news story or press release containing information that Woods was donating money to a charity that helps children in inner cities would be coded as philanthropic framing. Connections to Armstrong's LIVESTRONG organization is why philanthropic framing was his strongest frame on controlled media.

Table 6

*Dominant Frame by Athlete – Social Media*

	Infor	Human	Conflict	Morality	Economic	Philanth	No Frame
LA	1,380(42.7%)	595(18.4%)	60(1.9%)	3(0.1%)	0(0%)	358(11.1%)	834(25.8%)
TW	89(25.1%)	190(53.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	56(15.8%)	20(5.6%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Infor=Informative, Philanth=Philanthropic

Table 7

*Dominant Frame by Athlete – Traditional Media*

	Infor	Human	Conflict	Morality	Economic	Philanth	No Frame
LA	362(48.3%)	6(0.8%)	195(26%)	120(16%)	52(6.9%)	14(1.9%)	0(0%)
TW	201(40.1%)	80(16%)	77(15.3%)	55(11%)	88(17.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Infor=Informative, Philanth=Philanthropic

Table 8

*Dominant Frame by Athlete – Controlled Media*

	Infor	Human	Conflict	Morality	Economic	Philanth	No Frame
LA	2(11.8%)	0(0%)	2(11.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	13(76.5%)	0(0%)
TW	60(90.9%)	5(7.6%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(1.5%)	0(0%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Infor=Informative, Philanth=Philanthropic

Table 9

*Dominant Frame by Media Type*

	Infor	Human	Conflict	Morality	Economic	Philanth	No Frame
SM	1,469(29.9%)	785 (16%)	3(0.1%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	414(8.4%)	0(0%)
TM	563(11.4%)	86(1.7%)	272(5.5%)	175(3.6%)	140(2.8%)	14(0.3%)	0(0%)
CM	62(74.7%)	5(6%)	2(2.4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	14(16.9%)	0(0%)

Note: SM=Social Media, TM=Traditional Media, CM=Controlled Media, Infor=Informative, Philanth=Philanthropic

The next set of research questions examined if and how the cheating scandals affected Armstrong and Woods. The first question simply asks if the cheating scandal was mentioned, and the others examine other facets that described the athlete.

RQ4: Were Armstrong's and Woods' cheating scandals acknowledged on social, traditional, and controlled media?

As expected, a significant association was found between cheating and media type ( $\chi^2 = 4452.66, df = 2, p < .01$ ). The cheating scandal was most likely not mentioned on social media because it was an outlet the athlete (or public relations practitioner) controlled and maintained. As one might expect, the cheating scandal was not mentioned when it came to analyzing and coding the controlled media because the athlete (or public relations practitioner) controlled and maintained the press releases, press statements, and interviews. Traditional media, on the other hand, showed different results. For this study, traditional media were newspaper articles on Armstrong and Woods. The articles were media in which a reporter controlled the content so the high volume of traditional media artifacts that mentioned the cheating scandal was expected. Traditional media

mentioned Armstrong and Woods cheating (96.1%,  $n=720$ ; 97.8%,  $n=490$ ). See Table 10 for full comparison.

Table 10

*Was Cheating Mentioned by Athlete – Social, Traditional, and Controlled Media*

	Social	Traditional	Controlled
LA	Yes 43(1.3%)	720(96.1%)	4(23.6%)
	No 3,187(98.7%)	29(3.9%)	13(76.4%)
TW	Yes 2(0.6%)	490(97.8%)	2(3%)
	No 353(99.4%)	11(2.2%)	64(97%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 11

*Was Cheating Mentioned by Media Type*

	Cheating Mentioned	Cheating NOT Mentioned
SM	45(1.2%)	3,540(98.7%)
TM	1,210(96.8%)	40(3.2%)
CM	6(7.2%)	77(92.8%)

Note: SM=Social Media, TM=Traditional Media, CM=Controlled Media



RQ5: Is there a difference in Armstrong's and Woods' main issue on social, traditional, and controlled media?

Main issue and media type also had a significant association ( $\chi^2 = 2537.53$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The categories for main issue included man, athlete, promoter, philanthropist, villain, and womanizer. "Happy Father's Day to all you fathers out there" was an example of a tweet that was coded "man." A newspaper article that focused on the athlete doing something that a non-celebrity man can do was coded "man." For example, if the newspaper article focused on the athlete taking his son to school or playing with him at a park, that was coded "man." The same was true if the press release or press statement focused on something like the athlete donating blood at a local blood drive.

Artifacts that focused on Armstrong's and Woods' athletic accomplishments or scores were coded "athlete." "I finished the race in 24 minutes flat" was an example of a tweet that was coded "athlete." A news article that reported the athlete's score or reported how he placed in a race was coded "athlete." Also a press statement that highlighted the athlete's score or how he placed in a race was coded "athlete."

Artifacts that promoted attending, viewing, or supporting the athlete's tournaments, races, events, etc. were coded "promoter." "Everyone should come watch me play in the Master's tournament" is an example of a tweet that was coded "promoter." A newspaper article or press release/press statement that chronicled the athlete's tournament, races, events, etc. was coded "promoter."

Artifacts that portrayed the athlete negatively for behaving poorly were coded "villain." This category was not applicable to tweets because the athletes did not post negative tweets about themselves. Newspaper articles that reported the athlete behaving

poorly at a charity event, for example, were coded “villain.” Other examples of artifacts coded “villain” were press releases/press statements that apologized for Armstrong cheating.

Artifacts that portrayed or acknowledged the athlete’s infidelity or womanizer issues were coded “womanizer.” This category was not applicable to tweets because the athletes did not post tweets about themselves being womanizers. Newspaper articles referencing the athlete’s infidelity or womanizer issues were coded “womanizer.” Also, the press statement Woods released was coded “womanizer” because it referenced his infidelity.

Traditional media showcased how a third party (a reporter) described Armstrong and Woods. It is important to note that in traditional media, Armstrong and Woods have no control in how they are portrayed to the public. Traditional media showed Armstrong as a villain (8.4%,  $n=413$ ) and Woods as an athlete (17.5%,  $n=219$ ). One reason for this difference could be that Armstrong is no longer a professional athlete, and his cheating scandal played a critical part in that. Woods, however, is still a professional golfer. Woods’ cheating did not put an end to his career whereas Armstrong’s cheating aided in ending his career as a professional cyclist. See Table 12, 13, 14, and 15 for full comparison.

Table 12

*Main Issue by Athlete – Social Media*

	Man	Athlete	Promoter	Philanthropist	Villain	Womanizer
LA	1,876(58.1%)	767(23.7%)	235(7.3%)	349(10.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
TW	142(40%)	116(32.7%)	78(22%)	19(5.4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 13

*Main Issue by Athlete – Traditional Media*

	Man	Athlete	Promoter	Philanthropist	Villain	Womanizer
LA	29(3.9%)	193(25.8%)	38(5.1%)	69(9.2%)	412(55%)	8(1.1%)
TW	41(8.2%)	219(43.7%)	47(9.4%)	0(0%)	1(0.2%)	193(38.5%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 14

*Main Issue by Athlete – Controlled Media*

	Man	Athlete	Promoter	Philanthropist	Villain	Womanizer
LA	0(0%)	3(17.6%)	1(5.9%)	13(76.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
TW	0(0%)	62(94%)	2(3%)	2(3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 15

*Main Issue by Media Type*

	Man	Athlete	Promoter	Philanthropist	Villain	Womanizer
SM	2,018(56.3%)	883(24.6%)	313(8.7%)	368(10.3%)	0(0%)	3(0.08%)
TM	70(5.6%)	412(33%)	85(6.8%)	69(5.5%)	413(33%)	201(16.1%)
CM	0(0%)	65(78.3%)	3(3.6%)	15(18.1%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

Note: SM=Social Media, TM=Traditional Media, CM=Controlled Media

RQ6: Is there a difference in Armstrong's and Woods' message type present among social and controlled media?

A significant association was found between message type and media type ( $\chi^2=1002.93$ ,  $df=14$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Social media revealed interactivity to be the strongest message type for Armstrong and Woods (27.7%,  $n=1361$ ). Armstrong specifically used social media to communicate everything from music he liked to places he visited. No message present was the dominant message type for Armstrong and Woods regarding traditional media. This is not surprising because the newspaper articles were varied in their content and also because Armstrong and Woods could not control the newspaper articles' content. Information sharing (1.4%,  $n=68$ ) was the dominant category for controlled media. The primary purpose for press releases is to share information so this was an understandable find. See Tables 16, 17, 18 and 19 for more information.

Table 16

*Message Type by Athlete – Social Media*

	No Message	Interactivity	Diversion	Info-Shar.	Content	Fanship	Prom.
LA	1,048(32.4%)	1,243(38.5%)	1(0.0%)	421(13%)	0(0%)	92(2.8)	421(13%)
TW	28(7.9%)	118(33.2%)	0(0%)	76(21.4%)	0(0%)	39(11%)	94(26.5%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Info-Shar.=Information Sharing, Prom.=Promotional

Table 17

*Message Type by Athlete – Traditional Media*

	No Message	Interactivity	Diversion	Info-Shar.	Content	Fanship	Prom.
LA	597(79.7%)	130(17.4)	1(.1%)	2(.2%)	2(.2%)	7(.9%)	10(1.3)
TW	263(52.5%)	135(27%)	2(.2%)	72(14.4%)	0(0%)	13(2.6%)	16(3.2%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Info-Shar.=Information Sharing, Prom.=Promotional

Table 18

*Message Type by Athlete – Controlled Media*

	No Message	Interactivity	Diversion	Info-Shar.	Content	Fanship	Prom.
LA	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(29.4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	12(70.6%)
TW	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	63(95.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(4.5%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Info-Shar.=Information Sharing, Prom.=Promotional

Table 19

*Message Type by Media Type*

	No Message	Interactivity	Diversion	Info-Shar.	Content	Fanship	Prom.
SM	1,076(21.9%)	1,361(27.7%)	1(0%)	497(10.1%)	0(0%)	515(10.5%)	4(.1%)
TM	860(17.5%)	265(5.4%)	3(.1%)	74(1.5%)	2(0%)	20(.4%)	26(.5%)
CM	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	68(1.4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	15(.3%)

Note: SM=Social Media, TM=Traditional Media, CM=Controlled Media, Info-Shar.=Information Sharing, Prom.=Promotional

The next set of research questions examined the tone and emotions associated with Armstrong and Woods. The goal was to determine what the tones and emotions were for each athlete among the three different types of media. It was expected that social and controlled media would have more positive tones than traditional media because Armstrong and Woods had control over their social and controlled media outlets.

RQ7: Is there a difference in types of message tone associated with Armstrong and Woods among social, traditional and, controlled media?

Chi-square testing of tone type and media type showed a significant association ( $\chi^2=1267.73$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The category of tone type contained results that were both expected and unexpected. Surprisingly, the tone of social media content was mostly neutral for Armstrong and Woods (72.9%,  $n=1759$ ). Positive tone was second (33.1%,  $n=1629$ ). Controlled media, unsurprisingly, was overwhelmingly positive (0.8%,  $n=41$ ). Traditional media revealed a negative tone (12.2%,  $n=598$ ). See Table 20 for more information.

Table 20

*Message Tone by Athlete – Social Media*

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
LA	1,427(44.2%)	185(5.7%)	1,618(50.1)
TW	202(56.9%)	12(3.4%)	141(39.7%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 21

*Message Tone by Athlete – Traditional Media*

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
LA	68(9.1%)	392(52.3%)	289(38.6%)
TW	123(24.6)	206(41.1%)	172(34.3%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 22

*Message Tone by Athlete – Controlled Media*

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
LA	12(70.6%)	4(23.6%)	1(5.9%)
TW	29(44%)	13(19.7%)	24(36.4%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 23

*Message Tone by Media Type*

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
SM	1,629(33.1%)	197(4.0%)	1,759(72.9%)
TM	191(3.9%)	598(12.2%)	461(9.4%)
CM	41(0.8%)	17(0.3%)	25(0.5%)

Note: SM=Social Media, TM=Traditional Media, CM=Controlled Media

RQ8: Is there a difference in types of emotion associated with Armstrong and Woods among social, traditional, and controlled media?

Emotion and media type had a significant association ( $\chi^2=278.87$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Social media emotional content for the athletes was more likely to be negative (48.0%,  $n=2361$ ) than positive (24.7%,  $n=1215$ ). Traditional media, however, contained more positive content than expected. Positive content was more prevalent than negative and neutral and was dominant (59.6%,  $n=2930$ ). See Table 24 for additional information.

Table 24

*Emotion Type by Media Type*

	Positive	Negative	Neutral
SM	1,215(24.7%)	2,361(48%)	8(0.2%)
TM	748(15.2%)	500(10.2%)	2(0%)
CM	15(0.3%)	2,930(59.5%)	10(0.2%)



Note: SM=Social Media, TM=Traditional Media, CM=Controlled Media

As one might expect, the athletes attempted to keep their cheating scandals and emotions out of social media. (This was possible, once again, because the athletes were in control of their own social media pages.) Testing for types of emotion in the content of social media showed “no emotion” was the largest type of emotion for Armstrong and Woods (65.8%,  $n=2126$ ; 62.8%,  $n=223$ ). Happiness was the second largest category for Armstrong and Woods (27.8%,  $n=897$ ; 28.5%,  $n=101$ ). This makes sense because if the athletes or public relations practitioners are in control of the social media outlet, then if any emotion is going to be displayed, it should be positive. Further, the displayed emotion should flatter the athlete’s image. See Table 25 for more information.

Table 25

*Type of Emotion by Athlete – Social Media*

	Happiness	Anger	Pride	Shame	Resent.	Sadness	NoEmot.
LA	897(27.8%)	58(1.8%)	97(3%)	4(0.1%)	8(0.2%)	40(1.2%)	2,126(65.8%)
TW	101(28.5%)	4(1.1%)	26(7.3%)	1(0.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	223(62.8%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Resent.=Resentment, No Emot.=No Emotion

Traditional media revealed a different type of emotion. The reporters newspaper articles showed “sadness” to be the dominant emotion for Armstrong and Woods (25.1%,  $n=314$ ; 13.9%,  $n=13.9$ ). The second highest category for Armstrong and Woods was shame (17.8%,  $n=223$ ; 11.4%,  $n=143$ ). See Table 26 for further details.

Table 26

*Type of Emotion by Athlete - Traditional Media*

	Happiness	Anger	Pride	Shame	Resent.	Sadness	No Emot.
LA	19(1.5%)	47(3.8%)	22(1.8%)	223(17.8%)	15(1.2%)	314(25.1%)	74(5.9%)
TW	56(4.5%)	27(2.2%)	40(3.2%)	143(11.4%)	5(0.4%)	174(13.9%)	54(4.3%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Resent.=Resentment, No Emot.=No Emotion

Testing of controlled media for Armstrong and Woods yielded “no emotion” being the leading category (19.3%,  $n=16$  ; 57.8%,  $n=48$ ). Sadness was the second highest category for Armstrong (4.8%,  $n=4.8\%$ ) while happiness was the second highest for Woods (15.7%,  $n=13$ ). This was not surprising because Armstrong’s controlled media dealt with him stepping down from LIVESTRONG and his career ending, whereas Woods’ controlled media dealt with his future endeavors like upcoming endorsement deals and golf tournaments. See Table 27.

Table 27

*Type of Emotion by Athlete – Controlled Media*

	Happiness	Anger	Pride	Shame	Resent.	Sadness	No Emot.
LA	0(0%)	1(1.2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(25.1%)	16(19.3%)
TW	13(15.7%)	0(0%)	1(1.2%)	1(1.2%)	0(0%)	4(4.8%)	48(57.8%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods, Resent.=Resentment, No Emot.=No Emotion

The last set of research questions dealt with Armstrong and Woods and the crisis communication that occurred among media. The main subject of attack each athlete

faced was examined and coded. The researcher also analyzed media to determine if Armstrong and/or Woods used an image restoration strategy and, if so, which strategy was chosen.

RQ9: Is there a difference in the main subject of attack associated with Armstrong and Woods among social, traditional, and controlled media?

Testing of main subject of attack and media type revealed a significant association ( $\chi^2=1541.50$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Both Armstrong and Woods had “no subject of attack” as the dominant category in all three types of media. “Individual” was the second highest category in all three types of media. In terms of the individual category for Armstrong, there were multiple times cyclists were quoted in newspaper articles talking about Armstrong’s cheating scandal. In terms of the individual category for Woods, many articles centered on how Woods’ cheating scandal was going to affect his wife Elin. See Tables 28, 29, 30 and 31 for full comparison.

Table 28

*Main Subject of Attack by Athlete – Social Media*

	Individual	Policy	Organization	No Subject of Attack
LA	15(0.5%)	0(0%)	4(0.1%)	3,211(99.4%)
TW	(0%)	(0%)	0(0%)	355(100%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 29

*Main Subject of Attack by Athlete – Traditional Media*

	Individual	Policy	Organization	No Subject of Attack
LA	202(27%)	0(0%)	44(5.9%)	503(67.2%)
TW	247(49.3%)	5(1%)	7(1.4%)	242(48.3%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 30

*Main Subject of Attack by Athlete – Controlled Media*

	Individual	Policy	Organization	No Subject of Attack
LA	3(17.6%)	0(0%)	1(5.9%)	13(76.5%)
TW	(0%)	(0%)	0(0%)	66(100%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 31

*Main Subject of Attack by Media Type*

	Individual	Policy	Organization	No Subject of Attack
SM	15(0.3%)	0(0%)	4(0.1%)	3,566(72.5%)
TM	449(9.1%)	5(0.1%)	51(0.1%)	745(15.1%)
CM	3(0.1%)	0(0%)	1(0%)	79(1.6%)

Note: SM=Social Media, TM=Traditional Media, CM=Controlled Media

RQ10: Is there a difference in the IRS associated with Armstrong and Woods among social, traditional, and controlled media?

Finally, a significant association was found between image restoration strategy and media type ( $\chi^2=640.61$ ,  $df=12$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). No strategy was the dominant category for Armstrong and Woods for all three media types (72.3%,  $n=3558$ ; 20.7%,  $n=1020$ ; 1.7%,  $n=82$ ). This was important information because it showed that having no strategy was both Armstrong's and Woods' image restoration strategy. Specifically, both athletes ignored their cheating scandals on social media. Armstrong only acknowledged his cheating scandal on controlled media as it affected his foundation, LIVESTRONG. Another important finding was that the strategy of denial was the second largest category (0.2%,  $n=11$ ; 2.3%,  $n=111$ ; 0.0%,  $n=1$ ). This was not surprising considering both Armstrong's and Woods' initial strategy was to ignore any cheating took place. See Tables 32, 33, 34 and 35 for more information.

Table 32

*IRS by Athlete – Social Media*

	None	Denial	Evasion	Reduction	Corrective	Apology
LA	3,203(99.2%)	11(0.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	16(0.5%)	0(0%)
TW	355(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 33

*IRS by Athlete – Traditional Media*

	None	Denial	Evasion	Reduction	Corrective	Apology
LA	634(84.6%)	87(11.6%)	16(2.1%)	4(0.5%)	7(0.9%)	1(0.1%)
TW	386(77%)	24(4.8%)	4(0.8)	35(7%)	30(6%)	22(4.4%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 34

*IRS by Athlete – Controlled Media*

	None	Denial	Evasion	Reduction	Corrective	Apology
LA	16(94.1)	1(5.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
TW	355(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

Note: LA=Lance Armstrong, TW=Tiger Woods

Table 35

*IRS by Media Type*

	None	Denial	Evasion	Reduction	Corrective	Apology
SM	3,558(72.3%)	11(0.2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4(0.1%)
TM	1,020(20.7%)	111(2.3%)	20(0.4%)	39(0.8%)	37(0.8%)	23(0.5%)
CM	82(1.7%)	1(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

Note: SM=Social Media, TM=Traditional Media, CM=Controlled Media

## CHAPTER VII

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research examined how cyclist Lance Armstrong and golfer Tiger Woods handled their cheating scandals via social, traditional, and controlled media during critical time periods in their athletic careers. This study compared the social and controlled media coverage of the athletes with traditional media coverage. Previous research has shown that Twitter allows athletes to adopt different personas (Sanderson, 2013). For example, Tiger Woods tweeted “Happy Father’s Day to all you fathers out there.” In this capacity, Twitter allowed him to adopt the persona of a father. This research did not prove that Woods improved his image when he adopted a relatable persona like that of a father. However, his posts where he tweeted things that made him relatable to the public (like the “Happy Father’s Day” tweet) had high retweet numbers.

The tweets and press releases were communicative artifacts that were in the athlete’s control. It was the researcher’s expectation that the coverage the athletes controlled and maintained would be substantially more positive and flattering than the traditional media coverage (of which the athletes had no control). However, social media has the potential to influence traditional media so a possibility of somewhat flattering traditional media existed.

#### Summary of Findings

The first set of research questions looked at the composition and frame of the artifacts. Message format for each athlete was examined among social, traditional, and controlled media. Both Armstrong’s and Woods’ tweets contained article links and social media components. Other social media components included other users’ Twitter handles and or a link to Facebook. Regarding traditional media, the majority of message

format for both athletes was strictly text. Only three of Woods' articles contained links to other articles.

Woods' message format for controlled media was unique in this study. His controlled media utilized five out of six of the message format categories. One hundred percent of Woods' controlled media contained an article link, photo, video link, audio link, and social media. Armstrong's message format for controlled media was not as significant as Woods' message format. His controlled media contained article links and non-traditional news source links. Regarding message frame, episodic framing was the dominant frame for Armstrong and Woods on all three types of media. Informative framing was the dominant frame for both Armstrong and Woods on social media. After informative frame, no frame was used most on Armstrong's social media. Human-interest frame was Woods' second most used frame on social media. Informative framing was the most significant category for both athletes on traditional media. Unsurprisingly, conflict frame was Armstrong's second most used frame on traditional media. This was not surprising because how the stories were framed was not in Armstrong's control. The news reporter chose how his stories were framed. Economic frame was Woods' second highest frame on traditional media. The majority of Armstrong's controlled media contained philanthropic framing, while Woods' was informative. The philanthropic framing for Armstrong can be attributed to the removal of negative press releases about his cheating scandal from Nike.com and LIVESTRONG.org. The next set of questions examined the athletes' cheating, main issue and message type.

Armstrong and Woods had similar results regarding if their cheating was mentioned on the different media. It was not mentioned on social media or controlled



media. This was a likely result due to the fact that Armstrong and Woods were in charge of their social media and their controlled media. It was also a likely result because cheating has a negative connotation and is not a term or action with which people want to be linked. On traditional media, however, cheating was mentioned. The fact that neither Armstrong nor Woods could control the content of the newspaper articles aided in this result.

The main issue for Armstrong and Woods on social media was man followed by athlete. On controlled media, Armstrong's main issue was philanthropist, while Woods' main issue was athlete. Once again, traditional media yielded significantly different results. Armstrong's main issue was villain followed by athlete. Woods' main issue was womanizer followed by athlete. It is important to note the stark contrast between media the athletes control compared with the media they cannot control.

Interactivity was the prominent message type for both Armstrong and Woods. No message was the second most frequent message type for Armstrong. Armstrong's tweets were not planned out or focused. Conversely, Woods' tweets were designed to interact with his followers but also to promote himself or whatever he was doing at the time. Woods' second most frequent message type was promotion. Traditional media for Armstrong and Woods did not have a message type. However, promotion was the prominent message type in Armstrong's controlled media. Woods' message types were significantly information-sharing.

The next set of research questions examined the tone and emotion of the artifacts. The message tone on Armstrong's social media was over 50 percent neutral. Woods' message tone on social media was significantly positive. However, the dominant message tone on traditional media was negative. Both athletes' controlled media was

significantly positive. The type of emotion reflected by the athletes on social media and controlled media was interesting. No emotion was the most significant for both Armstrong and Woods. Conversely, the foremost emotion on traditional media for Armstrong and Woods was sadness, followed by shame.

The last questions examined the main subject of “attack” and the strategies used by the athletes. There was no main subject of “attack” in the athletes’ social media. Traditional media contained mostly no main subject of “attack” for Armstrong, and an individual was the main subject of “attack” for Woods’ traditional media. As expected, controlled media for both athletes contained no main subject of “attack.” No image restoration strategy was the prevalent strategy for Woods on social media. The same was true for Armstrong, but corrective strategy was his second most used strategy on social media. As social media allows for two-way communication, this was a significant result and reflected Armstrong’s strategy for repairing his image. No strategies were employed on the athletes’ controlled media. However, Armstrong used the denial strategy once on controlled media. Traditional media reflected no strategy was the dominant strategy for Armstrong and Woods. Denial was the second most prevalent strategy used on Armstrong’s traditional media. Woods’ second most used strategy on his traditional media was reduction.

### Significant Findings

In this study, social media did not influence traditional media in Armstrong’s and Woods’ cases. It is evident that Armstrong and Woods (or a public relations practitioner working for Armstrong and Woods) monitored and edited the content of their respective Twitter accounts. Woods went so far as to deactivate his Twitter account at the onset of his cheating scandal in an attempt to inhibit and combat negative comments on his

Twitter page. It was apparent Armstrong edited his Twitter account. For example, on February 29, 2012, Armstrong tweeted, “For the record, I welcome the testing. Anytime. Anywhere”(Hambrick et al., 2013, p. 8). This tweet was no longer on his Twitter page at the time of data collection. The manipulation of both athletes’ Twitter accounts had significant repercussions on this study. Woods’ deactivation stopped the two-way communication that social media makes possible between an athlete and a fan or critic. Armstrong removed tweets that showed he used crisis communication and image restoration strategies.

As a result of the athletes’ altered Twitter accounts, a significant finding in this study was that Armstrong and Woods did not use image restoration strategies on their social media accounts or through controlled media. The largest categories for image restoration strategy for both Armstrong and Woods were “no strategy” or “denial.” Further, a majority of their tweets were information-sharing.

Traditional media reflected another expected finding. The newspaper stories were more negative about the athletes than the tweets or press releases or statements. One example of a reoccurring theme in the Armstrong newspaper stories was a fellow cyclist discussing how Armstrong’s cheating negatively impacted his career as a professional cyclist. Like the social media content, the controlled media was mostly information-sharing. For Woods, the controlled media detailed the results of his golf games and gave information pertaining to future promotional events involving Woods and his foundation.

The most significant finding in this study was the difference in the way the public reacted to Armstrong’s professional cheating versus Woods’ personal cheating. Armstrong set himself up for negative results because of his early adoption of Twitter and his frequent communication with fans, critics, and other celebrities. He also created an

image for himself that showcased him as something he wasn't—a by-the-book, honest athlete who also happened to be a cancer survivor.

It is clear Woods' cheating was received in such a drastically different way because he apologized and admitted fault within a few months. Armstrong, on the other hand, did not apologize and admit fault within a few months. He vehemently denied he cheated for many years. The overall denial and the angry, defensive way in which Armstrong denied his cheating publicly and in interviews contributed to the way the media framed him. It also contributed to the negative way Armstrong is viewed in the court of public opinion.

Woods is a private professional athlete and did not frequently communicate with the media before his scandal. In the rare interviews Woods gave, he only talked about his career as a professional golfer. Rarely did Woods mention his personal life. Essentially, Woods was rarely in the limelight for anything but playing golf and winning golf tournaments. Armstrong, conversely, was constantly in the spotlight and was in frequent contact with the media. He was an early adopter of Twitter and tweeted daily, sometimes multiple times daily. Armstrong attracted media attention, and he was framed in more ways than being a professional athlete. Armstrong drew attention to the fact that he was a professional athlete, but he also drew attention to himself as a man who was in the dating scene. Armstrong drew attention to being a philanthropist and a cancer survivor, and he also promoted his upcoming events. Woods let his athleticism and golf skills represent him in the media. Before his scandal, Woods was framed in the media simply as an athlete. This was advantageous to Woods and the handling of his cheating scandal. It also aided in the repair of his image.

Many times throughout history, celebrities have recovered from a scandal by way of transparency and/or immediate admission of fault. This was not the main strategy for either Armstrong or Woods. Both athletes did not acknowledge wrong-doing for significant amounts of time. However, the big difference is Woods waited a few months, whereas Armstrong waited multiple years.

The strategies employed by each athlete had polarizing results. These strategies resulted in Woods losing endorsements, and his wife divorced him. However, Woods is still a professional golfer. Armstrong's strategies resulted in him relinquishing his racing titles, and he is no longer a professional cyclist. It is evident his choices and strategies ended his career as a professional athlete.

#### Theoretical and Practical Implications

Previous research showed Benoit's attack the accuser strategy was popular among celebrities and professional athletes involved in a scandal or crisis (Hambrick et al., 2013; Sanderson 2008; Brazeal, 2008). From a theoretical standpoint, this strategy is desirable because it deflects the attention away from the celebrity and shifts it to the individual, group, or organization accusing them of wrong-doing or questioning their credibility. Although a popular strategy among professional athletes, the attack the accuser strategy did not work for Armstrong and his cheating scandal. He used his Twitter account to criticize the USADA, but doing so did not change the fact that he lied and cheated during his professional cycling career. Other studies reflected the attack the accuser strategy did not repair Armstrong's image. According to Hambrick et al. (2013), Armstrong "attempted to paint USADA in a less than positive light. Attacking the accuser may have moved the focus away from him in the first part of the year, yet the USADA proved relentless. This strategy has worked with marginal success among professional athletes"

(p. 8). Further, this study adds to the body of research because it showed that in spite of Armstrong's social media and controlled media being manipulated, image restoration strategies like attack the accuser were unsuccessful in repairing Armstrong's image.

Although it was not reflected on his social media or controlled media, other studies showed Woods used the mortification strategy to manage his cheating scandal. In this study, Woods's main strategy was no strategy followed by reduction in his cheating scandal. Other research on Woods' cheating scandal reflected that waiting to hold his press conference and apologize was not effective in managing his cheating scandal. Bernstein (2012) noted, "Woods was criticized for his initial denial of the affairs and for going more than two months between statements (December 11 [2009] till February 17 [2010]). A swifter approach may have shortened the length of the acute crisis stage and minimized the number of dropped sponsors" (p. 70). Although using these strategies and waiting to address the cheating allegations did not end Woods' professional golfing career, his cheating scandal could have been managed in a faster, more effective way. Armstrong's cheating scandal could have been managed in a more effective way, but his strategies ended his professional cycling career.

Having no plan or strategy in a crisis situation is not an image restoration strategy and should not be the chosen strategy when a professional athlete is involved in a scandal. Responding quickly and choosing effective image restoration strategies would have helped manage the crisis and repair the image for both Armstrong and Woods. Having no plan or strategy in a crisis situation is not an image restoration strategy and should not be the chosen strategy when a professional athlete is involved in a scandal.

From a practical standpoint, this study showed that denial and attack the accuser strategies are not the strategies a professional athlete or celebrity should employ when

they are involved in a scandal. Brazeal's (2008) study on Terrell Owens affirmed this because Owens used attack the accuser, and his professional football contract with the Philadelphia Eagles was terminated. Further, this study showed that a delayed response can be harmful to the athlete's image. As reflected in the handling of Michael Phelps' scandal, responding quickly and apologizing is an effective way a public relations practitioner can help the individual manage the scandal and repair his or her image. Phelps is an excellent example of how to effectively manage a crisis in that he quickly utilized mortification and corrective action strategies.

#### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A significant limitation of this study was that not all of Armstrong's and Woods' media artifacts were available at the time of data collection. For example, the only controlled media for Armstrong on Nike.com was Nike's statement apologizing for Armstrong's actions. Woods' controlled media had been altered at the time of data collection as well. A substantial gap existed on Nike.com's coverage on Woods. His scandal broke in November 2009, and no information on Woods is available on Nike.com from July 2009 through November 2011.

Regarding social media, Woods deactivated his Twitter account at the onset of his scandal so anything he tweeted was not available. Similarly, not all of Armstrong's tweets were present on his Twitter page. Previous research from Hambrick et al.'s (2013) study showed Armstrong tweeted 859 times in 2012 through early 2013. However, at the time of data collection (May 2014 through March 2015), it was evident that a substantial number of tweets Armstrong posted had been removed. For example, Hambrick's study reported 102 tweets for April 2012, yet only 64 were available on his Twitter page at the

time of data collection for this study. Woods deactivated his Twitter account during his scandal so anything he tweeted was not available.

Audience response on social media not being included is a limitation of this study. This was due to the high volume of responses to the athletes' tweets and also because of the significant number of spam responses to the athletes' tweets. Also, the examination of the changes in the athletes' images over time was not analyzed and included in this study.

Another limitation of the study is the timeliness factor. Both Armstrong's and Woods' cheating scandals originated several years prior to the time of this study. However, Armstrong's scandal is still ongoing due to his issues with drinking and driving. Woods is facing issues due to his performance and ability to continue to play golf because of back problems.

Future research could analyze the two athletes over time and examine if they used crisis communication and/or image restoration strategies after March 2015, the ending data collection date of this study. Armstrong has maintained his Twitter account so he could be involved in another scandal at any time. At the time of this study, Woods had just ended his relationship with Olympic skier Lindsey Vonn, and he continues to be involved with women in the media. So, both athletes have the potential to be involved in another scandal or crisis.

Finally, this study showed that the penalty for professional cheating may outweigh the penalty for personal cheating. Armstrong's recovery from professional cheating was an enormous challenge, and the strategies he used to manage his crisis and repair his image were ineffective. He also waited too long to admit the truth and apologize. The public is more forgiving of someone who admits what they have done



and apologizes than someone who uses denial and attacks their accuser. This is evident in the cases of both Lance Armstrong and Tiger Woods.

Although both athletes exhibited morally wrong behavior, Woods still has a career as a professional golfer. This study showed infidelity (or personal cheating) is not unforgivable and does not end a professional athlete's career. Armstrong's cheating scandal and the image restoration strategies he chose ultimately ended his career as a professional cyclist. Armstrong's case is a lesson for professional athletes and celebrities.

It is best to admit the actions immediately and apologize when one makes a mistake or bad decision. This is especially true for professional athletes, celebrities, or anyone in the public eye. The bad decisions professional athletes make in their personal lives can be forgiven. However, the bad decisions professional athletes make while they are playing their sports could end their careers.

APPENDIX A  
SOCIAL MEDIA (TWITTER) CODESHEET

Case:

1. Lance Armstrong
2. Tiger Woods

Date and Time of Tweet: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the message format include text?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a link?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a photo?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a video?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include an audio link?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a non-traditional news source?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include social media?

1. Yes
2. No

Was the Tweet retweeted?

1. Yes
2. No

If yes, how many times was it retweeted? \_\_\_\_\_

Was the frame episodic or thematic?

1. Episodic (Factual)
2. Thematic (Background story, context given)

Select the dominant frame present:

1. Informative frame: Gives information and/or makes a statement
2. Human-interest frame: Places a human face or an emotional representation of a story
3. Conflict frame: Used to reflect conflicts between individuals, groups, and organizations

4. Morality frame: Puts the event in context of moral, social, and religious tenets
5. Economic frame: Reports an event in relation to the consequences it will have economically on an individual or organizational level
6. Attribution of responsibility frame: Attributes responsibility of an event to an individual, group, organization, or country
7. No recognizable frame present

Was the cheating issue mentioned (regardless of whether or not it was the main issue addressed)?

1. Yes
2. No

Identify the main issue addressed:

1. Armstrong/Woods as a Man (issues/subjects non-professional athletes can relate to)
2. Armstrong/Woods as an Athlete (workouts, competition, USADA and PGA)
3. Armstrong/Woods as a Promoter (endorsements, commercials, favorites)
4. Armstrong/Woods as a Philanthropist (LIVESTRONG/TW Foundation)
5. Armstrong/Woods as a Villain (cheating, illegal doping, unsportsmanlike conduct)
6. Armstrong/Woods as a Womanizer (relations with women, questionable social behavior/outbursts)

Identify the message type present:

1. None/Cannot be determined
2. Interactivity: Professional athlete's direct communication with fellow athletes and fans
3. Diversion: Non-sports-related information provided by professional athletes
4. Information-Sharing: Insight into an athlete's teammates, team, or sport, such as details about practices or training sessions or recent competitive events

5. Content: Includes links to pictures, videos, and other websites, such as an athlete's blog or a team's official website
6. Fanship: Occurs when athletes discuss sports other than their own teams and teammates
7. Promotional: Publicity regarding sponsorships, upcoming games, and related promotions, such as discounted tickets or giveaways

The overall tone is dominantly:

1. Positive
2. Negative
3. Neutral

Were emotions present?

1. Yes
2. No

Indicate the type of emotion expressed:

1. Happiness
2. Anger
3. Pride
4. Shame
5. Resentment
6. No identifiable emotion expressed

If applicable, indicate the main subject of criticism or "attack":

1. Individuals(s) (Pro athlete, sports fan/critic, foundation leader, etc.)
2. Policy (Infidelity/cheating, morals, good sportsmanship, etc.)
3. Organization (USADA, PGA, etc.)
4. No recognizable subject of criticism or "attack"

Identify the main issue addressed by general public:

1. Armstrong/Woods as a Man (issues/subjects non-professional athletes can relate to)
2. Armstrong/Woods as an Athlete (workouts, competition, USADA and PGA)
3. Armstrong/Woods as a Promoter (endorsements, commercials, favorites)
4. Armstrong/Woods as a Philanthropist (LIVESTRONG/TW Foundation)
5. Armstrong/Woods as a Villain (cheating, illegal doping, unsportsmanlike conduct)
6. Armstrong/Woods as a Womanizer (relations with women, questionable social behavior/outbursts)
7. No issue addressed

Identify the dominant image restoration/repair strategy present:

1. None/Cannot be determined
2. Denial
  - Simple denial: Did not perform act
  - Shift the blame: Act performed by another
3. Evasion of responsibility
  - Provocation: Responded to the act of another
  - Defeasibility: Lack of information or ability
  - Accident: Act was mishap
  - Good intentions: Meant well in act
4. Reducing offensiveness of event
  - Bolstering: Stress good traits
  - Minimization: Act not serious

- Differentiation: Act distinguished from other more offensive act

- Transcendence: More important considerations (i.e. helping patients more important than initial claims)

- Attack accuser: Reduce attacker's credibility

- Compensation: Reimburse victims

5. Corrective action: Plan to solve or prevent problem

6. Mortification: Apologize for act

CONTROLLED MEDIA (PRESS RELEASES, PRESS STATEMENTS AND  
INTERVIEWS) CODESHEET

Case:

1. Lance Armstrong
2. Tiger Woods

Date and Time of Message: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of artifact:

1. Press Release
2. Press Statement
3. Interview

Does the message format include a new article link?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a link to the athlete's blog or website?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a photo?

1. Yes
2. No



Does the message format include a video link?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include an audio link?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a non-traditional news source?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include social media?

1. Yes
2. No

Was the frame episodic or thematic?

1. Episodic (Factual)
2. Thematic (Background story, context given)

Select the dominant frame present:

1. Informative frame: Gives information and/or makes a statement
2. Human-interest frame: Places a human face or an emotional representation of a story

3. Conflict frame: Used to reflect conflicts between individuals, groups, and organizations
4. Morality frame: Puts the event in context of morals, social, and religious tenets
5. Economic frame: Reports an event in relation to the consequences it will have economically on an individual or organizational level
6. Attribution of responsibility frame: Attributes responsibility of an event to an individual, group, organization, or country
7. No recognizable frame present

Was the cheating issue mentioned (regardless of whether or not it was the main issue addressed)?

1. Yes
2. No

Identify the main issue addressed:

1. Armstrong/Woods as a Man (issues/subjects non-professional athletes can relate to)
2. Armstrong/Woods as an Athlete (workouts, competition, USADA and PGA)
3. Armstrong/Woods as a Promoter (endorsements, commercials, favorites)
4. Armstrong/Woods as a Philanthropist (LIVESTRONG/TW Foundation)
5. Armstrong/Woods as a Villain (cheating, illegal doping, unsportsmanlike conduct)
6. Armstrong/Woods as a Womanizer (relations with women, questionable social behavior/outbursts)

Identify the message type present:

1. None/Cannot be determined

2. Interactivity: Professional athlete's direct communication with fellow athletes and fans
3. Diversion: Non-sports-related information provided by professional athletes
4. Information Sharing: Insight into an athlete's teammates, team, or sport, such as details about practices or training sessions or recent competitive events
5. Content: Includes links to pictures, videos, and other websites such as an athlete's blog or a team's official website
6. Fanship: Occurs when athletes discuss sports other than their own teams and teammates
7. Promotional: Publicity regarding sponsorships, upcoming games, and related promotions, such as discounted tickets or giveaways

The overall tone is dominantly:

1. Positive
2. Negative
3. Neutral

Were emotions present?

1. Yes
2. No

Indicate the type of emotion expressed:

1. Happiness
2. Anger
3. Pride
4. Shame
5. Resentment
6. No identifiable emotion expressed

If applicable, indicate the main subject of criticism or “attack”:

1. Individuals(s) (Pro athlete, sports fan/critic, foundation leader, etc.)
2. Policy (Infidelity/cheating, morals, good sportsmanship, etc.)
3. Organization (USADA, PGA, etc.)
4. No recognizable subject of criticism or “attack”

Identify the main issue addressed by different stakeholders:

1. Armstrong/Woods as a Man (issues/subjects non-professional athletes can relate to)
2. Armstrong/Woods as an Athlete (workouts, competition, USADA and PGA)
3. Armstrong/Woods as a Promoter (endorsements, commercials, favorites)
4. Armstrong/Woods as a Philanthropist (LIVESTRONG/TW Foundation)
5. Armstrong/Woods as a Villain (cheating, illegal doping, unsportsmanlike conduct)
6. Armstrong/Woods as a Womanizer (relations with women, questionable social behavior/outbursts)

Identify the dominant image restoration/repair strategy present:

1. None/Cannot be determined
2. Denial
  - Simple denial: Did not perform act
  - Shift the blame: Act performed by another
3. Evasion of responsibility
  - Provocation: Responded to the act of another
  - Defeasibility: Lack of information or ability
  - Accident: Act was mishap

-Good intentions: Meant well in act

4. Reducing offensiveness of event

- Bolstering: Stress good traits

- Minimization: Act not serious

- Differentiation: Act distinguished from other more offensive act

- Transcendence: More important considerations (i.e. helping patients more important than initial claims)

- Attack accuser: Reduce attacker's credibility

- Compensation: Reimburse victims

5. Corrective action: Plan to solve or prevent problem

6. Mortification: Apologize for act

Indicate the source of information cited:

1. Lance Armstrong/Tiger Woods official
2. LIVESTRONG/TW Foundation official
3. Nike website
4. Non-official source from a new technology (i.e. Tweets, Facebook posts, Web reference)
5. General public
6. Cycling/golfing official
7. Cycling/golfing fan
8. Other

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA (NEWSPAPERS) CODESHEET

Case:

1. Lance Armstrong
2. Tiger Woods

Title of publication: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of publication: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the message format include a new article link?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a link to the athlete's blog or website?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a photo?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a video link?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include an audio link?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include a non-traditional news source?

1. Yes
2. No

Does the message format include social media?

1. Yes
2. No

Was the frame episodic or thematic?

1. Episodic (Factual)
2. Thematic (Background story, context is given)

Select the dominant frame present:

1. Informative frame: Gives information and/or makes a statement
2. Human-interest frame: Places a human face or an emotional representation of a story
3. Conflict frame: Used to reflect conflicts between individuals, groups, and organizations
4. Morality frame: Puts the event in context of morals, social, and religious tenets
5. Economic frame: Reports an event in relation to the consequences it will have economically on an individual or organizational level

6. Attribution of responsibility frame: Attributes responsibility of an event to an individual, group, organization, or country
7. No recognizable frame present

Was the cheating issue mentioned (regardless of whether or not it was the main issue addressed)?

1. Yes
2. No

Identify the main issue addressed:

1. Armstrong/Woods as a Man (issues/subjects non-professional athletes can relate to)
2. Armstrong/Woods as an Athlete (workouts, competition, USADA and PGA)
3. Armstrong/Woods as a Promoter (endorsements, commercials, favorites)
4. Armstrong/Woods as a Philanthropist (LIVESTRONG/TW Foundation)
5. Armstrong/Woods as a Villain (cheating, illegal doping, unsportsmanlike conduct)
6. Armstrong/Woods as a Womanizer (relations with women, questionable social behavior/outbursts)

Identify the message type present:

1. None/Cannot be determined
2. Interactivity: Professional athlete's direct communication with fellow athletes and fans
3. Diversion: Non-sports-related information provided by professional athletes
4. Information Sharing: Insight into an athlete's teammates, team, or sport, such as details about practices or training sessions or recent competitive events
5. Content: Includes links to pictures, videos, and other websites, such as an athlete's blog or a team's official website



6. Fanship: Occurs when athletes discuss sports other than their own teams and teammates

7. Promotional: Publicity regarding sponsorships, upcoming games, and related promotions, such as discounted tickets or giveaways

The overall tone is dominantly:

1. Positive
2. Negative
3. Neutral

Was emotion presented?

1. Yes
2. No

Indicate the type of emotion expressed:

1. Happiness
2. Anger
3. Pride
4. Shame
5. Resentment
6. No identifiable emotion expressed

If applicable, indicate the main subject of criticism or “attack”:

1. Individuals(s) (Pro athlete, sports fan/critic, foundation leader, etc.)
2. Policy (Infidelity/cheating, morals, good sportsmanship, etc.)

3. Organization (USADA, PGA, etc.)
4. No recognizable subject of criticism or “attack”

Identify the dominant image restoration/repair strategy present:

1. None/Cannot be determined
2. Denial
  - Simple denial: Did not perform act
  - Shift the blame: Act performed by another
3. Evasion of responsibility
  - Provocation: Responded to the act of another
  - Defeasibility: Lack of information or ability
  - Accident: Act was mishap
  - Good intentions: Meant well in act
4. Reducing offensiveness of event
  - Bolstering: Stress good traits
  - Minimization: Act not serious
  - Differentiation: Act distinguished from other more offensive act
  - Transcendence: More important considerations (i.e. helping patients more important than initial claims)
  - Attack accuser: Reduce attacker’s credibility
  - Compensation: Reimburse victims
5. Corrective action: Plan to solve or prevent problem
6. Mortification: Apologize for act

Indicate the source of information cited:

1. Lance Armstrong/Tiger Woods official
2. LIVESTRONG/TW Foundation official
3. Nike website
4. Non-official source from a new technology (ie. Tweets, Facebook posts, Web reference)
5. General public
6. Cycling/golfing official
7. Cycling/golfing fan
8. Other

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