**Literature Review**

This paper analyzes why a sports communication class should be added to the Communication Department at PFW. It provides insights into statistics on how universities have adopted sports communication classes to their campus. This paper examines the history of sports communication and main topics in sports communication such as fan culture, crisis communication, and gender in sport. In order to have a successful college class there needs to be effective pedagogy. The types of pedagogy that will best fit a sports communication course is either problem-based learning or case-based learning. PFW needs a sports communication course because the campus already has sports journalism majors who get experience in writing the outcomes of games or game highlights but they are not getting actual sport communication speaking experience like sports newscasters that we see on local news or national news. Some of these students might want to be a sports broadcaster someday and what a great way to test out the waters in the sports communication class in college.

Fan culture can make or break a team. A team’s relationship to their fans is significant because if there is no solid fan base the team could fall apart. Having a good fan base creates motivation for the team and profit. Crisis communication is important because of the different situations athletes, coaches, teams, or organizations can get in. If a sports team handles a crisis in a bad way, they could face serious consequences not only with the law but it can also affect their loyal fan base. Gender in sport has come to light this past decade. At first, gender in sports focused on women sports but now its broadened into the LGBTQ community as well. Gender in sport focuses on a multitude of different topics that ignite divisive topics such as salary, news coverage, or team success. Gender in sport has also affected the fan base by how the organization responds to controversial news stories such as a football player coming out as gay or a tennis player competing while pregnant. Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) has a policy on maternity leave organized by exceptional ranking in the league. The policy has a special ranking rule that allows players to freeze their ranking and enter eight tournaments in one year using their frozen ranking when rejoining professional tennis after pregnancy. Serena Williams returned as the top-ranked player to the 2018 French Open tour after her 16-month maternity leave (Beeghly, 2018). A minority of the tennis community thought the WTA’s policy on maternity leave were acceptable. Majority thought the WTA penalized female players for having children. They believed the special ranking rule should provide more flexibility to players wishing to return to the tour after giving birth. This policy was controversial. Critics of the policy claimed the differential treatment was wrong because it treated players with a maternity absence worse than others by failing to acknowledge and respect mothers. Since this controversial issue arose the founder of WTA changed the policy to allowing players to return on their own terms and provide protection for their health, family, and their career (Torres, 2019).

Finally, to have a successful class, effective pedagogy becomes instrumental. This paper interprets different pedagogy styles and types of effective learning that will be beneficial for a new course in the department of communication. The purpose of this literature review is to provide a foundation on sport communication so that an argument can be made to adopt sport communication into the Department of Communication curriculum.

**History of Sport Communication**

         The first-time sport communication appeared in a program at the National Communication Association (NCA) was in 2006, when a group of scholars gathered at a pre-conference to share their communication research. Ten years later in 2016, Sport Communication became its own division known as Communication and Sport (National Communication Association, October 14, 2021). Publishing companies produced academic books on various aspects of sport such as sport management, analytic methods in sports, strategic sport communication, and sports writing (Billings & Butterworth, 2021); many colleges and universities redesigned their communication programs to include sport communication as an offering.

To fully understand the impact sports has on American life, one must go back to youth sports. This would include the most common activities for children, including soccer, little league baseball and football, swimming, and even gymnastics. Sports demonstrate effective leadership. By participating in sports as a child, children develop interpersonal and conflict-resolution skills that then develop into individual skills and character. This demonstrates the power of communication regarding how sports are played, watched, interpreted, and evaluated (Wenner, 1991).

Communication practices are necessary to success of professional sports. It is important for all who are involved in the sports industry to watch over their identity when it is exhibited over live events and social media images. The language of sports started to get involved into American culture around the late 1950’s. In 1959, the phrase “sportugese” began to be acknowledged of how sport influenced how we think and talk. Sports metaphors developed to support feelings about war, politics, business, and sex. An example is from the 2008 presidential campaign highlighted Mike Huckabee and John Edwards from opposite parties referring to themselves as the racehorse Seabiscuit (Hilgers, 2006). Communication practices frame the ways people participate in sport. People tend to enact, produce, consume, and organize sport primarily as a communicative activity. Around 1975, the researchers of communication sparked an interest in communication surrounding sport (Sperber, 2000).

   Since the late 1970s, research on sports communication started to appear regularly in academic journals. At the beginning, scholars studied media framing (Hull et al., 2019). Real (1975), in writing about the Super Bowl, explaining the televised broadcast of the Super Bowl was arranged to emphasize the mythology of football as a ritualized expression of American identity. Sport communication researchers then began covering other aspects of sports.

While scholars rushed to publish, colleges and departments of mass communication were slow to offer courses and programs that would assist in producing more sport scholarships. In the media industry, sports communication developed a negative stigma as the “toy” department, which carried into the academic industry. During that period, sports communication did not gain any ground. Since that time, sports communication obtained scholars from different disciplines such as sociology, sports management, and sports studies. These programs began developing late in the 21st century. Because of this late rise in sports research, little scholarly research on sports communication in academic programs emerged. Many school administrators from across the United State saw sports-focused educational programs to attract prospective students, suggesting that sports communication classes are likely to be taught in schools that have a high profile in sports (Hull et al., 2019)

The relationship between sport and communication developed more in the 1990’s with diverse topics. At first, the study of sports was just viewed as “playtime” (Rowe, 2007), hence the toy department stigma. In the 2000s, though, sports communication began to garner heavier support when academics explored new avenues of sport communication, such as fan communities at the National Collegiate Association of Athletics' (NCAA) Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) men’s and women’s basketball championships (Symonds, 2004). The 2010s saw a spike in research and credibility and sports communication became a means to attract and retain prospective students to universities.

         The sports industry has changed drastically since 2020. In March 2020, sports fans around the world witnessed the impact Coronavirus had on sports. Games came to a screeching halt. Fan attendance was stopped from high school to professional sports. The world felt the impact of cancellation and suspension of sports. By fall 2020, sports started to resume around the globe but the aftereffects linger.

The canceling and suspension of many 2020 games affected communication in and about sport. Arenas and several sports venues have capacity limits, mask mandates, and even a vaccine mandate. At sports games, fans are to separate while watching the game. These changes caused a lot of controversy affecting sports communication. Different beliefs and personal interactions have been impacted by this change (Rowe, 2021). In 2020, the NBA struggled to pin a date to conclude the 2019-2020 NBA season. After more than 100 days of waiting, the NBA decided to have a “bubble environment” that had a massive list of protocols for players, coaches, staff, and media to follow. All 22 teams had to stay in their hotel rooms for 6 weeks and even two of the teams could not leave their rooms for 3 months. Many other protocols caused for this season to end like no other season the NBA has ever seen. This impacted fan not being able to attend and even top players such as Tukka Rask leaving the playoffs because of homesickness (Cacciola, 2020).

**Sports Communication in the Classroom**

With the growth of sports communication, universities and colleges designed and added sports communication curriculum to their departments. These classes contain a heavy focus on journalism and mass communication (Zirin, 2005). A sports communication course would best fit Purdue Fort Wayne because of the sport environment in Fort Wayne. Fort Wayne is home to the Kelly Cup Champions, the Fort Wayne Komets. The Komets have a huge fan base all over the northeastern part of Indiana and are the affiliate to the Vegas Golden Knights. The Fort Wayne Tin Caps are a minor-league baseball team with the affiliation to the San Diego Padres. Also, the Fort Wayne Mad Ants are the affiliate to the Indiana Pacers and recently underwent a rebranding. The minor-league players reside in Fort Wayne during their respective seasons and they are also a part of a professional national sports organizations, such as the MLB, NHL, and NBA. Fort Wayne is growing in sports with the newly added professional soccer team established in 2021. Fort Wayne Football Club (FWFC) is a part of a soccer pyramid with 91 teams and the team is made up of college age players (WANE 15, 2019).

With overabundance of professional sports and growing teams on campus, a sports communication class will benefit students by enabling them to apply course knowledge right to sporting events on campus and throughout Fort Wayne metropolitan area.

A sports communication course gives journalism students a chance to practice in broadcast and utilize writing techniques within sports journalism. By adding a sports communication course, students will write articles about game experiences, outcomes, fan culture etc. particularly for the Summit City Observer. The Summit City Observer, a student news organization at PFW, that provides people of Fort Wayne with the latest and news relevant to Fort Wayne. This would be a perfect opportunity for students who would like a career in sports journalism and a good way to market PFW’s athletic department and campus life.

Trine University offers two degrees related to sports communication such as a BSBA in Sport Management and a BS in Sport and Recreation. Both degrees offer several different sport courses like history of sports, issues in sports, sport psychology, etc. Ball State University also has a couple opportunities for students interested in sport communication. Ball State offers a BSBA in Sport Administration, where students are required to take a sport communication course. Ball State also offers a Journalism degree where students can take a sports news route and learn about news, magazine, photojournalism, and mass communication. In 2018, students were a part of the Winter Olympics. Students worked side-by-side with professional sport news journalist that provided daily coverage of the games. Campuses surrounding PFW have already adopted sports courses for students. A sports communication class would fit right into the journalism track.

Kian (2017), found 32 of then 222 U.S. universities offered an undergraduate sports communication program. Twenty-four of these programs are among universities in the Big Ten, Big 12, and SEC. This supports how most schools, especially schools with high media coverage, are more likely to be interested in sport communication academic programs. One of the earliest sport programs was established in 2003 at Penn State University where students explored multiple issues in sports journalism. Similar programs were then adopted to other universities such as the University of Georgia, Indiana University, and the University of Texas. The University of Texas is now home to the Center for Sports Communication & Media; and, they have the NBC Olympic internship coordinator on faculty.

Oklahoma State University created a sports media major after surveying the student body to gauge interest; about half of the student body responded, reporting that they would take sports communication classes (Krein & Weir, 2008). Many students had an interest in a sports communication course, much less programs, but programs and courses were not offered at that time. Once the program developed, universities found it hard to keep up with the demand of students wanting to be in the program (Krein & Weir, 2008).

Universities also needed to find qualified faculty to teach in the program. For a sports communication program to succeed, there needs to be enough faculty members who know how to teach the different classes. Colleges with sports communication programs did not struggle with finding faculty members to teach in the sports program as some of the current faculty had previous sports media knowledge (Hull et al., 2019). For example, since starting this project, PFW began an esports program, which has the potential to attract students; these students could then be advised to take sport communication courses.

While many universities did not struggle to catch students’ attention, some programs found it necessary to start a marketing campaign. To gather student interest, a public relations campaign at Oklahoma University, designed to market the potential new program, started. Successful marketing campaigns utilized services such as websites, social media, high school counselors, and admissions. Results from the research demonstrated that creating a sport communication program appealed to incoming freshman. It was easy to recruit students because of the high retention rate based on the career advancement opportunities that are offered to students after graduation. These opportunities can include jobs within the university’s sport organization or into professional sport organizations (Hull et al., 2019). Sport communication programs have moved from education development into employment considerations (Judson & Taylor, 2014).

By researching multiple college websites on sport communication courses, multiple universities cover the same topics. Lasell University offers a sports communication bachelor’s degree with a requirement of courses that contain Media, Sports & Society and Public Relations. Media, Sports, and Society focuses on several topics, including fan culture; students are introduced to various aspects of sport-media relationship as it relates to social issues affecting fans. Public Relation courses explore practices of professional public relations.  Sport media platforms are universally recognized for their orderly response to crisis communication (Lasell University, 2021). Medaille College (2021, November) has a sports communication degree where students take courses in Sports in Society and Sport Media Coverage Other programs mentioned similar courses offered in sports communication degrees. One area not covered is Gender in Sports. With gender politics arising in the United States today as well as featured in the FICA soccer world, gender should be discussed and have a section of a course or a whole course devoted to the history, evolution, and ethical concerns regarding gender representation among and within sports. With the sports world vastly growing in not only gender, but the fan base as well. The fan base of every team has way more involvement then just sitting in the seats cheering on their favorite team.

**Fan Culture**

           Another aspect of sport communication scholars find important is the fan culture. Fan culture is a critical part of the sports organization because the fans control the team. Having a strong fan culture allows for more growth and opportunity for the team. For example, the Kansas City Chiefs hold the Guniness World Record for loudest crowd roar at a sports stadium. These roars are known to reach 137.5 decibels (Chiefs, 2021), well beyond the average decibels of 80 to 90 (Lee & Han, 2019). Fans own part of the Green Bay Packers. Recently, the team sold 300,000 shares of the stock. Each stock cost $300 in 2021 (Breech, 2021). Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox, held the record for most consecutive sold-out home games until 2013; and even during their 86-year World Series win drought, fans continued to attend. The streak was the longest in major professional sports that sold out for 814 consecutive games (Mastrodonato, 2013).

Sports fan culture is a rapidly growing phenomenon with every sport providing immense opportunities to engage with and grow their fan base. Within the sports fan culture, there are sport fan types. A spectator watches the game (Piipponen, 2011). A fan is often more involved with a greater devotion to the sport (Brady, 2016). Some fans will go between fair-weather and die-hard. Fair-weather fans display a desire for their team if they are winning while die-hard fans are those who display heavy loyalty in their sport. A fair-weather fan is excited and watches all the NCAA March Madness when college basketball tournament starts but they do not watch games in the regular season (Billings & Butterworth, 2021). A diehard fan watches all the games leading up to and contained within the tournament.

           Three types of fans were classified by Sutton et al., (1997): social, focused and vested. A social fan has a limited sense of identification with a certain team. They seek fandom as a socializing opportunity, such as a fan who is loyal to the sport but not a specific team. He/she wants to see the game with decent quality performance. These types of fans tend to care more about the outcome (Smith & Westerbeek, 2003). The second type of fan is the focused fan who has invested interest in the sport. These fans, for instance, are those who are from a state or city where a team is located. Focused fans participate in civic engagement to show support to their local community. They are the fans that have little loyalty to the team and are thrilled by the entertainment and enjoyment provided by the game event. The first two types of fans have an attraction to the sport but not necessarily an attachment to the team (Smith & Westerbeek, 2003). The last type of fan is a vest fan who is a die-hard fan with elevated levels of emotional support. The team outcomes affect their emotional and mental state at that specific time. An example of this type of fan is he/she who is strongly passionate about the team. They are faithful, attend games, and often follow the team for better or worse (Smith & Westerbeek, 2003). While there are different types of fans, there are also different rituals that are seen among most sporting events.

           Every sports team contains fan rituals that are a rite of passage for both spectators and participants (Danglade, 2014). These can include tailgating, chanting, painting one’s body, wearing certain attire, etc. Professional sport contests provide a context to which opportunities for social and personal ritual behavior are prevalent and measurable. People perform rituals as either personal or social in nature. Sport marketers design the game day experience to social rituals (Neale et al., 2008), such as the use of music and songs at many live events. During baseball games, crowds sing “Take me out to the ball game”; and some sports venues, like Fenway Park, provide the fans the opportunity to loudly sing “Sweet Caroline” or sing songs with the rest of the crowd. Typically, a special celebrity guest sings “Take Me Out To The Ballgame.” Spectators have painted and decorated their bodies with team colors.  They often purchase merchandise at the game and you find many praying for team success (Neale et al., 2008).

Fans have personal rituals while watching sports on television. This enhances feelings of making fans feel a part of group membership. This gives fans a sense of participating without attending the game in person. For example, watch-parties are popular among different types of fans. Watch parties consist of decorating sites with paraphernalia. Then fans fill the space with other fans dressed in teams' colors they support while connecting with fans of another team. In Fargo, South Dakota, watch parties are held in movie theatres where the game is projected on the screen. The audio in these locations is turned up very loud to where if you are in a different theater, you can still hear what is going on with the game. There are team symbols supporting the team and their mascot placed strategically around the venue (Aden et al., 2009). Team symbols are used by fans at every game but being at the game comes with a different deeper meaning.

Research (Clark, 2011; Krizek, 1992) examined the meaning behind sports venues, such as the former White Sox stadium, Comiskey Field. The fans were asked to reflect on their experience and memories spent at the park. Come to find out, most of the fans had been coming to the park since they were children, and they were passing on the ritual to their children. These rituals help motivate the connection between the fans and the sports teams (Clark, 2011). Krizek (1992), describes his first time entering Old Comiskey Park. The smell of the hot dogs and cool dampness of the park. He remembers wearing a baseball cap and having a bag of peanuts in one hand. These moments were often spent with his dad. He later returned to “our” seats, and he reminisced. He thought of how his dad showed him the proper way to open a bag of peanuts and how he and his dad would cheer alongside one another. Sporting events and venues hold a lot of treasure and memories for families (Krizek, 1992).

           Fans often make connections with certain athletes and teams. Shilbury (2009), looked at self-identified fans. Depending on the dedication of the fan, their self-esteem can be impacted by the outcome of a sports team. These reactions can be positive or negative. Schools with football success tend to increase enrollments. If a school has an increase of sport success, there is usually an increase in student enrolments. Pope and Pope (2009) researched enrollments from the NCAA tournament March Madness to determine how enrollments were impacted by those teams in the tournament. If an institution is one of the sixty-four teams, there is a 1% increase in applications the following year. Making it to the “Sweet 16” yields a 3% increase in applications to a university. “Final Four” has a 5% increase but winning the tournament has an 8% increase in applications for a university. For football, if the results have the team ending in the top 20, there will be a 2.5% increase in applications. The teams that are in the top 10 have a 3% increase in applications and winning the football championship has a 7-8% increase. Fan culture is a very important factor in sports organizations; in the next section, we will examine how sport organizations react to a crisis.

**Crisis in Sports Organization**

           In December 2021, Tiger Woods announced he would be returning to the golf course, nearly 8 months after damaging both legs in a horrific car crash in Los Angeles. The accident took place Tuesday February 23 and the first press conference was held later that day to address the “crisis.” Tiger Woods’ accident is just one of the more recent sport stories that required a crisis communication plan (Lauletta, 2021).

Crisis communication is prominent in sports organizations. How sports handle the crisis such as in a timely manner is important. Every year, several different crises arise in sports such as players being in accidents, to getting injured playing a pick-up game, to even rumors of alleged affairs. The handling of a crisis reflects the entire sports organization. The use of a public apology is just one form of crisis communication. These public apologies are a tool to repair the team’s image. With image repair, the goal is to maintain a positive face. For example. Image repair is required by athletes. These repairs are often in the form of a news conference or an apology on a social media platform. Back in 2003, Kobe Bryant was accused of sexual assault on a front desk clerk at a Colorado resort. Bryant made a statement clarifying that he had committed adultery that night, but nothing happened against the will of that woman. Bryant’s remarks are an example of denial, mortification, and differentiation. The case was later dropped after the accuser refused to testify, but Bryant’s image was tarnished. It takes time and effort to restore a new positive image of an athlete to the public (Billings & Butterworth, 2021).

Another scandal involving, pro golfer Tiger Woods in 2009 occurred when he was caught in one of the highest profiling sex scandals. Reports claimed that his wife was chasing his Escalade with a golf club. Then in the weeks following multiple women came forward admitting they had affairs with Woods. There were over 120 allegations of adultery. His reputation was threatened, and he suffered monetary loss. This scandal then entered the chronic crisis stage, which is a period of regrouping and recovering. Woods offered an apology to his family and fans, making it clear he was ready to move on. He started to have interviews and slowly made his way into the professional golf circuit (Kozman, 2013).

One area of crisis communication that has not gardened as much research is how teams or sporting leagues handle a crisis. Certain situations, like the team from Washington attempting to sweep sexual harassment and a toxic male culture under the rug, can completely damage a reputation of a team. Other attempts, such as the NFL’s attempt at anti-domestic violence campaign, can fall short and question a fan’s loyalty to the league. A study by Smith and Keevanm (2019), determined that Goodall, head of the NFL, used three communication tactics to handle the domestic violence issue: he acknowledged the NFL had a domestic violence problem; he shifted the blame to Ray Rice; and, took responsibility for not punishing Rice more severely. However, many NFL fans were left wondering if that was enough. The specific responses to a crisis plays out in the public arena and influence public reactions. Any scandal that the sports organization faces targets the integrity of the sport

         Crisis in sports has always been a hot topic but gender in sports has shed recent light in the sports industry in a multitude of ways such as gender pay, women in sports, teams entering the LGBTQ community, etc.

**Gender In Sport**

           Gender differences have recently emerged within the last decade with different situations regarding salary, news coverage, team success, etc. In 2021, Drew Brees retired and the entire football nation and world knew. Many media outlets began coverage before his official announcement and continued coverage afterwards. Brees had several social media posts by fans and other big celebrities celebrating his retirement. Later that same year, Carly Lloyd, a FICA World Cup and Olympic Gold Medal winner, retired from professional soccer. Lloyd did not have the uproar of media coverage compared to Drew Brees. ESPN posted Drew Brees retirement in March 2021, the post received 36k likes, compared to Carly Lloyd’s retirement post from ESPN in April 2021 received 9k likes.

In the 1700s, women argued to be a part of athletics (Sandoz & Winans, 1999). It was not until 1928 – 1952, though, that females in sports started to gain societal attention. The first feminine sports introduced were gymnastics and swimming. Other sporting opportunities began to arise for women when men went off to fight in WWII Because of such an up rise in women playing sports, there began new expectations, accomplishments, and standard skills for women (Billings & Butterworth, 2021).

          Hegemonic masculinity is defined as a culturally idealized form of a masculine character which emphasizes toughness and competitiveness. This form of masculinity is often accepted in a culture when there is an acceptance of the dominant gender ideology of the culture. Hegemonic masculinity is often prevalent in sports organizations. Male athletes maintain dominance in sports. There are five features to being a man: (1) physical control, (2) occupational achievement, (3) patriarchy, (4) model outdoors person, and (5) heterosexuality. The first feature defines men as holders of power, women as subordinate, and this where the superiority of men become “naturalized” (Connell, 1983). The second feature defines hegemonic masculinity as occupational achievement. This definition classifies tasks as men’s work, meaning some work is more masculine than others (Komisar, 1980; Messner, 1988/1990). The third masculinity feature is patriarchy which is male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension in society (Lerner, 1986). The fourth feature that defines masculinity is the frontiersman which is outdoors person. The general US man can be defined like a cowboy who stands very tall as an archetypal image reproduced and exploited in literature (Cawlti, 1976; Kimmel, 1987b; Maynard, 1974; Rushing, 1983). The final masculine feature is heterosexuality that embodies personal characteristics which manifest adult males through exclusively social relationships with men and primarily sexual relationships with women (Rubin, 1985).

When people think of sports, they immediately think of who is bigger, stronger, and faster. ESPN has been known to show more powerful men performing talented moves. In the future, there is hope for women athletes in power-oriented sports (Billings & Butterworth, 2021). Masculinity features are relevant to understanding gender in sports because often people view most sports games as a men’s sport. We hear people state what game they are going to watch on tv later which is more times than not a men’s sport. Generally, when women are athletes, they are often viewed as having masculine features. It’s important to realize that just because a woman does not have all the masculine features does not mean they are not a good athlete.

       Although there has been an up rise of women in sports, the numbers grow at a slow rate. Pro sports are still highly dominated by males but some trends lead to more opportunities for women in sports. Women now purchase male-like clothing and shoes and are watching up to 40% of all sportscasts. Men’s sports still dominate the airways, though.  Women's professional leagues are struggling financially but the fact there are women's leagues is a huge accomplishment. Slowly, women's sports are being accepted by sports media. Women athletes are hired to be the spokesperson for networks such as ESPN or FOX Sports because they have the “sexy” look. The newest advancement that is trying to surface in the women's sports industry is ESPNW. An ESPN station for women that are covered by women for women (Billings & Butterworth, 2021).

In 2021, an entire Major League Baseball Game was called entirely by women for the first time. 5 women served as the on-air crew for the Boston Orioles and the Tampa Bay Rays (Waldstein, 2021). 2021 Super Bowl when the Kansas City Chiefs played the Tampa Bay Buccaneeers. This Super Bowl made history for several reasons but one of them being Sarah Thomas took the field as the first female official in the NFL (Goldman, 2021).

Jason Collins broke new ground as he was the first out of the top four American sports (Soccer, baseball, basketball, and soccer) to come out as gay. To be gay in the media that has meant you are young, white, wealthy, and oftentimes a male. Collins not only came out for the gay community but he also represented in the race, religion, and civil rights communities (Billings et al., 2015). At the age of 31, Chris Burns is the first-ever Division 1 men’s basketball coach to come out as gay. His fears were put aside as people greeted him with hugs and fist pumps to honor how brave he was. Even though the encouragement never came from players it came from other coaches. A recent study by the University of Winchester (2021), stated that 95% of athletes in high school through college are greeted by their teammates responding positively. This in turn is helping to turn the long years of homophobia persists in the locker room with multiple gay slurs. Jon Gruden (Las Vegas Raiders Head Coach) resigned because he repeatedly used homophobic language in a multitude of emails over several years. In June 2021, Carl Nassib (Las Vegas Defensive End) became the only active NFL player in history to come out as gay. Nassib took a week off after his former head coach resigned to process all the controversial information. Other NFL players have come out after they have retired such as Ryan O’Callaghan. O’Callaghan made a statement “A lot of homophobia is generational and comes from peoples’ parents” (Gleeson, 2021).

         In this section, sport communication as a field was explored. This examination shed light on how the field grew and the prominent themes being explored in the research. The next section highlights the importance of pedagogy.

**Effective Pedagogy**

To encourage learners to develop their critical thinking skills, one must research multiple methods used for teaching. A progressive pedagogy consists of learning and teaching being a collaborative process (Gibson, 2001). This approach encourages students to comprehend basic information as well as developing skills to evaluate the latest information and the spreading of ideas on a topic. The goal is to sustain a pedagogical approach that encourages learners to be transformers and creators (Lock et al., 2018).

There are several different pedagogical styles for learning experiences. Shulman’s (2005), signature pedagogies provide multiple goals with teaching and learning in higher education. There are three dimensions to signature pedagogy. The first is a surface structure that involves the instructor facilitating and controlling the dialogue. This dimension focuses on the influence of teaching. This type of dimension is interactive with engaging with the students such as questioning, sharing, and hands-on learning. The second is deep structure. This requires a deep strategy that could include guided case studies that would develop as professional practice. This dimension is a set of assumptions about how best to impart a certain body of knowledge and know how. The third is implicit structure to engage in a more ethical and moral standard. This is where the teachers know what is best for the learner. This moral dimension compromises a set of beliefs about professional attitudes, values, and dispositions (Lock et al., 2018).

I have chosen to use three pedagogical approaches to engage student interaction in the classroom because I feel these are the most successful approaches in college classrooms. In being a recent college student, I have experienced these approaches first hand. These approaches are created to implement an assessment to enhance teaching and learning. Each approach is defined and examined below (Shulman, 2005).

**Problem-based Learning.** Problem-based learning (PBL) is an innovation in education. PBL consists of active learning strategies than just listening to a lecture and taking notes. Examples of active learning activities include brainstorming, discussing, teaching, journaling, group work, focused listening, formulating questions, notetaking, annotating, and roleplaying (Stearns, 2017).

Students enjoy seeing their ideas put to work (Boss, 2015), this allows them to gain confidence as an individual but also a member of a group (Rice & Shannon, 2016). To make sure PBL is employed properly, one can start with open-ended questions. For a sports communication course on a particular subject the open-ended questions could be “Why do you think the Raiders made this comment after the head coach was fired? How do you think the public should respond to this controversy? What would be the desired outcome the Raiders are looking for from the public?” The question should influence structure along with design of each sub-goal (Hutchison, 2016).

This type of learning contains problem solving and self-directed skills. PBL has become highly popular in higher education (Wieseman & Cadwell, 2005), as it consists of a problem to recognize that allows the student to be motivated and focused. An example of this approach is giving problem-based questions to students to complete in small groups. This allows each student to be engaged and state their knowledge and skill of the course content. This approach also expects students to become good critical thinkers by allowing them to make real-world connections with their peers. PBL has been known to help students develop self-directed learning skills (Shulman, 2005). This learning style is student centered because faculty cannot dictate learning. It is also self-directed for students to assume responsibility individually and collaboratively for generating learning issues and processes (Hung, 2016).

PBL would be a good fit in a sport communication course because students can cover topic with open-ended questions that will narrow the topic down. If there is a certain controversy that is covered in the course the instructor can ask narrow questions so the students will focus on parts of the controversy. PBL contains carefully designed problems that will challenge students to use problem solving skills. Students will be challenged to see what the problem is and what the best way to resolve the issue is.

**Case-based Learning.** Case Based Learning (CBL) is effectively a set of training examples, each of which describes a single problem-solving episode. Students typically work in groups on multiple case studies, stories involving one or more characters and scenarios. The CBL approach is a skill-based approach to gain skills for their field. Case studies formally teach skills that are innovative in certain fields (Herreid, 1994). A case study is usually a short reading based on real events that can involve a dilemma for which there is no clear solution (May, 2017). Case studies provide students the opportunity to critically evaluate a real-world example and apply theoretical concepts. Students can reflect with one another on the organization’s responses to the problem (Alvarez et al., 2015; May, 2017).

  With case-based learning, students are required to apply real-life situations to their course content. Students need reasoning skills to make certain decisions for the required content in the program. Instructors should strongly consider implementing evidence-based learning for students to get a more hands-on approach (Shulman, 2005). Evidence-based learning is a class that contains processes and strategies that demonstrate a learning outcome. Evidence-based learning will utilize scientific evidence rather than traditional personal judgement. Evidence based learning can be used by several different pedagogical strategies such as PBL. CBL has a history of successful implantation in medical, law, and business school. CBL has increasingly been used within undergraduate education. This method involves a guided inquiry and is grounded in constructivism whereby students form new meanings by interacting with their own knowledge and environment (Lee, 2012).

CBL is another good pedagogical strategy to use in a sports communication. This was my personal favorite being a college student. Students often find it enjoyable to read a case based study of a real-life situation and analyze what went right, what went wrong, what was the problem, what led to the problem going wrong, how could this problem have been prevented, what can be put into place so this problem does not occur again, etc. CBL allows for students to be engaged in an open class discussion because every student could have similar or different outlooks of the case study. Students can see how different sports organizations handle situations in real-life and make their assumptions on what the desired outcome could be.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this literature review was to explain why a sports communication class should be added to the Purdue Fort Wayne campus. Discovering the history of sports communication and how it has evolved today was the first focus. Sports communication has many diverse and controversial topics, this review covered some of the main topics in sport communication because the topics of fan culture and crisis communication has always been a big part of having a productive and successful sport organization. Gender in sports is a recent and quickly evolving topic within sports organization and sport communication. It is clear from the research in pedagogy that most instructors should utilize problem based learning or case based learning. It is important to have diverse options of courses being taught on college campuses.

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