As scientists, sport management scholars are indefinitely tied to their publication record. Often referred to as the publish or perish or the authorship meal ticket model, “most tangible rewards in academic sciences, such as tenure and promotion, contracts and grants, honors and prizes, and status and prestige, are based on a person’s publication record” (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009, p. 99). Noting the importance of publications to the current and future success of scholars, researchers have indicated that the number of disputes surrounding authorship, as well as the extent of questionable authorship practices utilized, have increased substantially over the past few decades (e.g., Moffatt, 2011; Resnik, 2006; Shamoo & Resnik, 2009; Wilcox, 1998). For example, in a 2006 study completed by the National Institute of Environmental Health Services, over 35% of researcher respondents had experienced an authorship dispute, and almost 27% admitted to either receiving or assigning undeserved authorship on a peer-reviewed publication (Resnik, 2006). The increase in authorship disputes and morally questionable authorship practices can be attributed to a variety of factors such as vague or nonexistent authorship guidelines, immense power disparities in mentor/advisee relationships, dissimilar standard practices for cross-disciplinary research, or a lack of proper guidance to beginning and emerging researchers. Notably, sport management maintains the propensity for unclear authorship guidelines due to the various departments, schools, and/or colleges the field calls home (e.g., kinesiology, management, education), and the lack of explicitly stated policies by some top management journals.

The primary purpose of this presentation is to examine authorship practices in sport management as an academic field. In order to accomplish this task, two popularly followed authorship guidelines established by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) will be presented and outlined. Next, an examination of commonly applied, yet ethically questionable authorship practices that are pertinent to sport management (i.e., gift authorship, honorary authorship, prestige authorship, duplicative authorship) will be vetted and compared to instances of more severe academic/research misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, falsification, fabrication, multiple submissions). Ultimately, this presentation aims to provide a more complete comprehension of responsible and ethical authorship guidelines for sport management scholars. Through this research, sport management scholars have the opportunity to unify behind a single set of authorship standards, and ultimately establish greater trust and accountability across the field.

The National Academy of Science (2009) stated, “the scientific enterprise is built on a foundation of trust. Society trusts that scientific research…(is) honest and accurate” (p. ix). Within the foundation of trust, authorship practices play a pivotal role in maintaining accountability. To ensure accountability, peer-reviewed journals that provide authorship criteria popularly present criteria established by ICMJE or WAME. According to the ICMJE (2013) guidelines, authorship is based on three conditions, all of which must be securely met for responsible authorship: 1) an author must provide substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data, 2) an author must draft or revise the article for important intellectual content, and 3) an author must stipulate final approval of the publishable version. WAME provides a more simplistic, and in turn less descriptive standard of authorship by indicating that an author must provide substantial intellectual contribution to the manuscript (Moffatt, 2011; Shamoo & Resnik, 2009). Although journals should be commended for communicating authorship policies, both commonly implemented guidelines have limitations in application towards morally questionable authorship practices that are not considered severe examples of research misconduct.

Severe illustrations of research misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, falsification, fabrication, multiple submissions) are widely considered gross unethical conduct in academia, and are habitually punished as such. However, authorship practices such as gift authorship, honorary authorship, prestige authorship, and duplicative authorship are commonly employed, yet rarely officially sanctioned (e.g., Flanigan, et al., 1998; Jones, 2000; LaFollette, 1992). The first questionable practice, gift authorship, occurs when one researcher includes the name of another researcher as a professional favor (LaFollette, 1992; Shamoo & Resnik, 2009). In some cases, scholars have established publication
relationships to produce twice the output for both parties involved. This practice can be implemented for manuscript production or conference presentations. The next debatable practice, honorary authorship, transpires when an author/researcher “who has not earned authorship is listed as an author” generally out of gratitude or respect (Moffatt, 2011, p. 77). This type of morally dubious conduct is common in mentor/advisee collaborations and research that is produced in a funded lab setting. The third ethically problematic practice is prestige authorship, which occurs when “a person with a high degree of prestige or notoriety is listed as an author…to give the publication more visibility or impact” (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009, p. 100). This practice, which is primarily implemented by emerging or beginning researchers, often times awards authorship to undeserving established researchers (LaFollette, 1992). Lastly, the publication practice of duplicative authorship, commonly referred to as salami slicing, is a habitual occurrence in many academic fields that occurs when authors divide a research study into the greatest number of publishable parts or segments. In essence, this practice utilizes one study or data set for multiple publications that present like results, outcomes, and/or implications.

Although scholarly discussion on authorship has taken place in fields such as psychology, philosophy, and neuroscience, there has been little to no conversation in sport management. For Shamoo and Resnik (2009), a scholarly debate on responsible authorship “is imperative” in order to “establish standards…in research” (p. 101). As the field of sport management continues to see an increase in undergraduate students, graduate students, and scholars, an explicit treatise on acceptable authorship practices is imperative. Overall, having widely accepted and explicitly stated authorship standards protects trust, accountability, and most importantly, researchers at various stages in their careers. Finally, authorship standards in sport management can improve strategies for the mentorship of graduate students and beginning and emerging scholars.