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The Relationship Between Sport Fandom, Identification with a Specific Team, and an Individual's Socialization Experiences

Paul Frederiksen
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THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SPORT FANDOM, IDENTIFICATION WITH A SPECIFIC TEAM, AND AN INDIVIDUAL'S SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Paul B. Frederiksen

July 2003
THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SPORT FANDOM, IDENTIFICATION WITH A SPECIFIC TEAM, AND AN INDIVIDUAL’S SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES

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THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SPORT FANDOM, IDENTIFICATION WITH A SPECIFIC TEAM, AND AN INDIVIDUAL’S SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES

Paul B. Frederiksen

July 2003

Directed by: Frederick G. Grieve, Pitt Derryberry, Adrian Thomas

Department of Psychology

Western Kentucky University

The present study was designed to gain a better understanding of why some people become sport fans and others do not. The study focused specifically on the differences in socialization experiences between people high and low in sport fandom and people high and low in team identification. Wann (2003) defines sport fandom as one’s identification with his or her role as a sport fan. Wann (1997) states that team identification involves a person’s psychological connection and attachment to a specific team. Understanding why people become sport fans can be of vital importance to sport marketers.

Participants completed self-report measures of sport fandom (SFQ) and team identification (SSIS), as well as measures of socialization into sports and socialization with a specific team. It was hypothesized that participants who scored high on the SFQ would also score high on the sport socialization measure. It was also hypothesized that participants who scored high on the SSIS would tend to score high on the team socialization measure. Median splits were used to determine high and low groups for the SFQ and the SSIS. The scores from the socialization measures were submitted to a 2 (gender: male vs. female) x 2 (sport fandom: high vs. low) x 2 (team identification: high vs. low) Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).
Results indicated that both proposed hypotheses of the study were supported. Overall, participants who scored high on the sport fandom measure also scored high on the sport socialization measure. Likewise, the participants who scored high on the team identification measure also scored high on the team socialization measure. Therefore, it appears that the socialization experiences people receive are likely a determining factor in whether or not they become sport fans.
Introduction

Over the years, research in sport psychology has focused primarily on understanding athletes, as opposed to sport fans. Wann and Hamlet (1995) recently conducted a review of the literature in sport psychology and sport sociology. The researchers examined the content of articles published between 1987 and 1991 and found that fewer than 5% of the published manuscripts in their review actually studied sport fans. However, in the mid-1980's Thomas (1986) found that 71% of people surveyed considered themselves to be fans of sports. Similarly, Iso-Ahola and Hatfield (1986) found that approximately 70% of Americans read, watch, or discuss sports at least once a day. If sport fandom is so prevalent in our country, more research is needed to better understand the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral characteristics of sport fans.

To better understand the psychology and behavior of sport fans, research has attempted to identify exactly what motivates people to follow, and continue following, sports. Over the years, this body of research has identified several motivational factors. Sport fandom has been found to provide an escape from aspects of daily life (Sloan, 1989; Smith, 1988). Furthermore, this need for escape may be stronger when a country experiences difficulty or conflict. During times of war many individuals use sports as a diversion from national affairs (McGuire, 1994). During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt decided to allow professional baseball to continue being played. He explained that the American people "ought to have a chance for recreation and for taking their minds off their work" (McGuire, 1994, p. 66).

Zillman, Bryant, and Sapolsky (1979) argue that sport fandom relieves boredom by providing a source of entertainment. The notion of entertainment as a motivational
factor gains support from research on fans of professional wrestling. Stone (1971) found that fans of professional wrestling willingly admitted that they understood the matches were fixed, thereby suggesting that the fans were still attracted to professional wrestling for the entertainment qualities it provides.

Research has also identified eustress, aesthetics, and financial gain as motivational factors found in sport fans. Branscombe and Wann (1994) found eustress, or positive arousal, to be a reason why people followed sports. Sloan (1989) stated that sport fandom promotes positive levels of stress. Furthermore, Branscombe and Wann (1991) found that following a specific sport team reduced feelings of alienation and depression, while fostering feelings of self-worth. Other sport fans are motivated by the beauty or aesthetic value of sporting events (Sloan, 1989; Smith, 1988). This motivational factor of aesthetics is likely to be most prevalent in sports such as figure skating and gymnastics. Sport fans may also be motivated by potential financial gains through gambling (McPherson, 1975). This economic motivational factor is particularly likely among college students (Layden, 1995).

Other sport fans have been shown to be motivated by the desire to form group affiliations (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Sloan, 1989). Aveni (1977) found that spectators are more likely to attend sporting events as a member of a group than alone. Gantz and Wenner (1995) found that many fans attend sporting events as a way of spending time with family members. It is likely that most sport fans attended their first sporting event with another member of their family. Zillman et al. (1979) argued that sports also promote a sense of unity among members of a community. Forming group
affiliations such as these can satisfy the need for belongingness of some fans. This sense of belonging can also enhance the self-esteem of many fans.

For this sense of belonging and other reasons, increased self-esteem is another motivational factor identified in sport fandom (Branscombe & Wann, 1991). Sloan (1989) states that following sports gives fans a sense of accomplishment. The performance of a fan’s favorite team can have implications for the self-concept of that fan. When their team experiences success, many fans feel better about themselves because they share in this success; therefore, these fans display a tendency to “bask in reflected glory” (BIRG). Engaging in such behavior serves to maintain or enhance self-esteem.

Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, and Sloan (1976) were the first to identify the BIRG phenomenon. The researchers conducted a study on football fans from seven different universities to examine this tendency among sport fans. The researchers found that, after a Saturday football game, fans tended to wear clothing identifying their particular school on the following Monday more often after a team victory than a defeat. By wearing clothing identifying the winning team, the individuals have formed a self-esteem enhancing connection to the team’s success. In other words, these fans are showing a tendency to bask in reflected glory.

Wann, Dolan, McGeorge, and Allison (1994) examined the emotional reactions of sport spectators and found that fans do not react equally to all games. Those games perceived to be difficult or potential defeats produce more intense emotional reactions, as compared to games perceived to be easy victories. These findings are explained by the perceived threat to the sport fans’ levels of self-esteem. A difficult game produces a more
intense reaction because it poses the most threat to a fan’s self-esteem. Games viewed as easy victories pose little or no threat to a fan’s self-esteem and, thus, produce less intense emotional reactions. This research supports the idea that self-esteem is a motivational factor in people becoming sport fans.

Based on the research findings identifying numerous factors that motivate individuals to become sport fans, Wann (1995) developed the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS) to empirically measure such motivation. This scale consists of 23 Likert-type items designed to assess eight motivational factors of sport fandom. These factors include escape, entertainment, eustress, aesthetic value, economics, group affiliation, family needs, and self-esteem. Research has shown the SFMS and its eight subscales to possess internal consistency. The entire scale obtained a Cronbach’s reliability alpha of .90, while alphas for the subscales ranged from a high of .89 for eustress to a low of .63 for the family subscale (Wann, 1995). This same validation study also confirmed that the scale contained eight factors and possessed criterion validity. Wann, Schrader, and Wilson (1999) further validated the SFMS as a reliable and valid assessment tool using a more heterogeneous sample. It should also be noted that the SFMS examines only current motivations.

Some sport fans are more enthusiastic and dedicated than other sport fans. Past research has addressed this issue of differential allegiance, or level of identification, among people who follow sports. The majority of research in this area has been conducted by Daniel L. Wann. His research has addressed both level of identification with sports in general, or sport fandom, and level of identification with a specific sport team. Wann (2003) defines sport fandom as one’s identification with his or her role as a
sport fan. Wann (1997) states that team identification involves a person’s psychological connection and attachment to a specific team. Furthermore, Branscombe and Wann (1993) and Wann (2003) found strong positive relationships between level of sport fandom and level of team identification.

Highly-identified sports spectators, those high in allegiance, view their role of team follower as a central component of their social identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These highly-identified team followers often perceive their favorite team as an extension of themselves (Wann, 1997). These fans frequently use the pronoun “we” when referring to their favorite team, especially after the team experiences success (Lee, 1985). Cialdini et al. (1976) also found that sport fans are more likely to use the pronoun “we” when describing a team’s success, while using the pronoun “they” more often after a team’s failure. These research findings further illustrate the tendency to BIRG by many sport fans. Subsequent research has found that highly-identified fans are more likely to BIRG than fans low in identification (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). This tendency to BIRG maintains or enhances the self-esteem of these highly-identified fans. Smith (1988) and Wann (1994) have found positive correlations between level of identification and scores on measures of self-esteem. However, research shows that fans of a particular team must be near other fans of that team to benefit psychologically from their team identification (Wann, Roberts, & Tindall, 1999).

What if the team experiences failure? Would the result be the loss of self-esteem and separation from the team’s performance, a tendency referred to as “cutting-off-reflected-failure” (CORF)? Snyder, Lassegard, and Ford (1986) were the first to identify this CORF phenomenon. According to these researchers, people CORF in order to
decrease their association with an unsuccessful group or individual. This behavior serves to protect the individual’s self-esteem. In their initial study, participants performed a cognitive task and were then given feedback. Those who received positive feedback were more likely to wear badges identifying their designated group, while those receiving negative feedback were more reluctant to wear the identifying badges. As regards sport fans, research shows that highly-identified fans, as compared to those low in identification, are significantly less likely to CORF (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). These highly-identified fans typically remain loyal to their favorite team even after the team experiences failure.

However, this loyalty does not necessarily mean that the failure of the team does not reduce self-esteem in highly-identified sport fans. Research has found that these fans are more likely to use self-serving biases when evaluating and remembering the performance of their team (Wann & Dolan, 1994). The success of the team is attributed to internal factors, while the failure of the team is attributed to external factors. Such strategically manipulated attributions suggest the possibility that these fans are attempting to maximize the positive and minimize the negative implications of the team’s performance on their levels of self-esteem (Wann & Dolan, 1994).

McPherson (1975) found that sport fans high in identification, as compared to those low in identification, possess more knowledge pertaining to particular players, sports statistics, sports history, and sports strategies. In addition, Wann and Branscombe (1995) found that people high in identification with a specific sport team displayed more knowledge pertaining to that team and that particular sport. Highly-identified sport fans also exhibit more intense emotional reactions towards the performance of their favorite
teams (Wann & Branscombe, 1992). For example, they are likely to become more anxious, compared to fans low in team identification, when watching their teams compete (Wann, Schrader, & Adamson, 1998).

In contrast to highly-identified fans, fans low in identification perceive their role of team follower as only a peripheral component, if any, of their social identities (Crocker & Major, 1989). Such casual fans simply observe a sporting event and then forget about it soon after the event is over. Such fans do not perceive a direct connection between themselves and a particular team, as do highly-identified fans. Therefore, these fans low in identification are less likely to BIRG (Wann & Branscombe, 1990) because the team’s performance has only minimal implications, if any, on their social identities.

Even if a motivational scale such as the SFMS were created that included all possible motivational factors for all possible ethnic groups, the scale would still only explain the current motivational factors influencing sport fans. Such a scale would not explain why some people are motivated to become sport fans and others are not. It is safe to assume that many people satisfy personal needs such as eustress, entertainment, aesthetic value, self-esteem, and cultural affiliation through other interests and activities unrelated to sports (e.g., art and music). What past experiences lead some people to seek out sports to fulfill these personal needs, while others rely on different interests? Schurr, Wittig, Ruble, and Ellen (1988) suggest that many individuals simply prefer action-oriented activities.

It is also likely that the type of socialization people receive plays a prominent role in their development as a sport fan. McPherson (1976) completed one of the earliest studies to examine the influence of socialization on sport fans. This study identified four
agents of socialization: family, peers, school, and community. McPherson's findings supported each of these agents as being influential in the socialization of sport fans. It was found that families and peers had an influence on both males and females becoming sport fans. The research also found that schools were an influential socialization agent for males only, while the community was influential only on females. However, it should be noted that this study was conducted over 25 years ago, and a more current examination of socialization into sports is needed.

The present study examined the relationships between socialization experiences and both sport fandom and identification with a specific team. In addition to the four agents of socialization identified by McPherson (1976), family, peers, school, and community, the mass media were included due to the recent growth of sports in this area. The creation of 24-hour cable channels devoted exclusively to sports, such as the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) and the Fox Sports Network, has dramatically increased the influence of the media as an agent of socialization into sports. Therefore, the socialization measures constructed for the present study included items related to each of the five agents of socialization mentioned above.

The present study specifically examined the influence of these five agents of socialization with regards to one becoming a sport fan, taking into consideration degree of sport fandom and level of identification with a specific sport team. It was hypothesized that participants with higher levels of sport fandom would report having higher levels of socialization experiences into sports in general than participants with lower levels of sport fandom. Likewise, it was hypothesized that participants with higher levels of identification with a specific team would report having higher levels of socialization
experiences pertaining to that team than participants with lower levels of team identification.
Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 254 students, 137 (53.9%) women and 117 (46.1%) men, from Western Kentucky University. The mean age of the participants was 19.62 years, \( SD = 2.24 \). The mean education level was 13.45 years, \( SD = 0.90 \). There were 224 (88.2%) Caucasian participants, 19 (7.5%) African American participants, 1 (0.4%) Hispanic participant, 6 (2.4%) participants of other races, and four (1.6%) participants chose not to reveal this information.

Design

This study used a 2 (sport fandom: high vs. low) x 2 (team identification: high vs. low) x 2 (gender: male vs. female) quasi-experimental design. All factors were fixed and all variables were between-subjects. Based on their responses to questionnaire items, participants were divided into high and low groups for the sport fandom and team identification measures based on median splits of the overall scores. The present study was retrospective in nature. Although socialization experiences occur before the development of sport fandom and team identification, the intent of the study was to predict people's past socialization experiences from their current levels of sport fandom and team identification. Therefore, in this study, levels of sport fandom and team identification were the independent variables, and the two socialization measures were the dependent variables.

Measures

Demographics. Participants completed a 4-item questionnaire assessing age, gender, educational level, and race (see Appendix A).
**Sport Fan Identification.** The Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ; Wann, 2003) was given to participants. The SFQ (see Appendix A) consists of five Likert-type items designed to measure an individual’s identification with his or her role as a sport fan. This measure contains statements such as “I consider myself to be a fan of sports in general” and “Being a sport fan is very important to me.” Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 8 (strongly agree); thus, higher numbers reflect greater levels of sport fandom. Total scores on the SFQ were obtained by summing the responses to all five items. Wann (2003) conducted three separate studies to analyze the SFQ’s psychometric properties. It was found that the SFQ possessed strong internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .96), strong test-retest reliability ($r = .94$), and strong predictive validity ($r = .68$), and it measured a single factor. Thus, the SFQ has been proven to be a reliable and valid assessment tool. Cronbach’s alpha for the SFQ in the present study was .94. Item-total correlations for the five items ranged from $r = .77$ to $r = .89$.

**Sport Fan Socialization.** Participants completed a 16-item Likert-scale (see Appendix B) designed to measure level of socialization into sports in general. Sample items included “Growing up, my father followed sports” and “Growing up, I played at least one organized sport.” Response options on this measure ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 8 (strongly agree), with higher numbers reflecting greater levels of socialization into sports received. Total scores on this measure were obtained by summing the responses to all 16 items. A factor analysis conducted on the results indicated that the scale measured a single factor. In the present study, this measure yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .90, and item-total correlations for the 16 items ranged from $r = .42$ to $r = .76$. 
Team Identification. The Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS; Wann & Branscombe, 1993) was given to participants. The SSIS contains seven Likert-scale questions (see Appendix C) designed to measure level of identification with a specific sport team. "How important to you is it that your favorite team wins" and "How often do you display your favorite teams' name or insignia at your place of work, where you live, or on the clothing" are sample items from the scale. Response options range from 1 to 8, with larger numbers reflecting greater levels of identification with a specific sport team. Total scores on the SSIS were obtained by summing the responses to all seven items on the measure. Wann and Branscombe (1993) demonstrated that the SSIS possesses internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .91) and good one-year test-retest reliability ($r = .60$); consists of a single factor (average item-total correlation was .59); and possesses predictive validity. In the present study, the SSIS had a Cronbach’s alpha of .95, and item-total correlation for the seven items ranged from $r = .66$ to $r = .91$.

Team Socialization. Participants completed a 16-item Likert-scale (see Appendix D) designed to measure level of socialization for a specific sport team. Sample items included “Growing up, my father followed my favorite team” and “Growing up, I played the same sport as my favorite team.” Response options on this measure ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 8 (strongly agree), with higher numbers reflecting greater levels of socialization for a specific sports team. Total scores on this measure were obtained by summing the responses to all 16 items. A factor analysis conducted on the results indicated a single-factor solution. In the present study, this measure yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .91, and item-total correlations for the 16 items ranged from $r = .42$ to $r = .71$. 
**Procedure**

Before participating in the study, all participants completed an informed consent document (see Appendix E). Each participant then completed a brief demographics questionnaire, the SFQ, the sport socialization measure, the SSIS, and the team socialization measure. Participants had to identify their favorite sport team and respond to the final two questionnaires based this selected team. After completing all questionnaires, each participant was given a written debriefing statement (see Appendix F) describing the nature and hypotheses of the research study. It took approximately 10 minutes to complete all required materials.
Results

Previous research had indicated that men report higher levels of sport fandom than women (Wann, 2003). Therefore, an independent samples t-test was completed to compare the mean scores of each gender on the sport fandom measure. Results indicated that men ($M = 27.49$, $SD = 10.34$) scored higher than women ($M = 21.43$, $SD = 9.30$) on the SFQ, which was a statistically significant difference, $t(1, 252) = -4.91, p < .001$. Based on this difference, men and women were grouped separately on this measure, and separate median splits were calculated for each.

In comparison, previous research had not indicated any gender differences with regard to team identification (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Again, an independent samples t-test was completed to compare the mean scores of men and women. Results indicated no significant difference, $t(1, 252) = -1.48, p = .139$, with men ($M = 38.40$, $SD = 14.73$) and women ($M = 35.96$, $SD = 11.53$) scoring similarly on the SSIS. Therefore, all analyses of team identification in the present study were conducted across both genders.

High and low groups for men and women were obtained for the SFQ based on separate median splits of the overall scores. High and low groups, across both genders, were also obtained for the SSIS based on a median split of the overall scores. The scores from the socialization measures were then submitted to a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (gender: male vs. female) x (sport fandom: high vs. low) x (team identification: high vs. low) Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The results of the MANOVA indicated that there were no three-way interactions. One two-way interaction between sport fandom and team identification approached significance, $F(2, 245) = 2.51, p = .083$. There were main
effects for gender, $F(2, 245) = 3.12, p = .046$, sport fandom, $F(2, 245) = 23.00, p < .001$, and team identification, $F(2, 245) = 12.01, p < .001$. Therefore, two follow-up univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were computed and are reported below.

*Sport Fan Influences.* Results from the ANOVA indicated that there were no significant 3-way interactions on the sport socialization measure. There was, however, a 2-way interaction between the total scores on the sport fandom and team identification measures that approached statistical significance, $F(1, 246) = 3.07, p = .08$. There was a main effect for gender, $F(1, 246) = 4.27, p = .04$, such that men ($M = 94.81, SD = 22.58$) scored significantly higher than women ($M = 89.23, SD = 21.59$) on the sport socialization measure. There was also a main effect for the sport fandom total score, $F(1, 246) = 45.39, p < .001$, such that participants who were in the high SFQ group ($M = 103.99, SD = 13.89$) had higher levels of sport socialization than did participants in the low SFQ group ($M = 80.54, SD = 22.49$). A final main effect was observed for the team identification total score, $F(1, 246) = 10.08, p = .002$. Participants in the high identification group ($M = 101.72, SD = 16.46$) had higher sport socialization scores than participants in the low SSIS group ($M = 83.20, SD = 22.95$). See Table 1 for means and standard deviations for all conditions.
Table 1:

Means, Standard Deviations, and Cell Sizes of the Sport Socialization Measure for Men and Women High and Low in Team Identification and High and Low in Sport Fandom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Fandom: Low/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Identification Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sport Fandom Low/</td>
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<td>Team Identification Low</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Fandom High/</td>
<td>101.63</td>
<td>13.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Identification High</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Fandom High/</td>
<td>106.55</td>
<td>12.85</td>
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</table>

Team Identification Influences. Results from the ANOVA indicated that there were no significant 3-way interactions on the team socialization measure. However, there was a significant 2-way interaction between the total scores on the SFQ and the SSIS, \( F (1, 246) = 4.36, p = .04 \); see Table 2. There was no main effect for gender, \( F (1, 246) = .038, p = .845 \), as men \((M = 73.00, SD = 29.95)\) and women \((M = 71.85, SD = 26.40)\) scored similarly on the team socialization measure. As with the sport socialization measure, there was a main effect for the sport fandom total score, \( F (1, 246) = 17.01, p < \)
.001. Participants in the high SFQ group ($M = 85.24, SD = 23.17$) had higher team socialization scores than participants in the low SFQ group ($M = 60.50, SD = 26.99$).

Finally, there was a main effect for the team identification total score, $F (1, 246) = 23.32, p < .001$, such that participants in the high SSIS group ($M = 85.58, SD = 24.02$) had higher scores on the team socialization measure than participants in the low SSIS group ($M = 60.93, SD = 26.25$).

Table 2:

Means, Standard Deviations, and Cell Sizes of the Team Socialization Measure for All Participants High and Low in Team Identification and High and Low in Sport Fandom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
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<tr>
<td>Team Identification Low</td>
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<td>Sport Fandom High/</td>
<td>87.49</td>
<td>24.22</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correlations. Analysis (see Table 3) revealed that the four measures completed by participants, the SFQ, the SSIS, and the socialization measures, all correlated significantly with one another.

Table 3:

**Correlations Between the Independent and Dependent Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SFQ</th>
<th>Sp. Soc</th>
<th>SSIS</th>
<th>Team Soc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SFQ</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.75**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sp. Soc</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>.56**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.64**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSIS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.62**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Soc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*a* Sport Fandom Questionnaire

*b* Sport Socialization Measure

*c* Sport Spectator Identification Scale

*d* Team Socialization Measure
Discussion

The vast majority of research in sport psychology has focused primarily on athletes. With less than 5% of research directed at sport fans (Wann & Hamlet, 1995), the current research was designed to gain a better understanding of the etiology of sport fans. The goal of the research was to better understand one aspect of why some people become sport fans and others do not. The present study focused specifically on the differences in socialization experiences between people high and low in sport fandom and people high and low in team identification.

The first hypothesis under study stated that participants who scored high on the sport fandom measure (SFQ) would also score high on the sport socialization measure. People are more likely to be sport fans, meaning they score high on the SFQ, if they were exposed to sports as a child growing up, meaning they score high on the sport socialization measure. Overall, it seems more likely, for example, that people with family and friends who follow sports would become sport fans more often than people without such exposure to sports.

In support of the first hypothesis, results indicated that both men and women who scored high on the SFQ tended to score higher on the sport socialization measure, as compared to those participants who scored low on the SFQ. This finding suggests that participants with higher levels of sport fandom typically reported having more socialization experiences related to sports than participants with lower levels of sport fandom.

The second hypothesis under study paralleled the first. It stated that participants who scored high on the team identification measure (SSIS) would also score high on the
team socialization measure. As with sport fandom, it seems more likely that people with family and friends who are fans of a particular team also become fans of that team more often than people without such exposure. This type of socialization would seem very evident, for example, in collegiate athletics. Residents of a particular state would seem more likely to become fans of that state’s major college and university sport teams, as opposed to another state’s collegiate teams. A child growing up in Kentucky would seem more likely to become a fan of the University of Kentucky sport teams than a child growing up in Texas. Likewise, that same child from Texas would seem more likely to become a fan of the University of Texas sport teams than the child growing up in Kentucky.

In support of the second hypothesis, results indicated that participants who scored high on the SSIS tended to score higher on the team socialization measure, as compared to those participants who scored low on the SSIS. This finding suggests that participants with higher levels of identification with a specific team generally have more socialization experiences pertaining to that team than participants with lower levels of team identification.

The notion of people’s environments influencing their beliefs and behaviors is a fundamental principle of Bandura’s social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989). Social cognition refers to the manner in which people interpret, analyze, and remember information about their social world. According to Bandura, when people find themselves in certain environments, they use the information gathered, whether past or present, to define who they are. Applied to sport fans, this theory would suggest that
people may be more likely to develop sport fandom and team identification if they grow up in environments where sports or a particular sport team are prevalent.

Results indicated a 2-way interaction on the sport socialization measure between the total scores on the sport fandom and team identification measures that approached significance. This interaction suggests some relationship between sport fandom and team identification, as regards socialization experiences related to sports in general. Results also indicated a statistically significant 2-way interaction between the total scores on the sport fandom and team identification measures on the team socialization measure. This interaction suggests that there is a relationship between sport fandom and team identification, as regards socialization experiences related to a specific sport team. Simply stated, participants in the low sport fandom/low team identification cell had the lowest socialization scores. Thus, as long as participants were either high in sport fandom or high in team identification, they typically reported having more socialization experiences than participants low in both sport fandom and team identification. The observed interactions support previous research (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, 2003) indicating a positive relationship between sport fandom and team identification.

Men and women were grouped separately on the sport fandom measure because previous research (Wann, 2003) had indicated gender differences on the SFQ. In contrast, analysis of team identification was conducted across both genders because previous research (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann & Branscombe, 1993) had indicated no gender differences on the SSIS. The results of the present study further supported this previous research on gender differences, in that men and women did indeed differ significantly on the SFQ but not on the SSIS. Results indicated a main effect for gender
on the sport socialization measure but not on the team socialization measure. Overall, the results indicated that the more socialization experiences related to sports people receive, both men and women, the more likely both men and women to become sport fans and to identify with a specific sport team.

However, men tend to have higher levels of sport socialization overall than do women. Traditionally, in American culture, there is more pressure placed on young boys to develop and display masculinity than is placed on young girls. There is an abundance of research indicating that young boys develop their masculinity through participation in competitive games or sport in a school setting (Connell, 1996; Parker, 1996; Renold, 1997). Swain (2002) examined how young boys developed their masculinity when the school setting prohibited competitive sport. Results indicated that young boys still used physical activities, such as fighting and bullying, to establish their masculinity.

Collectively, this body of research indicates that young boys typically develop and display their masculinity through physical activities such as competitive games or sport. The cultural emphasis placed on masculinity among young boys is likely to be influential in the tendency for men to report having more sport socialization experiences overall than women.

Understanding why people become sport fans can be of vital importance to sport marketers. Such individuals are interested in marketing sports merchandise and sporting events to specific populations. For example, professional sport teams might increase future attendance at their games if they offer promotions targeting children. Such promotions will provide children with socialization experiences that may increase their level of sport fandom and team identification, which in return may increase the
likelihood that these children will attend additional games or team events in the future. This chain of activities might help increase and strengthen a team's fan base for the future.

Research has shown that, among college students, those with higher levels of identification with their school's sport program or individual teams reported more favorable impressions of the university as a whole (Wann & Robinson, 2002). These same students also tended to report having a greater likelihood of remaining at the institution. Applying these findings to the present study, participants who scored high on the team identification measure, and who also chose a Western Kentucky University sport team as their favorite, would have a greater likelihood of remaining students at WKU than the other participants. Therefore, it may be beneficial for university administrators to promote the school's sport program and team identification among the student body. Ensuring that students received socialization experiences related to university sport teams might help the school better retain students. Universities might benefit from offering free tickets to sporting events for students in order to ensure that they are receiving socialization experiences with university sport teams. Such actions might result in higher rates of student retention and more favorable evaluations of the university.

The findings of the current study help explain in part why some people become sport fans and others do not. While current motivational factors (e.g., positive arousal and entertainment) are important, the present study helps explain why some people choose sports, as opposed to other activities, to satisfy these personal needs. It is possible that
people who receive many socialization experiences related to art and theater choose such activities to satisfy these same personal needs, as opposed to sports.

The current study had some limitations. Several problems arise with the use of self-report data. Self-reports of attitudes and behaviors can be heavily influenced by characteristics of the research instruments, such as the wording, format, and context of the questions (Schwarz, 1999). Minor changes in these areas of the questions could result in major changes in the observed results. Question comprehension is another issue that must be addressed when using self-report data (Schwarz, 1999). Such data assume that all participants understood each question in the manner intended by the researchers. However, this is not likely to be true with all participants and all questions. Self-report data using rating scales presents another difficulty (Schwarz, 1999). For example, in the present study, what constitutes a "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree" response is likely to differ somewhat among participants. Theoretically, two participants could have identical experiences but respond to the rating scales differently. These individual differences in personal meaning and interpretation contribute to the fallability of self-reports as a source of data. Finally, with self-report data, respondents may edit their responses for reasons of social desirability and self-presentation (Schwarz, 1999).

To help alleviate the problem of question comprehension that arises from self-report data, the questions on the research instruments were created to be as simple as possible, avoiding unfamiliar and ambiguous words. In an effort to reduce socially desirable responses, it was emphasized to participants that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers and that their responses would remain completely anonymous.
Another limitation of the present study was the use of median splits to obtain high and low groups on the SFQ and the SSIS. Assuming the scores on the SFQ and SSIS were normally distributed, many participants allocated to the low groups and to the high groups may have differed only slightly in their total scores, as they may have been near the average. Therefore, any measured differences between these participants would need to be considered with caution. Another problem with median splits is that within-group variance often masks differences between groups, which affects both the test statistic and estimates of effect size. The present study still found differences between the groups being compared. However, these observed differences may have been larger had median splits not been used.

There are a couple of design methods that, while not solving all the problems mentioned, might have alleviated some of the described problems with median splits. Tertiary splits were considered as a solution, but the resulting sample sizes in the 2 x 2 x 2 MANOVA were too small to allow meaningful comparisons. Participants who did not fall into a high or low group for both the SFQ and the SSIS could not be included in the analysis. If tertiary splits had been used, the cell sizes would have been too small to provide statistical power. It was thought that the power gained from larger cell sizes would give the results more value. In order to produce meaningful statistics, tertiary splits would have required a much larger sample size than used in the present study. Another way to alleviate the problems with median splits might be to use data from previous studies using the SFQ and/or the SSIS to determine an overall mean on each measure. Specific values (e.g., one standard deviation from the mean) could then be used to define those high and low in sport fandom and those high and low in team
identification. This design method would require compiling past data or using a much larger sample than did the present study. Using either of the design methods described might produce more accurate high and low sport fandom and team identification groups and could yield more reliable and valid results.

The socialization measures used in the present study were constructed by the researchers. Statements were chosen that seemed logically to tap into one of the five agents of socialization included (family, friends, community, school, and the mass media). Despite both socialization measures possessing strong internal consistency scores (Cronbach’s alphas for the sport and team socialization measures were .90 and .91, respectively), no separate study was conducted to assess the validity of these socialization measures, which presents another limitation of the study.

It should also be noted that team identification varies over the course of a season (Wann, 1996; Wann, 2000). Wann (1996) found that level of team identification can be influenced by the team’s success and failure, as well as the location of the team’s previous game. These seasonal changes could have implications for the observed relationship between socialization and team identification from the present study. This observed relationship may be different at varying times during a team’s season or during that team’s off-season. Thus, these seasonal changes in team identification produce a potential limitation of the present study.

Because of these limitations, future research examining the relationship between socialization and sport fandom and/or team identification might seek to improve upon the socialization measures used in the present study, or even create new socialization measures. Socialization measures with stronger psychometric properties would provide a
more valid and reliable instruments for measuring one’s socialization experiences. Being able to accurately measure these experiences could help researchers better understand the relationships between socialization into sports and other variables of sport fan behavior. Future research on team identification could also use utilize a longitudinal approach in order to help control for seasonal changes in this variable. Finally, future research using the SFQ and/or SSIS would benefit from using more precise cut-off levels when determining high and low groups.

Historically, collegiate teams in the state of Kentucky have had more success in basketball than football; thus, Kentucky would be considered by most sport fans as a “basketball state.” People from this state generally follow basketball more closely than football. Therefore, children are more likely, through other people and the media, to receive exposure to basketball. The additional exposure to basketball received by children in the state of Kentucky might lead them to prefer that sport more often. In contrast, the collegiate teams in the state of Texas have historically had more success in football than basketball; thus, Texas would be considered by most sport fans as a “football state.” People from Texas generally follow football more closely than basketball. This additional exposure might lead these children to prefer the sport of football more often than basketball.

Therefore, the child from Kentucky would seem more likely to become a fan of the University of Kentucky basketball team, while the child from Texas would seem more likely to become a fan of the University of Texas football team. This example was carefully chosen in order to illustrate a future research possibility. Not only might the socialization experiences children receive influence which team is their favorite but
might also influence which particular sport, such as basketball or football, is their favorite. Any future research examining the relationship between socialization and which particular sport a person prefers would likely require gathering data from numerous states or regions around the country.

The present study revealed, in part, why some people become sport fans and others do not. Overall, participants who scored high on the sport fandom measure also scored high on the sport socialization measure. Likewise, the participants that scored high on the team identification measure also scored high on the team socialization measure. Therefore, it appears that the socialization experiences people receive are likely a determining factor in whether or not they become sport fans.
References


Appendix A

Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ)
INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer each of the following questions being completely honest in your responses. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers – we simply want you to indicate the most accurate response by circling the appropriate answer in the space below each item.

| STRONGLY DISAGREE | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |
| STRONGLY AGREE    |

1. I consider myself to be a fan of sports in general.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

2. My friends see me as a fan of sports.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

3. I believe that following sports is the most enjoyable form of entertainment.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

4. My life would be less enjoyable if I were NOT able to follow sports.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

5. Being a fan of sports is very important to me.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Appendix B

Sport Socialization Measure
**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please respond to each of the following statements. Circle the response choice that best describes your experiences related to sports in general **WHILE GROWING UP.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Growing up, my father followed sports.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

2) Growing up, my mother followed sports.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

3) Growing up, I had a sibling who followed sports.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

4) Growing up, I had one or more friends who followed sports.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

5) Growing up, I talked with friends about sports.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

6) Growing up, I had relatives, outside my immediate family, who followed sports.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

7) Growing up, my school supported sports.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

8) Growing up, my community supported sports.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9) Growing up, I played at least one organized sport.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

10) Growing up, I had a sibling who played at least one organized sport.  
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

11) Growing up, my parents attended sporting events.  
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

12) Growing up, I attended sporting events.  
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
13) Growing up, I watched sports on the television.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

14) Growing up, I listened to sports on the radio.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

15) Growing up, I read about sports in the newspaper.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

16) Growing up, I read about sports in magazines.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Appendix C

Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS)
Your favorite sport team: 

Specify the sport (i.e. basketball, football, etc.): 

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please answer the following questions honestly based on your feelings for the team you listed above. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers.

1. How important to YOU is it that your favorite team wins?
   - Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Very important

2. How strongly do YOU see YOURSELF as a fan of your favorite team?
   - Not at all a fan 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Very much a fan

3. How strongly do your FRIENDS see YOU as a fan of your favorite team?
   - Not at all a fan 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Very much a fan

4. During the season, how closely do you follow your favorite team via ANY of the following: a) in person or on television, b) on the radio, and/or c) television news or a newspaper?
   - Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Almost everyday

5. How important is being a fan of your favorite team to YOU?
   - Not important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Very important

6. How much do YOU dislike your favorite team’s greatest rivals?
   - Do not dislike 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Dislike very much

7. How often do YOU display your favorite teams’ name or insignia at your place of work, where you live, or on the clothing?
   - Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Almost everyday
Appendix D

Team Socialization Measure
**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please respond to each of the following statements. Circle the response choice that best describes your experiences related to your favorite sport team (listed on the previous page) WHILE GROWING UP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Growing up, my father followed my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

2) Growing up, my mother followed my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

3) Growing up, I had a sibling who followed my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

4) Growing up, I had one or more friends who followed my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

5) Growing up, I talked with friends about my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

6) Growing up, I had relatives, outside my immediate family, who followed my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

7) Growing up, my school supported my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

8) Growing up, my community supported my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9) Growing up, I played the same sport as my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

10) Growing up, I had a sibling who played the same sport as my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

11) Growing up, my parents attended sporting events of my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

12) Growing up, I attended sporting events of my favorite team.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
13) Growing up, I watched my favorite team on the television.

14) Growing up, I listened to my favorite team on the radio.

15) Growing up, I read about my favorite team in the newspaper.

16) Growing up, I read about my favorite team in magazines.
Appendix E

Informed Consent Document
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT
Sport Fan Study

You are being asked to participate in a study on sport fans. Information is needed from both sport fans and people who do not follow sports closely. Please read the following material carefully. It tells you why the study is being done, what you will have to do, risks and benefits of your participation, and what will happen to the information gotten from you. This study is being done through Western Kentucky University, which requires that you give your signed agreement to be included in this study. If you have any questions about the study, please ask the investigator.

If you then choose to participate in the study, please sign the bottom of this form in front of the person who explained the study to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. Nature and Purpose of the Project: The study is looking at the reasons why people become sport fans. The information collected will be used as part of the master’s thesis of a psychology graduate student.

2. Explanation of Procedures: You will have to fill out four brief surveys. You will answer questions about sports and your experiences with sports while growing up. It should take about 10-20 minutes to finish everything.

3. Discomfort and Risks: The risks of being in the study appear small. There is always a small chance that any question could bring about problems. Please let the researcher know if a question has bothered you.

4. Benefits: You might get extra credit in your psychology class, if it is offered by your professor (be sure to check). Other benefits could include a sense of having helped contribute to science and a sense of pride or accomplishment for helping a fellow WKU student. Benefits to science include providing information that will be used to help better understand why people become sport fans.

5. Confidentiality: Your identity will be completely anonymous. There will be no way for researchers to know who completed which surveys. The information collected from you will be combined with the information from all the other people when presented so no one can figure out how you answered.

6. Refusal/Withdrawal: Choosing not to be in this study will have no effects on you. Anyone who agrees to participate can quit at any time with no penalty.

7. Questions: If you have any questions about the study, please ask them now. If you think of questions later on, you may call Paul Frederiksen at (270) 745-2698 or Rick Grieve, Ph.D., at (270) 745-4417, Monday-Friday from 9:00 am until 4:30 pm.
You understand that it is impossible to know all possible risks in a study, and you believe that precautions have been taken to minimize both the known and possible but unknown risks.

Signature of Participant ___________________________- Date ____________

Signature of Witness ___________________________- Date ____________

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD
Dr. Phillip E. Myers, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-4652
Appendix F

Debriefing Statement
Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in this research study. We are interested in the relationships between socialization experiences and both sport fandom and identification or connection with a particular team. It was predicted that, overall, people high in sport fandom will report more socialization experiences related to sports in general than those scoring low in sport fandom. Similarly, it was also predicted that people high in team identification will report more socialization experiences related to that team than those scoring low in team identification. If you have any questions regarding the research or if you would like a final copy of the research project, please contact Dr. Rick Grieve at (270) 745-4417 or at the Department of Psychology, Western Kentucky University, 1 Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101. The final copies will not be available until after August 1, 2003.
Appendix G

Human Subjects Review Board Approval
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Human Subjects Review Board
Office of Sponsored Programs
104 Foundation Building
270-745-4652; Fax 270-745-4211
E-mail: Phillip.Myers@Wku.Edu

In future correspondence please refer to HS03-119, April 21, 2003

Paul Frederiksen
104 Woodmont Ave., Apt. B4
Bowling Green, KY 42101

Dear Paul:

Your research project, “The Influence of Socialization on the Development of Sport Fandom and Identification with a Specific Team,” was reviewed by the HSRB and it has been determined that risks to subjects are: (1) minimized and reasonable; and that (2) research procedures are consistent with a sound research design and do not expose the subjects to unnecessary risk.

Reviewers determined that: (1) benefits to subjects are considered along with the importance of the topic and that outcomes are reasonable; (2) selection of subjects is equitable; and (3) the purposes of the research and the research setting is amenable to subjects’ welfare and producing desired outcomes; that indications of coercion or prejudice are absent, and that participation is clearly voluntary.

1. In addition, the IRB found that: (1) signed informed consent will be obtained from all subjects. (2) Provision is made for collecting, using and storing data in a manner that protects the safety and privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data. (3) Appropriate safeguards are included to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

a. Your research therefore meets the criteria of Expedited Review and is Approved.

2. Please note that the institution is not responsible for any actions regarding this protocol before approval.

If you expand the project at a later date to use other instruments please re-apply. Copies of your request for human subjects review, your application, and this approval, are maintained in the Office of Sponsored Programs at the above address. Please report any changes to this approved protocol to this office. A Continuing Review protocol will be sent to you in the future to determine the status of the project.

Sincerely,

Phillip E. Myers, Ph.D.
Director, OSP and
Human Protections Administrator