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# Factors That Influence Team Identification: Sport Fandom and the Need for Affiliation

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THE NEED FOR AFFILIATION

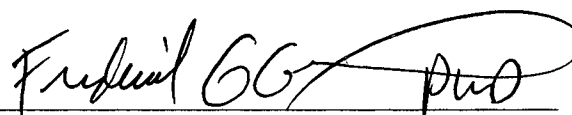
A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

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

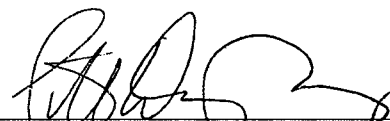
By  
Sarah L. Absten  
August 2011

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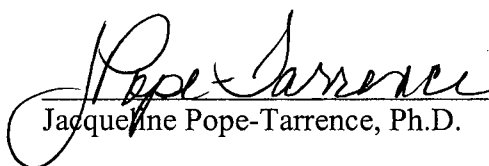
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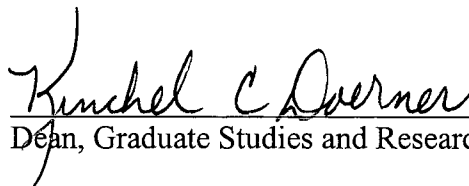
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vi
Abstract .....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Team Identification.....	1
Optimal Distinctiveness Theory.....	5
Factors That Influence Team Identification.....	6
Limitations of Previous Research .....	8
Current Study .....	9
Method.....	11
Participants.....	11
Design.....	11
Induction.....	11
Need for Affiliation Condition.....	11
Need for Differentiation Condition.....	12
Manipulation Check.....	12
Need for Affiliation.....	12
Measures.....	13
Demographics.....	13
Sport Fandom.....	13
Team Identification.....	13

Fan Scale.....	14
Procedure.....	14
Results.....	16
Preliminary Analysis.....	16
Manipulation Check.....	16
Hypothesis Testing.....	17
Discussion.....	21
References .....	26
Appendix A.....	30
Appendix B.....	32
Appendix C.....	34
Appendix D.....	36
Appendix E.....	39
Appendix F.....	41
Appendix G.....	43

## List of Tables

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for nAff by Condition .....	17
Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations for Identification for the Favored Team, Identification for the Underdog Team, Cheering for the Favored Team, and Cheering for the Underdog Team by Condition.....	18
Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations for Cheering for the Favored Team, and Cheering for the Underdog Team .....	19
Table 4: Crosstabulation for Condition x Team .....	19
Table 5: Correlations of Dependent Variables .....	20



FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TEAM IDENTIFICATION: SPORT FANDOM  
AND THE NEED FOR AFFILIATION

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The current study was conducted to examine whether priming for a need for assimilation or the need for differentiation influences an individual's identification with a particular team. Team Identification is defined as "the level of psychological attachment felt by a sports fan toward his or her favorite team" (Kim & Kim, 2009; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). Participants for the current study included 80 undergraduate psychology students, recruited through Study Board at Western Kentucky University. Participants completed the Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ) and were randomly assigned one of two scenarios where they were asked to transcribe two memories based upon their scenario. Then participants filled out the Need for Affiliation Scale (nAff) to assess whether the scenarios elicited a need for affiliation. Following the nAff, participants filled out the Fan Scale (FS) for both teams based on which team they were going to cheer for to win a fictional football game. The participants finished by filling out two Sport Spectator Identification Scales (SSIS), one for the underdog football team and one for the favored football team, to measure how identified they were with each team. Results indicated that the hypotheses were not supported. There were no significant differences between condition for the Fan Scale or the Sport Spectator Identification Scale. However, it was found that, regardless of condition, participants were more likely to cheer for the underdog football team than they were the favored football team. There

were no significant differences between the need for affiliation and the need for differentiation and their influences on team identification. The finding that participants were more likely to cheer for the underdog football team than they were the favored team has added another stepping stone for examining motives for team identification.

## **Introduction**

In the recent past, there has been an increasing interest in the relationship between psychological well-being and team identification. Team identification and social psychological health have been found to be positively correlated because identification leads to social connections, which in turn facilitates well being (Wann, 2006; Wann & Weaver, 2009). Researchers studying psychological attachments formed between sport spectators and sport teams have found team identification, as well as commitment and loyalty, to be the most common forms of these psychological attachments (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann & Pierce, 2005). As this field has expanded, research has been conducted to determine what team identification is and what benefits there are for team identification. Team identification has been found to be positively correlated with psychological health (Wann et al., 2003b), and greater social connections with others (Normansell & Wann, 2010). There is, however, a lack of literature that looks at factors motivating and increasing one's identification with a team.

### **Team identification**

Team Identification is defined as the level of psychological attachment felt by a sports fan toward his or her favorite team (Kim & Kim, 2009; Wann et al., 2001). Social identity is the part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his or her knowledge of their membership and groups together the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Kim & Kim, 2009). From the definition of team identification, the concept of social identity is gained because team identification is a manifestation of social identity (Kim & Kim, 2009). With this membership, fans become members of a

team because they believe a team's success or failure to be their own success or failure (Kim & Kim, 2009).

Many researchers suggest that there is a relationship between team identification and psychological health and well-being (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann, 2006; Wann, Dimmock, & Grove, 2003a; Wann et al., 2003b; Wann, Walker, Cygan, Kawase, & Ryan, 2005; Wann & Weaver, 2009). There have been many studies conducted by Wann and his colleagues (see Wann, 2006, for a review) testing this assumption. Results from these studies have indicated that there is a positive relationship between team identification and psychological health (Wann, 2006). These results suggest that, when an individual is highly identified with a team, that individual also feels connected to a larger social group (Wann, 2006). In addition, Wann (2006) suggests that individuals who have higher feelings of identification with groups and other members of these groups are mentally healthier (e.g., lower rates of depression, and higher self-esteem) than those who have lower levels of identification with a team. These results also lead to the conclusions that "positive social relationships" were one of the core variables that best predict happiness and satisfaction with life (e.g., psychological well-being) (Wann, 2006).

Wann's (2006) development of the Team Identification-Social Psychological Health Model (TI-SPH) came from the combinations of research findings from empirical investigations. This model was created to account for positive relationships between team identification and mental well-being. The first prediction of this model is that psychological well-being is positively related to identification with a local team but not a distant team. The second prediction is that psychological well-being is not related to mere sport fandom.

A number of studies support the relationship between team identification and social well-being. Wann and Weaver (2009) examined the relationship between team identification and satisfaction with life that was demonstrated in a previous study conducted by Wann and Pierce (2005). Wann and Weaver based their study on Wann's (2006) TI-SPH model. The results of this study revealed that higher levels of team identification are a significant independent predictor and are related to two dimensions of social well-being: social integration and social coherence (Wann & Weaver, 2009). Social integration is defined by Wann and Weaver (2009) as one's connection to the community at large. Social coherence is defined by Keyes (1998) as perceptions that a person's social world is predictable, understandable, and it "provides meaningfulness" (p.123).

Wann and colleagues (Wann, Dunham, Byrd, & Keenan, 2004) have also conducted research to look at the relationship between participants' team identification and their scores on the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO PI-R). For this study, the NEO PI-R scores for each individual were used to determine his or her psychological well-being. The NEO PI-R examines five domains of personality and each domain is based on the Five-Factor model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The Neuroticism domain reflects the degree of emotional stability and adjustment of an individual. The Extraversion domain assesses the extent to which individuals are "assertive, active, and talkative" (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 15). The Openness domain assesses the extent to which a person is open to new experiences, is creative and imaginative, and prefers variety. The Agreeableness domain reflects the extent to which a person is altruistic and

cooperative. Finally, the Conscientious domain assesses an individual's self-control and goal-oriented direction (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The results of the study conducted by Wann et al. (2004), as predicted, found local team identification to be positively correlated with psychological well-being based on scores from the Extraversion, Openness, and Conscientious Scales. However, identification with a distant team was not significantly correlated with psychological well-being. After combining this data with findings from previous studies, it is suggested that higher levels of team identification are related to higher personal and social self-esteem, as well as increasing the frequency of feeling positive emotions (Branscombe & Wann, 1991), and higher levels of extroversion, openness, and conscientiousness (Wann et al., 2004). Branscombe and Wann (1991) argued that strong identification with a specific sports team provides a buffer from feelings of depression and alienation, and at the same time fosters feelings of belongingness and self-worth. They conducted three studies which all found support for these notions and found there are positive implications of sports team identification for self-esteem maintenance and the social ties it creates.

Additionally, individuals feel less alienation and depression, more vigor, less fatigue, confusion, anger, and tension when identification with a team is present (Wann & Pierce, 2005; Wann et al., 2003b; Wann et al., 2005). Wann et al. (2005) conducted a study examining the relationship between team identification and social psychological well-being outside the classroom. Because most of the experiments previously examining this relationship were conducted within a classroom or school environment, Wann and colleagues wanted to generalize these feelings, or the lessening of these feelings in other

environments. Results of the study showed that, with the presence of the positive relationship, there is a lessening effect of negative feelings and attitudes such as fatigue, anger, confusion, and tension. Wann et al., (2003b) also found similar results in a study conducted to extend the line of research examining the relationship between team identification and optimism. The results of the study were consistent with previous studies and found an increase in positive emotions and feelings (higher self-esteem, higher extroversion, being more open, etc.) and a lessening effect of those negative emotions and feelings (depression, anger, fatigue, confusion, etc.). In other words, with the increase of positive emotions, these negative feelings and emotions tended to be reduced or even replaced (Wann et al., 2003b).

### **Optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT)**

Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT) states that social identity is driven by two fundamental human needs: the need for assimilation and the need for differentiation (Brewer, 1991). The focus of this theory is on motivations that underlie social identification and suggests that social identities play roles in achieving and maintaining stable self-concepts (Brewer & Pickett, 1999). The need for assimilation is the need for group inclusion and the feeling of belonging to a certain group. The need for differentiation is the need for individuation and the feeling of being different than others. Additionally, when assimilation and differentiation needs are triggered, then that person should act in ways to reassert his or her security and inclusion within the group or to reassert group distinctiveness (Pickett & Brewer, 2001).

ODT states that individuals experience conflict between these two fundamental human needs (Brewer, 1991; Pickett, Silver, & Brewer, 2002). Individuals experiencing

high levels of group inclusiveness have very little arousal of the need for assimilation, yet have high arousal of the need for differentiation. The opposite is true of individuals experiencing low levels of group inclusiveness. These individuals have very little arousal of the need for differentiation and high arousal of the need for assimilation (Brewer, 1991). This conflict is also brought about, according to ODT, by an individual's concern about the positivity of his or her social identity, as well as maintaining intergroup distinctiveness and intragroup assimilation (Pickett & Brewer, 2001). This often leads individuals to identify with social groups in order to alleviate the conflict (Brewer, 1991; Pickett et al., 2002). By identifying with these social groups, individuals are able to form new social identities and connect with others (Dimmock & Gucciardi, 2008).

Additionally, group membership satisfies both of these needs by providing feelings of assimilation with the in-group and feelings of differentiation through intergroup comparisons. This allows for an optimal balance between the two fundamental human needs (Dimmock & Gucciardi, 2008).

### **Factors that influence team identification**

In the past, researchers have examined the assumption that there are factors that influence team identification (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Madrigal, 1995; Wakefield, 1995; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). This research plays an integral part in better understanding of team identification. These researchers are interested in team identification because it is a strong predictor of sport fan consumption (Fink et al., 2002). Findings from these studies have determined that those who are highly identified with a team are more likely to attend games, pay more for tickets, spend more money on



merchandise, and remain loyal to their team regardless of performance than those in low identification (Madrigal, 1995; Wakefield, 1995; Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Fink et al. (2002) and Wann (1995) have identified psychological motives that relate to team identification. Fink et al. (2002) catalogued nine motives that are predictive of team identification: vicarious achievement (the need for social prestige, self-esteem, and a sense of empowerment that individuals can receive from their association with a successful team), aesthetics (the artistic appreciation of the sport due to its inherent beauty), drama (the need to experience pleasurable stress or stimulation gained from the drama of the event), escape (the need to find a diversion from work and the normal unexciting activity of everyday life), family (the opportunity to spend time with one's family doing something everyone enjoys), acquisition of knowledge (the need to learn about the team or players through interaction and media consumption), appreciation of physical skills of the athletes (the appreciation of the physical skill of the athletes or the well-executed performance of the team), social interaction (the need to interact and socialize with others of like interests to achieve feelings that one is part of a group), and physical attraction to the athletes (watching sports because of the physical attractiveness or "sex appeal" of an individual athlete or group of athletes).

Researchers have found significant relationships between motives and team identification, which lead to benefits of team identification; yet, have found a lack of relationships between the two as well (Fink et al., 2002; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995). In the process of identifying significant relationships among varieties of motives and identification for motive scales, Wann (1995) and Trail and James (2001) found low correlations between some motives and identification. For example, there is a small

correlation between physical attractiveness of the players and team identification. In addition Wann (1995) found similar results, a small correlation, between the family motive and team identification. He also found that many motives can be grouped together to lead to team identification. However, some motives have been found to have stronger relationships with team identification. Fink et al. (2002) determined eight of the nine motives they identified were highly correlated with team identification, with the family motive being the only motive significantly related to team identification.

There are also other variables (i.e. gender) that need to be accounted for when looking at the relationship between motives and team identification. These variables could also explain the differences found in each study. For example, when taking gender into consideration, there are mixed findings in regards to finding differences in levels of identification and motives. (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Fink et al., 2002; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, Tucker, & Schrader, 1996). Within these there have been studies that suggest there are no differences between genders (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann et al., 1996), yet others that reveal significant differences stating that males exhibit higher levels of team identification than women (Fink et al., 2002; Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

### **Limitations of previous research**

There have been a number of published research studies examining team identification. However, there is a lack of research examining the factors that motivate and increase an individual's identification with a team. There has also been some research published examining ODT, yet there is a lack of research examining if ODT motivates or increases one's identification with a team. A fair amount of research has

also been done to examine the effects of team identification, yet there has been little research done to examine and determine the specific motives in general that are antecedents of team identification and the specific relationship between these two, motives and identification. More research would be beneficial in these areas as well as examining additional factors that could influence an individual's identification with a certain team and how committed they are to that team or group.

### **Current study**

The purpose of the current study is to examine whether priming for a need for assimilation or the need for differentiation influences an individual's identification with a particular team. It is expected that those in the assimilation condition will choose to cheer for the favorite team because a large number of people have chosen this particular team, and this allows them to feel as though they are part of a larger group. Conversely, it is expected that those in the differentiation condition will choose the underdog team because fewer people have chosen this particular team, and this allows them to feel unique. The Fan Scale created for this study uses fictional teams that have no historical background. Participants will be asked to determine the team for which they are going to cheer for. When this is established, it is expected that the basis for their decision will be their emotional state from priming.

Fictional teams are used for the current study because a confound would be prevalent with the use of non-fictional teams. Using teams that participants could have previous affiliations with could cause them to cheer for these teams and the priming would have no effect. This can also be the basis of causality. If non-fictional teams are used, the historical premises of the team doing well or doing poorly might cause

participants to cheer for the team simply because they know the team is a good team or not to cheer for them simply because they know the team will perform poorly. If fictional teams are used, finding a correlation between affiliation and team identification is possible. This might lead to establishing the relationship further to state that affiliation causes team identification.

Thus, two hypotheses will be examined in the current study. Hypothesis 1 states that those who are primed to experience the feelings of needing to belong will choose to cheer for and be more highly identified with the favorite football team. Hypothesis 2 states that those who are primed to experience the feeling of needing to be different will cheer for and be more highly identified with the underdog football team.

## Method

### Participants

Participants for this study were 80 undergraduate psychology students recruited from Western Kentucky University. Of these participants, 80 (62.5%) were female, and 30 (37.5%) were male. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 59, with a mean age of 21.23 ( $SD = 6.86$  years). The ethnicity of the sample was 70 (87.5%) Caucasian, 9 (11.3%) African American, and 1 (1.3%) Hispanic. Of the participating sample, 62 (77.5%) reported some level of participation in sports, while 18 (22.5%) reported they had no participation in sports. The mean number of years participating in sports was 9.65 ( $SD = 4.74$ ).

### Design

This study used a between groups design. The independent variable was the feeling the participant will be primed to experience (i.e., the need to belong and the need to be different.) The dependent variable was the degree to which the participant will cheer for the favorite team or the underdog team.

### Induction

The participants were given a set of instructions for an activity designed to bring about a need state. The following instructions, adapted from Pickett et al. (2002), were presented:

**Need for affiliation condition.** These specific instructions were given for the need for affiliation condition:

Please take a moment and think of times when playing or watching sports you felt very different from people. In other words, think of times

and situations where you did not feel that you fit in with other people around you and that you “stuck out.” Please write a brief description of two memories of such times.

**Need for differentiation condition.** These specific instructions were given for the need for differentiation condition:

Please take a moment and think of times when playing or watching sports you felt overly similar to other people. In other words, think of times and situations where you felt that you were so much like other people around you that you did not have your own identity. Please write a brief description of two memories of such times.

### **Manipulation Check**

**Need for Affiliation.** Participants completed the Need for Affiliation Scale (nAff; Buunk, Zurriaga, Peiró, Nauta, & Gosalvez, 2005; See Appendix A). This scale is a 16-item measure divided into four areas that measure an individual’s desire to spend time with others, a lack of desire to spend time with others, a desire to complete tasks alone, and a desire to work with others to complete tasks. Participants indicate their responses to each item based on a Likert-type scale, circling either strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). Example items are, “I cannot stand being alone,” “I prefer to go my own way alone,” and “I love teamwork.” The nAff has an internal consistency of  $\alpha = .84$  (Buunk et al., 2005). Cronbach’s alpha for the current study was .86.

## Measures

**Demographics.** Participants completed a demographics questionnaire that includes information about their age, gender, ethnicity, and education level (See Appendix B).

**Sport fandom.** The Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ; Wann, 2002; See Appendix C) is a five-item measure of sport fandom. Participants respond to items along an eight-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 8 (*strongly agree*). An example item is, “I believe that following football is the most enjoyable form of entertainment.” Higher ratings for items, and the higher the overall total scores for the given items, indicates a higher level of sport fandom. The SFQ has an internal consistency of  $\alpha = .96$  (Wann, 2002). Cronbach’s alpha for the current study was .94.

**Team identification.** The Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; See Appendix D) is a seven-item measure of identification with a given team. Participants respond to items along an eight-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (*low identification*) to 8 (*high identification*). An example item is, “How important to you is it that this team wins?” Higher ratings for each item, and the higher the overall total score for the seven items, indicates a higher level of identification with the indicated team. The SSIS has an internal consistency of  $\alpha = .91$  (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). The SSIS was modified for the present study. Using Clippert (2010) as a guide, only items 1, 2 and 4 of the SSIS were used. Items 1 and 2 were left unchanged, while item 4 was modified to “If this game were aired for viewing, how closely would you follow the game via ANY of the following: a) in person or on television, b) on the radio, c) television news or a newspaper, and/or d) the Internet.” Cronbach’s alpha for this

shortened version of the SSIS ranged from .69 to .84 (Clippert, 2010). The SSIS for the favored team (the Chipmunks) had a Cronbach's alpha of .75. The SSIS for the underdog team (the Woodchucks) had a Cronbach's alpha of .94.

**Fan Scale.** Participants were informed of an imaginary football game and asked to indicate which team they want to win this game. Participants were then, given a five-item measure to be scored along an eight-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*indifferent*) to 8 (*this team has to win*). This scale assesses how likely participants are to cheer for each team and how strongly they want this team to win. (See Appendix E for the Fan Scale.) The Fan Scale for the favored team (the Chipmunks) had a Cronbach's alpha of .93. The Fan Scale for the underdog team (the Woodchucks) had a Cronbach's alpha of .98.

### **Procedure**

After obtaining Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) approval, participants were recruited for a study looking at a person's need for assimilation and differentiation. The participants were informed that the current study is being conducted in order to assess variables contributing to an individual's choice to cheer for a given sports team and that their participation is strictly voluntary. First, the participants completed the SFQ. Next, the participants were presented with one of two randomly assigned scenarios and asked to transcribe two memories based upon their assigned scenario. The participants then filled out the nAff. They were told that there was a football game between two imaginary teams, one of which is a large favorite to win the game. Then participants completed the Fan Scale for both teams. Participants were then asked to decide which team they are going to cheer for to win. The participants rated how identified they were



with each team in the game by filling out the SSIS for both teams. After participants completed the task, they were debriefed.

## Results

### Preliminary analysis

Scores from each of the measures were summed to create a total score. The 16 items for the nAff were combined to create a single index of need for affiliation ( $M = 32.35$ ,  $SD = 6.38$ ). The five items from the SFQ were combined into a single measure of sport fandom ( $M = 20.30$ ,  $SD = 9.42$ ). There were three items from the SSIS that were combined to create a single index of identification for the favored football team ( $M = 11.11$ ,  $SD = 5.50$ ), and three items from the SSIS that were combined to create a single index of identification with the underdog football team ( $M = 11.96$ ,  $SD = 7.07$ ). There were two items from the FS that were combined to create a single measure of rooting for the favored football team ( $M = 7.48$ ,  $SD = 4.43$ ), and two items from the FS that were combined to create a single measure rooting for the underdog football team ( $M = 9.95$ ,  $SD = 5.25$ ).

There were nine participants who did not understand the directions, and failed to write down two memories. Because they did not follow the directions of the induction, these participants were dropped from further analyses.

### Manipulation check

Results of an independent samples  $t$ -test indicated that the inductions the participants read had no significant effect on need for affiliation among groups,  $t(75) = .38$ ,  $p > .05$ . Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations for Needs for Affiliation by Condition*

Variable	M	SD
Need for Affiliation		
Differentiation	32.63	5.89
Affiliation	32.07	6.89

**Hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis one stated that those participants who were primed to experience the feelings of needing to belong would choose to cheer for and be more highly identified with the favorite football team. Hypothesis two stated that those participants who were primed to experience the feeling of needing to be different would cheer for and be more highly identified with the underdog football team. To test these hypotheses, independent samples *t*-tests were computed on SSIS scores and FS scores related to the favored football team and the underdog football team. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between conditions for SSIS scores associated with the favored team,  $t(78) = -0.38, p = .71$ , or SSIS scores associated with the underdog team,  $t(78) = 0.33, p = .74$ . Results also indicated there were no significant differences between conditions for FS scores associated with the favored team,  $t(78) = -0.40, p = .69$ , or FS scores associated with the underdog team,  $t(78) = 0.17, p = .87$ . Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for Identification for the Favored Team, Identification for the Underdog Team, Cheering for the Favored Team, and Cheering for the Underdog Team by Condition*

Variable	M	SD
Favored Team Identification		
Need for Differentiation	10.87	5.48
Need for Affiliation	11.34	5.58
Underdog Team Identification		
Need for Differentiation	12.23	7.94
Need for Affiliation	11.70	6.21
Cheering for the Favored Team		
Need for Differentiation	7.28	4.48
Need for Affiliation	7.68	4.43
Cheering for the Underdog Team		
Need for Differentiation	10.05	5.34
Need for Affiliation	9.85	5.22

Results of Pearson Correlations indicated that there was a negative correlation between the favored team and the underdog team and this correlation was significant,  $r(78) = -.77, p < .01$ . A paired samples  $t$ -test was computed to compare FS scores for the favored football team and the underdog football team. Results indicated there was a significant difference between individuals' scores for how much they would cheer for

each team,  $t(79) = -2.42, p = .02$ . Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Cheering for the Favored Team, and Cheering for the Underdog Team*

Variable	M	SD
Cheering for the Favored Team	7.48	4.43
Cheering for the Underdog Team	9.95	5.25

A Chi-Square analysis was conducted in order to evaluate whether there was a difference in the likelihood of identifying with a team. Results indicate there was not a difference in the likelihood of identifying with a team, Chi Square  $(1,80) = .24, p = .66$ . Crosstabulation for each condition and team is presented in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Crosstabulation for Condition x Team*

Variable	Team 1	Team 2	Total
Need for Differentiation	15	24	39
Need for Affiliation	18	23	41
Total	33	47	80

Pearson's correlations were conducted between the individual's need for affiliation, identification with each team and the degree to which he/she will cheer for each team. Results indicated that there were significant correlations between

identification with the favored team, cheering for the favored team, and cheering for the underdog team; identifying with the underdog team, cheering for the favored team, and cheering for the underdog team; and cheering for the underdog team and cheering for the favored team. Correlations are presented in Table 5.

Table 5  
*Correlations of Dependent Variables*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. nAfftot	...	.92	.29	.59	.80
2. Favorite Team ID	.01	...	.08	.00	.02
3. Underdog Team ID	.12	.19	...	.00	.00
4. Favorite Team Cheer	-.06	.48	-.46	...	.00
5. Underdog Team Cheer	-.02	-.25	.71	-.76	...

Note: Correlations are under the diagonal;  $p$ -values are above the diagonal.

nAfftot = participants' level of need for affiliation

## Discussion

The current study was conducted to examine Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT) by looking at affiliation and differentiation. It was proposed that by eliciting the need for affiliation and differentiation, individuals' levels of identification with a given team would be influenced. It was expected that when individuals were primed to feel a need for affiliation, they would be more likely to cheer for and be more highly identified with a favored football team. It was also expected that individuals who were primed to feel a need for differentiation would cheer for and be more highly identified with an underdog football team.

The manipulation that was given to each participant in the form of a priming induction did not work; there was no difference found between conditions as was originally expected. The nAff, which was used as the manipulation check, showed no directional bias toward individuals having a stronger need for affiliation in either condition by having a mean directly midline ( $M = 32.35$ , scale range 0 to 64). This finding holds possible implication for ODT because most studies examining ODT have manipulations but do not include a manipulation check in their design (Pickett et al., 2002; Sorrentino, Seligman, & Battista, 2007). Therefore, previous studies have found results that support their hypotheses, but they may not be accurate.

Based on the results of the manipulation check, it is not possible to evaluate the hypotheses of the current study because the manipulation did not work. One possibility for these results could be that being primed for feelings of affiliation may not necessarily increase the level of identification with the team, in opposition to the findings of Pickett et al. (2002). It could also have been the name of the favored football team, the Chipmunks.

In other words, since participants had little to determine allegiance but the team name, the name of this team may not have been sufficiently ferocious enough to compete with the name of the underdog football team, the Woodchucks. Another possibility for these results is that the need to be affiliated or different may not be a cause of team identification or one that influences sport fandom. Also this suggests that priming may have no effect on an individual's reactions or team identification in sports, similar to the results found in the study conducted by Clippert (2010).

Another possibility for why the priming had no effect is that we may not be able to manipulate an individual's personality; therefore, we may not have been able to prime affiliation because the need for affiliation may be a trait, not a state, condition. ODT is a theory that looks at a person's internal state and the internal equilibrium that an individual tries to maintain, which may make optimal distinctiveness a state condition because it changes constantly (Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Pickett, 1999; Pickett, Silver, & Brewer, 2002). As for a trait condition, the need for affiliation may be a personality trait that is a stable and prevalent aspect of an individual's personality. This may be a possibility for why the priming inductions had no effect on an individual's level of need for affiliation, and there were no differences found with the manipulation check.

Personalities also tend to develop at different rates, and generally seem not to complete the developmental process until later in life (Capsi, & Roberts, 2001). In this study, it may have been the case that the participants have not solidified a more differentiated or affiliated personality. The results of this study have shown that a personality cannot be manipulated at the trait level, but it may be able to be manipulated by manipulating



emotional states. This leaves the question: is Optimal Distinctiveness a trait phenomenon or a state phenomenon?

Researchers examining ODT has demonstrated in previous studies that, with heightened levels of feelings of affiliation and differentiation, participants elicit particular responses. In regard to the current study, the results differed from previous research, as levels of affiliation or differentiation did not elicit particular responses. Research by Picket and Brewer (2001) suggests that people have responses that increase intragroup similarity as the affiliation need increases, and, conversely, people also have responses that increase intergroup distinctiveness as the differentiation need increases.

It is important to note, however, that, regardless of condition, participants were more likely to cheer for and be more highly identified with the underdog football team. These results are interesting, as they suggest that individuals are more likely to cheer for an underdog team as opposed to cheering for the team favored to win. Remember, Picket et al. (2002) and Brewer (1991) found that, according to ODT, individuals experiencing the conflict between the two fundamental human needs (the need for affiliation and the need for differentiation) often identify with social groups to alleviate the conflict. The current findings support the previous findings of wanting to alleviate their internal conflict in relation to having a need for differentiation. Participants are constantly in the same environment as others around them (being students and participating in experiments), as well as simply feeling similar to others around them in general, and because of their feelings of constantly being the same as others they look for outlets to be different. A second possibility to this may also have been the name of the football team, the Woodchucks as previously stated. Another possibility may be that in an unfamiliar

game, individuals may be more likely to cheer for and be more highly identified with the underdog football team, prompting a sense of excitement. Fink et al. (2002) stated that there are nine motives (vicarious achievement, aesthetics, drama, escape, family, acquisition of knowledge, appreciation of physical skills of the athletes, social interaction, and physical attractiveness or “sex appeal” of an individual athlete or group of athletes) that influence social and psychological needs. Cheering for the underdog team may help meet some of these needs, such as drama, escape from work and the norm, and social interactions.

There are limitations to the current study. One limitation is that the priming inductions did not work. The directions were explained in detail; however, some participants asked what they should be writing while others did not write about memories involving sports. Using a different priming induction may produce different results. A second limitation is that it was uncertain whether the manipulation worked. Based on the manipulation check, no differences were found between conditions in regards to scores on the nAff scale. Another limitation is that when asking participants to be affiliated or differentiated from a group and be identified with sports teams, there needs to be scenarios or teams that are non-fictional, even though when looking in the research analogue fictional information has its advantages such as not having previous affiliations. Therefore, ODT is difficult to examine because of the artificial nature of the teams used.

Future research may want to incorporate a measure of motivations for cheering for or identifying with an underdog team versus a favored team. Including this measure may lead to implications for why individuals choose to cheer for the teams they do.

Research should focus on using non-fictional information when asking individuals to be affiliated or differentiated and be identified with teams because this may prompt a stronger identification with the team. Additionally, future research may want to recruit only participants interested in watching a particular sport, to help increase the chance of finding differences between conditions, as many in this study did not appear to have a strong preference for either team. Also including more specific directions when priming individuals may increase their understanding of the memories he/she is directed to write about and his/her emotional connection to the condition he/she is placed in based on these memories and the scenario he/she is primed with.

In conclusion, the present study has added another stepping stone for examining potential factors that influence team identification. There are no significant differences in the need for affiliation and the need for differentiation and their influences on participants' team identification. However, regardless of condition participants were more likely to cheer for and identify with the underdog football team.

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Appendix A  
Demographics



Demographics

**Directions:** Please answer the following questions in an honest manner. **DO NOT** include your name or any other identifying information.

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ **Prefer not to Respond**

2. Gender: **Male** **Female** **Prefer not to Respond**

3. Ethnicity: **African American** **Asian** **Caucasian** **Hispanic** **Native American**  
**Pacific Islander** **Bi-Racial** **Other** **Prefer not to Respond**

4. Education Level: **Less Than High School Degree** **Associates Degree**  
**High School Graduate** **Bachelors Degree**  
**Some College** **Post Bachelors**

5. Participation in Sports: **Yes** **No**  
If so, how many years?

Appendix B  
Sport Fandom Questionnaire

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 writing the appropriate answer in the space next to each item.

STRONGLY  
DISAGREE

STRONGLY  
AGREE

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8

- \_\_\_\_ 1.      I consider myself to be a football fan.
- \_\_\_\_ 2.      My friends see me as a football fan.
- \_\_\_\_ 3.      I believe that following football is the most enjoyable form of entertainment.
- \_\_\_\_ 4.      My life would be less enjoyable if I were not able to follow football.
- \_\_\_\_ 5.      Being a football fan is very important to me.

## Appendix C

### Need for Affiliation Scale

**Directions:** Please answer whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) or strongly disagree (SD) with each of the following statements. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

1. I like to go to places and settings with lots of people.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
2. I would never want to live completely on my own.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
3. In my leisure time, I prefer to do things together with others.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
4. I cannot stand being alone.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
5. I prefer to go my own way alone.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
6. I really prefer to stay as short a time as possible at occasions where there are lots of people.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
7. When on vacation, I avoid contacts with other vacationers as much as possible.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
8. It is not my thing to undertake something with a group of people	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
9. It sounds awful to have a job in which you are alone in a room the whole day.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
10. I find it stressful to have people around me constantly.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
11. I like to talk to others.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
12. Even when I am in a relationship, I still have a strong need to be alone.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
13. The ideal way to spend my leisure time is to do something on my own.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
14. I like to be alone.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
15. I love teamwork.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4
16. I don't like to undertake something totally on my own.	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4

## Appendix D

### Modified Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS)

SSIS

**Directions:** Answer the following questions based on how you feel about the Chipmunks. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, simply be honest in your responses. (circle your answer)

1. How important to YOU is it that this 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 this team?

Not at all a fan 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Very much a fan

3. If this game was aired for viewing, how closely would you follow the game via ANY of the following: a) in person or on television, b) on the radio, c) television news or a newspaper, and/or d) the Internet?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 View the whole game

SSIS

**Directions:** Answer the following questions based on how you feel about the Woodchucks. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, simply be honest in your responses. (circle your answer)

1. How important to YOU is it that this 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 this team?

Not at all a fan 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Very much a fan

3. If this game was aired for viewing, how closely would you follow the game via ANY of the following: a) in person or on television, b) on the radio, c) television news or a newspaper, and/or d) the Internet?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 View the whole game



## Appendix E

### Fan Scale

## Fan Scale

You are watching a football game between the Woodchucks and the Chipmunks, both National Football League Teams (NFL). The Chipmunks are favored to win this game by 10 points. Based on this information answer the following questions:

1. Which team will you cheer for?

Chipmunks

Woodchucks

2. How strongly will you cheer for the Chipmunks?

Not Likely    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    Very Likely

3. How strongly do you want the Chipmunks to win?

Not At All    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    Very Strongly

4. How strongly will you cheer for the Woodchucks?

Not Likely    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    Very Likely

5. How strongly do you want the woodchucks to win?

Not At All    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    Very Strongly

Appendix F  
Informed Consent

### Informed Consent

You are being asked to participate in a survey research project. Before verbally giving your permission to participate we would like to explain the following.

1. Your participation is completely voluntary. This means you have the right to not answer any question you do not want to, or to quit at any time without any penalty.
2. For this study, you will be asked to gamble with pretend money, and if this poses a problem, you are able to dismiss yourself from participating in this study, without penalty.
3. For this study, you will remain completely anonymous. That is, you will not be asked to write down any identifying information, such as your name.
4. This study appears to have minimal risks and discomfort. However, there is always a chance that a question could cause discomfort or problems. Please let the researchers know if any questions are upsetting.
5. Benefits of this study include a sense of well being for contributing to scientific research, helping a WKU graduate student, and providing information that will be used to help better understand sport spectators.
6. During participation you will be asked to complete a section asking for age, education, ethnicity, gender, and the football team you support. Also, you will be asked to complete three short measures (16 items, 5 items, 3 items) that evaluate team identification, sport fandom, and need for affiliation. These surveys collectively should take about 15 - 20 minutes to complete.
7. Although your individual responses will remain anonymous, your data will be combined with the data of others and may be submitted for publication in scholarly journals or presented at conventions.

Professor Rick Grieve, Ph.D., is the Faculty Sponsor for this research project and can be contacted at (270) 745-4417, with any questions in regards to the study, Monday through Friday from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm. Dr. Grieves' office is located in Tate Page Hall room 258. Questions or complaints about research participants' rights can be directed to the Human Subjects Review Board, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY 42101, or by phone at (270)-745-4652.

Appendix G  
Debriefing Statement

Thank you for taking part in this study. This study examines individuals' levels of identification with social groups including sport teams, religion, school groups, social groups, occupation, and a community-related activity. You first completed a questionnaire which provided us with basic information about yourself. Next, you completed a questionnaire used to measure your level of sport fandom. You also completed a questionnaire measuring your need for affiliation, or connection, with other people. You were then asked to remember and write down a memory that you had when you felt one of the following: that you belonged to a group, felt different from others in a group, or neither belonged nor felt different from others in a group. Then you were asked to wager money on a football game(s). Finally, you were asked to rate how identified you were with two of the football teams. The results of this study will be used to examine how the need for belongingness or distinctiveness influences team identification. I want to remind you that your responses in this study will remain anonymous. If you have any questions regarding your participation, you may contact the primary investigator, Sarah Absten, at [sarah.absten541@wku.edu](mailto:sarah.absten541@wku.edu), or my supervising professor, Dr. Rick Grieve, at (270) 745-4417. Also, if you feel any discomfort from participating in this study, you may contact the Western Kentucky University Counseling and Testing Center at (270)-745-3195.

