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FANDOM FROM AFAR: IDENTIFICATION, ATTACHMENT, AND
CONSUMPTION BEHAVIORS AMONG UNITED STATES BASED FANS OF
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE SOCCER CLUBS

By

Adam R. Cocco
B.S. Youngstown State University, 2006
M.A. University of Akron, 2010

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Education and Human Development
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development

Department of Education, Leadership, Foundations, and Human Resources
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2020

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FANDOM FROM AFAR: IDENTIFICATION, ATTACHMENT, AND
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ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE SOCCER CLUBS

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 15, 2020

By the following Dissertation Committee

Marion E. Hambrick, Chair

T. Christopher Greenwell

Megan B. Shreffler

Anita M. Moorman

Jason C. Immekus

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

James and Lark Cocco

I wish every child could experience the unconditional love and support they have always
provided to me

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is not possible to accurately list the names of each individual who has helped me along my path to this moment. There are people who are not mentioned here for the sake of brevity. Even if your name does not appear here, please know I am eternally grateful for the meaningful contribution you made to my life. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

FANDOM FROM AFAR: IDENTIFICATION, ATTACHMENT, AND CONSUMPTION INTENTIONS AMONG UNITED STATES BASED FANS OF ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE SOCCER CLUBS

Adam Cocco

April 15, 2020

The purpose of this study was to explore the antecedents to organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans and examine the relationship between these antecedents and various forms of sport consumption behavior. Specifically, this study examined the extent to which points of attachment explained variances in organizational identification and three types of sport consumption behavior – broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, and team-related merchandise purchases. Additionally, this study examined differences in points of attachment between fans of successful EPL organizations, known as the “Big Six” EPL clubs, and fans of unsuccessful EPL organizations. In contrast to most existing sport fan identification and attachment research, this study focused on distant fans, a group yet to receive significant attention in the sport management literature.

This study utilized social identity theory as a conceptual foundation. Social identity theory is a socio-cognitive framework that explains the formation and behaviors of social groups. It provides the main theoretical foundation for research on organizational identification and team identification. Points of attachment represent an

extension of team identification research that accounts for the potential of multiple factors to contribute toward one's fan identification. Previous research suggests an understanding of fan identification and attachment is crucial to developing targeted marketing plans which positively influence sport consumption behaviors.

To address the purpose of the study, a questionnaire was distributed to U.S.-based EPL fans through Facebook group pages organized around fan support and interactions for EPL clubs. The questionnaire contained items to assess respondent's levels of organizational identification, attachment to various aspects of the organization, and consumption behaviors. Participant responses ($n = 753$) revealed attachment to fan community exhibited the strongest relationship with organizational identification and each type of sport consumption behavior. Attachment to venue also suggested positive relationships with organizational identification and sport consumption behaviors. Two new points of attachment created for this study, attachment to owner and attachment to organizational history/tradition, positively explained respondent's frequency of merchandise purchases. Additional analysis revealed player and venue attachment held particular salience among U.S.-based fans of Big Six EPL organizations. Meanwhile, attachment to fan community, city/region, and owner displayed significantly higher ratings among U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six.

These results produce several theoretical and practical implications for researchers and practitioners. From a theoretical perspective, the results illuminate similarities and differences in identification and attachment among distant fan populations compared to local sport fans. Additionally, factor analyses supported a factor structure for items relating to the two new points of attachment created for this study.

This sets a foundation for future researchers to utilize these points of attachment in a variety of new research contexts covering distant and local fan types. From a practical implication perspective, the results show the importance of placing the concept of fan community at the heart of marketing strategies for EPL organizations and their U.S.-based broadcast partner, NBC Sports. As information technology and high-speed internet access continue to eliminate boundaries between sport teams and fans from across the world, it will become increasingly crucial for sport organizations to understand their fan bases in distant markets. This study provides initial evidence of variables that demonstrate a significant, positive impact on organizational identification and sport consumption behaviors for a particular set of distant fans.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Research Problem	2
Distant Sport Fans.....	3
Fan Identification	4
Points of Attachment.....	7
Sport Consumption Behavior.....	9
Organizational Identification and Team Success.....	10
Study Purpose and Research Questions	12
Study Significance	14
Delimitations.....	18
Limitations	19
Definition of Terms.....	20
CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE...23	
Social Identity Theory.....	25
Background.....	26
Organizational Identification and Team Identification.....	31
Organizational Identification	31
Team Identification.....	35
Soccer Fans	41
Points of Attachment.....	44
Background.....	44
Points of Attachment Index (PAI) Scale Development	48
Sport Consumption Behavior.....	59

Background	59
Relationship with Points of Attachment Research.....	63
Summary of Literature	68
CHAPTER III: METHOD	71
Purpose of the Study	71
Research Questions	72
Research Design.....	73
Study Participants	73
Sampling and Data Collection Procedure	74
Sampling Technique	74
Sampling Method.....	75
Data Collection Procedure	79
Instrumentation	80
Description of Instrument	80
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	80
Organizational Identification	81
Points of Attachment.....	81
Open-Ended Item	85
Consumption Behaviors.....	86
Participant Demographics.....	87
Evidence of Psychometric Properties	87
Instrument Development.....	89
Data Analysis	90
Scale Diagnostics	90
Exploratory Factor Analysis	91
Confirmatory Factor Analysis.....	92
Research Question 1	94
Research Question 2	97
Research Question 3	98
Summary of Method	99
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	103
Instrument Pretesting	103
Panel of Experts	103
Field Test	105

Descriptive Statistics.....	107
Sample Statistics	107
Demographic Information.....	107
EPL Club Information.....	109
Survey Items	110
Factor Analysis	114
Exploratory Factor Analysis	115
Confirmatory Factor Analysis.....	118
Summary of Instrument Development, Sample Statistics, and Factor Analysis	124
Data Analysis	125
Data Analysis of Research Question 1.....	126
Data Analysis of Research Question 2.....	132
Broadcast Media Consumption.....	133
Social Media Consumption.....	136
Merchandise Purchase Behavior.....	139
Data Analysis of Research Question 3.....	144
Summary of Results	148
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....	152
Interpretation of Results.....	153
Organizational Identification	153
Fan Community Attachment.....	154
Venue Attachment	157
City/Region Attachment	159
Other Points of Attachment	161
Summary of Organizational Identification	162
Sport Consumption Behavior.....	163
Fan Community Attachment.....	163
Venue Attachment	166
Player Attachment.....	167
Coach Attachment.....	168
Owner and Organizational History/Tradition Attachment	168
Summary of Sport Consumption Behavior.....	170
Fans of Successful and Unsuccessful EPL Organizations	171
Fans of Successful EPL Organizations	171

Fans of Unsuccessful EPL Organizations.....	173
Summary of Fans of Successful and Unsuccessful EPL Organizations .	176
Open-Ended Item Responses	177
Theoretical Implications	180
Distant Fans versus Local Fans.....	180
Fan Community Attachment.....	181
Venue Attachment	182
City/Region Attachment	183
Player Attachment.....	184
Coach Attachment.....	184
Sport and League Attachment.....	185
Summary of Distant Fans versus Local Fans.....	186
New Points of Attachment	187
Practical Implications.....	188
Fan Community Attachment.....	189
Venue Attachment	190
Player Attachment.....	191
Merchandise Purchase Behavior.....	192
Practical Implications Summary	192
Limitations	193
Future Research	194
Summary of Study	196
References.....	199
APPENDIX A: PROPOSED STUDY SURVEY INSTRUMENT	219
APPENDIX B: EFA RESULTS FOR POINT OF ATTACHMENT ITEMS	223
CURRICULUM VITA	225

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

1. Points of Attachment Utilized in Existing Literature	57
2. Targeted Social Media Sites for Data Collection	76
3. Demographics of U.S.-Based EPL Fans	78
4. Summary of Theoretical Foundations, Survey Items, and Data Analysis by RQ.....	101
5. Internal Consistency Reliability Estimates for Pilot Study.....	106
6. Demographics of U.S.-Based EPL Fans for Sample and Target Population.....	108
7. Sample Participants Selection of Favorite EPL Club	110
8. Descriptive Statistics for Identification, Attachment, and Consumption Items.....	112
9. Bivariate Correlations Among Identification, Attachment, and Consumer Behavior Scales	114
10. Results of Parallel Analysis	116
11. Model Fit Summary for CFA on Point of Attachment Items	119
12. Correlation Estimates Between Latent Variables	122
13. Scale Items, Standardized Factor Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Means, and Average Variance Extracted.....	123
14. Regression Analysis for Organizational Identification.....	132
15. Regression Analysis for Broadcast Media Consumption	136
16. Regression Analysis for Social Media Consumption	138
17. Regression Analysis for Merchandise Purchase Frequency	141
18. Regression Analysis for Merchandise Purchase Amount.....	143
19. Descriptive Statistics for Points of Attachment by Big Six Fandom Grouping	145
20. Results of Univariate ANOVA Tests for Points of Attachment.....	147
21. Results of Significant Predictor Variables.....	150
22. Categorization of Open-Ended Item Responses	177

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

1. Theoretical Framework for Sport Fan Identification and Sport Consumer Behavior ..	24
2. Relationship Between Motives and Points of Attachment	53
3. Scree Plot from EFA Using Maximum Likelihood Estimation with Promax Rotation	116
4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Point of Attachment Subscales	121
5. Histogram for Mean Organizational Identification Score	128
6. Scatterplot to Check Homoscedasticity of Variance for RQ1	129
7. P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residuals for RQ1	129
8. Histogram for Broadcast Media Consumption	134
9. Histogram for Social Media Consumption	137
10. Histogram for Merchandise Purchase Amount.....	140

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Soccer is a sport with growing popularity in the United States. A 2018 Nielsen Sports report revealed 32% of survey participants based in the United States (U.S.) indicated an interest in the sport of soccer. That proportion increased to more than 50% when restricted to participants in the 18-to-34-year-old demographic (Nielsen Sports, 2018). A Gallup poll conducted in 2017 revealed soccer was a more popular sport to watch than baseball and was on par with basketball for those individuals in the 18-to-34-year-old demographic (Norman, 2018). In correlation with this growing popularity of soccer in the U.S. is a surge in English Premier League (EPL) fandom among U.S.-based soccer fans. The EPL is the top-division soccer league in England. It comprises 20 teams with three of these teams changing each year based on the promotion and relegation system instituted across the divisions of English soccer. The EPL is the most-watched soccer league in the world, with an estimated one billion households consuming its programming across 188 different nations (“Premier League Explained,” 2019).

In 2010, ESPN and Fox Sports paid \$80 million for three years of limited EPL broadcast distribution rights in the U.S. (Goff, 2013). Beginning with the 2013-2014 EPL season, NBC Sports dramatically increased the ability of U.S. soccer audiences to consume EPL matches, spending \$250 million for the right to broadcast all 380 EPL matches over the following three seasons (Goff, 2013). Since then, NBC Sports has

amplified its investment by spending more than \$1 billion for the rights to provide television coverage of the EPL to the U.S. market through the 2021-2022 season (Sandomir, 2015). This massive monetary investment is not surprising given the record viewership numbers for EPL games on NBC Sports' media platforms. In the 2017-2018 season, 39.3 million U.S. viewers tuned into an EPL game broadcast, representing a 14% increase from the previous season (Schott, 2018). The 2018-2019 season saw a further 2% increase in viewership numbers per match (Fisher, 2019). According to a study by Universitaet Tubingen (2017), television ratings for EPL games now exceed those of regular-season National Hockey League games in the United States.

A 2019 poll conducted by Morning Consult found the majority of self-described "avid" soccer fans in the U.S. reported the EPL as their favorite European soccer league (Easley, 2019). Moreover, 57% of these individuals noted their fandom for the EPL began within the last five years (Easley, 2019). Both the Premier League and NBC Sports have recognized this growing fan base. The two entities partnered in 2018-2019 to host "Premier League Mornings Live" fan events across the United States. These events focused on delivering an enhanced fandom experience to the most dedicated and loyal U.S.-based EPL fans (Premier League, 2018). Some supporters take this level of fandom a step further. An estimated 26,000 Americans travel to the United Kingdom each week to watch an EPL game in person (Teodorczuk, 2017).

Research Problem

Despite this increasing level of fandom from U.S.-based EPL fans, little is known about the factors driving this fandom, especially at the club level. As more fans in the U.S. consume the EPL product, more of these sport consumers decide which team they

will root for, or identify with, in the league. Yet, ambiguity surrounds the factors leading to U.S.-based fans choosing “their team” within the EPL. Why, for example, do some fans choose to root for Manchester United while others develop an affinity for Arsenal? Moreover, why do some U.S.-based fans of the EPL decide to identify with traditionally less successful EPL clubs, such as West Ham United, Southampton, and Everton? Therefore, this research seeks to identify the determinants of fandom for U.S.-based EPL fans. Addressing the questions above will allow EPL organizations to better market their product to U.S.-based consumers, providing the potential for new fan acquisition, enhanced levels of fan support, and increased revenue generation within the U.S. market.

Distant Sport Fans

The vast majority of team identification research has explored identification between U.S.-based fans and a professional or college sport team within close geographical proximity (Pu & James, 2017; Scola, Stensland, & Gordon, 2019). Given this narrow research context, studies have suggested geographic location as a salient antecedent to team identification (e.g. Robinson & Trail, 2005; Wann, Tucker, & Schrader, 1996). Collins, Heere, Shapiro, Ridinger, and Wear (2016) stated geographic location is the most important external factor influencing fan identification with a team because “people believe the team to be representative of this larger community” (p. 656).

However, the explosion of high-speed information technology has reduced traditional geographic boundaries to sport fandom and sport consumers now can watch and support a sport organization regardless of their proximity to the organization (Silk & Chumley, 2004). Pu and James (2017) used the term “distant fans” to describe individuals who support a favorite sport team despite a lack of past or present

geographical proximity between team and fan. These types of fans do not live near their favorite team nor, perhaps, have they ever traveled to the team's home area. A U.S.-based fan of an EPL organization, for example, does not reside within a close geographical proximity of the club they support, yet they possess the ability to watch every game of their favorite team live on television, digest information pertaining to that team online, and connect with other fans of the team from around the world via social media. Therefore, "the traditional local sports fan may no longer be the sole focus for professional sport organizations" (Scola et al., 2019, p. 351). There is a need to understand organizational identification in contexts where a fan does not share geographic proximity to their favorite team.

Fan Identification

The increase in consumption of the EPL product from U.S.-based sport fans, witnessed, for example, through higher levels of media consumption and an increasing regularity of fan events, suggests increasing levels of organizational identification with EPL teams among U.S.-based supporters. Mael and Ashforth (1992) defined organizational identification as "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization(s) in which he or she is a member" (p. 104). Sport management researchers have investigated organizational identification through examinations of team identification, or attachment to a team, among sport fans (Hoeghele, Schmidt, & Torgler, 2014). There are clear parallels between organizational identification and team identification. Heere (2016) provided a succinct definition of team identification as "that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from membership in a community anchored around a sports team,

based on the emotional value attached to that membership, and the knowledge of, engagement with, and evaluation of the community itself” (p. 216). Inherent within both of these definitions is an understanding that identification concerns the degree or value placed on membership in a group, organization, or community.

Prior investigations of identification among fans geographically removed from their favorite sport team have focused on a variety of nonlocal fan types. Foster and Hyatt (2007) explored identification among Hartford Whalers fans after the team relocated to North Carolina. Their results provided insight into the different levels of identification among fans affected by the relocation, with some fans still identifying with the new organization and others displaying apathy or actively disidentifying with the new organization. Collins et al. (2016) studied groups of displaced fans, defined as individuals who once lived in proximity to their favorite sport team, have since moved away, but still maintained support for the team. They found hometown community attachment, use of social media, and use of the internet for viewing sports significantly influenced a displaced fan’s level of team identification. Scola et al. (2019) focused on members of a football fan club comprised of out-of-market fans, defined as those who live more than 100 miles away from their favorite team regardless of if they have ever lived in the same city as the team. Semi-structured interviews with 12 fan club members revealed group membership led to heightened feelings of identification and enhanced overall well-being among participants.

In contrast to displaced or out-of-market fans, Pu and James (2017) suggested distant fans, those that lack a past or present geographical connection to their team, represent a distinct type of fan and possess their own experiences and reasons for team

identification. A few studies in the literature have explored the “distant fan” as a unique focal object. Farred (2002) provided a narrative regarding his own life experiences supporting the EPL club Liverpool while growing up in South Africa. His narrative focused on the “geographical transcendence through the experience of intense emotional affiliation” (p. 9) with “his” team. He espoused the importance of sports journalism in the development and maintenance of his fandom, first through print media and radio and subsequently through television and the internet. Throughout this narrative, Farred (2002) argued that a lack of geographical proximity between him and Liverpool did not lessen his level of fan identification. He maintained his emotional involvement and identification with the team through a devout consumption of sport media.

Andrijiw and Hyatt (2009) used social identity theory and optimal distinctiveness theory to explore nonlocal fandom with hockey fans who supported a team outside of their immediate proximity. Results suggested nonlocal fandom allowed individuals to express uniqueness as they formulated their personal identifies and to connect with a more geographically disperse set of fans, thereby influencing their social identity formation. Andrijiw and Hyatt (2009) suggested sport organizations should implement a range of connectivity-based initiatives to help bring nonlocal fans together based on their shared social identities. These suggested initiatives included online message boards, an online user map to visualize the geographic dispersion of a team’s fans, scrapbooks, and specific recognition of a team’s nonlocal fans through marketing materials.

Research examining fan identification in a variety of contexts is important because sport fans with high levels of identification can develop a heightened sense of belongingness to their fan community. Trail, Anderson, and Fink (2000) noted sport

fandom can result in “positive consequences through the evolution of sentiments of belonging or attachment” (p. 165). Trail and James (2001) developed a conceptual foundation that focused on motivational factors underlying team identification. Fink, Trail, and Anderson (2002) examined these motivational factors and found variances in team identification attributable to different motives for sport consumption. They found motives relating to vicarious achievement, aesthetics, social interaction, and drama were most salient in explaining these variances in identification. However, a strict focus on team identification, or attachment to the team, does not produce a holistic understanding of the reasons why a sport fan may identify with their favorite team. A related, yet unique, research approach addresses antecedents to team identification by examining different factors, or points of attachment, surrounding the sport organization.

Points of Attachment

The term *team identification* implies that a sport fan solely focuses his or her identification, or attachment, on the team itself. It ignores additional ways in which an individual may come to identify with a particular sport organization. That is, a focus on team attachment ignores additional points of attachment that could influence the identification between a sport fan and sport organization. As originally suggested by Robinson and Trail (2005), an individual’s identification with a sport team may not actually represent attachment to the team itself. Other points of attachment potentially exist, and these additional points of attachment could provide more antecedents to team identification. In other words, attachment to the team may represent only one point of attachment for an individual sport fan. Multiple points of attachment could exist within the psyche of a sport fan, including attachment to players, coaches, community, or level

of sport. Organizational identification does not solely reflect team identification, or attachment to the team itself. Organizational identification could also stem from a fan's attachment to a star player, charismatic coach, league quality, or geographic location.

Pu and James (2017) provided an examination of distant fan points of attachment through an assessment of motivations for sport consumption among Chinese-based fans of the National Basketball Association. Similar to Andrijiw and Hyatt (2009), Pu and James (2017) suggested that different socialization factors may provide salience when determining the formation of fandom for distant fans compared to local fans of a sport organization. Their results indicated high levels of general basketball fandom and participation in the sport were the main factors influencing distant fan identification in this context. Furthermore, they theorized distant team identification may result from perceptions of local teams in the same sport being inferior in skill and level of play. They suggested the need for different marketing strategies for sport organizations to connect with distant fans, including highlighting distinctive differences between a local team and nonlocal alternative.

Given the relative dearth of studies on the distant fan topic, Pu and James (2017) called for researchers to place more attention on this fan group. Li, Dittmore, and Scott (2017) explored differences in points of attachment between Chinese and Western-based fans of a particular National Basketball Association team. They found significantly higher levels of attachment to the sport, league, and players among Chinese fans while Western-based fans exhibited higher levels of attachment to the team itself. The researchers stated these results suggested the need for different social media marketing strategies to help an organization connect with geographically different fan groups.

The breadth of research on nonlocal sport fans suggests distinct differences between nonlocal and local fans. Fandom of a nonlocal team can allow individuals to express uniqueness (Andrijiw & Hyatt, 2009) and connecting with other nonlocal fans of the same team can provide an enhanced sense of identification (Andrijiw & Hyatt, 2009; Scola et al., 2019). The unique context of nonlocal fandom and the unique outcomes associated with this type of fandom suggests a need for sport organizations to create distinctive marketing strategies to connect with their distant fans (Pu & James, 2017). Therefore, the first research question examined in this study is:

RQ1. Which points of attachment explain organizational identification for U.S.-based EPL fans?

Sport Consumption Behavior

In addition to sentiments of belongingness or attachment (Trail et al., 2000), sport fans with high levels of identification exhibit enhanced consumer engagement with their team. Seminal empirical research on team identification focused on the ways in which one's level of identification affects consumer-based outcomes. Wann and Branscombe (1993) provided initial research in this area. They developed the unidimensional seven-item Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) to assess the degree to which an individual identified with a sport team. Results from an initial validation of the SSIS suggested significant differences in behavioral, cognitive, and emotional reactions among sport fans based on their level of team identification. Since then, researchers have operationalized the concept of team identification in various forms and have demonstrated strong relationships between team identification and a host of sport consumer attitudes and behaviors, such as media consumption, merchandise purchases,

and game attendance (James & Trail, 2008; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Murrell & Deitz, 1992; Wann and Branscombe, 1993). The market research firm SSRS (2019) suggested those who felt a strong sense of belonging to their favorite team spent more money on sport-related goods and services, watched more sports on television, and attended more games compared to those who felt they “somewhat” belonged to their favorite team.

This study will explore sport consumption behavior outcomes relating to media consumption and merchandise purchases. It will do so with the context that points of attachment provide the basis for organizational identification. Therefore, the second research question examined in this study is:

RQ2. Which points of attachment explain sport consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2a. Which points of attachment explain broadcast media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2b. Which points of attachment explain social media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2c. Which points of attachment explain merchandise purchase behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

Organizational Identification and Team Success

Group identification theory suggests individuals identify with groups, such as being a fan of a particular sport team, that reflect positively on their self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, some individuals will continue to identify with losing or poorly performing sport teams. Fisher and Wakefield (1998) helped shed light on the factors that compel individuals to identify with low-performing teams. An interest in the

sport overall, perceived team performance, and fan group involvement were all variables effecting the degree of identification among fans in this study.

This research from Fisher and Wakefield (1998) is particularly applicable to the current study. The EPL is a sport league defined by great levels of disparity between clubs both on and off the field. Six EPL clubs – Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool, Chelsea, Arsenal, and Tottenham – produced 57.5% of all revenues generated in the EPL during the 2017-2018 season (Kidd, 2019) and accounted for over 90% of all fan engagements across social media during 2018 (Newton Insight, 2019). These same six clubs, informally termed the “Big Six,” (Douglas, 2018; Kidd, 2019; Robinson, 2019) finished in the top six places in the final league standings in every season but one between 2014 and 2019 (Kidd, 2019) and progressed to at least the quarterfinal round in a major European club competition during the 2018-19 season (Robinson, 2019). A brand valuation study from Brand Finance (2018) found each of the Big Six clubs ranked among the top 10 soccer teams in the world in terms of their overall brand value.

A clear delineation exists between high-performing and low-performing teams in the EPL in regard to objective business and on-field metrics. Prior research (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Trail, Robinson, Dick, Gillentine, 2003) has demonstrated differences in factors that influence identification between fans of successful sport organizations and fans of unsuccessful sport organizations. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize different identification factors will exist among different fan groups of EPL teams given the vast disparity in performance metrics, such as revenue generated, brand value, and on-field results, between successful, high-performing teams and unsuccessful, low-performing teams. The final research question examined in this study is:

RQ3. What differences exist in points of attachment between U.S.-based fans of the Big Six EPL organizations and U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six?

Study Purpose and Research Questions

Andrijiw and Hyatt (2009) suggested factors leading to identification and consequences of identification may not be similar for fans who are geographically distant from their favorite sport team compared to those within a close geographical proximity. Therefore, a need exists to explore the antecedents and outcomes related to team identification for nonlocal fan types as well. This study will answer the call from Pu and James (2017) for more research on the topic of distant sport fandom by employing social identity theory as a framework and improving upon the aforementioned distant fan studies. In contrast to Farred (2002), Andrijiw and Hyatt (2009), and Scola et al. (2019), this study will quantitatively examine distant fans by employing a cross-sectional survey research design, thereby providing a larger scope of analysis for this sport consumer group. Additionally, the studies conducted by Andrijiw and Hyatt (2009) and Scola et al. (2019) examined fans who had a local team to identify with but chose to identify with a geographically distant team in the same league. For distant fans of the EPL, a local team alternative within the same league does not exist for participants in this research context. This study will add to research from Pu and James (2017) by recognizing the presence of multiple points of attachment that could lead to team identification (Robinson & Trail, 2005) and influence consumer behavior (Shapiro, Ridinger, & Trail, 2013). Li et al. (2017) limited their research to just one professional organization and only included four

points of attachment. The current study will mitigate these limitations by exploring a greater number of organizations and points of attachment.

The case of U.S.-based EPL fans provides the context for this study. The EPL is the preferred European soccer league among avid U.S.-based soccer fans and the majority of U.S.-based EPL fans are relatively nascent in their fandom (Easley, 2019).

Additionally, U.S.-based broadcasters made a \$1 billion investment in the EPL through the 2021-2022 season (Sandomir, 2015) and U.S. viewership numbers continue to grow annually (Fisher, 2019; Schott, 2018). Therefore, this study explored a sport property that is a significant and sizeable portion of the U.S.-based soccer fan market. In particular, this research examined how U.S.-based sport fans develop an affinity for a certain EPL organization using points of attachment to help explain how fans determine “their team” to identify with from the EPL.

In addition, although successful teams such as Liverpool, Manchester City, and Chelsea have the highest number of average U.S. viewers for broadcasted EPL games, less successful teams such as West Ham United, Southampton, and Everton also possess a significant television audience among U.S.-based EPL consumers (Harris, 2017).

Easley (2019) noted a poll of U.S.-based EPL fans indicated more than 30% of these individuals identified with a traditionally less successful EPL organization outside of the EPL’s Big Six. This study will explore the salient antecedents that lead to identification among fans of these less successful teams. The purpose of this research is to explore the antecedents to organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans and examine the relationship between these antecedents and various forms of sport consumption behavior. The following three research questions will guide this study:

RQ1. Which points of attachment explain organizational identification for U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2. Which points of attachment explain sport consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2a. Which points of attachment explain broadcast media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2b. Which points of attachment explain social media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2c. Which points of attachment explain merchandise purchase behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ3. What differences exist in points of attachment between U.S.-based fans of the Big Six EPL organizations and U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six?

Study Significance

This study could provide several theoretical and practical contributions to fan identification and sport consumption behavior research. Theoretical contributions to fan identification and sport consumption behavior literature include the following. First, results can provide insight into salient points of attachment for distant fans. Given this group has yet to receive significant attention as a focal object in sport consumption research (Pu & James, 2017; Scola et al., 2019), findings from this study can help inform future researchers about the similarities and differences between local fans and distant fans in regard to antecedents to sport organization identification. Pu and James (2017) suggested that “distant fans might be influenced by different socialization agents in the

formation of their fandom” (p. 421). Scola et al. (2019) proposed the need to investigate the similarities and differences between nonlocal and local fan types. In addition, they stated research on out-of-market fans should include a variety of sport contexts. This study will contribute to the growing call for information on these topics.

Second, the questionnaire administered to participants (Appendix A) will include two newly created points of attachment. Spinda, Wann, and Hardin (2016) theorized that, despite currently established points of attachment, “it is possible, perhaps likely, that these [existing points of attachment] are not an exhaustive index of areas of fan identification” (p. 350). Therefore, this study will develop and test new attachment factors pertaining to organizational ownership attachment and organizational history/tradition attachment. An investigation of these new points of attachment could spur new research questions and contexts within fan identification research.

The questionnaire used for this study will also include one open-ended item asking respondents to identify any other factors, outside of those already included in the survey, that may have influenced their decision to support their favorite EPL club. Responses to this open-ended item may provide initial evidence of additional points of attachment to consider in future research. A prevalence of similar statements on a certain topic found among participant responses could lead to the development and validation of one or more new points of attachment. Similar to the development of new points of attachment in prior research (e.g., Spinda et al., 2016), the development of new scale items would require an item content review from a panel of content experts, pilot testing, and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to gather evidence for reliability and validity.

Third, this research may suggest relationships between points of attachment and various types of self-reported sport consumption behaviors. Examinations of linkages between these concepts has received scant attention in the literature. Existing studies that utilized points of attachment to examine sport consumption behaviors have mainly focused on future consumption behaviors (Ballouli, Trail, Koesters, & Bernthal, 2016; Shapiro et al., 2013). Cottingham, Chatfield, Gearity, Allen, and Hall (2012) provided a notable exception, finding attachment to sport was a significant predictor of online media consumption. However, their research focused on the niche sport of wheelchair rugby and only examined one form of media consumption. This study would examine the relationship between points of attachment and sport consumption in the context of a more mainstream sport and would expand the investigation of this relationship by assessing broader forms of broadcast media consumption and social media consumption. This may give future researchers a more informed perspective on the relationship between points of attachment and sport consumption behaviors.

In addition to these theoretical implications, there are several practical applications regarding the future business growth of EPL organizations stemming from this research. Most directly, out-of-market fans can provide an important source of revenue for sport organizations (Kerr & Emery, 2011). This study could provide sport marketers for EPL teams with a deeper understanding of those salient points of attachment that strongly relate to fan identification and consumption behavior among distant fans of their organization. The ability of EPL organizations to understand determinants of broadcast media and merchandise consumption behaviors are especially relevant to their long-term financial stability and growth potential. Broadcasting revenues

account for almost 60% of overall revenues for the EPL (“Annual Review of Football Finance,” 2019) and international broadcast fees will provide the EPL with almost £4.5 billion in revenue between 2019 and 2022 (Wigmore, 2019). Merchandise retail revenues account for almost £25 million in annual sales for some EPL organizations (Conn, 2019).

The results from this study would allow a marketing division for an EPL club to focus their efforts on highlighting points of attachment that produce the most significant effect on these consumption behaviors when creating marketing material for a U.S.-based audience. For example, perhaps results would suggest fans of successful EPL clubs are highly attached to the organization’s players. If this is the case, then star players should feature prominently on marketing material created for the U.S. audience. On the other hand, perhaps results suggest fans of unsuccessful EPL clubs are highly attached to their fan community. If this occurs, then marketers for those teams should prominently feature scenes of fans enjoying a game together in their marketing material created for the U.S. audience. As proposed by Robinson and Trail (2005), the relationship between points of attachment, identification, and consumption must sit at the heart of targeted marketing communication strategies for sport marketers and managers to help maximize consumer retention and commitment to their product.

Additionally, there is reason to expect continued growth of distant fan groups for sport organizations across the globe. Continuing increases in the speed of information technology and access to high-speed online services will make it increasingly possible for sport fans in any locale to consume sport products from any other locale. It will become increasingly easier for a sport fan to actively support any team from around the world as information technology becomes more powerful and ubiquitous. This is true for both fans

of EPL organizations and fans of any other sport league or organization across the globe. Therefore, sport marketers must develop a firm understanding of the antecedents to identification for distant fan bases to help maximize revenue generation potential. The results from this study will assist sport marketers in obtaining this information.

Delimitations

There are several delimitations to acknowledge in the current study. First, this study will only examine the antecedents to identification for one set of distant fans, U.S.-based sport fans, that identify with teams in one specific professional sport league, the EPL. This decision resulted from the growth of soccer fandom in the U.S. and the growth of fandom for the EPL among U.S.-based sport fans. Therefore, careful consideration needs to occur regarding the ability to generalize these results to other types of distant fans or fans of other professional sport leagues. The cross-sectional design of this study additionally limits generalizability as the reported consumption behaviors of participants represent one specific moment in time. If time constraints were absent and a longitudinal study of sport consumption behavior was possible, this study may produce different findings (Funk, Mahony, & Havitz, 2003; Funk, 2017). Finally, the data collection strategy for this study will only target those U.S.-based individuals who self-identify as fans of an EPL organization. This decision resulted from a desire to understand the factors that lead to one's identification with an EPL organization. To address the purpose of this study, a fan must already possess an existing identification with an EPL organization. Based on this data collection strategy, the findings of this study may not necessarily represent the antecedents to identification for those individuals with a low level of interest in the EPL and its clubs.

Limitations

Several limitations exist that will likely affect the results of this study. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014) cautioned against four types of survey error that can affect survey results: coverage error, sampling error, nonresponse error, and measurement error. Although the presence of each is possible within this study, nonresponse error and measurement error are most likely to limit the accuracy results from this study. Nonresponse error occurs when there is a discrepancy between estimates obtained from those who complete the survey compared to those who did not. Measurement error occurs when there is a difference between the obtained results and the true results of respondents (Dillman et al., 2014). Providing a short and concise survey with clear instructions and performing follow-up requests to minimize non-response will help mitigate, but not entirely eliminate, the presence of these survey errors in this research.

An additional limitation to the reliability of findings in this study could result from common method bias. Common method bias occurs when there is significant inflation (i.e., bias) in the correlations among item-level scores for scales included in a questionnaire due to the particular methods used to administer the questionnaire (Meade, Watson, & Kroustalis, 2007). This can occur in cross-sectional survey design where respondents report on their attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions and their past behaviors related to those attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions for a given topic (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) categorized potential sources of common method bias into four types, including social desirability effects, item ambiguity, effects related to item grouping, and simultaneous measurement of predictor and criterion variables. Meade, Watson, and Kroustalis (2007) conducted a meta-analysis

of past studies and found a prevalence of common method variance within organizational psychological research. However, they also noted this variance only produced a small to moderate amount of bias in most instances. Certain actions can help mitigate common method bias when administering a cross-section survey. These include producing a questionnaire short enough in length to avoid boredom or fatigue among respondents, assessing discriminant validity, and including a validity item to identify careless response patterns (Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

Furthermore, only three items will measure factors represented on the PAI scale for those factors adapted from existing literature. This is consistent with previous research utilizing the PAI scale (e.g., Robinson & Trail, 2005) but does present issues. First, it does not provide the ability to improve item quality or the psychometric properties of the scale by, for example, deleting an item to improve the internal consistency reliability of a subscale. Second, each point of attachment construct may suffer from underrepresentation with only three items used for measurement. Third, performing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with only three indicator items for each factor represents a “just identified” model, meaning there are just enough variables present in the model to freely estimate all model parameters (Babyak & Green, 2010). A more desirable situation would include estimation of an over-identified model, which would require the inclusion of additional items to measure each PAI subscale.

Definition of Terms

Big Six: Informal term used to describe six EPL clubs – Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool, Chelsea, Arsenal, and Tottenham – that have the highest brand value and

largest amount of recent on-field success among all EPL clubs (Douglas, 2018; Kidd, 2019; Robinson, 2019).

Conative Loyalty: A behavioral intention representing a “deeply held commitment to buy the brand in the future” (Oliver, 1999, p. 35).

Consumer Behavior: “The dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior, and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives” (American Marketing Association, 2018).

Distant Fan: “Those who follow a favorite team to which they are geographically distant and have not previously resided near or even been in physical proximity to their favorite team” (Pu & James, 2017, p. 421).

English Premier League (EPL): The top-division soccer league in England, comprising 20 teams and watched by an estimated one billion households across 188 different nations (“Premier League Explained,” 2019).

Intergroup Behavior: “Any behavior displayed by one or more actors toward one or more others that is based on the actors’ identification of themselves and the others as belonging to different social categories” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40).

Nonlocal Fan: Sport fans who follow a favorite team located outside of their immediate geographic region (Andrijew & Hyatt, 2009).

Organizational Identification: “The perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization(s) in which he or she is a member” (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104).

Points of Attachment: A multitude of factors that “reflect a psychological connection toward a certain entity,” such as a sport organization (Woo, Trail, Kwon, & Anderson, 2009, p. 40).

Social Identity Theory: A social psychological theory that attempts to explain group processes and intergroup behaviors (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995).

Sport Consumption Behavior: The confluence of consumer needs, user experience, and the business goals of a sport organization, such as profit, growth, and stability (Funk, 2017).

Team Identification: The “part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from membership in a community anchored around a sports team, based on the emotional value attached to that membership, and the knowledge of, engagement with, and evaluation of the community itself” (Heere, 2016, p. 216).

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to investigate the antecedents to organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans and examine the relationship between these antecedents and various forms of sport consumption behavior. The focus of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework and extensive review of the literature associated with the current study.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the framework and relationships among the concepts included in the subsequent sections of this chapter. Social identity theory provides the contextual foundation for research on this topic. Ashforth and Mael (1989) first proposed organizational identification as a specific form of social identification. Team identification is a unique manner of examining organizational identification within a sport context. Therefore, studies focusing on team identification have primarily drawn upon the conceptual foundation of social identity theory (Lock & Heere, 2017). As proposed by Robinson and Trail (2005), team identification may not solely represent attachment to the team itself. Additional points of attachment could influence the identification between a sport fan and sport organization. These additional points of attachment represent potential antecedents to team or organizational identification. Finally, these points of attachment can influence the consumption choices and intentions of sport consumers (Ballouli et al., 2016; Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Yoshida, Heere, & Gordon, 2015).

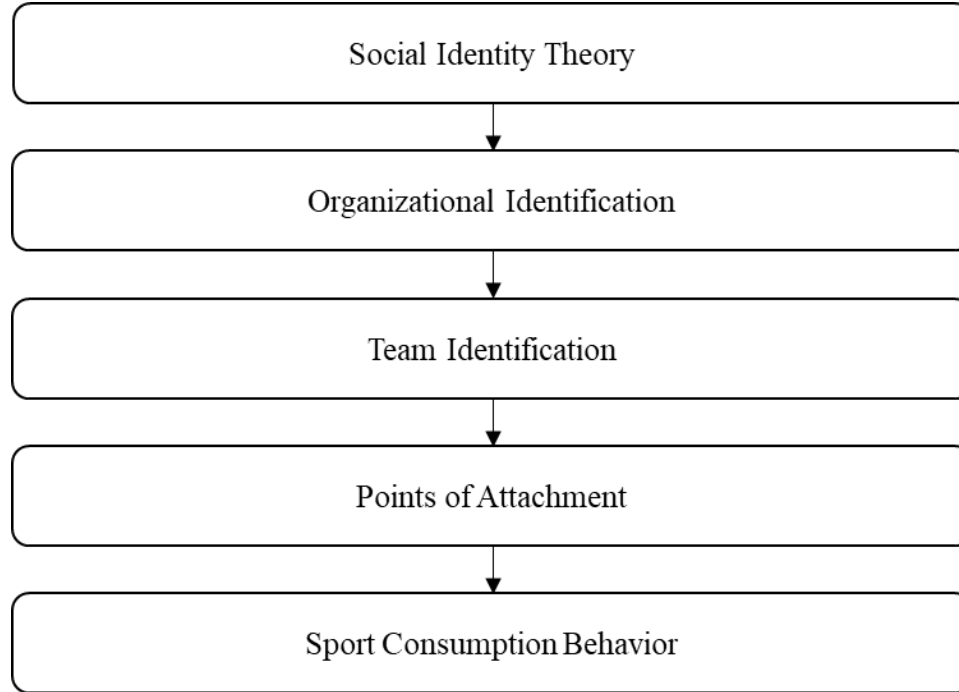


Figure 1.
Theoretical Framework for Sport Fan Identification and Sport Consumer Behavior

There are three main sections in the proceeding review of literature. The first section outlines the genesis of social identity theory. It then draws clear parallels between social identity, organizational identification, and team identification. The objective of this section is to provide a clear demonstration of social identity theory as the appropriate theoretical framework to use for research focusing on organizational identification and team identification. The first section concludes with a discussion of soccer fans and outlines the linkages between social identity theory and the exhibited behaviors of soccer fans. The second section explores the extension of team identification research into points of attachment and the development of the Points of Attachment Index (PAI). The PAI is a scale used to operationalize the concept of points of attachment within team identification research. The third and final section discusses sport consumption behavior. It begins with

an outline of sport consumer behavior models and the types of consumer behaviors measured within various sport research contexts. It concludes with an overview of sport consumption behavior research conducted within point of attachment studies.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory is a social psychological theory that attempts to explain group processes and intergroup behaviors (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). It relies heavily on the foundational work of Tajfel and Turner (1979) who defined intergroup behavior as “any behavior displayed by one or more actors toward one or more others that is based on the actors’ identification of themselves and the others as belonging to different social categories” (p. 40). The classification of individuals into social categories results in in-group/out-group dynamics, whereby individuals within a certain social group (i.e., the “in-group”) perceive their attitudes, preferences, and behaviors as superior to those who are not members of the social group (i.e., the “out-group”) to boost their self-esteem.

This section of the literature review contains four parts. The first part examines the historical development of social identity theory. It includes an overview of precursor theories; early experimental testing of social identity theory; and assumptions, principles, and variables that contribute to its foundation. The second part explains the concept of organizational identification as a specific form of one’s social identification. This part relies heavily upon the work conducted by Ashforth and Mael (1989) as well as Mael and Ashforth (1992). The third part provides an overview of team identification, an extension of organizational identification into the sport management context (Hoegele et al., 2014). This part focuses on the direct linkages between team identification and social identity theory and outlines the historical development of team identification research. The fourth

part examines soccer fans as a particular social group and draws clear parallels between social identity theory and the attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by soccer fan groups.

Background

Social identity theory attempts to explain the manifestation of attitudes, preferences, and behaviors between two competing groups. Turner (1984) coined the term *psychological group* to define a collection of people who share similar social identifications or define themselves as members of similar social categories. He also noted a member of a psychological group need not interact with other members of the group or receive acceptance from other members of the group. Instead, group membership solely relies on an individual's perception of group characteristics and willingness to incorporate status as a group member into their social identity. Group members define social categories based on abstract ideal group characteristics and use group categorization to segment their social environment and define themselves and others in society (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Individuals possess a range of social group memberships which vary in relative importance to constructing a self-concept, with each membership helping to create and describe one's thoughts and behaviors (Hogg et al., 1995). Therefore, the social identity of an individual is an agglomeration of their numerous social group memberships and the characteristics attributed to those groups.

Prior to the development of social identity theory, much of the theoretical literature pertaining to the social psychology of intergroup relations focused on aspects of prejudice, discrimination, and motivation surrounding interpersonal interaction (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Examples of foundational theories aimed at explaining interpersonal conflict include the theory of authoritarian personality (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick,

Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) and the theory of frustration, aggression, and displacement (Berkowitz, 1962), both of which focused on factors in interpersonal relations resulting in prejudice or discriminatory behavior against others. Sherif (1966) forged new ground by examining interpersonal relations through the lens of social group interactions. Central to this investigation of social groups was the hypothesis that conflicting group interests create tension between groups, a phenomenon Campbell (1965) referred to as realistic group conflict theory. This theory posited intergroup tension not only created hostile relations between groups, but it also fostered stronger positive attachments among members of the same group.

Although this foundational research explained the in-group/out-group dynamics inherent within social categories, Tajfel and Turner (1979) recognized realistic group conflict theory only discussed the causes for hostility between groups. It did not address the development of group identification, instead viewing identification of an individual with a group as almost a byproduct of intergroup tension. Tajfel and Turner (1979) contended this failure to properly address the development and maintenance of group identification led to inconsistencies between empirical data and realistic group conflict theory. They sought to expand the theory around intergroup behavior by properly considering the development of an individual's identification with an in-group.

To conceptualize this development, Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed a continuum of social behavior represented by interpersonal behaviors and intergroup behaviors at the extremes. Interactions on the interpersonal end of the continuum are fully contingent upon the relationship and personal characteristics of the two individuals involved and are not at all affected by the social groups to which each individual may

belong. At the other end of the continuum, intergroup interactions are fully dependent on the group memberships of the individuals involved in the interaction and do not consider the individual characteristics of the actors. It is unlikely for interactions to exist at these extreme ends of the continuum in real social situations. However, the nearer individuals fall toward the intergroup extreme, the more negatively they will treat members of the out-group and the more positively they will treat members of the in-group. Essentially, as individuals develop stronger identification with an in-group, they become more willing to depersonalize interactions and treat group members with uniformity by exhibiting positive attitudes and behaviors toward in-group members and negative attitudes and behaviors toward out-group members (Hogg et al., 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Early empirical evidence provided support for this in-group bias within intergroup relations. Tajfel (1970) and Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, and Flament (1971) performed experiments that categorized subjects arbitrarily into two groups and asked them to make decisions on how to allocate money to other participants in the sample. The other participants remained unidentified to the subject except for their group membership. Results demonstrated subjects were more likely to allocate money to participants who shared their group membership, despite the arbitrary assignment of the groups. This provided a clear suggestion of in-group bias and out-group discrimination. Billig and Tajfel (1973) reported similar results even though they made the randomness of group assignment explicit to participants. Tajfel and Turner (1979) concluded these results demonstrated the ease with which individuals create competitive behavior and intergroup conflict within society. In other words, categorization of individuals enhances intergroup

boundaries by producing normative perceptions and actions based solely on the assignment of people to relevant categories (Hogg et al., 1995).

In addition to intergroup differentiation, social identity theory argues that individuals in groups seek positive differences between themselves and members of out-groups to enhance their own self-esteem (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Self-enhancement guides social categorization through the development of in-group norms and stereotypes which favor members of the in-group and allow people to see themselves in a positive light compared to others (Hogg et al., 1995). Therefore, the process of individuals cognitively creating in-groups and out-groups and using in-group membership as a means of enhancing self-esteem provides the foundational basis for social identity theory.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) noted that social identity theory is a socio-cognitive framework used to account for a range of group behaviors and is not constrained by group size, dispersion, or frequency of interpersonal interaction. Fans of a sport organization, for example, can reside in many localities and do not need to personally interact with each other to view themselves as part of the same social group. The researchers based social identity theory on key assumptions, theoretical principles, and variables which contribute to intergroup differentiation. Social identity theory assumes individuals attempt to maintain or improve their self-esteem and strive to create a positive self-identity. Additionally, individuals assign positive or negative value connotations to membership in social groups, with individuals assigning positive value connotations to those groups within which they are a member and negative value connotations to those groups that stand in opposition to their social groups. Individuals will evaluate their own

group through comparisons to the values, attributes, and characteristics of relevant other groups.

From these assumptions, Tajfel and Turner (1979) outlined three theoretical principles of social identity theory. First, individuals strive to obtain or maintain a positive social identity. Second, this positive social identity forms, in large part, on the basis of favorable comparisons between an in-group and relevant out-groups, with the in-group perceived as positively different from the relevant out-groups. Lastly, if an individual deems their social identity as inadequate, he or she will leave their existing group for a more positively distinct group or will create different positive distinctions for their existing group. From these theoretical principles, Tajfel and Turner (1979) concluded that the need to evaluate one's in-group positively through comparisons with out-groups leads to attempts by social groups to differentiate themselves from other relevant groups.

Finally, Tajfel and Turner (1979) recognized the presence of variables that contribute to intergroup differentiation. Chief among these is the level to which an individual internalizes group membership as a dimension of their self-concept. It is not enough for others to define the individual as part of a group. Instead, the individual must internally identify with the group. Furthermore, intergroup comparisons and evaluations depend on the presence of social situations that allow for these determinations of differences between groups. Not all social situations trigger the need for between-group evaluations and even those situations that do lead to group comparisons vary in severity. Lastly, in-groups only compare themselves to relevant out-groups, not all out-groups.

Variables such as group proximity and situational importance influence the dynamics surrounding group comparability.

In summary, social identity theory outlines the means by which an individual orients himself or herself within a social environment. This orientation creates in-group/out-group dynamics, whereby an individual perceives themselves as part of a certain social group (the in-group) and assigns positive values and attitudes towards other members of the in-group. Conversely, those who do not identify as part of this social group are members of the out-group and negative values and attitudes are bestowed upon members of the out-group. This process allows an individual to create a positive self-concept and enhance their self-esteem. Investigations into group membership and identification within a sport fan context can be best understood through the concepts of organizational identification, team identification, and the degree to which an individual identifies as a fan of a particular sport team.

Organizational Identification and Team Identification

Organizational Identification. Social identification concerns collections of individuals who share similar values and, based on these shared values, define themselves as members of the same social category (Turner, 1984). Individuals can form social categories based on shared values and attitudes through expressions of organizational identification. Organizational identification concerns the degree to which an individual perceives themselves as belonging to an organization and how the individual allows organizational membership to define him or herself (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Ashforth and Mael (1989) proposed that organizational identification is a specific form of social identification and they, therefore, provided the first linkage between social identity theory

and organizational identity. They suggested the organization, as a social category, can fulfill critical personal needs for an individual, such as meaning, connectedness, and empowerment. Organizational membership can help enhance an individual's self-esteem, an important tenet of social identity theory. Ashforth and Mael (1989) argued previous researchers confused organizational identification with related constructs such as organizational commitment, affect, and behaviors, which align more with antecedents and consequences of identification. They suggested social identity theory, in contrast, presents a more appropriate approach for research on organizational identification given its focus on classifying individuals into social categories, such as organizational membership.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) elaborated on this point by contending that social identification extends Tolman's (1943) concepts of group identification. Tolman (1943) perceived group identification as a purely cognitive construct and not necessarily associated with any specific behaviors. In other words, individuals who wished to maintain group membership did not need to exert any effort or specific behavior toward achieving group goals. They only needed to perceive themselves as intertwined with the fate of a group to display concepts of group identification. Additionally, social and group identification both relate to individuals personally experiencing the successes and failures of a group (Foote, 1951; Tolman, 1943). An individual can maintain group membership when the group experiences failure or other instances of group hardship. Hogg and Turner (1987) made the distinction between social identification and internalization. As stated by Ashforth and Mael (1989), "whereas identification refers to self in terms of social categories (I am), internalization refers to the incorporation of values, attitudes,

and so forth within the self as guiding principles (I believe)” (pp. 21-22). Identification with a group is similar to identification with a person insofar as a person defines himself or herself in terms of a social referent.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) outlined several characteristics of an organization that could provide antecedents to social identification with an organization. The first is distinctiveness of an organization’s values and actions in relation to those of comparable organizations. This provides the organization with a clearly unique identity.

Distinctiveness need not only comprise positive value distinctions. Individuals can use negative value distinctions (e.g., supporting a losing sport organization) as defense mechanisms to recast a negative attribute as a positive one, potentially explaining the fierce identification some individuals display with elements of counterculture. The prestige of an organization is also a potentially salient antecedent to identification due to its effect on an individual’s self-esteem. This may explain, for example, the “bandwagon” effect seen among some fans of successful sport organizations. Lastly, identification is associated with the relative importance of out-groups. Enhanced awareness of out-groups reinforces awareness of in-group principles and the absence of relevant out-groups diminishes the need for positive in-group value distinctions. Although these characteristics may affect the extent to which an individual identifies with an organization, social identity theory contends they are not necessary for the formation of identification.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) also outlined potential outcomes and implications to social identification in organizations. As with possible antecedents, these outcomes and implications do not need to occur as a result of social identification in organizations.

First, due to the ability of social identification to provide a positive frame of self-reference for an individual, a person will choose to support organizations that embody important aspects of their identities. This support can manifest in various ways, ranging from awareness to actual purchase behavior. Social identification also affects outcomes traditionally associated with group formation, such as group cohesion, cooperation, altruism, and positive evaluations of a group. The effect of an individual's identification with an organization and the internalization of an organization's values and beliefs relies, in part, on the stability and consistency of organizational culture. It does not necessarily rely on interpersonal interaction. That is, organizational identification can arise separately from interpersonal interaction with a member of the organization.

Mael and Ashforth (1992) operationalized the construct of organizational identification by creating a six-item scale to measure the degree of identification between an individual and organization. Their development of an organizational identification model relied upon hypothesized organizational antecedents (distinctiveness, prestige, and competition) and individual antecedents to organizational identification. The model also recognized the consequences of organizational identification through one's willingness to support the organization. The resulting organizational identification scale contained the following six items: (1) "When someone criticizes [organization], it feels like a personal insult." (2) "I am very interested in what others think about [organization]." (3) "When I talk about this [organization], I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'." (4) "This [organization's] successes are my successes." (5) "When someone praises this [organization], it feels like a personal compliment." (6) "If a story in the media criticized

the [organization], I would feel embarrassed.” Initial reliability checks from Mael and Ashforth (1992) confirmed strong internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$).

The initial empirical investigation into organizational identification from Mael and Ashforth (1992) examined identification between alumni and their former school. Subsequent research has extended the application of this scale to a multitude of additional business contexts. Within the sport management realm, organizational identification typically takes the form of team identification (Hoegele et al., 2014), with sport fans deriving part of their social identities from their involvement in activities surrounding the support of a team, such as tailgating, attending games, and talking about the team with other fans of the same sport organization.

Team Identification. Scholars have long theorized that sport team identification is a particular form of organizational and social identification. Beisser (1967) suggested those living in an urban environment develop strong identification with a sport organization to construct a sense of belonging in an otherwise de-personalized environment. Hogg and Abrams (1988) used identification with a sport team as one example of group identification in their overview of intergroup relations and group processes. Murrell and Deitz (1992) provided initial empirical connections between team identification and social identity theory. They utilized data from college undergraduates to suggest a heightened sense of collective esteem and in-group identification significantly predicted higher levels of game attendance and overall attitudinal support of the team. This led to the conclusion that fan identification with a sport organization functioned in much the same way as general social group identification. This research provided indirect associations between team identification and social identity theory.

Heere and James (2007a) suggested the first explicit linkage between team identification and social identity theory. They built a conceptual framework which defined sport team fandom as simply a particular form of organizational membership and envisioned team identity as a specific type of group identity. There are clear indications suggesting social identity theory is an appropriate theoretical foundation for team identification research. Branscombe and Wann (1992) defined team identification as “the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as fans of the team, are involved with the team, are concerned with the team’s performance, and view the team as a representation of themselves” (p. 1017). Sutton, McDonald, Milne, and Cimperman (1997) stated team identification is “the personal commitment and emotional involvement customers have with a sport organization” (p. 15). A more recent conceptualization of team identification from Heere (2016) concluded it is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from membership in a community anchored around a sports team, based on the emotional value attached to that membership, and the knowledge of, engagement with, and evaluation of the community itself” (p. 216).

Lock and Heere (2017) presented four aspects commonly used to describe the meaning of team identification. First, team identification refers to a sport consumer’s perception, orientation, knowledge, cognitive state, or psychological connection to a sport organization, implying that an individual is aware of their connection to a sport team. Secondly, team identification interacts with an individual’s self-concept, which involves how a person orients themselves in terms of their fandom, how a team represents the individual, how a team becomes part of an individual’s self-concept, or how an individual promotes an active connection with a sport organization. Thirdly, individuals who

identify with a team carry a vested interest in the on-field and off-field performance of the team. Finally, team identification holds a degree of emotional importance for a sport consumer, with some individuals perceiving team identification as peripheral to their lives and others placing a great deal of emotional importance on their team identification.

These principles of team identification strongly link to the tenets of social identity theory. Again, social identity theory states an individual's self-concept stems in part from group memberships and individuals will join groups that reflect positively on their self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Identification with a group requires a sense of awareness of group membership and individuals place value connotations or emotional significance on memberships in social groups (Tajfel, 1982). In the concept of team identification, individuals are aware of their membership among a group of fans and use this group membership to help orient their self-concept. They also take a vested interest in team performance and place some degree of emotional importance on their identity as a fan of a sport team. Given these parallels between team and social identification, it follows that most of the recent research on team identification has utilized social identity theory as its foundation (Lock & Heere, 2017). Hoegele et al. (2014) stated "given the importance of sport for society at large, it is reasonable to assume that fans' identification with professional sports teams is more pronounced than customers' identification with conventional companies or brands" (p. 738). Social identity theory holds unique salience within team identification research.

Research on team identification has focused on topics such as factors leading to the development of team identification (e.g., Lock, Taylor, & Darcy, 2011; Lock, Taylor, Funk, & Darcy, 2012; Wann et al., 1996), the dimensional structure of team identification

(e.g., Heere & James, 2007a; Heere & James, 2007b; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and image maintenance among fans of poorly performing teams (e.g., Doyle, Lock, Funk, Filo, & McDonald, 2017; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). Wann and Branscombe (1993) and Wann et al. (1996) provided early research on the formation and effect of identification with a sport team. Wann and Branscombe (1993) developed the widely utilized Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) to gauge the degree of team identification among sport fans based on responses to behavioral, affective, and cognitive scale items. Results from initial scale validation suggested individuals with higher levels of team identification were likely to invest higher levels of time and financial resources in the team and perceived fellow fans more positively. However, the SSIS only examined the degree of identification among existing fans; it did not consider the factors germane to the origination and maintenance of this fandom. Wann et al. (1996) explored the factors involved in identifying a favorite sport team by providing open-ended questionnaires to sport fans. The most common responses for origination and maintenance of team identification included family affiliation, following specific players, peer affiliation, geographical ties, and team success. Conversely, respondents indicated a lack of team success, other commitments, a loss of certain players on the team, geographical concerns, and a lowered enjoyment stemming from group affiliation as the main reasons for cessation of team identification.

Although this seminal research into team identification incorporated many aspects of social identity theory, such as in-group favoritism and the dynamics of group affiliations, it did not explicitly utilize social identity theory as a foundational basis. This contrasts with more recent research on the formation of team identification. For example,

Lock et al. (2011) utilized social identity theory as the framework for exploring key themes driving the formation of new team identification. They contended that formation of new team identification only occurred when an individual was cognitively aware of becoming a member of a fan group for a sports team. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research uncovered three primary reasons for new team identification: identification with the sport, an affiliation with the location of the team, and pleasure derived from game-day atmosphere, especially when attending games with friends or family. These findings demonstrated how teams can seek to attract fan support by tapping into social identifications (e.g., sport and location) already maintained by individuals.

Lock et al. (2012) integrated social identity theory and the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM; Funk & James, 2001, 2006) to examine how team identification originates in relation to a new sport team. The PCM conceptualizes how sport consumers progress through four stages of team identification. At the lowest end of the continuum, a sport consumer becomes aware of a sport organization and consumes the sport product through extrinsic means, such as socialization and media. Following awareness, a consumer may develop attraction and intrinsically acknowledge a preference for certain features of the sport property. Then, the sport consumer attaches personal meaning and importance to the sport property and develops a psychological connection with it. For example, a consumer at the attachment stage of the PCM may switch from saying “I like the team” to “I am a fan of the team.” Finally, the sport consumer becomes wholly allegiant to the sport property and exhibits commitment, persistence, and loyalty to the sport property. Lock et al. (2012) found results from semi-structured interviews with fans indicated the concept of team identification was stronger

at the end of the season compared to the beginning. This change in degree of identification resulted from increased levels of centrality, meaning team identification became a central part of the individual's self-concept, and a heightened sense of importance attached to team personas, such as players and coaches.

Delia and James (2018) also employed social identity theory in a qualitative research setting to understand the meaning of team in the minds of sport fans. They discovered themes attributable to specific team identification included people, geography, facility, opposition to rivals, team success, community, and game traditions.

Social identity theory suggests individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity and join and maintain links with groups that reflect positively on their self-concept, with in-group identities relying upon perceptions that the in-group is positively distinct from relevant out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Why then do some individuals continue to identify with losing sport teams? Within the social identity process, an individual who evaluates their in-group unsatisfactorily can employ identity maintenance strategies to enhance their in-group status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In other words, groups perceived as negative in value (e.g., fans of losing sport teams) can reject this negative in-group evaluation and develop a positive group identity instead. Fisher and Wakefield (1998) used social identity theory to shed light on factors compelling individuals to identify with groups that do not exhibit high group performance through team success. Findings demonstrated that attachment to the sport and attachment to the players allowed group membership to continue for individuals who identified as fans of a losing team.

Doyle et al. (2017) and Rhee, Wong, and Kim (2017) both used semi-structured interviews to examine group identity maintenance strategies among fans of a losing

professional sport team. Doyle et al. (2017) suggested individuals own their identity through strategies such as in-group differentiation associated with being a fan of a losing team and frame the future by convincing themselves that enduring losing seasons now will ultimately result in future prosperity. Rhee et al. (2017) found local community attachment and sport involvement contributed most significantly to maintaining high levels of team identification even when the team failed to produce successful results. Overall, this research suggests several factors, including attachment to the sport, players, and local community, can contribute to fan identity maintenance despite a lack of team success. This is important in the context of U.S.-based EPL fans given more than 31% of these fans identify with a traditionally unsuccessful EPL organization (Easley, 2019).

Soccer Fans

Soccer fans traditionally exhibit high levels of identification with soccer teams, leagues, and the sport itself. Narrative accounts of attendance at soccer games describe the expression of soccer fan identification through various actions, such as waving flags and banners during games and cheering, chanting, and playing instruments during the match (Cleland & Dixon, 2014; Guschwan, 2016; Herd, 2017; Wagner & Shobe, 2017). Several of the tenets of social identity theory and its predecessors can help frame soccer fandom. Campbell's (1965) realistic group theory speculated intergroup tension created hostile relations between groups and forged stronger positive bonds between members of the same group. Within the sport of soccer, intergroup tension can transcend a match between teams of two rival fan groups. Examples come from regional identities formed around provincial soccer clubs in Spain (Szabo, 2013) or political identities formed around soccer teams in Italy (Brown & Walsh, 2000). The social groups found among

fans of a soccer team can overlap other similar minded social groups, enhancing intergroup tension and forming stronger bonds among members of the same group.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed social identity theory as the categorization of individuals into social categories which results in in-group/out-group dynamics. Individuals within a certain social group (i.e., the in-group) perceive their attitudes, preferences, and behaviors as being superior to those who are not members of the social group (i.e., the out-group) to boost their self-esteem. Wagner and Shobe (2017) performed interviews with soccer fans of a U.S.-based club and suggested the social identities of fans result in an “us versus them” mentality, where supporters use terms like “independent” and “organic” to describe their support pridefully, while describing supporter culture at a rival team in wholly oppositional terms, like “corporate,” “plastic,” and “manufactured.” Clark (2006) described this phenomenon as a need for soccer fan groups to shape a distinct superior identity when comparing themselves to fans of another team. Uhlman and Trail (2012) provided empirical support for this. They found variances in team identification among season ticket holders of a U.S.-based soccer club explained a significant amount of variance in feelings of fan superiority. Goldie and Wolfson (2014) also performed an empirical study on this phenomenon and found strong perceptions of superiority among supporters in comparison to supporters of a rival team.

Given this evidence, social identity theory has become a popular conceptual framework to examine soccer fandom (Kerr & Emery, 2016). Jones (2000) adopted social identity theory to identify consequences of group membership among soccer fans, namely: in-group favoritism, out-group derogation, unrealistic optimism, and voice. This research observed in-group favoritism through fans suggesting only members of their

group demonstrated certain positive characteristics. Fans assigned mostly neutral or negative traits to those outside of their group, indicating individuals used a level of out-group derogation as an ego-enhancement or ego-protection mechanism. Uhlman and Trail (2012) used social identity theory to frame their study focusing on the mediating effect of team identification on fan superiority among highly identified fans of a U.S.-based professional soccer club. Hallmann, Oshimi, Harada, Matsuoka, and Breuer (2018) drew upon social identity theory to examine the determinants of spectator behavior for women's national team matches in Japan and Germany. Survey results indicated a spectator's attachment to the team, coach, and sport significantly predicted future attendance intentions. Additionally, results showed a strong correlation between team identification and one's feelings of identification with their country.

This finding of a strong tie between team identification and geographic identification was expected. Traditionally, soccer fandom for a particular team has correlated strongly with the fan's geographic location. This is consistent with the literature on team identification formation. A fan's identification with a team commonly results from an individual's tie to a specific geographic region (Rhee et al., 2017; Wann et al., 1996). Brown (2008) described soccer fans as those embodying local communities with geographically based understandings. However, in today's ever-evolving information technology society, soccer fans possess the ability to devotedly follow any team from around the world, irrespective of geographic constraints. Geographic proximity may not provide the only basis for explaining a fan's identification with a soccer organization in today's sport fandom landscape. Other points of attachment may demonstrate salience in the development of this psychological connection. The following

section discusses the development of extensions to team identification research, including other points of attachment used to investigate the formation of organizational identification among sport fans.

Points of Attachment

Points of attachment represents the concept that a fan's identification with a sport team may not solely represent attachment to the team itself. Instead, this identification could derive from attachment to other objects surrounding the sport organization, such as specific players, a coach, or geographic location. Trail and his colleagues (Robinson & Trail, 2005; Robinson, Trail, Dick, & Gillentine, 2005; Trail et al., 2003) originally developed and tested the points of attachment concept. Continuing research has extended this concept through examining new points of attachment within various sport contexts.

This section of the literature review contains two parts. The first part provides background on points of attachment. It demonstrates the process by which points of attachment research grew from team identification research. The second part examines the development of the PAI scale to provide a uniform measurement of point of attachment factors. This includes early empirical studies that assessed the relationship between the PAI and scales used to measure the motivations for sport consumption, as well as more recent research that focused on extending the PAI through examinations of new points of attachment.

Background

The idea of multiple points of attachment contributing to fan identification with a sport organization stems from the work of Trail et al. (2000), who defined identification as "an orientation of the self in regard to other objects, including a person or group, that

results in feelings or sentiments of close attachment” (pp. 165-166). Inherent within this definition of identification is the concept of attachment deriving from one’s attitudes toward various other objects, including people and groups. In a sport context, a fan could be theoretically oriented, or attached, to other parts of the fandom experience, not necessarily just the team (Trail et al., 2000). An individual may possess attachment to a coach, a specific player, or a fan community in addition to their attachment to the team (Robinson & Trail, 2005). Points of attachment therefore may represent a multitude of factors that “reflect a psychological connection toward a certain entity” (Woo, Trail, Kwon, & Anderson, 2009, p. 40).

Early empirical research on additional points of attachment included exploration of the effects of “objects of attraction” on team identification (Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa, & Hirakawa, 2000) and the development of sport spectator motivation scales with factors such as “interest in player” and “interest in sport” (Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa, & Hirakawa, 2001). Funk et al. (2000) tested team, player, sport, and community pride as four unique objects of attraction affecting length of time as a fan of the J1 league, the top professional soccer league in Japan. The study instrument assessed each object of attraction using three items measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Item-level statements such as “Having a favorite player is more important than having a favorite team” helped to analyze the specific attachment points that contributed to one’s fandom. Funk et al. (2000) collected data across two seasons and found each of these objects of attraction significantly affected one’s duration of sport fandom. Attraction to sport emerged as the most salient factor affecting sport fan duration across both seasons of data collection. Funk et al. (2001) included interest in player, interest in team, and interest in sport as

three points of attachment in the Sport Interest Inventory (SII) instrument created to examine variance in consumer interest at the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup event. The SII mixed these points of attachment with other motives for sport spectating, such as drama, excitement, vicarious achievement, and aesthetics. Results suggested significant attachment factors influencing spectator interest in the event, including attachment to the sport and teams.

Although these early studies incorporated different points of attachment and helped forge new ground in explaining sport fan interest and identification, they did not produce a unified model to examine points of attachment. The development of a scale specifically designed to measure points of attachment originated from the creation of the *Team Identification Index* scale (TII; Robinson & Trail, 2005). Trail and James (2001) created the TII to assess the concurrent validity of the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC). The MSSC attempted to address psychometric property issues in prior scales meant to examine the motives of sport spectators for investing their money, emotions, and time in following and watching a sport team. Trail and James (2001) argued prior sport spectator motivation scales, namely the *Sport Fan Motivation Scale* (SFMS; Wann, 1995), the *Motivations of the Sport Consumer* (MSC) scale (Milne & McDonald, 1999), and the *Fan Attendance Motivations* (FAM) scale (Kahle, Kambara, & Rose, 1996), exhibited poor validity and reliability properties. For example, Wann (1995) failed to adequately establish content, construct, and discriminant validity during the SFMS development process, while Kahle et al. (1996) reported Cronbach's alpha values of .64 or below for five of seven FAM subscales, which suggested poor internal consistency reliability among scale items (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

In response to the psychometric property deficiencies of the aforementioned scales, Trail and James (2001) developed and validated the MSSC. The motivational factors assessed on the MSSC originated from Trail et al.'s (2000) conceptual model for sport spectator motivations. These motivational factors included achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, drama/eustress, escape, family, physical attractiveness of participants, quality of physical skill of participants, and social interaction. Trail and James (2001) created the TII simultaneously to assess the concurrent validity of the MSSC. The TII is a three-item scale comprised of the following statements: (1) "I already consider myself a fan of the (team name);" (2) "I would feel a loss if I had to give up being a (team name) fan;" and (3) "Others recognize that I am a big (team name) fan" (James & Trail, 2008). Trail and James (2001) reported that the TII demonstrated strong internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) and suggested concurrent validity with the MSSC through significant positive correlations with eight of the nine sport spectator motivational factors.

Following this research, Fink et al. (2002) performed further investigations on the relationship between team identification and motives for sport spectator consumption. They tested a theoretical model that viewed motives as antecedents to team identification. This study extended the work of Trail and James (2001) by examining motives as individual factors with varying levels of salience to team identification rather than placing motives together as a single higher order latent variable. Fink et al. (2002) again reported strong internal consistency reliability for the TII (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$). Their study used structural equation modeling to analyze the effect of each motivational factor on team identification. Results revealed vicarious achievement, aesthetics, drama, and

social interaction significantly predicted variances in team identification levels. Men and women differed slightly in terms of the relationship between motives and team identification. Specifically, drama only significantly predicted identification for women, while social interaction and acquisition of knowledge significantly predicted identification for men only.

Additional studies that utilized the TII demonstrated significant relationships between team identification and different types of consumer outcomes, including behavioral intentions (e.g., Yoshida, Heere, & Gordon, 2014), conative loyalty (Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2005), and past consumption behaviors (Kwon et al., 2005). However, as previously noted, team identification, or attachment to the team itself, may only represent one point of attachment for a sport spectator. Other points of attachment, such as attachment to a star player, charismatic coach, league quality, or geographic location, may represent additional salient connections between a sport fan and the sport organization (Robinson & Trail, 2005). Therefore, one cannot assume organizational identification solely reflects team identification, or attachment to the team itself. Robinson and Trail (2005) built upon the concept of the TII to explore these additional identification factors.

Points of Attachment Index (PAI) Scale Development

Researchers have operationalized the examination of specific points of attachment in relation to a sport organization through the use of the Points of Attachment Index (PAI). Robinson and Trail (2005) developed the PAI to test the hypothesis that team was just one form of identification, or attachment, to a sport organization and multiple other points of attachment may also exist. Researchers (Robinson & Trail, 2005; Robinson et

al., 2005; Trail et al., 2003) performed a series of studies that examined seven unique points of attachment influencing a fan's identification with a sport organization: players, team, coach, university, sport, community, and level of sport. The attachment to players factor sought to identify the influence of individual players, rather than the team as a whole, on organizational identification. Attachment to team examined the importance of the team to the fan and utilized the same item-level statements as the TII (Trail & James, 2001). Coach attachment asked if the fan followed the team specifically because of the coach. Attachment to a university is unique to the collegiate sport context and examined one's allegiance to the university as a whole rather than to a specific sports team. Attachment to the sport attempted to identify if an individual was a fan of the sport overall. Community attachment attempted to ascertain positive psychological connections between a sport team and the status of a particular community or region. Attachment to level of sport asked if an individual highly identified with the level of sporting competition, regardless of which teams competed.

Initial studies utilizing the PAI focused on the relationship between attachment factors and constructs from the MSSC. Trail et al. (2003) examined this relationship using data collected from undergraduate students at college football games. They found support for a model that segmented points of attachment into two categories: organizational identification (team, coach, community, university, and players) and sport identification (sport and level of play). They also found significant relationships between organizational identification attachments and motives associated with fans of successful teams as well as between sport identification attachments and motives associated with fans of unsuccessful teams. These findings suggested the importance of determining

unique points of attachment between fans and a sport organization before developing marketing plans meant to positively influence sport fan consumption behavior.

Robinson and Trail (2005) found further support for the model identified by Trail et al. (2003). The researchers utilized a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with each point of attachment factor score as a dependent variable to highlight differences in the importance placed on points of attachment when compared across gender and type of sport. Partial eta-squared results revealed small to moderate amounts of variance explained by these independent variable groupings. In specific, women exhibited higher attachment to the sport and attachment to players compared to men, while a subject's attachment to player, sport, coach, and university varied based on the type of sporting event. Additionally, closer examinations of the relationship between points of attachment and motives for sport consumption indicated attachments to the team and community were most strongly related to the motive of vicarious achievement. This finding promoted the tenets of social identity theory and team identification. Namely, these results suggested individuals enhance their relationship with the group (i.e., fans of a specific sport organization) by socially interacting with like-minded individuals at a sporting event (Robinson & Trail, 2005). Further findings revealed differences in aesthetics and drama motives created variability in attachment to the sport and level of sport. Overall, these results indicated significant differences existed in relationships between specific motives and points of attachment. Robinson and Trail (2005) argued these relationships must sit at the center of marketing communication strategies for sport marketers and managers to help maximize consumer retention and commitment to the sport product.

In an effort to enhance this line of inquiry, Woo et al. (2009) provided an important development to theoretical models linking sport consumption motives and points of attachment. This research examined four theoretical models to determine which explained the most variance in relationships between motives and points of attachment. The first model closely resembled the model from Trail et al. (2003) with points of attachment categorized into two dimensions: organizational identification and sport identification. Additionally, Woo et al. (2009) speculated organizational identification derived from the motive of vicarious achievement. The researchers suggested those motivated by vicarious achievement required a social-psychological attachment to the team (e.g., player, coach, or university) to identify with a successful in-group. Conversely, individuals motivated by factors such as drama or aesthetics would not care as much about wins and losses and instead would exhibit stronger points of attachment to sport or level of sport.

The second model put forth by Woo et al. (2009) extended their first model and hypothesized a significant reciprocal relationship between organizational identification and sport identification. This reciprocal relationship would mean, for example, a fan of soccer would likely have a favorite player or team and a fan of a specific soccer team or player would likely display a strong attachment to the sport itself. The third model differentiated between fans and spectators, with “fans” defined as individuals who displayed high levels of identification with their favorite sport team compared to “spectators” of the sport who displayed lower levels of organizational identification. Woo et al. (2009) demonstrated a connection with social identity theory in their justification of developing this model by theorizing that “fans may socially interact with each other more

than spectators because they consider themselves as an ‘in-group’ which has a clear shared goal (winning) and show favoritism towards their in-group members” (p. 43). The fourth model shared the same structure as the third but hypothesized a potential reciprocal relationship between organizational identification and sport identification, similar to the second model.

Woo et al. (2009) used a sample of college students who identified as fans of their university’s football team to test these four theoretical models. Results from correlation and path analysis suggested the fourth model provided the best fit to the data. Therefore, the results from their study built upon those from Trail et al. (2003), which categorized points of attachment into organizational identification and sport identification dimensions. Results from Woo et al. (2009) suggested those motivated by vicarious achievement placed importance on organizational identification factors, such as attachment to a player, coach, or university. Conversely, individuals motivated by factors such as drama or aesthetics did not care as much about wins and losses and instead exhibited stronger points of attachment to sport or level of sport. Those displaying high levels of identification (fans) were more likely to exhibit attachment to organizational identification factors (e.g., team, coach, or players) while those with lower levels of identification (spectators) were more likely to display attachment to the level of sport or the sport itself. However, only the path from organizational identification to sport identification was significant, which indicated a one-way, rather than reciprocal, relationship between these variables. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the model of best fit from Woo et al.’s (2009) analysis.

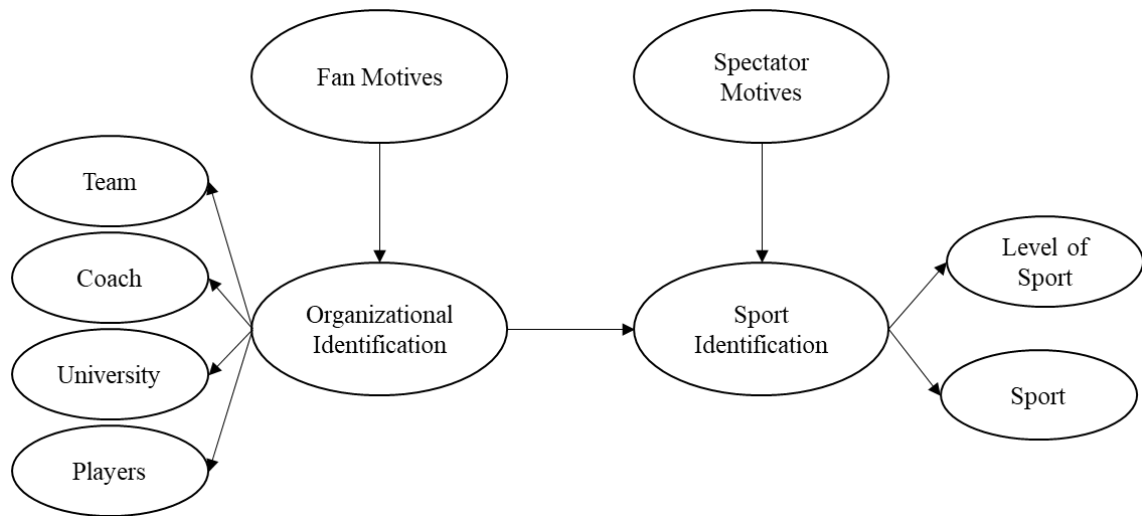


Figure 2.
Relationship Between Motives and Points of Attachment. Adapted from Woo et al. (2009)

These results again provided support for the need to segment target markets and develop separate marketing strategies for them. Specifically, sport marketers should differentiate their target market between fans and spectators since these two segments are likely to respond differently to various marketing stimuli based on the salience they place on different points of attachment.

More recent studies employing the PAI scale focused on instrument extension through examination of additional points of attachment. Shapiro et al. (2013) incorporated two new points of attachment – attachment to a university’s athletic department and identification as a general sports fan – in their inspection of the mediating role played by points of attachment on the relationship between past consumption behaviors and future consumption intentions. In particular, the first new point of attachment, identification as a general sport fan, attempted to identify if individuals attached to a certain sport team simply because of their general interest in sport. In addition to testing these two new points of attachment, Shapiro et al. (2013) performed

model-fit tests to reveal a third-order latent model of points of attachment. In the model of best fit, points of attachment acted as the third-order latent variable, with three second-order latent variables grouped underneath: group focus, local focus, and broad focus. Each of these related to three first-order variables. Group focus consisted of attachment to team, coach, and players. Local focus encompassed the attachment factors of university, athletic department, and community. Broad focus included points of attachment regarding level of sport, the sport itself, and general sports fandom. Results from this study indicated varying mediation effects of points of attachment on the relationship between past consumption behaviors and future consumption intentions. The results showed team identification was the only significant explanatory variable across all contexts.

Yoshida et al. (2015) further expanded the study of points of attachment by splitting community attachment into two distinct factors: local city attachment and fan community attachment. Local city attachment examined the importance of a team's locality in shaping the self-image of an individual, and fan community attachment examined the connectedness between one fan and other fans of the same team. The decision to represent community attachment as two distinct factors drew justification from previous literature. For example, prior research demonstrated empirical support for the positive effect of city and state identification on team identification (Heere, James, Yoshida, & Scremin, 2011). Additionally, Katz and Heere (2015) performed interviews and ethnographic observations with fan groups and found strong connections between fan community attachment and positive behaviors related to team identification. Yoshida et al. (2015) incorporated these points of attachment, along with sport and player attachment, as antecedents to team identification and potential direct and indirect

influencers of attendance frequency at professional soccer matches in Japan. Factor analysis results revealed each of the three items designed to measure local city attachment and fan community attachment, respectively, significantly loaded on its hypothesized factor. Structural equation modeling results suggested attachment to sport and fan community attachment shared a positive and significant relationship with team identification. Most saliently, fan community attachment was the only significant predictor of repeat attendance frequency throughout the season.

Spinda et al. (2016) further refined the measurement of local community attachment by including “region” in the name of the university attachment factor and refining the item-level statements used to measure this factor (e.g., “I identify with numerous aspects of the university/region rather than with just being a fan of the team”). They also included conference attachment as a potential factor and considered this as a different construct compared to level of play attachment. Furthermore, they explored how points of attachment varied among football fans at three different levels of competition: high school, college, and professional. This study collected data from self-identified fans of football via online message boards and websites devoted to social interaction among football fans. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed significant differences between fans of football at the three levels of competition in relation to strength of attachment to both region and conference. In addition, ANOVA results suggested significant differences between fans regarding attachment strength to team, players, and coach. Post hoc analysis revealed high school football fans displayed higher levels of attachment to region compared to college or professional football fans. This analysis also

revealed college football fans exhibited higher levels of attachment to conference compared to high school or professional football fans.

Finally, Ballouli et al. (2016) explored the effects of consumption motives and points of attachment on the conative loyalty of motorsport event attendees. This study defined conative loyalty as a behavioral intention representing a “deeply held commitment to buy the brand in the future” (Oliver, 1999, p. 35). In relation to points of attachment research, Ballouli et al. (2016) extended this subject through an exploration of the attachment fans exhibit to a particular sporting venue. Items relating to the measurement of this factor included “[The venue] is the best [venue] in the U.S.,” “I am a big fan of [the venue],” and “Being a fan of [the venue] is very important to me” (p. 175). Results suggested venue attachment was a significant predictor of conative loyalty among attendees. The association between other points of attachment and conative loyalty varied by attachment factor, once again indicating the need for sport marketers to segment their target market appropriately based on attachment constructs.

A review of the literature reveals researchers have examined a variety of points of attachment. Table 1 provides an overview of the various points of attachment found in the existing literature and reveals the prevalence of certain ones throughout this line of research. A majority of studies utilized points of attachment related to players, team, coach, sport, university, and level of sport. Community, one of the original attachment factors proposed by Trail and his colleagues (2003), largely disappeared. Instead, more recent research (e.g., Yoshida et al., 2015; Spinda et al., 2016) examined community attachment as two unique constructs: local city/region attachment and fan community attachment.

Table 1
Points of Attachment Utilized in Existing Literature

	Trail et al. (2003)	Robinson et al. (2005)	Robinson & Trail (2005)	Kwon et al. (2005)	Woo et al. (2009)	Uhlman & Trail (2012)	Shapiro et al. (2013)	Yoshida et al. (2015)	Spinda et al. (2016)	Ballouli et al. (2016)
Players	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Team	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Coach	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Community	✓	✓	✓				✓			
Sport	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Level of Sport	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Athletic Department							✓			
General Sport Fandom							✓			
Local City/Region								✓	✓	✓
Fan Community						✓		✓		
Conference									✓	
Venue										✓

In addition, Table 1 demonstrates that researchers have adapted the PAI to fit unique research contexts. The applicability of points of attachment can differ based on the sport and research context. For example, neither Yoshida et al. (2015) nor Ballouli et al. (2016) included university or athletic department as points of attachment in their studies since their specific research contexts focused on professional sport (soccer and motorsports, respectively). Table 1 also shows researchers have created or modified point of attachment factors to provide a more holistic assessment of specific research contexts. Spinda et al. (2016) created items to measure conference attachment for fans of football. Ballouli et al. (2016) added items to examine venue attachment in their study of Formula

One racing fans. However, opportunities still exist to extend the PAI. As stated by Spinda et al. (2016), “it is possible, perhaps likely, that these [existing points of attachment] are not an exhaustive index of areas of fan identification” (p. 350). Attachment to organizational factors such as team ownership or the history and tradition of the organization, for example, have not received empirical assessment within the existing inventory of point of attachment research.

Overall, the existing inventory of research on points of attachment established strong linkages between attachment factors, motivations for sport consumption, and team identification. Initial research from Trail et al. (2003) revealed points of attachment could represent two distinct modes of identification, with attachment to team, coach, university, community, and players representing a form of organizational identification and attachment to sport and level of play indicating a form of sport identification. Attachment factors linked to organizational identification possessed a significant relationship to motives associated with fans of successful sport organizations while attachment factors linked to sport identification demonstrated a significant relationship to motives associated with fans of unsuccessful sport organizations. Shapiro et al. (2013), Yoshida et al. (2015), and Ballouli et al. (2016) additionally found associations between points of attachment and consumer loyalty constructs, such as past and future consumption, repeat attendance at a sporting event, and conative loyalty. These aforementioned studies, however, differ in the types of behavioral outcomes examined and their results vary in terms of the strength of relationship between points of attachment and these behavioral outcomes. Therefore, the following section outlines specific examinations of sport consumption behavior outcomes and the influence of points of attachment on these outcomes.

Sport Consumption Behavior

The following section of the literature review discusses sport consumption behavior. It contains two parts. The first part provides background information on sport consumption behavior. This includes defining the term “sport consumption behavior,” demonstrating its relationship with social identity theory, and outlining the major theoretical models used to explain the sport consumer. The second part outlines the relationship between sport consumption behaviors and points of attachment research. In particular, this subsection examines significant findings from points of attachment research in relation to various types of sport consumption behavior including conative loyalty, past consumption behavior, future consumption intentions, and actual game attendance behavior (Ballouli et al., 2016; Kwon et al., 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Yoshida et al., 2015).

Background

The American Marketing Association (2018) defines consumer behavior as “the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior, and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives.” Consumer behavior research draws upon theories from several academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and education, and sport consumption behavior research is a specific subgenre that focuses on the consumption of products and services in the sport industry (Funk et al., 2003; Funk, 2017). Funk (2017) envisioned sport consumption behavior as the confluence of consumer needs, user experience, and the business goals of a sport organization, such as profit, growth, and stability. In regard to behavior outcomes, sport management researchers have studied a wide variety of consumption behaviors

exhibited by sport consumers, including attendance at sporting events (Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Trail et al., 2003; Yoshida et al., 2015), media consumption (Shapiro et al., 2013; Wakefield, 2016), news and social media consumption (Phua, 2012; Wakefield, 2016), and purchases of sport team related merchandise (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Shapiro et al., 2013; Trail et al., 2005).

The importance of sport consumer research is evident, as it underlies the ability of sport organizations to accomplish organizational goals, such as maximizing revenue through marketing efforts and meeting consumer expectations of service quality (Funk, 2017; Trail, 2018). Social identity theory provides an apt framework for investigating consumer behavior research. Tajfel and Turner (1979) suggested that social identification accounts for a range of group behaviors. Smith, Patterson, Williams, and Hogg (1981) proposed this theoretical foundation applied to sport contexts, with highly identified sport fans likely to attend more games, spend more money on merchandise, and consume and share more information about their team. Early empirical work confirmed the relationship between identification and sport consumption behavior. Wann and Branscombe (1993) provided evidence that fans with higher levels of identification were significantly more likely to invest time and financial resources in their favorite team. Sutton et al. (1997) also suggested differences in consumer behavior between highly identified sport fans and lowly identified sport fans, particularly in their behavioral loyalty toward the organization. These early studies demonstrated the significant relationship between fan identification and sport consumption behavior. However, they did not necessarily explain or predict the sport consumption process.

Much of the ongoing research regarding sport consumption behavior has focused on developing and testing theoretical models that explain the sport consumer (Funk et al., 2003, Trail, 2018). One such model is the PCM (Funk & James, 2001; 2006). The PCM attempted to explain the stages of behavioral development within the sport consumer. In sum, sport consumers reside at one of four stages of psychological identification with a sport organization. The lowest level indicates a basic awareness of the organization and possible consumption of the sport property through socialization and media. Higher levels of commitment include attraction, attachment, and, ultimately, allegiance to the sport organization. At the allegiance level, the sport consumer becomes wholly committed to the sport property and exhibits persistent loyalty through repeated consumption behaviors such as game attendance or merchandise purchases.

Although the PCM (Funk & James, 2001; 2006) provided a theoretical model to outline the engagement process of a sport consumer, it did not discuss the motivations for why a fan might consume the sport product. Trail et al. (2000) proposed a theoretical model that linked sport fan motivations and team identification with sport consumer behavioral outcomes. This model utilized expectancies about one's experience, confirmation of these expectancies, self-esteem responses, and affective state to moderate the relationship between motivations, identification, and sport consumption behavior.

Trail and James (2001), Fink et al. (2002), and Trail et al. (2003) performed a series of tests to explain why sport fans engage in consumption activities through the development of the *Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption* (MSSC). Trail and James (2001) focused on an assessment of the scale's psychometric properties and did not link the motivational factors to any type of consumption-based outcome. Fink et al. (2002)

directly utilized social identity theory, organizational identification, team identification, and motivations for sport consumption in their study applying the MSSC to predict variance in team identification levels among sport fans. Their results suggested the factors used to explain sport consumption accounted for almost 73% of the variance in one's level of team identification. Trail et al. (2003) became the first researchers to empirically test the relationship between sport fan motivations and behavioral outcome variables. Their model hypothesized sport fan motives led to team identification, which created expectancies around the sport event and the presence of future fan behavioral intentions regarding media and merchandise consumption. Data collected from spectators at two college basketball games produced results that only explained about 10% of the variance in future behavior intentions.

Additional studies continued to hypothesize new models linking identification with consumer behavior outcomes. Trail et al. (2005) used levels of self-esteem to moderate the relationship between team identification with intended game attendance and merchandise purchases. They tested four models but found team identification only predicted 2% of these behavioral intentions. James and Trail (2008) tested three explanatory models to explain the effect of team identification on attendance, merchandise, and media consumption intentions among season-ticket holders for a U.S.-based professional baseball team. They grounded this research in social identity theory and found support for a model that segmented these consumption intentions into distinct outcomes, thereby supporting the need to treat consumer behavior outcomes differently. In specific, identification produced a larger and more significant amount of explanatory

power on merchandise and media consumption intentions compared to future game attendance intentions.

The relatively low levels of consumption behavior explained in these aforementioned studies could relate to several factors. First, these studies examined future consumption intentions. Funk et al. (2003) noted that consumption intentions does not always lead to actual consumption behavior. Therefore, participants in these studies could state their desire to engage in steady streams of future consumption behaviors even if this did not represent a plausible reality for them. Kim and Trail (2010) explained this mismatch between intended and actual behavior as the effect of constraints, barriers, or obstacles on one's ability to engage in intended behavior. Second, it was possible that factors other than team identification, such as point of attachment variables, could explain significant additional variance in sport consumption behaviors. The following examines specific linkages between points of attachment research and sport consumption behavior.

Relationship with Points of Attachment Research

Funk et al. (2003) outlined several critiques of existing sport consumption behavior research. A main point of contention regarded the lack of research on multiple objects of attachment that could lead to sport consumer behavior choices. Funk et al. (2003) stated "investigating an individual or group's relationship with a single sport object is an area that has received limited attention" (p. 202). They hypothesized several examples of this type of research, such as studying fans engaging in attendance or media consumption behavior due to attachment to the sport or a player rather than attachment only to the team itself. Since this initial call for research examining the relationship between points of attachment and sport consumption behavior, point of attachment

research has focused on many different types of behavior outcomes, including conative loyalty, past consumption behavior, future consumption intentions, and actual game attendance behavior (Ballouli et al., 2016; Kwon et al., 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Yoshida et al., 2015).

Initial examinations of the relationship between points of attachment and sport consumption behavior came from Robinson et al. (2005). This research examined differences in points of attachment among college football game attendees at various levels of competition. Results suggested that, for the most part, organizational identification attachment factors, such as attachment to the team, coach, community, and university, drove game attendance for fans of teams at higher levels of competition. However, attachment to player and sport identification attachment constructs (attachment to the sport and level of play) had less clarity regarding effects on attendance at each level of college football competition. These attachment factors held the highest level of salience at the lowest level of competition, followed by the highest level of competition, and finally the middle level of competition. Given the ambiguity found in some of these results, the need for more research on the subject was evident.

Kwon et al. (2005) also provided an early investigation into the relationship between points of attachment and sport consumption behaviors. This study focused on associations between points of attachment and four consumer outcomes, identified as “cognitive, affective, conative, and behavioral dimensions of sport spectatorship” (p. 255). It also provided the first empirical assessment of the PAI scale’s predictive validity. Cognitive and affective loyalty examined variations in consumer allegiance and satisfaction with a sport team. Conative loyalty assessed one’s intent to purchase future

team tickets, merchandise, and clothing. The scale utilized to measure these purchase intent behaviors derived from Trail et al.'s (2005) intentions for sport consumption behavior scale. The evaluation of behavioral loyalty comprised a single question regarding the number of past games attended. The study utilized college students who self-identified as fans of their university's football team. Results from hierarchical linear regression models suggested attachment to the team predicted a significant and meaningful amount of variance in all four consumer outcomes, while attachment to coach, university, and level of sport also explained a significant, although less meaningful, amount of variance in consumer behavior.

Shapiro et al. (2013) conducted a large cross-sectional study that examined the mediating effect of points of attachment between past consumption behaviors and future consumption intentions for a university's sport teams. Their study adapted and extended Trail et al.'s (2005) sport consumer behavior intentions scale, originally used to assess conative loyalty in sport spectators, to measure past consumption behaviors. Past consumption behavior data collected by Shapiro et al. (2013) included various forms of media consumption (television, radio, print, and web broadcast), information and news consumption through the team's website, social media consumption related to the team (Facebook and Twitter), game attendance, merchandise purchases, tailgating, and athletic department donations. Shapiro et al. (2013) adapted items from previous studies on future consumption intentions (James & Trial, 2008; Trail et al., 2003; Trail et al., 2005) to examine future behavior intentions, including future merchandise purchases, support for sponsors of the football team, and future attendance intentions for football, men's basketball, and women's basketball games. Shapiro et al. (2013) utilized hierarchical

regression analysis to first determine the amount of variance explained in each type of future behavior intention by points of attachment. Then, past consumption behaviors were entered into each regression model to assess the unique variance accounted for in future consumption intentions by these past consumption variables, controlling for points of attachment. Overall, the mediating effect of points of attachment differed depending on the type of future behavior intention examined. Results suggested points of attachment fully mediated models predicting future attendance intentions at men's and women's basketball games, partially mediated models predicting intentions to purchase team merchandise and support the team sponsor, and did not have any mediation effect on future attendance intentions at college football games.

Yoshida et al. (2015) developed a theoretical framework and collected real attendance data to examine the effect of points of attachment on actual consumer behavior. This study, which attempted to predict longitudinal behavioral loyalty for season ticket holders of a Japanese professional soccer club, proposed a model whereby four points of attachment (sport, player, local city, and fan community) positively influenced team identification. Previous literature established the significance of these relationships (e.g. Yoshida et al., 2014). However, Yoshida et al. (2015) also hypothesized team identification shared a positive relationship with attendance behavior over time. Furthermore, they hypothesized that the four points of attachment included in this study could directly affect behavioral loyalty without utilizing team identification as a mediating variable. Results suggested player attachment, sport attachment, and fan community attachment factors all significantly explained team identification. However, team identification did not have a significant effect on attendance frequency for any time

period examined in the study. Instead, fan community attachment was the only variable to demonstrate consistent predictive validity on attendance frequency. In comparison, more established constructs in the literature, such as team identification, organizational satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, did not significantly predict repeat attendance behavior. This result showed the importance of the fan community attachment factor and deemphasized the need to include team identification as a mediator variable between points of attachment and consumption behaviors.

Ballouli et al. (2016) provided a further inspection of the relationship between points of attachment and conative loyalty within the context of a Formula One race event. In this study, the researchers sought to examine the effects of sport consumption motives and points of attachment on conative loyalty items regarding intent to purchase tickets for a future event, buy merchandise in the future, and continue supporting the sport organization. Motives and points of attachment jointly explained 37% of the variance in future attendance intentions, with attachment to the venue exhibiting the largest effect on a participant's intent to return to the sporting event. The predictor variables also explained 41% of the variance in intent to purchase team merchandise. Attachment to the team and attachment to the level of sport demonstrated a stronger effect on this consumption intention compared to other attachment factors. Lastly, motives and points of attachment jointly explained 52% of the variance in intentions to support an organization in the future, with attachment to team possessing the strongest effect on this conative loyalty outcome. The context of this study was unique, given data collection occurred during a large motorsports event, which is a sport where more of the focus is on the individual athletes compared to teams and home venues. Therefore, Ballouli et al.

(2016) suggested future studies should assess whether these results are replicable across different samples or are unique to this study context.

Summary of Literature

The aforementioned literature provides a basis for investigating the purpose and research questions associated with this study. Social identity theory provides a socio-cognitive framework to explain the formation of social groups and behaviors derived from intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory offers a strong theoretical foundation for research on organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and team identification (Lock & Heere, 2017) with sport fans qualifying as a particular type of social group. However, team identification only represents one potential form of identification, or attachment, between a sport fan and sport organization. It is possible that other points of attachment exist to help explain the development of sport fandom (Robinson & Trail, 2005). Multiple antecedents to fan identification, such as attachment to players, coaches, a fan community, or the sport itself, can provide additional salience regarding high levels of identification with a sport organization.

Initial research on points of attachment focused on the relationship between motivations for sport consumption and various points of attachment (e.g., Woo et al., 2009; Trail et al., 2003; Trail et al., 2005). In general, this research demonstrated that points of attachment could represent two distinct modes of identification, with attachment to team, coach, university, community, and players representing a form of organizational identification and attachment to sport and level of play indicating a form of sport identification. Attachment factors linked to organizational identification possessed a significant relationship to motives associated with fans of successful sport organizations

while attachment factors linked to sport identification demonstrated a significant relationship to motives associated with fans of unsuccessful sport organizations. From this initial line of inquiry, point of attachment research extended into studies that attempted to explain the relationship between points of attachment and multiple forms of sport consumption behaviors (Ballouli et al., 2016; Kwon et al., 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Yoshida et al., 2015). Findings from these studies revealed the importance of assessing unique points of attachment affecting the relationship between sport fans and a sport organization before creating targeted marketing plans to positively influence sport consumption behavior.

Yet, there is still more territory to explore in regard to points of attachment and the effect of attachment factors on team identification sport consumption behavior. Again, Spinda et al. (2016) stated “it is possible, perhaps likely, that these [existing points of attachment] are not an exhaustive index of areas of fan identification” (p. 350). Moreover, many of the studies outlined in this literature review focused on predicting future consumption behaviors (for an exception, see Yoshida et al., 2015). Funk et al. (2003) warned of the inaccuracy between self-reported behavior intentions and actual consumption behavior. They called for future research on sport consumption behavior “to broaden our understanding by interacting with the world outside of the United States. In sport-related research, understanding national and cultural differences within and across sport would seem to be an obvious necessity in extending this body of knowledge” (p. 202). More recently, a panel of experts reiterated this need for more focus on globalization and internationalization within future sport consumption behavior research, specifically in regard to “an expected dominance of international leagues supplanting

existing national leagues” (Funk, 2017, p. 149). Thus, the existing literature on team identification, points of attachment, and sport consumption behavior reveals gaps, specifically related to understanding sport fandom in different cultural and global contexts.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter outlines the proposed methodology to address the stated purpose and research questions of this study. Broadly, this chapter outlines the research design of the study, sampling and data collection strategy, instrumentation, and data analysis techniques.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the antecedents to organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans and examine the relationship between these antecedents and various forms of sport consumption behavior. Points of attachment (Robinson & Trail, 2005) between U.S.-based EPL fans and their favorite EPL team provided the foundation for exploring these antecedents to fan identification. The measurement of sport consumption behaviors drew from existing research that utilized self-reported past behaviors within a point of attachment research context (Kwon et al., 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013). This study explored the antecedents to identification and consumption behaviors for a population of “distant fans,” described as fans who do not live near their favorite team nor, perhaps, have they ever traveled to the team’s home area (Pu & James, 2017). This subset of sport fans has received relatively scant attention in the literature despite their growth in recent years due to advances in information technology (Scola et al., 2019).

This study provides an understanding for how U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations choose a favorite team and how the factors influencing this choice of team affect consumption behavior decisions. In particular, these results illuminate the salient points of attachment affecting team identification and consumption behaviors of distant fans, providing implications for sport organizations around the world as they seek to better understand how to connect with growing distant fan populations. Distant fans can contribute important streams of revenue for sport organizations through nonlocal broadcast fees and merchandise purchases (Kerr & Emery, 2011). The results of this study provide enhanced knowledge specifically to EPL organizations regarding the most efficient way to structure marketing materials geared toward a U.S.-based audience.

Research Questions

RQ1. Which points of attachment explain organizational identification for U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2. Which points of attachment explain sport consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2a. Which points of attachment explain broadcast media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2b. Which points of attachment explain social media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2c. Which points of attachment explain merchandise purchase behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ3. What differences exist in points of attachment between U.S.-based fans of the Big Six EPL organizations and U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six?

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to investigate antecedents to identification for a set of distant sport fans, namely U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations. Cross-sectional survey designs utilize a sample from a representative subset of the population to draw statistical inferences regarding the entire population (Creswell, 2008). They provide the benefit of allowing a researcher to investigate a current issue in a relatively short time frame. This study collected cross-sectional data via an online survey instrument administered through Qualtrics. Dillman et al. (2014) outlined several advantages of online survey delivery. This type of survey delivery provides the ability to engage with large portions of the U.S. population, is appropriate to reach a defined target population, and allows for greater flexibility in the design and implementation of the survey.

Study Participants

The target population for this study was U.S.-based individuals who identify as fans of EPL teams. Prior research established strong positive relationships between a fan's level of identification with their favorite team and involvement with various sport consumption behaviors, such as media consumption and merchandise purchases (James & Trail, 2008; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Therefore, this study targeted individuals who display identification with their favorite EPL organization through social media. An examination of the antecedents to organizational identification for this group of fans

provides insight into the objects of attraction (Funk et al., 2000) leading to organizational identification.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedure

This section outlines sampling and data collection procedures. First, this section discusses the sampling method that provided access to the target population for this study. Then, this section provides an overview of target population demographic characteristics, statistical tests used to measure whether the sample obtained was representative of the target population, and techniques to utilize if the sample obtained was not representative of the target population.

Sampling Technique

This study utilized a voluntary-response sample, meaning individuals who participated did so voluntarily and did not receive any tangible benefit from their participation (Creswell, 2008). This sampling technique is popular when the researcher cannot reasonably gain access to an entire target population. Since it is impractical to obtain access to every U.S.-based fan of an EPL organization, this sampling technique was appropriate for this study.

There are certain disadvantages to employing this type of sampling procedure. One disadvantage is the presence of coverage error (Dillman et al., 2014). Given the sample for this study drew from fans engaged on social media sites, not every member of the target population, particularly those without social media engagement, had a nonzero probability of participation. Therefore, the makeup of participants involved in the sample may not accurately represent the demographic makeup of the target population (Creswell, 2008). A subsequent section in this chapter provides an overview of the strategy to assess

and potentially mitigate any issues that arose from an unrepresentative sample in relation to the demographics of the target population. In addition to the risk of over-sampling or under-sampling certain segments of the target population, voluntary-response sampling faces the risk of abnormally high engagement with participants who hold strong opinions on a particular subject. However, Moore (1997) noted this risk lessens when the topic examined is not of a controversial nature. There is no indication within past literature that research on team identification or points of attachment constitutes a controversial topic. Thus, this risk was minimized within the sampling process.

Sampling Method

To perform data collection for this study, the researcher identified and targeted social media sites on Facebook organized around fan support and interactions for EPL teams. Past research suggested collecting data through social media sites as a suitable method for reaching a target population (Barratt et al., 2015; Masson, Balfe, Hackett, & Phillips, 2013; Parkinson & Bromfield, 2013; Seltzer, Stolley, Mensah, & Sharp, 2014). Sport message boards provide an important medium for connecting distant fans with the teams they support (Baena, 2016; Ioakimidis, 2010). According to the social media research company Newton Insight (2019), more than half (56.5%) of EPL fans on social media followed their favorite team on Facebook, outpacing the share of EPL fans on other popular social media sites such as Instagram (18.3%) and Twitter (16.5%). Therefore, Facebook provided the most direct access to this target population.

The initial step in the data collection procedure involved locating social media interaction pages for all 20 EPL teams. Table 2 provides an overview of the Facebook group sites this study targeted for data collection. The researcher contacted the

administrator for each Facebook group site page identified in Table 2 and asked permission to post a link to the questionnaire for this study. The link to the questionnaire remained active on group sites for a one-week period.

Table 2
Targeted Social Media Sites for Data Collection

EPL Organization	Facebook Group	Members
Arsenal	Arsenal America	5,477
Aston Villa	Aston Villa America	1,720
Bournemouth	AFC Bournemouth Fans in the USA	237
Brighton & Hove Albion	Brighton & Hove Albion USA Fans	1,354
Burnley	North American Clarets	412
Chelsea	Chelsea in America	2,512
Crystal Palace	CPFC in the USA	614
Everton	Everton USA	3,058
Leicester City	Leicester City FC - USA Fan Group	411
Liverpool	Liverpool FC U.S. Fan Group	6,316
Manchester City	U.S. Manchester City FC Fans	610
Manchester United	Manchester United USA Supporters Club	6,522
Newcastle	Toon Army USA	822
Norwich City	AmeriCanaries	66
Sheffield United	Sheffield United Fans	353
Southampton	United States of Southampton FC	559
Tottenham	Tottenham Hotspur Supporters of America	2,904
Watford	New York Hornets / West Coast Hornets	1,053
West Ham United	American Hammers	907
Wolverhampton Wanderers	Wolves U.S.A	1,929
Total		37,836

There are certain risks associated with collecting data via social media sites. King, O'Rourke, and DeLongis (2014) noted a limited ability to build rapport with participants and validate participant identities as well as the potential for duplicate responses to the survey by the same individual. The risk of building rapport with participants is a concern for longitudinal studies. This risk is not inherent within this research given the cross-sectional nature of this study. However, the latter two risks require remediation.

Qualtrics, the hosting software for the survey used in this study, captured the Internet Protocol (IP) address for each survey respondent. An IP address is a unique numerical value that provides the identity and location of a device connected to an internet network. Monitoring of IP addresses from respondents allowed for systematic identification of participants who submitted multiple surveys and indicated the location of survey respondents.

Creswell (2008) stated a sample of participants must reasonably represent the target population, thereby allowing the researcher to generalize results from sample data to the overall target population. Thus, the sampling procedures used in this study attempted to produce a representative sample of U.S.-based soccer fans. A national poll conducted by the global survey research and data services firm Morning Consult in 2019 provided demographic data for U.S.-based EPL fans (Easley, 2019). Table 3 summarizes the results of this poll. Approximately two out of every three U.S.-based EPL fans are men and approximately the same proportion are white. Additionally, 30% of individuals in this fan group are below the age of 30 and more than 80% are below the age of 55. In terms of income, the vast majority of U.S.-based EPL fans earn under \$100,000 per year. Finally, more than half of the participants in this poll indicated they had not earned a bachelor's degree while only 16% indicated they completed a postgraduate degree. This study utilized the data from Table 3 as a guideline to determine whether the participant sample for this study provided an appropriate demographic representation of the target population.

Table 3
Demographics of U.S.-Based EPL Fans

	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
Gender		
Male	68.2%	68.2%
Female	31.8%	100.0%
Race		
White	67.7%	67.7%
Black	8.1%	75.9%
Hispanic	16.1%	92.0%
Other	8.1%	100.0%
Age Range		
18-29	29.6%	29.6%
30-44	34.0%	63.6%
45-54	18.6%	82.2%
55-64	10.8%	92.9%
65+	7.1%	100.0%
Income		
Under \$50,000	44.9%	44.9%
\$50,000-\$100,000	36.8%	81.7%
Over \$100,000	18.3%	100.0%
Education		
Less than college	56.4%	56.4%
Bachelor's degree	27.6%	84.0%
Postgraduate degree	16.0%	100.0%

Source: Morning Consult (2019)

n = 986

Chi-square goodness of fit tests assessed the representativeness of the sample in relation to target population demographics. The chi-square goodness of fit tests compared the observed demographic characteristics of the sample with the expected demographic characteristics of the sample as reported in Table 3. If these goodness of fit tests suggest significant differences between the sample and target population for one or more demographic variables, those demographic variables entered the data analysis models as control variables to help mitigate the effect of an unbalanced sample on the results.

Researchers have offered varying recommendations regarding sample size requirements to perform different types of inferential analyses and test for statistical and practical significance. Cohen (1992) indicated the need for approximately 120 observations to achieve a statistical power of 0.80 given a medium effect size and Type I error rate of .05. When performing multiple linear regression analysis, most researchers (e.g., Cohen, 2008) recommend a minimum of 15 observations per independent variable. To perform a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), Comrey and Lee (1992) stated a minimum of 200 observations is necessary, with 300 observations being good and 1,000 observations being excellent. Henson and Roberts (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of CFA research and found the average amount of observations utilized within a CFA was 436. Finally, Dillman et al. (2014) suggested that, for populations larger than 100,000, 383 observations would allow for generalizability given a Type I error rate of .05. Therefore, the current study attempted to produce a sample size of at least 400 participants to meet the generalizability criteria specified by Dillman et al. (2014) and approximate the average number of observations utilized in studies conducting a CFA (Henson & Roberts, 2006).

Data Collection Procedure

Qualtrics survey software hosted the questionnaire for this study. Data collection occurred from February 23, 2020 through March 1, 2020. A password protected computer securely stored all collected survey data. The primary researcher alone had access to this computer. Survey distribution to the target population via the aforementioned sampling method occurred after Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Upon accessing the survey, all participants saw a confidentiality statement and

IRB approval notification, along with the contact information for the researcher. Individuals did not receive any tangible benefit or financial remuneration for their participation in this study. The participant had to agree to the IRB notification statement to begin the questionnaire.

Instrumentation

Description of Instrument

The questionnaire for this study consisted of six sections. The following information outlines each of these sections. The first section contains information on the inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation in the survey. The second section details the organizational identification scale used in this study. The third section contains the PAI scale used to gather data on points of attachment. The fourth section includes an open-ended item that allowed participants to share additional attachment factors that led to their identification with an EPL organization. The fifth section outlines the consumption behaviors measured in this study. Finally, the sixth section solicited information on demographic characteristics of the sample.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. The first section of the questionnaire screened individuals using inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation and asked them to identify their favorite EPL team. Screening survey items consisted of one item asking participants to indicate whether they are 18 years of age or older and one item asking participants whether they are a current resident of the United States. An answer of “no” to either of these survey items prohibited an individual from continuing with the questionnaire. Next, participants indicated their favorite EPL team by selecting the team from a drop-down

list. Participants were prohibited from continuing with the questionnaire if they did not indicate a favorite EPL team.

Organizational Identification. The second section of the questionnaire gauged an individual's level of organizational identification with their favorite EPL team. Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item organizational identification scale provided this measure. The researcher chose this particular scale to measure identification for several reasons. First, the scale has received widespread usage due to its brevity, practical utility, and strong psychometric properties. Wakefield (2016) reported this scale has received over 2,200 citations in academic publications, which is evidence of its prevalence in the literature. Second, Riketta (2005) performed a meta-analysis of organizational identification studies and found that Mael and Ashforth's (1992) scale was the preferred scale used in research focusing on predicting and explaining behavior. Therefore, this scale provided a reliable fit for measuring identification in this study. The items from Mael and Ashforth's (1992) organizational identification instrument were assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating stronger levels of identification with an EPL organization. Example items from this scale include: "When someone criticizes [team name], it feels like a personal insult," "When I talk about [team name], I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'," and "If a story in the media criticized [team name], I would feel embarrassed." The term *team name* in each scale item was replaced with the individual's favorite EPL team as identified in the first section.

Points of Attachment. The third section of the questionnaire evaluated point of attachment factors potentially driving an individual's identification with their favorite EPL team. Table 1, found in Chapter II, provides an overview of the various points of

attachment found in the existing literature. A thorough review of previous studies uncovered seven points of attachment germane to the research context of this study. These seven attachment factors were adapted for use in this study. They included attachment to players, coach, and sport (Robinson & Trail, 2005); region or local city (Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2015); league (Spinda et al., 2016); fan community (Yoshida et al., 2015); and venue (Ballouli et al., 2016). Attachment to league used the same item-level statements as Spinda et al.'s (2016) attachment to conference factor but substituted the term "EPL" for "conference" (i.e., "Even when [team name] is not playing, I root for EPL teams when they play against teams outside of the EPL."). This allows for applicable terminology given the research context of this study. Each of these points of attachment were measured using three items assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating stronger levels of attachment.

This study excluded six points of attachment used in previous research on this topic. Trail et al. (2003), Robinson et al. (2005), and Robinson and Trail (2005) utilized community attachment in their seminal studies on points of attachment. However, more recent research (e.g., Yoshida et al., 2015) examined this attachment factor as two unique constructs: local city/region attachment and fan community attachment. This study remained consistent with more recent point of attachment research and examined the community attachment factor as two unique attachment constructs. University attachment (Trail et al., 2003) and athletic department attachment (Shapiro et al., 2013) are only applicable to the collegiate sport context. This study focused on a professional sport context. Therefore, similar to other point of attachment studies that examined a professional soccer context (Uhlman & Trail, 2012; Yoshida et al., 2015), this study did

not include university attachment and athletic department attachment as factors. General sport fandom attachment (Shapiro et al., 2013) is applicable when a study examines attachment across various types of sport simultaneously. Given its strict focus on one sport (soccer), this study did not include general sport fandom as an attachment factor. Level of sport attachment suggests an examination of fan attachment across different levels of sport competition, such as amateur and professional football (Spinda et al., 2016) or different competition divisions within college football (Robinson et al., 2005). This study only examined fan identification at one level of competition, the EPL, and therefore excluded level of play attachment from its instrumentation. Finally, the decision to remove attachment to team occurred due to its redundancy with Mael & Ashforth's (1992) organizational identification scale. This corresponded to other points of attachment studies (e.g., Hoegele et al., 2014) that used Mael & Ashforth's (1992) organizational identification scale in lieu of attachment to team.

In addition to points of attachment found in previous research, this study provided an initial examination of two new attachment factors. The first focused on attachment to ownership of the organization. Hamil and Chadwick (2010) indicated three primary ownership models found within EPL organizations. These include a stock market model of ownership, a fan-based supporter trust ownership model, and a foreign ownership model. The foreign ownership model, in particular, became increasingly prominent as EPL organizations continued to grow operating revenues and expand their commercial appeal across the globe (Wilson, Plumley, & Ramchandani, 2013). A review of EPL organizations competing during the 2019-2020 season revealed 15 of 20 clubs had some amount of foreign ownership. Americans represented the largest nationality among

foreign ownership groups. Moreover, almost all of the American ownership groups represented in the EPL also owned a team in one of the four major professional sport leagues in the U.S. (Major League Baseball, National Football League, National Basketball Association, and National Hockey League). Therefore, a U.S.-based EPL fan may derive identification with an EPL organization due to shared ownership between the EPL club and a favorite team from one of the U.S. major professional sport leagues. For example, the ownership group of the Boston Red Sox in Major League Baseball also possesses a full ownership stake in the EPL club Liverpool (Metcalf & Stupples, 2019). It is possible a U.S.-based fan of the Boston Red Sox may also develop fan identification with Liverpool due to the shared ownership between these two organizations.

The item-level statements used to measure the attachment to coach factor (Robinson and Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Woo et al., 2009) were modified to test the attachment to owner factor. The attachment to owner subscale initially consisted of four items. These items included “I am a fan of [team name] because of the owner,” “I am a big of [team name]’s owner,” “I follow [team name] because I like the owner,” and “Being a fan of [team name]’s owner is very important to me.” Each item was assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating stronger levels of attachment. Prior to data collection, these items were subjected to the pretesting procedures described below to address content and face validity. Following data collection, factor analysis procedures assessed the reliability and validity of each item in relation to its hypothesized attachment factor.

The second new attachment factor this study examined is attachment to the history or tradition of the organization. Organized professional soccer in England has an

established history, with each current EPL club formed during the late 19th or early 20th century (“Football History,” 2019). Furthermore, most EPL organizations have achieved varying levels of success throughout their history. Each EPL club has a unique history and tradition that could possibly drive fan identification. Four item-level statements were adapted and modified from previous literature to examine the attachment to history/tradition factor. These items included “I feel connected to the history and tradition of [team name],” “I follow [team name] because of its history and tradition,” “I am a fan of [team name] because of the club’s history and tradition,” and “The history and tradition of [team name] brings back nostalgic feelings for me.” Each item was assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating stronger levels of attachment. As with the items used to measure attachment to owner, the items used to assess attachment to history/tradition were subjected to pretesting procedures and a factor analysis to examine item reliability and validity.

Overall, nine subscales containing a total of 29 items comprised the PAI scale used in this study. Seven of these subscales came from existing literature on the topic and two were developed and examined specifically for this research. Appendix A provides a full listing of PAI scale items used in this study.

Open-Ended Item. The fourth section of the questionnaire contained one open-ended item asking participants to disclose any additional reasons they chose to identify with their favorite EPL team. The item read: “Other than the reasons stated above, what other factors may have influenced your decision to choose [team name] as your favorite EPL club?” The purpose of this item was to identify potential additional points of

attachment to include within future sport team identification and attachment research, particularly when examining distant fan populations.

Consumption Behaviors. The fifth section of this questionnaire examined consumption behaviors pertaining to the participant's self-reported favorite EPL organization. Examinations of sport consumption behavior commonly attempt to predict attendance at a sporting event (e.g., James & Trail, 2008; Yoshida et al., 2015). The lack of geographical proximity between fan and club in this research setting, however, prohibits regular game attendance. Therefore, this study did not focus on game attendance as a consumer behavior outcome and instead focused on other behaviors that have more meaning and applicability within this research context. To perform this investigation, items utilized by Shapiro et al. (2013) to measure past consumption behaviors were adapted for this study. These included broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, and merchandise purchases.

Broadcast media consumption examined the frequency with which study participants watch games of their favorite EPL team on television or via online video streaming services. The item to rate broadcast media consumption read "I watch all [team name] games on television or via online streaming services" and was assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating stronger levels of broadcast media consumption. Social media consumption examined the frequency with which study participants consume information about their favorite EPL team through social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. The item to rate social media consumption read "I get information about [team name] through social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)" and was assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating

stronger levels of social media consumption. Merchandise purchase behavior was evaluated in two manners. A single item to rate frequency of merchandise purchases read “I frequently purchase [team name] merchandise, apparel, and/or paraphernalia” and was assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating higher frequencies of merchandise purchase behavior. Additionally, a separate item estimated the amount of money study participants spent on team-related merchandise and apparel during the preceding 12 months. The question read “Please estimate the total dollar amount that you spent on [team name] merchandise, apparel, and paraphernalia during the last 12 months.” The structure of this survey item allowed participants to choose a valid numerical dollar amount between \$0 and \$1,000 on a set sliding scale.

Participant Demographics. The sixth and final section of this questionnaire gathered demographic data from participants. This data helped ensure this study examined a representative sample of U.S.-based soccer fans. The demographic data collected in this section of the questionnaire included age, gender, race, household income, and education level. It also included an item asking participants the length of time they have identified as a fan of their particular favorite team. This information allowed for a more detailed overview of participants in this study.

Evidence of Psychometric Properties

Past research has suggested strong reliability and validity properties for the items used in the aforementioned scales. Mael and Ashforth (1992) found strong internal consistency reliability for their six-item organizational identification scale, reporting a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.87. More recently, Hoegle et al. (2014) produced evidence of internal consistency reliability among scale items ($\alpha = 0.81$) in a study which examined

the influence of superstar athletes on an individual's level of sport organization identification. Wakefield (2016) utilized the scale in a study that examined the effects of passion, identification, and involvement on various consumption behaviors. He also found strong internal consistency reliability among scale items ($\alpha = 0.95$). Aiken, Bee, and Walker (2018) suggested criterion validity by demonstrating significant positive correlations between the organizational identification scale items and a set of items that measured sport consumption.

Studies utilizing the PAI scale have focused on producing evidence of its psychometric properties through investigations of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. Researchers examining point of attachment factors have consistently used Cronbach's alpha to demonstrate internal consistency reliability among scale items, with alpha levels above .70 deemed adequate for evidence of reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Meanwhile, sport management researchers have focused on average variance extracted (AVE) values to assess convergent validity among PAI scale items. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested AVE values above .50 represent good convergent validity, meaning the item scores align more with the scale's theoretical construct rather than attributable to error. A review of salient studies that employed the PAI scale (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2015) found strong evidence of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity for the scale items. With only a few minor exceptions, point of attachment factor analysis in these studies produced Cronbach's alpha levels above .70 and AVE values above .50. Additionally, Shapiro et al. (2013) reported that "the internal consistency was satisfactory for all multi-item past behaviors (alpha values ranging from

.85 to .86)” (p. 133). This provides indication of strong psychometric properties for the items adapted to measure sport consumption behavior in this study.

Instrument Development

Dillman et al. (2014) provided several guidelines for ensuring quality control when administering internet-based surveys. These guidelines include obtaining an expert review of survey content, conducting a field test or pilot study, and testing the survey across a variety of web-based devices, platforms, and internet browsers.

A panel of experts reviewed content within the questionnaire to provide a measure of content validity. The researcher identified four sport management academics familiar with the literature on the topics of team identification, points of attachment, and sport consumption behavior. The researcher contacted the panel members and asked them to participate in a review of content for this study. Upon agreement to participate, the researcher provided the panel of experts with explanations regarding the purpose of the study and the constructs assessed within the instrument. The panel of experts reviewed the items included in the questionnaire and used a standardized response form to rate each item in terms of clarity and how well the item represents its underlying construct. Items on the instrument were modified based on ratings and recommendations from the panel of experts (Dillman et al., 2014).

Sport administration graduate students enrolled in a sport finance course at a research university conducted a field test of the questionnaire. All sport administration doctoral students at the same university also participated in this field test. Those participating in the field test were instructed to comment on the readability and clarity of the instrument. If a field test participant identified any challenges when competing the

instrument, they were asked to provide detailed explanations or comments regarding the nature of the issue. Field test participants were asked to complete the survey using different types of web-based devices, including cell phones, laptops, and desktops. They also completed the survey using both Windows and Macintosh operating software and using a variety of common internet browsers, such as Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Microsoft Edge. The researcher randomly assigned EPL clubs among field test participants to ensure coverage of each potential workflow option on the survey. The instrument was modified accordingly based on issues uncovered during the field test (Dillman et al., 2014).

Data Analysis

The following section outlines the particular data analysis techniques used for this study. Scale diagnostics and factor analyses (EFA and CFA) analyzed the performance of scale items and the factor structure of PAI items used in this study. Multiple linear regression and a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used as inferential statistical tests to address the stated research questions. IBM SPSS and AMOS software performed the statistical computations for this study. All statistical tests employed a Type I error rate of .05 to determine statistical significance.

Scale Diagnostics

Data analysis for this study began with an examination of item quality for all scale items used within the questionnaire. Means, medians, and distributions assessed item quality. Item quality metrics evaluated whether participant responses to scale items covered the full range of possible answer choices. Item means and medians should ideally converge around the midpoint for all Likert scale items and item distributions should

indicate normally distributed data covering the full range of response options (Clark & Watson, 1995).

The assessment of psychometric properties for scale items included in this study involved examinations of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. Internal consistency reliability indicates whether scale items function in a manner that produces consistent scores within the instrument. Cronbach's alpha values estimated internal consistency reliability. Evidence of internal consistency reliability in this study followed a more stringent cutoff value of .80 (Loo, 2001) for items in psychological measurement scales. This study remained consistent with other prominent PAI research (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2015) and used AVE values above 0.50 to suggest convergent validity.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) examined the overall factor structure of the items included in the PAI scale. The EFA was performed using maximum likelihood estimation with oblique (promax) rotation. Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, and Strahan (1999) noted maximum likelihood is the best estimation approach for an EFA when data are normally distributed because "it allows for the computation of a wide range of indexes of the goodness of fit model and permits statistical significance testing of factor loadings and correlations among factors" (p. 277). Additionally, oblique rotation allows for correlation among the extracted factors (Pituch & Stevens, 2015). Previous research on PAI scales (e.g., Woo et al., 2009) found evidence of sufficient correlation among points of attachment. Therefore, the use of oblique rotation seemed appropriate for data analysis in this research context.

Three analyses helped determine the factor structure for the data: assessing eigenvalues greater than one (Kaiser, 1960), examining a scree plot graph (Cattell, 1966), and performing a parallel analysis (Horn, 1965). Eigenvalues greater than one (Kaiser, 1960) examines the variance in all variables accounted for by a factor. Therefore, any retained factor accounts for the variance of at least one item. A scree plot is a graphical model for factor extraction developed by Cattell (1966). It plots eigenvalues on the y -axis and number of factors on the x -axis. A sharp drop and the presence of an elbow in the graph line indicates the cutoff for factor retention. Henson and Roberts (2006) suggested both the eigenvalue and scree plot methods overestimate the number of factors to retain. Alternatively, they deemed parallel analysis as the most accurate factor retention estimation procedure. A parallel analysis creates a “parallel” set of eigenvalues from random data and compares those to eigenvalues from the original data set (Horn, 1965). Factor retention rules of parallel analysis suggests retaining factors from the original data set if eigenvalues are greater than average eigenvalues generated from the random data.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

After conducting an EFA to suggest an appropriate factor structure for the PAI scale data, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) tested the statistical significance of a hypothesized point of attachment factor model. Babyak and Green (2010) suggested testing three factor structure models when conducting a CFA: a unidimensional model, a correlated factor model, and a bifactor model. A unidimensional, or single-factor, model “specifies a single dimension underlying a set of measures and, thus, provides a parsimonious explanation for the responses on these measures” (Babyak & Green, 2010, p. 588). A correlated factor model examines a factor structure whereby two or more

factors underlie a set of measured response items and are set to correlate with each other. A bifactor model specifies a general factor related to all measured response items and one or more group factors related with a limited number of response items. In addition to these models suggested by Babyak and Green (2010), a second-order factor model tested a hypothesized factor structure where each response item associated with an underlying factor and each underlying factor associated with a second-order latent variable.

Four measures of fit were used to analyze CFA results: (1) chi-square, (2) the normed fit index (NFI), (3) the comparative fit index (CFI), and (4) the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). A chi-square statistic tested the difference between the predicted and observed relationships in the model. Sample size should be considered when interpreting the result of a chi-square test. If the sample contains fewer than 200 observations, chi-square analysis can represent an adequate measure of fit (Kenny & McCoach, 2003), but as sample size increases, a chi-square test can become unreliable to judge the overall fit of the model (Bentler, 1990). Both NFI and CFI are relative fit measures, meaning they measure the fit of the data relative to a null model, or one where no relationships exist between the data. These indices produce results that range from zero to one, with zero indicating the data do not fit the model at all and one indicating the data fit the model perfectly. Hu and Bentler (1999) provided recommendations for assessing model fit. NFI and CFI values between .90 and .95 indicate good fit between the data and model while values above .95 indicate excellent fit between the data and model. RMSEA measures the average size of the residuals between the observed correlation from the sample data and an expected model estimated from the population. RMSEA values above .10 indicate an unacceptable model, values between .10 and .06

represent good fit between the data and the model, and values below .06 demonstrate excellent model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Research Question 1

Research question 1 (RQ1) investigated which points of attachment explain organizational identification for U.S.-based EPL fans. To answer RQ1, a hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis assessed the effect of points of attachment on a fan's level of identification with their favorite EPL organization. Within this analysis, the mean organizational identification score, calculated by averaging participant responses to Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item organizational identification scale, served as the dependent variable.

The entry of data into a hierarchical multiple linear regression model began with the demographic variables that statistically differed, based on a chi-square goodness of fit test, between the sample and target population. These variables entered the regression equation first as control variables to help mitigate the effect of an unbalanced sample. Following the entry of control variables, item scores for each of the retained point of attachment subscales were averaged and entered into the regression equation to serve as the main independent variables for inspection.

An examination of results from the regression analysis focused on interpretation of the F -statistic, R^2 , and unstandardized beta coefficients. The F -statistic determined whether the overall regression model significantly explained fan identification. The R^2 statistic provided an indication of how much variance the independent variables explained in fan identification. A change in R^2 (ΔR^2) between the first regression model, with only demographic variables included as predictors, and the second regression model,

with point of attachment subscales included, provided an assessment of how much variance these points of attachment explained in fan identification above and beyond that explained by only demographic variables. According to Cohen (1992), practically meaningful results should achieve a minimum of 6% of variance explained in the dependent variable by the predictor variables. Unstandardized beta coefficients were examined for each of the point of attachment variables to determine the significance, magnitude, and direction of these variables in regard to explaining fan identification.

Several regression diagnostics required close examination to ensure the results produced by this analysis were reliable and did not violate key assumptions required for a multiple linear regression analysis. Field (2009) suggested examining five key assumptions when performing a multiple linear regression analysis: independence of responses, normal distribution of dependent variable data, homoscedasticity of variance around the regression line of best fit, linearity of the dependent variable, and an absence of multicollinearity among independent variables.

The assumption of independence of responses implies that each participant should complete the survey only once (Field, 2009). Qualtrics, the hosting software for the survey used in this study, captures the IP address of each survey respondent. Therefore, a check of IP address from survey respondents was performed to ensure no duplicate IP addresses exist within the data set. The normal distribution of dependent variable data states that respondent scores for the dependent variable should be normally distributed (Field, 2009). An inspection of data via bar charts and box-and-whisker plots determined normalcy. Pituch and Stevens (2015) stated a violation of homoscedasticity of variances indicates the presence of elevated levels of random error in the relationship between the

dependent and independent variables. A scatterplot graph of the residuals of the predicted scores for the dependent variable was inspected to ensure no violations of the assumption of homoscedasticity in the data. Given this analysis focuses on linear regression, an implied assumption states that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables should be linear. An assessment of scatterplots between the dependent variable and each independent variable were used to determine the presence of linear relationships.

Finally, the presence of multicollinearity refers to high multiple correlations among the independent variables in a regression equation. High multicollinearity would suggest one or more of the independent variables in the analysis are redundant. Pedhazur (1997) mentioned multicollinearity “may have devastating effects on regression statistics, to the extent of rendering them useless, even highly misleading” (p. 295). An examination of variance inflation factors (VIF) occurred to ensure regression coefficients were not skewed due to high multiple correlations among independent variables in the model. Some researchers suggested VIF values that exceed 10 indicate a poor estimation of regression coefficients due to severe multicollinearity and would require modifications to the regression model (Midi & Bagheri, 2010). However, a VIF of 10 would indicate the regression coefficient is more than three times larger than if the independent variable was completely uncorrelated with a linear combination of the other independent variables. Due to the potentially detrimental effects multicollinearity can have on regression statistics (Pedhazur, 1997), this study followed a stricter cutoff for diagnosing problems resulting from multicollinearity by considering any VIF value above 5 as problematic (Rogerson, 2001).

Research Question 2

Research question 2 (RQ2) investigated which points of attachment explain sport consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans. The types of sport consumption behavior specifically examined in this research question included broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, and merchandise purchases. To answer RQ2, four separate hierarchical multiple linear regressions assessed the relationship between points of attachment and sport consumption behaviors. The first used participant scores for broadcast media consumption behavior as the dependent variable. The second used participant scores for social media consumption behavior as the dependent variable. The third used participant scores for merchandise purchase frequency as the dependent variable. The fourth used participant answers to the item assessing merchandise purchase amount as the dependent variable.

For each analysis, the entry of data into a hierarchical multiple linear regression model began with the demographic variables that statistically differed, based on a chi-square goodness of fit test, between the sample and target population. These variables entered the regression equation first as control variables to help mitigate the effect of an unbalanced sample. Then, item scores for each of the retained point of attachment subscales were averaged and entered into the models to serve as the main independent variables for inspection.

Similar to RQ1, an examination of results from these regression models focused on interpretation of the F -statistic, R^2 , and unstandardized beta coefficients to determine significance and variance explained by these points of attachment on the three sport consumption behavior variables. All regression diagnostics outlined within the data

analysis discussion for RQ1 were followed in the data analysis for RQ2 to ensure reliable results.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 (RQ3) explored differences in points of attachment between U.S.-based fans of successful EPL teams and U.S.-based fans of unsuccessful EPL teams. To answer RQ3, a MANOVA examined differences in points of attachment between U.S.-based fans of the Big Six EPL organizations compared to fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six. The EPL is a league that exhibits great disparity between teams in terms of crucial business and on-field performance metrics. Six clubs, informally termed the “Big Six,” (Douglas, 2018; Kidd, 2019; Robinson, 2019) produced 57.5% of the revenues generated by all 20 EPL clubs during the 2017-18 season (Kidd, 2019) and accounted for over 90% of all fan engagements across social media during 2018 (Newton Insight, 2019). These six clubs – Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool, Chelsea, Arsenal, and Tottenham – also finished in the top six league places during four out of five EPL seasons between 2014 and 2019 (Kidd, 2019) and progressed to at least the quarterfinal round in a major European club competition during the 2018-19 season (Robinson, 2019). Given these disparities in business and sporting success between the Big Six clubs and the remaining 14 EPL organizations, this analysis investigated differences in antecedents to identification for fans of these two distinct groups of clubs.

This analysis utilized a two-group between-subjects MANOVA, with average item scores for each of the retained point of attachment subscales providing the dependent variables and the independent variable consisting of two groups based on the aforementioned Big Six club definition. To perform a MANOVA, appropriate statistical

checks are required to ensure all assumptions of the analysis are met (Pituch & Stevens, 2015). A Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices determined if the covariance matrices for each dependent variable were equal across the two levels of the independent variable. A Bartlett's Test of Sphericity examined whether sufficient correlation exists between the dependent variables to perform this analysis. The Wilks' Lambda value determined if the linear combination of point of attachment subscale scores were significantly related to team success, while partial eta-squared values assessed the amount of variance explained in the linear combination of point of attachment subscale scores by team success grouping.

If the *F*-statistic from the MANOVA result is significant at a .05 alpha level, follow-up univariate ANOVA tests were used to ascertain the specific points of attachment that significantly contribute to this statistical difference among groups. Corresponding with the model supported by Trail et al. (2003) and extended by Woo et al. (2009), one can expect points of attachment aligned with organizational identification (e.g., players and coach) to have significantly higher average item scores for fans of successful EPL organizations and points of attachment aligned with sport identification (e.g., sport) to have significantly higher average item scores for fans of unsuccessful EPL organizations.

Summary of Method

This study examined U.S.-based EPL fans to determine the extent to which points of attachment explain variances in team identification and sport consumption behaviors. Additionally, inferential tests examined differences between fans of successful EPL teams and unsuccessful EPL teams in regard to points of attachment. Mael and

Ashforth's (1992) six-item organizational identification scale provided an estimate of team identification. A thorough review of the literature identified seven unique points of attachment germane to the purpose of this study: players, coach, and sport (Robinson & Trail, 2005); region or local city (Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2015); league (Spinda et al., 2016); fan community (Yoshida et al., 2015); and venue (Ballouli et al., 2016). Additionally, two new point of attachment factors were developed and explored in this study: attachment to owner and attachment to organizational history/tradition. Sport consumption behavior items adapted from Shapiro et al. (2013) provided measurements of broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, and team-related merchandise purchases.

Scale diagnostics and factor analyses (EFA and CFA) were used to provide evidence of reliability, validity, and factor structure among the PAI items used in this study. Hierarchical multiple linear regression models assessed RQ1, with organizational identification scores serving as the dependent variable and points of attachment serving as the independent variables. Four separate hierarchical multiple linear regression models assessed RQ2. Points of attachment served as independent variables in each regression equation. Broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, merchandise purchase frequency, and merchandise purchase amount served as dependent variables across the four respective regression equations. Finally, a MANOVA assessed RQ3, with points of attachment entering as the dependent variables and independent variable groups representing fans of the Big Six EPL organizations and fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six.

Table 4 provides a holistic overview of the theoretical framework, survey item sources, and data analysis techniques used to address each research question investigated in this study.

Table 4

Summary of Theoretical Foundations, Survey Items, and Data Analysis by RQ

Research Question	Theoretical Foundation(s)	Source(s) of Survey Items	Data Analysis
RQ1. Which points of attachment explain organizational identification for U.S.-based EPL fans?	Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); Organizational Identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989)	Organizational Identification Scale (Mael & Ashforth, 1992); PAI (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2012)	Multiple Linear Regression
RQ2. Which points of attachment explain sport consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?	Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); Sport Consumption Behavior (Trail et al., 2000)	PAI (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2012); Past Sport Consumption Behaviors (Shapiro et al., 2013)	Multiple Linear Regression
RQ2a. Which points of attachment explain broadcast media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?	Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); Sport Consumption Behavior (Trail et al., 2000)	PAI (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2012); Past Sport Consumption Behaviors (Shapiro et al., 2013)	Multiple Linear Regression

<p>RQ2b. Which points of attachment explain social media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?</p>	<p>Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); Sport Consumption Behavior (Trail et al., 2000)</p>	<p>PAI (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2012); Past Sport Consumption Behaviors (Shapiro et al., 2013)</p>	<p>Multiple Linear Regression</p>
<p>RQ2c. Which points of attachment explain merchandise purchase behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?</p>	<p>Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); Sport Consumption Behavior (Trail et al., 2000)</p>	<p>PAI (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2012); Past Sport Consumption Behaviors (Shapiro et al., 2013)</p>	<p>Multiple Linear Regression</p>
<p>RQ3. What differences exist in points of attachment between U.S.-based fans of the Big Six EPL organizations and U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six?</p>	<p>Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); Organizational Identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989)</p>	<p>PAI (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2012)</p>	<p>MANOVA</p>

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to explore the antecedents to organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans and examine the relationship between these antecedents and various forms of sport consumption behavior. Specifically, this study collected data from U.S.-based EPL fans to determine the extent to which points of attachment explained variances in organizational identification and three types of sport consumption behavior (broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, and team-related merchandise purchases). Additionally, this study examined differences in points of attachment between successful EPL organizations, informally known as the “Big Six” EPL clubs (Douglas, 2018; Kidd, 2019; Robinson, 2019), and unsuccessful EPL organizations.

Instrument Pretesting

A series of pretesting steps occurred to assess content validity, face validity, reliability, and consistency of the instrument. Dillman et al. (2014) suggested using a panel of experts, conducting a field test or pilot study, and testing the survey across a variety of web-based devices, platforms, and internet browsers to provide quality control for surveys administered on the internet. This study utilized this suggested approach.

Panel of Experts

A panel of experts reviewed the proposed point of attachment subscales to assess item content validity. This panel included four sport management faculty members

familiar with the literature on team identification, points of attachment, and sport consumption behavior. Each panel member received an email explaining the purpose of the study and an attached worksheet listing each point of attachment item. Instructions provided to the panel of experts asked them to provide feedback on the clarity of each item and its ability to appropriately represent its underlying point of attachment construct.

The panel recommended several minor changes to item wording and provided general feedback on the proposed items to assess the two new point of attachment subscales in this study (attachment to owner and attachment to organizational history/tradition). In total, the wording on four items required revision. One suggestion for changes to item wording included removing comparisons to the team within each player attachment item. For example, a panel member suggested changing the item “I identify with the individual players on [team name] more than with the team” to simply “I identify with the individual players on [team name].” The panel member suggested similar changes for the other two player attachment items. These changes to player attachment items removed the comparison between players and the team itself and allowed the wording for player attachment items to more closely align with other point of attachment items used in the instrument. Additionally, a panel member suggested removing a comparison reference to the team within an item for region or local city attachment. Thus, the item “I support the city/region that [team name] plays in as a whole, not just the team” was simplified to state “I support the city/region that [team name] plays in as a whole.” The panel provided general positive feedback on the items created to assess attachment to owner and attachment to organizational history/tradition in regard to item clarity and relatedness to its underlying construct.

Field Test

Following the expert panel review, sport management graduate and doctoral students at a research university participated in a field test of the instrument. This served as a means of checking for face validity and to provide data for an initial assessment of scale reliability. A random assignment of EPL clubs among field test participants ensured coverage of each potential workflow option on the survey. Additionally, participants completed the survey using a variety of web-based devices, internet browsers, and operating systems. The field test participants provided feedback on general readability and clarity of survey items, the length of time it took to complete the survey, and the structure and workflow of the survey.

Overall, 35 individuals participated in this field test. Participants agreed on the overall readability and clarity of items and did not provide any suggestions for further improvement regarding item wording. Participants generally reported a five to ten-minute timeframe to complete the entire survey. Multiple field test participants commented on the need to split point of attachment subscale items into smaller chunks rather than displaying all items continuously on one survey page. Therefore, alterations to the survey design allocated point of attachment items to display in blocks of eight to ten items.

The data provided by field test participants also allowed for an initial examination of internal consistency reliability among scale items. Cronbach's alpha estimates assessed reliability for the six-item organizational identification scale (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and each point of attachment subscale found within the instrument. Based on the recommendation from Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach's alpha estimate greater than .70 indicated adequate internal consistency reliability. Table 5 shows each

construct, the number of items included in the scale used to measure the construct, and Cronbach's alpha estimates of internal consistency reliability for each scale. Cronbach's alpha estimates for both newly created point of attachment subscales (attachment to owner and organizational history/tradition) suggested strong internal consistency reliability. Five of the eight scales utilized in prior research (organizational identification as well as attachment to players, coach, sport, and region/city) demonstrated adequate internal consistency reliability. Three of the previously utilized scales (attachment to league, fan community, and venue) did not demonstrate adequate internal consistency reliability. However, previous points of attachment studies (Ballouli et al., 2016; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2015) found these scales to display adequate levels of internal consistency reliability. Therefore, based on previous findings and an assessment of content and face validity of items from a panel of experts and field test participants, these point of attachment items remained on the instrument administered to the target population of U.S.-based EPL fans.

Table 5
Internal Consistency Reliability Estimates for Pilot Study

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Organizational Identification	6	.85
<i>Attachment Subscales</i>		
Players	3	.87
Coach	3	.78
Sport	3	.85
Region/City	3	.84
League	3	.59
Fan Community	3	.57
Venue	3	.52
Owner	4	.82
History/Tradition	4	.87

Descriptive Statistics

Sample Statistics

Data collection for this study occurred via Facebook pages organized around U.S.-based fan support and interactions for EPL clubs. A Qualtrics link to the survey instrument was posted on at least one Facebook fan group site per EPL club for approximately one week. A total of 1,099 questionnaires were submitted. However, only 853 survey responses (77.6% of total submitted questionnaires) displayed a “finished” status, indicating the participant progressed through all pages of the survey. The other 246 questionnaires (22.4%) were eliminated at this stage. This subset consisted of questionnaires where participants failed to navigate through the entire questionnaire due to attrition or meet the inclusion criteria regarding age or U.S. residency. An additional 54 respondents (4.91%) were eliminated due to participants incorrectly responding to the captcha item (“Please select strongly disagree for this item”). Finally, 46 more surveys (4.18%) were removed due to missing responses for one or more scale items. Therefore, the data cleaning process resulted in a total of 753 useable surveys for further analysis. This sample size met the guidelines offered by Henson and Roberts (2006) and Dillman et al. (2014) for conducting a CFA and producing generalizable results for a population larger than 100,000 given a Type I error rate of .05.

Demographic Information. The useable sample of 753 participants consisted of 658 males (87.4%) and 92 females (12.2%). A vast majority of the sample (87.6%) indicated their race was white. Almost half the sample (48.3%) indicated an annual household income over \$100,000. In terms of education, 45.0% of the sample had obtained a bachelor’s degree as their highest level of education while 33.3% of

respondents achieved a postgraduate degree and 21.6% of the sample did not complete a college degree program. Participant age ranged from 18 years to 82 years and the mean age was 39.43 years ($SD = 11.85$). In terms of age categorization, 22.8% of respondents indicated their age as between 18 and 29 years while 88.1% of participants were under the age of 55 years. Table 6 displays demographic data for the sample and provides demographic information for the target population as reported by Morning Consult (2019) and presented in Table 3 in the previous chapter.

Table 6
Demographics of U.S.-Based EPL Fans for Sample and Target Population

	Sample		Target Population*	
	n	Frequency	n	Frequency
Gender	752		986	
Male	658	87.4%	672	68.2%
Female	92	12.2%	314	31.8%
Other	2	0.4%	0	0.0%
Race	752		986	
White	660	87.6%	668	67.7%
Black	16	2.1%	80	8.1%
Hispanic	36	4.8%	159	16.1%
Other	40	5.4%	80	8.1%
Age Range	596		986	
18-29	136	22.8%	292	29.6%
30-44	266	44.6%	335	34.0%
45-54	123	20.6%	182	18.6%
55-64	55	9.2%	106	10.8%
65+	16	2.7%	70	7.1%
Income	744		986	
Under \$50,000	138	18.5%	443	44.9%
\$50,000-\$100,000	247	33.2%	363	36.8%
Over \$100,000	359	48.3%	180	18.3%
Education	751		986	
Less than college	161	21.6%	556	56.4%
Bachelor's degree	339	45.0%	272	27.6%
Postgraduate degree	251	33.3%	158	16.0%

*Source: Morning Consult (2019)

Chi-square goodness of fit tests assessed the data from Table 6 to determine if demographics from sample participants represented the demographics of the target population. Results of chi-square goodness of fit tests revealed statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between sample participants and the target population in regard to gender, race, income, and education demographics, indicating sample participants did not adequately represent the target population for these demographic characteristics. However, the chi-square test for age indicated a non-significant difference between the sample and target population ($\lambda^2 = 7.04, p = .13$). This result suggested that sample participants were representative of the target population in terms of age. Therefore, gender, race, income, and education variables entered hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis models as control variables to mitigate the effect of an unrepresentative sample on inferential results.

EPL Club Information. After analyzing sample participant demographics in relation to the target population, participant responses to their selection of favorite EPL club were categorized. Table 7 reveals approximately 60% of respondents ($n = 452$) indicated fandom for a Big Six EPL club while almost 40% of respondents ($n = 301$) indicated fandom for an EPL club outside of the Big Six. Within the Big Six category, fans of two clubs supplied a majority of the data. Tottenham fans provided almost 40% of survey responses for Big Six clubs (23.64% of survey responses overall) while Liverpool fans accounted for 26.33% of Big Six EPL club fan responses (15.80% of total survey responses). Each fan group of a Big Six club completed a minimum of 24 surveys.

Fandom for EPL clubs outside of the Big Six was more varied in terms of club representation. Four fanbases contributed over 10% of total responses for fans of non-Big

Six EPL clubs. These included Everton (26.58% of non-Big Six EPL club responses; 10.62% of total responses), Aston Villa (22.59%; 9.03%), Leicester City (12.96%; 5.18%), and Newcastle (11.96%; 4.78%). Despite attempts to engage U.S.-based fans of all EPL clubs, fans of Brighton & Hove Albion, Crystal Palace, and Sheffield United did not supply any completed surveys to this study.

Table 7
Sample Participants Selection of Favorite EPL Club

EPL Organization	n	Category Frequency	Overall Frequency
Big Six EPL Clubs	452		60.03%
Arsenal	27	5.97%	3.59%
Chelsea	48	10.62%	6.37%
Liverpool	119	26.33%	15.80%
Manchester City	24	5.31%	3.19%
Manchester United	56	12.39%	7.44%
Tottenham	178	39.38%	23.64%
Non-Big Six EPL Clubs	301		39.97%
Aston Villa	68	22.59%	9.03%
Bournemouth	21	6.98%	2.79%
Brighton & Hove Albion	0	0.00%	0.00%
Burnley	17	5.65%	2.26%
Crystal Palace	0	0.00%	0.00%
Everton	80	26.58%	10.62%
Leicester City	39	12.96%	5.18%
Newcastle	36	11.96%	4.78%
Norwich City	23	7.64%	3.05%
Sheffield United	0	0.00%	0.00%
Southampton	2	0.66%	0.27%
Watford	1	0.33%	0.13%
West Ham United	11	3.65%	1.46%
Wolverhampton Wanderers	3	1.00%	0.40%

N = 753

Survey Items

After examining participant demographic variables, an assessment of descriptive statistics for identification, attachment, and consumption behavior items commenced.

Table 8 provides descriptive statistic data for these items. An inspection of item means, medians, and ranges provided evidence of item quality. Each item included on the instrument possessed a range of six, indicating participant responses covered the full range of possible answer choices from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*. Most item means and medians ranged between two and six, indicating the average or middle respondent for each item was at the relative midpoint of the Likert scale. Moreover, skewness and kurtosis values for all identification and attachment scale items were below an absolute value of 3.00 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), indicating normally distributed data. Kurtosis values for three consumption behavior items (broadcast media, social media, and merchandise purchase amount) were above a value of 3.0, indicating a peaked distribution. However, visual inspections of the histogram charts for each identification, attachment, and consumption behavior item provided confirmation of relatively normal data distribution for each item.

Participants indicated strong consumption frequencies for each consumer behavior item. Broadcast media consumption ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 1.32$), social media consumption ($M = 6.16$, $SD = 1.19$), and merchandise purchase frequency ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.19$) all displayed means above the item scale midpoint, leading to negative skewness within each item's distribution, although still within an acceptable range (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In terms of dollars spent on merchandise, the average participant purchased almost \$200.00 ($SD = \170.27) of team-related merchandise over the past 12 months.

The average participant score on Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item organizational identification scale was 4.93 ($SD = 1.08$), meaning participants overall indicated above-average fandom for their favorite EPL club. Participants varied in terms

of their agreeableness to items for each point of attachment subscale. On average, attachment to fan community ($M = 5.78$, $SD = 0.94$) received the highest agreeableness ratings among point of attachment subscales while attachment to players ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.02$) was the lowest rated point of attachment subscale.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Identification, Attachment, and Consumption Items

Item	M	SD	Median	Range	Skew	Kurtosis
Organizational Identification	4.93	1.08	5.00	6.00	-0.58	0.25
Org ID Item #1	4.74	1.66	5.00	6.00	-0.64	-0.43
Org ID Item #2	5.00	1.43	5.00	6.00	-0.88	0.36
Org ID Item #3	5.99	1.37	6.00	6.00	-1.74	2.77
Org ID Item #4	4.93	1.66	5.00	6.00	-0.74	-0.25
Org ID Item #5	5.03	1.51	5.00	6.00	-0.79	0.05
Org ID Item #6	3.94	1.69	4.00	6.00	-0.12	-1.01
Broadcast Media Consumption	6.11	1.32	7.00	6.00	-1.90	3.32
Social Media Consumption	6.16	1.19	6.00	6.00	-2.15	5.20
Merchandise Purchase Frequency	5.30	1.54	6.00	6.00	-0.96	0.27
Merchandise Purchase Amount	\$199.69	\$170.27	\$152.00	\$1,000.00	2.16	6.56
Attachment to Player	2.26	1.02	2.00	6.00	0.99	1.23
Player Item #1	2.66	1.39	2.00	6.00	0.79	0.01
Player Item #2	2.12	1.14	2.00	6.00	1.22	1.57
Player Item #3	2.01	1.07	2.00	6.00	1.34	2.02
Attachment to Coach	3.63	1.44	3.33	6.00	0.23	-0.48
Coach Item #1	4.95	1.78	5.00	6.00	-0.73	-0.40
Coach Item #2	3.03	1.68	2.00	6.00	0.55	-0.71
Coach Item #3	2.94	1.68	2.00	6.00	0.64	-0.57
Attachment to Sport	5.20	1.37	5.33	6.00	0.60	-0.39
Sport Item #1	5.32	1.67	6.00	6.00	-0.91	-0.16
Sport Item #2	5.53	1.83	6.00	6.00	-1.02	-0.31
Sport Item #3	4.76	1.80	5.00	6.00	-0.50	-0.95
Attachment to City/Region	4.24	1.54	4.33	6.00	0.00	-0.80
City/Region Item #1	4.38	1.68	4.00	6.00	-0.21	-0.82
City/Region Item #2	4.03	1.84	4.00	6.00	0.05	-1.13
City/Region Item #3	4.32	1.80	4.00	6.00	-0.24	-0.99
Attachment to League	5.21	0.95	5.33	6.00	-0.83	1.41
League Item #1	3.71	1.79	4.00	6.00	-0.05	-1.19
League Item #2	6.07	1.01	6.00	6.00	-1.65	3.95
League Item #3	5.86	1.16	6.00	6.00	-1.57	3.36

Attachment to Fan Community	5.78	0.94	6.00	6.00	-1.09	2.00
Fan Community Item #1	5.55	1.17	6.00	6.00	-1.02	1.57
Fan Community Item #2	5.86	1.02	6.00	6.00	-1.23	2.42
Fan Community Item #3	5.94	1.13	6.00	6.00	-1.39	2.38
Attachment to Venue	5.42	1.28	5.67	6.00	-0.79	0.11
Venue Item #1	5.44	1.84	6.00	6.00	-0.95	-0.27
Venue Item #2	5.98	1.28	6.00	6.00	-1.48	2.09
Venue Item #3	4.86	1.65	5.00	6.00	-0.57	-0.44
Attachment to Owner	2.86	1.24	2.75	6.00	0.37	-0.41
Owner Item #1	2.23	1.35	2.00	6.00	1.07	0.40
Owner Item #2	3.71	1.85	4.00	6.00	-0.02	-1.08
Owner Item #3	2.37	1.38	2.00	6.00	0.83	-0.12
Owner Item #4	3.14	1.77	3.00	6.00	0.43	-0.95
Attachment to History/Tradition	5.25	1.26	5.50	5.75	-0.78	0.25
History/Tradition Item #1	5.46	1.41	6.00	6.00	-1.02	0.71
History/Tradition Item #2	5.33	1.53	6.00	6.00	-1.00	0.37
History/Tradition Item #3	5.36	1.47	6.00	6.00	-0.99	0.31
History/Tradition Item #4	4.87	1.68	5.00	6.00	-0.46	-0.77

N = 753

M = mean; *SD* = standard deviation

Note: All items measured on seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*

Finally, a bivariate correlation analysis assessed relationships among organizational identification, consumption behaviors, and each hypothesized point of attachment subscale. Organizational identification and point of attachment subscale scores reflected the average scores of items within each respective scale. Consumption behaviors scores represented single item measures. Ideally, independent variables in regression models (i.e., points of attachment in this study) possess correlations of relative low magnitude with each other and relatively high correlations with dependent variables (i.e., organizational identification and consumption behaviors in this study) in regression models (Field, 2009). Table 9 outlines correlation results. In general, this analysis suggested point of attachment subscales were significantly related to consumption behavior measures and organizational identification. Furthermore, point of attachment

subscales mostly displayed low magnitude relationships amongst each other. Two exceptions occurred in relation to the correlation between fan community attachment and history/tradition attachment ($r = .52$) and the correlation between coach attachment and owner attachment ($r = .55$).

Table 9
Bivariate Correlations Among Identification, Attachment, and Consumer Behavior Scales

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Player Attachment (1)	--												
Coach Attachment (2)	.20	--											
Sport Attachment (3)	.04	.09	--										
City/Region Attachment (4)	.05	.12	.12	--									
League Attachment (5)	.17	.22	.25	.07	--								
Fan Community Attachment (6)	-.19	.07	.19	.41	.15	--							
Venue Attachment (7)	-.03	.09	.16	.20	.12	.41	--						
Owner Attachment (8)	.14	.55	.07	.24	.15	.15	.15	--					
History/Tradition Attachment (9)	-.13	.11	.25	.48	.10	.52	.37	.20	--				
Organizational ID (10)	-.03	.09	.20	.28	.17	.51	.34	.11	.30	--			
Broadcast Consumption (11)	-.14	.05	.15	.10	.16	.30	.31	.11	.22	.29	--		
Social Media Consumption (12)	-.07	.15	.11	.20	.20	.38	.31	.14	.24	.30	.32	--	
Merch. Purchase Frequency (13)	-.02	.09	.19	.24	.18	.41	.31	.20	.31	.34	.41	.42	--
Merch. Purchase Amount (14)	-.09	-.05	.03	.18	.02	.27	.25	.04	.19	.20	.25	.20	.50

Note: Items in **bold** indicate significance at .05 level

Factor Analysis

The point of attachment items used to assess antecedents to organizational identification and relationships to sport consumption behaviors included seven subscales (players, coach, sport, city/region, league, and fan community) used in previous research (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2015)

and two new points of attachment (owner and organizational history/tradition) created for this study. Given the presence of new attachment factors, an EFA explored the factor structure of point of attachment items. Results from the EFA provided *a priori* factor structure information to conduct a CFA on point of attachment items.

To perform both an EFA and CFA, a random number generator function was used to analyze data in two parts. A total of 355 observations were used in the EFA procedure, surpassing Fabrigar and Wegener's (2012) suggested minimum sample size of 200 to conduct an EFA. The remaining 398 observations were utilized to perform a subsequent CFA. Based on a meta-analysis of CFA studies performed by Henson and Roberts (2006), this approximated the average number of observations used for a CFA.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

An EFA using maximum likelihood estimation with oblique (promax) rotation was performed on respondent data for 29 point of attachment items. Item-level skewness and kurtosis data (Table 8) and a visual inspection of histogram charts for each point of attachment item provided evidence of normal data distribution. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .798, indicating the data were suitable for a factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (approximate $\lambda^2 = 4513.42$, $p < .05$), indicating sufficient correlation between variables to proceed with the analysis (Pituch & Stevens, 2015).

Three analyses helped determine the factor structure for point of attachment items in this dataset. The first technique involved assessing eigenvalues greater than one (Kaiser, 1960). Secondly, an examination of a scree plot graph was used (Cattell, 1966). Lastly, a parallel analysis was conducted on the data (Horn, 1965). The Kaiser-Guttman

retention criterion of eigenvalues greater than one indicated a nine-factor solution.

Examination of a screen plot graph (Figure 3) suggested a seven to eight factor solution.

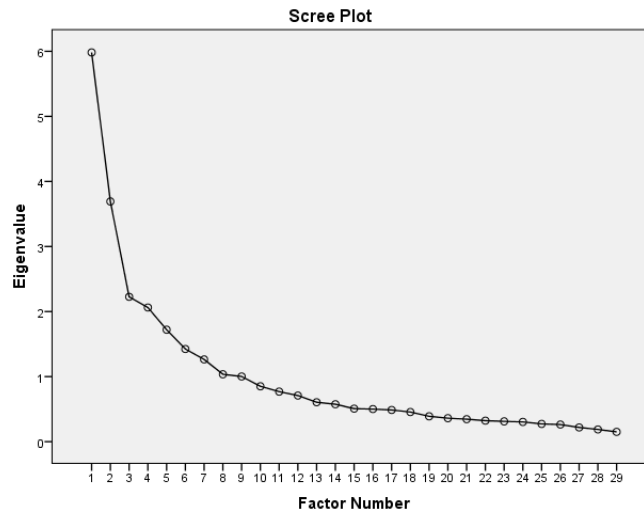


Figure 3.
Scree Plot from EFA Using Maximum Likelihood Estimation with Promax Rotation

The parallel analysis procedure suggested a seven-factor solution (Table 10).

Table 10
Results of Parallel Analysis

Factor	Real Data	Parallel Analysis
Factor 1	5.98	1.57
Factor 2	3.69	1.48
Factor 3	2.22	1.42
Factor 4	2.06	1.37
Factor 5	1.72	1.32
Factor 6	1.42	1.28
Factor 7	1.26	1.24
Factor 8	1.03	1.20
Factor 9	1.00	1.16

Note: Values represent eigenvalues

Given the ambiguity these analyses provided in regard to factor structure, a seven, eight, and nine-factor solution were analyzed to determine the model that allowed for the

greatest amount of variance explained among items, reduced significant cross-loadings for items between factors, and retained at least three items per factor. After analyzing these different factor structure models, an eight-factor solution provided the most appropriate fit for the data. The seven-factor model contained several cross-loading issues while the nine-factor solution did not allow for at least three items to cleanly load on the ninth factor. The eight-factor model accounted for 66.92% of the total variance in the data. Extraction communalities for the 29 items ranged from .22 to .71.

Six of these factors corresponded to point of attachment subscales used in previous research. Each of these six subscales contained three items and included attachment to city/region (eigenvalue = 5.98; 20.62% of total variance in the data after rotation), attachment to players (2.06; 7.11%), attachment to fan community (1.72; 5.93%), attachment to sport (1.42; 4.91%), attachment to coach (1.26; 4.35%), and attachment to venue (1.03; 3.57%). Additionally, the factor analysis retained both of the new point of attachment subscales created for this research. The attachment to owner subscale (eigenvalue = 3.69) accounted for 12.72% of the total variance in the data after rotation and all four items from the instrument development phase significantly loaded on this factor. The attachment to history/tradition subscale (eigenvalue = 2.22) accounted for 7.67% of the total variance in the data after rotation. However, only the first three items for this subscale exhibited clean factor loadings. The fourth item (“The history and tradition of [team name] brings back nostalgic feelings for me”) displayed significant cross-loadings on another factor. Finally, the attachment to league subscale was dropped from further analysis. The first and third item on this subscale did not saliently load on

any of the eight factors while the second item on this subscale cross-loaded with the attachment to sport subscale.

Appendix B provides full results of the factor analysis, including communalities and factor loadings (pattern and structure coefficients) for each item. Of particular note is each retained item significantly loaded on its factor above the recommended cut-off value of .40 (Pituch & Stevens, 2015). Additionally, no retained item displayed significant cross-loadings on another factor, demonstrated by the absence of factor loadings on an alternative factor above .30 and a difference of at least .20 between primary and alternative factor loadings (Hinkin, 1998).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Following the EFA procedure, a CFA was performed on the remaining 398 observations from the sample dataset. Babyak and Green (2010) suggested testing three factor structure models when conducting a CFA: a unidimensional model, a correlated factor model, and a bifactor model. The unidimensional model included the 25 observed item variables retained from the EFA and hypothesized a relationship between these 25 items and a single higher-order latent variable, points of attachment. The correlated factor model included the 25 observed items and eight latent variables corresponding to the eight factors retained from the EFA. The model hypothesized each item to associate with its respective factor based on EFA results and also set the eight latent variables to covary with each other. The bifactor model hypothesized relationships for each item between both its respective factor and a single higher-order latent variable, points of attachment. In addition to models suggested by Babyak and Green (2010), a second-order factor model tested a hypothesized factor structure whereby each item associated with its

respective factor and all eight factors associated with a second-order latent variable, points of attachment. Results from chi-square analysis, NFI, CFI, and RMSEA provided measures to assess model fit for each CFA model.

An initial assessment of each structural model revealed inadequate fit between the data and hypothesized models. None of the four tested models produced acceptable model fit according to Hu and Bentler’s (1999) guidelines on fit indices. A closer inspection of the item factor loadings across all models revealed two issues. Chen and Tsai (2007) suggested factor loadings for all items should exceed .5. The fourth item on the attachment to owner subscale (“Being a fan of [team name]’s owner is very important to me”) did not meet this standard. Therefore, this item was removed from the CFA models. Additionally, the third item on the attachment to sport subscale (“I am a soccer fan at all levels, e.g., high school, college, professional”) failed to produce a factor loading above .5. Eliminating this item left only two items relating to the sport attachment factor, creating an under-identified model (Babyak & Green, 2010). Therefore, the attachment to sport subscale was removed from the CFA models. After these alterations, the models were retested with 21 observed item variables and seven latent variables. Each latent variable included three observed items. Table 11 provides results from the second round of CFA model tests.

Table 11
Model Fit Summary for CFA on Point of Attachment Items

Model	Chi-square	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Unidimensional	5028.54*	.34	.35	.18
Correlated Factor	788.28*	.90**	.92**	.07**
Bifactor	895.17*	.88	.90**	.08**
Second-Order	1300.51*	.83	.85	.09**

* = significant at .05 level

** = good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999)

An analysis of model fit statistics in Table 11 revealed a significant chi-square test for each model. This suggested poor model fit due to significant differences between covariance matrices in the observed and expected models. However, Kenny and McCoach (2003) stated it is best to use chi-square analysis as an adequate measure of model fit in samples of fewer than 200 observations. Bentler (1990) noted chi-square tests can become an unreliable measure of model fit as sample size increases. Given the large sample size for these CFA tests ($n = 398$), chi-square test results did not provide the best gauge for model fit, necessitating the examination of other fit indices. The unidimensional model did not demonstrate good model fit across any of the model fit indices. The remaining three models all produced a RMSEA value indicating good model fit. However, only the correlated factor model (NFI = .90, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .07, CI = .065 - .075) produced good model fit across all fit indices. Although none of the models displayed model fit indices considered as great or excellent fits for the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999), the correlated factor model provided the best model according to these statistical indices. Therefore, this model provided the point of attachment subscale model for further analyses. Figure 4 shows the final model structure.

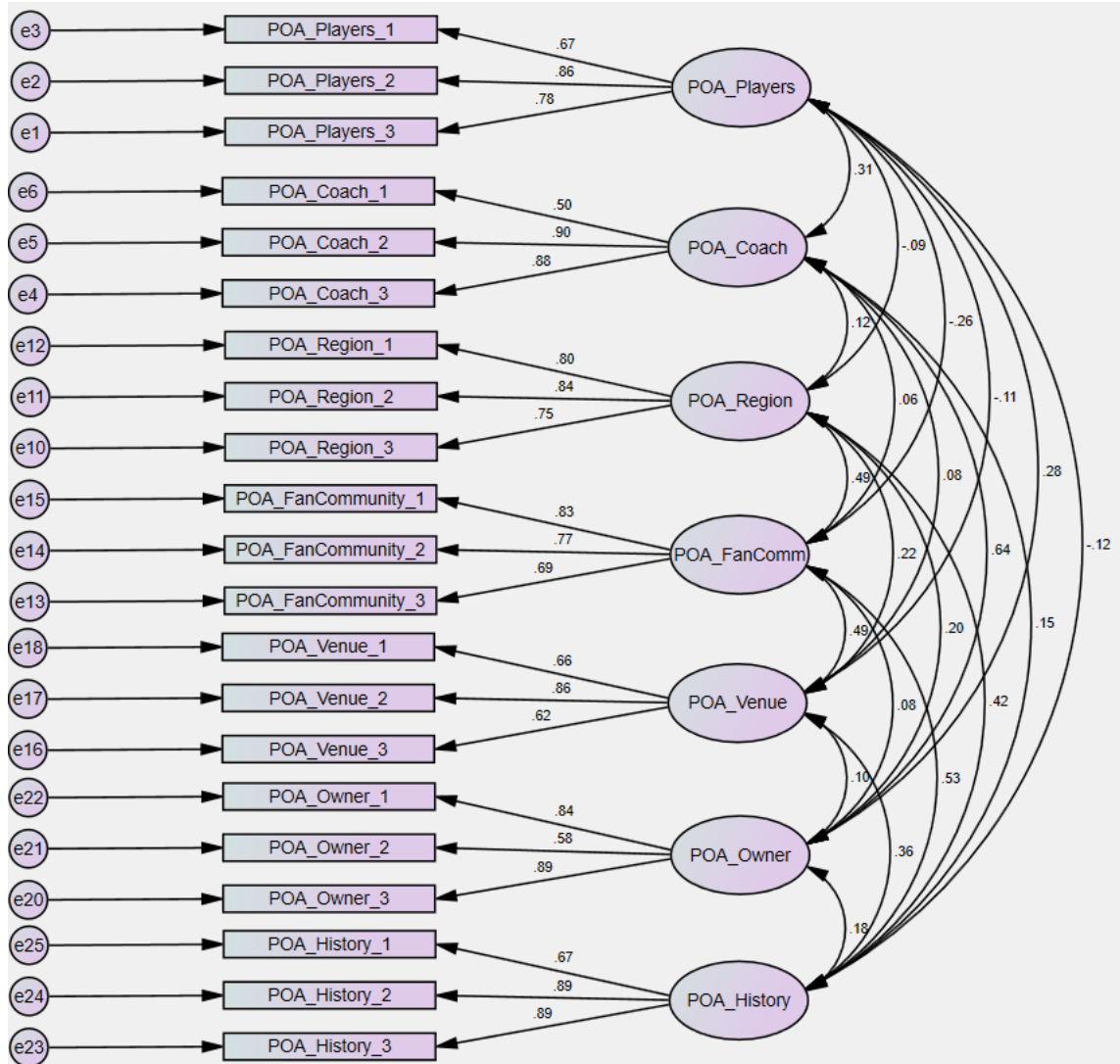


Figure 4.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Point of Attachment Subscales

After confirming the appropriate factor structure for point of attachment items, discriminant validity checks occurred. Discriminant validity refers to the degree latent variables (factors) correlate with each other. A factor should not display high correlations with other factors. If this occurs, it suggests redundancy among the factors, meaning the effect of an individual factor on another variable, such as organizational identification or sport consumption behaviors, cannot be appropriately parsed out. Voorhees, Brady,

Calantone, and Ramirez (2016) recommended correlation values between latent variables below an absolute value of .85 to avoid discriminant validity issues. Table 12 provides information on correlations between factors.

Table 12
Correlation Estimates Between Latent Variables

Factor		Factor	Correlation Estimate
Players	↔	Coach	.31
Players	↔	Region	-.08
Players	↔	Fan Community	-.25
Players	↔	Venue	-.11
Players	↔	Owner	.28
Players	↔	History	-.12
Coach	↔	Region	.12
Coach	↔	Fan Community	.06
Coach	↔	Venue	.08
Coach	↔	Owner	.64
Coach	↔	History	.15
Region	↔	Fan Community	.49
Region	↔	Venue	.22
Region	↔	Owner	.20
Region	↔	History	.42
Fan Community	↔	Venue	.48
Fan Community	↔	Owner	.08
Fan Community	↔	History	.52
Venue	↔	Owner	.10
Venue	↔	History	.36
Owner	↔	History	.18

Factor correlations between latent variables ranged from -.25 (Players ↔ Fan Community) to .64 (Coach ↔ Owner). None of the factor correlations displayed an absolute value above .85, thereby suggesting adequate discriminant validity between latent variables (Voorhees et al., 2016). Interestingly, the only latent factors to display negative correlations included those between attachment to players and attachment to

region, fan community, venue, and history. This suggests as a fan’s attachment to region, fan community, venue, and history increases, their attachment to players decreases.

Lastly, an examination of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity for the point of attachment factors occurred. Table 13 provides information on standardized factor loadings for each point of attachment item as well as measures to assess internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. Cronbach’s alpha values provided an estimate of internal consistency reliability. Six of the seven point of attachment factors had a Cronbach’s alpha value above .80, indicating strong internal consistency reliability (Loo, 2001). The remaining factor, attachment to venue, generated a Cronbach’s alpha estimate of .76. This met the standard proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) for adequate evidence of reliability.

In addition, AVE values for each factor suggested convergent validity. Each AVE value was above .50, indicating item scores aligned more with the scale’s theoretical construct rather than error (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results provided consistency with previous findings for point of attachment factor reliability and convergent validity (Ballouli et al., 2016; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2015).

Table 13
Scale Items, Standardized Factor Loadings, Cronbach’s Alpha, Means, and Average Variance Extracted

Factor and Item	β	α	M	AVE
Players Attachment		.81	2.26	.59
I identify with individual players on [team name]	.67			
I am a big fan of specific players on [team name]	.86			
I consider myself a fan of certain players on [team name]	.78			
Coach Attachment		.81	3.64	.61
I am a big fan of the coach of [team name]	.50			
I follow [team name] because I like the coach	.90			

I am a fan of [team name] because of the coach	.88		
Region/City Attachment		.84	4.24 .63
I identify with residents of the city/region that [team name] plays in	.80		
I feel part of the city/region that [team name] plays in	.84		
I support the city/region that [team name] plays in as a whole	.75		
Fan Community Attachment		.81	5.78 .59
I feel a deep connection with others who follow [team name]	.84		
I identify with people who follow [team name]	.77		
I feel like I belong to a club with other fans of [team name]	.69		
Venue Attachment		.76	5.42 .52
[Team name]'s home stadium is the best in the EPL	.66		
I am a big fan of [team name]'s home stadium	.86		
Being a fan of [team name]'s home stadium is important to me	.62		
Owner Attachment		.82	2.77 .61
I am a fan of [team name] because of the owner	.85		
I am a big fan of [team name]'s owner	.58		
I follow [team name] because I like the owner	.89		
History/Tradition Attachment		.86	5.38 .67
I feel connected to the history and tradition of [team name]	.67		
I follow [team name] because of its history and tradition	.89		
I am a fan of [team name] because of the club's history and tradition	.89		

Summary of Instrument Development, Sample Statistics, and Factor Analysis

An assessment of sample statistics revealed wide coverage of favorite EPL clubs among survey respondents. Fans of 17 out of 20 EPL clubs completed surveys. Approximately 60% of respondents ($n = 452$) indicated fandom for a Big Six EPL club while almost 40% of respondents ($n = 301$) indicated fandom for an EPL club outside of the Big Six. In regard to participant demographics, the majority of the sample was male (87.4%) and white (87.6%). Participant age ranged from 18 years to 82 years, with 88.1% of participants under the age of 55. Results of chi-square goodness of fit tests revealed statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between sample participants and the target population in regard to gender, race, income, and education demographics. Therefore,

these demographic variables entered multiple linear regression models as control variables to mitigate the effect of an unrepresentative sample on regression results.

The use of multiple quality control procedures and a robust factor analysis process established several aspects of validity and reliability for point of attachment scale items. A panel of experts provided suggestions on item wording to improve content validity. Graduate students at a research university participated in a field test of the instrument to provide face validity and suggest minor workflow changes to the web-based survey design. After collecting data, an EFA and CFA procedure helped establish a factor structure that provided good fit for the data (NFI = .90, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .07, CI = .065 - .075). In sum, the factor analysis procedures retained seven factors, each with three items. These factors included attachment to players, coach, region/city, fan community, venue, owner, and organizational history/tradition. Correlation estimates among latent factors suggested an absence of discriminant validity issues. AVE values above .50 suggested adequate convergent validity among latent factors. Cronbach's alpha estimates suggested adequate internal consistency reliability for each point of attachment factor.

Data Analysis

The main data analysis for this study focused on the following three research questions:

RQ1. Which points of attachment explain organizational identification for U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2. Which points of attachment explain sport consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2a. Which points of attachment explain broadcast media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2b. Which points of attachment explain social media consumption behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ2c. Which points of attachment explain merchandise purchase behavior among U.S.-based EPL fans?

RQ3. What differences exist in points of attachment between U.S.-based fans of the Big Six EPL organizations and U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six?

The following sections outline detailed results of each research question.

Data Analysis of Research Question 1

To address the first research question, a hierarchical multiple linear regression investigated which points of attachment explained organizational identification for U.S.-based EPL fans. The mean organizational identification score for participants, calculated by averaging participant responses to Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item organizational identification scale, served as the dependent variable in this analysis. The first block of the hierarchical multiple linear regression model contained demographic variables to control for participant gender, race, income, and education. Since each of these were categorical variables, dummy coding transformed each variable into a binary structure for use with multiple linear regression. Following the entry of these control variables, the second block of data entry included the seven point of attachment factors retained from the factor analysis procedures (attachment to players, coach, city/region, fan community, venue, owner, and organizational history/tradition). Each of these factors contained three

items. The three items for each factor were averaged to calculate a point of attachment factor score for each attachment variable.

Prior to conducting the hierarchical multiple linear regression, several assumptions required validation. Field (2009) suggested the need to validate five key assumptions to perform a multiple linear regression analysis: independence of responses, normal distribution of dependent variable data, homoscedasticity of variance around the regression line of best fit, linearity of the dependent variable, and absence of multicollinearity among independent variables. The assumption of independence implies each participant should complete the survey only once. A check of IP addresses captured for each survey respondent indicated a lack of duplicate IP addresses within the dataset, providing validation for this assumption.

Normal distribution of the dependent variable was examined using several techniques. The item level statistics presented in Table 8 indicated acceptable levels of skewness and kurtosis (Hu & Bentler, 1999) within the mean organizational identification score ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.08$). Additionally, a histogram chart (Figure 5) provided a visual inspection of the dependent variable distribution. An examination of this histogram chart served as additional evidence of a normal distribution for the dependent variable in this analysis.

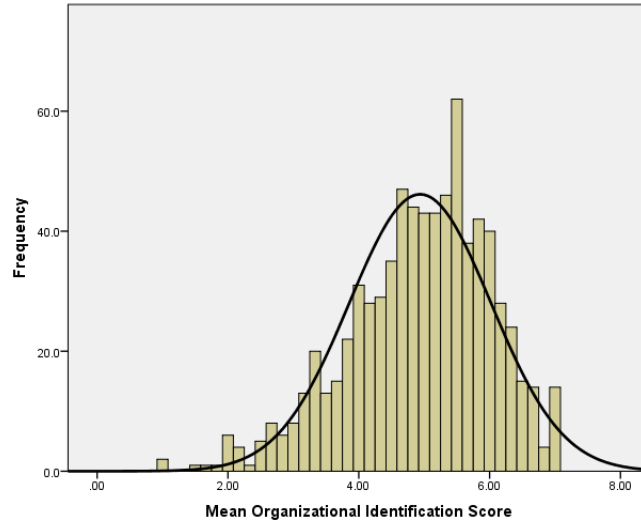


Figure 5.
Histogram for Mean Organizational Identification Score

To ensure homoscedasticity of variance around the regression line of best fit, a scatterplot was used to examine the regression standardized predicted value of the dependent variable on the x -axis and the regression standardized residual of the dependent variable on the y -axis. Figure 6 displays this scatterplot. The variance of data points appears relatively even around the model fit line overlaid on the chart. This indicates low levels of random error in the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variable, thereby validating the assumption of homoscedasticity of variance (Pituch & Stevens, 2015).

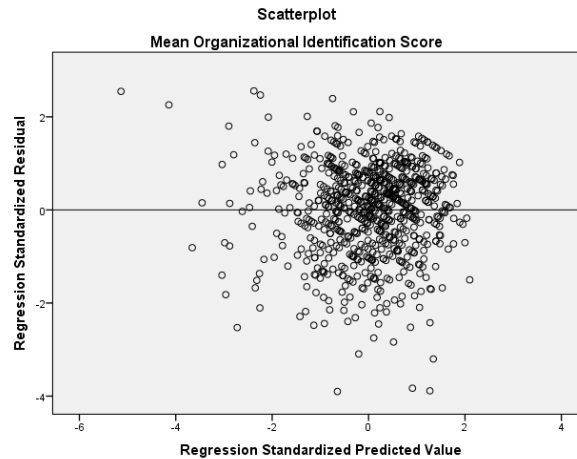


Figure 6.
Scatterplot to Check for Homoscedasticity of Variance for RQ1

Finally, the assumption of a linear relationship between the dependent variable and all independent variables was examined using a probability plot of standardized residuals. Figure 7 provides this chart. A linear relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables was recognized based on the standardized residuals closely mirroring the least squares regression line overlaid on the chart.

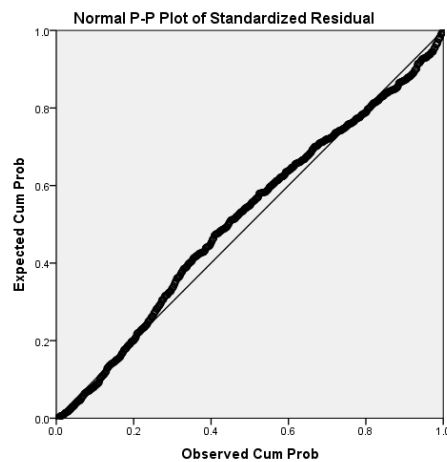


Figure 7.
P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residuals for RQ1

Following the validation of these assumptions, hierarchical linear regression analyses commenced. The first block of the regression model only included control variables (gender, race, income, and education). These control variables overall significantly explained organizational identification [$F(4,748) = 2.71, p = .03$]. The R^2 value indicated the control variables explained 1.4% of the variance in organizational identification. Significant gender ($b = .28, t = 2.41, p = .02$) differences were realized within organizational identification scores. Gender represented a dummy-coded variable, whereby males provided the referent group (indicated by a value of zero) and all other gender responses provided the comparison group (indicated by a value of one). Therefore, the unstandardized regression coefficient ($b = .28$) on gender signified respondents in the comparison group, comprised almost entirely of females, displayed a significantly higher level of organizational identification.

The second block of the multiple linear regression model added the seven point of attachment variables retained from factor analysis (player, coach, city/region, fan community, venue, owner, and organizational history/tradition). Overall, the variables in the second model significantly explained organizational identification [$F(11,741) = 29.85, p < .01$]. The ΔR^2 between the first and second model was significant [$F(7,741) = 44.73, p < .01$]. The increase in R^2 between the first and second model of 29.3% meets the standard for practically meaningful results as established by Cohen (1992). The R^2 value indicated the variables in the second model collectively explained 30.7% of the variance in organizational identification.

An inspection of regression output revealed VIF values for each independent variable below 2.0. These indicated an absence of multicollinearity (Midi & Bagheri,

2010; Rogerson, 2001) and no issues with skewness among regression coefficients. The addition of point of attachment variables mitigated the significance of the regression coefficient on gender from the first model.

Results suggested that, when controlling for demographic variables, attachment to city/region ($b = .06, t = 2.60, p = .01$), attachment to fan community ($b = .51, t = 11.42, p < .01$), and attachment to venue ($b = .13, t = 4.40, p < .01$) demonstrated significant positive relationships with organizational identification. Interpretation of the unstandardized regression coefficients is crucial to understanding the unique effect of each point of attachment on organizational identification. The largest effect on organizational identification occurred through attachment to fan community ($b = .51$). An interpretation of this unstandardized regression coefficient suggests that a one-unit change in attachment to fan community (for example, comparing a respondent with an average attachment to fan community score of six out of seven to a respondent with an average attachment to fan community score of five out of seven) produces a 0.51-unit change in organizational identification, holding all else constant. This represents an approximate 7.14% increase in organizational identification in this interpretation example.

Outside of these three points of attachment, none of the unstandardized regression coefficient results from other independent variables suggested a significant relationship with organizational identification. Table 14 provides a summary of regression results for RQ1.

Table 14
Regression Analysis for Organizational Identification

	Model I			Model II			
	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	VIF
Constant	4.80*	0.07	< .01	0.93*	0.25	< .01	
<i>Control Variables</i>							
Gender	0.28*	0.12	.02	0.19	0.10	.06	1.01
Race	0.14	0.12	.23	0.10	0.10	.34	1.05
Income	0.14	0.08	.07	0.12	0.07	.07	1.04
Education	0.00	0.08	.97	0.01	0.07	.94	1.02
<i>Points of Attachment</i>							
Players				0.05	0.03	.16	1.13
Coach				0.04	0.03	.18	1.52
City/Region				0.06*	0.02	.01	1.34
Fan Community				0.51*	0.04	< .01	1.61
Venue				0.13*	0.03	< .01	1.28
Owner				-0.03	0.03	.37	1.57
Org. History/Tradition				-0.04	0.03	.25	1.51
<i>Model Fit</i>							
n	753			753			
F-value	2.71*			29.85*			
R ²	.014			.307			
ΔR ²	.014*			.293*			

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients reported. S.E. = Standard Error. VIF = Variance Inflation Factor . * = significant at .05 level

Data Analysis of Research Question 2

To address the second research question, four separate hierarchical multiple linear regression models examined the effect of points of attachment on three types of sport consumption behavior (broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, and team-related merchandise purchase behavior). The dependent variable in each analysis consisted of consumption behavior scores reported by participants. Broadcast media and social media consumption consisted of single-item measures used to assess the frequency of consumption. Two different metrics examined team-related merchandise purchase

behavior. The first consisted of a single-item measure regarding the frequency of team-related merchandise purchases while the second consisted of a single-item measure regarding the amount spent on team-related merchandise purchases over the previous 12 months. As with RQ1, the first block of each hierarchical multiple linear regression model contained demographic control variables. The second block for the models included the seven point of attachment factors (attachment to players, coach, city/region, fan community, venue, owner, and organizational history/tradition) each representing an average of its three underlying items. The following sections outline the results and analysis for each sport consumption behavior type.

Broadcast Media Consumption. Before performing a regression analysis on broadcast media consumption, a check for normal distribution of the dependent variable occurred. Table 8 reported the descriptive statistics for broadcast media consumption ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 1.32$). The skewness and kurtosis values indicated a negatively skewed distribution with a peaked distribution slightly outside of the proscribed range as suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999) for normally distributed data. A histogram (Figure 8) provided additional evidence of the distribution for this dependent variable. The negative skewness and peaked distribution of the data for broadcast media consumption are evident in Figure 8. Although this is not ideal, both Stevens and Taylor (2009) and Schmidt and Finan (2018) noted multiple linear regression is robust to deviations for normally distributed dependent variable data, especially with large sample sizes. Therefore, analysis continued without further alterations to the data.

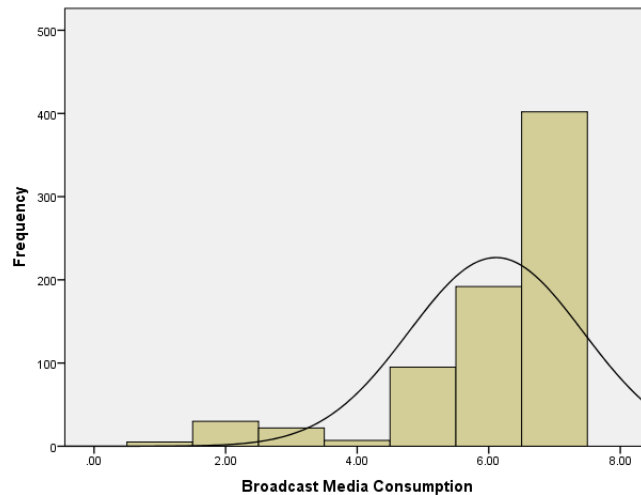


Figure 8.
Histogram for Broadcast Media Consumption

A scatterplot examining the regression standardized predicted values and regression standardized residuals of the dependent variable provided evidence of homoscedasticity of variance around the regression line of best fit. The probability plot of standardized residuals to examine the assumption of a linear relationship between the dependent variable and all independent variables showed deviations between the standardized residuals and least squares regression line at several points. However, these deviations did not appear to indicate a non-linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Therefore, the data were deemed suitable for further analysis.

The regression analysis on broadcast media consumption began with control variables entered into the first block of the hierarchical regression model. These control variables did not cumulatively explain broadcast media consumption [$R^2 = .004$, $F(4,748) = 0.69$, $p = .59$]. Additionally, none of the control variables individually produced a regression coefficient that significantly explained broadcast media consumption.

The second block of this multiple linear regression model added the seven point of attachment variables (player, coach, city/region, fan community, venue, owner, and organizational history/tradition). Overall, the variables in the second model significantly explained broadcast media consumption [$F(11,741) = 12.28, p < .01$]. The ΔR^2 between the first and second model was significant [$F(7,741) = 18.83, p < .01$]. The increase in R^2 between the first and second model of 15.0% meets the standard for practically meaningful results as established by Cohen (1992). The R^2 value indicated the variables in the second model collectively explained 15.4% of the variance in broadcast media consumption.

An inspection of regression output revealed VIF values below 2.0, indicating an absence of multicollinearity (Midi & Bagheri, 2010; Rogerson, 2001). Results suggested that, when controlling for demographic variables, player attachment ($b = -.13, t = -2.88, p < .01$) possessed a negative relationship with broadcast media consumption while fan community attachment ($b = .27, t = 4.51, p < .01$) and attachment to venue ($b = .23, t = 5.83, p < .01$) demonstrated significant positive relationships with broadcast media consumption. The unstandardized regression coefficient on attachment to players ($b = -.13$) indicated that a one-unit change in attachment to player score produced a 0.13-unit decrease in broadcast media consumption among respondents.

None of the other regression coefficients on point of attachment variables indicated a significant relationship with the dependent variable. Table 15 provides a summary of regression results for RQ2a.

Table 15
Regression Analysis for Broadcast Media Consumption

	Model I			Model II			
	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	VIF
Constant	6.18*	0.09	< .01	3.50*	0.34	< .01	
<i>Control Variables</i>							
Gender	0.04	0.14	.80	0.04	0.14	.79	1.01
Race	-0.01	0.15	.93	-0.07	0.14	.58	1.05
Income	-0.16	0.10	.10	-0.18*	0.09	.05	1.04
Education	0.00	0.10	.98	-0.01	0.09	.89	1.02
<i>Points of Attachment</i>							
Players				-0.13*	0.05	< .01	1.13
Coach				0.02	0.04	.54	1.52
City/Region				-0.04	0.03	.20	1.34
Fan Community				0.27*	0.06	< .01	1.61
Venue				0.23*	0.04	< .01	1.28
Owner				0.04	0.04	.37	1.57
Org. History/Tradition				0.03	0.04	.42	1.51
<i>Model Fit</i>							
n	753			753			
F-value	0.69			12.28*			
R ²	.004			.154			
ΔR ²	.004			.150*			

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients reported. S.E. = Standard Error. VIF = Variance Inflation Factor . * = significant at .05 level

Social Media Consumption. Similar to broadcast media consumption, social media consumption ($M = 6.16$, $SD = 1.19$) displayed negative skewness and a peaked distribution based on descriptive statistics from Table 8. Figure 9 presents a histogram of social media consumption data. This chart verifies the negatively skewed and peaked distribution. However, given the robustness of multiple linear regression to deviations in normally distributed dependent variables when sample sizes are large (Schmidt & Finan,

2018; Stevens & Taylor, 2009), the analysis for social media consumption continued without further alterations to the data.

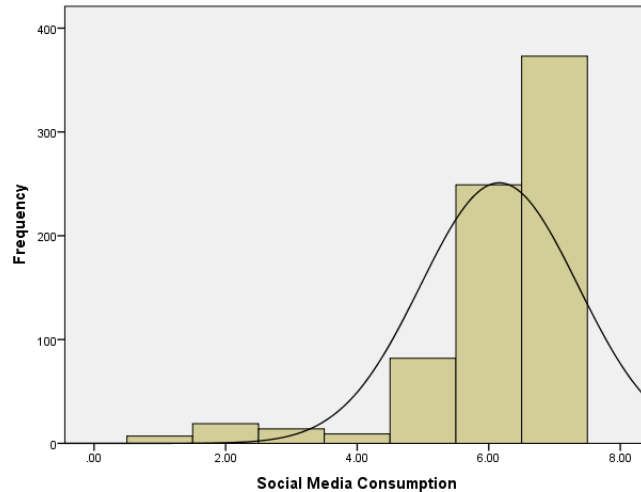


Figure 9.
Histogram for Social Media Consumption

A scatterplot examining the regression standardized predicted values and regression standardized residuals of the dependent variable provided evidence of homoscedasticity of variance around the regression line of best fit. The probability plot of standardized residuals to examine the assumption of a linear relationship between the dependent variable and all independent variables showed deviations between the standardized residuals and least squares regression line at several points. However, these deviations did not appear to indicate a non-linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Therefore, the data were deemed suitable for further analysis.

The control variables entered into the first block of a hierarchical multiple linear regression equation did not significantly explain social media consumption [$R^2 = .004$, $F(4,748) = 0.71$, $p = .58$]. The second block, with point of attachment variables added to the regression model, did significantly explain social media consumption [$F(11,741) =$

15.80, $p < .01$]. The ΔR^2 between the first and second model was 18.6% and the F -test suggested this change was significant [$F(7,741) = 24.34, p < .01$]. This increase in R^2 between the first and second model met the standard for practically meaningful results (Cohen, 1992). The R^2 value indicated the variables in the second model collectively explained 19.0% of the variance in social media consumption.

VIF values for each independent variable in the second model were below 2.0, indicating an absence of multicollinearity (Midi & Bagheri, 2010; Rogerson, 2001). When controlling for demographic variables, results suggested that attachment to coach ($b = .09, t = 2.83, p = .01$), attachment to fan community ($b = .34, t = 6.35, p < .01$), and attachment to venue ($b = .15, t = 4.47, p < .01$) demonstrated significant positive relationships with social media consumption. None of the regression coefficients from other independent variables suggested significant relationships with social media consumption. Table 16 provides a summary of regression results for RQ2b.

Table 16
Regression Analysis for Social Media Consumption

	Model I			Model II			
	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	VIF
Constant	6.11*	0.08	< .01	2.80*	0.30	< .01	
<i>Control Variables</i>							
Gender	0.21	0.13	.10	0.16	0.12	.17	1.01
Race	0.03	0.13	.81	0.01	0.12	.96	1.05
Income	-0.01	0.09	.94	-0.04	0.08	.63	1.04
Education	0.03	0.09	.74	0.02	0.08	.78	1.02
<i>Points of Attachment</i>							
Players				-0.03	0.04	.39	1.13
Coach				0.09*	0.03	.01	1.52
City/Region				0.02	0.03	.50	1.34
Fan Community				0.34*	0.05	< .01	1.61
Venue				0.15*	0.03	< .01	1.28
Owner				0.01	0.04	.91	1.57
Org. History/Tradition				0.03	0.04	.41	1.51

<i>Model Fit</i>		
n	753	753
F-value	0.71	15.80*
R ²	.004	.190
ΔR ²	.004	.186*

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients reported. S.E. = Standard Error. VIF = Variance Inflation Factor . * = significant at .05 level

Merchandise Purchase Behavior. Study participants provided two measures of merchandise purchase behavior. The first indicated frequency of merchandise purchase behavior ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.54$) and the second indicated amount of money spent on team-related merchandise over the previous 12 months ($M = \$199.69$, $SD = \$170.27$). The data for merchandise purchase frequency indicated a normal distribution based on skewness and kurtosis values under an absolute value of 3.0 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and a visual inspection of data through a histogram chart. The data for merchandise purchase amount indicated positive skewness and a peaked distribution. Figure 10 shows a visual representation of the positive skewness and peaked data distribution for this dependent variable. However, given the large sample size of this study and robustness of this assumption to multiple linear regression when working with large sample sizes (Schmidt & Finan, 2018; Stevens & Taylor, 2009), analysis continued without further alterations to the data. Additionally, scatterplots and probability plots for each dependent variable suggested the assumption of homoscedasticity was met and a linear relationship existed between the independent variables and each dependent variable.

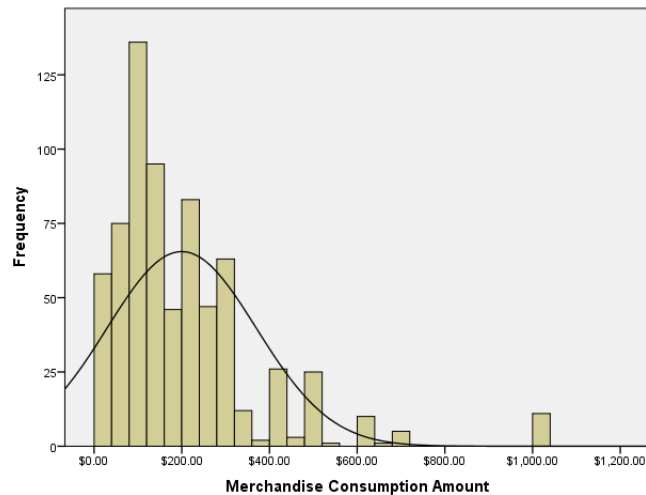


Figure 10.
Histogram for Merchandise Purchase Amount

Data analysis for merchandise purchase frequency began with control variables entered into the first block of a hierarchical multiple linear regression model. These control variables overall (gender, race, income, and education) did not significantly explain variance in merchandise purchase frequency [$R^2 = .006$, $F(4,748) = 1.05$, $p = .38$]. The second block, with points of attachment variables added to the regression model, did significantly explain merchandise purchase frequency [$F(11,741) = 19.75$, $p < .01$]. The ΔR^2 between the first and second model was significant [$F(7,741) = 30.28$, $p < .01$]. The increase in R^2 between the first and second model of 22.1% meets the standard for practically meaningful results (Cohen, 1992). Furthermore, the R^2 value indicated the variables in the second model collectively explained 22.7% of the variance in merchandise purchase frequency.

An inspection of VIF values for each independent variable revealed an absence of multicollinearity (Midi & Bagheri, 2010; Rogerson, 2001). Results suggested that, when controlling for demographic variables, attachment to fan community ($b = .45$, $t = 6.75$, p

< .01), attachment to venue ($b = .18, t = 4.02, p < .01$), attachment to owner ($b = .13, t = 2.79, p < .01$), and attachment to organizational history/tradition ($b = .13, t = 2.80, p < .01$) all possessed significant positive relationships with merchandise purchase frequency. Additionally, significant income ($b = -.23, t = -2.25, p = .02$) differences were suggested among merchandise purchase frequency scores. Income represented a dummy-coded variable, with individuals indicating an annual household income at or below \$100,000 providing the referent group (coded as a value of zero) and individuals indicating an annual household income above \$100,000 providing the comparison group (coded as a value of one). Therefore, this result suggested those respondents at or below \$100,000 in annual household income purchased merchandise significantly more infrequently than those individuals above \$100,000 in annual household income. Table 17 provides an overview of regression results for merchandise purchase frequency.

Table 17
Regression Analysis for Merchandise Purchase Frequency

	Model I			Model II			VIF
	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	
Constant	5.42*	0.11	< .01	0.56	0.38	.14	
<i>Control Variables</i>							
Gender	0.13	0.17	.44	0.05	0.15	.75	1.01
Race	-0.01	0.17	.95	-0.05	0.16	.72	1.05
Income	-0.21	0.11	.06	-0.23*	0.10	.02	1.04
Education	-0.07	0.11	.55	-0.07	0.10	.45	1.02
<i>Points of Attachment</i>							
Players				0.07	0.05	.19	1.13
Coach				-0.02	0.04	.55	1.52
City/Region				0.03	0.04	.34	1.34
Fan Community				0.45*	0.07	< .01	1.61
Venue				0.18*	0.04	< .01	1.28
Owner				0.13*	0.05	< .01	1.57
Org. History/Tradition				0.13*	0.05	< .01	1.51
<i>Model Fit</i>							
n	753			753			

F-value	1.05	19.75*
R ²	.006	.227
ΔR ²	.006	.221*

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients reported. S.E. = Standard Error. VIF = Variance Inflation Factor . * = significant at .05 level

Data analysis for merchandise purchase amount followed the same process as described above for merchandise purchase frequency. Control variables overall significantly explained merchandise purchase amount [$R^2 = .032$, $F(4,694) = 5.70$, $p < .01$]. The R^2 suggested the control variables explained 3.2% of the variance in merchandise purchase amount. Both race ($b = 41.47$, $t = 2.13$, $p = .03$) and income ($b = -49.18$, $t = -3.84$, $p < .01$) significantly explained merchandise purchase amount.

The second block, with point of attachment variables included, also significantly explained merchandise purchase amount [$R^2 = .145$, $F(11,687) = 10.59$, $p < .01$]. The ΔR^2 between the first and second model was significant [$F(7,687) = 12.99$, $p < .01$]. The increase in R^2 between the first and second model of 11.3% meets the standard for practically meaningful results (Cohen, 1992). Additionally, the R^2 value indicated the independent variables in the second block collectively explained 14.5% of the variance in merchandise purchase amount.

VIF values were below 2.0, indicating an absence of multicollinearity among the independent variables (Midi & Bagheri, 2010; Rogerson, 2001). Results suggested that, when controlling for demographic variables, attachment to city/region ($b = 9.39$, $t = 2.09$, $p = .04$), attachment to fan community ($b = 30.78$, $t = 3.78$, $p < .01$), and attachment to venue ($b = 22.86$, $t = 4.35$, $p < .01$) all demonstrated a positive relationship with merchandise purchase amount while attachment to coach ($b = -12.37$, $t = -2.37$, $p = .02$) demonstrated a negative relationship with the dependent variable. Additionally, the

inclusion of point of attachment variables mitigated the significant regression coefficient on race from the first model. However, the control variable income continued to demonstrate a negative relationship with merchandise purchase amount ($b = -50.99$, $t = -4.16$, $p < .01$). Similar to merchandise purchase frequency, income represented a dummy-coded variable, with individuals at or below \$100,000 in annual household income coded as a value of zero and individuals above \$100,000 in annual household income coded as a value of one. Therefore, this result suggested those respondents at or below \$100,000 in annual household income purchased almost \$51 less in team-related merchandise over the preceding 12 months compared to respondents above \$100,000 in annual household income. Table 18 provides an overview of regression results for merchandise purchase amount.

Table 18
Regression Analysis for Merchandise Purchase Amount

	Model I			Model II			
	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>p</i>	VIF
Constant	208.79*	12.27	< .01	-97.91*	47.32	.04	
<i>Control Variables</i>							
Gender	20.17	19.60	.30	13.85	18.62	.45	1.01
Race	41.47*	19.45	.03	32.91	18.76	.08	1.04
Income	-49.18*	12.78	< .01	-50.99*	12.23	< .01	1.03
Education	17.27	12.85	.18	12.12	12.21	.32	1.02
<i>Points of Attachment</i>							
Players				-4.29	6.24	.49	1.12
Coach				-12.37*	5.21	.02	1.55
City/Region				9.39*	4.48	.04	1.31
Fan Community				30.78*	8.13	< .01	1.52
Venue				22.86*	5.25	< .01	1.26
Owner				3.45	5.87	.55	1.59
Org. History/Tradition				2.48	5.76	.67	1.45
<i>Model Fit</i>							
n	699			699			
F-value	5.71*			10.59*			
R ²	.032			.145			

ΔR^2	.032*		.113*
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Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients reported. S.E. = Standard Error. VIF = Variance Inflation Factor . * = significant at .05 level

Data Analysis of Research Question 3

To address the third research question, a two-group between-subjects MANOVA explored differences in points of attachment between U.S.-based fans of successful EPL clubs (the Big Six EPL organizations) and U.S.-based fans of unsuccessful EPL clubs (fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six). As mentioned previously, the EPL is a league with great disparity between its 20 clubs in terms of off-field and on-field performance. Six EPL organizations (Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, and Tottenham) produce the majority of revenues, social media fan engagements, and on-field success among EPL clubs (Kidd, 2019; Newton Insight, 2019). Therefore, this analysis will investigate potential differences in antecedents to organizational identification between fans of these two distinct groups of clubs.

To conduct this analysis, average scores for the seven point of attachment variables (players, coach, city/region, fan community, venue, owner, and history) served as the dependent variables and the independent variable consisted of two groups based on fan for a Big Six club ($n = 452$) or a club outside the Big Six ($n = 301$). Prior to performing a MANOVA, certain statistical checks ensured validation of the assumptions for this type of analysis (Pituch & Stevens, 2015). First, as mentioned previously in this chapter, an inspection of IP addresses from respondents showed no duplicates within the dataset, thereby providing validation of the assumption of independence. Second, the assumption of normality requires dependent variables to display a normal distribution of data. Results from Table 8 and a visual inspection of histogram charts revealed relative

normal distribution for each point of attachment variable. Furthermore, Table 19 provides information on descriptive statistics for each point of attachment variable broken down by independent variable grouping. The skewness and kurtosis data suggested normal distribution of the dependent variables across each independent variable grouping (Hu & Bentler, 1999). A visual inspection of histogram charts provided corroborating evidence of this normal distribution.

Table 19

Descriptive Statistics for Points of Attachment by Big Six Fandom Grouping

Item	Big Six Club Fans (<i>n</i> = 452)				Non-Big Six Club Fans (<i>n</i> = 301)			
	M	SD	Skew.	Kurt.	M	SD	Skew.	Kurt.
Attachment to Player	2.34	1.04	0.98	1.07	2.13	0.98	1.03	1.55
Attachment to Coach	3.60	1.46	0.28	-0.59	3.69	1.40	0.16	-0.25
Attachment to City/Region	3.98	1.50	0.11	-0.75	4.63	1.51	-0.16	-0.77
Attachment to Fan Community	5.71	0.99	-1.15	2.07	5.90	0.85	-0.83	1.10
Attachment to Venue	5.73	1.13	-0.97	0.43	4.96	1.36	-0.49	-0.20
Attachment to Owner	2.61	1.25	0.60	-0.13	2.99	1.31	0.14	-0.52
Attachment to History/Tradition	5.35	1.29	-0.98	0.69	5.42	1.28	-0.88	0.26

M = mean; *SD* = standard deviation

The final assumption check examined the equality of covariance matrices for each dependent variable across the two levels of the independent variable. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was significant (Box's $M = 77.83$, $F = 2.75$, $p < .01$), indicating that the dependent variable covariance matrices were not equal across the levels of the independent variable. However, Pituch and Stevens (2015) noted MANOVA analyses are robust to violations of this assumption. Therefore, the analysis proceeded.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (approximate $\lambda^2 = 1280.39$, $p < .01$), indicating sufficient correlation among the point of attachment dependent variables to continue with this type of analysis. The obtained Wilks' Lambda value of 0.791 was statistically significant [$F(7,745) = 28.12$, $p < .01$]. This suggested the linear combination

of points of attachment were significantly related to EPL club success. The partial eta-squared value was .209, suggesting that club success explained 20.9% of the total variance among the linear combination of point of attachment variables.

Since MANOVA results suggested statistical significance, univariate ANOVA tests followed to ascertain the specific points of attachment that significantly differed among fan groupings. Prior to performing these univariate ANOVA tests, a Levene's Test of Equality of Variances examined the assumption of homogeneity of population variances for each point of attachment variable. Six of seven points of attachment demonstrated non-significance, indicating homogeneity of population variances for these variables. Attachment to venue [$F(1,751) = 11.93, p < .01$] did produce a significant Levene's test. However, as noted by Pituch and Stevens (2015), these analyses are robust to violations of this assumption and, therefore, the analysis proceeded. Additionally, a Bonferroni adjustment altered the Type I error rate ($\alpha / 7 = .007$) for the univariate ANOVA tests.

Results suggested significant differences between fans of Big Six EPL organizations and fans of non-Big Six EPL organizations for the following points of attachment: players, city/region, fan community, venue, and owner. No significant differences existed between fan groups in regard to attachment to coach or attachment to organizational history/tradition. For player attachment, fans of Big Six EPL organizations ($M = 2.34, SD = 1.04$) displayed significantly higher levels of attachment compared to fans of non-Big Six EPL organizations ($M = 2.13, SD = 0.98$), $F(1,751) = 7.51, p = .006$, partial eta-squared = .010. Additionally, fans of Big Six EPL organizations ($M = 5.73, SD = 1.13$) demonstrated significantly higher levels of attachment to venue than fans of non-

Big Six EPL organizations ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.36$), $F(1,751) = 69.15$, $p < .001$, partial eta-squared = .084.

The other three points of attachment with significant differences between groups suggested higher levels of attachment for fans of non-Big Six EPL organizations. Fan grouping was significantly associated with attachment to city/region [$F(1,751) = 33.01$, $p < .001$, partial eta-squared = .042], with non-Big Six EPL club fans ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.51$) showing higher attachment to a club's city or region than fans of Big Six EPL clubs ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.50$). Fan grouping was also significantly associated with attachment to fan community [$F(1,751) = 7.35$, $p = .007$, partial eta-squared = .010], with fans of non-Big Six EPL clubs ($M = 5.90$, $SD = 0.85$) demonstrating higher attachment to their fan community than fans of Big Six EPL clubs ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 0.99$). Finally, fans of non-Big Six EPL clubs ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.31$) displayed higher levels of attachment to owner compared to fans of Big Six EPL clubs ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.25$), $F(1,751) = 16.03$, $p < .001$, partial eta-squared = .021. Table 2 provides a full summary of univariate ANOVA results.

Table 20
Results of Univariate ANOVA Tests for Points of Attachment

Variable	<i>F</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	p-value	Partial <i>eta</i> -squared
Attachment to Players	7.51*	1	751	.006	.010
Attachment to Coach	0.7	1	751	.402	.001
Attachment to City/Region	33.01*	1	751	< .001	.042
Attachment to Fan Community	7.35*	1	751	.007	.010
Attachment to Venue	69.15*	1	751	< .001	.084
Attachment to Owner	16.03*	1	751	< .001	.021
Attachment to History/Tradition	0.45	1	751	.502	.001

* = statistically significant at $p = .007$ level

Summary of Results

The purpose of this research was to explore the antecedents to organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans and examine the relationship between these antecedents and various forms of sport consumption behavior. Additionally, this study examined differences in points of attachment between fans of successful EPL organizations, informally known as the “Big Six” EPL clubs (Douglas, 2018; Kidd, 2019; Robinson, 2019), and unsuccessful EPL organizations. Prior to administering the survey to the target population, a panel of experts and a field test provided validation of the survey instrument. The survey was distributed to social media sites on Facebook structured around U.S.-based fan support and interactions for EPL clubs. A total of 753 usable surveys were retained after data cleaning. EFA and CFA procedures confirmed an appropriate factor structure for the point of attachment items included on the instrument. Results from factor analysis revealed a seven-factor structure (attachment to players, coach, city/region, fan community, venue, owner, and organizational history/tradition) provided the best model fit to the data, with each factor comprising three items.

To address the relationship between points of attachment and organizational identification (RQ1), a hierarchical multiple linear regression analyzed the effect of each point of attachment on fan identification with their favorite EPL club. Results suggested points of attachment uniquely explained 29.3% of the variance in organizational identification. Attachment to city/region ($b = .06$), attachment to fan community ($b = .51$), and attachment to venue ($b = .13$) all demonstrated significant positive relationships with organizational identification. None of the predictor variables suggested significant negative relationships with organizational identification.

To address the relationship between points of attachment and sport consumption behaviors (RQ2), four separate hierarchical multiple linear regressions were used to analyze the effect of each point of attachment on specific sport consumption behaviors. In regard to broadcast media consumption, results suggested points of attachment uniquely explained 15.0% of the variance in this mode of consumption. Attachment to fan community ($b = .27$) and attachment to venue ($b = .23$) demonstrated significant positive relationships with broadcast media consumption while attachment to players ($b = -.13$) possessed a negative relationship with broadcast media consumption. For social media consumption, results indicated points of attachment uniquely explained 18.6% of the variance in social media consumption. Attachment to coach ($b = .09$), attachment to fan community ($b = .34$), and attachment to venue ($b = .15$) displayed significant positive relationships with social media consumption. None of the predictor variables suggested significant negative relationships with this mode of consumption.

Merchandise purchase behavior was analyzed in two ways. The first examined merchandise purchase frequency while the second examined money spent on team-related merchandise. For merchandise purchase frequency, results suggested points of attachment uniquely explained 22.1% of the variance in merchandise purchase frequency. Attachment to fan community ($b = .45$), attachment to venue ($b = .18$), attachment to owner ($b = .13$), and attachment to organizational history/tradition ($b = .13$) all possessed significant positive relationships with merchandise purchase frequency, while none of the predictor variables suggested a negative relationship. For merchandise purchase amount, results suggested points of attachment uniquely explained 11.3% of the variance in the amount of money spent on team-related merchandise by participants. Attachment to

city/region ($b = 9.39$), attachment to fan community ($b = 30.78$), and attachment to venue ($b = 22.86$) all displayed significant positive relationships with merchandise purchase amount. Additionally, attachment to coach ($b = -12.37$) was the only variable to suggest a negative relationship with merchandise purchase amount. Table 21 provides a summary of significant points of attachment for each outcome variable examined.

Table 21
Results of Significant Predictor Variables

Outcome Variable (DV)	Significant Positive Predictors	Significant Negative Predictors
Organizational Identification	Attachment to City/Region Attachment to Fan Community Attachment to Venue	
Broadcast Media Consumption	Attachment to Fan Community Attachment to Venue	Attachment to Players
Social Media Consumption	Attachment to Coach Attachment to Fan Community Attachment to Venue	
Merchandise Purchase Frequency	Attachment to Fan Community Attachment to Venue Attachment to Owner Attachment to History/Tradition	
Merchandise Purchase Amount	Attachment to City/Region Attachment to Fan Community Attachment to Venue	Attachment to Coach

In addition, a MANOVA addressed differences in points of attachment between fans of Big Six EPL organizations and fans of EPL clubs outside of the Big Six (RQ3). The obtained Wilks' Lambda value of 0.791 was statistically significant [$F(7,745) = 28.12, p < .01$], suggesting the linear combination of points of attachment was significantly related to EPL club success. Follow-up univariate ANOVA tests revealed fans of Big Six EPL organizations demonstrated significantly higher levels of attachment to players and venue. Fans of non-Big Six EPL organizations displayed significantly

higher levels of attachment to city/region, fan community, and owner. Results did not suggest significant differences among attachment to coach or organizational history/tradition.

Overall, these results show the importance of attachment to fan community and attachment to venue in explaining organizational identification, sport consumption behaviors, and differences between fans of EPL organizations with different levels of success. Fan community was a particular driver of fan identification and consumption behavior among fans of EPL clubs outside the Big Six while attachment to venue was a particular driver of fan identification and consumption behavior among fans of the Big Six EPL clubs. Interestingly, attachment to fan community explained the most variance in each outcome variable among the regression models.

The results presented in this chapter provide both corroboration and conflict with results found in the existing literature. The following chapter explains these results in detail, discusses them in accordance with findings from previous literature, and provides theoretical and practical implications from these findings.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to explore the antecedents to organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans and examine the relationship between these antecedents and various forms of sport consumption behavior. This study provides important insights into salient aspects of organizational identification and sport consumption behavior for distant fans, a group of sport fans yet to receive significant attention as a focal object in organizational identification and sport consumption research (Pu & James, 2017; Scola et al., 2019). Distant fan consumption can provide an important source of income for sport organizations (Kerr & Emery, 2011). Within the EPL, clubs derive a significant amount of revenue from international broadcast fees (“Annual Review of Football Finance,” 2019; Wigmore, 2019) and merchandise retail (Conn, 2019). Therefore, understanding identification and its relationship with sport consumption behaviors among distant fans is an important aspect of enhancing these revenue sources.

The results from this study provide practical and theoretical implications for EPL organizations and NBC Sports, the U.S.-based broadcast partner of the EPL. For example, results can aid EPL organizations and NBC Sports as they develop marketing materials to enhance engagement with U.S.-based audiences. From a theoretical perspective, the presence of two newly created points of attachment on the questionnaire for this study allowed novel insights to emerge regarding new “objects of attraction”

(Funk et al., 2000) surrounding organizational identification. Additionally, the one open-ended item contained on the questionnaire provided information that could lead to further developments within this research line.

This chapter contains six sections. The first provides an interpretation of results from the three research questions posed in this study. The second section outlines the results of the open-ended item provided on the questionnaire. The third section discusses theoretical implications from this study, including the contribution of these results to an extension of knowledge regarding points of attachment and distant fan groups. Next, the fourth section provides practical implications from this study, including the use of results by EPL organizations to develop marketing strategies that positively affect future revenue generation. The fifth section explains limitations of the study. Finally, the sixth section suggests avenues for future research on this topic.

Interpretation of Results

Organizational Identification

The first research question (RQ1) investigated relationships between points of attachment and organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans. Results suggested attachment to fan community ($b = .51$), attachment to venue ($b = .13$), and attachment to city/region ($b = .06$) possessed a significant positive relationship with organizational identification. These findings indicate stronger sentiments of fan community attachment, stadium attachment, and attachment to the geographical location of the organization significantly explained higher levels of organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans. In other words, participant differences in agreeableness to

these attachment constructs significantly explained differences in the level of organizational identification expressed by participants.

Fan Community Attachment. Attachment to fan community held particular salience in explaining organizational identification, with a one-unit increase in attachment to fan community explaining a .51-unit increase in organizational identification among respondents, holding all else constant. This result suggests a participant with an overall attachment to fan community rating of six (“Agree”) on a seven-point Likert scale would likely indicate an organizational identification score .51 points higher than a participant with an overall attachment to fan community rating of five (“Somewhat agree”), holding all else equal between the two participants. This represents almost a one-half unit increase in standard deviation for organizational identification ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.08$).

Previous research suggested strong positive relationships between fan community attachment and organizational identification. Murrell and Dietz (1992) indicated higher levels of in-group identification significantly predicted higher levels of attitudinal support for a college football team among undergraduate students. Wann et al. (1996) found family and peer affiliations were salient factors in fan identification origination. Uhlman and Trail (2012) observed attachment to fan community possessed the strongest relationship with team identification among season ticket holders for a professional soccer team. Similarly, Yoshida et al. (2015) found attachment to fan community was the most salient influencer of team identification, almost doubling the path coefficient found between any other attachment variable and identification. Katz and Heere (2015), meanwhile, used qualitative observations of college football fan groups to suggest strong

connections between fan community attachment and positive feelings of team identification. Delia and James (2018) also found attachment to other fans of the team significantly shaped the concept of “team” in the minds of participants.

The importance of fan community attachment on organizational identification found in the results of this study correspond well with findings from previous research. The existing studies in the literature focused on identification among local fan groups while the current study focused on identification among distant fans. These results suggest attachment to fan community significantly and saliently explains organizational identification among local fans and distant fans alike. Although Pu and James (2017) noted that “distant fans might be influenced by different socialization agents in the formation of their fandom” (p. 421) compared to local fans, attachment to community does not appear to represent a unique socialization agent among distant fans. Several responses to the open-ended item included in the questionnaire provided further evidence of the importance placed upon attachment to fan community for this target population. For example, one Tottenham Hotspur commented that after a move to Austin, Texas, “A friend recommended I check out the local supporters club with him since I like soccer. Two years later, Austin Spurs are my community and my support network.” A fan of Leicester City noted, “Most of all, it is the personal connections made through social media and eventually in-person interactions that solidified my support of Leicester City.”

These results also support the presence of social identity theory principles among soccer fans, who develop social identities that lead to an “us versus them” mentality (Wagner & Shobe, 2017). This mentality creates in-group/out-group dynamics which strengthens one’s attachment to in-group membership. Wagner and Shobe (2017) found

soccer fans used phrases like “independent” and “organic” to describe their support in positive terms while using phrases such as “corporate” and “plastic” to describe support of a rival team in negative terms. Clark (2006) described this as a need for soccer fans to exhibit a superior identity when comparing themselves to fans of other teams. Again, open-ended response items provided evidence of this sentiment. One fan of West Ham United commented, “I deliberately did not want to choose one of the most popular clubs in the league so I would not be considered a plastic/bandwagon fan.” Additionally, a fan of Newcastle United discussed fans of the team as:

“the most welcoming, least plastic in all of English soccer. Newcastle fans are more likely to be able to discuss the history heroes and cult figures of our club more than the supposed ‘fans’ of those other clubs. I would be embarrassed to associated with the majority of ‘fans’ of most other English teams.”

The information provided on fan community attachment strongly suggests a positive and salient relationship with organizational identification. This is evident among both fans of local teams (Delia & James, 2018; Katz & Heere, 2015; Murrell & Dietz, 1992; Uhlman & Trail, 2012; Yoshida et al., 2015; Wann et al., 1996) and fans of distant teams. Furthermore, expressions of fan community attachment overlap well with tenets of social identity theory. From a theoretical perspective, these results show attachment to fan community is an appropriate construct to include in studies investigating organizational identification and attachment for distant fan groups. Any study investigating organizational identification among sport fans should account for the effect of fan community attachment on identification. From a practical perspective, these results indicate a need for sport organizations to foster sentiments of fan community attachment

among distant fan groups. The practical implications section found later in this chapter outlines specific actions organizations can take to bolster fan community attachment within distant fan groups.

Venue Attachment. Attachment to venue also significantly explained variations in organizational identification in this study. A one-unit increase in attachment to venue explained a .13-unit increase in organizational identification among respondents, holding all else constant. This suggests a participant with an overall venue attachment score of six (“Agree”) on a seven-point Likert scale would likely indicate an organizational identification score .13 points higher than a participant with an overall venue attachment score of five (“Somewhat agree”), holding all else equal between the participants.

This result is somewhat curious given distant fans do not possess the same opportunities to attend games at a team’s home stadium compared to local fans. The unique displays of fan identification at soccer matches may explain this attachment to venue among distant fans. Soccer fans express fan identification in stadiums through actions such as waving flags, cheering, organized chants, and playing instruments during the game (Cleland & Dixon, 2014; Guschwan, 2016; Herd, 2017; Wagner & Shobe, 2017). Although distant fans cannot directly engage in this in-stadium behavior, visual representations of this atmosphere created at venues may resonate strongly with distant fans, thereby enhancing the connection between venue attachment and organizational identification among this population. Several examples of venue attachment derived from open-ended response items. One Aston Villa fan discussed reading a book and noted, “the way the author described the club, the history, the stadium, the fans, the city as a whole, I was hooked instantly.” Additionally, a Liverpool fan indicated the “stadium

atmosphere in games” at Anfield, Liverpool’s home stadium, reminded them of the in-stadium atmosphere at games for their favorite college football team.

Only one prior study explicitly investigated attachment to venue among sport fans. Ballouli et al. (2016) investigated venue attachment among attendees at a Formula One racing event held in the U.S. and found this attachment construct significantly explained one’s intention to continue supporting their favorite racing team. The findings in this study suggested similar results in terms of venue attachment significantly explaining organizational identification. Interestingly, the results from Ballouli et al.’s (2016) and this study provided similar results despite different research contexts. This suggests attachment to venue can demonstrate salience of fan identification across a variety of sporting contexts.

The unique displays of fan identification at stadiums during soccer matches potentially explains the significant positive relationship between venue attachment and organizational identification. From a theoretical standpoint, these results extend findings from Ballouli et al. (2016) about the importance of venue attachment in other sport research contexts. Ballouli et al. (2016) noted the need to validate this point of attachment in different research contexts. This study provided evidence of the ability for this point of attachment to demonstrate salience in a variety of study environments. However, more empirical work across additional research settings is necessary to further validate this attachment construct. In terms of practical implications, NBC Sports, the media broadcast partner for the EPL in the U.S., could produce documentaries on EPL stadiums for U.S.-based audiences or highlight stadiums during broadcasts through expansive shots of the stadium combined with historical anecdotes about the venue.

City/Region Attachment. Attachment to city/region had a smaller, yet significant, positive effect on organizational identification. A one-unit increase in attachment to city/region explained a .06-unit increase in organizational identification among respondents, holding all else constant. This suggests a participant with an overall city/region attachment score of six (“Agree”) on a seven-point Likert scale would likely indicate an organizational identification score .06 points higher than a participant with an overall city/region attachment score of five (“Somewhat agree”), holding all else equal between the participants.

Previous research indicated a strong connection between geographic location and team identification. Wann et al. (1996) provided initial evidence of the positive relationship between geography and fan identification origination. Collins et al. (2016) stated geographic location was the most important factor influencing fan identification because “people believe the team to be representative of this larger community” (p. 656). Lock et al. (2011), using social identity theory as a conceptual foundation, corroborated these findings, as did Delia and James (2018) in their exploration of what the term “team” meant to sport fans. From a quantitative perspective, Yoshida et al. (2015) found a positive, but insignificant relationship between location attachment and team identification. Ballouli et al. (2016) found attachment to place exhibited an indirect effect on loyalty intentions.

These findings indicate the importance placed on local city/region attachment among local fans. However, it is somewhat surprising to find attachment to city/region significantly explained organizational identification in this study given distant fans lack geographical proximity to their favorite team (Pu & James, 2017). Given this

geographical distance, it was counterintuitive to find this attachment construct significantly related to a fan's organizational identification.

Pieces of insight derived from the open-ended item included on the questionnaire help shed light on this phenomenon. Several participants noted developing organizational identification due to a study abroad or family vacation spent in the vicinity of the club. Others mentioned a connection between their favorite band and the city/region of the club, especially Beatles fans forming a connection with one of Liverpool's EPL clubs, Everton and Liverpool. Furthermore, many participants indicated a connection between their home city/region and that of their favorite EPL club. For example, one Manchester United fan mentioned, "I am from Youngstown, Ohio, which is an older industrial city similar to Manchester." An additional example comes from a Liverpool fan: "I identify with the people of Liverpool and the surrounding area. They remind me of the people in my hometown of New Orleans: open, welcoming, polite, warm, multicultural, inclusive, and a laissez-faire attitude."

The information provided on city/region attachment suggests fans enhance identification with their favorite EPL organization through a variety of attachments to city/region. These include attachments to the city/region developed from past vacations or study abroad experiences, existing attachments to the region formed through attachments to other entertainment options, such as a musical group, and attachments derived from perceived similarities between one's home city/region and that of the EPL organization. These findings produce several implications. First, theoretical implications include a need to investigate city/region attachment even when studying populations of distant fans. This attachment construct is well established among local fan identification

literature (Collins et al., 2016). This study demonstrated that this construct is not specific to investigations of local fans. Instead, it can provide significant explanatory power among distant fans as well. Furthermore, from a practical perspective, these results indicate several means for EPL organizations to enhance identification among distant fan groups. These include promoting their product to study abroad students and family vacations in the area. It also includes partnering with other established entertainment properties, such as musical artists, to promote their product to a more global audience. Finally, it can include promoting their product through sister-city partnerships that highlight the similarities between the city/region of both areas.

Other Points of Attachment. In contrast to the three points of attachment that significantly explained organizational identification, four points of attachment did not demonstrate significance. Two points of attachment found in the existing literature, attachment to player and attachment to coach, did not significantly explain one's level of organizational identification. The result for attachment to player contrasts somewhat with findings from Yoshida et al. (2015). Their results suggested a moderate negative relationship between player attachment and team identification, although this relationship was mediated by fan community attachment. Additionally, Hoegele et al. (2014) found positive relationships between player attachment and team identification. However, their study strictly focused on the effect of "superstar" players on team identification. Attachment to coach did not significantly explain organizational identification, and this finding corresponds with others from similar studies in the existing literature (e.g., Kwon et al., 2005; Woo et al., 2009). Therefore, attachment to player may have different

salience among local fans and distant fans, while attachment to coach results suggest this is an insignificant predictor of fan identification across multiple research contexts.

Finally, the two new point of attachment factors created for this study, attachment to owner and attachment to organizational history/tradition, did not significantly explain organizational identification. Both of these attachment variables indicated a negative relationship with organizational identification, although this relationship was not significant. However, these attachment constructs require further investigation given the inability to compare these findings against studies in the existing point of attachment literature.

Summary of Organizational Identification. Three point of attachment variables demonstrated significant positive relationships with organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans. Fan community attachment produced the strongest relationship with identification, followed by venue attachment and city/region attachment. The results for fan community attachment correspond well with results from previous studies on team identification and points of attachment. This suggests fan community attachment is a salient indicator of fan identification among both local and distant fan types.

Attachment to venue and attachment to city/region demonstrated surprisingly significant relationships with organizational identification. Aspects relating to the unique fan identification displayed by in-stadium soccer fans during a match and anecdotal evidence from open-ended participant responses about their identification provided explanations for these findings. Theoretical and practical implications were suggested in each subsection above and are expanded upon in subsequent sections found later in this chapter.

Sport Consumption Behavior

The second research question (RQ2) examined relationships between points of attachment and four sport consumption outcomes, namely broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, merchandise purchase frequency, and merchandise purchase amount, for U.S.-based EPL fans. Results suggested attachment to fan community exerted the largest positive influence on each of these consumption variables. Additionally, attachment to venue demonstrated a significant positive relationship with each consumption outcome. Attachment to players ($b = -.13$) produced a significant negative relationship with broadcast media consumption. Attachment to coach ($b = .09$) held a significantly positive relationship with social media consumption. Attachment to owner ($b = .13$) and attachment to organizational history/tradition ($b = .13$) both suggested significant positive relationships with merchandise purchase frequency. Attachment to city/region ($b = 9.39$) had a significant positive relationship with merchandise purchase amount while attachment to coach ($b = -12.37$) held a significant negative relationship with this consumption outcome variable.

Fan Community Attachment. Fan community attachment provided the strongest influence on each sport consumption behavior examined. A one-unit change in fan community attachment (for example, a participant recording an overall fan community attachment score of seven rather than six on the Likert scale) explained a .27-unit, .34-unit, and .45-unit change in broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, and merchandise purchase frequency, respectively, holding all else constant. Additionally, a one-unit change in fan community attachment suggested a \$30.78 increase in merchandise purchase amount among respondents, holding all else constant.

Previous research provided evidence of significant relationships between fan community attachment and sport consumption behaviors. In Yoshida et al.'s (2015) study on Japanese soccer fans, fan community attachment was the only variable to significantly predict attendance behavior among season ticket holders. Furthermore, Phua (2012) and Wakefield (2016) provided evidence of significant relationships between social identification and enhanced social media engagement with a sport team. Phua (2012) found positive relationships between fan identification and enhanced social capital formed through social media site usage. Social capital, defined as social relationships with a system of norms, trust, and reciprocity that help to create positive outcomes for social group members (Putnam, 2000), has strong linkages to social identity theory (Phua, 2012). Wakefield (2016) found that organizational identification produced strong positive effects on Facebook usage among sport fans.

The importance of fan community attachment on sport consumption behaviors in this study parallels findings from previous research. Although Yoshida et al. (2015) focused on game attendance as a consumption outcome, measuring game attendance as a consumption outcome was not appropriate for this study on distant fans. Broadcast media consumption provides a relevant proxy to game attendance for this group of fans. Additionally, Phua (2012) and Wakefield (2016) found strong linkages between fan identification and social media engagement with a sport organization. Each of the aforementioned studies focused on the effect of fan community attachment among local fan groups. The current study focused on distant fans. Therefore, these results suggest attachment to fan community provides an important explanation of sport consumption behavior among distant and local fans alike. Similar to organizational identification, this

indicates certain factors hold similar salience among distant and local sport fans despite hypothesized differences between these two groups of fans (Pu & James, 2017).

No existing studies in the literature explicitly link attachment to fan community with merchandise purchase behaviors. However, several researchers provided evidence of positive relationships between team identification and merchandise purchase behaviors (James & Trail, 2008; Shapiro et al., 2013; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Given the importance of fan community attachment on organizational identification from RQ1, it is not surprising to witness this attachment construct also significantly explain merchandise purchase behaviors among participants.

These results indicated strong relationships between fan community attachment and a variety of sport consumption behaviors among distant fans. Comparisons to previous research (Phua, 2012; Wakefield, 2016; Yoshida et al., 2015) revealed similar findings in regard to local fans. Therefore, attachment to fan community is an appropriate construct to include when investigating relationships with sport consumption behaviors for distant fans and local fans alike. These results also suggest a relationship between the theoretical construct for fan community attachment, social identity theory, and increased consumption of team-related goods and services among distant sport fans. From a practical implication perspective, this indicates the need for EPL organizations and its U.S.-based broadcast partner, NBC Sports, to highlight U.S.-based fan communities in their marketing and broadcast materials. This could include specific mentions of fan communities on websites and broadcasts, sponsoring meet-up events for fan community members in the U.S., and building narratives around stories that showcase the influence of family and friends on one's willingness to consume the EPL product.

Venue Attachment. The next point of attachment, venue attachment, also significantly explained each type of sport consumption behavior examined. This produced a surprising finding given the lack of clear parallels from existing research and the geographical distance between fan and stadium. Ballouli et al. (2016) found venue attachment produced significant effects on participants' attendance and word-of-mouth intentions, but much less significant effects on merchandise purchase behaviors. Since this study assumes broadcast media provides a relevant proxy to game attendance for distant fans, the significant relationship between venue attachment and broadcast media consumption is not overly surprising. Yet, the indication of significant positive relationships between venue attachment, social media consumption, and merchandise purchase behavior draws no explanation from previous literature.

One explanation could derive from the unique salience held by soccer fans for the stadium atmosphere created during soccer matches (Cleland & Dixon, 2014; Guschwan, 2016; Herd, 2017; Wagner & Shobe, 2017). If this in-stadium atmosphere particularly resonates with distant fans, it could explain a willingness to engage about the topic via social media and support the organization through team-related merchandise purchases. These potential explanations are conjectural and require empirical evidence from future studies to provide support for this hypothesis.

Given the relative lack of information on venue attachment and its relationship with sport consumption behaviors, these findings produce new knowledge about this point of attachment and its effect on distant sport fan consumption. This provides both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, this result brings new information to point of attachment literature and further studies could confirm the

saliency of venue attachment on these sport consumption behaviors across a variety of contexts. From a practical standpoint, this result demonstrates the potential for EPL clubs to enhance relationships with their distant fans through marketing materials, such as documentaries, informational press releases, and apparel, focused on highlighting the unique venue where the organization plays its home games.

Player Attachment. Attachment to players indicated a significant negative relationship with broadcast media consumption. Interpretation of the regression coefficient for player attachment ($b = -.13$) indicated a one-unit increase in attachment to player explained a .13-unit decrease in broadcast media consumption, holding all else constant. This suggests a participant with an overall player attachment score of six (“Agree”) on a seven-point Likert scale would likely indicate a broadcast media consumption score .13 points lower than a participant with an overall player attachment score of five (“Somewhat agree”), holding all else equal between participants.

Previous research provided similar evidence of negative relationships between player attachment and sport consumption behaviors. Yoshida et al. (2015) found a significant negative relationship, with approximately the same magnitude between player attachment and game attendance in their study. Kwon et al. (2005) and Hallmann et al. (2018) also found negative relationships between player attachment and sport game consumption, although both studies reported an insignificant regression coefficient for player attachment. Therefore, player attachment appears to remain constant as a negative indicator of sport consumption behavior among both distant and local sport fans.

These results suggest individuals who highly identify with players may not watch sport, either through game attendance or viewing a broadcast of the game, at a significant

level compared to those individuals with lower player attachment. This may result from an individual only choosing to consume games if certain players are actually playing in those games. Therefore, injuries, coaching decisions on starting lineups, and player transfers may all produce significant effects on broadcast media consumption if individuals derive identification through player attachment.

Coach Attachment. Attachment to coach suggested a significant positive relationship with social media consumption and a significant negative relationship with merchandise purchase amount. An interpretation of the regression coefficient for social media consumption indicated a one-unit increase in attachment to coach yielded a .09-unit increase in social media consumption, all else held constant. In regard to merchandise purchase amount, a one-unit increase in coach attachment explained a \$12.37 decrease in merchandise purchase amount among respondents. There are no clear parallels between coach attachment and social media consumption in the existing literature. This indicates a new finding regarding antecedents to organizational identification manifesting into sport consumption behavior. The result regarding merchandise purchase amount contrasts with findings reported by Kwon et al. (2005). Their study indicated coach attachment produced a significant positive relationship with conative loyalty. Therefore, these results, taken together, indicate potential differences in coach attachment and sport consumption behaviors between distant and local fans. This provides a potential theoretical implication regarding the deployment of this attachment construct upon distant fan populations in future research.

Owner and Organizational History/Tradition Attachment. The two new point of attachment variables utilized in this study, attachment to owner and attachment to

organizational history/tradition, both indicated significant positive relationships with merchandise purchase frequency. Interpretation of regression coefficients revealed a one-unit increase in either attachment variable explained a .13-unit increase in merchandise purchase frequency, holding all else constant.

Given these attachment constructs and their underlying items were created for this study, there are no previous studies to compare these results against. However, there are indications these results make sense within the context of this research. The attachment to owner items derived from coach attachment items developed by Robinson and Trail (2005). Kwon et al. (2005) found a significant positive relationship between coach attachment and conative loyalty items, including likelihood to purchase team-related merchandise and clothing. Therefore, attachment to owner, using items based on coach attachment to measure its underlying construct, suggested similar relationships. It also indicates more positive attitudes toward an EPL club's owner can positively influence a fan's willingness to purchase team-related merchandise. This makes sense given these merchandise purchases generate revenues for the team owner.

These results provide several theoretical implications for point of attachment research. First, they extend attachment research by offering two new variables that could influence fan identification and sport consumption behavior. Second, they provide avenues for comparing "socialization agents" (Pu & James, p. 421) across distant and local sport fans to continue building knowledge on similarities and differences between these two fan types. This study provides initial evidence of attachment to owner and attachment to organizational history/tradition contributing unique salience to sport consumption behaviors among distant fans. Future studies should extend this

investigation, using these results as a baseline for comparison. Additionally, these results provide practical implications. In terms of attachment to organizational history/tradition, these results demonstrate an opportunity for EPL clubs to increase merchandise turnover by highlighting aspects of the organization's history and tradition on team-related merchandise, apparel, and paraphernalia.

Summary of Sport Consumption Behavior. Each of the points of attachment included in this study demonstrated some level of significance on at least one sport consumption behavior examined (broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, merchandise purchase frequency, and merchandise purchase amount). Attachment to fan community and attachment to venue suggested significant positive relationships with all consumption behaviors, with fan community attachment indicating the strongest relationship with all consumption behaviors. Results for fan community attachment from this study and previous research indicate consistent outcomes between local and distant fan types. Attachment to venue findings show similar results between local and distant fans in terms of watching games. However, distant fans indicated a stronger influence of venue attachment on merchandise purchase behaviors compared to local fans. Player attachment results were consistent with previous findings in that they possessed a negative relationship with game consumption. Results did suggest differences between distant and local fan types in regard to coach attachment explaining consumption behavior. Finally, the two new attachment constructs created for this study, attachment to owner and attachment to organizational history/tradition, provided initial evidence of significant explanatory power when regressed on merchandise purchase frequency. Future research incorporating these points of attachment can provide further

theoretical developments on the salience of these constructs among both distant and local fans.

Fans of Successful and Unsuccessful EPL Organizations

The third research question (RQ3) examined differences in points of attachment between U.S.-based EPL fans of successful (Big Six) EPL clubs and fans of unsuccessful EPL clubs. Results suggested significant differences in participant scores for five point of attachment variables. In particular, fans of Big Six EPL organizations displayed significantly higher levels of attachment to players and venue compared to fans of non-Big Six EPL clubs. Conversely, fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six demonstrated significantly higher levels of attachment to city/region, fan community, and owner.

Fans of Successful EPL Organizations. Trail et al. (2003) and Woo et al. (2009) provided evidence of structural models for points of attachment among local fans. These researchers found points of attachment related to organizational identification (i.e., players and coach) aligned more with fans of successful sport organizations. The higher levels of player attachment found amongst fans of Big Six EPL organizations corresponds well with these findings. It also compliments findings from Hoegele et al. (2014) which suggested fans of successful soccer teams perceive superstar players as more important compared to fans of unsuccessful teams. Several responses to the open-ended item included on the questionnaire provided support for this finding. One Liverpool supporter mentioned several players as individuals “I admired for their skill, but also their importance to their national teams.” A Tottenham supporter noted, “I came to Tottenham because I supported their captain, Hugo Lloris, who is also captain of the

French National Team.” Others simply invoked the name of a legendary club player, such as Steven Gerrard for Liverpool fans or Thierry Henry for Arsenal fans. These responses underscore the importance of players, especially superstar players with international pedigree, among fans of successful EPL organizations.

Fans of Big Six EPL organizations also rated attachment to venue significantly higher than fans of non-Big Six EPL clubs. It is reasonable to suggest venue as a specific identifier of an organization, similar to the other points of attachment (players and coach) grouped under this designation by Trail et al. (2003) and Woo et al. (2009). An organization employs a unique set of players and a unique coach. Similarly, each EPL club plays in its own unique stadium. This contrasts with points of attachment (sport and level of sport) grouped under sport identification by Trail et al. (2003) and Woo et al. (2009), which are factors shared across all sport organizations in the same league. Therefore, it is unsurprising to find venue attachment aligned more saliently with fans of successful EPL organizations. This finding suggests an extension of points of attachment structural models validated by Trail et al. (2003) and Woo et al. (2009). This study provided initial evidence that venue attachment may represent an additional salient attachment point among fans of successful sport organizations. Additional studies of local and distant fans of sport teams can provide further validation of this finding.

Structural models developed by Trail et al. (2003) and Woo et al. (2009) also supported attachment to coach as a significant predictor of organizational identification among fans of successful sport organizations. This study did not produce similar results. Coach attachment did not demonstrate significant differences between fans of Big Six EPL organizations and non-Big Six EPL clubs. This indicates a significant difference

between local and distant fans of successful sport organizations in terms of how they identify with their favorite team. This difference may result from familiarity, with distant fans knowing less about the coach of a team 3,000 miles away compared to the coach of a team within close geographical proximity. It could also result from the increasingly short tenures of EPL coaches. An analysis conducted at the end of the 2018 season found 40% of EPL clubs changed their coach during 2017-2018 and 75% of EPL club coaches had been in their role for less than two years (Wiggins & Gal, 2018). The heightened turnover of EPL coaches may contribute to the lack of overall coach attachment among U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations.

Fans of Unsuccessful EPL Organizations. The structural models supported by Trail et al. (2003) and Woo et al. (2009) found points of attachment related to sport identification aligned more with fans of unsuccessful sport organizations. The two points of attachment group under sport identification in these models were sport attachment and level of sport attachment. Neither of these attachment constructs were included in the data analysis used to examine this research question. Therefore, results from this study provide novel insight into points of attachment rated significantly higher by distant fans of unsuccessful sport organizations.

The result of significantly higher levels of attachment to fan community among fans of non-Big Six EPL organizations finds support from the literature. Fisher and Wakefield (1998) suggested fans of unsuccessful teams focus on the positive aspects of their fan group affiliations to compensate for lack of team success. Ashforth and Mael (1989) also explained that individuals can utilize negative value distinctions (e.g., supporting an unsuccessful sport organization) as defense mechanisms to turn a negative

attribute (losing) into a positive attribute (solidarity with other group members).

Additionally, Doyle et al. (2017) suggested individuals choose to own their identity as fans of losing teams and bond together with other fans of the team in hopes that enduring losing seasons presently will result in future prosperity.

Responses from the open-ended item included on the questionnaire point toward fans of unsuccessful EPL organizations deliberately choosing an “underdog” team to root for in the EPL due to perceptions of fan community. One Bournemouth fan, for example, stated, “I like an underdog. I did not particularly care for the Big Six and wanted [to support] a smaller club with a more family-like fan base.” An Aston Villa fan mentioned, “I didn’t want to select one of the ‘big clubs’ but I did want to select a team with tradition and history. I found a community with my friends and the local supporters group that I grew to enjoy.” Finally, a Norwich City fan summed up their choice of EPL club by saying, “I did not choose a Big Six club as that would be like rooting for the Yankees or Cowboys.” These testimonials, as well as many others in the dataset, point to a significant movement among U.S.-based EPL fans to consciously and deliberately choose an EPL club outside of the Big Six, in many cases due to a perception of these non-Big Six clubs possessing a tighter knit sense of community.

A significantly higher level of attachment to city/region among U.S.-based fans of unsuccessful EPL organizations finds opposition and support from the literature. In the original point of attachment structural model developed by Trail et al. (2003), attachment to community represented one’s attachment to the perception of the community in which a team plays. This is somewhat related to the city/region attachment point utilized in the current study. Trail et al.’s (2003) community attachment construct aligned with

organizational identification, indicating an alliance with fans of successful sport organizations. This contrasts with findings from the current study. Several reasons may explain this difference. First, the attachment to city/region items used in this study derived from Spinda et al. (2016) and Yoshida et al. (2015) and significantly differed in terms of wording and meaning compared to those utilized by Trail et al. (2003). Additionally, more recent research from Rhee et al. (2017) suggested local community attachment significantly contributed to maintaining organizational identification among fans when their team failed to produce successful results. Results from the current study support this notion and indicate a salient difference in the role of geographical attachment on sport fandom compared to Trail et al.'s (2003) original conceptualization.

There are some indications among open-ended item responses that city/region attachment directly led to the choice of a favorite EPL organization from outside the Big Six. One Bournemouth fan mentioned taking an ancestry genetic test and finding out, "my family originated from the south coast of England, primarily Dorset County [which includes the city of Bournemouth]." An Aston Villa fan opined the club, "has a lot of very odd connections with my hometown teams in Cleveland and a friend of mine who is a Cleveland fan supports Villa. He introduced me to Villa and I fell in love." Finally, another Aston Villa fan simply said, "I like the club because it was not London based."

The significantly higher levels of attachment to owner among fans of unsuccessful EPL organizations presents a potential conundrum. One might expect this point of attachment to align more with fans of successful EPL organizations given this attachment variable is an entity specific to each EPL organization and, therefore, would align more with those attachment variables found under organizational identification

groups (Trail et al., 2003; Woo et al., 2009). A potential explanation for this comes from the particular research context of this study. As mentioned in Chapter III, American owners of EPL organizations are prevalent throughout the league. A majority of these American owners bought stakes in Big Six EPL organizations and several of these owners have been derided by fanbases due to the amount of long-term debt placed upon the club or the perception of “absentee” ownership of the organization (Robinson & Clegg, 2018). Therefore, although these owners have invested large amounts of money in these EPL organizations, fans of these Big Six clubs may resent the over-commercialization and seeming disinterest these multi-billionaires bring to club ownership (Robinson & Clegg, 2018).

Summary of Fans of Successful and Unsuccessful EPL Organizations. Fans of Big Six EPL organizations exhibited significantly higher levels of player attachment and venue attachment compared to fans of non-Big Six EPL clubs. Conversely, fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six demonstrated significantly higher levels of attachment to city/region, fan community, and owner. The result for player attachment corresponds well with previous findings regarding salient points of attachment among fans of successful sport organizations. The result for venue attachment makes sense given a team’s venue is a specific identifier of the organization. The unique salience of fan community attachment and city/region attachment among fans of unsuccessful EPL organizations finds support from the literature. Finally, the finding related to owner attachment is surprising since owner is an entity specific to each EPL club. The particular focus of this study on U.S.-based fans of organizations in a league with prevalent American ownership among successful teams may explain this result.

Open-Ended Item Responses

The fourth section of the questionnaire used in this study contained an item allowing participants to disclose any additional reasons for identifying with their favorite EPL club. Specifically, this item read: “Other than the reasons stated above, what other factors may have influenced your decision to choose [team name] as your favorite EPL club?” In total, 605 participants contributed comments to this section of the questionnaire. Table 22 provides an overview of the general themes communicated by participants in regard to this open-ended item.

Table 22
Categorization of Open-Ended Item Responses

Response Category	<i>n</i>	Frequency
Fan Community	152	25.12%
Players	120	19.83%
City/Region	108	17.85%
Other	48	7.93%
History/Tradition	47	7.77%
Style of Play	32	5.29%
Underdog	31	5.12%
Video game	18	2.98%
Broadcast	16	2.64%
Coach	10	1.65%
Owners	9	1.49%
Religion	6	0.99%
Team Name	4	0.66%
Venue	3	0.50%
Gender Inclusiveness	1	0.17%
Total	605	100.00%

A review of the information in Table 22 reveals the majority of respondents choose to use this open-ended item to elaborate on identification antecedents already captured within the PAI scale on the instrument. This mainly includes responses relating to fan community attachment (25.12% of all open-ended item responses), player

attachment (19.83%), city/region attachment (17.85%), and attachment to organizational history/tradition (7.77%). Responses discussing fan community attachment mainly revolved around the influence of family members or friends on one's fandom for a specific EPL club. A majority of responses for player attachment centered on the presence of current and former U.S. men's national team players on EPL clubs, thereby creating fan identification among U.S.-based fans. This included the presence of former U.S. national team goalkeeper Tim Howard and former U.S. national team forward Landon Donovan on Everton as well as the presence of former U.S. national team forward Clint Dempsey on Tottenham's roster.

Responses that went beyond PAI scale items included choosing a team because of its "underdog" status (5.12%), a phenomenon examined in the discussion section covering differences between fans of Big Six EPL organizations and other, less successful, EPL clubs. Additionally, 16 respondents (2.64%) indicated they chose their favorite EPL club because they happened to tune into an EPL game broadcast and started cheering for one of the teams playing in that game.

Two of the most interesting responses on this open-ended item regard organizational identification stemming from video games (2.98%) and from religious affiliation (0.99%). The Electronic Arts (EA) Sports produced *FIFA* video game series is immensely popular among video game players in the United States. Between March 2018 and March 2019, *FIFA* ranked as the ninth best-selling video game in the U.S. (Wilson, 2019) and accounted for 14% of EA Sports revenues for the fiscal year 2018 (Liao, 2019). Examples of participant responses for this organizational identification antecedent included one Chelsea fan stating, "I first became affiliated with Chelsea in 2010 as they

were my team of choice when playing FIFA against friends.” Additionally, a Bournemouth fan indicated they found the team as a fourth division club on *FIFA 09* and decided to use the team in the game and begin following them in real life. Markovits and Green (2017) produced a case study exploring the use of *FIFA* as a vehicle for increasing soccer’s popularity in the U.S. However, no investigation of this topic has received major empirical attention from scholars, suggesting a possible avenue for future research.

The influence of religion on EPL club identification came primarily from Tottenham fans. Tottenham is located in an area of North London that historically includes a large Jewish population and, therefore, the club has counted many Jewish supporters among its ranks throughout its history (Cloake & Fisher, 2016). Evidence of the effect of Tottenham’s status among Jewish individuals appears in several excerpts from responses to the open-ended item, including, “I decided to follow them because of the Jewish connections the team has” and, “The traditions of the supporters identifying with the Jewish people, even and especially among those who are not Jewish, is very important to me.” An interesting case study topic for future research could explore the connection between U.S.-based Jewish people and their identification with Tottenham.

Although the majority of participants utilized the open-ended response item to elaborate on reasons for their fandom already captured in the PAI scale, several novel concepts emerged regarding antecedents to identification. These included discovering a favorite organization through video games, deliberately identifying with an “underdog” organization, and religious ties between participant and club. The potential empirical investigation of these concepts is discussed in the future research section found later in this chapter.

Theoretical Implications

There are several theoretical implications to glean from the results found in this study. This section presents two main areas of theoretical implications. The first discusses points of attachment among distant fans, drawing specific comparisons to previous research focused on points of attachment among local fans. The second area of theoretical implications concerns the extension of the PAI scale in this study through an investigation of two new points of attachment.

Distant Fans versus Local Fans

The vast majority of existing research on team or organizational identification in sport has focused on identification between U.S.-based fans and a professional or college sport team within close geographical proximity (Pu & James, 2017; Scola et al., 2019). However, as suggested by Pu and James (2017), “distant fans might be influenced by different socialization agents in the formation of their fandom” (p. 421) compared to local fans. Therefore, this study provided needed insight into the salient antecedents to organizational identification among distant fans and compared findings to previous research focused on local fans. This investigation was accomplished through examinations of relationships between points of attachment, organizational identification, and sport consumption behavior for U.S.-based EPL fans. It also examined differences in points of attachment between U.S.-based fans of successful EPL organizations and unsuccessful EPL organizations. Additionally, the few studies concentrated on motivations for fandom among distant fans (e.g., Li et al., 2017; Pu & James, 2017) focused on foreign fans of U.S.-based professional sport teams, such as teams in the

National Basketball Association. The current study focused on U.S.-based fans of foreign sport organizations, thereby adding new knowledge to the literature on this subject.

Fan Community Attachment. Fan community attachment exhibited particular salience on organizational identification and sport consumption behaviors among the distant fan population in this study. The importance of fan community attachment corresponds well with findings from previous studies focused on local fan groups. Numerous quantitative (e.g., Murrell & Dietz, 1992; Uhlman & Trail, 2012; Wann et al., 1996; Yoshida et al., 2015) and qualitative (e.g., Delia & James, 2018; Katz & Heere, 2015) studies stressed the importance of fan community attachment on the origination and maintenance of team identification among local fans. In particular, Uhlman and Trail (2012) and Yoshida et al. (2015) found fan community attachment was the most salient influencer of team identification among soccer fans. Katz and Heere (2015) indicated fan community attachment was the only significant indicator of continued team identification among college football fans. Additionally, fan community attachment was suggested as the only significant predictor of game attendance behavior among soccer team supporters (Yoshida et al., 2015). Phua (2012) and Wakefield (2016) also provided evidence of significant relationships between social identification and enhanced social media engagement with a sport team. Therefore, although Pu and James (2017) noted that “distant fans might be influenced by different socialization agents in the formation of their fandom” (p. 421) compared to local fans, attachment to community does not appear to represent a unique socialization agent among distant fans.

Fan community attachment also appeared to represent principles of social identity theory among participants, especially those identified as fans of unsuccessful EPL clubs.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) described social identity theory as a socio-cognitive framework used to explain intergroup interactions and behaviors. As an example within a soccer context, Wagner and Shobe (2017) found soccer fans used positive phrases to proudly describe their support while using negative phrases to disdainfully describe support of a rival. Clark (2006) described this as a need for soccer fans to exhibit a superior identity when comparing themselves to fans of other teams. This sentiment was evident through respondent comments such as “I deliberately did not want to choose one of the most popular clubs in the league so I would not be considered a plastic/bandwagon fan.”

Venue Attachment. Attachment to venue also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with organizational identification and sport consumption behaviors among distant fans. Only Ballouli et al. (2016) provided a previous investigation of venue attachment. This study examined venue attachment among attendees at a Formula One race. This study supported findings from Ballouli et al. (2016) regarding the significant positive relationship between venue attachment and sentiments of organizational identification and support. It also supported Ballouli et al.’s findings of a significant relationship between venue attachment and sport watching behaviors. In these manners, venue attachment produced similar results between distant and local fans. However, venue attachment did suggest higher salience in explaining merchandise purchase behavior among distant fans. This indicates a new theoretical implication derived from this study and will require further validation across various sport research contexts.

Additionally, fans of Big Six EPL organizations rated venue attachment significantly higher than fans of non-Big Six EPL clubs. This suggests venue attachment aligns with other unique indicators of a sport organization, such as the team’s players and

its coach. This finding provides a theoretical implication by extending the points of attachment structural models proposed by Trail et al. (2003) and Woo et al. (2009). In other words, this study provided initial evidence that venue attachment may represent an additional salient attachment point among fans of successful sport organizations.

City/Region Attachment. Previous research (Collins et al., 2016; Delia & James, 2018; Lock et al., 2011; Wann et al., 1996; Yoshida et al., 2015) indicated a strong connection between geographic location and team identification among local fans. Surprisingly, attachment to city/region also significantly explained organizational identification among distant fans despite the geographical distance between fan and team. Open-ended item responses provided potential reasons for this unexpected phenomenon. These included past vacations or study abroad experiences in the area, existing attachments to the region formed through attachments to other entertainment options, such as a musical group, and attachments derived from perceived similarities between one's home city/region and that of the EPL organization.

Additionally, higher levels of city/region attachment were found among U.S.-based fans of unsuccessful EPL clubs compared to fans of Big Six EPL organizations. This contrasts with seminal point of attachment structural models developed by Trail et al. (2003). However, it does correspond with more recent findings that suggested local community attachment significantly contributed to maintaining organizational identification among fans when their team failed to produce successful results (Rhee et al., 2017). The presence of several participant responses to the open-ended item also provide evidence for this finding, such as one Aston Villa fan commenting, the club "has

a lot of very odd connections with my hometown teams in Cleveland and a friend of mine who is a Cleveland fan supports Villa. He introduced me to Villa and I fell in love.”

Player Attachment. Attachment to player results provided differences and similarities in comparison to studies focusing on local fans. Player attachment did not significantly explain organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans, contrasting with previous studies focusing on local fan groups (Hoegele et al., 2014; Yoshida et al., 2015). Therefore, player attachment appears to hold different levels of importance among distant and local fans.

Player attachment did demonstrate a negative relationship with broadcast media consumption among distant fans. This parallels findings from previous studies focusing on local fans (Hallman et al., 2018; Kwon et al., 2005; Yoshida et al., 2015). This indicates attachment to player is a consistent negative indicator of sport consumption behavior, particular game watching behavior, between distant and local sport fans.

Finally, significantly higher levels of player attachment among fans of Big Six EPL organizations corresponds well with points of attachment aligned with fans of successful sport organizations from models developed by Trail et al. (2003) and Woo et al. (2009). It also compliments findings from Hoegele et al. (2014), which suggested fans of successful soccer teams perceive superstar players as more important compared to fans of unsuccessful teams. Therefore, distant and local fans of successful sport organizations appear to place particular importance on player attachment.

Coach Attachment. Attachment to coach also produced results that compare and contrast with findings from previous research. Attachment to coach did not significantly explain organizational identification, which corresponds with other findings from similar

studies in the existing literature (e.g., Kwon et al., 2005; Woo et al., 2009). However, attachment to coach negatively explained merchandise purchase behavior, which contrasts with findings from Kwon et al. (2005) who found coach attachment produced a significant positive relationship with conative loyalty. Therefore, these results indicate distant fans and local fans agree on the lack of importance for coach attachment in regard to organizational identification but disagree on the effect of coach attachment on sport consumption behaviors.

Additionally, coach attachment did not indicate a particular salience among fans of successful sport organizations in the current study, a departure from findings suggested by Trail et al. (2003) and Woo et al. (2009). This indicates a significant difference between local and distant fans of successful sport organizations in terms of how they identify with their favorite team.

Sport and League Attachment. The other two existing points of attachment originally included in this study, attachment to sport and attachment to league, did not provide similar factor analysis results compared to previous research. Items relating to attachment to league did not produce a significant factor structure. This resulted from participant ratings of the first item on this subscale (“Even when [team name] is not playing, I root for teams within the EPL when they play against teams outside the EPL”) relative to the other subscale items (“I am a big fan of the EPL” and “There is just something special about the EPL”). This indicates U.S.-based EPL fans enjoy and appreciate the league itself, but do not extend that enjoyment and appreciation to other teams in the league.

Additionally, the third item on the attachment to sport subscale (“I am a soccer fan at all levels, e.g., high school, college, professional”) failed to produce a significant factor loading. This contrasts starkly with previous research (Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Trail et al., 2003; Woo et al., 2009) and suggests a key discrepancy between distant and local fan types. Distant fans, specifically those based in the U.S., may not extend fandom for a sport watched from afar to local alternatives, especially those at an inferior level of play.

These results indicated certain items contained with each factor may not be as appropriate for measuring points of attachment among distant fans compared to assessments of local fan types. Additional item development should commence for these points of attachment to derive a set of items that produce a significant factor structure when utilized among distant fan groups. Specifically, item development should focus on the first item from the league attachment subscale and the third item from the sport attachment subscale since these items did not resonate with a distant fan population. Modifications to item wording should consider salient differences between distant and local fan populations and follow quality control guidelines established by Dillman et al. (2014) to suggest adequate validity and reliability.

Summary of Distant Fans versus Local Fans. Interpretation and comparison of results to previous studies indicated constructs related to attachment to fan community, attachment to venue, and attachment to city/region function relatively similarly among distant fan and local fan populations. This study provides strong initial evidence that these points of attachment can be adapted from previous studies focused on local fans to future studies focusing on distant fans without additional scale development work.

Attachment to player and attachment to coach produced mixed findings in relation to organizational identification, sport consumption behaviors, and differences among fans of successful and unsuccessful teams compared to studies focused on local fans. Therefore, additional investigations of distant fan group attitudes and feelings toward these points of attachment is necessary to resolve this ambiguity. Finally, attachment to sport and attachment league did not produce significant factor structures, making these constructs difficult to examine among distant fans in their current state. Additional scale development work should commence on items underlying these constructs for future inclusion of these points of attachment in studies focusing on distant fan groups.

New Points of Attachment

This study also contributed to the literature through an investigation of two new points of attachment: attachment to owners and attachment to organizational history/tradition. Four items were created to measure these new points of attachment based on modifications to existing point of attachment items found in the literature (Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Woo et al., 2009). Items for these point of attachment subscales were initially validated through a panel of experts and a field test. Subsequently, the items underwent factor analysis procedures. The four items created for attachment to owner significantly loaded on the same factor during the EFA procedure. However, during the CFA procedure, the fourth item failed to significantly load on its hypothesized attachment factor. Yet, the three remaining items demonstrated significant factor loadings and produced initial evidence of a scale with adequate internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. Similarly, the four items created to assess attachment to organizational history/tradition were reduced to three when the fourth item

significantly cross-loaded on another factor during the EFA procedure. Yet, the CFA procedure confirmed a factor with significant item loadings for the remaining three items and adequate levels of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity.

Therefore, this study contributes two new points of attachment to the literature with items displaying initial indications of content validity, face validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability. Although these points of attachment did not significantly explain organizational identification and only explained one type of sport consumption behavior (merchandise purchase frequency), they do offer future researchers a new avenue to explore antecedents to organizational identification. The performance of these new points of attachment in this study may not necessarily represent their performance in various other research contexts. Future studies incorporating these new points of attachment should do so across a variety of local and distant fan contexts, using results from this study as a benchmark.

Practical Implications

In addition to theoretical implications, this study offers several practical implications. Results suggest specific areas of focus for EPL organizations as they generate marketing materials to engage a U.S.-based audience. They also suggest ways for media partners of the EPL, such as NBC Sports, to enhance engagement with distant fan audiences through the delivery of their product. Robinson and Trail (2005) stated the relationship between points of attachment, identification, and consumption must sit at the heart of targeted marketing communication strategies for sport marketers and managers to help maximize consumer retention and commitment to their product. This is an increasingly important concept to consider for distant fan bases, given that out-of-market

fans can provide an important revenue source for sport organizations (Kerr & Emery, 2011).

This section contains five areas of focus. The first section presents practical implications related to the most salient finding in this study, fan community attachment. The second section discusses practical implications from venue attachment results. The third section outlines practical implications of player attachment. The fourth section discusses practical implications regarding the myriad of points of attachment which significantly explained merchandise purchase behavior. The fifth section summarizes and concludes the discussion on practical implications.

Fan Community Attachment

The results of this study strongly suggest the concept of fan community should sit at the heart of marketing strategies for the EPL and its U.S.-based broadcast partner. Attachment to fan community demonstrated the strongest positive effect on organizational identification and sport consumption behaviors. Therefore, the EPL and NBC Sports should create ways to promote positive images of EPL fan communities to a U.S.-based audience. These entities have already begun to take steps toward executing this marketing strategy. During the 2018-2019 league season, they partnered to host “Premier League Mornings Live” fan events across the U.S., which focused on delivering an enhanced fandom experience to dedicated U.S.-based EPL fans (Premier League, 2018). These events continued in the 2019-2020 season and should increase in frequency for future seasons. NBC Sports has also begun highlighting a different “Fan Club of the Week” during its weekly EPL broadcasts. These are important sources of fan engagement for U.S.-based EPL fans, especially those of clubs outside the Big Six given this group

demonstrated significantly higher levels of attachment to fan community compared to Big Six EPL organizations.

In addition to these initiatives already ongoing, EPL organizations could highlight aspects of U.S.-based EPL fan communities in their marketing materials and market themselves through existing U.S.-based fan communities. This could include highlighting different factions of U.S.-based fan groups prominently on their website or social media pages. It could also include collecting and marketing testimonials from highly identified team fans who developed an affinity for their club through associations with family members and friends. EPL clubs could also increase their own organization of fan community group meet-up events throughout the U.S. The members of the U.S.-based supporters groups could market these events themselves, thereby potentially reaching a wider audience than if marketed solely by the EPL clubs. The continuation of marketing strategies and development of new marketing strategies based on EPL fan communities in the U.S. is essential for enhancing organizational identification and, therefore, consumption behaviors among this distant fan audience.

Venue Attachment

Participants also indicated a significant attachment to venue in terms of enhancing organizational identification and consumption behaviors. This was especially true among fans of Big Six EPL organizations. Therefore, NBC Sports and EPL organizations could devote significant effort toward featuring stadiums in their marketing and promotion materials. NBC Sports, for example, could broadcast documentaries featuring the different stadiums used by EPL organizations. These documents could feature the history, tradition, architecture, and unique fit of these stadiums within their local communities.

Additionally, NBC Sports could focus on highlighting venues during weekly EPL broadcasts. This could include planned expansive shots of stadiums during pregame, halftime, and postgame or delivery of knowledge about these stadiums through informational pieces presented during on-air broadcasts. Since results suggested attachment to venue significantly explained broadcast media consumption behavior, these types of strategies could prove crucial for NBC Sports as they seek to increase viewership.

Player Attachment

One area that media partners should refrain from focusing on within their marketing and promotion materials for the EPL is the players. Attachment to players indicated a significant negative relationship with broadcast media consumption. Additionally, this point of attachment did not significantly explain organizational identification. These results suggest individuals displaying high levels of attachment to players may not possess strong levels of organizational identification and are less likely to consistently watch games via television or online media streaming. This may result from fans choosing to place less importance on watching games if a certain player or players are out of the lineup due to injury or a coach's decision, or because a favorite player was transferred to a different team. However, this is not to say broadcast partners of the EPL should completely remove players from their marketing strategies. Attachment to players did hold higher salience among U.S.-based fans of Big Six EPL organizations compared to fans of the other 14 EPL organizations. This mimics findings from Hoeghele et al. (2014) about the unique importance of superstar players among fans of successful soccer clubs. Therefore, the marketing of players for Big Six EPL clubs

should remain a central focus for NBC Sports. It is possible an injury, for example, to a star player for one of these organizations would be less impactful on the broadcast consumption decisions of fans given the presence of other star players on the team.

Merchandise Purchase Behavior

Attachment to fan community, venue, organizational history/tradition, and city/region all showed indications of positively explaining merchandise purchase behavior. This provides several areas for EPL organizations to focus on as they license the production of team-related merchandise, apparel, and paraphernalia for consumption in the U.S. market. Images of a club's stadium could provide interesting design content for team-related apparel. Club slogans, fan chants, and historical accomplishments could all be used to highlight the history and tradition of the organization on marketing and promotional materials. Local products unique to an EPL club's city or region could be marketed to U.S.-based fans as a means of enhancing fans' connection to the club's home area. EPL clubs could also license, produce, and sell individualized merchandise to appeal to specific U.S.-based fan groups.

Practical Implications Summary

It is essential for EPL clubs and their U.S.-based media partner, NBC Sports, to capitalize on these opportunities to strengthen engagement and identification among U.S.-based EPL fans. NBC Sports is in the midst of a \$1 billion deal to broadcast EPL matches to a U.S. audience (Sandomir, 2015). EPL organizations derive over £1 billion in revenue annually from international broadcast fees (Wigmore, 2019) and generate millions of dollars in revenue annually from merchandise retail sales (Conn, 2019). The market growth of distant fan bases will continue to increase as the speed of information

technology and access to high-speed online services will make it increasingly possible for sport fans in any locale to consume sport products from any other locale. Therefore, it is increasingly crucial for sport organizations to understand their fan bases in these distant markets. This study provides initial evidence of variables that demonstrate a significant, positive impact on organizational identification and sport consumption behaviors within a particular set of distant fans, U.S.-based EPL fans.

Limitations

This study derived its focus from information indicating the EPL was the preferred European soccer league among U.S.-based soccer fans (Easley, 2019). Additionally, this study collected cross-sectional data. Therefore, implications from this study can guide practitioners and researchers examining other distant fan populations or U.S.-based fans of other foreign sport leagues, but they are not fully generalizable to other distant fan contexts. Additionally, this study collected data on past consumption behaviors reported by participants. A study collecting actual consumption behavior data over a longitudinal timeframe may produce different findings. However, time and resource constraints prevented the collection of longitudinal actual consumption behavior data for this study. The timeframe used for data collection may have produced an effect on study results. Data collection occurred during the 2019-2020 EPL season. Therefore, in-season events, such as team performance, player injuries, and coaching changes, may have had an effect on participant responses.

Coverage error, nonresponse error, measurement error, and common method bias all likely affected this study. These modes of error occur when it is not possible to conduct probabilistic sampling of the entire target population and when administering

cross-sectional surveys where respondents report on past behaviors related to their attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions on a given topic. Certain decisions made in this study helped mitigate, but did not entirely eliminate, the presences of these errors. These include providing respondents with a short questionnaire, ensuring item clarity and readability before administering the questionnaire, and including a captcha item within the instrument to identify obvious examples of measurement error. Finally, this study only collected data from individuals who self-identified as a U.S.-based fan of an EPL club and actively participated on fan group Facebook pages. Therefore, the findings from this study may not represent the individuals with lower levels of fan engagement for their favorite EPL club or who do not participate with an online fan group community.

Future Research

The results of this study provide several ideas for future research. To begin, replications of this study within different distant fan group contexts would contribute to the scant knowledge currently existing on identification, attachment, and consumption behaviors among distant fans. This study was the first to examine U.S.-based fans as distant fans of another professional sport league. Future studies could focus on U.S.-based fandom for other prominent European soccer leagues, such as Germany's Bundesliga or Spain's La Liga. Additionally, future studies could examine growing distant fan bases of U.S.-based professional sport leagues. Examples could include NFL fans from the United Kingdom or Mexico and NHL fans from several parts of Europe.

Secondly, the two new points of attachment developed for this study, attachment to owners and attachment to organizational history/tradition, require further testing in diverse research contexts. The factor structure and salience of these points of attachment

on various outcome variables in different research settings would contribute to the overall literature on identification and attachment.

Additionally, the open-ended item responses from participants provide numerous opportunities to develop new points of attachment in future research. These could include specific investigations related to the influence of video games on the origination of sport fandom. Several qualitative investigations and case studies (e.g., Markovits and Green, 2017) have examined the use of video games, particularly *FIFA*, on sport popularity among gamers. However, this topic has not received empirical investigation as yet, suggesting a possible avenue for future exploration. Future studies on distant fan populations could also include case studies focusing on the unique impact of religion on the development of sport fandom and investigations of the particular salience a team's "underdog" status has on fan identification.

Furthermore, the factor structure of points of attachment within distant fan research settings requires further examination since two points of attachment validated in previous research on local fans – attachment to sport and league – did not produce similar results in the current study. Additionally, none of the factor models tested in this study, or any found in previous research (Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Spinda et al., 2016; Trail et al., 2003; Woo et al., 2009), produced a model fit index that could be classified as "excellent" model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). This suggests further instrument development work on PAI scale items is warranted. This could include the refinement of the existing scale and items and the creation of new scale items and, potentially, new point of attachment factors. Existing results demonstrate room for growth in the area of point of attachment model fit.

Finally, any sport consumption behavior study could improve through the use of actual consumption behavior data collected longitudinally. The current study is no different. Future research on distant fan groups could focus on the influence of points of attachment and fan identification on actual broadcast media, social media, and merchandise purchase consumption behaviors over numerous time periods to more accurately portray the effects of attachment and identification on sport consumption behaviors.

Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the antecedents to organizational identification among U.S.-based EPL fans and examine the relationship between these antecedents and various forms of sport consumption behavior. Specifically, this study examined the extent to which points of attachment explained variances in organizational identification and three types of sport consumption behavior – broadcast media consumption, social media consumption, and team-related merchandise purchases. Additionally, this study examined differences in points of attachment between fans of successful EPL organizations, known as the “Big Six” EPL clubs, and fans of unsuccessful EPL organizations. In contrast to most existing sport fan identification and attachment research, this study focused on distant fans, a group yet to receive significant attention in the sport management literature.

This study utilized social identity theory as a conceptual foundation. Social identity theory is a socio-cognitive framework that explains the formation and behaviors of social groups. It provides the main theoretical foundation for research on organizational identification and team identification. Points of attachment represent an

extension of team identification research that accounts for the potential of multiple factors to contribute toward one's fan identification. Previous research suggests an understanding of fan identification and attachment is crucial to developing targeted marketing plans which positively influence sport consumption behaviors.

To address the purpose of the study, a questionnaire was distributed to U.S.-based EPL fans through Facebook group pages organized around fan support and interactions for EPL clubs. The questionnaire contained items to assess respondents' levels of organizational identification, attachment to various aspects of the organization, and consumption behaviors. Participant responses ($n = 753$) revealed attachment to fan community exhibited the strongest relationship with organizational identification and each type of sport consumption behavior. Attachment to venue also suggested positive relationships with organizational identification and sport consumption behaviors. Two new points of attachment created for this study, attachment to owner and attachment to organizational history/tradition, positively explained respondents' frequency of merchandise purchases. Additional analysis revealed player and venue attachment held particular salience among U.S.-based fans of Big Six EPL organizations. Meanwhile, attachment to fan community, city/region, and owner displayed significantly higher ratings among U.S.-based fans of EPL organizations outside the Big Six.

These results produce several theoretical and practical implications for researchers and practitioners. From a theoretical perspective, these results illuminate similarities and differences in identification and attachment among distant fan populations compared to local sport fans. Additionally, factor analyses supported a factor structure for items relating to the two new points of attachment created for this study.

This sets a foundation for future researchers to utilize these points of attachment in a variety of new research contexts covering distant and local fan types. From a practical implication perspective, these results show the importance of placing the concept of fan community at the heart of marketing strategies for EPL organizations and their U.S.-based broadcast partner, NBC Sports. As information technology and high-speed internet access continue to eliminate boundaries between sport teams and fans from across the world, it will become increasingly crucial for sport organizations to understand their fan bases in distant markets. This study provides initial evidence of variables that demonstrate a significant, positive impact on organizational identification and sport consumption behaviors for a particular set of distant fans.

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APPENDIX A

Proposed Study Survey Instrument

Section 1 – Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- 1) Are you 18 years of age or older?
 - Yes
 - No
- 2) Are you a current resident of the United States?
 - Yes
 - No
- 3) Choose your favorite English Premier League (EPL) club.
 - Drop-down menu to display names of all 20 EPL clubs.
 - Include “I am not a fan of an EPL club” option

Section 2 – Organizational Identification Scale (Mael & Ashforth, 1992)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

- Note: Each item measured on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 7 = *Strongly Agree*

- 1) When someone criticizes [team name], it feels like a personal insult.
- 2) I am very interested in what others think about [team name].
- 3) When I talk about [team name], I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they.’
- 4) [Team name]’s successes are my successes
- 5) When someone praises [team name], it feels like a personal compliment.
- 6) If a story in the media criticized [team name], I would feel embarrassed.

Section 3 – Points of Attachment

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

- Note: Each item measured on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 7 = *Strongly Agree*

Attachment to players (Robinson & Trail, 2005)

- 1) I identify with the individual players on [team name].
- 2) I am a big fan of specific players on [team name].
- 3) I consider myself a fan of certain players on [team name].

Attachment to coach (Robinson & Trail, 2005)

- 1) I am a big fan of the coach of [team name].
- 2) I follow [team name] because I like the coach.
- 3) I am a fan of [team name] because of the coach.

Attachment to sport (Robinson & Trail, 2005)

- 1) First and foremost, I consider myself a soccer fan.
- 2) Soccer is my favorite sport.
- 3) I am a soccer fan at all levels (e.g., high school, college, professional).

Attachment to region or local city (Spinda et al., 2016; Yoshida et al., 2015)

- 1) I identify with residents of the city/region that [team name] plays in.
- 2) I feel part of the city/region that [team name] plays in rather than just being a fan of the team.
- 3) I support the city/region that [team name] plays in as a whole.

Attachment to league (adapted from Spinda et al., 2016)

- 1) Even when [team name] is not playing, I root for teams within the EPL when they play against teams outside of the EPL.
- 2) I am a big fan of the EPL.
- 3) There is just something special about the EPL.

Attachment to fan community (Yoshida et al., 2015)

- 1) I feel a deep connection with others who follow [team name].
- 2) I identify with people who follow [team name].
- 3) I feel like I belong to a club with other fans of [team name].

Attachment to venue (Ballouli et al., 2016)

- 1) [Team name]'s home stadium is the best stadium in the EPL.
- 2) I am a big fan of [team name]'s home stadium.
- 3) Being a fan of [team name]'s home stadium is very important to me.

Attachment to owner (adapted from Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Woo et al., 2009)

- 1) I am a fan of [team name] because of the owner.
- 2) I am a big fan of [team name]'s owner.
- 3) I follow [team name] because I like the owner.
- 4) Being a fan of [team name]'s owner is very important to me.

Attachment to history/tradition (adapted from Robinson & Trail, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2013; Woo et al., 2009)

- 1) I feel connected to the history and tradition of [team name].
- 2) I follow [team name] because of its history and tradition.
- 3) I am a fan of [team name] because of the club's history and tradition.
- 4) The history and tradition of [team name] brings back nostalgic feelings for me.

Section 4 – Open-Ended Item

1) Other than the reasons stated above, what other factors may have influenced your decision to choose [team name] as your favorite EPL club?

- Note: Open-ended response type for this question

Section 5 – Sport Consumption Behaviors (adapted from Shapiro et al., 2013)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

- Note: Each item measured on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 7 = *Strongly Agree*

Broadcast Media Consumption

1) I watch all [team name] games on television or via online streaming services

Social Media Consumption

1) I get information about [team name] through the club's official social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

Merchandise Purchase Frequency

1) I frequently purchase [team name] merchandise, apparel, and/or paraphernalia

Merchandise Purchase Amount

1) Please estimate the total dollar amount that you spent on [team name] merchandise, apparel, and paraphernalia during the last 12 months.

- Note: This item measured using a sliding scale with response options ranging from \$0 to \$1,000

Section 6 – Demographic Information

1) Please indicate your current age.

- Response type: Sliding scale with response options ranging from 18 to 100

2) With which gender do you most closely identify?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Do not identify as male, female, or transgender

3) What is your race?

- White
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- Other (please specify: _____)

4) Please indicate your current annual gross household income.

- Under \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$75,000
- \$75,001 - \$100,000
- Over \$100,000

5) Please indicate your highest level of education obtained.

- High school or GED
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's or professional (e.g., JD) degree
- Doctoral degree

6) How many years have you been a fan of [team name]? If less than one year, select "0" on the sliding scale.

- Response type: Sliding scale with response options ranging from 0 to 100

APPENDIX B

EFA Results for Point of Attachment Items

		Pattern (Structure) Coefficients							
Item	h ²	City/Region	Owner	History	Players	Fan Comm.	Sport	Coach	Venue
Player #1	.37				.67 (.65)				
Player #2	.53				.84 (.83)				
Player #3	.47				.73 (.73)				
Coach #1	.47		.24 (.44)		-.22 (<.20)			.47 (.51)	
Coach #2	.71							.91 (.93)	
Coach #3	.69							.82 (.85)	
Sport #1	.43						.74 (.72)		
Sport #2	.40						.70 (.69)		
Sport #3	.22						.45 (.44)		
City/Region #1	.58	.84 (.82)							
City/Region #2	.58	.85 (.82)							
City/Region #3	.55	.80 (.77)							
League #1	.25				.25 (.31)				
League #2	.42	-.22 (<.20)				.30 (.29)	.48 (.47)		
League #3	.38						.38 (.39)		
Fan Comm. #1	.56					.76 (.79)			
Fan Comm. #2	.54					.83 (.81)			
Fan Comm. #3	.51					.67 (.74)			
Venue #1	.45								.70 (.69)
Venue #2	.53								.89 (.88)
Venue #3	.46	.26 (.43)							.46 (.55)
Owner #1	.59		.83 (.82)						
Owner #2	.52		.66 (.65)						
Owner #3	.63		.80 (.83)						
Owner #4	.35	.20 (.34)	.50 (.53)						

History #1	.59	.25 (.56)		.48 (.66)					
History #2	.70			.91 (.90)					
History #3	.68			.93 (.88)					
History #4	.49	.39 (.59)		.25 (.51)					
Eigenvalue		5.98	3.69	2.22	2.06	1.72	1.42	1.26	1.03
% variance after rotation		20.62%	12.72%	7.67%	7.11%	5.93%	4.91%	4.35%	3.57%
Cronbach's alpha		0.84	0.77	0.84	0.77	0.82	0.67	0.79	0.71

Note: h^2 = communalities. Structure coefficients in parentheses. Pattern coefficients greater than .40 in bold. Pattern coefficients less than absolute value of .20 suppressed.

CURRICULUM VITA

Adam R. Cocco

1122 Payne St., Louisville, KY 40204 ♦ (330) 501-6167 ♦ adamcocco@gmail.com

Education

- Ph.D. University of Louisville** **Spring 2020 (expected)**
Educational Leadership, Evaluation and Organizational Development
Specialization: Sport Administration
- M.A. University of Akron** **December 2010**
Economics
- B.S. Youngstown State University** **December 2006**
Major: Business Administration
Minor: Economics
-

Research

Research Interests

Statistical analysis of sport industry topics, examining the socioeconomic impacts of professional sport, and exploring sport consumer motivations and behaviors.

Peer Reviewed Publications

Pond, A.M., **Cocco, A.R.**, & Spencer, T.C. (2020). Road back to glory: How the NCAA Football video game franchise could make a comeback. *SAGE Business Cases*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781529727951>.

Shreffler, M.B., **Cocco, A.R.**, Presley, R., & Police, C. (2019). Testing the learning styles hypothesis: An assessment of the learning styles, learning approaches, and course outcomes in the Sport Management classroom. *Sport Management Education Journal*, 13(2), 83-91.

Shreffler, M.B., **Cocco, A.R.**, & Shreffler, J.R. (2019). An examination of the relationship between instruction type and course outcomes in Sport Management courses. *Sport Management Education Journal*, 13(2), 53-62.

Cocco, A.R., & Spencer, T.C. (2019). Path to the Pros: How Major League Soccer is revolutionizing youth player development in the United States. *SAGE Business Cases*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526464002>.

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Research in Progress

Spencer, T.C., Greenwell, T.C., & **Cocco, A.R.** (Revise & resubmit). Identification with the National Football League following franchise relocation: An analysis of St. Louis Rams and San Diego Chargers fans. Submitted to *Journal of Global Sport Management*.

Gray, W.D., Jett, M., **Cocco, A.R.**, Vanhoover, A.C., Pantalos, G.M., Stumbo, J., Quesada, P.M., & Caruso, J.F. (In review). Evidence of heat removal through the hand's palmar surface with a novel skin cooling device. Submitted to *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*.

Cocco, A.R., Katz, M., & Hambrick, M.E. Investigating social networks formed in soccer supporter groups. (Manuscript in progress). To be submitted to *Journal of Sport Management*.

Cocco, A.R. (Data collection). Using contingent valuation method to assess the community value provided by a minor league soccer team. To be submitted to *Sport Marketing Quarterly*.

Scholarly Presentations

Cocco, A.R., & Presley, R. (2020). Exploring international volunteer learning programs: An examination of engagement and skill development of sport management participants. *Applied Sport Management Conference*, Waco, TX.

Shreffler, M.B., & **Cocco, A.R.** (2019). The impact of controversial behaviors on brand image and purchase intentions: An examination of Colin Kaepernick and Nike. *Sport Marketing Association (SMA) Conference*, Chicago, IL.

Shreffler, M.B., **Cocco, A.R.**, Presley, R., & Police, C. (2019). Preferential learning in Sport Management courses: An assessment of student learning styles, instructional methods, and course outcomes. *North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) Conference*, New Orleans, LA.

Cocco, A.R., Police, C., & Spencer, T.C. (2019). The Neymar effect: Examining transfer value determinants in the English Premier League in consideration of recent market developments. *Applied Sport Management Conference*, Nashville, TN.

Cocco, A.R., & Shreffler, M.B. (2018). Draft or develop: Examining statistical differences between drafted and homegrown players in Major League Soccer. *Sport Marketing Association (SMA) Conference*, Dallas, TX.

Cocco, A.R. (2018). The grass is always greener: Changes in consumer preferences for football and soccer in America. *Sport Marketing Association (SMA) Conference Ignite Session*, Dallas, TX.

Cocco, A.R., & Spencer, T.C. (2018). Path to the Pros: How Major League Soccer is revolutionizing youth player development in the United States. *Spring Research Conference (SRC)*, Louisville, KY.

Grants and Funding

Cocco, A.R. (2018). Sport Marketing Association Research Grant. Grant intended to support collaborative research endeavors between industry leaders and academics. Funding amount requested: \$3,000. **Funded.**

Cocco, A.R. (2018). Travel costs for the Sport Marketing Association Conference to present. Funded by the Graduate Student Council, University of Louisville, in the amount of \$300. **Funded.**

Teaching

SPAD 437/637: Sport Analytics **Fall 2019, Spring 2020**

Course purpose: To develop student's understanding of data driven decision-making in sport through the use of basic and advanced data analysis techniques and provide students with an understanding of how to measure performance and seek competitive advantages for individual athletes, sport teams, and sport businesses. This course places a heavy emphasis on problem-solving skills based on sound quantitative reasoning.

SPAD 404/604: Financial Principles in Sport **Fall 2018, Fall 2019, Spring 2020**

Course purpose: To demonstrate basic and advanced financial and economic concepts necessary to understand the sport business industry and examine the various means for financing sport organizations.

SPAD 561: International Service Learning – Ghana **Spring 2019, Spring 2020**

Course purpose: To develop student's knowledge about Sport for Development and Peace, International Service Learning, sport-based curriculum building, and Ghanaian culture and history in anticipation of an immersive in-country experience.

SPAD 383: Sport Marketing**Fall 2018, Fall 2019**

Course purpose: To apply the basic principles of marketing to the managed sport industry with emphasis on intercollegiate athletics, professional sport, and multisport club operations.

SPAD 401: Career Development in Sport Administration**Spring 2019**

Course purpose: To equip students with the necessary skills and afford students an opportunity to reflect on potential career opportunities in the sport industry.

SPAD 402: Internship in Sport Administration**Spring 2018 – Spring 2019**

Course purpose: To afford students an opportunity to apply theoretical classroom information in a real-world environment and develop skills beneficial to students seeking careers in sport management.

SPAD 382: Organizational Behavior in Sport**Spring 2018, Spring 2019**

Course purpose: To expand the student's understanding of various management techniques and their application to sport organizations and administration.

Guest Lectures

Fall 2019**SPAD 635** *Research in Sport Administration* – Quantitative Data Analysis**SPAD 405** *Sport Facility Management* – Public vs. Private Financing for Sport Facilities**Spring 2019****SPAD 637** *Sport Management Analytics* – Basics of Inferential Statistics**SPAD 637** *Sport Management Analytics* – Correlation Analysis**SPAD 637** *Sport Management Analytics* – Conducting T-Tests**SPAD 637** *Sport Management Analytics* – Analysis of Variance and Covariance**SPAD 637** *Sport Management Analytics* – Linear Regression**SPAD 604** *Financial Principles in Sport* – Sport Facility Financing**SPAD 405** *Sport Facility Management* – Public vs. Private Financing for Sport Facilities**Fall 2018****SPAD 635** *Research in Sport Administration* – Quantitative Data Analysis**SPAD 405** *Sport Facility Management* – Public vs. Private Financing for Sport Facilities**Spring 2018****SPAD 180** *Sport Spectating Experience* – Soccer Spectating**SPAD 404** *Financial Principles in Sport* – Sport Facility Financing**SPAD 405** *Sport Facility Management* – Public vs. Private Financing for Sport Facilities**SPAD 490** *Senior Seminar in Sport Business* – MLS Expansion Case Study**Fall 2017****SPAD 382** *Org Behavior in Sport* – MLS Expansion Case Study**SPAD 404** *Financial Principles in Sport* – Sport Facility Financing

SPAD 405 *Sport Facility Management* – Public vs. Private Financing for Sport Facilities
SPAD 605 *Sport Facility Management* – Public vs. Private Financing for Sport Facilities
SPAD 490 *Senior Seminar in Sport Business* – MLS Expansion Case Study
Central High School/SPAD Sport Marketing Magnet Program – A Tale of Two
Facilities: KFC Yum! Center & LCFC Proposed Stadium

Service

University

- 2019 - 2020** Faculty Leader – International Service-Learning Trip to Ghana –
University of Louisville
- 2019 - 2020** Faculty Advisor – Women’s Soccer Club – University of Louisville

College

- 2019** Search Committee Member for Coordinator of Admissions – College of
Education and Human Development – University of Louisville
- 2018** Member – Planning & Budget Committee – University of Louisville
- 2018** Search Committee Member for Senior Academic Counselor – Department
of Health & Sport Sciences – University of Louisville

Department

- 2019** Sport Administration Master’s Program Coordinator – University of
Louisville
- Spring 2019** Co-Coordinator and Faculty Leader – NCAA Final Four Green Team –
Minneapolis, MN – University of Louisville
- 2018 - 2019** Sport Administration Association – Co-Faculty Advisor – University of
Louisville
- Spring 2018** Co-Coordinator and Faculty Leader – NFL Draft Volunteer Experience in
Dallas, TX – University of Louisville
- Spring 2018** Sport Administration Masters Admissions Committee – University of
Louisville
- Fall 2017** Sport Administration Association Trip Planning Committee – Nashville,
TN – University of Louisville
- Fall 2017** Sport Administration Masters Admissions Committee - University of
Louisville

Professional

- 2019 - 2020** Member – Sport Marketing Association (SMA)
- 2018 - 2019** Member – North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM)
- 2018 - 2019** Member – North American Society for Sport Economists (NASSE)

Community

- Nov. 2018** Faculty Coordinator – Breeder’s Cup Economic Impact Study –
Louisville, KY
- Oct. 2018** Volunteer Captain – IronMan Louisville – Race Operations – Louisville,
KY

2017 – 2018 Member – Butchertown Neighborhood Association – Louisville, KY
July 2017 Volunteer – CONCACAF Gold Cup – Media Operations – Cleveland, OH
July 2017 Volunteer – International Champions Cup – Broadcast Operations – Nashville, TN
April 2017 Volunteer – Rock n’ Roll Marathon – Pre-race Operations – Nashville, TN
March 2017 Volunteer – OVC Basketball Tournament – Event Operations – Nashville, TN

Honors

2018 – 2019 Faculty Favorite Award Nominee
2017 – 2018 University Fellowship Award, University of Louisville
2009 – 2010 Graduate Assistantship, University of Akron
2003 – 2006 University Scholar Award, Youngstown State University
2006 Senior Leadership Award, Youngstown State University

Professional Training

2018 - Delphi University: Principles of Online Course Design - University of Louisville - Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning

Relevant Work Experience

Cleveland Soccer Club, Cleveland, OH **January 2018 – Present**
Finance Consultant

- Created financial projections for inaugural team season. These financial projections were presented to NPSL leadership as a requirement for league entry
- Completed income statement and balance sheet based on actual financial returns from the first season of operations
- Provided broadcast commentary on an ad hoc basis

Nashville Soccer Club, Nashville, TN **May 2017 – July 2017**
Game Day Operations Volunteer

- Responsible for tracking player statistics for each Nashville SC home game
- Responsible for submitting player statistics, game day lineups, and official referee report to USL PDL league office and complying with USL PDL rules regarding submission preferences and deadlines
- Provided broadcast commentary for last home game of season

KeyBank, Brooklyn, OH **November 2010 – July 2017**
Senior Operations Analyst / Channel Manager Branch Operations / Performance Analyst

- Served as lead Business Analyst on Payments Risk database and reporting project. This application provides senior risk managers with self-service reports and automated risk alerts while tracking over \$100B in annual deposits from personal and corporate clients.

- Re-engineered process for onboarding Commercial clients by leading development of a dedicated workflow solution that processes client set-ups, completes document management functions, and eliminates redundant data entry activities. Project contributed over \$1M in annual savings to corporate client services division.

The Entrepreneurs EDGE, Independence, OH

June 2010 – July 2010

Independent Consultant

- Provided independent consulting for International Resource Development, Inc.
- Completed due diligence on idea to grow market share of Northeast Ohio companies involved in the wind energy supply chain in Chinese market.

University of Akron, Akron, OH

August 2009 – December 2010

Graduate Assistant

- Collaborated with professors in the Economics Department to provide research and support on various topics and studies submitted for publication.
- Performed study regarding the economic impact of Akron Marathon on the city, in coordination with fellow graduate assistants in the Economics Department. Study found the marathon event contributed over \$4M to Akron's local economy on an annual basis.