

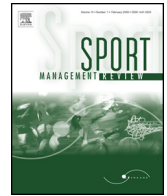


ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Sport Management Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/smr



The meaning of team in team identification

Elizabeth B. Delia^{a,*}, Jeffrey D. James^b

^a Department of Sport Management, Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts Amherst, United States

^b Department of Sport Management, Florida State University, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 28 March 2017

Received in revised form 15 September 2017

Accepted 18 September 2017

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Consumer behaviour

Identity

Team identification

ABSTRACT

A voluminous literature exists on the relationship between team identification and various consumer thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours. However, the psychological meaning of team to consumers remains unknown, as scholars have studied individuals' identification with a team without empirically investigating its meaning. Following an interpretive mode of inquiry in this study, the authors used interviews and concept mapping to understand the meaning of team among fans of two separate teams. An important discovery is that the meaning of team evolves due to environmental changes and personal experiences. At the same time, the authors determined that the meaning of team in team identification has three broad components: place, past, and present, each of which uniquely contributes to the identity. The authors conclude by discussing the implications of this research on the team identification literature and offering suggestions to practitioners and researchers.

© 2017 Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Scholars have taken great interest in understanding individuals' psychological connections to sport entities. While not an exhaustive list of concepts, when studying connection to a sport entity, one may use identification (Lock & Heere, 2017; Wann & Branscombe, 1993), commitment (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000), attraction, attachment, and allegiance (Funk & James, 2001), or internalization (Kolbe & James, 2003) as a conceptual framework. Of these concepts, the most frequently studied among scholars has been team identification, the degree of an individual's psychological connection to a sport team (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Team identification is aligned with social identity theory (Lock & Heere, 2017), a social psychology theory based on group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Scholars have posited that identified individuals are more involved with and committed to a sport entity than those who are not identified (Wann & Branscombe, 1993), and that team identification influences a multitude of attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Lock & Funk, 2016). Despite the relative popularity of team identification as a topic of study, little attention has been paid to the team component of team identification. Though sport teams have been discussed as representative of other entities (Heere & James, 2007) and inclusive of other identities (Lock & Funk, 2016), empirical investigation of the psychological meaning of team is void from the literature.

* Corresponding author at: Department of Sport Management, Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 121 Presidents Drive, Isenberg 255, Amherst, MA 01003, United States.

E-mail addresses: edelia@isenberg.umass.edu (E.B. Delia), jdjames@fsu.edu (J.D. James).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.09.002>

1441-3523/© 2017 Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

The lack of empirical examination of the meaning of team could be for a variety of reasons. For some scholars, the meaning of team may be self-evident. Others may believe the meaning of team is simply too abstract or nebulous to be understood, and perhaps others have not considered its meaning at all. Regardless of the reason, understanding the meaning of team—from the consumer's perspective—is critical. Indeed, sport consumer behaviour scholars have emphasized the importance in building conceptual frameworks from empirical study rather than just the ideas of researchers (e.g., Ross, James, & Vargas, 2006). As scholars, if we do not understand the meaning of team to consumers, we risk compromising our knowledge of team identification and an opportunity for developing good theory (e.g., Cunningham, 2013).

Understanding the meaning of team is necessary because it is foundational to individuals' identification with a team, which undoubtedly influences attitudes and behaviours (Lock & Heere, 2017). A better understanding of the meaning of team may also provide insight into the theoretical underpinning of team identification, though such direction is beyond the scope of this work. Kolbe and James (2003) suggested a team may be a summary unit for related entities, and that understanding its meaning is important in considerations of consumer loyalty. Recognising the meaning of team is also necessary so that it can be reflected in the marketing activities of sport organizations to leverage fan connections, making a team identity salient in consumer decision-making (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). We contend that by understanding the meaning of team, we may be able to offer sport marketers direction in activating a team identity.

Our purpose in this article is to further our understanding of the psychological meaning of team in the minds of sport fans. Employing an interpretive mode of inquiry, we use interviewing to examine the meaning of team among fans of two separate sport teams in the United States. We conclude that while the meaning of team is fluid, it broadly consists of three components—place, past, and present—which serve to develop and maintain one's identification with a sport entity.

2. Literature review

2.1. What is meaning?

In studying the meaning of team, we work from the views of a group of consumer behaviour scholars who have studied the psychological meaning of objects (products) for decades (Belk, 1987; Fournier, 1991; Levy, 1959). In studying the psychological meaning of an object to an individual, the experiential, emotive, and subjective aspects of consumption are embraced over the functional and objective. By understanding consumer behaviour from this perspective, we are able to understand the symbolic meaning of objects to consumers, and how this meaning relates to their use of such objects.

Levy (1959) noted that products are psychological things, and that “people buy things not only for what they can do, but also for what they mean” (p. 118); thus, according to Levy, scholars should focus on what an object represents (personally and socially) to an individual in addition to its functionality, especially those products which provide entertainment or please the senses. Studying the meaning of objects is advantageous in expanding the theoretical understanding of consumer behaviour, as well as in a practical sense, in that meaning exposes the core of the relationship between a consumer and a product, which can allow for product-related marketing campaigns infused with consumer insights (Fournier, 1991). Recognizing that a sport team is an experiential, highly emotive, and intangible entertainment object (Funk, 2017), a study of the meaning of team to expand our understanding of team identification would be insightful. Before doing so, it is important to acknowledge the literature that could inform such an effort.

2.2. Team identification and theory

Scholars study team identification using social identity theory as a theoretical framework (Lock & Heere, 2017). According to social identity theory, an individual derives a greater sense of self from the perceived awareness, value, and emotional significance of belonging to a group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The social groups to which individuals perceive they belong contribute to their self-image by classifying themselves with group members and distinguishing themselves from non-group members. Positive social identity is derived from favourable comparisons between ingroups and outgroups. When a social identity is unfavourable, individuals strive to make the ingroup positive, or leave the group if possible (Tajfel, 1974).

2.2.1. Flexibility and context in identity

Social identity scholars have acknowledged that social structures are contextual and fluid, changing based on economic, cultural, and historical circumstances (Abrams, 1999; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social groups' defining features are susceptible to change, highlighting the significance of context in studying social identity (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). The meaning and importance of a social identity is dependent on the social context in which it is formed and maintained (Abrams, 1999). Thus, though some may believe a sport-related social identity is relatively stable, it is quite plausible to simultaneously consider it unfixed, not only because of salience (Reed, 2002), but also in considerations of identity meaning in the social context. Indeed, this is the stance taken by cultural studies scholars, who believe that identities are temporally and/or spatially constructed based on our experiences and interactions in society, and are therefore never complete and always partial (Bhabha, 1996; Hall, 1996). These multiple disciplinary views of identity as an ongoing project are evident, yet scholars rarely discuss this in the team identification literature.

While a majority of the team identification research to date has focused on attitudes or behaviours influenced by team identification, some scholars have studied how such identification develops and endures over time (e.g., Doyle, Lock, Funk,

Filo, & McDonald, 2017; Lock, Taylor, & Darcy, 2011; Lock, Funk, Doyle, & McDonald, 2014). Lock et al. (2011) suggested that other identities might influence the formation of identification with a new team, such as identification with the sport or one's place of origin. Investigating how individuals develop and maintain team identification during periods of poor performance, Doyle et al. (2017) found that tactics such as social mobility and creativity are used, illustrating that individuals may alter their perception of the focal identification object (team) in an effort to remain identified. In their research with fans of a new team, Lock et al. (2014) suggested that a new team might inherit meaning via the place it is located or the history of the players on the new team. Collectively, these scholars have added support to the idea that the meaning of team is complex and multifaceted, however a study dedicated to understanding the meaning of team is still absent.

2.3. Multiple group identities

Individuals often identify with multiple social groups, some of which may relate (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Heere and James (2007) discussed the idea of the team as representative of multiple group identities, and later found that team identity can be related to city, state, and university identities (Heere, James, Yoshida, & Scremin, 2011), suggesting the significance of place identity in sport-related identity projects. It is important to note though, that Heere et al. refer to a team as symbolic of other groups, not the meaning of a sport team for individuals.

Those utilizing a self-categorization theory framework to study multiple group identities have suggested individuals organize identities at different levels of abstraction (Turner, 1985). For example, an individual might be a resident of a city, which has a university, which has a football team, and as such, perceive group membership to each of these entities. Thus, the university and team group identities would be nested within each other. Lock and Funk (2016) suggested individuals may identify with a sport entity at superordinate, subgroup, and relational levels, each of which fulfil different social needs, yet often operate in conjunction. The authors explained superordinate identification as individuals' identification with a sport entity broadly, subgroup identification as identification with a sub-section of team supporters (e.g., a section of fans within a stadium), and relational identification as the interpersonal interactions individuals may have in less inclusive social groups (e.g., family, friends, tailgating groups). Collectively, these various team-related identities enhance individuals' sense of self. This work further illustrated the complexity to individuals' identification with a sport entity and supports the notion that identification with a team may include one's relationships with others.

2.4. Brand associations

Separate from the identity literature, it is important to acknowledge the brand associations literature, as it could be closely related to the meaning of team. Brand associations can vary in terms of strength, favourability, and uniqueness, and are part of sport spectator-based brand equity (Ross et al., 2006). Several scholars have developed scales to measure team brand associations (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Ross et al., 2006), as well as league brand associations (Kunkel, Funk, & King, 2014). Collectively, these scales allow scholars to assess the attributes, benefits, and attitudes consumers associate with a sport entity, and may include dimensions such as history, tradition, success, and rivalry. Scholars have suggested that team identification influences the complexity of brand associations (Ross & James, 2007); however, they have not explored the notion of brand associations as part of the team in the mind of the consumer. For example, if an individual thinks of team success when thinking about a team, perhaps this association is also actually part of the meaning of team. Explicitly, it is possible that assessing brand associations partly captures the meaning of team.

Given the preceding literature review and our purpose in this article to understand the meaning of team, the following question guided our study: What is the psychological meaning of team (concerning team identification) among the individuals interviewed?

3. Research context

We conducted interviews with fans of two teams—the Syracuse University Men's Basketball team (henceforth referred to as "Syracuse"), a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I program, and the Major League Baseball (MLB) Minnesota Twins (henceforth referred to as "the Twins")—in an effort to understand the meaning of team in two separate contexts. Syracuse and the Twins differ in terms of geographic location, population of the area, sport, sport level, and relative success. Thus, range was established not only among the informants of a particular team, but also between the two teams examined.

Located in Central New York, Syracuse is a city of about 145,000 people, with the larger metropolitan statistical area home to about 660,000 people. With no major league professional sport teams in Syracuse, many Central New Yorkers have embraced Syracuse University Athletics, especially Men's Basketball. A perennial leader in NCAA Division I Men's Basketball, Syracuse is one of the winningest men's basketball programs of all time (NCAA, 2013). When interviews for the current study were conducted, Syracuse was experiencing great success, with an appearance in the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament Final Four in 2013.

The Twins are based in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul (Twin Cities) metropolitan area, home to about 3.5 million people. The Twin Cities have a team in each of North America's Big Four leagues, as well as the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and Major League Soccer (MLS). The Twins' most prized seasons are 1987 and 1991, when the Twins won World

Series titles. Such successful seasons have been contrasted by relatively poor seasons, such as in 2016, when the Twins lost 35 of its first 50 games. To this end, it is important to note the interviews in this study were conducted while the Twins were in the midst of a losing season.

4. Method

This research is aligned with the interpretive research paradigm. Interpretivists believe in multiple realities and the subjective nature of knowledge (Sparkes, 1994), and are interested in understanding and interpretation in research. Thus, researching a certain number of individuals is not of concern, but rather to deeply understand those who are studied (Adler & Adler, 2012).

4.1. The long interview

As McCracken (1988) noted, interviews “give us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves” (p. 9). The type of interview used in the current study is reminiscent of McCracken’s (1988) long interview, in which the researcher maintains a heightened awareness of the method throughout the research process. Existing literature informs the questions posed in the interview; the use of a discussion guide—even if just broad questions—provides order and ensures the objectives of the interview are met, while also allowing opportunities for unstructured follow-up questions. Researchers can also engage in ‘auto-driving’ (McCracken, 1988, p. 36), in which

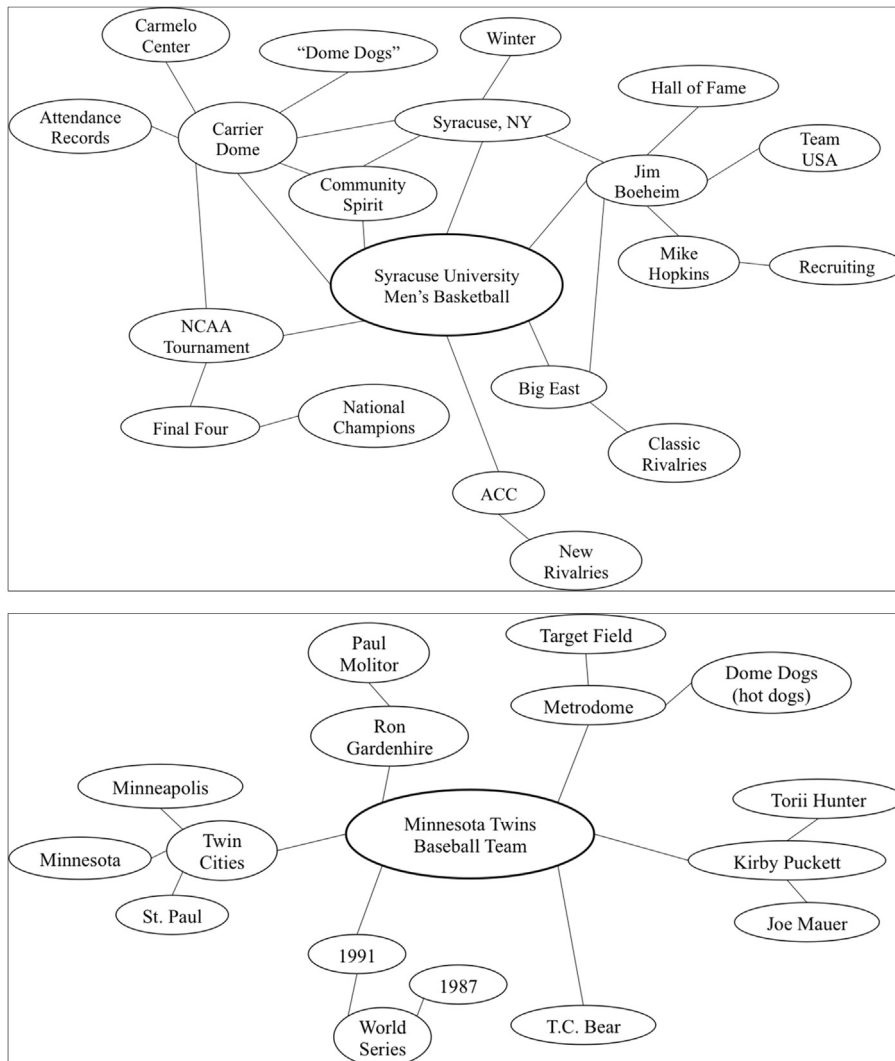


Fig. 1. Concept mapping activity.

participants construct their own materials (e.g., journal, video, and pictures) from which comments are solicited. During analysis, the researcher examines interview transcripts while reflecting on the literature and knowledge of the topic. Analysis begins at the individual level, and as themes are discovered through constant comparison, the researcher is able to generate theoretical conclusions.

4.2. Interviews in the current study

In the current study, it is important to note that we interviewed what we refer to as traditional (local or displaced) fans—those who currently live, have lived, or spent considerable time in the area where a team plays. We did not interview distant fans, as the identification possessed by such individuals is fundamentally different from that of the local or displaced fan (Wann, 2006). The first author conducted all interviews, spending several months in each area to obtain a deep understanding of the fans and how the entity is situated within the larger community. Syracuse fans were interviewed between August and October 2014, and Twins fans were interviewed between June and August 2016. The final sample included 21 participants: 13 Syracuse fans and 8 Twins fans. In both settings, there was no predetermined number of interviews sought, as interviews were conducted until commonalities across participants were evident. Thus, fewer interviews were conducted with Twins fans than with Syracuse fans because saturation was reached sooner (Glaser & Strauss, 1977).

4.3. Procedure

Interviews lasted about 60 minutes per participant and were conducted in public spaces or participants' homes. Because of the depth of inquiry necessary to understand the meaning of team, we followed Shankar, Elliott, and Fitchett (2009) by recruiting participants via acquaintances “with whom trust, empathy, and a shared past” (p. 80) was established. In both settings, we contacted friends and family in the area to put us in touch with potential participants.

Potential informants had to self-identify as a fan of the focal team. More than two-thirds of Syracuse informants and all but one Twins informant had been fans since childhood (others became fans during adolescence or adulthood). Informants ranged in age from 20 to 70 years old; the average age of Syracuse and Twins informants was 36 and 38, respectively. Nearly all (seven) of the Twins informants were male; almost two-thirds of Syracuse informants were male. In addition, informants had a range of educational backgrounds (from some college to graduate degree) and professional backgrounds (most often, individuals worked in business or education).

Interviews were recorded using a digital audio recording device. All interviews began with participants sharing basic information about themselves. Next, questions became sport-specific, with individuals asked to explain their interest and involvement in sports. Discussion then shifted to the focal team. Participants were asked to complete a concept mapping activity as an auto-driving tool (McCracken, 1988), which was used to guide most of the interview.

4.3.1. Concept mapping: An auto-driving interview tool

Given the relative lack of inquiry into the meaning of team, a participant-centred approach to conversation, relying on a concept mapping activity, was deemed optimal. Concept maps are diagrams constructed by individuals to express ideas (with lines or “links”) associated with a central concept (Wheeldon, 2011). Informants were asked to draw a diagram of thoughts that come to mind when thinking of the “Syracuse University men’s basketball team” or “Minnesota Twins baseball team.” Digitally reproduced example participant maps are shown in Fig. 1.

Once completed, participants were asked to discuss each item on the map and any links between items, explaining the significance of the items to the focal team and their connection to it. Once all items on the map were discussed, pointed questions were asked in an effort to understand the psychological meaning of team. Eventually, participants were specifically asked, “When you think about being a fan of this team and your connection to it, what is it that you’re connected to?” The term “connection” was used because participants were able to understand it more easily than identification, which is an academic term (Lock et al., 2011). However, acknowledging the subtle differences between psychological connection and identification, additional follow-up questions of, “What does that team mean?” and, “If ‘x’ goes away, are you still identified with the team?” were asked to understand which items were part of the individuals’ meaning of team. Once conversation regarding the meaning of team was exhausted, the first author summarized the conversation with the participant and the interview concluded.

4.4. Analysis

Empirical material for analysis consisted of audio recordings, transcripts, concept maps, and field notes. Although others have aggregated concept maps for analysis (John, Loken, Kim, & Monga, 2006), we did not, as we sought to use the maps as a guide to uncover the meaning of team based on participants’ thoughts. Interview transcripts amounted to about 55,000 words and over 20 hours of recorded conversation. We first analysed each participant’s construction of team individually to account for his/her unique lived experiences, and then analysed across participants at the team level to compare the meaning of team in each context, and finally analysing across both teams to understand team meaning collectively. This allowed us to discover patterns and global themes (McCracken, 1988).

To enhance the trustworthiness of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), participants were contacted to review and comment on themes, allowing for member checking. We also engaged in peer debriefing to discuss findings to uninvolved colleagues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a task performed during and after interviews were conducted, using individuals' responses to conceptualize a broader meaning of team. Credibility was enhanced by interviewing fans of two teams, as well as prolonged engagement in the research setting. Confirmability was established by ensuring the findings were based on what informants said; this required the authors to practice reflexivity (or critical subjectivity; Lincoln, 1995) in acknowledging their knowledge on the topic and setting (and from one context to the other), and ensuring such knowledge did not taint the findings.

5. Results

5.1. Team-level analysis: micro-level components of team

Throughout our analysis, it was evident that individuals construct the meaning of team according to the way they were introduced to and have experienced it over time. In this regard, the team that individuals identify with is discursive, comprised of a collection of memories and experiences unique to the individual. However, while recognizing the contextualized nature of the meaning of team, common themes (referred to as micro-level components of team) were found among fans of each team; many of these micro-level components are similar to team brand associations, a point taken up in the discussion. In this section, we discuss the meaning of team to Syracuse and Twins fans. We present the results as generated from the individual level analysis, discussing the meaning of team to Syracuse and Twins fans separately. The micro-level components were shared by most informants (at least 11 of 13 Syracuse fans and 7 of 8 Twins fans). Verbatim responses are included to add thick description to the findings. To ensure anonymity, participants are represented with pseudonyms.

5.1.1. Syracuse

Across all Syracuse fans interviewed, people (coach, players, and fans), geographic location (Syracuse and Central New York), facility (Carrier Dome), opposition to rivals, and success were common themes in the meaning of team. Each of these micro-level components is discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Fans included the team's Head Coach, Jim Boeheim, in their idea of the team. Boeheim has held this position since 1976, and most of the individuals interviewed have never followed Syracuse University Men's Basketball under other leadership. As such, these individuals have come to think of Boeheim as part of the team they are connected to. As Wilson noted, "He's the one constant that's been with the team forever, and kind of inseparable." George remarked similarly, "The consistent person in all of this is the coach. The players come and go, but he's the architect of the team. He's part of the team."

Although Boeheim was often the first person recalled when thinking of Syracuse, individuals frequently thought of other people, such as players, as part of the team they are identified with. Interestingly, nearly all fans included former players in their idea of the team, with current players still considered part of the team but in a more supportive role. As George noted, "The current players are the mercenaries." Similarly, Rachael included both current and former players in her concept map, and emphasized that "the current players are just *part* of the team" (emphasis original). The viewpoint that current players are just part of the team was especially true of individuals who have supported Syracuse for some time. For these individuals, past players (e.g., Carmelo Anthony, Derrick Coleman) come to mind and are considered part of the team.

Beyond the coach and players, Syracuse fans frequently included other fans (e.g., family, friends) in describing their identification with the team. Although these other individuals do not directly impact the success or failure of Syracuse in terms of performance, participants appear to include other fans in the meaning of team as a result of experiences alongside them. Participants remarked on the vast Syracuse fan base as integral in their connection. As Carter noted, "In 1987, when they went to the Final Four, I remember people painting roads orange. I remember thinking, wow—just realizing that everyone was kind of tied together, all a part of this team, and it was pretty cool."

In addition to the people considered part of the team, participants include other entities in the meaning of team. For many, the Carrier Dome, home of Syracuse since 1980, is considered part of the team. Ashley stated, "I definitely think the dome is part of the team. You're going to see Syracuse play in the dome. I don't think it would be the same if they didn't play there." Others also explained how the Carrier Dome is part of the meaning of team as a result of games attended, and its relative uniqueness as a basketball venue. In addition, due to the urban location of the Carrier Dome, most fans walk about a mile from parking garages to the Carrier Dome to attend games. The dome walk has become a tradition for those who travel by car to games, and has become part of the meaning of team. In addition to the dome, many individuals discussed crowd size inside the Carrier Dome. Participants remarked on the games they have attended where attendance records have been broken, and how such traditions have become part of the team they are connected to.

Beyond the notion of the Carrier Dome being part of the meaning of team, geographic location is also included in individuals' idea of the team they are connected to, including the city of Syracuse and more broadly, Central New York. As Carter noted, "Around here, growing up, it's the one thing that, growing up in a small town, it sort of ties you to the city, to Syracuse. It makes you feel like you're a part of something bigger." Rachael similarly remarked, "The team is just part of life here, it's part of the community, it's Syracuse, and it puts Central New York on the map." Others remarked similarly, explaining that the city/region and Syracuse basketball are synonymous in their minds; this was especially true among those

who have spent time away from the area, who noted that outsiders perceive the city and the team as the same, and thus, the city has become part of the team they identify with.

Rivals of Syracuse—specifically, the opposition to rivals—are considered part of the meaning of team. Individuals who have followed Syracuse for some time often included former Big East Conference rivals, such as Georgetown University and the University of Connecticut, and some also included new Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) rivals, such as Duke University. The distinction individuals make between Syracuse and its rivals makes them feel unique, which illustrates how individuals are able to think of a rival university as part of the meaning of team. As Mark noted, “That’s one thing, like, I think we have that shared hatred with Georgetown; you have the unique opportunity to have something bigger than everyone else has.” Thinking about Syracuse (in-group) as distinct from Georgetown or other rivals (out-groups), individuals have come to consider the opposition to these rival teams part of their connection to Syracuse; the absence of these rivalries would make Syracuse less distinct, and thus more difficult to derive an enhanced sense of self from connecting with Syracuse.

In addition to considering the opposition to rivals part of the team, many individuals also included the Big East Conference in the meaning of team. Although Syracuse has been a member of the ACC since 2013, individuals tended to discuss the Big East Conference—which Syracuse was a member of for more than 30 years—as part of the meaning of team. As Mark said, “Not being able to go to the Big East Tournament. Not having the same rivalries they’ve had in the past. Obviously, they have new rivalries. But, Syracuse/Duke, in my mind, will never compare to Syracuse/Georgetown, or even Syracuse/UConn.” Seth commented similarly in discussing Syracuse and the Big East, “I mean we kind of made the Big East, we were part of it for so long, it’s kind of like a marriage, part of us.” Because Syracuse and its Big East rivals were all housed under one conference, thinking of Syracuse without the Big East was difficult for those who have been fans for some time.

Finally, conversations with participants revealed that Syracuse’s history of success is part of the meaning of team. This often includes achievements they have experienced as fans (e.g., victories over rivals, Boeheim’s 900th win in 2012, NCAA Final Four appearances). Although some participants indicated they would still support Syracuse if they were not successful, the program’s success has given them something positive to identify with, and thus, the successful seasons over time have become part of the meaning of team. Some individuals felt particularly strong about past success as a part of team. George noted, “All of those other things are *nothing* if they don’t win. Winning is a huge part of the team.” Essentially, the absence of consecutive losing seasons makes it difficult for individuals to imagine anything but success or league dominance when thinking of the team and their identification with it.

5.1.2. Minnesota Twins

From the interviews with Twins fans, geographic location (Twin Cities and Minnesota), community, facility (Metrodome and Target Field), game traditions, history and past success, and players were considered part of the meaning of team. Each of these micro-level components is discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

In discussing the Twins, it was evident the Twin Cities and more broadly, the state of Minnesota are integral in considering the meaning of team. For these individuals, thoughts about the Twins are linked to thoughts about Minnesota. Vincent simply stated, “They [the Twins] represent who I am. I’m Minnesotan. That’s who they are.” Joey explained that he views Minnesota as unique relative to other areas of the United States, and he thinks the Twins organization has successfully exemplified Minnesota culture in their activities:

I think Minnesota has a very unique and different kind of culture. I think the Twins do a good job of incorporating that into the organization, whether through the promotions they do, or the food they serve. They really do a good job of tying in what Minnesota is all about, into what they do.

In addition to the idea of the Twin Cities and/or Minnesota being part of the Twins, individuals commented on the Twins’ community involvement and how it gives the professional baseball organization a very local feel. As Addison explained: They do a lot for the community. Not me personally, but they provide jobs for a lot of people, and provide enjoyment for a lot of people. They do good work in the community. And, I think that’s the kind of thing to support and encourage.

Others similarly commented on the Twins’ community involvement, such as promoting and supporting youth baseball programs, and hosting TwinsFest, a fan-focused festival held annually. Activities such as these seem to emblemize the community-centred mentality of Minnesotans, further illustrating how individuals view such engagement as part of the meaning of team.

In addition to geographic location and community, the facilities where the Twins have played home games over the past four decades are also considered part of the team. Both the Metrodome, where the Twins played from 1982 to 2009, and Target Field, where the Twins have played since 2010, were discussed as part of the team. While individuals view Target Field and the Metrodome as markedly different, both are considered part of the meaning of team because of individuals’ experiences within each.

Informants perceive Target Field as a state-of-the-art venue, and one of the nicest in professional baseball, which is a point of pride and differentiation for Twins fans. Informants also talked about memories of attending games at the Metrodome in discussing Target Field. In discussing how he felt when the Twins began playing at Target Field, Brody said:

I was excited. And then a couple years later, I was like, I would probably go back to a game at the dome if it was still there, it would be fun. But the experience, watching a game at Target Field is way better. The on the field product isn’t as good [right now], but the experience of being at that stadium is better than being at the Metrodome.

Others were more nostalgic in their recollections of the Metrodome. Joey stated, “It wasn't the greatest place to watch games, but when you drove into the Twin Cities, you saw the big white dome and knew you were in Minneapolis.” Some were also nostalgic about the Twins' success in there. As Sam explained, “The one thing that stands out is the playoff games, they're just such a different atmosphere when you're in the dome. That place would rock and it was so loud.”

While individuals had unique perspectives of the facilities the Twins have called home, one thing was evident among all informants: the experiences they have had inside those structures matter just as much as the physical structures themselves. Oftentimes, individuals discussed traditions—behaviours they routinely engaged in when attending games—as part of the team they are connected to.

Many individuals shared how traditions of attending games with family or friends have become part of the team for them. As Sam noted, “Relationships are a big part of it [team], going to the games with the same people and spending time around them.” Some individuals explained how they attribute some of their close relationships to their shared interest in supporting the Twins. Brody explained:

I've made specific relationships with other people through those memories. If I didn't have those, what would my relationship with my dad be like right now? Would we share the same interests that we do? My friends, would they even be my friends right now?

Perhaps a result of individuals (at least) partly attributing their connection with certain people to their shared interest in the Twins, some continue to make these connections even once traditions of attending games together have ended. For example, Addison—whose earliest memories of being a Twins fan are of annual trips with her grandparents from their rural Minnesota hometown to the Twin Cities for games—explained: “Every once in a while I'm at a game, and both of my grandparents have passed away, but there's always part of me that wishes, it just makes me wish they were still around.”

Many individuals also shared how they often arrive early to games to watch players warm up and/or take advantage of promotional giveaways. Ben recalled his first game because he and his mother arrived early. He said, “My first memory was going to Kirby Puckett bat day. And back then they gave out full-sized bats. I still have it, it's sweet. I was maybe, 7 or 8, going to the Metrodome, and getting this huge bat.” In addition to arriving early to collect promotional items, some also expressed their interest in arriving early to see players practice. The interactions individuals have had with players and the items they have collected over the years allow them to remember particular interactions, games, and seasons, all contributing to make certain facilities, players, and playoff runs part of the meaning of team. Sam explained how he believes these experiences have been integral in his connection to team:

Talking to players, Torii Hunter, waiting in line for bobbleheads, watching batting practice. If I didn't have those experiences, where I felt like I was with the team, and part of the team . . . If I wasn't so close to it and wasn't able to go to games all the time and have those memories, I wouldn't have as strong of a connection.

Beyond the traditions that are part of the meaning of team for Twins fans, individuals discussed and emphasized the importance of past success in their connection to the Twins, particularly World Series wins in 1987 and 1991. Because the Twins are not a perennial championship contender, these past successful seasons are all the more integral in individuals' consideration of their connection; it is these successes that allow individuals to think of the Twins positively from a competitive standpoint. In talking about how he became attached to the Twins, Daniel stated, “It really took off with the World Series wins, it was an exciting time. 1987 in particular because they just came out of nowhere.” Individuals' reflection on the Twins' past success makes it evident that such memories are important in mediocre seasons. Ben stated, “The Twins, we have had success, but we've had a lot of tough years. But I guess I reflect on the good times, and hope that we will have that again. It kind of keeps me going.” As Ben and others explained, being able to reflect on previous accomplishments is not only a point of pride, but also helps them maintain their identification with the Twins, so much so that it is part of the meaning of team.

Finally, individuals often thought of players as part of the team they are connected to, and interestingly, consider past players just as much (if not more) part of the team as current players. Perhaps a result of the Twins' past success, players who competed for the Twins during the World Series wins and playoff runs were most integral in considerations of the team. Brody stated, “When I think of the Twins, I think of the players I like. And I could split that into past, present, and future,” and later commented that he considers past players part of the team “if they are primarily known for being with the Twins,” such as Kirby Puckett. Indeed, Kirby Puckett, who played for the Twins during its World Series wins, was considered part of the team by nearly all individuals interviewed. Many individuals also considered past players, such as Rod Carew, Tony Oliva, and Harmon Killebrew, part of the team. In terms of current players, most individuals only discussed Joe Mauer, a native of the Twin Cities, as being part of the team, in part due to him being from the Twin Cities (thus maintaining the idea of the team having a local feel). It seems the current players are only considered part of the meaning of team if/when individuals recognize they have had a significant impact on the legacy of the program.

5.2. Cross-team analysis: Macro-level components of team

In the previous section, we discussed numerous micro-level components in the meaning of team and found similarities and differences in the meaning of team for Syracuse versus Twins fans. For example, both groups consider geographic location a critical component of team because of their identification with the area, but only Syracuse fans include a coach in

their idea of team, in part due to Jim Boeheim being head coach of the program for more than 40 years. Similarities and differences in the meaning of team such as these are likely to be found across numerous sport teams (Jones, 1997). Sport teams often serve common purposes for fans, such as being representative of a place (Heere & James, 2007) and providing individuals with a positive sense of self through certain achievements and feelings of belongingness. However, teams are also unique in that each has its own evolving history and traditions. As such, attempting to universally define the meaning of team is a difficult task. Indeed, it was not until we interviewed fans of two quite different teams that we were able to find clarity in the meaning of team.

Broadly, the psychological meaning of team can be thought of as consisting of three macro-level components: place, past, and present (see Fig. 2). Each macro-level component has emotional significance and value to individuals in regard to their identification. These components jointly contribute to individuals' identification with a given sport entity, resulting in a complex, evolving meaning of team. We must emphasize these do not operate in isolation. As illustrated in Fig. 2, the macro-level components of team overlap. In the following paragraphs, we discuss the macro-level components of team as well as the ways they may overlap.

5.2.1. Place

Place (or location) in regard to identification can vary in scale (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004), and for sport fans, includes an array of locales. Considering the meaning of team, place may include a city, state, or country where a team competes, a community, a particular neighbourhood or university campus, and a stadium. These places differ in terms of the needs they fulfil for fans, as well as stability.

We are aware of the importance of a city or state in team identification, as a sport entity can be closely linked to a location (Heere and James, 2007; Lock et al., 2011; , 2014). However, it was evident from the interviews that a team is not just representative of a location. The neighbourhood, city, state, or country affiliated with a given team is part of the team's psychological meaning to supporters, and often central to individuals' identification with the team. In the absence of this component, team identification may cease to exist. As such, if we are to consider the meaning of team, the location a team represents is of critical importance.

Why does location matter? Considering those interviewed, one may identify as a Central New Yorker or Minnesotan and thus, identifying with a team in that area can be thought of as symbolic or representative of the geographic location (Heere & James, 2007) as it serves to enhance one's self-concept and/or satisfy a need for belonging. But in terms of its significance to team identification, location is a constant—a part of a team that will never change, aside from a team relocation, which fundamentally changes one's connection (Hyatt, 2007) and is beyond the scope of this article. Players, coaches, success, and even other micro-level components of place (e.g., stadium) may come and go, but the geographic location of the team throughout these changes remains the same. As such, the geographic location micro-level element of place is situated in Area 1 of Fig. 2, overlapping both past and present. Considering the extent to which identities are susceptible to change (e.g., Hall, 1996; Hogg & Abrams, 1988) and the meaning of team, geographic location allows stability for those who are identified.

In addition to the significance of a geographic location to the place component of team, the stadium where a team plays is also important. Scholars have suggested that a stadium may play an important role in one's thoughts about a team (Chen & Zhang, 2011; Ross et al., 2006). Based on our findings, it appears a stadium is enmeshed in the meaning of team—it is often part of one's identification to a team. This could be a result of a stadium feeling like a home to fans (Delia, 2014), especially in comparing one's team to another. Consider the crosstown rivalry between MLB's New York Yankees and New York Mets. In a city where Yankees and Mets fans are often neighbours, the stadiums of these two teams are a place of refuge for fans. On the streets of Manhattan, Yankees and Mets fans share a city—both represent New York. But inside Yankee Stadium and Citi Field,

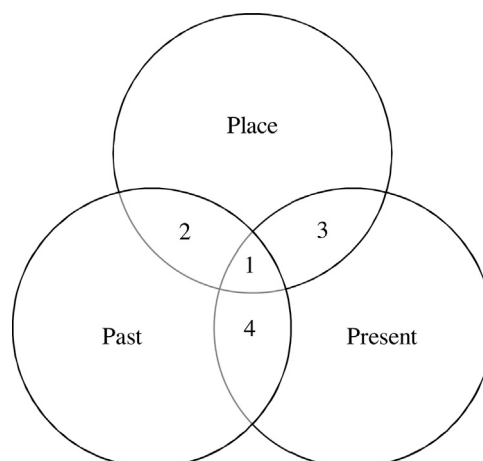


Fig. 2. The meaning of team: Macro-level components and the overlap between them.

fans realise a more precise sense of place identity. While the lifespan of a stadium is not as enduring as the more broad geographic location, the sense of belongingness fans derive from it makes it a fundamental micro-level component of place.

5.2.2. Past

The past component of team meaning is relatively stable, and may be comprised of an array of micro-level components. Past may include program past success, as well as former players, coaches, rivalries, game traditions, and family/friends. These past objects, experiences, and achievements are integral in the meaning of team and collectively (along with place), they form a relatively stable foundation for individuals to derive a positive sense of self from identifying with the team. These “items of the past” cannot change and, by including them in the psychological meaning of team, individuals are almost always guaranteed mechanisms to protect themselves from threats to identity, such as poor performance or program scandal.

One of the most important micro-level components of past is past success, as certain achievements will always be part of the program and are a vital source of vicarious achievement (Cialdini et al., 1976). In the current work this included a National Championship and various Final Four appearances for Syracuse fans, and two World Series Championships for Twins fans. These past successes are not only a source of pride for fans, but often are leveraged when programs may be suffering performance-wise. For example, many Twins fans discussed the poor season the program was currently enduring, but explained that past success allowed them to think positively and remain hopeful for future success. This is in line with Doyle and colleagues' (2017) research on how fans maintain identity in the absence of success.

Former players, coaches, rivalries, game traditions, and family/friends may also be micro-level components within past, and are often associated with past success. For example, Twins fans include Kirby Puckett as part of the team; he is one of the greatest Twins players of all time, and was integral in the World Series Championships of 1987 and 1991. All of these things are unique to the Twins—part of their “team”—and will never change. Others have discussed how fans share memories or recall past team accomplishments to strengthen their connection to the team (Heere et al., 2011), but these past experiences and accomplishments have yet to be considered part of one's connection.

5.2.3. Present

The present component of team consists of micro-level components that are still part of the day-to-day operations of the entity. Present may include current players, coaches, rivalries, game traditions, and family/friends. Considering the importance of present in the meaning of team, present is distinct from past in that it is fluid, while past (as previously discussed) is stable. That is, many of the present micro-level components of the meaning of team will eventually pass, either becoming part of past or being removed from the meaning of team altogether. Beyond the notion of fluidity versus stability though, the present component is important because it is what allows the identity to continue to exist. Without the day-to-day operations of the entity (e.g., the games played, watched, or coached and the fan experiences that accompany such), the team (and associated identity) would likely become irrelevant to both in-group and out-group members. Given that distinguishing from non-group members is a fundamental component of group identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the micro-level components of present that allow the team-related identity to persist are critical.

Most of the micro-level components of present will eventually pass (e.g., current players will move on to other teams or retire); however, they will only continue to be part of the meaning of team if they are emotionally significant to the individual and have added value to one's connection. For example, Syracuse was a member of the Big East Conference until 2013, and during that time, the Big East and associated rivals were micro-level components within present. However, since the university's departure to the ACC, those components have shifted, still part of team due to their significance, but now housed under past. Thus, it seems the more meaningful present components of team are, the more likely they are to become part of the meaning of team permanently.

5.2.4. Overlap between past, present, and place

As mentioned, geographic location is a constant in the meaning of team, thus overlapping both past and present (Area 1 in Fig. 2). In addition to this area, other overlapping elements are important to note. Overlap between place and past (Area 2 in Fig. 2) can occur when a place is embedded in one's thoughts about the past related to team meaning. Such is the case for Twins fans who consider the Metrodome part of the meaning of team, with memories of World Series wins occurring in the former venue. Overlap between place and present (Area 3 in Fig. 2) can occur when a place is rooted in one's thoughts about the present in regard to team meaning. For Syracuse fans, this area of overlap would include the Carrier Dome, where the team currently plays home games, and the dome walk tradition fans have come to consider part of the meaning of team. Overlap between past and present (Area 4 in Fig. 2) can occur when a present component of team has been a significant factor in the team's past. For example, while Jim Boheim is currently head coach of Syracuse, he has been integral in decades of accomplishments for the team, including its National Championship in 2003, and thus can be thought of as part of past as well.

6. Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to understand the meaning of team in team identification. In conducting interviews with fans of two separate teams, we found that while the exact meaning of team is contextual, it consists of many micro-level

components. These micro-level components can be classified into the macro-level components place, past, and present, each of which has distinct emotional significance and value to fans. While the place and past components are relatively stable, present is fluid, thus illustrating the complex meaning of team others have alluded to (Doyle et al., 2017; Lock et al., 2011, 2014). Collectively, the meaning of team allows fans to feel a sense of steadiness in identifying with a team whose whole meaning is evolving. In the remainder of this paper, we discuss the findings, implications for scholars and sport managers, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

6.1. The meaning of team

Although scholars have suggested team identification may be complex (Kolbe & James, 2003) and others have discussed it as representative of other identities (Heere & James, 2007), they have not explicitly considered the meaning of team through empirical investigation. We found that many people, places, objects, and experiences comprise the meaning of team, and that they can be broadly categorized as place, past, and present. Meaning is never static, but evolves. Thus, scholars should endeavour to understand how individuals remain identified with sport entities despite fluidity in the meaning of team.

6.1.1. Fluidity in identity meaning

Some scholars consider individuals' identification with a team as resistant to change (Funk & James, 2001). For many individuals, team identification is quite steady; however, the psychological meaning of that identification is always evolving. If identities are indeed fluid, how do people maintain those identities with such resilience? At the very least, it should be evident at this point that in order for individuals to remain identified with a team for years despite fluidity in its meaning, some amount of mental stress must be endured periodically (Doyle et al., 2017). For example, if a star player such as LeBron James were to leave the NBA Cleveland Cavaliers (again) for another team, such a move would likely be devastating to fans and alter the meaning of team (thus illustrating its fluidity). Despite the move, many individuals would likely remain fans of the Cavaliers—but understanding how they would do so is telling of the significance of the meaning of team as discussed in the current study.

In the case of team identification, both place and past allow for stability in a team identity. This stability is juxtaposed to a fluid component in the meaning of team, present, which contains continually changing micro-level team components. Returning to the LeBron James example, his hypothetical departure would not remove individuals' identification with Cleveland and the surrounding area (place), nor would it take away the NBA Championship won by the Cavaliers in 2016 (past), traditions they may have with fellow fans (past and/or present), and so on. Those parts of team are stable, making it difficult for identified individuals to leave the group in uncertain times, yet simultaneously allowing individuals to maintain positive thoughts about the identity through difficult times. This finding adds support to Doyle et al.'s (2017) research on how individuals may alter perceptions of a team as a result of particular occurrences.

The fluidity in the meaning of team makes evident the need for scholars to consider the unfixed nature of sport-related identities, including how we theorize about such identities. Social identity scholars have suggested identities are contextually flexible (e.g., Hogg & Abrams, 1988), and culture studies scholars stress identity projects as partial and temporal (e.g., Bhabha, 1996). In the current study, a multidisciplinary understanding of group identity allowed for recognition of the evolving nature of the meaning of team. In the current study, we may have overlooked this finding had we possessed a narrower disciplinary view of identity. As such, we encourage scholars not only to embrace the idea of fluidity in identity, but also to broaden our theoretical understanding of the phenomena we study, as doing so may allow us to discover new avenues of inquiry (Lock & Heere, 2017).

To date, scholars have done well demonstrating how team identification influences a range of behaviours and attitudes, as well as acknowledging the multiple identities so often involved in supporting a team (Heere & James, 2007; Lock & Funk, 2016; Lock et al., 2011; Trail et al., 2003). However, scholars have done much less to address the messiness of things from a fan's perspective—the consumption experience for fans, and how such experiences influence the way they think about a team, which drives attitudes and behaviours (Funk, 2017). Consumers' minds are not nearly as orderly as researchers often strive to make them seem. Understanding that identification with a team influences behaviours or attitudes has limitations practically; for example, it is hardly practical to advise sport managers that having more identified fans will allow them to sell more of a product. What is it about those identified individuals that makes them more desirable consumers? How do they experience sporting events? How do they endure the highs and lows of being a fan? Why (and how) are they so psychologically invested, year after year?

To answer questions like these, perhaps in addition to studying team identification as an attitudinal barometer (Lock et al., 2012), researchers could also strive to learn why and how locations, people, experiences, interactions, and memories influence such attitudes and behaviours (Doyle et al., 2017; Lock et al., 2011, 2012, 2014). Doing so should offer a deeper understanding of sport consumer behaviour and an opportunity to provide sport marketing professionals insight on how the meaning of team unveils the core of the relationship between a fan and a sport entity. Placing a greater priority on understanding consumer experiences might entail use of alternative methods (i.e., non-survey, qualitative research such as in-depth interviews or ethnography) that allow researchers to understand the journey of a consumer (Funk, 2017). The macro-level components of team meaning discussed in the current study are insightful in that they can be applied to other organizations in understanding the psychological meaning of a team. However, the micro-level components of team meaning discussed in the current study highlight the significance of engaging in qualitative inquiry to understand team

meaning in a particular context. The meaning of one team will never be identical to the meaning of any other team, a reality that is perhaps best realized through deep conversations with and observation of fans. Thus, in this study, we underscore the important role qualitative techniques can play in understanding sport consumer behaviour, particularly team identification.

6.2. Points of attachment and team brand associations

In addition to the fluidity in the meaning of team and the implications of such for the study of team identification, researchers must also address the implications of the current study on other bodies of literature, particularly points of attachment and team brand associations.

Scholars have suggested that individuals may identify with a team as well as other points of attachment such as players, coaches, and community (Trail et al., 2003); however, based on the current study, these other points of attachment are often included within the meaning of team. Thus, scholars must recognize that in measuring identification with multiple entities such as a team, its players, and the city in which it is located, the team variable often encapsulates the others, albeit in varied ways based on the context. Scholars studying points of attachment might incorporate qualitative research into their study of multiple identities to better understand the extent to which the meaning of team includes these other points of attachment in a particular setting. Another idea to consider is that if the meaning of team does include micro-elements as illustrated in this work, it may be that in previous studies involving points of attachment, respondents when thinking about a coach, player, or city, for example, were in essence thinking about team. Thus, points of attachment research may be an extended study of team identification.

In addition to points of attachment, we emphasize that in considerations of identification, individuals' strongest team brand associations are often key to the meaning of team for them. The concept mapping activity used in interviews in the current study was essentially a tool to elucidate thoughts, or team brand associations. In discussing these associations with individuals, we found that they consider many of them part of the meaning of team. Our findings allow us to provide a descriptive explanation of the relationship between team identification and brand associations, in that to some extent, eliciting team brand associations may capture the meaning of team to an individual. The brand associations found to be part of the meaning of team in the current study were positive. While brand associations generally vary in favourability, it could be that in considerations of team meaning and identity, positive associations prevail, as they nourish the group identity.

In developing scales to assess brand associations, scholars have often asked respondents to list thoughts that come to mind when thinking of a team or league (Bauer et al., 2008; Kunkel et al., 2014; Ross et al., 2006). While not a concept mapping activity, these thought listing exercises are similar in that respondents were in essence thinking about the meaning of a sport entity. Thus, in addition to the value of brand associations in considering sport brand equity, scholars might also benefit from utilizing the brand knowledge literature to understand the meaning of team. It makes sense that the meaning of team to individuals could be developed as brand associations, particularly those elements of meaning that “cut across” multiple fans. However, we must emphasize that using a brand associations scale is not necessarily a means to study the meaning of team; the meaning of team comes from eliciting ideas from respondents, not having them rate the ideas of researchers.

6.3. Managerial implications

Beyond the theoretical implications of the current study, there are also implications for sport managers. Given that the meaning of team includes the macro-level components of place, past, and present, these components should be captured in marketing and branding efforts to ensure team identification is made salient in communicating and interacting with consumers. Given that the place, past, and present components uniquely contribute to the psychological meaning of team, leveraging all of them simultaneously in marketing and branding activities should allow organizations to reap the benefits of individuals' complex identification.

In the current study, we emphasized that the meaning of team, specifically the present macro-level component, is relatively fluid and susceptible to change. Understanding and acting on such changes in team meaning in marketing activities could be rewarding to sport managers. Specifically, if a micro-level component of team changes—perhaps a star player is traded to another team or the team is moving to a new facility—organizations should publically recognize the significance of that component to individuals. Understanding that fans may be going through a difficult time psychologically, the organization might prepare a commemorative video to share with fans on social media, or organize a formal ceremony for fans to experience in-person. Subsequently, the more stable macro-level components in team meaning can be leveraged in marketing and communications materials to remind fans of the positive components of team meaning that remain, to ease the grieving period for fans.

6.4. Limitations and suggestions for future research

The interviews we conducted in the current study were cross sectional; we did not empirically examine the meaning of team over time. Echoing calls from others (Lock et al., 2014) and to continue this line of inquiry, scholars should conduct longitudinal research with individuals to understand how changes in team meaning influence consumers psychologically, particularly focusing on periods of transition (both personal and environmental) for fans.

In the current study, we found that most team components are largely positive. This makes sense, given that identities are leveraged to enhance one's sense of self, and that in instances of identity threat, individuals will often seek to change what they perceive as negative attributes of a social group (Doyle et al., 2017; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, we also know that when threats to team identity occur (e.g., athlete transgression, organization mismanagement), it can lead to fan de-identification (Hyatt & Foster, 2015). Thus, while we argue that the complexity of the place, past, and present team components allow individuals to maintain a positive sense of self, it is possible that negative occurrences could be significant enough to lead to de-identification. At the very least, understanding how fans deal with negative occurrences in terms of how they understand the psychological meaning of team would be insightful. Scholars could investigate this in the future, as there were no significant threats to identity at the time of interviewing in either of the contexts we examined.

While we maintain that the macro-level components of team will persist across contexts, the micro-level components of team will always be unique to a particular team. Thus, researchers should venture to understand the meaning of team in other contexts, which could reveal certain micro-level components that persist across settings, and additional micro-level components not observed in the current research. In doing so, researchers interested in quantitatively assessing the meaning of team will be better equipped to develop a measure for doing so.

Finally, understanding the meaning of team could be beneficial from a well-being perspective. Such considerations might tell us how the meaning of team influences the happiness derived from supporting the entity, as well as their overall contentment in life. Scholars should consider supplementing the findings of the current study by aiming to understand the effort individuals may exert to remain connected to teams over time despite its fluidity, and the potential implications of such on the well-being of the individual (Belk, 1987; Wann, 2006).

6.5. Conclusion

Despite decades of research into team identification, scholars have not endeavoured to examine empirically the psychological meaning of team. Our purpose in this study was to understand the meaning of team. In conducting interviews in two separate contexts, we found that many people, places, objects, and experiences comprise the meaning of team, and that while they can be broadly conceptualized as place, past, and present, the particular meaning is never whole. The findings of this research allowed us to set free the ambiguity in the meaning of team and highlight implications for scholars and managers considering team identification.

References

- Abrams, D. (1999). Social identity, social cognition, and the self: The flexibility and stability of self-categorization. In D. Abrams, & M. A. Hogg (Eds.), *Social identity and social cognition* (pp. 197–229). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (2012). The epistemology of numbers. In S. E. Baker, R. Edwards, & M. Doidge (Eds.), *How many qualitative interviews is enough?* (pp. 8–11). Southampton, UK: National Centre for Research Methods.
- Bauer, H. H., Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., & Exler, S. (2008). Brand image and fan loyalty in professional team sport: A refined model and empirical assessment. *Journal of Sport Management*, 22, 205–226.
- Belk, R. W. (1987). ACR Presidential Address: Happy thought. In M. Wallendorf, & P. Anderson (Eds.), *Advances in consumer research*, 14 (pp. 1–4). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1996). Culture's in-between. In S. Hall, & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 53–60). London: Sage.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2003). Consumer-company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of Marketing*, 67, 76–88.
- Chen, K. K., & Zhang, J. J. (2011). Examining consumer attributes associated with collegiate athletic facility naming rights sponsorship: Development of a theoretical framework. *Sport Management Review*, 14, 103–116.
- Cialdini, R. B., Borden, R. J., Thorne, A., Walker, M. R., Freeman, S., & Sloan, L. R. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34, 366–375.
- Cunningham, G. B. (2013). Theory and theory development in sport management. *Sport Management Review*, 16, 1–4.
- Delia, E. B. (2014). Subconscious (un) attachment to a sponsor: An irrational effect of facility naming rights. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28, 551–564.
- Doyle, J. P., Lock, D., Funk, D. C., Filo, K., & McDonald, H. (2017). 'I was there from the start': The identity-maintenance strategies used by fans to combat the threat of losing. *Sport Management Review*, 20, 184–197.
- Fournier, S. (1991). Meaning-based framework for the study of consumer-object relations. In R. Holman, & M. Solomon (Eds.), *Advances in consumer research*, 18 (pp. 736–742). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Funk, D. C., & James, J. D. (2001). The psychological continuum model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual's psychological connection to sport. *Sport Management Review*, 4, 119–150.
- Funk, D. C. (2017). Introducing a sport experience design (SX) framework for sport consumer behaviour research. *Sport Management Review*, 20, 145–158.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1977). Theoretical sampling. In N. Denzin (Ed.), *Sociological methods: A sourcebook* (pp. 105–114). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs 'identity'? In S. Hall, & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1–17). London: Sage.
- Heere, B., & James, J. D. (2007). Sports teams and their communities: Examining the influence of external group identities on team identity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 21, 319–337.
- Heere, B., James, J. D., Yoshida, M., & Scremin, G. (2011). The effect of associated group identities on team identity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 25, 606–621.
- Hyatt, C. G., & Foster, W. M. (2015). Using identity work theory to understand the de-escalation of fandom: A study of former fans of National Hockey League teams. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29, 443–460.
- Hyatt, C. G. (2007). Who do I root for now?: The impact of franchise relocation on the loyal fans left behind: A case study of Hartford Whalers fans. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 30, 36–56.
- John, D. R., Loken, B., Kim, K., & Monga, A. B. (2006). Brand concept maps: A methodology for identifying brand association networks. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 43, 549–563.
- Jones, I. (1997). Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods in sports fan research. *The Qualitative Report*, 3(4), 1–8.
- Kolbe, R. H., & James, J. D. (2003). The internalization process among team followers: Implications for team loyalty. *International Journal of Sport Management*, 4, 25–43.

- Kunkel, T., Funk, D., & King, C. (2014). Developing a conceptual understanding of consumer-based league brand associations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28, 49–67.
- Kyle, G., Graefe, A., Manning, R., & Bacon, J. (2004). Effect of activity involvement and place attachment on recreationists' perceptions of setting density. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36, 209–231.
- Lazarus, R., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Levy, S. J. (1959). Symbols for sale. *Harvard Business Review*, 37, 117–124.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (1995). Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1, 275–289.
- Lock, D. J., & Funk, D. C. (2016). The multiple in-group identity framework. *Sport Management Review*, 19, 85–96.
- Lock, D., & Heere, B. (2017). Identity crisis: A theoretical analysis of 'team identification' research. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 17, 413–435.
- Lock, D., Taylor, T., & Darcy, S. (2011). In the absence of achievement: The formation of new team identification. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 11, 171–192.
- Lock, D., Taylor, T., Funk, D., & Darcy, S. (2012). Exploring the development of team identification. *Journal of Sport Management*, 26, 283–294.
- Lock, D., Funk, D. C., Doyle, J. P., & McDonald, H. (2014). Examining the longitudinal structure, stability: And dimensional interrelationships of team identification. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28, 119–135.
- Mahony, D. F., Madrigal, R., & Howard, D. A. (2000). Using the psychological commitment to team (PCT) scale to segment sport consumers based on loyalty. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 9, 15–25.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- NCAA (2013). 2012–2013 NCAA men's basketball records. Retrieved from http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/stats/m_basketball_RB/2013/2013%2001%20Div.%20I%2010-16.pdf.
- Reed, A. (2002). Social identity as a useful perspective for self-concept-based consumer research. *Psychology and Marketing*, 19, 235–266.
- Roccas, S., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). Social identity complexity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6, 88–106.
- Ross, S. D., & James, J. D. (2007). The influence of psychological connection on professional sport team brand associations. *International Journal of Sport Management*, 8, 115–129.
- Ross, S. D., James, J. D., & Vargas, P. (2006). Development of a scale to measure team brand associations in professional sport. *Journal of Sport Management*, 20, 260–279.
- Shankar, A., Elliott, R., & Fitchett, J. A. (2009). Identity: Consumption and narratives of socialization. *Marketing Theory*, 9, 75–94.
- Sparkes, A. C. (1994). Research paradigms in physical education: Some brief comments on differences that make a difference. *British Journal of Physical Education Research Supplement*, 14, 11–16.
- Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behavior. *Social Science Information*, 13, 65–93.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Trail, G. T., Robinson, M. J., Dick, R. J., & Gillentine, A. J. (2003). Motives and points of attachment: Fans versus spectators in intercollegiate athletics. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 12, 217–227.
- Turner, J. (1985). Social categorization and the self-concept: A social cognitive theory of group behaviour. In E. Lawler (Ed.), *Advances in group processes: Theory and research* (pp. 77–121). London: JAI Press.
- Wann, D. L., & Branscombe, N. R. (1993). Sports fans: Measuring degree of identification with their team. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 24, 1–17.
- Wann, D. L. (2006). Understanding the positive social psychological benefits of sport team identification: The team identification-social psychological health model. *Group Dynamics: Theory Research and Practice*, 10, 272–296.
- Wheeldon, J. (2011). Is a picture worth a thousand words?: Using mind maps to facilitate participant recall in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, 16, 509–522.