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1-1-2016

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### Recommended Citation

Havard, Cody T.; Eddy, Terry W.; and Ryan, Timothy D. (2016) "Examining the Impact of Team Identification and Gender on Rival Perceptions and Consumption Intentions of Intercollegiate Athletics Fans," *Journal of Applied Sport Management*. Vol. 8 : Iss. 2.

<https://doi.org/10.18666/JASM-2016-V8-I2-6444>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm/vol8/iss2/10>

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# Examining the Impact of Team Identification and Gender on Rival Perceptions and Consumption Intentions of Intercollegiate Athletics Fans

Cody T. Havard  
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## Abstract

The current study investigated rival perceptions using the Sport Rivalry Fan Perception Scale (SRFPS) (Havard, Gray, Gould, Sharp, & Schaffer, 2013) on a group of male and female intercollegiate athletics fans at various levels of favorite team identification. To this point, the SRFPS has primarily been used to examine highly identified male fans (Havard, Reams, & Gray, 2013; Havard, Wann, & Ryan, 2013). The current study extended previous research on rivalry by finding that rival perceptions were impacted by level of team identification. Specifically, highly identified fans experienced more sense of satisfaction when their favorite team defeated the rival team in direct competition. Additionally, highly identified fans were more likely to attend a rivalry game, watch a rivalry game on television or the Internet, and read about the favorite team when playing a rival team than lowly identified fans. Further, female fans were more likely to watch a rivalry game on television than male fans, and the interaction of team identification and gender indicated that playing a rival team impacts female intentions to attend the game more so than male intentions. Significance of findings, along with implications for practitioners and avenues for future study are presented.

**Keywords:** *rivalry; fan sport rivalry; sport rivalry; fan behavior; intercollegiate athletics; team identification; gender*

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Rivalry plays an important role to sport fans (Havard & Eddy, 2013) and has been used by organizations to promote and market their product to consumers. For example, many institutions give promotional titles to the rivalries they share with other schools in an attempt to engage fan bases and stakeholders (e.g., Red River Showdown, The Game, Iron Bowl). The impact of rivalry on fans of inter-collegiate athletics has started to receive attention in the sport management literature (Havard, 2014, Havard & Eddy, 2013; Havard, Reams, & Gray, 2013; Havard, Wann, & Ryan, 2013; Kilduff, Elfenbein, & Staw, 2010). The purpose of the current study is to extend the existing research by measuring perceptions of rival teams and intentions to consume a rivalry game among male and female fans with varying levels of identification with their favorite team. The Sport Rivalry Fan Perception Scale (SRFPS) was developed and validated to measure the beliefs and degree of derogation fans experienced toward rival teams on four aspects of a rivalry (Havard, Gray, Gould, Sharp, & Schaffer, 2013). Specifically, the SRFPS measures how fans perceive the success and failure of a rival team in indirect competition (e.g., when they play someone other than the favorite team), academic prestige of the rival institution, fan sportsmanship, and the sense of satisfaction experienced when the fan's favorite team defeats the rival.

The SRFPS has been used to investigate differences between team fan groups (Havard, Reams, & Gray, 2013), impact of conference realignment on fans (Havard, Wann, & Ryan, 2013), and differences based on the team a fan follows (Havard, 2016) and the conference in which the team is affiliated (Havard & Reams, in press). However, in previous studies, the SRFPS has primarily been used to measure rival perceptions of highly identified male fans. For example, the overall mean scores for measurements of the level of team identification in the studies listed above were 6.35 out of 7, 7.21 out of 8, and 7.15 out of 8, respectively. It was by design that highly identified fans were the target of previous research on fan rivalry, because they are believed to be more likely to follow their favorite team and rival team than fans at lower levels of identification. However, to begin to gain a better understanding of rival perceptions among broader groups of fans, the current study chose to break down the group commonly believed to be highly identified fans into separate groups to test for differences in rival perceptions and consumption intentions, and to also separate them by gender. Wann, Havard, Grieve, Lanter, Partridge, and Zapalac (in press) used a modified version of the SRFPS to test the impact of team identification on rival perceptions of college and professional fans, but the current study makes use of the full SRFPS in analysis. Additionally, the current study tests for differences among highly identified fans on their intention to consume the favorite team when playing a rival team through game attendance, game television or Internet viewership, reading about the favorite team, wearing favorite team merchandise, and purchasing favorite team merchandise.

## Background

Researchers have recently expanded the knowledge base on the rivalry phenomenon in sport. Kilduff et al. (2010) assert that proximity to a team, history with a team, and relative competitiveness with a team all play a role in introducing the rivalry phenomenon, and Tyler and Cobbs (2015) added characteristics such as star power, competition for personnel, and defining moments as elements that increase rivalry among teams. Havard, Gray et al. (2013) defined rivalry as “a fluctuating adversarial relationship existing between two teams, players, or groups of fans, gaining significance through on-field competition, on-field or off-field incidences, proximity, demographic makeup, and/or historical occurrence(s)” (p. 51). Additionally, previous findings support research on competition and comparison (Turner, 1975) by asserting that the presence of a rival team impacted the performance of participants (Kilduff et al., 2010). Rivalry in sport fans has been linked to *schadenfreude* (Heider, 1958): taking joy in the demise of another (Cikara, Botvinick, & Fiske, 2011; Leach & Spears, 2009; Leach, Spears, Branscombe, & Doojse, 2003), and has been shown to impact team identification (Kimble & Cooper, 1992), perceptions of sponsors (Davies, Veloutsou, & Costa, 2006), and the likelihood to watch a rival team on television (Mahony & Moorman, 1999).

At the intercollegiate level, a qualitative investigation of football and men’s basketball fans extended research on in-group bias (Tajfel, 1969; Turner, 1982) *schadenfreude* (Heider, 1958), and disposition of mirth (Zillman & Cantor, 1976), by finding that fans would rejoice when their favorite team’s rival lost in indirect competition, which is known as Glory Out of Reflected Failure (GORFing: Havard, 2014). Additionally, fans of intercollegiate football experienced various physiological reactions to the success and failure of their favorite and rival teams in direct competition (Hillman, Cuthbert, Bradley, & Lang, 2004), and described the actions of favorite team fans and performance of players more favorably than that of rival teams (Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann & Grieve, 2005; Wann et al., 2006).

Havard, Reams, and Gray (2013) found that the type of intercollegiate team followed (basketball, football), season ticket holder status, and the outcome of the most recent rivalry game impacted the way highly identified fans perceived aspects of identified rival teams. Further, fans of teams joining a new athletic conference found various ways to derogate the rival team in the conference their team was leaving (Havard & Eddy, 2013), and held more positive perceptions of the identified rival in the conference they were joining than the one they were leaving (Havard, Wann et al., 2013). Additionally, team and conference affiliation has also been found to impact perceptions of a rival team (Havard, 2016; Havard & Reams, in press), and Havard, Shapiro, and Ridinger (in press) found that the presence of a rival team caused fans to have more intention to attend a live game, watch a game on television or the Internet, consume favorite team web content, and purchase favorite team merchandise when the favorite team plays a rival than a non-rival team.

Identification with a favorite team can play an important role in a person's life (Wann, 2001), and the level of identification a person has with a team can impact their consumption in myriad ways (Funk & James, 2001; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000; Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003; Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). For instance, relative success can impact fan identification with a team (Cialdini et al., 1976; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). People who are highly identified with a team can gain more satisfaction from a win and find it harder to distance from a loss than fans at lower levels of team identification (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Identification with a team can also help lead to consumer loyalty (Bodet & Bernache-Assollant, 2011). The current study extends research in the area by investigating the impact of team identification on fan rival perceptions and their consumption intentions when the favorite team plays the rival team.

Differences in consumer behavior based on gender have also been examined in a number of settings. Although males are generally found to be stronger fans of certain sports in a general sense (Bravo, Won, & Lee, 2013; Kim, Greenwell, Andrew, Lee, & Mahony, 2008), females have been found to garner stronger connections to their specific favorite teams (James & Ridinger, 2002). Additionally, females have been found to report higher levels of vicarious achievement and higher levels of university pride in college sport settings (Ridinger & Funk, 2006). This is interesting to note, as females have also been found to be less critical of their favorite team's performance than males (Greenwell, Fink, & Pastore, 2002), and are more likely to continue being loyal to their favorite team regardless of the team's performance (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002). Finally, and perhaps most importantly to the current study, is that it has been suggested that CORFing behavior is stronger in males (Trail, Robinson, & Kim, 2008), supporting other previous research that team identification plays a larger role in self-esteem maintenance for males than females (Swanson, Gwinner, Larson, & Janda, 2003). Clearly, sport affects the self-esteem and social identity of males and females in different ways, but past research has not examined gender differences in terms of fans' processing of rivalries.

### **The Present Study**

To date, the work utilizing the SRFPS to investigate rivalry at the intercollegiate level has focused almost exclusively on male fans with high levels of identification with their favorite teams. However, within a group of fans that report being highly identified with their favorite team, various feelings and behaviors can occur. For example, two fans may both report being highly identified with their favorite team; however, one fan may reserve stronger feelings of attachment to the team than the other. It also makes sense that if differences in feelings toward a favorite team exist among highly identified fans, they may also reserve different perceptions toward the rival team, which may impact how they choose

to consume a rivalry game between the two teams. Additionally, as previously mentioned, male and female fans may differ in their perceptions and behaviors regarding rival teams.

Wann et al. (in press) utilized a modified SRFPS to assert that intercollegiate and professional fans with higher levels of team identification displayed stronger negative perceptions of rival teams than fans with lower levels of identification. However, the full measure has yet to be used on intercollegiate fans at various levels of favorite team identification, and the current study seeks to extend research by utilizing the SRFPS in this capacity. In particular, the current study investigated whether rival perceptions and favorite team consumption intentions differed based on team identification and gender. Following the findings of Wann et al., the following hypothesis is offered:

**H1:** Fans with higher levels of team identification will display stronger negative perceptions of the rival team than fans with lower levels of identification with the favorite team.

It is presently unknown if male and female fans differ in their perceptions of rival teams, therefore the following research question is presented:

**RQ1:** Does gender impact the perceptions fans have of rival teams?

Additionally, the current study investigated the impact of team identification and gender on consumption intentions of rivalry games, and the following research questions are posed:

**RQ2:** Does a fan's (a) level of team identification, (b) gender, or (c) the interaction between level of team identification and gender impact their intention to consume their favorite team when playing a rival team?

Findings from the current study will provide practitioners with evidence as to how favorite team identification and gender can impact rival perceptions and consumption intentions.

## Method

An online survey was constructed using Qualtrics software and distributed on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an online medium dedicated to constructing and distributing surveys to large samples of online individuals. Participants were compensated \$.25 for their responses, completed the survey in about 10 minutes, and data collection took a total of one week.

### Participants

Participants were fans of intercollegiate athletics recruited through MTurk. This method of distribution resulted in 374 people starting the survey, and 228 completing the instrument, for a completion rate of 61%. Since MTurk is an online forum designed to help gather survey responses for companies and research-

ers, the authors took some precautionary steps to help ensure that fans of intercollegiate athletics took the survey over non-fans.

Once surveys were completed and results downloaded, the lead researcher looked for four indicators that to help distinguish fans of intercollegiate athletics from non-fans. First, if a person incorrectly identified the favorite team or left an uninterpretable response, their survey was removed from the data set ( $n = 55$ ). Second, participants were asked what conference their favorite team belongs to, and data from participants that could not properly supply this information were deleted ( $n = 29$ ). Third, if a participant failed to identify a rival team or submitted an uninterpretable response, they were deleted from the data set ( $n = 3$ ). Finally, if it was believed that an individual responded to a majority of questions using the same response (e.g., 4 for all items), they were removed from the dataset ( $n = 23$ ). After incorrect or incomplete responses were removed, 118 surveys were used for analysis.

Overall, the sample was moderately to highly identified with their favorite teams (a 5.84 out of 7 on the Team Identification Index), Caucasian (84.7%) male (66.7%), and the largest group of participants were 26 to 35 years of age (44.1%). Favorite team identification is lower than in reported in previous studies on sport rivalry, possibly due to the use of MTurk to collect data instead of collecting through team specific fan pages or season ticket holders (Havard, 2016; Havard & Reams, in press; Havard et al., in press; Havard, Reams et al., 2013; Havard, Wann et al., 2013). The vast majority of participants identified football and men's basketball as the sport through which they followed their favorite teams (95.6%), had been fans from 2 to 60 years ( $M = 20.53$ ,  $SD = 12.23$ ), and no favorite team was represented at more than 10% of the sample. For instance, the top three favorite teams identified were the Ohio State Buckeyes (8.5%), the Oregon Ducks (5.9%), and the Michigan Wolverines (4.2%).

### Instrument

The instrument in the current study contained four sections, beginning with participants identifying their favorite intercollegiate team, and the sport with which the participant most strongly identifies. Participants completed the Team Identification Index (TII: Trail et al., 2003) to measure their identification with the favorite team, and answered consumption questions regarding their favorite team. The second portion of the survey asked participants to identify the team they believe is the biggest rival of their favorite team. Once a biggest rival team was identified, participants completed the 12-item, 7-point Likert scale (1=*Strongly Disagree* to 7=*Strongly Agree*) SRFPS to measure their perceptions of the rival team regarding indirect competition, academic prestige, fan sportsmanship, and sense of satisfaction when the favorite team defeats the rival team (Havard, Gray et al. 2013). With the exception of the indirect competition sub scale, a higher score on the sub scale indicates stronger negative perceptions of the rival team.



The third section of the survey used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Definitely Would Not* to 7 = *Definitely Would*) to gauge participant intention to consume their favorite team when playing (1) the biggest rival team and (2) a team they did not consider to be a rival. Specifically, participants responded to 10 questions regarding 1) attending the game, 2) watching the game on television or the Internet, 3) wearing favorite team identifying merchandise because of the game, 4) reading about the favorite team in the game, and 5) purchasing favorite team merchandise as a result of the favorite team playing in the game. These questions were modified from a previous study investigating the impact of rival perceptions on favorite team consumption intentions (Havard et al., in press).

## Results

Scores for the TII and four SRFPS sub scales were averaged to form a single index that could be used in analysis, and all displayed acceptable reliability, with  $\alpha$  ranging from .821 to .968 (Table 1). In general, participants indicated they would not support their rival in indirect competition ( $M = 2.72, SD = 1.83$ ), felt the academics at their rival school were somewhat prestigious ( $M = 2.60, SD = 1.35$ ), rated the behavior of rival fans neutral to somewhat positive ( $M = 3.76, SD = 1.80$ ), and experienced satisfaction when their favorite team defeated the rival in direct competition ( $M = 5.84, SD = 1.38$ ). Finally, participants indicated they were likely to consume their favorite team when playing both a rival team and non-rival team.

**Table 1**

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability for TII and SRFPS Sub Scales*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$
Team Identification Index (TII)	5.84	1.00	.821
Out-Group Indirect Competition (OIC)	2.72	1.83	.921
Out-Group Academic Prestige (OAP)	2.60	1.35	.917
Out-Group Sportsmanship (OS)	3.76	1.80	.968
Sense of Satisfaction (SoS)	5.84	1.38	.943

In order to use team identification scores as a measure for analysis, a median split was created to form a very highly identified fan group ( $M = 6.62, SD = 0.40$ ) and a moderate highly identified fan group ( $M = 4.96, SD = 0.53$ ). Very highly identified fans scored significantly higher on the TII than moderate highly identified fans  $F(1, 116) = 387.42, p < .001$ .

### Testing the Hypothesis and Research Questions

A 2x2 factorial MANOVA in SPSS 22 was used to investigate the Hypothesis and Research Question 1. Hypothesis 1 stated that fans with higher levels of team identification would reserve stronger negative perceptions of the rival team than



fans with lower levels of favorite team identification. In the factorial MANOVA, the SRFPS sub scales were treated as dependent variables and team identification as the measure. Box's M indicated that the observed covariance of the dependent variables was equal across groups ( $p = .156$ ). Means and standard deviations can be found in Table 2. A significant Wilks'  $\Delta$  test indicated that fans at different levels of team identification reserved different perceptions toward their rival team, (.826,  $F(4, 110) = 5.80, p < .001$ ). Univariate analysis revealed that very highly identified fans ( $M = 6.30, SD = 1.34$ ) experienced a greater sense of satisfaction than moderate highly identified fans ( $M = 5.24, SD = 1.37$ ) when their favorite team defeated the rival team in direct competition ( $F(1, 113) = 23.68, p < .001$ ). No significant differences were found for out-group indirect competition, out-group academic prestige, or out-group sportsmanship. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. Regarding Research Question 1, no significant differences in SRFPS scores were found for gender or the interaction of gender and team identification.

**Table 2**

*Mean Scores by Team Identification for OIC, OAP, OS, and SoS Sub Scales*

	OIC		OAP		OS		SoS	
Team Identification	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Highly Identified	2.62	1.80	2.56	1.36	3.96	1.91	6.38*	1.15
Lowly Identified	2.86	1.67	2.67	1.35	3.58	1.66	5.24*	1.73

\* significant difference at .05 level.

Research Question 2 investigated what impact team identification, gender, and the interaction between team identification and gender had on fan intention to consume the favorite team when playing the biggest rival team. Prior to analysis on the research questions, a paired samples *t*-Test with a significance level of .01 was used to determine if significant differences existed regarding fan consumption of the favorite team when playing a rival team versus a non-rival team across the entire sample. Significant differences were present regarding attendance at the live games ( $p = .001$ ), watching the games on television or the Internet ( $p = .003$ ), and reading about the favorite team ( $p = .003$ ). In all three instances, participants reported greater intention to consume when the favorite team was playing a rival team than a non-rival team (Table 3). Because of this finding, the two items regarding merchandise were dropped, and three items regarding attendance, watching on television or the Internet, and reading about the game versus a rival team were used to investigate the three sub-parts of Research Question 2.

**Table 3**

*Mean Scores for Intentions to Consume Favorite Team*

	Attend		TV/Int		Wear Merchandise		Read About		Purchase Merchandise	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Rivalry Game	6.32*	1.11	6.53*	0.98	6.34	1.16	6.44*	0.88	5.69	1.42
Non-Rivalry Game	6.14*	1.12	6.36*	0.99	6.30	1.14	6.29*	1.09	5.57	1.53

\* significant difference at .01 level.

A MANOVA was run to analyze the three subsets of Research Question 2, and a significant multivariate *F* statistic indicated that differences existed regarding team identification (RQ2a) (Wilks'  $\Delta$  .797,  $F(3, 100) = 9.329, p = .000$ ), gender (RQ2b) (Pillai's Trace, .092,  $F(3, 110) = 3.698, p = .014$ ), and the interaction between team identification and gender (RQ2c) (Pillai's Trace, .093,  $F(3, 110) = 3.738, p = .013$ ).<sup>1</sup> Regarding the interaction between team identification and gender (RQ2c), follow-up mean comparisons using a Bonferonni adjusted .0125 significance level indicated that moderate highly identified male fans ( $M = 6.08, SD = 1.21$ ) were more likely to attend the rivalry game than moderate highly identified female fans ( $M = 5.39, SD = 1.38$ ) ( $p < .001$ ). Further, univariate scores indicated that higher team identification (RQ2a) lead to greater likelihood to attend the rivalry game ( $F(1, 112) = 27.53, p = .000$ ), watch the rivalry game on television or the Internet ( $F(1, 112) = 8.10, p = .005$ ), and read about the game ( $F(1, 112) = 4.01, p = .048$ ), and that female fans (RQ2b) ( $M = 6.79, SD = 0.47$ ) were more likely to watch the rivalry game on television or the Internet than male fans ( $M = 6.39, SD = 1.14$ ) ( $F(1, 112) = 4.94, p = .028$ ). Findings for Research Questions 2a, 2b, and 2c can be found in Table 4.

<sup>1</sup>Pillai's Trace was used for RQ2b and RQ2b because box's M was significant for gender, signaling unequal sample sizes. The interaction utilized Pillai's Trace because of gender being included in the analysis.

**Table 4**

*Mean Scores by Team Identification, Gender, and Interaction for Favorite Team Consumption*

	Attend		TV/Int		Read about	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Team Id						
Very High	6.74*	0.71	6.80*	0.63	6.61*	0.76
Moderate High	5.85*	1.30	6.22*	1.20	6.25*	0.97
Gender						
Male	6.38	1.05	6.39*	1.14	6.35	0.94
Female	6.21	1.24	6.79*	0.47	6.62	0.71
Interaction						
Very High x Male	6.65 <sup>b</sup>	0.80	6.73	0.75	6.53	0.82
Very High x Female	6.90 <sup>ac</sup>	0.44	6.95	0.22	6.76	0.63
Moderate High x Male	6.08 <sup>e</sup>	1.21	6.03	1.36	6.16	1.04
Moderate High x Female	5.39 <sup>bd</sup>	1.38	6.61	0.61	6.44	0.78

\* = significant difference at .05 level.

c = significant difference with Low x Female at .05 level

a = significant difference with High x Male at .05 level.

d = significant difference with Low x Male at .0125 level

b = significant difference with High x Female at .05 level.

e = significant difference with Low x Female at .0125 level

## Discussion

The current study investigated how team identification and gender impacted rival team perceptions, and consumption intentions when a favorite team played their rival. It is again important to note that participants in the current study were all moderately to highly identified fans of their favorite teams, and even though the sample reported lower team identification than in previous studies on rivalry, the sample was quite highly identified overall in comparison to other literature on college sport fans (Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005; Ridinger & Funk, 2006; Wann & Wadill, 2013; Zhang, Won, & Pastore, 2005). Findings illustrated that very highly identified fans experienced a greater degree of satisfaction when their favorite team defeated the rival in direct competition than moderate highly identified fans. Those that are lower in identification perhaps understand the basics about a rivalry and that they are supposed to think the rival is inferior in many ways, but they likely do not feel the same level of satisfaction internally because the connection to the team is weaker, similarly to what has been observed with

BIRGing behaviors (Cialdini et al., 1976). Team identification significantly impacted the favorite team consumption intentions that participants displayed when a rival team was involved in the contest, as very highly identified fans reported stronger intention to consume the favorite team in all three manners examined than moderate highly identified fans. While this finding was expected, it is important to note that despite the significant difference, the moderate highly identified fans still exhibited strong consumption intentions, so clearly rivalry games are still important to this group as well.

Likewise, gender significantly impacted the intention to consume the favorite team versus a rival team, as females reported stronger intention than males to watch the game on television or the Internet. This was interesting, as Tainsky, Kerwin, Xu, and Zhou (2014) found almost no differences between sexes on BCS bowl game viewership habits, though they did find a local team playing in a BCS game had a greater effect on females than males in terms of the likelihood they would watch the game. It could be that games carrying greater importance or uniqueness for the favorite team, such as a rivalry game, illicit greater interest from females to view the result of the game on television or the Internet. More research, possibly using qualitative methods, is necessary to determine exactly why females appear to be drawn to these “special” games via television or the Internet at a greater rate than men.

In the current study, males indicated they had strong intentions to attend a rivalry game regardless of their level of team identification, which seems reasonable since males have been found to be bigger fans of sports in general, and thus may have greater interest in rivalry games as interesting sporting events even if their favorite team is not playing (James & Ridinger, 2002). On the other hand, female participants reported stronger intentions to attend a rivalry game if they were very highly identified with the favorite team than if they were moderate highly identified with the favorite team. This finding is consistent with previous research in that highly identified female fans may indicate stronger intent to consume their favorite team's contests, regardless of team performance (Fink et al., 2002; Ridinger & Funk, 2006). On the other hand, there was no significant difference between moderate high and very highly identified females on the other forms of consumption. This could perhaps indicate that the lower attendance intention in moderate highly identified females is not an indication that they are less interested in the rivalry game overall, just less interested in spending the time and money required to actually attend the game. If the overall interest in rivalry among this group of female fans is still somewhat high, then there could still be an opportunity for marketers to use rivalry games to build identification within this group.

Overall, it appears that higher levels of identification had positive effects on the consumption intentions of both males and females (as expected from the literature), but the effect of identification appeared to be somewhat stronger for females than males. Future research should continue to explore attitudinal and

behavioral differences between males and females at similar levels of identification (i.e. do highly identified males think and act differently from highly identified females?), as it could be that the four groups yielded by the interactions in this study (i.e., very high male, very high female, moderate high male, moderate high female) are more distinct than previously thought, and consequently should be considered separately in future examinations involving team identification.

### Implications

Findings from the current study add to the sport rivalry literature by 1) utilizing the SRFPS with intercollegiate athletics fans with various levels of moderate high to very high identification with a favorite team, 2) determining how fans of various levels of team identification react to the rivalry phenomenon, and 3) showing an interaction between team identification and gender on fan intention to consume the favorite team when playing a rival. The participant mean scores for the SRFPS sub scales followed a basic trend of perception scores from previous findings (Havard, Reams et al., 2013; Havard, Wann et al., 2013) with the exception of the out-group sportsmanship sub scale. Previous studies have found that participants perceived the behavior of rival fans to be very poor, and that was not the case in the current study. Whether this is a function of the sample being somewhat less identified than in previous studies on rivalry (see Participants section), or consisting of a set of fans of different teams (with different rivals), is unclear.

The current study contributes to the sport management literature by illustrating that rival perceptions and intentions to consume exist between fans traditionally considered to have moderate to strong identification with their favorite team. The current study was also first to illustrate the impact of a rivalry game on female consumption, and the first to test for an interaction between team identification and gender. These findings further research into the phenomenon of sport rivalry, and provide avenues for future academics to explore.

The current study also carries important implications for practitioners working for intercollegiate sport teams. First, practitioners should take notice of the impact team identification can have on rival perceptions and behavior. For example, knowing that highly identified fans experience more satisfaction at the defeat of the rival team in direct competition, practitioners can choose to highlight this fact among fans commonly believed to be highly identified or attached to a team (e.g., season-ticket holders, donors, active alumni, and current students). This finding helps to justify the practice of intercollegiate teams producing merchandise featuring the score of a victory versus a rival or the favorable historical record against a rival. Also, athletic administrators should consider focusing greater attention on the highly-identified female fan, especially via television and Internet viewership, as this study followed findings from previous research that these females tend to have strong consumption intentions and behaviors that are less sensitive to team performance, which is outside of the control of administrators and marketers. This finding also amplifies the importance of past research which has suggested

females do not respond to marketing campaigns in the same way as men, in part because they are often not (effectively) targeted by sport properties and sponsors (Dodds, DeGaris, & Perricone, 2014).

Possibly the most interesting finding to practitioners is the interaction effect of team identification and gender on consumption of the favorite team when playing the rival. Since a rivalry game had a larger impact on attendance at live games for females than males, perhaps practitioners should begin to target messages and advertisement toward this group in an attempt to engage more highly identified female fans.

### Limitations and Future Study

As with any investigation, the current study contains possible limitations. The first deals with data collection. Data in the current study was collected using the online data collection site MTurk, and using a different method could possibly impact the findings. Future study utilizing a different collection method could be useful to compare findings. In particular, considering some of the mean scores regarding rival perceptions were lower than previous findings on sport rivalry, replicating the current study using different methods would be appropriate. Additional investigation on the interaction between team identification and gender is warranted, as differences at the .05 level were found between very highly identified males and very highly identified females ( $p = .045$ ), and very highly identified females and moderate highly identified females ( $p = .046$ ). Replicating the current study may help to shed light on these findings.

Additionally, it is with caution that the findings from the current study be generalized beyond the realm of major Division I intercollegiate athletics as the majority of participants in the current study indicated football or men's basketball to be their favorite sport. Future research should focus on collecting data related to rival perceptions and favorite team consumption in non-revenue sports and female sports in order to determine whether or not the impact of rivalry is similar across all sports in an athletic department.

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