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Exploring the role of collective narcissism in sport team identification

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**EXPLORING THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE NARCISSISM IN SPORT TEAM
IDENTIFICATION**

A Dissertation Presented

By

BEN LARKIN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in the partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2017

Management

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE NARCISSISM IN SPORT TEAM

IDENTIFICATION

MAY 2017

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Team identification is among the most widely studied concepts in sport fan behavior. This is largely due to the fact that highly identified fans exhibit drastically different and more avid consumption and purchase behavior compared to those low and/or moderate on team identification. Most notably, this has been manifested in a greater propensity to attend games, watch the team on television, and purchase team merchandise. While the study of team identification has focused both on its development and outcomes, one constant is that scholars have long focused on team identification as a healthy and positive type of team attachment. In this dissertation, I argue that this is not necessarily always the case. Drawing on literature from social psychology on a construct known as collective narcissism, I argue that sport fans' identification with their favorite team(s) may take a collectively narcissistic form that results in drastically different outcomes and behavioral responses compared to the generally positive team identification that has been so vigorously studied in the literature.

I investigate this phenomenon through a mixed method approach designed to explore both the roots and outcomes of collectively narcissistic fandom. In study 1, I explain how collective narcissism relates to and can extend a number of literature streams in the field of sport

fan behavior that are most commonly associated with team identification. Furthermore, I leverage hierarchical regression techniques to show the extent to which collective narcissism can explain additional variance over and above team identification in these commonly studied outcome variables. In study 2, I conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants from the first study, some of whom registered as collective narcissists and others who registered as merely highly identified but not collectively narcissistic. In comparing the two groups, I uncover critical differences in the drivers of collective narcissism that are unique from traditional drivers of team identification. In doing so, I extend the general literature on both collective narcissism and team identification by exploring the roots of this form of ingroup identification and elucidating how it develops. Finally, in study 3, I demonstrate the drastically different behavioral responses exhibited by collective narcissists in comparison to mere highly identified fans facing team criticism in the context of sport rivalries. Specifically, through a two-way MANOVA, I show that collective narcissists are significantly more likely than mere highly identified fans to interpret criticism directed at their favorite team as a threat and respond by derogating the source and exhibiting aggression intentions.

In sum, these three studies underscore the pivotal role collective narcissism plays in sport fans' identification with their favorite team(s). I posit that collective narcissism exists to varying degrees in virtually every sport fans' team identification. Moreover, it is this element of identification that is responsible for many of the behavioral outcomes commonly exhibited by highly identified sport fans. Collectively, the three studies contribute to a more complete understanding of team identification and the various forms it may take. A growing body of literature has sought to extend the concept of team identification by examining the various elements that contribute to its makeup, but has assumed identification to take a positive and

healthy form. The current research fills this gap by exploring the development and outcomes of a collectively narcissistic form of team identification. Moreover, these studies provide insight for sport managers seeking to better understand many of the idiosyncratic traits and behaviors of sport fans and leverage this understanding with more effective marketing communications moving forward.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Team identification is well understood in the sport management literature. For example, a wealth of research has been put into understanding both the outcomes of team identification (e.g., Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005; Madrigal, 1995; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003; Wakefield & Wann, 2006; Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wu, Tsai, & Hung 2012) as well as how it develops (Funk & James, 2001; Kolbe & James, 2000; Lock, Darcy, & Taylor, 2009; Lock, Taylor, Funk, & Darcy, 2012). Researchers have identified a number of outcomes related to fans' identification with a team (Wu et al., 2012), including basking-in-reflected-glory (BIRG) and cutting-off-reflected-failure (CORF; Delia, 2015; Kwon, Trail, & Lee, 2008; Madrigal, 1995; Wann & Branscombe, 1990), loyalty (Kwon et al., 2005; Tsiotsou, 2013; Wu et al., 2012), and attitude importance (Funk, Haugtvedt, & Howard, 2000; Funk & James, 2004). In addition, undesirable consequences such as dysfunctional fandom have been identified (Donahue & Wann, 2009; Wakefield & Wann, 2006).

While a considerable amount of research has gone into team identification, one constant is scholars have always focused their studies on the positive attachments fans form with respect to their favorite team(s). Certainly, Wann and his colleagues (e.g., Donahue & Wann, 2009; Wakefield & Wann, 2006) have demonstrated how team identification can manifest in negative behaviors such as verbal and physical aggression, blasting, etc.; however, this was assumed to simply represent the behaviors of a select subset of highly identified fans rather than a distinct form of identification with the sport team in itself. In this series of three essays, I argue that identification with a sport team can and in some cases does take a different form, a form that has been referred to as collective narcissism. Collective narcissism has been defined as “an ingroup

identification tied to an emotional investment in an unrealistic belief about the unparalleled greatness of an ingroup” (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009, p. 1074). In effect, it is a manifestation of many of the traits and characteristics possessed by those with a narcissistic personality expressed in relation to an ingroup with which they identify (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

While this construct has been studied extensively in relation to individuals’ national and ethnic identities (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013), to this point it has not been studied in relation to sport consumers and their identification with a sport team. Given the notion that one can develop a narcissistic identification in relation to any group with which they identify (Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012), this is an area that warrants further exploration amongst sport fans. After all, sport fans have long been criticized for being unrealistic (Poladian, 2015) and oversensitive (Burke, 2014), and have shown a history of aggressive responses to losses and criticism (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Wann, Carlson, & Schrader, 1999), three traits commonly associated with collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

1.1 Purpose of the Studies, Justification, and Expected Contributions

Accordingly, the overarching purpose of this research is to introduce the collective narcissism construct to the sport consumer behavior literature and explain how it can be used to extend a number of literature streams commonly associated with team identification (e.g., BIRG, CORF, dysfunctional fandom and aggression, attitudes, and loyalty). Specifically, using hierarchical regression analyses, I examine the additional variance over and above team identification that can be explained by collective narcissism in these commonly studied outcome

variables. In doing so, I aim to extend the literature on team identification by showing that it may sometimes take a different form, which is expected to have wide-ranging implications for our understanding of sport fan behavior moving forward. Second, I aim to explore the roots of collective narcissism. Specifically, through semi-structured interviews with self-reported collectively narcissistic sport fans, I aim to understand how generally positive team identification may instead take the form of collective narcissism. In doing so, I seek to extend the literature both on collective narcissism and sport team identification. Finally, in study 3, I look to further explain how collective narcissism and positive team identification differ. Specifically, I examine the distinct behavioral responses of both highly identified fans and collective narcissists in the context of team criticism in sport rivalries. This work aims to show that collective narcissists are prone to exhibit much more aggressive and intolerant responses to criticism—interpreting even ambiguous comments as a threat and responding by derogating the outgroup. In doing so, I look to extend the literature on sport consumer behavior and team identification by showing that perhaps the collectively narcissistic aspect of one’s identification with their favorite sport team(s) is responsible for outgroup derogation and intergroup conflict/aggression. It has long been assumed through the tenets of social identity theory that outgroup derogation is characteristic of highly identified sport fandom. However, social identity theory research has generally shown individuals to exhibit more of a proclivity to ingroup favoritism than outgroup derogation (Brewer, 1979). I aim to isolate the role of collective narcissism in sport team identification and demonstrate how it may be this distinct construct that is responsible for many of the behaviors commonly associated with high levels of general sport team identification.

The importance of this research is clear given the aggressive and often excessively dysfunctional behavior exhibited by sport fans across the globe (e.g., Branscombe & Wann,

1992; McClintock, 2011; Wakefield & Wann, 2006). For example, McClintock (2011) detailed a host of hostile intergroup conflicts between fans of two rival west coast baseball teams that resulted in serious injury and in some cases death. While extant literature has examined sport fan aggression (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Wakefield & Wann, 2006), a strong theoretical explanation as to the roots of this behavior have not been provided. Wakefield and Wann's (2006) work on dysfunctional fans was largely atheoretical. Moreover, although Wann and his colleagues (e.g., Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Wann, 1993; Wann, Carlson, & Schrader, 1999; Wann, Peterson, Cothran, & Dykes, 1999) have attempted to draw on aggression theory to explain why highly identified fans may be more prone to aggression, I argue there is an explanation rooted in certain individuals' identification with the team that can explain the excessive and sometimes hostile nature of their fandom. However, it is only through obtaining an understanding of identification of this nature that we can begin to address problems such as fan dysfunction and aggression. In addition, I argue there are indeed positive outcomes of collective narcissism. For example, if these fans are to exhibit higher levels of loyalty and attitude importance—as is argued here—then this may result in higher degrees of attendance, media, and merchandise consumption.

1.2 Overview of the Studies

In chapter 2, I begin by first providing a thorough review and background on the collective narcissism literature. Golec de Zavala and her colleagues have conducted a series of studies over the last several years that have provided a firm foundation on which to draw in my efforts to merge this literature with what we know of team identification. From there, I introduce self-expansion theory, which I argue provides a more appropriate framework than the more commonly used social identity theory to understand the nature of the relationship developed

between collective narcissists and their favorite teams. Next, in an effort to demonstrate how collective narcissism is indeed quite prevalent in the spectator sport industry, I draw on anecdotal evidence obtained from the National Football League's New England Patriots fan base. Through this examination, I aim to point out the characteristics of collective narcissism displayed quite frequently by these fans. Finally, I explain how collective narcissism is a unique and distinct form of group esteem, with qualitative differences between this construct and other forms of inflated group identification. In chapters 3 through 5, I introduce each of the three studies, including a discussion of their results and contributions. Finally, in chapter 6, I wrap up with a brief review of the key findings, a discussion of the common thread tying all of the findings together, and a few concluding remarks on the investigation of this construct moving forward.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Collective Narcissism

Narcissism is a trait characterized by grandiose, but simultaneously unstable self-views that require incessant validation and admiration from others (Thomaes, Bushman, De Castro, & Stegge, 2009). Narcissism is thought to stem from a fragile self-esteem, accompanied by an almost addictive desire to constantly enhance self-esteem (Baumeister & Vohs, 2011; Thomaes et al., 2009). The concept of *collective* narcissism extends this theory to groups, suggesting that if people can be narcissistic with regard to their personal identities, they can certainly be narcissistic about collective group identities as well (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Collective narcissism, then, is an exaggerated and insecure collective self-esteem that produces an inflated and grandiose image of an ingroup. It is seen as an extension of individual narcissism, though the two variables are distinct, and it has been argued that one can be narcissistic at the individual but not collective level and vice versa (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). With collective narcissists, the ingroup is seen as an extension of self (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), though this may only be specific to certain groups as one can be narcissistic about one (or more) groups, but not others (Golec de Zavala, 2011). This could stem from the fact that collective narcissism is sometimes used as a strategy to protect a threatened ego (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). It may be that groups with which one identifies that provide particularly strong support for an unstable and fragile ego and self-esteem (e.g., a successful sport team with a rich history) are particularly susceptible to the emergence of collectively narcissistic identification. Individuals who identify in this manner are believed to be emotionally invested in an excessive image of an ingroup, an

image that requires chronic validation and is particularly vulnerable to any and all challenges from both inside and outside the group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

Because collective narcissists hold on to this grandiose image so tightly, collective narcissism has been shown to be a strong predictor of intergroup attitudes and relations (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Collective narcissists have been shown to be unwilling to forgive and forget past slights and unfairness, both real and perceived, and they have been shown to hold prejudice against certain groups with whom they share a tenuous history (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). In fact, specific outgroups are often targeted and perceived as consistently threatening (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013a). Accordingly, these groups are regularly met with hostile responses. The magnitude of one's collective narcissism increases following a negative evaluation of an ingroup (Golec de Zavala, 2011). Such evaluation is typically interpreted as a threat and is met with hostility and unwavering defense. These hostile reactions might include violent and coercive acts even in ambiguous situations (Golec de Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that these individuals are not necessarily generally hostile, as the aggressive response is limited only to the outgroup perceived to insult or threaten the collective narcissist's ingroup in some fashion (Golec de Zavala, 2011).

Collective narcissists' unparalleled regard for their ingroup leads to the impression that others simply don't understand or appreciate the greatness of their ingroup (Golec de Zavala, 2011). This, in turn, creates a feeling amongst collective narcissists that their group is unfairly treated and constantly threatened. This may include a tendency to believe in conspiracy theories as a means of protecting the ingroup's grandiose image (Cichocka, Golec de Zavala, Marchlewska, & Olechowski, 2015). Even when the group is acknowledged in some fashion by outsiders, it is rarely seen as good enough. One exception may be those who repeatedly express

support for the ingroup, as collective narcissists quickly come to tolerate those who regularly express support and respect for the ingroup. Nevertheless, they remain “constantly vigilant for new signs of anything undermining the group” (Golec de Zavala, 2011, p. 315), presumably so they can derogate the source of such perceived slights as a means of temporary self-esteem restoration.

2.2 Collective Narcissism as Viewed through Self-Expansion Theory

While team identification has traditionally been understood through an application of social identity theory, Aron et al. (2005) argued that their self-expansion model “provides novel and potentially useful explanations for ingroup identification processes” (p. 224). Moreover, I argue that such a model provides a more appropriate framework for an understanding of a collectively narcissistic identification with a sport team than is provided by social identity theory. In this section, I discuss the central tenets of self-expansion theory and explain how it fits within the collective narcissism context.

The origins of self-expansion theory stem from Aron and Aron’s (1986) efforts to understand attraction and satisfaction in relationships. Their conclusion was that motivation to enter into such relationships was a result of exploratory motives, such as the desire to enhance opportunities and increase self-efficacy. The central premise of the model is that when one enters into a relationship, they gain the other’s resources, perspectives, and identities (Aron et al., 2005). This process has been shown to take place not just in individual and romantic relationships, but also in groups (Aron et al., 2005; Tropp & Wright, 2001).

When speaking of resources, the authors referred not just to material or knowledge resources that may be more characteristic of interpersonal romantic relationships, but also social assets that can enable individuals’ achievement of goals (Aron et al., 2005). In the context of

romantic relationships, this may literally provide both partners with resources they did not previously have; however, in other cases, such as one's relationship with a sport team, "one may feel as if what the other has is one's own even when it is not in actuality" (Aron et al., 2005, p. 210). That is, even when an individual simply *perceives* another's resources as their own, the outcomes (rewards and costs) received by the other are experienced as their own. In the case of a collective narcissist, I posit that the perception of the team's resources as their own may be used as a vehicle to fulfill their excessive and fragile self-esteem addiction, as discussed by Golec de Zavala and her colleagues (e.g., Cichocka et al., 2015; Golec de Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala et al., 2013a, 2013b) as well as other scholars (e.g., Thomaes, Bushman, De Castro, & Stegge, 2009).

Since rewards and costs are experienced as their own (Aron et al., 2005), I argue that criticism of the team is interpreted as a threat—not just to the team, but the individual as well—and is met with hostility and unwavering defense of the team amongst those fans who are collective narcissists (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). This exemplifies the reciprocal nature of resource exchange in relationships (Aron et al., 2005). Recent extensions of self-expansion theory have argued that those who are attached to brands not only *receive* the brand's resources, but also invest *their own* resources in the brand as a means of relationship sustenance (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). While the resources invested may be time or money resources, the authors argue that this could also be reflected in social resources, such as "defending the brand or derogating alternatives" (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Park et al., 2010, p. 4). Indeed, both the unwavering defense of the ingroup and derogation of the outgroup are characteristic of collective narcissism, but not necessarily mere ingroup identification (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013). Moreover, narcissists are typically achievement-oriented (Paulhus &

Williams, 2002; Thomaes et al., 2009) and leverage social relationships as a means of establishing social dominance and furthering their own agenda (Thomaes et al., 2009), tendencies that certainly coalesce with the self-expansion view of ingroup identification.

Therefore, in short, I argue that collective narcissists identify with a team in an effort to boost an excessive, yet fragile, self-esteem. This effort requires an identification characterized by a reciprocal exchange of resources, such that—through the view of the collective narcissist—team outcomes are experienced as their own. Accordingly, they invest their own resources in defending the team and derogating the opposition.

2.3 A Case of Collective Narcissism: The New England Patriots Fan Base

Collective narcissism has most commonly been studied in the context of individuals' national identities (Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012); however, its effects have been demonstrated in groups beyond the national context (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013). Although it has never been examined in sport, anecdotal evidence of typical collectively narcissistic behavior can be found in the actions of the National Football League's New England Patriots fan base. Burke (2014) detailed a widespread oversensitivity of this fan base. Researchers have suggested that social contexts and situational factors can give rise to collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009) and the New England Patriots' involvement in a seemingly endless list of scandals over the years has perhaps provided a breeding ground for identification of this nature amongst their fan base. Van Natta and Wickersham (2015) detailed the two most noteworthy accounts, often referred to as "SpyGate" and "DeflateGate." In "SpyGate," the Patriots found themselves in the National Football League's (NFL) cross hairs for illegally videotaping opponents' signals. The more recent "DeflateGate" refers to the Patriots' usage of footballs below the air pressure limit mandated by the NFL. As Van Natta and Wickersham (2015) explained, the league went

relatively easy on the Patriots when handing down the punishment in “SpyGate,” but perhaps made up for this lenient sentence by inflicting a considerably harsher punishment for “DeflateGate.” This added NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and sport and entertainment network ESPN—who Patriots fans seem to believe has it out for the team given how they have covered the scandal (Hill, 2015; Wilbur, 2015)—to the growing list of enemies the team has acquired over the years (e.g., Shaughnessy, 2015).

Consistent with the behavior of collective narcissists, the New England Patriots fan base has demonstrated an extreme vulnerability and sensitivity to challenges from outside the group and an unwillingness to forgive past transgressions with outgroups (e.g., the Colts, the NFL, and ESPN). In addition, fans have been on high alert for anything and everything that might undermine the group, no matter how ambiguous. Such perceived attacks have led to beliefs in conspiracy theories and have been met with aggressive responses, presumably as a means of ego restoration. Refer to Table 2.1 for examples of how the New England Patriots fan base has exemplified such traits and behaviors.

Although highly identified sport fans have long shown a tendency to derogate perceived outgroups (Delia, 2015; Wann & Branscombe, 1990), I posit that this finding may stem from the fact that collective narcissism has never been measured or parsed out in a team identification measure. Therefore, it is important I distinguish between collective narcissism and other forms of identification or group esteem. This will allow me to elucidate how collective narcissism relates to and can extend a number of literature streams in the sport consumer behavior literature.

2.4 Collective Narcissism as a Distinct Form of Identification and Group Esteem

There is a qualitative difference between collective narcissism and other forms of inflated group esteem (Golec de Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Moreover, citing the weak

relationship found between ingroup identification and outgroup derogation found in meta-analytic work (e.g., Pehrson, Brown & Zagefka, 2009), Golec de Zavala et al. (2013b) demonstrated that there is a distinct narcissistic aspect of ingroup identification that, when parsed out, serves as a *robust* predictor of outgroup derogation and hostility. Across numerous studies, the researchers demonstrated a consistent and robust *negative* relationship between positive ingroup identification and outgroup negativity, but a significant and robust *positive* relationship between collective narcissism and outgroup negativity. It is important to note, however, that independently the relationship between ingroup identification and outgroup negativity was negative, but not significant. It was only when collective narcissism was added to the regression that the relationship became both negative and significant. This led Golec de Zavala and her team to conclude:

Genuine, non-narcissistic in-group positivity predicts positive attitudes toward out-groups...however, because in-group positivity is positively related to collective narcissism, a tendency to form hostile attitudes toward out-groups associated with collective narcissism masks the potential of unpretentious and noncontingent positive in-group regard to predict positive attitudes toward out-groups (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013a, p. 25).

Consistent with social identity theory, sport researchers have long demonstrated a tendency for highly identified sport fans to derogate the outgroup (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Delia, 2015), bask-in-reflected-glory (Delia, 2015; Wann & Branscombe, 1990), and in some cases act aggressively toward such entities as the opposing team and/or referees (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Wakefield & Wann, 2006). However, to this point, the narcissistic component of team identification that may exist to varying degrees in sport fans has not been accounted for in spectator research. This is important given that extant measures of group identification capture *both* narcissistic and non-narcissistic components of in-group positivity, failing to distinguish between the two (Golec de Zavala et al., 2011). In short, it may be that the narcissistic

component of sport fans' team identification is partially responsible for various behaviors; however, until parsed out and accounted for alongside generally positive team identification, this cannot be determined.

Table 2.1

Collective Narcissism in Professional Sport Fandom

Collectively Narcissistic Traits, Beliefs, and Behaviors	Examples demonstrated by the New England Patriots Fan Base
Collective narcissists are characterized by a feeling that others simply don't understand the greatness of their ingroup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patriots fans have embraced the tagline “You hate us ‘cause you ain’t us,” which essentially boils down to the notion that any criticism of the franchise is sour grapes (Metcalf, 2015)
Collective narcissists exhibit an unwillingness to forgive and forget past slights, both real and perceived	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Patriots have a long list of enemies stemming from a tenuous history both with the league in general and specific opponents, including (Shaughnessy, 2015): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Baltimore Ravens, who allegedly tipped off the Colts organization to keep an eye out for deflated footballs during the AFC Championship game -The Indianapolis Colts for bring the deflated football issue to the attention of the league -The Houston Texans organization for doing little more than criticizing the Patriots for not cooperating during the “DeflateGate” investigation -Any other owner who expressed support for the NFL commissioner during the “DeflateGate” investigation, including Dallas Cowboys Owner Jerry Jones and New York Giants Owner John Mara • The animosity for the most recent enemy, the Indianapolis Colts, is particularly pronounced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Patriots defeat of the Colts in the 2015 season was not the “blood bath” fans were hoping for as the main target for retribution following “DeflateGate” (Dolloff, 2015) -“New England fans...want the Patriots to continue their scorched-earth campaign and roll up a kazillion points on the Colts” (Lowe, 2015, para 5)
Collective narcissists display an extreme vulnerability and sensitivity to challenges and criticism, no matter how ambiguous, even going so far as to chronically scan the external environment for anything that might undermine the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the “DeflateGate” investigation, New England Patriots fans have undergone a transformation taking them from “well-adjusted, rational people into emotional, hypersensitive wrecks” (Malinowski, 2015, para 8) • Members of a New England Patriots blog and fan community interpreted a harmless and ambiguous tweet on the part of ESPN during a Patriots Monday Night Football telecast as an antagonistic reference to the team’s role in the “SpyGate” scandal. Specifically, the network tweeted a stream of football and camera emoji icons, to which Hill (2015) responded, “this could very well be an attempt to highlight all of the camera reviews that broke up the flow of the game, but everyone knows exactly how this tweet would be received” (para 4) • Even a year after the “DeflateGate” scandal initially occurred, the fan base and media continues to perpetuate it by holding on to these past perceived slights
Collective narcissists display a tendency to buy in to conspiracy theories as a means of protecting ingroup image against threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giles (2015) detailed a series of conspiracy theories diehard New England Patriots use as a means of explaining “DeflateGate” in some fashion other than the Patriots cheating

<p>Collective narcissists respond aggressively to perceived attacks and slights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Malinowski notes, “After ‘DeflateGate,’ Pats fans are mad as hell and they’re looking for revenge against Roger Goodell and the NFL’s ‘sting’ operation”• Kurkjian (2015) relayed a quote from a Patriots fan at a 2015 home game, who, in reference to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, stated “he’s afraid of this place. I would be, too, if I was him...He would hear some bad things coming his way. He wouldn’t have a pleasant arrival or exit” (para 16)• Other fans have suggested every week will represent revenge against anybody who said or did something, such as those enemies identified by Shaughnessy (2015), providing an opportunity for the Patriots to make clear: “You should have kept your mouth shut, and now we’re going to shove you in a locker and teach you a lesson” (Malinowski, 2015, para 40)• Fans have even gone to the lengths of hiring private planes to fly over Commissioner Goodell’s vacation home in Scarborough, ME with banners containing antagonistic messages directed at the commissioner (Associated Press, 2015; Basu, 2015)
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CHAPTER 3

STUDY 1: THE OUTCOMES OF COLLECTIVE NARCISSISM

I propose that when added into hierarchical regression models on top of positive team identification, collective narcissism will serve to explain a substantial amount of additional variance over and above team identification in a number of commonly studied constructs in sport consumer research. In the sections that follow, I review literature on such topics as BIRGing and CORFing, dysfunctional fandom, sport fan aggression, sport fan attitudes, and sport fan loyalty. In doing so, I aim to elucidate the role collective narcissism may play in these various literature streams.

3.1 Collective Narcissism and BIRGing and CORFing

In their foundational work, Cialdini et al. (1976) demonstrated the tendency for individuals to “share in the glory of a successful other with whom they are in some way associated” (p. 366). This phenomenon, which the researchers termed basking-in-reflected-glory (BIRGing), was demonstrated by college students’ tendency to wear team apparel and use the pronoun ‘we’ to a greater extent after a (football) team win than a team loss. In the years since this study, a great deal of research in the sport consumer behavior literature has been dedicated to this phenomenon (e.g., Delia, 2015; Hirt, Zillman, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992; Kwon et al., 2008; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). This research has included the related phenomenon of cutting-off-reflected-failure (CORFing), which refers to the propensity for individuals to distance themselves from unsuccessful others (Wann & Branscombe, 1990).

Research has shown that these phenomena are identity enhancement techniques motivated by individuals’ desire to maintain a positive self-esteem (Hirt et al., 1992; Wann & Branscome, 1990). Furthermore, higher levels of fan identification have been shown to result in

a greater tendency to BIRG and a lower tendency to CORF. Because the team is so central to these individuals' self-concept, their identities persist even through hard times and negative public ridicule (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Accordingly, CORFing is not viewed as a viable identity maintenance strategy for those highly identified with a team. However, given their robust attachment to the team, these individuals will be the first to BIRG following a team win.

The notion that BIRGing and CORFing tendencies are designed to maintain a positive self-esteem could have implications for collective narcissists' propensity to do so given that there are indeed categorical differences in the extent to which narcissistic and non-narcissistic individuals pursue self-esteem (Thomaes et al., 2009). That is, non-narcissistic individuals are apt to attempt to enhance self-esteem in situations that organically allow for it (i.e., after a team win); in contrast, narcissists more frequently seek out and/or even artificially create such situations in an effort to feed their self-esteem addiction (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Thomaes et al., 2009). It seems, then, that a narcissistically identified fan's chronic need for self-esteem enhancement would lead to a perpetual effort to associate themselves with the team even in situations when a typical highly identified fan may not. Moreover, Delia (2015) suggested that BIRGing is not just for the purpose of affiliation, belongingness, and pride, but also to ensure that others know they are superior to and not associated with the opposition. Given that collective narcissists perceive their ingroup to be of unparalleled dominance and superiority (Golec de Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), I posit that the narcissistic portion of one's identification with a sport team could be partially responsible for the BIRGing phenomenon.

Similarly, sport consumer behavior scholars have long held that outgroup derogation represents perhaps the only identity restoration technique available to highly identified fans

given their unwillingness to CORF (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). This research, however, has never accounted for collective narcissism within the same study. Viewed through self-expansion theory (e.g., Aron et al., 2005), collective narcissists can be understood to experience the rewards and costs associated with the team as their own. It is for this reason that they invest resources in the relationship with the team (Park et al., 2010), such as a tendency to defend the team no matter how dire the situation. Even highly identified fans have been shown to reduce their relationship with the team in the wake of such situations as player scandals (Fink, Parker, Brett, & Higgins, 2009). Therefore, it would seem collective narcissists would be even less likely to CORF than merely highly identified fans. Based on the preceding logic, I expect collective narcissism will explain additional variance over and above team identification in both BIRGing and CORFing.

3.2 Collective Narcissism and Dysfunctional Fandom

Team identification has long been associated with aggressive behavior on the part of sport fans. Wann and Branscombe (1990) noted “highly identified fans, when threatened by a loss, may be more likely to aggress than those low on identification. They cannot cope by distancing themselves as low identified persons can” (p. 113). Branscombe and Wann (1992) identified a number of additional causes beyond their inability to CORF. Such rationale included the presence of situational factors (i.e., heat, crowd noise and density) that produce arousal, particularly for those highly identified fans who feel intense affect. They argued that arousal could exacerbate fans’ tendency to categorize, stereotype, and exhibit attributional biases.

According to Wann (2006), identification has been found to be the primary factor facilitating fan aggression. He discussed a number of ways in which aggression may manifest in sport spectatorship, but the type of aggression most relevant to this discussion is that of

instrumental aggression. While this goal-oriented aggression may be geared toward helping the team, it is often more of an attempt to restore psychological health and self-esteem (Wann, 2006). Given that narcissists differ from non-narcissists in the degree to which they pursue self-esteem (Baumeister & Vohs, 2001; Thomaes et al., 2009), it seems collective narcissists may possess an even greater need to aggress than those who are merely highly identified with the team.

More recent research has extended the concept of aggression to represent a mere subset of the behavior exhibited by what Wakefield and Wann (2006) referred to as dysfunctional fans. They defined dysfunctional fans as “overly zealous and abusive,” and suggested they have “taken identification to the extremes” (Wakefield & Wann, 2006, p. 170). Further, they purported that this group represents but a small segment of highly identified sport fans, those that are confrontational and complain often. They found this group to be significantly more likely to engage in behavior such as blasting officials, calling into sports talk radio to criticize the team, believing in the need to consume alcohol during games, and traveling to away games in an effort to start trouble with the opposing team’s fans.

In short, Wann and his colleagues have consistently suggested that team identification can be taken to extremes, wherein certain fans exhibit aggressive and hostile behavior as a means of identity restoration (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Wakefield & Wann, 2006). However, interestingly, in presenting their portrait of the dysfunctional fan, Wakefield and Wann (2006) linked dysfunctional fan behavior to narcissism and the need to cope with an inflated, yet fragile, self-esteem. Specifically, they drew on Ruiz, Smith, and Rhodewalt’s (2001) notion that “narcissism and hostility are both characterized by dysfunctional social interactions, including tendencies to perceive slights, experience anger, and behave aggressively” (p. 537). Moreover,

these dysfunctional fans' aggressive responses to self-concept damage represent an attempt to cope with "inflated and fragile self-esteems" (Wakefield & Wann, 2006, p. 182). Wakefield and Wann's (2006) portrayal of the dysfunctional fan draws several parallels to collective narcissism, most notably hostile responses stemming from an inflated, yet fragile, self-esteem (e.g., Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). They parsed out participants into two groups, including highly identified fans with low dysfunctionality and highly identified fans with high dysfunctionality. Based on the preceding logic, I posit that this subset of highly identified fans with high dysfunctionality are more than likely collectively narcissistic fans. Therefore, I expect collective narcissism will predict additional variance over and above team identification in dysfunctional fandom.

3.3 Collective Narcissism and Attitude Importance

Attitude has been defined as both an enduring feeling about an entity that has the power to guide behavior (Funk et al., 2000; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981), as well as a learned predisposition with regard to a particular object (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Funk et al., 2000). Funk and his colleagues have explained that team identification is a key antecedent to attitude importance with respect to the team (Funk et al., 2000; Funk & James, 2004). Importance reflects the "psychological significance and value attached to the team stemming from one's self-concept" (Funk et al., 2000, p. 132). Although there are many properties of attitudes, attitude importance has been shown to be a strong predictor of various dependent variables and thus represents a useful point of departure in the discussion of attitudes amongst sport fans (Funk & James, 2004).

Funk et al. (2000) explained that attitude importance "motivates individuals to selectively process and elaborate on personally relevant information" (p. 132-133). Accordingly, those who possess stronger attitudes and place a great deal of importance on the team are more apt to notice

newspaper articles written about the team. Such behavior is characteristic of collective narcissists, as these individuals regularly survey the external landscape for anything that might undermine their group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Moreover, attitude importance has been shown to be highly predictive of more persistent attitudes that are resistant to change, as well as a willingness to support the team even in times of controversy (Funk et al., 2000). While those who are highly identified with the team have been shown to reduce their association with the team in such circumstances (Fink et al., 2009), collective narcissists are more apt to resist and respond aggressively (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). This is tied to the grandiose image these individuals possess with regard to the team. Moreover, scholars have argued that narcissism is a personality trait that predisposes people to hold strong attitudes rooted in ingroup favoritism (e.g., Bizumic & Duckitt, 2008). Accordingly, we posit that collective narcissists' attitudes are more persistent and resistant to change compared to those who are merely highly identified with the team. Their attitudes with respect to the team could thus be characterized by a higher degree of importance. Therefore, I argue that collective narcissism will explain additional variance in attitude importance over and above that explained by team identification.

3.4 Collective Narcissism and Loyalty

Team loyalty is arguably the most important outcome variable in sport management. Team identification has long been shown to be an antecedent to loyalty (Kwon et al., 2005; Tsiotsou, 2013; Wu et al., 2012). Kwon et al. (2005) found team identification to predict cognitive, affective, conative, and behavioral loyalty, while no other point of attachment (e.g., player, coach, etc.) explained a practically meaningful amount of variance in any of the various types of loyalty. Tsiotsou (2013) explained that the key driver that converts mere cognitive processes into loyal consumer behavior is one's attachment to (or identification with) a team. Wu

et al. (2012) found that both team and player identification were direct predictors of behavioral loyalty. Vicarious achievement and trust were found to be antecedents to team identification, suggesting that the extent to which one trusts the team and derives self-esteem by virtue of the team's achievement are aspects of individuals' team identification that indirectly explain behavioral loyalty.

While highly identified fans have long been shown to be more loyal to the team than casual fans, there is reason to believe collective narcissism could be partially responsible for this pattern. Shabad (2010) spoke of a "narcissistic loyalty to one's own kind" (p. 710). On a similar note, Bizumic and Duckitt (2008) studied narcissism in a group context, suggesting that due to their on-going efforts to regulate self-esteem "narcissists tend to see anything that is closely associated with themselves as grandiose, important, and superior" (p. 442). They further argued that these individuals are thus likely to see their groups in this fashion and develop ethnocentric beliefs.

As previously discussed, collective narcissists stand behind their team in virtually any and all circumstances (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). The same has long been posited to be true for those merely highly identified with a team (Funk & James, 2000), however, more recent work has proven otherwise (Bizman & Yinon, 2002). Moreover, seen through the lens of self-expansion theory (e.g., Park et al., 2010), collective narcissists can be expected to expend significant financial, time, and social resources as a means of relationship maintenance. For example, stemming from their tendency to remain perpetually on watch for anything undermining the team (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), it seems collective narcissists may invest more time on sport media consumption related to the team to ensure they are being held in a positive regard by both mainstream and social media. Moreover, if my supposition that

dysfunctional fans can be characterized as collective narcissists is to be believed, it would seem these individuals would be more apt to both consume the team via sport talk radio and even exhibit the uniquely loyal behavior of attending the team's away games (Wakefield & Wann, 2006), a behavior that would require an extremely significant investment in time, financial, and social resources. That is, the cost of both travel and game tickets would require significantly more time and financial resources than even a home game. Furthermore, given that the game is played in the opposition's home facility, the individual would then need to invest social resources in defending their team and derogating the opposition. Based on the preceding logic, I argue that collective narcissism will explain additional variance in behavioral loyalty beyond that explained by team identification.

3.5 Methods

A total of 254 sport fans 18 years of age and above were recruited to participate in a survey built on Qualtrics survey software. Participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) service to complete the survey containing measures of the variables discussed above in the literature review. MTurk has been shown to be a source for reliable data (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), with a more demographically diverse and representative pool of participants than college students (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010).

3.5.1 Measures

The survey contained the following variables (see Table 3.1 for a list of items for each construct). All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

- **Collective Narcissism.** Collective narcissism was measured using an adaptation of Golec de Zavala et al.'s (2009) scale. The 9-item one factor model exhibited excellent model fit

and an alpha coefficient as high as .84 in their studies. Moreover, the predictive validity of the scale has been established numerous times across studies (e.g., Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala et al., 2013b).

- **Team Identification.** Team Identification was measured using the Attachment to Team subscale from the Points of Attachment Inventory (e.g., Robinson, Trail, & Kwon, 2004). This measure has exhibited alpha coefficients of .97 and AVE values around .90 in recent work (e.g., Larkin, 2015; Larkin, Fink, & Trail, 2015).
- **Basking-in-reflected-glory.** BIRG was measured using Kwon, Trail, and Anderson's (2005) measure. The construct showed strong psychometric properties, with an alpha coefficient of .87 and an AVE value of .686.
- **Cutting-off-reflected-failure.** CORF was measured using Kwon, Trail, and Lee's (2008) measure. This measure exhibited an alpha coefficient of .87 and an AVE value of .689 in their work.
- **Dysfunctional Fandom.** Dysfunctional Fandom was measured using Wakefield and Wann's (2006) measure. The alpha coefficient for this measure was just .72 in their work, but to my knowledge, no other measure exists to capture this construct.
- **Aggression.** Aggression was measured using Wann, Schrader, and Carlson's (2000) Hostile and Instrumental Aggression of Spectator's Questionnaire. This measure displayed alpha coefficients ranging from .83 to .94.
- **Attitude Importance.** Attitude Importance was measured using an adaptation of Jacks and Devine's (2000) measure. This construct displayed an alpha coefficient of .80 in their work.

- Loyalty. Loyalty was measured using Tsiotsou's (2013) measure, which contains both a behavioral loyalty and loyalty intention measure. Only the behavioral loyalty component was used for this study. Tsiotsou (2013) reviewed a number of sport team loyalty measures and identified a series of conceptualization and operationalization issues. It was concluded that this measure, drawn from Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996), was the most suitable measure of team loyalty. Collectively, this measure exhibited an AVE value of .93.

3.6 Analysis & Results

Initially, seven of the 254 cases were removed because the subjects failed the authentication question, which simply asked them to select a certain number for a specific question to ensure they were completing the survey in earnest. This left a final sample size of 247 participants. The sample consisted of 68.4% males with an average age of 34.1 years old. A total of 36% of the sample reported a 2015 household income between \$20,000 and \$49,999, while 27.5% reported making between \$50,000 and \$79,999, 13.8% reported making \$19,999 or less, 12.6% reported making between \$80,000 and \$109,999, and just 10.1% reported making more than \$110,000.

3.6.1 Measurement Model

Descriptive statistics, including the means and standard deviations of the variables of interest, can be found in Table 3.2. Initially, the measurement model was assessed through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Mplus 5.0 structural equation modeling (SEM) software. The initial assessment of the measurement model revealed the following fit statistics: [χ^2/df ratio = (1863.883/743 = 2.51), CFI = .835, RMSEA = .078, and SRMR = .090], indicating poor model fit per widely accepted SEM guidelines. Hu and Bentler (1999) argued that the χ^2/df

ratio should fall below 3.0, the CFI should exceed .90, and both the RMSEA and SRMR should fall below .08. Therefore, the initial assessment of the measurement model revealed poor fit per both the CFI and SRMR fit index criteria. In addition, the model failed to demonstrate both convergent and discriminant validity. With regard to convergent validity, there was one item from the Collective Narcissism measure as well as one item from the Loyalty measure that presented an issue. One of the Collective Narcissism items read “I do not get upset when people do not notice achievements of my group.” This item is worded with a double-negative, which can be assumed to have created confusion amongst participants responding to the measure. This may have confounded the results to a degree. Accordingly, this item was dropped from the Collective Narcissism measure for further analyses. One of the Loyalty items read “I attend all of the events of my team.” While this would certainly be indicative of loyalty, it is also unrealistic given the cost of attending sport events in the United States. As has been noted in past research, cost is one constraint to sport event attendance that could prove insurmountable irrespective of the individual’s level of identification and/or motivation to attend (Larkin et al., 2015). In short, I posit that this item is simply not a fair indicator of loyalty to a particular team. Accordingly, this item was dropped from the Loyalty measure for further analyses. With regard to discriminant validity, several more issues emerged. First, discriminant validity between Hostile Aggression and Instrumental Aggression, Hostile Aggression and Dysfunctional Fandom, and Instrumental Aggression and Dysfunctional Fandom was not established. The correlations between these variables did not exceed the AVE values of the constructs in question, as prescribed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). This was not necessarily unexpected given that aggression is considered a hallmark of dysfunctional fandom (Wakefield & Wann, 2006). Given that dysfunctional fandom captures a wider domain of dysfunctionality amongst fans—a domain that includes aggression—

Dysfunctional Fandom was kept for further analyses, while both Hostile Aggression and Instrumental Aggression were dropped from the analyses. Finally, the correlation between Attitude Importance and Team Identification was .971, which when squared also exceeded the AVE values of both subscales. Therefore, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) discriminant validity criteria was not met for these constructs. Moreover, with an AVE of 0.48, Attitude Importance presented convergent validity issues and was thus dropped from the analysis.

Following the aforementioned changes, the measurement model was once again assessed and it revealed the following fit statistics: [χ^2/df ratio = (687.962/334 = 2.06), CFI = .909, RMSEA = .065, and SRMR = .064], indicating acceptable model fit per widely accepted SEM guidelines (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Moreover, convergent validity was demonstrated as all AVE values exceeded the requisite 0.50 cutoff (see Table 3.3 for an illustration of the psychometric properties of the subscales). In addition, discriminant validity was established as all AVE values exceeded the squared correlations between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; see Table 3.4 for the correlations amongst the latent variables).

3.6.2 Hierarchical Regression Model

Factor scores were created using principal components analysis with direct oblimin rotation in SPSS 22. Subsequently, a two stage hierarchical regression model was conducted for each of the four remaining dependent variables (i.e., BIRGing, CORFing, Dysfunctional Fandom, and Loyalty). In each case, Team Identification was entered first, with Collective Narcissism entered second to ascertain the amount of additional variance on top of Team Identification that Collective Narcissism explains in the dependent variables. Given the likely correlation between the dependent variables, a Bonferroni correction was used, such that

significance was achieved by $p < .0125$. The results of the hierarchical regression analyses are summarized in Table 3.5.

The hierarchical regression revealed that at the first stage, Team Identification was a significant predictor of BIRGing, $F(1, 246) = 150.23, p < .001$, explaining 38% of the variance. When Collective Narcissism was added to the model in step two it made a significant change, $F(2, 244) = 106.78, p < .001$, explaining an additional 8.7% of the variance in BIRGing. When both Team Identification and Collective Narcissism were included in the regression model together, both predictors were significant ($p < .001$) and they served to explain 46.7% of the variance in BIRGing. With respect to CORFing, Team Identification was again a significant predictor, $F(1, 246) = 51.26, p < .001$, explaining 17.3% of the variance. When Collective Narcissism was added to the model in step two it made a significant change to the model, $F(2, 244) = 39.54, p < .001$, explaining an additional 7.2% of the variance in CORFing. When both Team Identification and Collective Narcissism were included in the regression model together, both predictors were significant ($p < .001$), collectively explaining 24.5% of the variance in CORFing. However, interestingly, and contrary to expectations, the coefficient for Team Identification was negative ($\beta = -.531, p < .001$), as expected, but the coefficient for Collective Narcissism was positive ($\beta = .291, p < .001$), indicating Collective Narcissism was actually positively associated with CORFing. With respect to Dysfunctional Fandom, Team Identification was once again a significant predictor, $F(1, 246) = 82.20, p < .001$, explaining 25.1% of the variance. When Collective Narcissism was added to the model in step two it made a significant change to the model, $F(2, 244) = 100.91, p < .001$, explaining an additional 20.2% of the variance in Dysfunctional Fandom. When both Team Identification and Dysfunctional Fandom were included in the regression model together, both predictors were significant ($p < .001$),

explaining a total of 45.3% of the variance in Dysfunctional Fandom. Finally, with respect to Loyalty, Team Identification was again a significant predictor, $F(1, 246) = 135.34, p < .001$, explaining 35.6% of the variance. When Collective Narcissism was added to the model in step two the model was once again significant, $F(2, 244) = 69.98, p < .001$; however, this explained only 0.8% of additional variance in Loyalty, for a total of 36.4%. Moreover, when both Team Identification and Collective Narcissism were included in the regression model together, only Team Identification was a significant predictor.

I also examined some potential behavioral correlates of both Team Identification and Collective Narcissism, including Attendance Intention, Substitution Intention, number of team's games attended in the previous year, number of team's games intended to attend in the next year, and number of games intended to watch on television in the next year. Neither Team Identification nor Collective Narcissism explained a practically meaningful amount of variance in past or future behavior. This was the case both together and independently. However, an interesting result emerged with regard to the behavioral intention items (which were measured on a 7-point likert scale). These items simply asked participants, given the choice between attending future games or watching them at home, whether they were "likely to attend future games" (Attendance Intention) or "likely to watch future games at home rather than attend" (Substitution Intention). The hierarchical regression indicated that at the first stage, Team Identification was a statistically significant predictor of Attendance Intention, $F(1, 246) = 24.612, p < .001$, explaining 9.1% of the variance. When Collective Narcissism was added to the model in step two it made a significant change to the model, $F(2, 244) = 16.454, p < .001$, but explained only 2.8% of additional variance. With regard to Substitution Intention, when Team Identification was entered into the regression model in the first stage, it was not a statistically significant predictor

of Substitution Intention, $F(1, 246) = 0.186, p = .667$, explaining just 0.1% of the variance. However, when Collective Narcissism was added into the model in the second stage, it made a significant change to the model, $F(2, 244) = 7.856, p < .001$, explaining an additional 5.9% of the variance. However, interestingly, the coefficient for Collective Narcissism was negative ($\beta = -.266, p < .001$), while the coefficient for Team Identification was positive, but not significant ($\beta = .132, p = .051$).

3.7 Discussion

The results of the research reveal that collective narcissism plays a significant and meaningful role in explaining a number of outcome variables commonly associated with team identification, including BIRGing, CORFing, and dysfunctional fandom. Such findings have significant implications for the development of theory and literature on sport fan behavior. In the sections that follow, I discuss these findings and their theoretical implications—specifically identifying how they extend the sport fan behavior literature in a number of capacities. Subsequently, I discuss the practical implications of the work, as well as limitations and directions for future research.

3.7.1 Collective Narcissism and BIRGing

Collective narcissism explained an additional 8.7% of variance in BIRGing on top of the 38% explained by team identification independently. This indicates that the collectively narcissistic portion of fans' team identification is partially responsible for their BIRGing tendencies. This finding is consistent with the notion that narcissists have a self-esteem addiction and thus perpetually seek out ways to boost their self-esteem (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Thomaes et al., 2009). Given the notion that BIRGing is an identity enhancement technique rooted in a quest to maintain a positive self-esteem (Hirt et al., 1992), it would seem the

collectively narcissistic portion of fans' team identification could be a driving force in their general BIRGing tendencies. Furthermore, given that BIRGing is also motivated by a desire to display superiority (Delia, 2015), BIRGing could be driven in part by collective narcissists' desire to see their team (group) as superior (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Regardless, scholars have long held that highly identified fans have a heightened tendency to BIRG (Hirt et al., 1992; Kwon et al., 2008; Wann & Branscombe, 1990); however, this study extends on that notion by showing that this tendency is partially a result of the collectively narcissistic portion of individuals' team identification. This opens up new directions for future research on the subject of BIRGing.

3.7.2 Collective Narcissism and CORFing

Scholars have also long held that highly identified fans have a reduced tendency to CORF (Wann & Branscombe, 1990), due largely to the fact that the team is so central to their self-concept. I expected this to be even more pronounced amongst collective narcissists for a number of reasons, most notably because of their tendency to stand behind their groups and invest resources in their defense (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). While collective narcissism did explain a significant amount of additional variance (7.2%) in CORFing, the relationship was not in the expected direction. In contrast to team identification, collective narcissism was *positively* related to CORFing.

While unexpected, I feel this could be rooted in the *type* of self-esteem typically possessed by narcissists. As noted, collective narcissists possess an inflated but unstable and vulnerable self-esteem. Moreover, narcissists typically possess what has been referred to as discrepant high self-esteem—meaning they have low implicit self-esteem and high explicit self-esteem (Zeigler-Hill, 2006). This distinction is entrenched in the dual-process perspective. Put

simply, implicit self-esteem is rooted in the nonconscious, automatic processing system (Pelham & Hetts, 1999; Zeigler-Hill, 2006), while explicit self-esteem is a product of the cognitive system (Brown, 1993; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). Thus, explicit self-esteem refers to the “conscious feelings of self-liking, self-worth, and acceptance,” while implicit self-esteem is exemplified by “nonconscious, automatic, and overlearned self-evaluations” (Zeigler-Hill, 2006, p. 120). Because narcissists are low on implicit (nonconscious) self-esteem, but high on explicit (conscious) self-esteem, they possess underlying negative associations of the self that are incongruent to their conscious attitudes, in turn leaving them susceptible to temporary fluctuations in their *explicit* self-esteem (Kernis, 2003; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). Moreover, these individuals are more sensitive and reactive to negative events (e.g., failure, losses, etc.), perhaps due to the triggering of those underlying negative associations of the self (Zeigler-Hill, 2006). This is why they are more prone to such tendencies as unrealistic optimism (Bosson, Brown, Zeigler-Hill, & Swann, 2003) and defensive behaviors like ingroup bias and dissonance reduction (e.g., CORFing; Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003).

It is also worth noting that the unwavering ingroup defense exhibited by collective narcissists in past work occurred in a markedly different context. Past work was largely conducted in the context of national identities and international relations, contexts generally characterized by subjective actions and perceptions of various countries. In contrast, the sport context comes with a clear cut winner and loser when it comes to game outcomes, leaving sport fans few options for rationalizing such outcomes.

In short, perhaps collectively narcissistic fans project grandiose attitudes with regard to the team—attitudes that mask underlying vulnerability. This, in turn, leaves them susceptible to fluctuations in explicit self-esteem, outward expression, and ultimately defensive behaviors

aimed at dissonance reduction (e.g., CORFing). I posit, however, that these lapses in explicit self-esteem are only temporary. These are only momentary defensive techniques that represent a departure from collective narcissists' general tendency to invest resources in defending the team.

The finding that collective narcissism is positively related to CORFing could also be useful in explaining contradictory findings from past work on the construct. Although the bulk of the research has found a negative association between team identification and CORFing, at least one study has found otherwise, as Ware and Kowalski (2012) found those fans who strongly associate with a team to be the most likely to both BIRG following a win *and* CORF after a loss. Given that collective narcissism is thought to represent a distinct narcissistic aspect of individuals' ingroup identification (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013a, 2013b), it could be that Ware and Kowalski's (2012) sample was made up of individuals with a particularly pronounced narcissistic element to their team identification. Researchers must parse out the (collectively) narcissistic element of ingroup identification to draw such a conclusion, and this is the first study of sport fan behavior to have done so. Given this result, it seems collective narcissism is something well worth monitoring in studies of BIRGing and CORFing moving forward.

3.7.3 Collective Narcissism and Dysfunctional Fandom

Among the most robust findings from the research was that collective narcissism explained 20.2% of additional variance in dysfunctional fandom when added into the model on top of team identification. Indeed, Wakefield and Wann (2006) characterized dysfunctional fans as individuals who have the tendency to perceive slights in social interactions and behave aggressively as a means of coping with an excessive, yet fragile, self-esteem. Clearly, this portrait has many of the same traits as collective narcissism; however, one of the strongest contributions of the current research is the development of the theoretical underpinnings for this

type of behavior. Wakefield and Wann's (2006) work described dysfunctional fans as a mere subset of highly identified fans—only those who have taken identification to the extremes. The results support my argument that perhaps collective narcissism is at the root of the dysfunctional fan behavior discussed by Wakefield and Wann (2006). In that sense, the current study provides a strong theoretical foundation for the advancement and development of the line of research on dysfunctional fandom. While scholars (e.g., Donahue & Wann, 2009; Partridge, Wann, & Elison, 2010) have followed up on Wakefield and Wann's (2006) work with further studies, these studies have lacked a strong theoretical explanation for dysfunctional fandom. Partridge et al.'s (2010) work was rooted in theory, but their theoretical arguments were centered around the concept of shame and dysfunctional fans' coping with shame rather than on the general idea of fan dysfunction. The current study shows that collective narcissism is an even stronger predictor of dysfunctional fandom than team identification and thus provides a strong theoretical explanation for the behavior of dysfunctional fandom. Accordingly, collective narcissism should be an integral part of the development of the dysfunctional fandom literature moving forward.

3.7.4 Collective Narcissism and Loyalty

Contrary to expectations, when added in to the regression model on top of team identification, collective narcissism did not explain a significant amount of variance in loyalty. Given their tendency to invest substantial resources in support of the team (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Park et al., 2010), it was expected that collective narcissism would explain part of the variance in sport fan loyalty beyond team identification; however, this was not shown to be the case. This could be related to the unstable self-esteem that leaves them susceptible to defensive behaviors and dissonance reduction techniques, as discussed in the finding related to CORFing. That is, given that self-esteem has long been believed to be at the center of sport team

identification, the uniquely unstable self-esteem of collective narcissists perhaps leaves them vulnerable to temporary lapses in devotion to their teams. On a self-report measure, this could lead to unstable responses on such items as attitudes and loyalty. Accordingly, this is something that is worth investigating further in future research.

3.7.5 Collective Narcissism and Self-Expansion Theory

An interesting finding from the research that has implications for the use of self-expansion theory as a framework for the examination of collectively narcissistic identification is the positive association between collective narcissism and CORFing. This result is seemingly at odds with the notion of inclusion of the team in self and investing resources to defend the team (e.g., Aron et al., 2005; Park et al., 2010). It is for this reason that I argue for the need to consider the instability of collectively narcissistic relationships in the broader context of both the self-expansion model and attachment theory and the overlap between the two. Indeed, there are considerable similarities and overlap between attachment theory and the self-expansion model (Aron & Aron, 2006). This has been acknowledged and supported in a marketing context as well, specifically as a means of exploring consumers' brand attachments (e.g., Park et al., 2010).

Pistole (1995) discussed narcissistic and non-narcissistic relationships through the lens of attachment theory, specifically exemplifying many of the central tenets of self-expansion theory—and thus the overlap between the two theories—including the tendency for individuals to include the other in the self and experience their partner's resources as their own. Pistole argued that securely attached individuals are more proficient in managing their esteem through an “internal self-confirming process” (1995, p. 119). In contrast, more narcissistically based relationships are exemplified by the self taking on primary importance, causing interactions with

their partner to be characterized by the need to substantiate their own self-worth and regulate esteem.

Initially, esteem may be enhanced through merging with a partner that the narcissist effectively puts on a pedestal (Pistole, 1995). Pistole (1995) further noted that, “with the partner serving as a self-object...the power and worth are experienced as belonging to self. The partner is valued as part of the self” (p. 120). In such times, the narcissistic partner will affirm the security of the relationship (Pistole, 1995), perhaps through the mutual exchange of resources. However, if the individual’s narcissistic needs are not met, it is likely to result in defensive behaviors (e.g., CORFing) which are used as a means of regulating and protecting the self (Pistole, 1995).

In short, seen through the lens of self-expansion theory and attachment theory—and more so the overlap between the two—the collectively narcissistic fan’s relationship with their favorite team(s) can be characterized as a relationship marked by instability. While the relationship is generally characterized by collective narcissists assuming the team’s value and worth as part of themselves—and subsequently investing their own resources to maintain the relationship—it is susceptible to defensive behaviors such as CORFing when individuals’ narcissistic needs are not being met. This could have theoretical implications for such topics as fair-weather fandom and dysfunctional fandom moving forward.

3.7.6 Practical Implications

In addition to the aforementioned theoretical implications, the study also comes with information useful for advancing practice. Given that collective narcissism has been demonstrated to be an aspect of team identification that plays a role in explaining such outcomes as BIRGing, CORFing, and dysfunctional fan behavior (e.g., blasting, aggression, etc.), this is

not something that should be ignored by sport practitioners. Teams should consider designing specific programs and marketing messages aimed at countering the hostility displayed by this segment at sporting events. Marketing materials could include embracing the notion of a wider ingroup. Consistently priming these individuals with ideas of a division-, conference-, or league-wide ingroup could go a long way toward countering some of the dysfunctionality displayed at sporting events. Such an approach is consistent with the notion of superordinate identity, which has been shown to provide a foundation for the development of tolerant intergroup relationships (Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007; West, Pearson, Dovidio, Shelton, & Trail, 2009). This could be particularly important given that the results demonstrated that collective narcissism was negatively associated with substitution intention and thus apt to attend live events with relatively high frequency. A growing body of research has examined the escalating propensity for individuals to choose to watch sport events from the comforts of home in lieu of attending (e.g., Larkin, 2015; Larkin et al., 2015; Pritchard & Funk, 2006). For a growing number of fans, this is a result of the inappropriate and antisocial behavior characteristic of many live sporting events in this day and age (Mravic, 2013).

In addition, given the notion that collective narcissists can be collectively narcissistic about multiple ingroups with which they identify (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), teams should leverage external identities (e.g., region, city, etc.) in marketing messages with these fans (as discussed by Heere & James, 2007). This could capitalize on the grandiose images these individuals may have with regard to other relevant identities, thereby strengthening their relationship with the team. The perspective has been put forth that external identities could, in fact, be enmeshed within the superordinate identity that is the sport team identity itself (Lock & Funk, 2016). Thus, while perhaps practically difficult, it does seem leveraging, for example, the

city wherein the team resides as a related collectively narcissistic identity could potentially bear fruit. Such efforts could capitalize on the grandiose images these individuals may have with regard to other relevant identities, thereby strengthening their relationship with the team.

3.7.7 Limitations and Future Research

As with any research, the current study does come with some limitations. First, although Amazon's Mechanical Turk is considered a quality source for reliable data collection (Buhrmester et al., 2011), the pool of participants represented a convenience sample and not a true random sample. Second, discriminant validity issues prohibited the assessment of both instrumental and hostile aggression, as well as attitude importance. Third, while hierarchical regression analyses allowed for the examination of collective narcissism's impact on top of generally positive team identification, it did not allow for further insight that could provide additional information about the underlying mechanisms (e.g., mediators and moderators) of the relationship between Collective Narcissism and these outcome variables. Finally, while team identification has long been measured with a parsimonious unidimensional self-report measure, a growing body of research has called for a more complex multidimensional measure of team identification (e.g., Heere & James, 2007; Heere, James, Yoshida, & Scremin, 2011). The approach taken here with regard to the measurement of ingroup identification was akin to that used by Golec de Zavala et al. (2013) in their study designed to parse out collective narcissism from generally positive ingroup attachment. Furthermore, sport spectator behavior scholars—including authors of the studies referenced in this study's literature review—have continued to utilize the unidimensional measures successfully (e.g., Kwon et al., 2005; Larkin et al., 2015; Madrigal, 1995; Wakefield & Wann, 2006). That being said, there exists a school of thought that team identification is inherently multidimensional and should only be measured that way.

As for future research, given the discriminant validity issues in the study, future research could replicate the study with different measures of aggression and attitude importance. This could allow for further insights on the role of collective narcissism in sport team identification. Second, given that the current study provided only theoretical propositions about the underlying mechanisms of the relationships between collective narcissism and such outcomes as BIRGing, CORFing, and Dysfunctional Fandom, future studies should look for and test potential mediators and moderators that could provide further insights on the cognitions and behaviors of collectively narcissistic sport fans. Following the surprising positive relationship between collective narcissism and CORFing, future work should explore more deeply the notion of collectively narcissistic instability. In addition, given the apparent differences in fandom between collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans (e.g., positive relationship with CORFing, stronger correlation with dysfunctional fandom), future studies should explore additional differences in cognitions and behavior between collective narcissists and highly identified fans. For example, although discriminant validity issues prevented the assessment of aggression in the current study, this avenue would be one well worth seeking in future work. Finally, while a growing body of research has begun to explore how team identification develops, it is unclear how such identification may instead take the form of collective narcissism. Future work should explore the roots of this type of identification to shed light on how fans come to identify in this fashion.

Table 3.1

Study 1 Factors and Items

Factor and Items
Collective Narcissism
I wish other groups would more quickly recognize the authority of my team
My team deserves special treatment
I will never be satisfied until my team gets all it deserves
I insist upon my team getting the respect that is due to it
It really makes me angry when others criticize my team
If my team had a major say in the league the league would be a better place
I do not get upset when people do not notice the achievements of my team
Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of my team
The true worth of my team is often misunderstood
Team Identification
Being a fan of the team is important to me
I am a committed fan of the team
I consider myself a “real” fan of the team
BIRG
I like to let others know about my association with the team
I like to publicize my connection with the team
I like to tell others about my association with the team
CORF
I do not want to be associated with the team
I do not wish to be a fan of the team
I would like to disconnect myself from the team
Dysfunctional Fandom
I can’t help but complain when there is something wrong related to the team
When a coach or player makes mistakes, I let others know about it
I speak my mind when I see players or coaches screwing up
I have had confrontations with others at the team’s games when I voiced my opinion
I am one of those that stand up and yell even when others don’t like it
Instrumental Aggression
I have yelled at an official because I thought it would help my team
I have yelled at an official because I thought it would improve my team’s performance
I have yelled at an opposing player or coach because I thought it would help my team
I have yelled at an opposing player or coach because I thought it would improve my team’s performance
Hostile Aggression
I have yelled at an official because I was mad at him/her and wanted to express my anger
I have yelled at an official because I was mad at him/her and wanted to hurt him/her in some way
I have yelled at an opposing player or coach because I was mad at him/her and wanted to express my anger
I have yelled at an opposing player or coach because I was mad at him/her and wanted to hurt him/her in some way
Attitude Importance
My attitude toward the team is very important to me personally
I do not care personally about the team
I am personally very concerned about the team
Loyalty
I follow my team in all of the games

I attend all of the events of my team that I can
I am devoted to my team
I am a loyal fan of my team
I support my team even when it loses
I am trying to convince others to be fans of my team
I do not allow others to say bad things about my team
I intend to pay anything in needed (money, time, and effort) in order to be close to my team
I intend to be a fan of my team forever

Table 3.2

Study 1 Descriptive Statistics

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation
Team Identification	5.67	1.33
Collective Narcissism	3.91	1.74
BIRGing	5.07	1.45
CORFing	1.77	1.26
Dysfunctional Fandom	4.08	1.62
Loyalty	5.06	1.35

Table 3.3**Psychometric Properties of the Study 1 Variables***Factor Loadings (β), Alpha Coefficients (α), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*

Items	β	α	AVE
Team Identification		.860	0.68
Being a fan of the team is important to me	.747		
I am a committed fan of the team	.895		
I consider myself a “real” fan of the team	.828		
Collective Narcissism		.888	0.50
I wish other teams would more quickly recognize the authority of my team	.687		
My team deserves special treatment	.674		
I will never be satisfied until my team gets all it deserves	.751		
I insist upon my team getting the respect that is due to it	.755		
It really makes me angry when other criticize my team	.684		
If my team had a major say in the league, the league would be a better place	.678		
Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of my team	.687		
The true worth of my team is often misunderstood	.736		
BIRGing		.906	0.77
I like to let others know about my association with the team	.844		
I like to publicize my connection with the team	.916		
I like to tell others about my association with the team	.863		
CORFing		.808	0.59
I do not want to be associated with the team	.741		
I do not wish to be a fan of the team	.778		
I would like to disconnect myself from the team	.786		
Dysfunctional Fandom		.839	0.52
I can’t help but complain when there is something wrong related to the team	.652		
When a coach or player makes mistakes, I let others know about it	.809		
I speak my mind when I see players or coaches screwing up	.775		
I am one of those that stands up and yells even when others don’t like it	.652		
I have had confrontations with others at the team’s games when I voiced my opinion	.694		
Loyalty		.853	0.50
I follow my team in all of the games	.780		
I am devoted to my team	.854		
I am a loyal fan of my team	.822		
I support my team even when it loses	.597		

I am trying to convince others to be fans of my team	.572		
I do not allow others to say bad things about my team	.568		

Table 3.4

Correlations amongst Study 1 Latent Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Team Identification	1					
2. Collective Narcissism	.439**	1				
3. BIRGing	.680**	.580**	1			
4. CORFing	-.505**	.091	-.229*	1		
5. Dysfunctional Fandom	.578**	.695**	.671**	.041	1	
6. Loyalty	.700**	.369**	.476**	-.295**	.368**	1

Note: **p < .001; *p < .01

Table 3.5

Summary of Study 1 Hierarchical Regression Results

Variable	β	t	R	R^2	ΔR^2
BIRGing					
Step 1			.617	.380	.380
Team Identification	.617	12.26*			
Step 2			.683	.467	.087
Team Identification	.490	9.64*			
Collective Narcissism	.320	6.30*			
CORFing					
Step 1			.416	.173	.173
Team Identification	-.416	-7.16*			
Step 2			.495	.245	.072
Team Identification	-.531	-8.77*			
Collective Narcissism	.291	4.82*			
Dysfunctional Fandom					
Step 1			.501	.251	.251
Team Identification	.501	9.07*			
Step 2			.673	.453	.202
Team Identification	.309	5.99*			
Collective Narcissism	.488	9.48*			
Loyalty					
Step 1			.597	.356	.356
Team Identification	.597	11.63*			
Step 2			.604	.364	.008
Team Identification	.557	10.03*			
Collective Narcissism	.101	1.82 (NS)			

Note: $N = 247$; * $p < .001$

CHAPTER 4

STUDY 2: EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLLECTIVE NARCISSISM

In the first study, we explained how collective narcissism could potentially extend a number of literature streams on sport fan behavior commonly associated with sport team identification. While this served to elucidate some of the potential outcomes of collective narcissism (e.g., heightened degrees of dysfunctional fandom, BIRGing, and CORFing), it remains unclear how identification of this kind develops. Even within the general literature on collective narcissism, this is not something that has been explored.

Nevertheless, due to the significance of the construct, a growing body of research has been dedicated to the examination of how team identification develops (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; James, 2001; Kolbe & James, 2000; Lock, Darcy, & Taylor, 2009; Lock, Taylor, Funk, & Darcy, 2012). While this work has served to elucidate the age at which children are capable of forming a psychological commitment to a team (James, 2001), instrumental socializing agents in the development of fandom (Kolbe & James, 2000), and behavioral manifestations of developing team identification (Lock et al., 2012), the work has generally assumed that identification develops in a positive and healthy manner. As evidenced by the dysfunctional fan behavior discussed by Wakefield and Wann (2006)—behavior I argue is rooted in collective narcissism—it is clear that positive and healthy attachment is not always the case. Nevertheless, it is unclear if the development of collective narcissism is rooted in the narcissistic personality trait at the individual level, if it is influenced by the team with which the individual identifies, or if the development of initially positive team identification at some point veers off course and becomes identification more characteristic of collective narcissism. In this study, I explore the development of collective narcissism. I do so by drawing on theory and literature related to the

development of team identification, organization narcissism, and the development of narcissism as a personality trait at the individual level. Using these theories and models to inform the research, I will conduct semi-structured interviews with both collectively narcissistic and mere highly identified fans from the first study. In doing so, I aim to extend the literature on collective narcissism—both in general and as it relates to sport fandom—by illuminating the roots of collective narcissism and how identification of this nature may form and develop.

I begin by reviewing the literature on the development of general team identification. I use this as a point of departure to discuss how one may instead develop a narcissistic degree of identification with a team. In doing so, I propose three plausible ways in which generally positive team identification may instead develop into a form more characteristic of collective narcissism.

4.1 The Development of Team Identification

Early work on the development of team identification identified environmental causes, such as socializing agents (e.g., fathers and coaches), that are instrumental in the initial formation of sport fandom (James, 2001; Kolbe & James, 2000). Kolbe and James (2000) suggested this typically occurs between the ages of six and 15, while James (2001) found children as young as five years old are capable of forming a psychological commitment to a team. It should be noted, however, that the behavioral consistency characteristic of those with developed team identification does not seem to surface until children are at least nine years old (James, 2001). Kolbe and James (2000) found that when socialized into sport fandom as preteens, fathers and coaches were most influential. These agents were also prominent for adolescents, albeit not to the same degree as preteens. For adults, on the other hand, players, coaches, and *other fans* were the primary socializing agents. In addition, they found that fans did not exhibit the tendency to

practice exclusivity in group membership. Rather, they displayed accepting tendencies toward any and all individuals with a desire for membership in the group.

Interestingly, Lock et al. (2012), too, found identified fans of a sport team to exhibit tendencies to not only accept new fans, but actively recruit them, a practice they termed “spruiking” (p. 289). In this work, the researchers conducted qualitative interviews with fans of a new sport team after their first year of competition. Consistent with Lock et al. (2009), they found that team identification develops rather quickly as fans get to know the players and coaches over the course of the year. Furthermore, as the season progresses and associations with players percolate, consumption of the team becomes central to individuals’ lifestyles. This typically entails the active search for information through various forms of media both as a result of internalized team identification and to demonstrate fandom. Indeed, organizational characteristics, team success, and player attributes (e.g., attractiveness and similarity) have been identified as team-related causes of team identification (Wann, 2006).

While these environmental factors may indeed foster movement along a psychological commitment continuum, much of the initial attraction to a sport team may be rooted in psychological factors (Park, Mahony, & Kim, 2011; Wann, 2006). Park et al. (2011) conceptualized the notion of curiosity as an initial attraction mechanism for sport. They noted that while understudied in spectator sport, the uncertainty and variety inherent in this sector make the context a natural fit for the study of curiosity. Reviewing the literature on curiosity from the fields of both social psychology and business, the researchers elucidated how curiosity, because of its nature as a driver of exploratory behavior, may indeed represent a critical factor in explaining how consumers initially become interested in sport. Team identification has also been shown to stem from the psychological need for belonging and affiliation, as well as the desire to

be part of a distinctive group (Wann, 2006), the latter of which may have implications for one's propensity to develop a collectively narcissistic form of identification. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

4.2 Collective Narcissism and the Need for Group Distinctiveness

In discussing the motivational roots of team identification, Wann (2006) stated that fans are sometimes motivated to view their ingroup as distinct from outgroups and that in some cases this desire can even supersede the desire for a positive group image. Indeed, Delia (2015) found BIRGing to reflect a desire to show that one's team is better than and distinct from rival teams. This is tied to a belief that one's team is special or unique (Wann, 2006).

Collective narcissism is a term used to describe an "individual's emotional investment in an unrealistic belief in the exaggerated greatness of an in-group" (Golec de Zavala, 2011, p. 310). In other words, collective narcissists possess a highly persistent belief that their in-group is special and thus deserves preferential treatment. Cichocka et al. (2015) explained that collective narcissism is likely to foster heightened degrees of collective paranoia. Kramer (2004) described collective paranoia as exaggerated beliefs that one's group is incessantly being threatened, mistreated, or vilified by certain vindictive out-group(s). Kramer and colleagues (e.g., Kramer, 1998; Kramer & Jost, 2003; Kramer & Messick, 1998) argued that collective paranoia is associated with the categorization of oneself as a member of a *distinct* social group that is constantly scrutinized (Cichocka et al., 2015). Therefore, it seems plausible that collective narcissism may be particularly likely to develop in those fans that identify with the team due to the desire to be part of a distinct group.

4.3 Collective Narcissism by way of a Narcissistic Organization

According to Heere and James (2007), fans often consider themselves to be organizational members of the sport team(s) they support. This is potentially significant for the development of collective narcissism given that organizations can adopt collectively narcissistic identities that yield unethical behavior (Duchon & Drake, 2009). Like individuals, organizations, too, have a need for self-esteem (Brown, 1997; Duchon & Drake, 2009). Furthermore, they are motivated to preserve their collective identity and sense of legitimacy (Duchon & Drake, 2009). This can sometimes lead to the institutionalization of an extreme narcissistic identity with norms of dominance, control, and entitlement. While often rooted in the higher levels of an organization's hierarchy, such a narcissistic identity can be passed down to organizational members at all levels through an organization's culture (Duchon & Drake, 2009; Schein, 1992). According to Schein (1992), "culture is the social mechanism that will transfer the organization's identity to new members as the 'correct' way to perceive, think, and feel" (p. 4). Thus, collective narcissism in a fan base could stem from institutionalized norms of dominance, control, and entitlement projected from team leadership. Indeed, narcissism is a trait characteristic of many great leaders, as narcissists generally possess the charisma and grand vision that are paramount for successful leadership (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Furthermore, given the role of mass media as a social institution (Silverblatt, 2004) with the power to shape public opinion and influence followers (Brown & Deegan, 1998), this collectively narcissistic identity in a team's fan base may even stem from the team's media.

According to Stein (2003), narcissistic organizations possess many of the same traits as collective narcissists, including the feeling that the organization is incredibly special and unique, a pervasive sense of self-aggrandizement and entitlement, and a delusional sense that nothing of

value can possibly exist outside the organization, so much so that they are consistently flippant with regard to other organizations. These attributes are so universal and omnipresent in the organization that they become perpetually embedded in organizational functioning. Therefore, whether stemming from team leadership (e.g., ownership, coach, management) or the team's local media, a fan's collective narcissism could perhaps develop via a trickle-down effect stemming from the team itself.

4.4 Collective Narcissism as a Byproduct of a Narcissistic Personality

Narcissistic personality disorder is “characterized by a pervasive sense of grandiosity and self-importance and by a strong need to be validated and obtain attention or admiration from others” (Thomaes et al., 2009, p. 1233). One may exhibit these qualities to a degree and thus be considered narcissistic based on a self-report measure without having been clinically diagnosed as a narcissist. Such traits would include an exaggeration of one's talents and accomplishments, a feeling of superiority, a sense of entitlement, and an obsessive concern for how they are viewed by others (Thomaes et al., 2009). Thomaes et al. (2009) presented a framework for the development of narcissism as a personality trait, which—given the notion that personality characteristics may impact the internalization of one's team identity (Funk & James, 2004)—may indeed have significant implications for the development of collective narcissism. Accordingly, I briefly discuss how narcissism develops as a personality trait as a means of understanding how this may translate into a collectively narcissistic identification with a sport team.

According to Morf and Rhodewalt's (2001) self-regulatory model, narcissists possess grandiose, but unstable self-views. In an effort to validate these self-views, narcissists often take undue credit for positive outcomes, view themselves as superior to others and exaggerate their

accomplishments. This is often met with criticism or rejection from others, which causes the narcissistic individual to continuously seek renewed validation. In effect, this is a vicious cycle which is a result of an underlying effort to regulate self-esteem. In fact, Baumeister and Vohs (2001) portrayed narcissism as an addiction to self-esteem. Narcissists want to feel good and thus pursue their self-esteem “fix” by any means possible. Therefore, given that self-esteem enhancement has long been shown to underlie identification with sport teams (Wann, 2006), collective narcissism could stem from the self-esteem addiction characteristic of the narcissistic personality trait. Baumeister and Vohs (2001) argued that narcissists differ in the degree to which they pursue self-esteem. As opposed to seeking self-esteem boosts in naturally occurring situations (e.g., a team win), narcissists will artificially create such situations. This explains why a collectively narcissistic fan may actively seek out content that undermines the team and subsequently respond aggressively as a means of self-esteem restoration (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). As Thomaes et al. (2009) explained, these attempts to exhibit superiority often come at the expense of others.

Narcissism as a personality trait typically emerges well before adulthood (Thomaes et al., 2009). While children can evaluate their own self attributes as early as age two or three, they lack the ability to reflect on themselves or form conscious self-esteem until at least age eight (Harter, 2006; Thomaes et al., 2009). Between the ages of eight and adolescence are when children become motivated to form favorable (and avoid negative) self-views. Indeed, it is at this point that children become increasingly self-conscious and use impression management strategies to influence the opinions of others (Harter, 2006; Thomaes et al., 2009). Thus, consistent with Bleiberg’s (1994) notion of adolescence as a period of “narcissistic vulnerability,” it appears likely narcissism emerges between the ages of eight and adolescence.

This coincides with Kolbe and James' (2001) proclamation of a six to 15 year old age range for the emergence of a psychological connection with a sport team. Therefore, it seems plausible that collective narcissism could develop in concert with narcissism as a personality trait. According to Thomaes et al. (2009), narcissism is likely to emerge following a "derailment of normative self-development at some point in or just after late childhood" (p. 1236). This might include a loss of self-esteem from negative peer evaluation or some other blow to one's ego that causes excessive shame and anger (Thomaes et al., 2009).

There are two major schools of thought with regard to why narcissism emerges. Some scholars have argued that narcissism stems from biological temperamental traits, while others have held firm that it is rooted in socializing experiences in childhood (Thomaes et al., 2009). With regard to the former, approach and avoidance temperament are most relevant to the formation of narcissism (Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Rothbart & Bates, 2006; Thomaes et al., 2009). Approach temperament refers to "a general neurobiological sensitivity to positive or desirable stimuli" (Thomaes et al., p. 1237). It has been reported that approach temperament in adolescence is tied to risk taking behavior and a predisposition to substance abuse (Quevedo, Benning, Gunnar, & Dahl, 2009; Thomaes et al., 2009). In contrast to approach temperament, avoidance temperament refers to "a general neurobiological sensitivity to *negative* or undesirable stimuli" (Thomaes et al., 2009, p. 1238). Avoidance temperament is often evidenced by a tendency to experience negative emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness (Rothbart et al., 2000; Thomaes et al., 2009). Narcissists are believed to be high in approach temperament because they display many of the behavioral (e.g., risk taking, impulsivity, etc.) and personality (e.g., extraversion, competitiveness, achievement orientation, etc.) characteristics traditionally exemplified by those with an approach temperament (Thomaes et al., 2009). Such characteristics

are also frequently exemplified by collective narcissists with regard to their ingroup (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Also consistent with those high in approach temperament, narcissists are highly goal-oriented and are sensitive to rewards (Thomaes et al., 2009). Thus, it is not surprising that narcissism has been shown to be associated with high self-reported approach temperament measures (Foster & Trimm, 2008). Narcissists do sometimes still display the negative emotions characteristic of avoidance temperament, leading Thomaes et al. (2009) to claim that those high in *both* approach and avoidance temperament display what is known as covert narcissism, which is evidenced by high degrees of self-absorption, introversion, and an inclination to experience negative emotions (e.g., shame), leading such individuals to withdraw from others. Those high in approach temperament, but low in avoidance temperament, are known as overt narcissists (Thomaes et al., 2009). Such individuals are “self-absorbed extraverts prone to deny or block negative experience from conscious awareness by becoming angry, and to express anger in the form of aggression against others” (Bushman et al., 2009; Thomaes et al., 2009, p. 1234).

It is thought that such biological temperamental traits interact with one’s environmentally based experiences during development to jointly affect the development of narcissism (or lack thereof) over time (Thomaes et al., 2009). Two theories have been put forward dealing with the socializing experiences linked to narcissism, both dealing with parent-child relationships. Some theorists argue that overvaluation and overindulgence on the part of parents may serve to engender narcissistic traits in their children (Thomaes et al., 2009; Twenge, 2006). This is akin to putting one’s child on a pedestal, wherein a child is made to feel they are special and unique from other children, and showered with praise for any and all efforts. This, in turn, leads to children developing grandiose self-views, a sense of entitlement, and a dependence on external

validation. In contrast, other theorists suggest that “parental coldness, extremely high expectations, and lack of support may lead to narcissism” (Kohut, 1977; Thomaes et al., 2009, p. 1239). Proponents of this view hold that children create inflated self-views in an effort to shield themselves from feelings of rejection and low self-worth. This may also be tied to a desire for positive attention from others to make up for their lackluster parental relationship.

Thomaes et al. (2009) explained that empirical support has been found for both theories. Given that “collective narcissism is seen as an extension of individual narcissism to the social aspects of self” (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, p. 1075), and fandom develops around the same time period in a child’s life as does narcissism (Kolbe & James, 2001), I posit that collective narcissism may simply represent a group-related manifestation of a fan’s individual narcissism. Nevertheless, individual and collective narcissism are related but distinct variables (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Since one can be narcissistic at the individual, but not collective level, and vice versa (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), I propose that the development of collective narcissism on the part of sport fans could also be tied to fandom rooted in an excessive need for group distinctiveness, and/or a trickle-down effect, whereby fans become collectively narcissistic indirectly by embracing the culture imparted by the team for whom they root and/or their local media. These various theories serve as a guide as I explore the development of collective narcissism in sport fans.

4.5 Methods

To explore the development of collective narcissism, semi-structured interviews were conducted with self-reported collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans obtained from the first study as measured by Golec de Zavala et al.’s (2009) scale. Qualitative research methods were chosen due to their suitability for answering ‘why’ questions (Fylan, 2005). For example,

rather than trying to quantify the broad impact of collective narcissism—as was the case in the first study—I was interested in exploring the roots of this phenomenon and discovering *why* identification of this nature may emerge rather than generally positive team identification. Furthermore, interviews afforded me the opportunity to engage in a discussion that ultimately provided a rich understanding of participants’ experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Scholars have argued that the primary purpose of qualitative research is to “describe human experience as it is lived” (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989, p. 136). Through probing research subjects to reflect on previously repressed or unreflected experiences, researchers have the ability to discover previously veiled patterns (Thompson et al., 1989). I feel the use of semi-structured interviews allowed for the provision of novel insight on this phenomenon, which is important given the lack of research or understanding on how collective narcissism develops,

4.5.1 Participants and Procedure

Interviews were conducted by phone with self-reported collective narcissists from the first study, as measured by Golec de Zavala et al.’s (2009) and Robinson et al.’s (2004) scales. This approach to participant selection ensured the provision of participants best able to help understand the questions of interest (Creswell, 2009). These individuals were initially recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to take part in a survey that contained the collective narcissism and team identification measures, as well as measures of other variables of interest in the study. A question was included on this survey requesting an email address at which participants could be contacted to participate in a follow up study (i.e., the current study). An email was sent to those scoring particularly high on the collective narcissism measure requesting participation in a 30-45 minute interview. I emailed those scoring highest on the Collective Narcissism measure (and thus Team Identification) first for the collective narcissists group, and those scoring high on

Team Identification, but below the midpoint (on a 7-point scale) on Collective Narcissism for the highly identified group. In an effort to increase participation, a \$25 Amazon gift card was offered to each participant. In the email, I explained a bit more about the purpose of the study.

Specifically, I explained that I am interested in the individual's relationship with their favorite sport team. In addition, I reminded each participant that participation was voluntary, but that doing so would result in the provision of a \$25 Amazon gift card. A copy of the informed consent was also included.

At the start of each interview, I ensured each participant that they had the opportunity to review the consent form and ask any questions that may remain. In addition, each participant was reminded that an audio recording of the interview would be kept. Lastly, they were informed that they had the ability to withdraw from the study at any time, but that doing so would result in the forfeiture of eligibility for the \$25 Amazon gift card. Upon the conclusion of each interview, I summarized the content of the interview to the participant (i.e., performed a member check; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). As Fylan (2005) explained, doing so affords the researcher the opportunity to seek confirmation from the interviewee with regard to whether or not their statements were interpreted correctly. In essence, this served the purpose of an immediate validity check. The initial target sample size for each group was 15 and the intent was to only continue interviews past that point if it was evident that saturation had not yet been reached. Given that common themes emerged but additional data was not producing any additional themes (McCracken, 1988) after reaching 15 interviews in each group, no additional interviews were conducted.

4.5.2 Materials and Analysis

Prior to beginning the interviews, a two-step process was used to develop the interview guide. In the first step, the aforementioned theory and literature was used as a means of generating questions to be included in the guide (e.g., McCracken, 1988). Subsequently, a colleague with expertise in sport consumer behavior reviewed the guide, making suggestions for additional questions that may be of use to elicit insights central to the phenomenon. The interview guide was included in the submission to the university's Institutional Review Board and was ultimately granted full approval. A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix A. The interview guide served as the core foundation of the interviews; however, as prescribed by Fylan (2005), the conversation remained free to vary, and open to the pursuit of topics and thoughts raised by the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Moreover, an on-going coding process was used, wherein novel ideas raised by participants were pursued in subsequent interviews with other participants, so as to explore the extent to which these ideas may or may not emerge as prevailing themes across interviews.

The interviews typically lasted between 30 and 50 minutes. I occasionally engaged in peer debriefing. This process consisted of a critical review of the project and its findings with individuals detached from the study (Creswell, 2009). According to Rossman and Rallis (2012) a peer debriefer “serves as an intellectual watchdog for you as you modify design decisions, develop possible analytic categories, and build an explanation for the phenomenon of interest” (p. 65). Furthermore, the process can serve the purpose of enhancing trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Prior to the analysis, the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim to produce a comprehensive and accurate written record of each session. Per the recommendation of Gibbs (2007), after each

interview was transcribed, the written record was checked for accuracy to ensure it did not contain any mistakes.

A coding process akin to those discussed by Creswell (2009), Tesch (1990), and Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2012) was used. Specifically, I engaged in an inductive data analysis, wherein patterns, categories, and themes were built “from the bottom up, by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information (Creswell, 2009, p. 175). Participants were viewed as knowledgeable agents (Gioia et al., 2012), and thus, at the initial stage, the underlying meaning from the perspective of each participant was sought (Tesch, 1990). As the research proceeded, I searched for similarities and differences, parsing the information into more abstract categories (e.g., Creswell, 2009; Gioia et al., 2012). In doing so, I remained mindful of the theory and literature informing the study, so as to maintain some level of theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978). Data was regularly compared with the codes to ensure there were no inconsistencies in the definition or meaning of codes throughout the process (Gibbs, 2007). Finally, the codes were compared and discussed with another member of the team to determine intercoder agreement (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

4.5.3 Participant Characteristics

I recruited 15 participants for each group. For the Collective Narcissist group, scores on the measure of Collective Narcissism ranged from an average of 5.125 to an average of 7, with a total group average of 6.0 (on a 7-point scale). The Team Identification score ranged from an average of 5 to an average of 7, with a total group average of 6.5 on this measure. This provided me with a group I could be reasonably certain was at least relatively collectively narcissistic, given that not one person in the group fell below 5 (out of 7) on the Collective Narcissism scale and on average these individuals scored approximately 6 (out of 7). For the highly identified (but

not collectively narcissistic) group, scores on the Collective Narcissism measure ranged from an average of 1.375 (on a 7-point scale) to 3.75, with a total group average of 3.0 on this measure. The Team Identification scores ranged from an average of 5 to an average of 7, with a total group average of 6.1. This provided me with a group that I could be reasonably certain was not particularly collectively narcissistic, but yet was still very much invested in the team, as evidenced by their 6.1 average (out of 7) on Team Identification.

There was a pretty good mix of ages in both groups. In the Collective Narcissists group, there were seven participants 30 years old or younger, while the remaining eight were over 30 years old. The average age in this group was 31 years old. In the Highly Identified group, the average age was slightly older—35 years old—but there remained a strong mix of experience and youth, with six participants checking in at 30 years or younger and the remaining nine over 30 years of age. On the whole, females were underrepresented, with just three participants (or 20% of the sample) in each group identifying in this fashion. It is also worth noting that there was a good mix of people in each group who lived their whole life in the hometown of their favorite team and others who lived in the town and then ultimately moved.

4.6 Results

Insights gleaned from the analysis provide evidence of a number of distinct drivers of collectively narcissistic team attachment generally not shared by mere highly identified fans. While there were some consistencies between the two groups, collective narcissists differed from their non-narcissistic counterparts on a number of key factors. Results indicate that collective narcissists' identification with their favorite teams is driven by an incessant desire to view the team as unique, a sense of ingroup exclusivity, a pervasive feeling of being under scrutiny from external parties, and a chronic underdog mentality marked by a need to prove the doubters

wrong. In the sections that follow, I first discuss the similarities—drivers of team attachment shared by both groups—many of which are consistent with results from past literature on the development of team identification (e.g., Kolbe & James, 2000; Lock et al., 2009, 2012). Subsequently, I discuss each of the themes unique to collective narcissists noted above, as well as how mere highly identified fans compare.

4.6.1 Similarities

As the interviews unfolded, it became clear that both the collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans shared a number of qualities related to their sport fandom. For the most part, participants in both groups had been fans since childhood and follow the team regularly through watching on television, attending games, and consuming content on the internet. Participants on both sides reported enjoyment when their favorite team is praised and also indicated they experience some level of vicarious achievement. Furthermore, both sides expressed enjoyment with regard to being around other fans of their favorite team, with one collectively narcissistic Oakland Raiders fan remarking, “Raiders fans are some of the best people in the world.” Despite the wide array of characteristics these two groups shared, there were four in particular that stood out as *drivers* of fandom for both collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans alike. These include socialization agents, player attachment, player personas, and rivalries.

4.6.1.1 Socialization Agents

In discussing the roots of their attachment to their favorite team(s), both collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans alike, recounted early memories of following the team with family members. For example, a collectively narcissistic fan of the Green Bay Packers explained that his attachment to the team is rooted in watching games with his parents early on in

his life. He explained that, “my mom and dad were big Packer fans. So, they had it on. And I was just sort of born into it. So just watching games with them. As early as I can remember, that’s what we did on Sunday.” Similarly, a non-narcissistic Bears fan explained that he initially became a fan of the team via his family. He notes, “it’s kind of just been engrained in my family that in this area we’re Bears fans. You know, nothing out of the ordinary...Just in this family, we’re Bears fans.” These findings are consistent with previous literature which has found father figures in particular to be the most impactful force in fostering initial fandom in children (James, 2001; Kolbe & James, 2000).

4.6.1.2 Player Personas

Another prominent driver that influenced the development of team identification in both groups was the construction of player personas. Consistent with the findings of Lock et al. (2012), these highly identified fans grew increasingly more attached to the team as they got to know the players on a seemingly personal level. Interestingly, collective narcissists identified this as a critical factor in the advancement of their attachment as well. A collectively narcissistic Philadelphia Phillies fan discusses this notion in the comment below.

I would say it was kind of the off the field personalities (that made me connect more deeply with the team). Like, Shane Victorino established himself as kind of the team jokester, and you would see that sort of thing after the game. He would be the one pieing the person who hit a walk-off home run. Stuff like that. And when they would do press conferences, you would see who had the charisma to be funny...So you really do establish it and Chase Utley, not one for many words, but I think that was one of the things that appealed to me. He didn’t have much to say, and everything he showed was on-field performance.

Similarly, a highly identified but non-narcissistic Cleveland Browns fan indicated that his attachment to the Browns grew by virtue of the strong personalities that were on the team when he initially became a fan, something that paled in comparison to other Cleveland teams.

You know, between (Bernie) Kosar, Dixon, all those guys...it was just...because they were really strong personalities. That's what made the team. There weren't—I mean there's certain teams throughout, liking teams in Cleveland—but there weren't a lot of strong personalities, people you enjoy watching play and things. But during those years they really were and that kind of cemented feelings for the team.

Lock et al.'s (2012) notion of player personas was tied to the development of identification with a brand new team. Results of the current study indicate that, for both collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans alike, the opportunity to observe players' genuine personalities, whatever they may be, is instrumental in the development of team attachment even for established teams. Extending on the work of Lock et al. (2012), this was the case even for established star players (e.g., Bernie Kozar, Chase Utley, etc.).

4.6.1.3 Player Attachment

Independent of player personas, the results indicate that the formation of *attachment* to certain players can in turn increase attachment to the team as a whole. This was consistent across both collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans. A collectively narcissistic Oakland Raiders fan suggested he may not have identified as strongly as he did if it were not for certain players to whom he was attached:

I think it's pretty important. I mean I'm not entirely sure that I would have identified as much as I did when I was a kid if my dad had never gotten me Jack Tatum's book. And you know I never would have learned about guys like Dave Otto, Jack Casper, um, Ken Stabler, you know, the historical greats. You know, when I was a kid, like, Tim Brown, Jerry Rice...I remember when I was a kid Jerry Rice came over from the Niners and that was huge.

A highly identified but non-narcissistic Philadelphia 76ers fan indicated that in spite of the team's lack of success recently, he remains prideful and attached to the team and this largely stems from his attachment and appreciation for individual players.

A lot of my passion for the team comes from the players. I like certain players. I follow the players and gradually I just started following the team. I remember a couple years ago, we still had Andre Iguodala. I think he was a pretty decent player. Uh...like back

then...looking back through history, we had Allen Iverson, we also had Julius Erving, who was probably in the top 3 players of all time. So, just looking back through history, that really attracts me...because I never realized we have that many great players considering how trashy we are today.

In short, learning about players' personalities and becoming attached surfaced as a primary driver of team identification for both collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans. While it has to this point not been made explicitly clear in the literature whether team attachment stems from initial attachment to players or vice versa, it seems that in at least a number of participants in this study, player attachment was a primary source of team identification.

4.6.1.4 Rivalries

In addition to socialization agents and player-derived attachment—factors uncovered in previous research on the development of team identification—participants in the current study also indicated that rivalries influenced their attachment to the team. While not necessarily the determining factor impacting attachment, they indicated that it can help foster more deep-rooted connections. For example, a collectively narcissistic Los Angeles Lakers fan alludes to such a notion below:

Definitely the rivalry with the Celtics. That was...when they beat us in 2008 it was one of the hardest losses of my life. Probably the hardest I've ever experienced. So it made it so sweet when we beat them in 2010. Boston/LA is the classic rivalry in the NBA. It used to be in like in the 80s. And it was cool to experience that. I think other than that...I mean we have—I know the Clippers want to think they're a rival now (laughs). It's...they're a nice side story, but...they'll never be us. You know we've kind of had some other rivals through the years...the Spurs, the Mavericks...but the Boston rivalry has always been the big one. I will say that probably that rivalry between 2008 and 10...that brought my fandom to an even higher level.

While not the source of initial fandom, this participant indicated that the rivalry was a driver in the advancement of her attachment to the team. Interestingly, a mere highly identified Boston

Red Sox fan indicated that not only did the rivalry with the New York Yankees increase fandom, but it was, in fact, the source of his initial identification with the team.

I think the rivalry (with the Yankees) very much was...like it had to do with why I became a Red Sox fan in the first place. So, I guess the origin-point of my fandom was very much influenced by the rivalry. And it also I think during those early years—it was like the main narrative that kept things interesting, kept things...made it feel as if something was at stake...Um because Red Sox fans have always been sort of upset about the Yankees' success, while the Red Sox went so long without any success. But 2004 was a rather pivotal moment because the Red Sox finally won a World Series and they won it in a rather story book fashion...that team...like it was perfect. Like I saw an HBO advertisement with Bill Simmons, the famous sports journalist, and he's just saying all these things and one of them was "I believe the 2004 playoffs were an act of God." And just like...and that does I think resonate with a lot of Red Sox fans. But from that moment...the rivalry was just never really the same. So, I think maybe, if I'm less of an intense Red Sox fan, it probably has to do with the fact that the rivalry is no longer as intense as it used to be.

In sum, common across both collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans, rivalries between their favorite team and a specific adversary fueled their attachment to the team. In a similar vein to the mere highly identified Red Sox fan quoted above, a collectively narcissistic Oakland Raiders fan spoke about Northern California's bay area rivalry with the San Francisco 49ers and identifying not just as an Oakland Raiders fan but also as "not a 49ers fan," and how this has, in large part, fueled his fan identity through the years. It is worth noting that while rivalries were important in the development of identification for both groups, collective narcissists were a bit more aggressive to this end. For example, a collectively narcissistic participant indicated "it is tough to have a reasonable conversation with (fans of a rival team)." In contrast, mere highly identified fans, for the most part, were more grounded about it and had the tendency to appreciate rivalries for what they are. Nevertheless, while it would seem interactions with a rival outgroup could indeed bring out the worst in collective narcissists—

something that will be explored later—even non-narcissists in this study indicated rivalries were an instrumental factor influencing their attachment.

4.6.2 Unique Drivers of Collectively Narcissistic Identification

Despite the emergence of these factors common to both collective narcissists and highly identified fans, the perspectives expressed by collective narcissists revealed a number of critical differences regarding what drives their fandom. These drivers were marked by instability and could also be construed as manufactured by the individual, perhaps to support a fragile ego. In the following section, I discuss these four themes, while also explaining how mere highly identified fans differed. In addition, I draw parallels between these insights and our existing knowledge of collective narcissism, so as to highlight where the current findings build on the extant collective narcissism literature.

4.6.2.1 Pervasive Need to View the Team as Unique

Without exception, the collectively narcissistic participants exhibited a prevailing need to view the team as unique. This went well beyond the long-standing notion—derivative of social identity theory—wherein highly identified individuals strive to identify as part of a distinct group. This segment went to great lengths to construe their team as a highly unique entity, standing in stark contrast to others in the league, and identified these factors perceived as unique and distinct from outgroups as influential in the development of their attachment to the team. Generally speaking, participants perceived their favorite team as unique and distinct from rivals in three typical ways: history, culture, and fan bases.

In speaking with participants, it was evident that history was a large source of perceived group distinctiveness. Moreover, it was immediately clear that this was a source of pride that

really drove their attachment with the team. As Brad describes below, the Detroit Red Wings' history is incredibly unique within the context of the NHL:

I would say that the history of the team being one of the most winningest franchises in the league. They are one of the original 6 teams. You know, when the league started there were just six teams and they were one of them. Um, the logo is widely regarded as one of the most iconic or branded logos in all of sports, not just hockey. So, I would say that they're unique. I mean, obviously, there's 30 teams now. So, being a pro hockey team I guess isn't unique. But, how they've branded themselves, the deep level of history, and then the iconic players they've had makes them a unique franchise for sure.

Sandy echoed this sentiment in talking about her attachment to the Lakers:

They're incredibly unique. They're probably, like I said, one of, if not the most iconic team in sports. The logo, the colors, the...just the team in general...the name, the history, the players...they are the NBA's marquee franchise. The league is at its best when the Lakers are winning championships. Like right now—and they will only be down for so long—right now, everyone I talk to thinks the NBA is boring. There can be teams like the Warriors and Thunder and Cleveland and whoever else...and it's nice for them to win a championship or compete for a championship or whatever, but they'll never be the Lakers.

She continues: “I would say that, definitely, the Lakers' image has been a huge part of my obsession with this team through the years.” In addition to history, many collectively narcissistic fans also discussed how their favorite team's culture was incredibly unique and also contributed to a feeling of group distinctiveness and team attachment through the years. A comment by Brian, a New England Patriots fan, demonstrates this phenomenon quite aptly:

I think teams are catching on, when they see the Patriots are interested, then it's like “oh crap...I'm also interested. Why are they interested? I should be interested too.” So I think in that way, these teams try to copy cat the philosophy. So I think that's why for a long time we saw a lot of front office guys from the Patriots...you know, Scott Pioli, you know the guy the Lions hired, their GM...Bob Quinn or something? Does that sound familiar? I don't know. But, you see these teams take from our tree to try to copy that success, and it's not like that. Um, so yeah, they're unique in a lot of ways. Like I said, they establish value for a guy, and if he doesn't fit with that value then he's gone. It's that simple. And they have a certain type of player they want, and if you're not that type of player, you're gone. Or we're not drafting you. Um, you know, and I think the Patriots love to find value in guys. Corey Dillon...no one wanted Corey Dillon. Corey Dillon comes here...he's the leading rusher and they win the Super Bowl. Um, you know, nobody wanted Randy Moss. He was sitting around in Oakland, pouting, had the worst

season of his career. Raiders trade him for a 4th round pick. Then he comes here, we go to the Super Bowl, and he has the record for most touchdowns and receiving yards in a season in NFL history.

Brian continues:

It's definitely helped (form my attachment to the team). I think that had led to the "In Bill we trust" mentality. Or "Trust the hoodie" or whatever shirt from Barstool Sports you want to see. Um, I think that's very much a real thing. I think kind of like what the Yankees did for a while when they won 4 out of 5. It's like, okay, whatever you guys are doing, it turns out to be gold. So, yeah...I'm all for it. Trust, trust, trust, trust. Um, so it's the same thing with the Patriots.

Mike, a Green Bay Packers fan, expressed a similar point of view to Brian. However, despite acknowledging that there were indeed other impressive franchises in the National Football League, Mike explained that, as he sees it, even the other elite franchises in the league pale in comparison and cannot match the successful, winning culture exhibited by the Green Bay Packers:

Like I said before, they're the best run organization in the NFL. Maybe in sports...although it's tough to compare across sports. Um, but yeah...they're...they have an eye for talent and picking the right players at the right time. They're patient, well run, smart, hard working...and no nonsense. They pick the right players, but not just the right ones on the field. They pick the right guys to represent the team off the field as well. That's a big part of it. That's something that like...you know successful organizations like I've mentioned before—the Patriots, the Ravens, the Steelers. Well...the Patriots are constantly involved in cheating scandals. The Steelers have a quarterback accused of rape, a wide receiver suspended for drugs. The Ravens have a running back proven to be a wife beater, a player who was accused of murder. I mean...the Packers have none of that. They have all of the same success in selecting players and acquiring talent without any of the nonsense. It's the perfect NFL culture.

In addition to the team's culture, Mike also argued that the Green Bay Packers' fans have developed a culture unique from other teams in the NFL, and this, too, has contributed to the feeling of group uniqueness and attachment felt with regard to the team:

I think there are other loyal fan bases too. No doubt. Um, you know, I know Bears fans are incredibly loyal, for example. I think Cowboys' fans are fair-weather...to be honest with you. And I've lived here now (in Dallas)...I've been here. I've seen it. They go 11-5 a few years ago, make the playoffs, have some success, people are all about them. Last

year, Romo goes down, Dez goes down, the team goes into the toilet, you don't hear a peep. Which is how it should be (laughs). Um, no, but...there are other loyal fan bases, but not to the level of the Packers. And again, show me another group of fans that actually has an investment...partial ownership stake...in the team. You can't.

Sandy echoed this sentiment, suggesting Saints' fans are unique from others in the league and the players feel this too. Collectively, this has been a powerful source of attachment to the team:

That's actually one thing we pride ourselves on. We feel like we have a really, really, really strong fan base. We aren't the type of fans to try and start arguments to try and start fights. Um, when we do smack talk, it's in good fun and we don't say anything hurtful toward the other teams. And the one thing about Saints fans that sets us apart from other fans is when we tailgate, we don't just tailgate, we have second lines. That's a really big part of New Orleans culture. I remember when we went to Miami, we second lined. Everyone thought it was so weird. They were in shock by what was going on because they had never seen anything like this. So, we second lined down the street, um, in Miami, with New Orleans bands playing, live music. You know, we had umbrellas that we use to second line, black and gold umbrellas, and we actually give them to people on the street so they can join in. So, we're just a really unique fan base.

She continues:

I believe the Saints are unique in terms of the fan following. That sets them apart from every other team. We're such weird people here. I remember players would say this is a different experience...this is a different animal. So, yeah, I believe the fans set them apart.

One interesting thing to note about the collective narcissists' perception of team uniqueness and distinctiveness is that their assertions in this regard were very quick and definitive. When asked about the notion, they answered immediately with decisive examples of group distinctiveness that clearly served as a source of great pride. One such example is Mike's summary of Green Bay Packers' uniqueness, which encompasses history, culture, and fan base, all together making them the "gold standard in the NFL," from his point of view:

Oh definitely. They're incredibly unique. You know, like I've said, they're the gold standard in the NFL. They're probably the best run organization in the NFL. They have a long history of great coaches and players. You know, Vince Lombardi, Mike Holmgren, Mike McCarthy now. You know, all Super Bowl winning coaches. The quarterbacks...Bart Starr, Favre, Rodgers. Name another team with that kind of rich

quarterback history. Um...they're the only team to sell an ownership stake in the organization to the fans. That's just so cool. It really is a team owned and operated by the fans. We are the most important stakeholder and the team knows it. They're unique in so many different ways. Um, you know, both the current team and throughout history. Show me another team that is on that level. I don't think you can.

While there were critical exceptions, by and large, the mere highly identified fans did not view their favorite teams as particularly unique from others in the respective leagues. Even when they did, it was typically something they needed to ponder for a few moments before identifying factors that could be construed as unique. In many of these cases, the individuals would identify a potential unique quality, but quickly qualify it by suggesting that this may also be something that other teams could boast. When asked about the notion of team uniqueness with respect to the Green Bay Packers, Lindsey stated, "I think there's talent on every team. I think there's people on every team. I just happen to prefer them, but I don't think they're anything like over the top unique." Similarly, Ron, a Minnesota Twins fan, and Bart, a Baltimore Orioles fan, suggested that every team could boast some unique quality, but that there's nothing really that sets their team apart:

Ron: Not really. I mean unique in the sense that every team is unique. Every team has a different character. Certainly, obviously, they have a different history, but...Certainly, I would say the Yankees are unique. The Twins are not unique, I don't think. Um, yeah, I don't think there's anything really meaningful that distinguishes them from other teams in their sport or in any sport. Yeah, I'd be hard pressed to really say they're unique.

Bart: Hmm...like an Orioles exceptionalism? Let's see...I guess there's things that make every team unique. I guess with the Orioles I feel like they have a history of good players starting in the 1950s, but they're a newer team than a lot of the other teams, especially in the division. And since it's kind of....I'm not sure what sets them apart.

Both Bart and Lindsey expressed similar sentiments with regard to their teams' fan bases:

Lindsey: I don't know how much different they are, but they're very passionate. If you've seen some of the comments on their news articles and stuff...generally they're pretty nice, but you do see some people who are cranky and angry, and I mean I think generally they appreciate the team.

When asked to describe Baltimore Orioles' fans, Bart described them, but quickly indicated these qualities are not unlike fans of other teams (i.e., the Boston Red Sox):

I feel like they're kind of hard-nosed and realistic. Especially after so many years of not doing well. It always felt like Orioles fans kind of had a lot in common with Red Sox fans, in how they viewed themselves as the underdogs most of the time.

Bart expressed a similar sentiment in discussing the Orioles' culture. He suggested that they make the most of limited resources, but other teams do the same:

Well, I would say unusual because I feel like in recent years, I feel like Tampa has really gotten to be known as the ultimate example of a team with very little money who managed to play above their means, and also the Oakland A's as well. So, I feel like the Orioles don't really have a corner on that reputation, but I still like to think they make a lot out of the limited resources that they have.

A critical exception to mere highly identified fans' perceptions of group distinctiveness and uniqueness was found in the comments of Jamie, a Philadelphia 76ers fan:

Unique??? I'd have to think about that. I mean I don't think we're that unique. Well...we are one of only a few teams that have won a championship. Like I think there are only 8 teams in the league that have won at least one championship, and we have 2 or 3, so that makes us unique. We also have a lot of great historical players that played on our team, and not a lot of teams have that. We also have a very passionate fan base. Our fans are very passionate. And we're located in Philadelphia, which is a very historical city.

In sum, the preceding quotes, provided by both collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans alike, exhibit the tendency for collective narcissists to identify with their team in part to be a member of a distinct group, unique from others in the respective league. While mere highly identified fans did in some cases express the view that their team is unique and this serves as a source of attachment, this was not nearly as widespread, nor were they as decisive and definitive. Examples of this include Ron's assertion that the Twins were unique only "in the sense that every team is unique," as well as Jamie's hesitation to suggest the Philadelphia 76ers were unique before concluding that they were unique in their history and passionate fan base. As

a whole, the collective narcissists exhibited a far greater need to perceive the team as unique and distinct from others, and this tendency is in line with scholars' notions of identification for the sake of being a part of a distinct group (e.g., Wann, 2006), particularly for collective narcissists (e.g., Cichocka et al., 2015). Given the current findings, I would argue that, while highly identified fans, via the tenets of social identity theory, do indeed identify as part of a distinct group, collective narcissists appear to take this to a different level, identifying with a perceived unique entity in and of itself.

4.6.2.2 Chronic Sense of Scrutiny

A common theme that popped up in the interviews is that collective narcissists were considerably more sensitive to criticism than mere highly identified fans. This was not surprising, as it is something consistent across the extant literature on collective narcissism (e.g., Golec de Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala et al., 2013a, 2013b). However, in more than half of the interviews with collective narcissists, the perception of the team being under constant scrutiny emerged. Moreover, it was identified as a driver of fandom and team attachment in these individuals. Brian discusses this concept in relation to his Patriots' fandom in the following statement:

So, I guess what I can say is this must have been what it felt like to be a Yankees fan in the 90s. You know? You're the villain, everyone hates you, you know it, this isn't like it's a façade that's being created in a fan's head. This is well documented. Um, you know, from Trent Dilfer saying Brady's toast, uh, to whoever. Like go Google "Patriots trash talking" and you'll see all these ESPN analysts come up. Um, you know, it's just...it's part of the territory of winning. And unfortunately I think it's one of those things that people will appreciate when it's gone. You know? People outside of Patriot Nation, I mean. Because I don't think we'll see anything like this ever again.

Brian continues below, explaining how the constant scrutiny the team is under actually serves, at least on some level, as a source of attachment:

I think it's actually increased my attachment. Um, you know, my attachment was strong to begin with, but I think it's higher, because, you know, it's not fun being poked at all the time. Like, you poke the bear, eventually he's going to eat you. And that's kind of how I feel about being a Patriots fan. But at the same time, it makes me laugh, and I actually kind of get joy out of it, with how many people dislike the Patriots. It just shows other peoples' jealousy, at times misunderstanding of what's going on, you know?

This phenomenon was not unique to Brian's Patriots fandom. Rather, fans of a variety of teams in the NFL expressed a similar sentiment in discussing their own perceptions of their favorite teams. Interestingly, much of this notion of scrutiny stemmed from me asking them about how the team is covered in the media. Initially, I was trying to find out if there was any sort of 'trickle-down effect,' wherein collective narcissism stems from a collectively narcissistic organization and/or team media (as noted in the literature review). However, consistently, across participants, this pervasive feeling of the team being scrutinized emerged. A quartet of NFL fans discuss this notion below:

Bonnie: When "BountyGate" happened, they were all about "punish the Saints! Horrible people in that organization! Scammers! They're this and they're that... what they did to Brett Favre." I sit there thinking about how they're not commenting on the fact that other teams do the same exact thing. You know, other teams have bounties. It's been a part of the NFL culture forever. It just so happened that the Saints got caught. So, I feel if you're going to punish the Saints, punish every single team that has participated in it. Investigate every team and see if they've done something like that. But, no, they needed a fall guy, and that was the Saints. And the national media kept wanting to pump it into people's heads that, you know, the Saints they are thugs and they're horrible people and they try to hurt people. And in my opinion it's all based off the fact that the Saints destroyed Brett Favre's chance to go to the Super Bowl that year because everybody thought that was the year that Favre would go to the Super Bowl. When the Saints destroyed that... oh no... just a lot of push back.

Chris: They (the Cowboys) know they're under the microscope, but they aren't going to change who they are, or the way they operate, or how they act, for anybody. And I love that about them.

Mike: (The media coverage is) generally positive. I mean, I think most of what I read for blogs is... it's written by other fans. And of course we get mad and upset when the team is playing poorly. But, you know, that's... you know that's few and far between. Um, we're just passionate fans that loves to see our Packers play well. And they usually do. Um, you know, sometimes the national guys can get a little salty. And I think it's... you know a lot

of these national guys are former players, and it's really just jealousy. Jealous they weren't a part of an organization like the Packers. And some of the other guys...even guys that weren't players...they just—whatever team they're going for—probably just jealous of Packers fans and what we've been able to experience over the years. So it's just sour grapes I think...I'd say it (has influenced my fandom). I don't mind being hated. It's...it's kind of almost like a sign of respect. They hate us because they want what we have. Um, and so it's sort of a source of pride. It's something I can hang my hat on as a fan. It's like...almost validation in a way. You know what I mean?

Steve: You realize the national view of your team is a lot more...depressing. So, you, for a long time it would be like "there's the Raiders...making a stupid call again." And it's just like, dude, you've been trashing my team for 12 years. And I respect your view as a sports journalist, but the Raiders haven't done anything right since 2002 according to this guy. So, I always keep that in mind when I'm reading football articles. It's like, who is the author? Does this guy have a bit of a bias?

The preceding comments all highlight the idea of being "under the microscope" for one reason or another. It may be due to success, culture, style of play, perpetual ineptitude, etc. Regardless, these fans perceive it as a consistent and unjustified view of their team. Accordingly, this fosters an increased bond with the team and something of an "us against them" mentality. While these fans did not state explicitly that they felt this scrutiny was unique to their team, I got the sense that in most cases they did. However, Dean, a Montreal Canadiens fan, stated unequivocally that, at least in the context of the National Hockey League, his team is scrutinized unlike any other:

Well, it depends who you're talking about. You know, I live here in New England and so a lot of the coverage I have access to is Boston Bruins fans...Boston Bruins media. So, I mean, and I'll watch ESPN, but they barely even talk about hockey until the playoffs. Either way, whether it be the Boston media, ESPN, it doesn't matter...we're held to a higher standard.

When pressed to clarify what he meant by being held to a higher standard, Dean continued:

Just...like everything. You turn on ESPN and they never have anything positive to say about us. Obviously, you know, the Boston media hates us, and I get it...it's...you know it's a rivalry. But, no other team gets this kind of treatment. Maybe it's the success we've had throughout history. You know, the Phoenix Coyotes, the Tampa Bay Lightning...nobody cares what's going on with them.

When asked about the media coverage of their favorite teams and/or how they feel when the team is criticized, mere highly identified fans generally responded much differently. They were generally able to brush it off and in some cases even see the merit in the criticism. This mentality characterizes Lindsey's feelings as she stated, "and I also think the critiques that are out there...like if a player has a bad game, I think it's fine to say so. I don't think they've ever been picked on or held to the fire either way." Ron expressed a similar view, noting that it would bother him, not because it was unjustified, but because it was true:

I think if it bothers me, it bothers me because I think it's true. Like if someone says the Twins are never going to win again, it would bother me not because somebody said it or because somebody had a negative opinion of the Twins, but because I think it's true and because I don't want it to be true. So, the idea that somebody doesn't like the Twins or thinks poorly of the Twins, in itself, isn't a problem to me, or doesn't bother me. Half the time I don't think the Twins are good. You know, I don't think the Twins are good right now. You know, I have no problem admitting that. Um, so I don't...you know, I don't have a problem with people not liking the Twins or criticizing the Twins if...especially if it's justified, but it bothers me because if it's true then it suggests bad things about what their prospects are moving forward.

While criticism—be it in the media or from other fans—did in some cases bother mere highly identified fans, not a single one of these participants expressed the perspective that their team is under some kind of scrutiny. The perspective expressed here by the collective narcissists, however, is in line with Cichocka et al.'s (2015) argument that collective narcissists seek to identify with a distinctive group that is constantly under scrutiny. This feeling of scrutiny—whether manufactured or otherwise—seems to serve as a source of pride that fuels their bond and attachment with the sport team.

4.6.2.3 Underdog Mentality

A common characteristic shared by the majority of collective narcissists, but only a few select non-narcissists, was an underdog mentality. In effect, these individuals internalized the doubt expressed toward their team from external parties (e.g., the media, fans of other teams, and

‘fair weather’ fans of their own team) and used this as a driving force in their fandom, taking particular pride in their success after having stuck it out through the lean years. Peter, a Philadelphia Phillies fan, spoke of this concept, recounting the Phillies’ journey from perennial basement dweller (last place team) to 2008 World Series champion and perennial World Series contender in the following sequence of quotes:

I think the fact that going into anything as an underdog, it’s very much more exciting to see them succeed. It gives you more of a sense of pride and accomplishment than watching a team who does really well, but was expected to do really well.

It (their underdog identity) definitely (influenced my attachment). I remember in high school the Phillies weren’t doing very well, but I’d still always have my Phillies shirt or my Phillies hat with me at all times, and I would always get “Oh hey...why you reppin’ that when the Eagles are going to do better?” And it’s like, alright, but then just watching them slowly succeed and do better and have that relationship with the players. It was much more satisfying and rewarding for myself to actually see it. And I think because I had established that, I think everyone knew for me it was a much bigger deal than for other people who just jumped onto it much later when they were doing well.

Well, everyone is always entitled to their own opinion. I don’t really let it get at me. But it does make me focus or kind of root for them a little more, just so they can prove that person wrong.

While much of Peter’s notion of identifying with an underdog mentality and proving the doubters wrong, so to speak, stems from personal encounters with “fair weather” Phillies fans, other collectively narcissistic participants’ underdog mentality was more a product of comments and opinions from the media. For example, Chad, a collectively narcissistic Chicago Bears fan, explained that the team consistently outperforms projections after being slighted in the media:

Some Bears fans (doubt the Bears). A lot of fans of other teams (doubt the Bears). A lot of analysts (doubt the Bears). Even though most of the analysts said the Bears had a great draft, I doubt many of them will pick the Bears to make the playoffs, and I just love to prove them wrong. And like year in and year out, they’re always projected to be one of the worst teams in the league, and they don’t make the playoffs, but they’re never that bad. So, it’s always nice just proving the people wrong who think they’re going to be that bad.

Interestingly, Chad identified multiple external parties (e.g., other Bears fans, fans of other teams, and the media) as parties casting doubt on the Bears. His comments on the media specifically are consistent with the notion that collective narcissists are constantly on watch for anything that could be perceived as a slight on the group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Other participants took exception to the *lack* of coverage—noting that whatever coverage the team did get was not exactly positive—and used this as a source of pride as the team started to succeed and media coverage, in turn, escalated. Molly, a Florida Panthers fan, covers this idea in the following comment:

Sometimes it was almost no coverage. It was just kind of like an afterthought. And then sometimes it's like not exactly positive. Just kind of reinforcing that who are these guys sort of feeling. It's just because we've started to succeed a little bit in the last couple of years that they've started to get some more positive coverage. It hasn't been as much taking pot shots at what we haven't accomplished. It's now instead more what we are doing. So, that's...I appreciate that. Locally, it's still garbage coverage and next to none. But nationally we're starting to get more positive coverage.

While the collective narcissists, by and large, embraced this notion of being an underdog—effectively perceiving it as a slight that they could then use as fuel as the team started performing better—mere highly identified fans, for the most part, could see merit in the doubt cast on their team and did not use this to fuel an underdog image. This perspective is captured in the following quotes from Ron and Bart:

Ron: I guess I don't see my fandom of the Twins as being a competition with other fans that much. Um, I don't interact with other fans that much, and if...and I've never felt some sort of strong sense of...if you're a fan of the Yankees, or the Red Sox, or the Patriots, or the Lakers, or one of these big teams, you probably feel like people are throwing stones at you a lot. And then maybe you have a sense of I'm going to show you guys. Um...but I don't think anybody...the Twins are not a big enough franchise that anyone is going to be throwing stones at them. They're usually being ignored. So, I don't think that there's ever been too much of that feeling of need to show them wrong.

Bart: I can't say it was anything like proving the doubters wrong because the doubters were right for so many years. I guess it probably just fits with my idea that all things must pass. Everything will come around eventually. Things will even out. There's definitely

like...it's emotionally satisfying, especially toward the beginning when they first started doing well, when it wasn't expected yet that the Orioles would win a lot at home. And so, um, I guess sort of that emotional part of the rivalry.

Bart's comment, in particular, is emblematic of the more even-keeled perspective expressed by much of the non-collectively narcissistic group throughout the interviews. The notion that "all things must pass" and "it's not about proving the doubters wrong" suggests that he is not using his attachment to the Orioles as a means of boosting his ego, which stands in contrast to the views expressed by many of the collective narcissists. That being said, there were a few critical exceptions to this trend amongst the mere highly identified fans:

Lindsey: It is nice when (the Packers) are doing bad and it's like the next season everyone expects they will continue to be bad. Or, if they have a bad game or a streak of bad games they're going to continue to do bad. But, at the same time, when they do well, it's kind of like... "Haha, you were wrong!" So it does feel good.

Brent: Oh definitely...Just because there was a lot of mockery about the direction (the Browns) were taking, and just basically there were a lot of writers, so called experts, and fans of different fan bases, saying it was idiotic to hire a front office where the VP was from baseball. But after they did their draft and they got pretty high marks for how smart they were and acquiring with draft picks, it was kind of a feel good feeling to say like "Yeah, finally they're doing something right." You know, usually we're the butt of jokes, but people were kind of taking notice about it. So, it was kind of cool.

Andy: Well I think you always want to kind of shove it in their face a little bit (laughs). Um, I think saying like "Well looks like you were wrong" is always fun, and we've done that. Like I mean...in 2007, 2011, we (the Giants) weren't favorites. We were always underdogs. Um, but we won anyway. I love that aspect of it. I think...I would in those two seasons, the fact we were underdogs made it even sweeter. Especially in 2007. But...yeah I don't know if that's influenced my fandom. I think I'd still be just as big of a Giants fan anyway. But uh...it definitely it makes it fun to kind of stick it to the frontrunners, you know?

While these comments do touch on the notion of an underdog mentality, they were also a bit more tempered than those expressed by the collectively narcissistic participants. The mentality was also not nearly as widespread amongst the mere highly identified participants. The roots of the collectively narcissistic underdog mentality could be tied to the extent to which it lends itself

to boosting a fragile ego. Bristow and Sebastian (2001) explained that the “the more competitive a fan is, the more likely she/he is to cheer for an underdog. Such a fan might readily view the competition as being tougher, the victories sweeter, and the positive affect experienced greater” (p. 270). Indeed, scholars have long found evidence of a (dis)confirmation continuum, wherein an unexpected win provides for the most positive affect, even more than one that was expected (e.g., Madrigal, 1995). For collective narcissists, identifying with an underdog mentality and using newfangled success as a means of proving the doubters—those who have slighted the team, whether real or perceived—wrong can produce maximum positive affect that helps to, at least temporarily, prop up an unstable self-esteem.

4.6.2.4 Ingroup Exclusivity

Tied to the idea of an underdog mentality is an ingroup exclusivity expressed by many of the collective narcissists, but only a single non-narcissistic participant. Many of the collective narcissists noted that sticking with the team through the lean years—those that gave life to the underdog mentality discussed previously—made them “true” fans. In contrast, those that did not stick with the team through “thick and thin” were mere “bandwagoners” who could not be considered part of the inner circle. Molly touches on this notion of ingroup exclusivity in the following statement:

So, it’s fun to be part of the ra-ra crowd, especially the part of the crowd that never gave up. Some people just come on when they’re doing well and disappear when they’re not. Not true fans, really. But you know I hang in there.

The notion that those who did not stick with the team through unsuccessful seasons are not true fans was highly pervasive through many of the interviews with collective narcissists. This was also something that did not sit well with several of the collectively narcissistic participants, as bandwagon fandom comes with significant downsides. For example, Steve, explained that a

growing Oakland Raiders' fan base in recent years is bittersweet because he knows these new fans are not "true" fans:

I mean (the increase in Raiders fans is) almost bittersweet though. Like, four years ago if I walked down the street and saw another Raiders fan, you know that guy has been through the same amount of shit as you. So, there's almost like the camaraderie... 'cause it's always like "Man, the Raiders suck." And you know he's heard it for the last decade too. So, you know, you have all these people who like...last week, I was in the supermarket and I'm like "Oh cool! Raiders fans!" But they're like "yeah, I just started following the team this year." And I'm like that's kind of weird.

From this perspective, it seems true fandom of a sport team is something that must be earned. It is an exclusive club and loyalty/unwavering support is the currency. Sandy noted another downside to bandwagon fans, explaining that they give the entire fan base a bad reputation:

I know LA is known for being sort of, I guess, fair-weather fans...bandwagon fans...whatever. I hate that stereotype because I'm not like that at all! I...I mean yes I don't watch *as* many games as I used to and I might turn it off if they're down 20. But I still love the team. I still really want them to do well. So...I think the bandwagoners...they can just suck it. I hate that they give us that reputation. Um...and as a true fan, I think, I think that's how my fandom has changed the most.

In contrast to collective narcissists, of which more than half touched on this notion of ingroup exclusivity, only a single mere highly identified fan raised this issue. Mark, a highly identified San Francisco 49ers fan, noted the fluctuation in support for the team he has seen throughout his lifetime:

You do see that (people jumping on and off the bandwagon). I mean, you look at the 80s and 90s and everyone and their brother is a 49ers fan. You know, the team was doing really well...winning Super Bowls...life is good, right? Um, fast forward to like the last 10 years and it's just been almost disheartening to watch. The team is really bad for a while under, like, Mike Singletary, and everyone starts to jump ship. Then Jim Harbaugh returns the team to glory and everyone's back on. Now...it's like...history repeating itself, you know? Um, I think people are optimistic about Chip Kelly, so we'll see how that goes, but...so I think the fan base shows its true colors in situations like this. You know, it's not going to be playoffs and Super Bowls all the time. I know that and I think most other real 49ers fans know that. But we do have our fair share of bandwagoners and god knows they'll be back if Chip Kelly is able to work his magic.

Other than Mark, no other non-narcissists brought up the notion of ingroup exclusivity. In fact, Brent noted how incredibly loyal the Cleveland Browns' fan base has been despite years as perennial losers:

The fact that we have such a large fan base...we have been perennial losers for the last 20 years, so that speaks volumes about the loyalty. It's kind of a really unique historical team and it's definitely...I think it's definitely amongst a few teams that you have that die-hard fans no matter what the record is. We're one of those few teams.

Interestingly, this notion of ingroup exclusivity on the part of collective narcissists stands in contrast to Lock et al.'s (2012) findings of 'spruiking,' wherein fans of a new soccer team actively attempted to recruit new fans as their identification with the team was developing. In effect, the view practiced by participants in Lock et al.'s (2012) study is "fandom without borders," so to speak, whereas the perspective expressed here, by the collective narcissists, is "fandom with closed borders." This is interesting given that collective narcissism has long been associated with intergroup hostility and mistrust of outsiders in the context of international relations (Golec de Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2013). It seems a similar concept could be playing out here, on a smaller scale, where collectively narcissistic sport fans seek to guard membership in the fan community tightly, reserving it only for those truly loyal individuals.

4.7 Discussion

The preceding discussion provides evidence of both similarities and differences vis-à-vis the development of team identification for both collectively narcissistic as well as highly identified fans. Indeed, while there is considerable overlap, the collectively narcissistic segment displayed a unique perspective that distinguishes them from their mere highly identified counterparts. In this section, I attempt to tie together the similarities and differences gleaned from the interviews with the two distinct fan groups, in an effort to provide an informed

conclusion on the pertinent research question: Just what drives collectively narcissistic sport team identification? And how and when does this develop?

4.7.1 The Development of Collective Narcissism

One interesting aspect of the results is that many of the drivers of *initial* sport team fandom are largely the same (e.g., socialization agents, player personas, etc.). Indeed, many participants in both groups recounted early attendance experiences and/or watching games on television with family and friends, and getting to know the players and their personalities as instrumental in the formation of their early fandom. In most cases, these individuals were fans since childhood. These findings are neither unexpected, nor are they novel, as they are certainly in line with past research (e.g., James, 2001, Kolbe & James, 2000; Lock et al., 2012).

The fascinating part of these findings is where these two groups of fans differ. That is, when examining the unique drivers of collectively narcissistic identification, it seems as though this type of attachment stems from the differing needs of these individuals compared to their mere highly identified counterparts. For a mere highly identified fan with stable and secure self-esteem, the factors referenced previously (e.g., socialization agents, player personas, etc.) are sufficient to foster a positive and healthy relationship with the team. Collective narcissists, on the other hand, appear to manufacture a perspective in their mind that the team is of unparalleled importance and greatness (i.e., unique and distinct from other teams in the league) and that outside parties simply “do not get it” (i.e., the chronic sense of scrutiny and inclinations toward ingroup exclusivity).

Indeed, Baumeister and Vohs (2001) argued that narcissists differ in the degree to which they pursue self-esteem. That is, rather than seeking it out in naturally occurring situations (e.g., after a team win), they go to such lengths as artificially constructing such situations—for

example, holding on to the idea that the team is unique and distinct from others in the league and is constantly under scrutiny from outsiders—as a means of inflating a fragile ego and self-esteem. Accordingly, there does not seem to be a point at which positive and healthy team attachment instead takes the form of collective narcissism. Rather, responses indicate that these individuals simply have a more exaggerated need for self-esteem, by virtue of their collective narcissism, and thus—through using their relationship with the team to bolster that self-esteem—possess a natural proclivity to conceptualize the team in such a way as to artificially enhance their self-esteem. Based on past findings from narcissism scholars (e.g., Thomaes et al., 2009), I would surmise that this likely occurred somewhere between the ages of 8 and adolescence, as it is at this point children become motivated to form favorable self-views.

Nevertheless, given the proclivity for both segments to recount the development of player personas and player attachment as drivers of initial fandom, it would seem teams should go to great lengths to foster these connections between fans and players. Teams could use social media to give fans inside access to players' lives off the field/court. It would also be smart to leverage these platforms to allow fans to “get to know” prospects in sports like baseball or hockey, where players usually spend several years in a team's minor league system before reaching the big leagues. Through these efforts, fans will have already formed something of a relationship with the player before he is even a member of the team.

4.7.2 Collective Narcissism and Self-Expansion Theory

With regard to self-expansion theory, the findings illustrate the extent to which collective narcissists are motivated to invest their own resources in relationship sustenance (as discussed in Park et al., 2010). However, based on the findings, it does not appear these resources are reflected solely in these individuals' tendencies to express unwavering defense of the team in the

face of criticism. Rather, they invest significant *cognitive* resources in forming a perspective of the team that allows for maximum self-esteem enhancement. Moreover, it seems these processes operate as something of a feedback loop. That is, the collectively narcissistic fan is attached and/or devoted to the team, and thus invests resources in defending the team. As noted, part of these resources are comprised of the perceptions of uniqueness, scrutiny, etc. manufactured by the individual to boost a fragile self-esteem. In turn, they become more attached to the team by virtue of these perceptions.

From a practical standpoint, it would seem, then, that marketers would be well served to invest in marketing campaigns that accentuate the fans' role as part of the team. Given that they endow such significant resources in defending the team and maintaining the relationship, one could argue they invest more heavily in the team from a cognitive and emotional standpoint than even a mere highly identified fan. Accordingly, initiatives such as the Seattle Seahawks' "12th Man" campaign, wherein the home crowd is given the honorary title as another "player" in addition to the 11 already on the field at any given time, would seemingly be increasingly effective for a collectively narcissistic fan.

4.7.3 Ingroup Identification and the Need for Group Distinctiveness

In past work, scholars have referenced the need for group distinctiveness when discussing both collective narcissism as well as mere ingroup identification. In the current study, the findings were quite clear on this subject, as all 15 collectively narcissistic participants touched on the idea of their favorite team being unique and distinct from others in the league and identified this as a significant driver of their fandom. Moreover, they were very quick, decisive, and emphatic in their responses on this topic, leaving little doubt as to what their true feelings are vis-à-vis the team's place in the league and sport in general. In contrast, just five of their mere highly

identified counterparts expressed the perspective that the team is *unique*, and even in such cases, the responses were less ardent. Instead, these participants hesitated, taking time to ponder, before ultimately concluding that there were indeed some unique qualities of their team. Indeed, while clearly identifying with a *distinct* group, this segment was largely hard pressed to conceive of their team as truly *unique*. It appears collective narcissists simply take this conception of a distinct group to another level, construing the team as a truly unique entity of an unreachable standard to all others.

In either case, this finding speaks to the importance of leveraging the unique qualities of the team in marketing communications with fans. This could be reflected in the team's unique history, culture, or even fan base, as all three aspects were identified by participants as characteristics that made their team unique from others in the league. A good example of a campaign that touched upon the uniqueness of the fan base is the Boston Celtics' souvenir cups created for the 2012 National Basketball Association playoffs. The cup featured text reading: "I AM NOT SOUTH BEACH," "I AM NOT HOLLYWOOD," "I AM CAUSEWAY STREET." This was intended to capture the blue-collar image assumed by the Boston Celtics fan base that stands in opposition to the more glamorous identity of Miami Heat and Los Angeles Lakers' fans, two of Boston's biggest rivals at that time. In other words, it was designed to capture the unique qualities of the Boston Celtics' fan base by pitting them in opposition to rival fan bases. This particular campaign could have been particularly effective given that it combined both rivalries and team uniqueness—two prevailing themes in the current study—into a single campaign. Teams would be well served to pursue a similar approach in marketing efforts.

4.7.4 Collective Narcissists' Underdog Mentality and Ingroup Exclusivity

The underdog mentality embraced by many of the collective narcissists, but relatively few of the mere highly identified fans, also yielded some interesting insights. It is worth noting that, in most cases, these collectively narcissistic participants were reflecting back on teams that had been unsuccessful, but then went on to have success. So, it could be interpreted as a means through which they could embellish the sweetness of the success they had already experienced. By doing so post-hoc, they could self-aggrandize the long road they had travelled to reach that point, in turn providing a grounds to cast off those who did not stick by the team and thus could not experience the true satisfaction of winning after a period of struggle.

This notion of ingroup exclusivity was among the more interesting findings yielded by the research, particularly given that exclusion inherently serves as a basis for all groups (Mulcahy, Parry, & Glover, 2010). Indeed, as Mulcahy et al. (2010) argued, “there are times when the nature of the group insists upon exclusivity” and such situations are “not necessarily malicious” (p. 12). Within sport, most investigations of group exclusion have been focused on individuals being excluded from sport fan communities based on such factors as race, class, gender, and sexuality (see Esmonde, Cooky, & Andrews, 2015 for a review). However, Crawford (2004) discussed the distinction typically drawn between “consumer” fans and “traditional” fans in the United Kingdom, wherein “consumer” fans are those who buy large amounts of merchandise and consume sport extensively through mass media, and “traditional” fans are those who attend often but do not necessarily consume excessively otherwise. He noted that “consumer” fans are often cast as not being real fans. This account is similar in nature to the collective narcissists from the current study, who displayed a tendency to exclude those they did not perceive as sticking with the team through thick and thin from the group of “true” fans.

A number of explanations have been proposed for exclusion efforts on the part of ingroup members. For example, Castano, Yzerbyt, Bourguignon, and Seron (2002) explained that individuals may display more or less ingroup exclusion as a function of their ingroup identification levels. The researchers also suggested their status within the group—such as being a core member as opposed to a newcomer—could play a role. It would seem both would be plausible explanations for collective narcissists' perceptions of ingroup exclusivity, as they possess both extreme levels of ingroup identification (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009) and also, per the results of the current study, view themselves as core members of the fan base. Furthermore, given the tendency of narcissists to leverage impression management tactics as a means of managing others' impressions of them (Thomaes et al., 2009), it would seem Noel, Wann, and Branscombe's (1995) argument that overexclusion could be a self-presentational strategy for displaying to other ingroup members that they are indeed truly devoted and loyal ingroup members could also be a worthy explanation for the current finding.

Collective narcissists' tendency to view others as “fair weather” or “bandwagon” fans and subsequently exclude them from the group, at least in their own conception, was particularly interesting in light of the finding from the first study that collective narcissism was both positively related to and explained a substantial amount of variance in CORFing. CORFing refers to the tendency to disassociate from an unsuccessful other (Wann & Branscombe, 1990) and in that sense is characteristic of “bandwagon” or “fair-weather” fans. As discussed in the conclusion of that study, however, theory would suggest that this is merely a temporary self-esteem restoration tactic leveraged before reverting back to the more typical baseline collectively narcissistic relationship. As such, collective narcissists likely do not view this as “jumping ship,”

as evidenced by Sandy commenting that she “might turn (the game) off if they’re down 20…” but yet “still loves the team,” before preceding to criticize bandwagon fans.

With respect to practice, findings on the notion of the underdog mentality and ingroup exclusivity serve as an indication marketers should leverage such ideas in marketing communications directed toward the collectively narcissistic segment. Tailoring marketing initiatives to this segment that play on the idea of being a “true” fan and sticking with the team “through thick and thin” may resonate with these individuals to a greater extent than others in the fan base due to their more inflated need for self-esteem. This would be consistent with the collectively narcissistic perspective of ingroup exclusivity.

4.7.5 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions of the work, this study does come with some limitations. For one, both collectively narcissistic and mere highly identified participants were fans of different teams in different sports and at different levels. It is certainly possible that contextual differences (e.g., market size, team success or lack thereof, etc.) may have played a role in responses. It is worth noting, however, that there was a good mix of small and large market teams, some with rich and successful histories and others without, on both sides. As such, given that I was able to isolate the collective narcissists from mere highly identified fans, there is still plenty to be taken from the findings. Second, given that a measure of narcissism at the individual level was not included on the original survey instrument (from the first study) it proved difficult to ascertain the extent to which collective narcissism may simply stem from narcissism at the individual level, as was proposed as a possibility in the literature review. Third, comprising just six of the 30 person total sample (across the two groups), females were underrepresented in the current study. It is worth pointing out that the gender distribution was

equal in each group, with three of 15 collective narcissists and three of 15 mere highly identified fans being female. As such, I do not feel this served to compromise the results in any way. That being said, given that scholars have found significant differences between genders in past work (e.g., Fink & Parker, 2009), it is possible different or additional themes could have been found with a more extensive concentration of women.

As for future research, it would seem that further investigation into team identification due to the need for group distinctiveness would be worthwhile. Scholars have identified this as a driver of team identification in the past (Wann, 2006), but findings from the current study suggest collective narcissists take this to a completely different level. Cross-sectional survey work containing both a measure of team identification and collective narcissism would allow for the isolation of the collectively narcissistic component of team identification that could yield insights on whether this need for group distinctiveness truly is unique to the collectively narcissistic segment of sport fans. In addition, given the findings related to ingroup exclusivity, experimental work examining the exclusion tendencies of collective narcissists in a lab or field setting could yield fascinating insights on the psychology and behavior of collective narcissists. Are these feelings related to ingroup exclusivity mere perceptions used by collective narcissists to enhance self-esteem? Or are these views so deep-rooted that they may, in fact, act on these feelings in an effort to weed out those they do not consider to be “true” fans? Answers to these questions would advance the literature on collective narcissism significantly. Finally, qualitative work—specifically interviews and/or observation—on sport fans in childhood and/or adolescence could produce worthwhile findings on the stage at which children begin to identify in a collectively narcissistic fashion. Although theory would indicate that this happens between

late childhood and adolescence (James, 2001; Thomaes et al., 2009), this cannot be said with certainty until investigation has actually been conducted specific to this population.

4.8 Appendix A. Study 2 Interview Guide

Pre-interview Script:

“You have had an opportunity to read the consent form sent to you via email. Do you have any questions about that document or what is being asked of you?”

“And you still wish to participate in the study?”

“I just want to remind you that I will be keeping an audio recording of our interview today. Is this okay with you?”

“I also just want to remind you that it is possible I may be contacting you in the future if there is anything from our interview today that requires clarification. Are you okay with this?”

“Finally, I just want to remind you that you may withdraw from the study at any time and skip any question you feel uncomfortable answering. However, if you withdraw from the study, we will be unable to provide the \$25 Amazon gift card.”

Interview Questions

- 1.) Tell me about yourself.
- 2.) Tell me about your relationship with this team.
 - a. Do you attend many games?
 - b. Ever been to an away game featuring the team?
 - c. Do you watch a lot on TV?
 - d. Do you read a lot about this team?
 - e. Do you participate on message boards, blogs, or anything of that nature?
 - f. Do you like to be around other fans of the team?
 - g. Do you like to be around members of opposing teams?
- 3.) How does being a fan of this team make you feel?
- 4.) How long have you been a fan of this team?
 - a. What happened at the beginning that made you become a fan?
 - b. How did that start?
- 5.) How has your connection with the team developed over time?
 - a. From then to now—how has it changed?
 - b. Would you say you're less or more of a fan now?
 - c. What has happened during that time that has caused changes?
 - d. Has your fandom ever decreased at any point?
 - e. Can you remember things from the past that have made you connect more deeply with the team?
 - f. What role/how important are the players in the development of your fandom?
 - i. Do you believe the team has a specific “type” of player that they target? Like, oh, he's a “Patriot”?
 - ii. Has this influenced your attachment to the players/team?

- 6.) Have rivalries impacted the development of your fandom at all?
- 7.) Do you feel league has it out for the team?
- 8.) Do you have this same type of connection with all your teams?
 - a. If so, has it always been this way?
 - b. If not, how does the connection differ? And why do you think this connection is different?
- 9.) Do you view the team(s) as unique from other teams and/or rivals? If so, how are they different from others in the league? Has this influenced attachment?
 - a. How do you feel about the fans of your team?
 - b. How do you feel about fans of opposing teams?
 - c. Do you feel (team's) fans are different than fans of other teams?
 - d. Do you identify as a NOT A FAN of (rival)?
- 10.) How would you describe the team's culture/way of doing things (e.g., with respect to the front office, coaching staff, league relations)?
- 11.) Has this influenced your fandom or the way you feel about the team in any way? If so, how?
 - a. Different from other teams in the league?
- 12.) How about the team's personality?? How would you describe that??
 - a. Do you view this as unique from other teams/rivals?
- 13.) Do you follow the team's media? If so, how would you describe the way they cover the team?
- 14.) Has this influenced your fandom or the way you feel about the team?
- 15.) Would you characterize yourself as goal-oriented /achievement-oriented?
 - a.) As a fan, do you have goals for your team?
 - b. Does the team's success provide you with a sense of achievement? If so, how/explain.
- 16.) Describe an achievement in your childhood. How did your parents react?
- 17.) Was this typical whenever you did anything good?
- 18.) When someone criticizes your team, how does it make you feel?
 - a. Would you say that proving them wrong (proving the doubters wrong) has been a significant factor in driving your fandom?
 - b. Does this provide you with a sense of validation?
- 19.) How do you respond when your team is criticized?
- 20.) What about when your team is praised? How does that make you feel?

Closing: Thank you very much for participating in my study. Your Amazon gift card should arrive electronically within a few minutes.

Table 4.1
Profile of Study 2 Participants

Name	Team	Age	Sex	CN/ ID (7-pt. Scale)	Similarities				Unique Drivers of Collective Narcissism			
					Socialization	Player Attachment	Player Personas	Rivalries	Team Unique	Scrutiny	Underdog Mentality	Ingroup Exclusivity
Collective Narcissists												
Peter	Phillies	26	M	6.5/7	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Bonnie	Saints	31	F	6.9/7		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eddie	Mets	31	M	5.25/5	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Brad	Red Wings	27	M	5.5/6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Molly	Florida Panthers	46	F	5.1/ 6.7		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Steve	Raiders	33	M	5.4/ 6.3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chad	Bears	26	M	5.25/7				✓	✓		✓	
Brian	Patriots	28	M	6.5/7		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Sandy	Lakers	30	F	7/7	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Tom	Dolphins	38	M	6.6/6	✓	✓			✓	✓		
Mike	Packers	27	M	6.25/6	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Chris	Cowboys	33	M	6/7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stewart	Tar Heels	30	M	5.25/ 6.3	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Dean	Canadiens	28	M	5.5/6		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dave	Blue Jays	34	M	6.5/7	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Highly Identified												
					Socialization	Player Attachment	Player Personas	Rivalries	Team Unique	Scrutiny	Underdog Mentality	Ingroup Exclusivity
Doris	Red Wings	42	F	1.4/6	✓							
Lindsey	Packers	26	F	3/6	✓	✓	✓				✓	

Name	Team	Age	Sex	CN/ ID (7-pt. Scale)	Similarities				Unique Drivers of Collective Narcissism				
					Highly Identified					Socialization	Player Attachment	Player Personas	Rivalries
Paul	Red Sox	29	M	2.75/5			✓	✓					
Jamie	76ers	20	M	3.25/ 5.33	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
Mark	Bears	34	M	3.75/ 6.33	✓		✓						
Brent	Browns	40	M	3.25/6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Bart	Orioles	50	M	2.5/ 6.7	✓	✓		✓					
Ron	Twins	38	M	2.9/7	✓			✓					
Andy	Giants	38	M	3.3/ 6.3	✓			✓	✓				
Scott	49ers	45	M	3.5/ 6.7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Fred	Colts	47	M	3.4/7	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Rita	Royals	43	F	2/5.3		✓	✓					✓	✓
Alex	Angels	20	M	3.6/ 6.3	✓	✓							
Matthew	Knicks	27	M	3.9/6		✓		✓					
Walter	Bulls	30	M	3.6/ 5.3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				

CHAPTER 5

STUDY 3: BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES OF COLLECTIVE NARCISSISTS AND HIGHLY IDENTIFIED FANS

The importance of determining how generally positive team identification may instead take the form of collective narcissism is buttressed by the drastically different behavioral responses exhibited by this segment (Golec de Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2013a, 2013b). According to Golec de Zavala and her colleagues, collective narcissists are particularly prone to exhibit intergroup hostility and aggression as a means of protecting the group's image. Within sport, that image is perhaps never more vulnerable than in the context of relations with a rival outgroup. As McClintock (2011) explained, there is usually more emotion and more at stake, and while this can make contests between rival teams more fun, there is often a dark side. "Every season, in every sport, a story will inevitably emerge of fan-on-fan violence in the stands or parking lots. Maybe he/she was wearing the rival team's colors, maybe there was some trash talking that got out of hand" (McClintock, 2011, para 5). Indeed, intergroup relations between rival fans can sometimes grow cantankerous.

Wakefield and Wann (2006) argued that, in contrast to hooliganism and large crowds in international soccer, the source of such hostile, aggressive, and sometimes violent interactions in America is typically an individual fan they characterized as dysfunctional. While these dysfunctional fans have generally been characterized as a subset of highly identified fans—those that have taken identification to an extreme—the results from Study 1 indicate that it may be collective narcissism that is at the heart of hostile intergroup relations between fans of rival teams. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine both collective narcissists' and mere highly identified fans' behavioral responses to team criticism. Given the pervasiveness and

importance of rivalries in spectator sport, I explore these responses both in the context of intergroup relations with neutral and rival parties. I begin by reviewing the literature on sport rivalries and team identification, before briefly explaining how collective narcissists could be expected to respond differently than highly identified fans. Subsequently, hypotheses are presented.

5.1 Team Identification and Sport Rivalries

Team identification refers to a fan's psychological connection to a team (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). The notion that highly identified sport fans possess psychological connections so robust that they are resistant to underperformance and counter-persuasion is well documented in the literature (e.g., Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Funk & James, 2001). For example, highly identified fans have been shown to be more apt to associate with successful others, but less apt to distance themselves from unsuccessful others (Hirt, Zillmann, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992; Kwon, Trail, & Lee, 2008; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). These results suggest that highly identified fans will stand by their team even when performance falls below expectations. Research has also suggested that highly identified fans will maintain their association with their favorite team in the face of counter-persuasive information (Funk & James, 2001). Consistent with balance theory (e.g., Heider, 1958), Funk and James (2001) explained that "if information related to a favorite team conflicts with current beliefs, the attached fan will invoke cognitive effort to process and re-evaluate the information in order to restore internal consistency" (p. 141). Moreover, such information is typically rejected outright, or is interpreted in a biased manner that is in line with their own beliefs.

This ingroup bias is well documented and extends all the way back to Hastorf and Cantril's (1954) classic study wherein supporters of two respective college football teams in a

head-to-head matchup had vastly different perspectives on the same game, with each blaming the other for physical and sometimes dirty play. Seen through the lens of balance theory and social identity theory, it can help explain highly identified sports fans' behavior with regard to rival teams. Scholars have generally found that highly identified fans exhibit bias toward individuals supporting their favorite team (Harvard, 2014; Wann & Dolan, 1994). This is sometimes accompanied by a peaked interest in rival teams (Fortunato, 2004; Harvard, 2014; Sierra, Taute, & Heiser, 2010), and more specifically pleasure derived from the failure of others, commonly referred to as *schadenfreude* (e.g., Heider, 1958).

At the root of this opposition are innate needs for belonging (Maslow, 1943) and social comparison (Turner, 1975). This drives people to make distinctions of social categorization and ultimately form groups with similar others (Tajfel, 1969; Turner, 1975), which serves as a basis for intergroup behavior (Turner, 1975). Thus, when fans of rival teams interact, they self-categorize, identifying as a member of a specific ingroup and classifying the opposition as a distinct outgroup. This gives rise to “intergroup competitive and discriminatory responses” on the part of the in-group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, p. 38). As a measure of self-enhancement, these stereotypes and comparisons to relevant out-groups are construed in such a way that favor the in-group (Hogg et al., 1995). Tajfel and Turner (1979) explained that interpersonal history between group members need not exist; rather, the mere categorization is sufficient to engender ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation.

As Harvard (2014) explained, rivalries exist on a dyadic level—that is, two entities must be present for the instigation of a rivalry—and in order for balance to be maintained in such a relationship, both sides must either like or dislike one another. Interestingly, evidence of both was found in his study of rivalries at the intercollegiate level, as individuals demonstrated a clear

in-group bias in favor of their favorite team—a bias that featured intensified satisfaction both when their favorite team defeats the rival, as well as when the rival is defeated by a neutral party. However, in some cases, the notion of ingroup was extended to the conference in which their team is a member at large. That is, in some cases, the rival was seen as a representative of the conference, and in such cases, there existed a mutual respect and/or liking on the part of the two—normally opposed—sides.

This blurring of the lines between rivals coalesces with research on social identity and rivalries, research that has consistently found evidence of ingroup *favoritism*, but not necessarily outgroup *negativity*. For example, social identity theory research has found ingroup favoritism to be more likely than outgroup derogation (Brewer, 1979). Moreover, in Wann and Dolan's (1994) study of sport fans—wherein either an ingroup or outgroup fan was described as having acted out at a sport event between the two rivals (e.g., yelling obscenities at the referees, throwing soda on the court, etc.)—highly identified fans did not perceive outgroup fans more negatively than did those low on identification. In other words, although they found evidence of an ingroup bias, a negative bias against the outgroup was absent. This is consistent with more recent work, which found fans to be more apt to accentuate their own team's unique (presumably positive) characteristics than to look for unique (presumably negative) features on the part of the rival or opposition (Smith & Schwarz, 2003).

In brief, evidence from theory and literature on highly identified fans' perceptions and interactions with rival outgroups (teams) suggests a clear and overt ingroup bias or favoritism. This has been evident time and again across contexts (e.g., Harvard, 2014; Smith & Schwarz, 2003; Wann & Dolan, 1994). Nevertheless, despite possessing a clear bias in favor of the

ingroup, highly identified fans haven't necessarily exhibited outgroup negativity or derogation of rivals.

5.2 Collective Narcissism and Sport Rivalries

Harvard (2014) characterized a rivalry as a continuous, on-going phenomenon that can be intensified by particular events. Moreover, a rivalry can be experienced with multiple teams and need not be reciprocated—that is, it can be perceived by one side and not the other (Harvard, 2014). For example, the New York Jets' role in implicating the New England Patriots in the "SpyGate" scandal and, more recently, the Indianapolis Colts' role in bringing the Patriots' role in "DeflateGate" to the league's attention are specific events sufficient to heighten burgeoning rivalries. Shaughnessy (2015) explained that the Patriots now have a long list of enemies stemming from their involvement in these scandals and public criticism on the part of other organizations in the wake of such scandals.

While highly identified fans may not be particularly prone to exhibiting much outgroup negativity and derogation in the midst of rivalries of this nature (Smith & Schwarz, 2003; Wann & Dolan, 1994), collective narcissists are a different animal. As noted, these individuals are particularly prone to interpreting others' actions as an indication of criticism or disrespect (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). However, it is only specific outgroups—those with whom they share a tenuous history—that are perceived as *consistently* threatening (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013b). While they may still exhibit hostile responses to threats and/or criticism coming from outgroups with whom they do not share a volatile past (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013b), collective narcissists are more apt to interpret known outgroups as threatening (Golec de Zavala, 2011). As Golec de Zavala (2011) explained, collective narcissism is not a predictor of negative attitudes toward parties that are not perceived as true *out*-groups.

Therefore, I expect that collective narcissists will exhibit significantly different responses to criticism of their favorite team than those who are merely highly identified with the team. Due to their proclivity to interpret others' actions as signs of criticism, collective narcissists may interpret even ambiguous comments as a threat and both derogate and express an intention to aggress against the source when it comes from an outgroup with whom the team shares a history of hostile relations. When such comments come from a neutral party, one not viewed as an outgroup, these negative responses should not persist. However, when these comments are legitimately critical in nature, the source of the criticism should not matter. The collective narcissist can be expected to interpret these comments as a threat and respond with derogation and aggression. Due to their tendency not to exhibit outgroup negativity (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013; Smith & Schwarz, 2003; Wann & Dolan, 1994), I argue that highly identified fans will exhibit no such tendencies, particularly when comments can be considered ambiguous. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: Collective narcissists will be significantly more likely than mere highly identified fans to interpret ambiguous comments made about the team as (a) threatening, and respond by (b) derogating the source, and (c) expressing aggression intentions, but only when the source of such comments is a rival as opposed to a neutral party

H2: Collective narcissists will be significantly more likely than mere highly identified fans to interpret critical comments made about the team as (a) threatening, and respond by (b) derogating the source, and (c) expressing aggression intentions regardless of whether the source of such comments is a rival or a neutral party

5.3 Methods

To investigate the stated hypotheses, the research was conducted in the context of the National Football League's New England Patriots. As noted, this team has no shortage of rivals and enemies stemming from their unprecedented success and involvement in numerous scandals through the years (Shaughnessy, 2015). This list is not limited just to teams with whom they share a tenuous history on the field, but also those who have been publicly outspoken with regard to the team's involvement in questionable off-field transgressions, such as sport broadcast network ESPN. Since collective narcissists are hostile only to outgroups perceived to insult or threaten their ingroup (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), I posit that this represents an ideal context in which to investigate the hypotheses.

5.3.1 Study 3a

5.3.1.1 Participants, Procedure and Manipulation

A 2 (Source of Comments: Rival vs. Neutral) x 2 (Fan Type: Collective Narcissists vs. Highly Identified) design with a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used for the analysis. Participants' assessment of their perception of the comments as a threat and their intention to both derogate the outgroup and respond aggressively served as the dependent variables in the study.

A sample of 214 New England Patriots fans were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk panel service to participate in the study. The sample was initially 225, but 8 participants were dropped because they measured as low identifiers (i.e., their team identification score fell below the midpoint). These individuals were not of interest in the current study because, given their lack of strong feelings about the team, it would not be expected they would have much of a reaction to comments made about the team one way or the other. Another 3 participants were

dropped from the analysis because they did not provide the correct response on the authentication question, which simply asked participants to select a specific response on a particular question to ensure they were completing the survey in earnest. The sample was restricted to United States only and participants were offered \$0.30 in exchange for taking the survey. The link to the survey was posted with a heading reading: “NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS FANS WANTED to complete a short survey about their perceptions of the media’s portrayal/coverage of their favorite team,” followed by further information about the survey. The sample was 66.4% male and had an average age of 34.9 years old.

The survey was posted in two batches. In the first batch (N = 118), participants were shown a news article, which was just a general report from the Associated Press on the judge presiding over New England Patriots Quarterback Tom Brady’s court hearing and his disbelief of Brady’s defense. Being that the comments in the article represent a mere report on what transpired in the court hearing, I posit that these comments can be considered ambiguous. That is, the qualitative nature of such comments is not particularly critical and likely wasn’t intended as such; rather, it was intended only to inform the public on what transpired in the court hearing. A sample of 30 undergraduate students at a large Northeastern university were recruited to participate in a pretest to ascertain the article was not perceived as critical, but rather more neutral in nature. In comparing the article to another, which was intended to be more critical in nature, respondents indicated this article was more neutral (M = 3.97) than the other article (M = 2.27), which was a significant difference ($t = 11.42, p < .001$). However, given that the mean score was just 3.97, and participants also indicated the article was at least moderately critical (M = 3.97), it would seem there was some level of ambiguity as to whether the article was critical or neutral, which is what was sought in this study.

Individuals in the first batch (neutral condition) were told the article was written by a neutral party, Tom Pelissero, Staff Writer for USA Today. USA Today was chosen over Sports Illustrated for the neutral condition due to the results on a pretest. USA Today received a favorability mean score closer to the midpoint ($M = 4.53$ on a 7-point scale) compared to Sports Illustrated ($M = 5.20$). This difference was significant ($t = 21.28, p < .001$). In the second batch (rival condition; $N = 96$), participants were shown an identical article, but in this case they were told that the article was written by Mike Wells, Indianapolis Colts Beat Writer for ESPN. The Indianapolis Colts were chosen as the rival condition due to their role in “DeflateGate.” Specifically, they represent a team with which the Patriots share a tenuous history and are most relevant to the “DeflateGate” context given that they are the organization that initially brought the issue to the attention of the league. After removing those pretest participants who did not identify as fans of the New England Patriots, the Colts were identified as a rival ($M = 4.7$).

After reading the news article, participants responded to a self-report survey instrument containing measures of team identification, collective narcissism, perception of threat, outgroup negativity (outgroup derogation), aggression intention and demographic information.

5.3.1.2 Measures

The following variables and items were measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored by 1 = This is not at all descriptive of me, and 7 = This is very descriptive of me.

- **Team Identification.** Team Identification was measured using the three items making up the Attachment to Team subscale on the Points of Attachment Inventory (PAI; Robinson, Trail, & Kwon, 2004). A sample item from this scale is “I consider myself a ‘real fan’ of the team”. This factor has been shown to possess strong internal consistency, having exhibited an alpha coefficient of .96 in recent research (e.g., Kim, Trail, & Magnusen,

2013), as well as an alpha coefficient of .86, and an AVE value of .68 in phase 1 of this dissertation.

- **Collective Narcissism.** Collective Narcissism was measured using an adaptation of Golec de Zavala et al.'s (2009) scale. A sample item from this scale is "not many people seem to fully understand the importance of my group". This was modified to read "not many people seem to understand the importance of the New England Patriots football team". This scale exhibited an alpha coefficient of .86 in Golec de Zavala et al.'s (2009) work. It also displayed an alpha coefficient of .888 and an AVE value of 0.50 in phase 1 of this dissertation.
- **Perception of Threat.** Perception of threat was measured using three items developed for use in this study. Items include, "the news report is a critical threat to the New England Patriots football team," "the report's portrayal of the New England Patriots football team is quite threatening," and "I feel threatened by the report's portrayal of the New England Patriots football team".
- **Aggression Intention.** Aggression Intention was measured using four items created for use in this study. The first two items were adapted from Wann et al.'s (2000) Hostile Aggression scale, while the latter two are emblematic of the views expressed by collectively narcissistic New England Patriots fans as discussed in Table 2.1. Items include: "I would like to yell at him to express my anger," "I would like to hurt him in some way," "I would like to make him pay for his remarks," and "I would like to teach him a lesson."
- **Outgroup Negativity/Derogation.** Outgroup Negativity (Derogation) was measured using Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp's (1997) semantic differential scale, which

is designed to capture derogatory feelings toward outgroups. This factor exhibited alpha coefficients ranging from .93 to .94 in their work, and was also successfully used by Golec de Zavala et al. (2013). The six semantic differentials are: (warm-cold; positive-negative; friendly-hostile; trusting-suspicious; respect-contempt; admiration-disgust). These were measured with the more negative adjective receiving the higher score, so that outgroup negativity (derogation) was indicated by a higher score.

5.3.1.3 Measurement Model

For a list of descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, etc.) refer to Table 5.2. The measurement model was assessed via a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using MPlus 5.0 structural equation modeling (SEM) software. The measurement model was assessed initially and displayed the following fit statistics: [χ^2/df ratio = (530.633/265 = 2.00), CFI = .926, RMSEA = .067, and SRMR = .067]. While this represented good model fit per widely accepted SEM guidelines (e.g., Hu & Bentler, 1999), there was a convergent validity issue with the Collective Narcissism measure. One item reading, “I do not get upset when people do not notice the achievements of the team” had a poor factor loading. I posit that this stems from the fact that it is a double negative and thus could easily confuse participants. Accordingly, this item was dropped from the analysis and the model was once again analyzed, displaying the following fit statistics: [χ^2/df ratio = (500.566/242 = 2.07), CFI = .927, RMSEA = .069, and SRMR = .068]. This represented good model fit per Hu and Bentler’s (1999) criteria. Furthermore, convergent validity was displayed with all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores exceeding the 0.50 threshold (see Table 5.3 for a list of the psychometric properties of the measures). Finally, discriminant validity was demonstrated as all AVE scores exceeded the squared correlations between variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; see Table 5.4 for a matrix of correlations between

variables). Given the goodness of fit of the measurement model, it was determined that it was appropriate to proceed to the two-way MANOVA to evaluate hypotheses.

5.3.1.4 Hypothesis Testing

The results of the two-way MANOVA are summarized in Table 5.5. To test H1, participants were categorized into one of two possible fan types based on their responses. First, as mentioned, 8 participants who scored as low identifiers were dropped from the analysis. Subsequently, those scoring at the midpoint or below on Collective Narcissism were categorized as Highly Identified ($N = 62$), while those scoring above the midpoint on Collective Narcissism were categorized as Collective Narcissists ($N = 152$). An independent samples t test revealed that the means on collective narcissism for collective narcissists and highly identified fans were significantly different ($t = -15.89, p < .001$). The mean for the highly identified group was 3.27, while the mean for the collective narcissist group was 5.23. Subsequently, a 2 (Source of Comments: Rival vs. Neutral) x 2 (Fan Type: Collective Narcissists vs. Highly Identified) MANOVA was conducted with Perception of Threat, Outgroup Derogation, and Aggression Intention as the dependent variables. In H1, I hypothesized an interaction effect, wherein collective narcissists would exhibit significantly greater perceptions of the comments as a threat, source derogation, and intention to aggress against the source, compared to highly identified fans, but only when the source of such comments was a rival. The Wilks' Lambda revealed that there was not a significant interaction ($F_{(3, 208)} = .586, p = .625$). Follow-up analyses revealed that the interaction was not significant for Perception of Threat ($F_{(1, 210)} = .00518, p = .943$), Derogation ($F_{(1, 210)} = .51769, p = .473$), or Aggression Intention ($F_{(1, 210)} = 1.45, p = .230$). Therefore, H1 (a, b, and c) was not supported. However, the MANOVA results did reveal a significant main effect of Fan Type. The Wilks' Lambda for Fan Type was significant ($F_{(3, 208)} =$

20.551, $p < .001$). Moreover, follow-up analyses were indicative of a significant main effect of Fan Type on Perception of Threat ($F_{(1, 210)} = 53.49$, $p < .001$), Derogation ($F_{(1, 210)} = 16.80$, $p < .001$), and Aggression Intention ($F_{(1, 210)} = 33.08$, $p < .001$). As such, it seems the source of the comments were irrelevant—collective narcissists displayed a significantly greater tendency to perceive the comments as a threat, derogate the source, and exhibit aggression intentions toward the source than highly identified fans regardless of source condition.

Per Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), when cell sizes are unequal—as was the case in this study with a much larger number of collective narcissists compared to non-narcissists—a Box's M Test must be conducted to ascertain the equality of covariance matrices, an assumption made in MANOVA analyses. The Box's M (30.011) was significant ($p < .001$), indicating this assumption was violated. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) recommend randomly deleting cases from one group, so as to make the groups equal, before re-analyzing the data. Accordingly, 90 cases from the collective narcissists group were randomly deleted from the sample, leaving a sample of 124 participants, with an equal number of narcissists and non-narcissists. The results of the MANOVA with equal groups revealed the same pattern of results. The Wilks' Lambda for the interaction effect was not significant ($F_{(3, 118)} = .892$, $p = .448$). Follow-up analyses revealed that the Fan Type x Source interaction was not significant for Perception of Threat ($F_{(1, 120)} = .597$, $p = .441$), Source Derogation ($F_{(1, 120)} = .971$, $p = .326$), or Aggression Intention ($F_{(1, 120)} = .137$, $p = .712$). There was, however, a main effect of Fan Type, as the Wilks' Lambda for Fan Type was significant ($F_{(3, 118)} = 14.653$, $p < .001$). Follow-up analyses revealed a significant main effect of Fan Type on Perception of Threat ($F_{(1, 120)} = 38.462$, $p < .001$), Source Derogation ($F_{(1, 120)} = 14.151$, $p < .001$), and Aggression Intention ($F_{(1, 120)} = 28.990$, $p < .001$). Given that the

same pattern of results was repeated with equal groups, the initial test can be considered robust. The results of the analyses with equal group sizes are summarized in Table 5.6.

5.3.2 Study 3b

To test H2—that collective narcissists would be more likely than highly identified fans to interpret *critical* comments made about the team as a threat, and derogate and express aggression intentions toward the source regardless of whether the source is a neutral party or rival—a second study was conducted. To test this hypothesis, a sample of 230 participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk service. However, 12 participants were dropped because they measured as low identifiers and another 2 failed the authentication question. This left a remaining sample of 216. The sample was 63.4% males with an average age of 36.1 years old. The same procedure as was used in the first study was used in this study. Individuals in each of the conditions were shown an identical article—one which features criticism of the team framed within the general premise that no person could reasonably defend the team given the evidence against them. A pre-test of 30 undergraduate students at a large northeastern university assessed the critical nature of the article. In comparing the article to another, which was posited to be more neutral in nature, respondents indicated this article was more critical ($M = 5.90$) than the other article ($M = 3.97$), which was a significant difference ($t = 13.17, p < .001$). Identical source conditions to the first study were repeated in this study.

5.3.2.1 Measurement Model

For a list of descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, etc.) refer to Table 5.2. The measurement model was again assessed through a CFA on MPlus 5.0 SEM software. The measurement model was assessed initially and displayed the following fit statistics: [χ^2/df ratio = $(617.173/265 = 2.33)$, CFI = .909, RMSEA = .076, and SRMR = .080]. While this fit was

adequate, per Hu and Bentler's (1999) criteria, there was once again a convergent validity issue with the Collective Narcissism measure, with the same item from Study 1 and Study 3a reading, "I do not get upset when people do not notice the achievements of the team" receiving a poor factor loading. As such, this item was dropped from the analysis and the model was assessed again. The model displayed the following fit statistics: [χ^2/df ratio = (577/242 = 2.38), CFI = .912, RMSEA = .078, and SRMR = .080]. This represented acceptable model fit per Hu and Bentler's (1999) guidelines. In addition, convergent validity was displayed given that all AVE scores exceeded the 0.50 threshold (see Table 5.3 for a list of the psychometric properties of the measures). Finally, discriminant validity was demonstrated with all AVE scores exceeding the squared correlations between variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; see Table 5.4 for a matrix of correlations between variables). Given that the measurement model was deemed sound, I decided it was suitable to proceed to the MANOVA for hypothesis testing.

5.3.2.2 Hypothesis Testing

To test H2, participants were categorized into one of two possible fan types using the same method as was used in Study 3a. This resulted in 137 collective narcissists and 79 highly identified fans. An independent samples *t* test revealed that the means on collective narcissism for collective narcissists and highly identified were significantly different ($t = -17.26, p < .001$). The mean for the highly identified group was 3.38, while the mean for the collective narcissist group was 5.04. Subsequently, a 2 (Source of Comments: Rival vs. Neutral) x 2 (Fan Type: Collective Narcissists vs. Highly Identified) two-way MANOVA with the same dependent variables from the first study was conducted. In H2, I hypothesized a main effect of Fan Type, such that collective narcissists would be more likely than mere highly identified fans to perceive critical comments about their favorite team as a threat and respond by derogating the source and

exhibiting aggression intentions, regardless of whether the source was a rival or neutral party. The Wilks' Lambda revealed that there was indeed a significant main effect for Fan Type ($F_{(3, 210)} = 19.166, p < .001$). Further investigation revealed that there was a significant main effect of Fan Type on Perception of Threat ($F_{(1, 212)} = 35.181, p < .001$), Derogation ($F_{(1, 212)} = 19.56, p < .001$), and Aggression Intention ($F_{(1, 212)} = 33.390, p < .001$). Therefore, H2 (a, b, and c) was supported—the collectively narcissistic group displayed a significantly greater tendency to perceive the critical comments as a threat and respond by derogating the source and exhibiting aggression intentions, regardless of whether this came from a rival or a neutral party. No other effects were significant in this study. See Table 5.5 for a summary of results in this study.

Since Fan Type group sizes were unequal, a Box's M Test was conducted to ascertain the equality of covariance matrices. The Box's M (29.130) was significant ($p < .001$), indicating this assumption was violated. Following the procedure recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), 58 collective narcissists were randomly removed from the sample, and the data was analyzed with a sample of 158, containing an equal number of narcissists and non-narcissists. The results of the MANOVA with equal groups revealed the same pattern of results. The Wilks' Lambda for the interaction effect was not significant ($F_{(3, 152)} = 1.590, p = .194$). Follow-up analyses revealed that the Fan Type x Source interaction was not significant for Perception of Threat ($F_{(1, 154)} = .047, p = .829$) and Source Derogation ($F_{(1, 154)} = .033, p = .855$) and was only marginally significant for Aggression Intention ($F_{(1, 154)} = 4.312, p = .04$). Though it is worth noting that the multivariate test of significance revealed a confidence interval that overlapped zero for Aggression intention (Coefficient = .827, 95% CI, LL = -.306, UL = 1.96), indicating this result was not significant. There was, however, a main effect of Fan Type, as the Wilks' Lambda for Fan Type was significant ($F_{(3, 152)} = 20.638, p < .001$). Follow-up analyses revealed a

significant main effect of Fan Type on Perception of Threat ($F_{(1, 154)} = 32.303, p < .001$), Source Derogation ($F_{(1, 154)} = 16.459, p < .001$), and Aggression Intention ($F_{(1, 154)} = 40.499, p < .001$). Since the same pattern of results was repeated with equal groups, the initial test can be considered robust. The results of the analyses with equal group sizes are summarized in Table 5.6.

5.4 Discussion

The results of the current study advance past literature on outgroup negativity and derogation in sport (e.g., Smith & Schwarz, 2003; Wann & Dolan, 1994), in showing that collective narcissists exhibit significantly different responses to criticism of their favorite team than mere highly identified fans. Regardless of whether the comments were ambiguous in nature or legitimately critical, this group exhibited a greater propensity to perceive the comments as a threat and exhibit derogation and aggression intentions toward the source of such comments. Golec de Zavala (2011) stated that collective narcissists are unlikely to exhibit negative attitudes toward neutral parties not typically perceived as outgroups (Golec de Zavala, 2011). In contrast, the current study shows that, even when the “attack” was ambiguous, it did not matter whether the source of such commentary was neutral or a true outgroup with whom the team shared a tenuous history. In both cases, collective narcissists exhibited the same hostile responses.

It is not difficult to understand why a sport fan, particularly a collectively narcissistic one, would take criticism personally, and thus respond aggressively. After all, when one identifies with a sport team, rage may serve as an effort to restore their identity when their self-concept is threatened (Grove, Pickett, Jones, & Dorsch, 2012). Given that collective narcissism is associated with an excessive need for self-esteem and validation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), one would expect that a collective narcissists’ rage would be even more acute following a threat

to their self-concept. But I posit that it is the very nature of spectator sport and the social context of sport fandom that sets collective narcissism in sport apart from other contexts under which this construct may be studied. Specifically, as Grove et al. (2012) argued, “the social context of spectator sport may make it easy for some fans to replace the prescriptions of normally acceptable behavior in favor of a different set of norms they believe define a ‘true fan’” (p. 8). Indeed, given the results of the second study, it would seem collective narcissists hold on tightly to the notion of ‘true fan’ and guard jealously the boundaries of their perceived ingroup. As such, what is governed as acceptable outside the realm of spectator sport, and in other contexts where collective narcissism could conceivably be rampant, may not necessarily apply in this unique arena.

Sport, by its very nature, pits team versus all other opponents. It would cease to exist if not for the inherent competition between parties. Perhaps more than any other entity, sport is characterized by the mentality of “if you’re not for me, you’re against me.” Thus, anyone expressing criticism—whether fans of opposing teams, media of opposing teams, or even a mainstream journalist from a national publication not typically viewed as an outgroup—could quickly be cast as an antagonist if the collective narcissist does not like the tone of the comments.

It is worth noting that, while significantly higher than highly identified fans, with the exception of source derogation, the mean scores for the other dependent variables were not particularly high (See Tables 5.2 and 5.5). In Study 3a, wherein the comments were ambiguous in nature, only source derogation registered above the mid-point. In Study 3b, wherein the comments were legitimately critical, only source derogation and perception of threat for collective narcissists registered above the mid-point, though it is certainly possible that these

numbers were suppressed to a degree by response bias (i.e., respondents did not want to admit they would act aggressively, even in a confidential survey). Nevertheless, while clearly significantly more sensitive to criticism than mere highly identified fans, it does not appear as if collective narcissists are a group of “ticking time bombs” set to explode at any given moment. What the results do suggest is that, given their inflated and grandiose image of the team and excessive emotional investment in this image, they are *more* vulnerable than a mere highly identified fan to anything that might undermine that image and thus more prone to lash out at the slightest hint of a negative comment. Moreover, it is likely that certain individuals, perhaps more plentiful in the collective narcissist group, are particularly prone to hostility and aggression.

These findings advance Branscombe and Wann’s (1992) conceptual work on spectator aggression as well as many follow-ups (e.g., Wakefield & Wann, 2006; Wann et al., 1999, 2000, etc.). In their model, team identification served as an initial antecedent for arousal, categorization, and ultimately aggression as a means of self-esteem restoration. They argued that, since highly identified fans regard the team as part of their own social identity, they show the most marked responses to successes and failures, in some cases exhibiting the highest degrees of outgroup derogation (Branscombe & Wann, 1992). However, importantly, the authors explained that “unmeasured variations in team identification among spectators in prior studies that examined the consequences of game outcome for fan aggression may be an important factor underlying the conflicting results that have been observed” (Branscombe & Wann, 1992, p. 1017). Indeed, by parsing out the narcissistic aspect of team identification and measuring it in juxtaposition to positive ingroup attachment, I answer the authors’ call for research, by providing evidence that collective narcissism may be responsible for much of the fan aggression observed at stadia and sporting arenas worldwide.

Branscombe and Wann (1992) noted the varied instances of fan aggression and tragic outcomes stemming from high identification, explaining that, while fatal outcomes are rare, they still happen far too often. One such instance occurred in 2013, when a Los Angeles Dodgers fan was fatally stabbed to death by a (rival) San Francisco Giants fan following a game at AT&T Ballpark in San Francisco (Bender, Gomez, & Melvin, 2013). While it is impossible to say whether the individuals involved in this altercation were collectively narcissistic fans, the results of the current study provide a layer of support for the notion that this and many other similar instances may stem from identification of this nature. This illustrates the benefit for practitioners to understand what underlies identification of this nature, so as to leverage this knowledge with an increased awareness and ability to deal with potentially abusive and unruly fans at sporting events.

It is also interesting that the mean scores for collective narcissism across these two studies were considerably higher than the mean score in phase 1 of this dissertation. The mean scores in these two studies were 4.66 and 4.43, respectively, while participants averaged only 3.91 in the first phase. A number of reasons are plausible for this increase. For one, it could be that certain teams are more vulnerable to collectively narcissistic ingroup identification. Given that the study in the first phase of this work asked participants to complete the scale in reference to their favorite team—thus providing responses relevant to a mix of different teams—and the current studies asked participants to fill out the instrument with respect to the New England Patriots, it is plausible to suggest that the New England Patriots may simply be more prone to collectively narcissistic identification than other teams, perhaps due to their unprecedented success. This is also something that could be driven by the team's in-market media coverage. That is, the New England media has perpetuated the notion that the team is under intense

scrutiny and subject to unfair treatment with respect to the “DeflateGate” drama. For example, more than two years after the inception of the scandal, in the week leading up to the team’s Super Bowl LI matchup with the Atlanta Falcons, Howe (2017) discussed the five biggest storylines of Super Bowl week, the top two of which were centered around the idea of “DeflateGate” and the commissioner who handed down the penalty, rather than the game itself. The inability or unwillingness on the part of the media to let go of past slights could certainly play a role in perpetuating such feelings amongst the fan base. An alternative, but related, explanation is that collective narcissism has been shown to increase after a negative evaluation of an ingroup or in cases where individuals feel temporarily insecure or vulnerable as group members (Golec de Zavala, 2011). Given that these New England Patriots fans first read an article containing either ambiguous or critical comments about the team, perhaps this served as a stimulant for their levels of collective narcissism. Further research is needed to substantiate these propositions.

Certainly, this would seem to serve as an indicator that the media could play a powerful role in the development of collectively narcissistic sport fans. For journalists and publications that frequently heap criticism on the team, the results of the current study suggest this may serve to elevate collectively narcissistic feelings on the part of fans. Moreover, it would seem outlets who play the role of “watch dog,” highlighting places in the media wherein the team has received criticism or perceived disrespect at various times could play a similar role in priming collective narcissism in their fan base. Given the propensity for hostile responses to criticism on the part of collectively narcissistic fans in the current studies, this is something of which sport teams and media outlets alike should be cognizant, so as to avoid such outcomes moving forward.

5.4.1 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions, the study does have some limitations. First, the Indianapolis Colts were used as the “rival” outgroup in question because they represent the group with whom the New England Patriots share the most tenuous history relevant to the “DeflateGate” context used in this study. However, it is possible other teams or entities may engender even more vitriol from the New England Patriots’ fan base. I did not pretest other potential rival sources. Second, and somewhat surprisingly, non-narcissistic fans were underrepresented in these two studies. In the first study, just 29% of the sample was non-narcissistic, while in the second study only 36.5% identified in this fashion. This means that, across the two studies, roughly 2/3 of the sample was collectively narcissistic. While this was beyond my control, a more equal proportion of both collectively narcissistic and mere highly identified fans would have been desirable. Finally, comprising just 33.6% of the sample in the first study and 36.6% of the sample in the second study, females were underrepresented across these two studies. This is worth noting given that significant differences have been observed between genders in past work (e.g., Fink & Parker, 2009).

With regard to future research, a follow-up study investigating changes in collective narcissism levels amongst sport fans following a negative evaluation of their team would be worthwhile. Given the higher collective narcissism scores amongst New England Patriots fans compared to the sample in the first phase of this dissertation, it would seem entirely possible that this was due to the priming of collective narcissism via the ambiguous or critical article. However, given the design of this study, this is impossible to conclude. Future work could isolate pre- and post-test collective narcissism levels to gain a clearer picture of this phenomenon. In addition, it is possible that team-related factors could play a role in fans’ levels of collective

narcissism. Factors such as history, tradition, success and/or failure, market size, or even the team's media could play a role in the extent of collective narcissism in the fan base. Future studies would be well served to investigate this further. Third, the current study could be repeated using other outgroups to determine if a group other than the Indianapolis Colts could serve to produce the hypothesized interaction effect in the ambiguous comments condition. Fourth, given that team criticism could come from a variety of sources, including the media, opposing fans, the team's own fans, or opposing players and/or coaches, it would be worthwhile to investigate whether collective narcissists respond differently depending on the type of source. Finally, future studies should measure other differences in behaviors between collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans. For example, given that collective narcissists are prone to remain on watch for anything undermining the group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), and the proliferation of sport content distributed through social media (e.g., Larkin & Fink, 2016), it would be worth examining the media consumption habits of collective narcissists and mere highly identified fans to observe potentially critical differences in behavior.

5.5 Appendix B. Study 3 Team Criticism Article Manipulations

Ambiguous Comments Conditions

Brady's side faces tough questions at Deflategate appeal

By (Peter King/Mike Chappell, Beat Writer, Indianapolis Colts/Jeremy Fowler, ESPN Staff Writer)

March 3, 2016, 4:48 PM EDT

The latest chapter in the Deflategate saga unfolded in a Manhattan courtroom on Thursday as the three judges from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit questioned lawyers for both the NFL and NFLPA in a hearing to determine if they will uphold Judge Richard Berman's ruling that set aside Patriots quarterback Tom Brady's four-game suspension.

Observers in the courtroom noted that NFLPA lawyer Jeffrey Kessler faced stiff inquiries during his turn in front of the panel, including queries from Judge Barrington Parker about Brady's destruction of his cell phone.

"Why couldn't the commissioner suspend Brady for that conduct alone?" Judge Barrington Parker said, via the *Providence Journal*. "You have one of the most celebrated players performing in that fashion? Anybody within 100 yards of this proceeding knew that would raise the stakes."

Parker went on to say that Brady's explanation that he routinely destroys his phone "made no sense whatsoever." Federal court reporter Max Stendahl of Law360 tweeted throughout the hearing and noted that Judge Denny Chin called evidence "compelling, if not overwhelming."

Their appeals court's decision will not be known for several months and could affirm Berman's decision, send it back to Berman's court, back to an arbitrator or find for the league. The losing side would be able to request a hearing from the entire Second Circuit or the Supreme Court, so, in other words, we may not be close to the end of the road yet.

Cheating Scandals Will Forever Tarnish the Brady-Belichick Legacy

By (Peter King/Mike Chappell, Beat Writer, Indianapolis Colts/Jeremy Fowler, ESPN Staff Writer)

It's time to stop with the excuses. Stop with looking the other way. Just stop. Stop defending Tom Brady and Bill Belichick.

No human being with a functioning cerebrum can defend them now.

Sure, New England Patriots fans will. This is what fans do. Everyone cheats. All teams try to get an edge. You think the Patriots are the only team to underinflate footballs? It wouldn't have mattered in the game anyway. You're just a hater. All Brady and Belichick want to do is win. They are winners. Because winning. Patriot winning is greater than your winning. Mom, apple pie and winning. Please hold it down over there. We're winning.

The excuses from Patriots fans are flowing like a fine vintage of clam chowder. This is the second time the Patriots have shown they don't care about rules. To the Patriots, rules are for suckers. Rules are for losers. Rules are for you and me, not for Brady and B.

One underinflated football is interesting. Three are curious. Eight are a pattern. But 11 of 12?

That's serial.

Don't blame the weather. Don't look for false equivalence. Don't say the Packers overinflated, the Vikings warmed their footballs, the Earth's gravitational pull caused the air to leak or microscopic black holes sucked out the pressure.

Belichick and Brady cheated. No, they are not the only ones. But this is the second blatant example of rules skirting. This is no longer coincidence. This is a culture that I didn't think existed there but does.

There is no explanation for 11 of 12 footballs being doctored other than purposeful manipulation.

This is why the NFL should, and I think will, come down hard on the Patriots. If the NFL doesn't, it will look like it is enabling cheating. Roger Goodell is on record as saying he would punish teams harsher that try to cheat the competitive balance rules.

Table 5.1

Study 3 Factors and Items

Factor and Items
Collective Narcissism
I wish other groups would more quickly recognize the authority of my team
My team deserves special treatment
I will never be satisfied until my team gets all it deserves
I insist upon my team getting the respect that is due to it
It really makes me angry when others criticize my team
If my team had a major say in the league the league would be a better place
I do not get upset when people do not notice the achievements of my team
Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of my team
The true worth of my team is often misunderstood
Team Identification
Being a fan of the team is important to me
I am a committed fan of the team
I consider myself a “real” fan of the team
Perception of Threat
The news report is a critical threat to the New England Patriots football team
The report’s portrayal of the New England Patriots football team is quite threatening
I feel threatened by the report’s portrayal of the New England Patriots football team
Outgroup Derogation
Warm-Cold
Positive-Negative
Friendly-Hostile
Trusting-Suspicious
Respect-Contempt
Admiration-Disgust
Aggression Intention
I would like to yell at him to express my anger
I would like to hurt him in some way
I would like to make him pay for his remarks
I would like to teach him a lesson

Table 5.2

Study 3 Descriptive Statistics

Factor	<i>Study 3a</i>		<i>Study 3b</i>	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Team Identification	5.93	1.04	5.72	1.04
Collective Narcissism	4.66	1.54	4.43	1.46
Perception of Threat	3.53	1.48	3.68	1.51
Source Derogation	4.83	1.26	5.29	1.21
Aggression Intention	2.60	1.37	2.87	1.39

Table 5.3**Psychometric Properties of the Study 3 Variables***Factor Loadings (β), Alpha Coefficients (α), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*

Items	Study 3a			Study 3b		
	β	α	AVE	β	α	AVE
Team Identification		.856	0.76		.843	0.77
Being a fan of the team is important to me	.801			.872		
I am a committed fan of the team	.905			.886		
I consider myself a “real” fan of the team	.897			.871		
Collective Narcissism		.895	0.52		.876	0.52
I wish other teams would more quickly recognize the authority of my team	.802			.740		
My team deserves special treatment	.667			.647		
I will never be satisfied until my team gets all it deserves	.740			.647		
I insist upon my team getting the respect that is due to it	.692			.779		
It really makes me angry when other criticize my team	.778			.735		
If my team had a major say in the league, the league would be a better place	.722			.773		
Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of my team	.655			.725		
The true worth of my team is often misunderstood	.715			.726		
Perception of Threat		.835	0.63		.828	0.62
The news report is a critical threat to the New England Patriots football team	.772			.732		
The report’s portrayal of the New England Patriots football team is quite threatening	.853			.808		
I feel threatened by the report’s portrayal of the New England Patriots football team	.759			.811		
Aggression Intention		.885	0.67		.860	0.64
I would like to yell at the author to express my anger	.721			.695		
I would like to harm the author in some way	.761			.789		
I would like to make the author pay for his/her remarks	.914			.882		
I would like to teach the author a lesson	.853			.827		
Source Derogation		.924	0.68		.936	0.72
Warm-Cold	.853			.878		
Positive-Negative	.870			.901		
Friendly-Hostile	.744			.804		
Trusting-Suspicious	.736			.785		
Respect-Contempt	.878			.848		
Admiration-Disgust	.849			.854		

Table 5.4**Correlations amongst Study 3 Latent Variables**

<i>Study 3a</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1) Collective Narcissism	1				
2) Team Identification	.601***	1			
3) Aggression Intention	.403***	-.002	1		
4) Perception of Threat	.587***	.183*	.699***	1	
5) Source Derogation	.443***	.329***	.242***	.404***	1
<i>Study 3b</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1) Collective Narcissism	1				
2) Team Identification	.710***	1			
3) Aggression Intention	.504***	.209**	1		
4) Perception of Threat	.652***	.373***	.617***	1	
5) Source Derogation	.477***	.499***	.099	.439***	1

Note: ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05

Table 5.5

Summary of Study 3 Results

Univariate Tests			Multivariate Tests			
Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	F	Coefficient (Mean Difference)	Confidence Interval (LL)	Confidence Interval (UL)	Sig
<i>Study 3a</i>						
Perception of Threat	Fan Type	53.494	-1.475	-2.047	-.9040	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	.518	-.2903	-1.433	.8522	p = .473
Source Derogation	Fan Type	16.799	-.6586	-1.114	-.2035	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	1.452	-.3872	-1.297	.5229	p = .230
Aggression Intention	Fan Type	33.076	-1.123	-1.677	-.5703	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	.005	-.0281	-1.135	1,078	p = .943
<i>Study 3b</i>						
Perception of Threat	Fan Type	35.181	-1.183	-1.748	-.6813	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	.271	.2078	-.9220	1.338	p = .603
Source Derogation	Fan Type	19.560	-.7268	-1.192	-.2615	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	.078	.0918	-.8389	1.023	p = .780
Aggression Intention	Fan Type	33.390	-1.057	-1.574	-.5388	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	2.244	.5478	-.4877	1.583	p = .136

Note: N = 214 (Study 3a), N = 216 (Study 3b)

Table 5.6

Summary of Study 3 Results (with equal groups)

Univariate Tests			Multivariate Tests			
Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	F	Coefficient (Mean Difference)	95% Confidence Interval (LL)	95% Confidence Interval (UL)	Sig
<i>Study 3a</i>						
Perception of Threat	Fan Type	38.462	-1.532	-2.238	-.8255	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	.597	-.382	-1.795	1.031	p = .441
Source Derogation	Fan Type	14.151	-.7080	-1.246	-.1697	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	.971	-.3708	-1.447	.7057	p = .326
Aggression Intention	Fan Type	28.990	-1.217	-1.864	-.5707	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	.137	.1671	-1.126	1.461	p = .712
<i>Study 3b</i>						
Perception of Threat	Fan Type	32.303	-1.213	-1.820	-.6056	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	.047	.0925	-1.122	1.307	p = .829
Source Derogation	Fan Type	16.459	-.7323	-1.246	-.2187	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	.033	-.0659	-1.093	.9614	p = .855
Aggression Intention	Fan Type	40.499	-1.267	-1.833	-.7004	p < .001
	Fan Type x Source	4.312	.8268	-.3062	1.960	p = .040

Note: N = 124 (Study 3a), N = 158 (Study 3b)

CHAPTER 6

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Anecdotal (Burke, 2014; Poladian, 2015) and empirical (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Wakefield & Wann, 2006; Wann et al., 1999) evidence indicated sport fandom may be a worthwhile context in which to examine collective narcissism. The results of three studies discussed here bear that out, as an initial portrait of the collectively narcissistic sport fan has emerged that greatly extends the literature both on collective narcissism in general, as well as team identification within sport. In this closing chapter, I provide a brief review of the results from the three studies, as well as a discussion of the common thread tying everything together, before wrapping up with a discussion of the future outlook on collective narcissism.

6.1 Key Findings

The results from Phase 1 provide an initial profile of the collectively narcissistic sport fan—one who is, quite interestingly, prone to *both* BIRGing and CORFing, as well as dysfunctional fandom. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect to emerge from this study was the temporary lapses in loyalty (i.e., CORFing) displayed by collectively narcissistic fans. Theoretically, I proposed this stemmed from their insecure self-esteem, which resulted in heightened sensitivity to negative events, and thus a susceptibility to dissonance reduction techniques such as CORFing. Ultimately, this finding was emblematic of the nature of the narcissistic relationship. In good times, the narcissistic partner is apt to affirm the security of the relationship, but in bad times—when the narcissistic needs are not being met—this is likely to result in defensive behaviors to protect the fragile self-esteem (Pistole, 1995).

While Phase 1 featured an examination of the outcomes of collective narcissism in sport, Phase 2 featured an exploration of the *drivers* of this type of attachment. What was provided in

this study was evidence of the ways collective narcissists perceive the team that are distinct from those exhibited by mere highly identified fans. Collective narcissists displayed a tendency to attach themselves to narratives that allow them to inflate their fragile ego, thereby fueling their narcissistic attachment. They exhibited a propensity to conceive of the team as unique and distinct from others in the respective league, possessive of an underdog spirit, constantly under scrutiny from external parties, and prone to the identification as a “true fan” who stuck it out with the team while others did not. The latter notion is interesting given their propensity to CORF. Regardless, these efforts largely seemed to represent narratives manufactured in the mind of the collective narcissist as a means of ego fulfillment. In contrast, highly identified fans, for the most part, attached themselves solely to more secure aspects of the team and vehicles for identification (e.g., socialization agents, players, rivalries, etc.).

Finally, in the third phase, I provided evidence of defensive behaviors distinct from mere highly identified fans that serve as dissonance reduction mechanisms in the face of criticism. Across two studies, collective narcissists were shown to be more prone to perceiving of criticism as a threat, as well as outgroup derogation and aggression intention in the face of the criticism. This was shown to be the case regardless of whether the criticism was ambiguous or legitimately critical, or whether it came from a neutral or rival party.

Common across all three phases is evidence of a fan that goes to excessive lengths to use their relationship with the team as a vehicle to protect and inflate their fragile and insecure self-esteem. While different results and pieces of evidence emerge throughout, this is the common (theoretical) thread tying these three separate but related studies together. In an overarching way, the findings are consistent with our existing understanding of collective narcissism stemming from the work of Golec de Zavala and her colleagues (e.g., Cichocka et al., 2015; Golec de

Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2013a, 2013b). That being said, the current work advances the collective narcissism literature significantly by providing a nuanced look at how this plays out in the unique context of sport. In addition, as noted throughout, I provide considerable advances for our understanding of sport fan behavior and team identification.

6.2 Key Advances on Past Literature

An important advancement of the current work is the merging of the literature on collective narcissism and self-expansion theory. This provides scholarly work on collective narcissism with a strong theoretical underpinning in ingroup identification processes. Specifically, collective narcissism is an ingroup identification marked by inclusion of the team/group in self and merging of resources. The self-expansion model also provides a framework to better understand narcissistic relationship tendencies characteristic of collectively narcissistic sport team identification. These include the affirmation of the relationship through a mutual exchange of resources during good times, coupled with defensive behaviors (e.g., CORFing) when narcissistic needs are not met during bad times (e.g., failure, team loss, etc.). Given the characteristics and behaviors exhibited by collective narcissists both in the current work and past literature (e.g., Golec de Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2013a, 2013b), the self-expansion model represents a natural accompaniment affording scholars a sound theoretical lens through which to view ingroup identification of this nature.

Another important advancement of the current work specific to literature on team identification is the provision of a distinct set of outcomes, drivers, and behavioral responses, when compared to mere positive team identification. This illustrates the importance of parsing out the narcissistic aspect of team identification, which likely exists to varying degrees in sport fans worldwide. For some this may be dormant or insignificant in their fandom, while for others,

this may be quite pronounced and evident in their relationship with the sport team and resultant behaviors. Regardless, there is considerable insight to be gained for both academicians and practitioners alike to warrant continued exploration of this construct moving forward. A number of ideas for future study have been put forth across this series of essays. These and other avenues would represent a sound starting point for the continued advancement of this research line and ultimately a better understanding of sport fan identification and behavior.

Team identification is among the most widely studied constructs in the sport management literature and with good reason. Highly identified fans have long exhibited a distinct set of behavioral responses from those low or moderate on team identification, making them a segment coveted by marketers. Because of this, we have a firm understanding of many of the outcomes and drivers of this important construct. However, findings from the current series of studies provide evidence to suggest our current understanding is incomplete. In order to truly understand team identification, we must also consider the potential for other forms and/or variations of the construct—one such variations being collective narcissism. Indeed, the potential exists for a robust segment of individuals who identify in this fashion, and as such, it is critical we make an effort to understand the psychology and behaviors exhibited by this segment. The current work represents an important first step in this venture, providing a foundation for the advancement of literature on team identification and collective narcissism moving forward.

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