

## *Journal of Issues in* **Intercollegiate Athletics**

### **"I hate you man!": Exploring Maladaptive Parasocial Interaction Expressions to College Athletes via Twitter**

---

**Jimmy Sanderson**  
Clemson University

**Carrie Truax**  
West Virginia University

---

*There has been an increasing trend of fans attacking college athletes via Twitter after athletic contests. These messages often contain hostile and vitriolic language that in many cases, make national sport news headlines. The present study explored this behavior through the lens of maladaptive parasocial interaction (Kassing & Sanderson, in press) by investigating tweets directed at University of Alabama placekicker Cade Foster after Alabama lost their rivalry game against Auburn University on November 30, 2013. Using Radian6 software, a total of 938 tweets were analyzed. Analysis revealed that maladaptive parasocial interaction manifested in the following ways: (a) belittling; (b) mocking; (c) sarcasm; and (d) threats. Interestingly, and unexpectedly, a host of supportive comments were conveyed to Foster as well. The results suggest that athletic department personnel must provide resources and education for college athletes on coping with these messages to mitigate potentially negative psychological effects. The results also reveal that Twitter functions as a venue where fans discuss what it means to be a "true" fan with respect to appropriate reactions after a team loses.*

Social media platforms have given fans unprecedented access to initiate interaction with athletes, both at the professional and amateur level (Sanderson, 2011). This capability can result in positive outcomes such as Cincinnati Reds player Brandon Phillips attending a little league game after a player requested via Twitter that Phillips attend one of his games (Wagner, 2011); and New England Patriots player Julian Edelman visiting a marketing class at Emerson University after students started a Twitter campaign to bring him to class (Borchers, 2013). However, this access also enables fans to post threatening, demeaning, and insulting messages to athletes, including death threats. For example, during the 2013 college football season, after University of Missouri kicker Andrew Baggett missed a field goal attempt that would have tied a game against the University of South Carolina, he was subjected to hate-filled messages via his Twitter account (Gleeson, 2013). This behavior also extends towards families of athletes as well. For instance, during the 2012 National Basketball Association (NBA) playoffs, Los Angeles Lakers player Steve Blake missed a shot that would have won a playoff game against the Oklahoma City Thunder. Shortly after Blake missed the shot, people attacked his wife, Kristen, via her Twitter account. One such message stated, "I hope your family gets murdered" (Devine, 2012).

Whereas this behavior is problematic for professional athletes, it is especially troubling when directed at college athletes, a group for whom athletics is not intended to be their primary pursuit. Nevertheless, this behavior appears to be increasing and when a college athlete commits a mistake that is perceived to affect the game outcome, it is essentially an expected result that hateful messages will be directed to the athlete's Twitter account. Consequently, more journalists are starting to cover this behavior; with one columnist noting the psychological ramifications these hateful messages may prompt in college athletes (Olson, 2013). While some may suggest that a simple way to solve this problem is for college athletes to remove themselves from Twitter, this may not be the ideal solution for every college athlete, and is not plausible on a wide scale. For many college athletes, Twitter and other social media platforms have become a predominant method of communication, and they regularly check these platforms to see what is being said about them as they *are* the conversation (Browning & Sanderson, 2012). This suggestion also eschews the opportunity for college athletes to use social media platforms for positive purposes, such as growing personal networks and developing a compelling online presence.

Considering that college athletes (and indeed athletes at large) are likely to continue using social media, it is important to examine the types of hateful messages that can be transmitted to them through these digital platforms. Kassing and Sanderson (in press) coined the term, "maladaptive parasocial interaction" to characterize the increase in hateful and vitriolic messages directed at athletes in the current social media era. Investigating how maladaptive parasocial interaction manifests is an important undertaking for several reasons. First, whereas research has documented a variety of positive parasocial interaction behaviors, the range of maladaptive behaviors remains largely unexplored (see Sanderson, 2008a for one exception). Second, this behavior seems to be growing in intensity and frequency, and understanding more about this type of behavior can help athletic department personnel and others who work with college athletes who experience it.

In that vein, we explored messages sent to University of Alabama placekicker Cade Foster, after the team's rivalry game against Auburn University on November 30, 2013. The

Alabama-Auburn rivalry, which has been played for 110 years, is considered one of the most intense in all of college sports (Doyel, 2013), and in this particular game, Foster struggled, missing 3 field goal attempts. Ultimately, with the game on the line, Alabama Head Coach Nick Saban sent in the back-up kicker, Adam Griffith. Griffith's field goal attempt missed, and was returned by Auburn player Chris Davis for the game-ending touchdown, propelling Auburn to the Southeastern Conference Championship Game and ultimately the National Championship Game. Not surprisingly, as Foster struggled and as Alabama ultimately lost the game, people turned to Twitter to attack him. Consequently, the large corpus of messages directed at Foster in the immediate aftermath of the game offer rich data to examine the concept of maladaptive parasocial interaction.

## Review of Literature

### *Fan Identification*

For many individuals, sport fandom is an integral social identity element (Wann, Royalty, & Roberts, 2000). Branscombe and Wann (1991) noted, "Sports viewing provides individuals with something grander than themselves that they can feel a part of, without requiring any special skills, knowledge, or acceptance of particular institutional values" (p. 116). As identification grows, fans associate their self-esteem and social identity with athletes' and sports teams' performances, characterized by fans using terminology such as "we" when discussing these "collective" performances (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976; Sanderson, 2008a).

This behavior is indicative of larger fan behavior frameworks such as basking in reflected glory (BIRGing) (Cialdini, et al., 1976) and cutting off reflected failure (CORFing) (Snyder, Lassergard, & Ford, 1986). Put simply, when the team/athlete a fan supports is winning, highly identified fans are more likely to overtly demonstrate their affiliation with that team/athlete to be seen as a "winner" or BIRG; whereas when a team/athlete is losing or experiences a troubling experience, these same fans are more likely to disassociate themselves from the team, and not seek that affiliation and association, or CORF. As an example, when NBA player LeBron James left the Cleveland Cavaliers for the Miami Heat as a free agent in 2010, some Cavalier fans reacted by burning his jersey in the street (CORFing). Conversely, when James announced in July 2014, that he was rejoining the Cavaliers, fans in Cleveland overwhelmingly welcomed him back and once James announced he would be wearing his former number 23 jersey, there was a rush of purchases for this item (BIRGing) (Pollakoff, 2014).

Identification can produce positive outcomes such as increasing interpersonal connections, elevating social life satisfaction, and reducing loneliness and alienation (Wann, 2006). Yet, identification also can result in problematic behaviors (Wakefield & Wann, 2006; Sanderson, 2013b). Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) sheds insight on intergroup behaviors that can lead people to engage in this kind of behavior. According to SIT, people derive their identity, in part, from their association with groups. Thus, fans engage in social comparison (Brewer, 1999) to evaluate their team (in-group) more favorably than a rival team (out-group). Branscombe and Wann (1994) argued that from an SIT perspective, engaging in derogatory behaviors provides a beneficial impact on group members' social identity satisfaction quality.

Given the inherent competitive nature of sports, there is ample opportunity to explore how fan identity promotes derogatory behavior. For example, Amiot, Sansfaco, and Louis (2013) investigated hockey fans' motivations for engaging in discriminatory behaviors, and how these actions predicted social identity quality. They found that the more hockey fans engaged in derogatory behaviors, their well-being, frequency of these behaviors, and positive social identity all increased. Sanderson (2013b) investigated fan reactions on Facebook to University of Cincinnati head coach Brian Kelly leaving the school to become the head football coach at the University of Notre Dame. He discovered that fans responded to this social identity threat by demeaning a new out-group (Notre Dame) and expressing threatening, misogynistic and homophobic language towards Kelly.

Whereas most of the research on fan identification and sport has focused on behavior towards out-groups, less work has examined maladaptive behavior directed towards in-group members. Yet, in many cases, athletes who fans perceive to be responsible for social identity threats still remain on the team, and fans may direct their wrath at these in-group members, rather than solely focusing on the out-group. This may stem, in part, from fans feeling an emotional ownership of sports teams, prompting internalization of the team's success or lack thereof (Donavan, Carlson, & Zimmerman, 2005).

As fans seek to ameliorate these feelings, Twitter and other social media platforms provide a convenient outlet for them to enact this process. Indeed, fans can both "let out" their feelings to a collective audience and directly attack the person that they believe to be directly responsible.

### *Sport Fans and Social Media*

Social media are, "architected by design to readily support participation, peer-to-peer conversation, collaboration, and community (Meraz, 2009, p. 682). The proliferation of social media into sport over the past decade has been well documented (Sanderson, 2011; Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012; Hambrick & Kang, in press; Sanderson & Browning 2013). As social media platforms have swept across sport, both teams and athletes have rapidly adopted these channels, resulting in a host of compelling outcomes. For example, athletes have taken a more assertive role in their public portrayal (Sanderson, 2008b); which has enabled them to express more aspects of their identity (Sanderson, 2013a). Yet, for sports organizations, particularly at the amateur level, managing social media, in particular Twitter, can be challenging (Sanderson & Browning, 2013). Twitter also has become the predominant place where sports news breaks, and some sports journalists have been observed to behave differently on Twitter than they do in their columns and broadcasts (Sanderson & Hambrick, 2012).

Whereas social media's influence has influenced athletes, sports organizations, and sports journalists, fandom also has been affected (Clavio & Walsh, 2014; Sanderson, 2010a). Twitter enables sports audiences to have collective discussion about sports through the hashtag (#), which allows them to publicly perform as part of a larger fan group (Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, 2013). Although this connection and community can be positive, it also can become problematic as the Sanderson (2013b) study of fan reactions to Brian Kelly discovered. Another implication social media has created is creating a digital closeness between fans and athletes, particularly for those athletes who use social media in ways that invite interaction (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012).

As fans now have the ability to send messages directly to athletes, and in some cases engage and interact with them, both positive and negative outcomes can result. Kassing and Sanderson (in press) noted that social media facilitates the expression of what they termed maladaptive parasocial interaction - behavior characterized by fans expressing demeaning and inflammatory comments towards athletes. Whereas this can be problematic for professional athletes, this behavior takes an added dimension for college athletes. These athletes are younger and perhaps more impressionable to criticism directed at them, and research suggests that criticism directed at college athletes fractures their identity and raises questions about how to deal with the onslaught of often very hateful messages (Browning & Sanderson, 2012).

To that end, we seek to extend the notion of maladaptive parasocial interaction (Kassing & Sanderson, 2014), by investigating how this construct unfolds via messages sent directly to an athlete on Twitter.

### *Parasocial Interaction (PSI)*

Parasocial interaction (PSI) refers to behavior that people express towards media figures that resembles actual social interaction, but differs because the interaction is mediated and unreciprocated (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Researchers have discovered that PSI mirrors actual social relationships and that people utilize similar processes when evaluating media figures and actual relational partners (Cohen, 2004; Eyal & Dailey, 2012; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Tsao, 1996). PSI research has evolved into a multi-faceted construct that encompasses a variety of behaviors (Gleich, 1997; Kassing & Sanderson, 2009; Sanderson, 2008a; Sanderson & Emmons, 2014).

Additional PSI research indicates that some people become so absorbed in their interaction and relationships with media figures that they transport themselves into media narratives surrounding these figures (Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000; Sanderson, 2010a) Other scholars have discovered that placing oneself into a media narrative and PSI are conceptually related (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004; Greenwood, 2008). With the advent of the Internet and digital media technologies, people now have the capability to initiate PSI expressions towards media figures, providing unique opportunities to examine this behavior, particularly in sport (Kassing & Sanderson 2009; Sanderson, 2008c).

Kassing and Sanderson (2009) explored PSI expressions from fans towards American cyclist Floyd Landis via his blog and found that PSI was conveyed in relationally appropriate ways that matched with how Landis was performing in the Tour de France. Sanderson (2008c) examined PSI directed at Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban as he participated on ABC's television program *Dancing With the Stars* and found that fans experienced emotions that mimicked Cuban's performance on the show. He also found that fans diligently reported to Cuban about their efforts to keep him on the show (e.g. sending out e-mails encouraging friends to vote for Cuban to stay on the show). Sanderson and Emmons (2014) investigated PSI towards Major League Baseball (MLB) player Josh Hamilton after he publicly acknowledged an alcohol relapse, and discovered that fans overwhelmingly forgave Hamilton and found common ground in his struggles with addiction.

Whereas this line of research has unpacked positive expressions of parasocial interaction, less work has examined the reverse. Kassing and Sanderson (in press) conceptualized maladaptive PSI as embodying negative and hateful expressions from fans expressed often via digital and social media. They argued that this behavior is emboldened by the anonymity

provided by the Internet and also fueled by sport fans increasing participation on these sites and the strong role that sport plays in many fans social identity construction. In one study, Sanderson (2008a) explored PSI towards Boston Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling and noted the presence of critical behaviors as people derided Schilling for his vocal support of the United States Republican Party and then President George W. Bush. Yet, beyond this one study, we know little about the way maladaptive PSI manifests.

Thus, we examine how maladaptive PSI manifests towards an athlete via Twitter. Given the intensity of the Alabama-Auburn rivalry, the dramatic nature of that game, and the increasing prevalence of criticism launched at college athletes on this platform, Cade Foster's Twitter account provides a rich source for examination. To guide our analysis, we proposed the following research question:

RQ1: In what ways does maladaptive parasocial interaction manifest on a college athlete's Twitter profile?

## Method

### *Data Collection*

Data consisted of tweets mentioning Cade Foster's Twitter handle (@Foster\_43). The Radian6 software program was used to cull tweets. Radian6 is a social media tracking software program that allows users to search publicly available social media posts within specific time parameters for user-defined search terms. As we were interested in the expression of maladaptive parasocial interaction, we used Foster's Twitter handle as our search term and limited the search to Twitter. This provided a sample of messages where users had directly mentioned Foster, increasing the chances of him seeing these messages (Twitter allows users to set notifications for when their account is mentioned) rather than posts that only mentioned his name, which would not create a notification (although one could certainly search one's name). In short, messages with Foster's handle were directed *at* him, whereas messages just mentioning his name were more likely *about* him, and we felt those targeted messages were most relevant for this particular examination.

Our rationale for limiting the search to Twitter was based on previous research that indicates that college athletes are heavy consumers of Twitter (Browning & Sanderson, 2012). Additionally, people can generally follow anyone on Twitter with little restriction (e.g., few people maintain private accounts, wherein follower requests have to be approved) whereas on Facebook, users have to approve "friend" requests, making these particular messages unlikely to manifest in the degree they would on Twitter. With respect to time, given the intensity surrounding the Auburn-Alabama rivalry and the dramatic manner in which that particular game unfolded, we limited our search to the day of and the day after the game - November 30, 2013 - December 1, 2013.

Utilizing the Radian6 software, the initial search for "@Foster\_43" for November 30 - December 1, 2013 resulted in 12,311 tweets. We then elected to remove "as is" re-tweets from the data. Re-tweets are re-transmissions of another Twitter user's message, and can be re-transmitted "as is" or by the user performing the re-tweet while also interjecting their own unique commentary. The interpretive design of our study, and the ambiguity surrounding the intent of "as is" re-tweets (e.g., endorsement? Interesting content?) informed this particular

decision. If the re-tweet included user commentary, we included it in the sample. There were a total of 5,645 “as is” retweets, leaving a sample of 6,666 tweets. We then took a systematic random sample of every 6<sup>th</sup> tweet, which resulted in a sample of 1,111 tweets. The Radian6 software also provides demographic information on message senders regarding their number of tweets, number of followers, and the number of accounts they follow. For the Twitter users with messages in the sample, they followed from 0 to 13,599 Twitter users ( $M = 487.23$ ), possessed from 0 to 26,380 followers ( $M = 589.44$ ), and had posted from 1 to 295,007 tweets ( $M = 10,164$ ).

### *Data Analysis*

To answer the research question, a thematic analysis of the postings was conducted using constant comparative methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Each tweet served as the unit of analysis. First, both authors independently immersed themselves in the data through an initial active reading of the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that this type of reading involves researchers searching for meanings and patterns, rather than just casually reading through the data. This approach allows identification of possible patterns to emerge and to be shaped. This process also involves making notes about what is interesting in the data and producing initial categories. Braun and Clarke (2006) observed that this process can be driven by data or theory and we took a data-driven approach, allowing categories to emerge as data analysis unfolded rather than *a priori* (Kassing & Sanderson, 2009). Next, using a procedure employed by Sanderson and Emmons (2014) both authors independently coded 25% of the postings ( $n = 278$ ) developing themes by micro-analyzing and classifying themes into emergent categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) based on how audience members were expressing maladaptive parasocial interaction to Foster. Tweets that appeared to involve more than one type of parasocial interaction were placed into the one category that was thought to exemplify the most dominant theme of the tweet. Development, clarification and refinement of categories continued until new observations did not add substantively to existing categories. This allowed both authors to independently gain insight into the usefulness of the developed thematic categories (Suter, Bergen, Daas, & Durham, 2006).

Both authors then met and reviewed the categories and any differences were resolved until reaching consensus. After reaching agreement on the categories, both authors used these themes as a template for the remaining tweets, which were divided equally and analyzed. After completing this analysis, both authors again reviewed themes and agreed that the remaining tweets could be categorized into one of the previously developed themes. Additionally, it also was discovered that 173 tweets were not relevant to the study (e.g., spam messages, posting comments to other Twitter followers not directed at Foster) and these were removed leaving a final sample of 938 tweets. Through the data analytic process described above, four categories emerged: (a) belittling; (b) mocking; (c) sarcasm; and (d) threats. Interestingly, and unexpectedly, analysis revealed an overwhelming presence of another category - support for Foster. We were intrigued by this outpouring of encouraging messages and thus, elected to include it in the analysis. Table 1 provides an illustration of each theme along with the frequencies of each theme in the data.

Table 1 - Participant Themes

Theme	Frequency/(% of Sample)	Example
Belittling	85 (9.1%)	“@Foster_43 you’re kidding right? You fucking blow. You choke every big game.”
Mocking	58 (6.2%)	“@Foster_43 Better stay 4 years and get that degree, your obviously not getting drafted.”
Sarcasm	32 (3.4%)	“@Foster_43 congrats on the great game dude!”
Threat	26 (2.8%)	“Kill yourself you fuckin loser @Foster_43”
Support	737 (78.5)	“@Foster_43 God bless you Cade. Don’t let the negative of a bad hour overshadow your success.”

## Results and Interpretation

Tweets are reported verbatim from the data, and spelling and grammatical errors were left intact. We first discuss the maladaptive themes and then discuss the support theme that emerged.

### *Belittling*

For some people, Foster’s performance prompted them to express comments that were demeaning and overtly critical. These sentiments, appeared in approximately 9% of the sample and were conveyed by remarks such as, “@Foster\_43 when I find you on campus I’m gonna show you how to kick - with a swift one to the nuts. Jackass, thought u would learn after LSU;” “@Foster\_43 Man fuck you fuck you, you need to kick for 40 days and nights;” and “@Foster\_43 Boy u was out there kicking with some Timberland [work] boots on wun ya.” Other individuals communicated terse, harsh statements. For example, “@Foster\_43 You fucking suck;” “fuck you a freshman can kick better than you;” and “@Foster\_43 you fuckin suck i hope they whoop yo ass in the locker room.”

Belittling also consisted of messages that blamed Foster for the outcome of the game. This was not altogether surprising, as in many instances, when sports fans are trying to make sense of a football team losing, particularly in a close game, the kicker is often targeted. These comments were typified by sentiments such as, “@Foster\_43 YOU LOST US THE GAME! You suck;” “@Foster\_43 Wow thanks for making us lose, everybody hates you now;” and “@Foster\_43 I hate you man! This is all your fault! If you would have made at least one field goal this would be over! I hope you break your leg!” Other individuals contended that because Foster was to blame for the loss, he deserved consequences. These remarks included,

“@Foster\_43 WAY TO COST YOUR TEAM A NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP. YOUR SCHOLARSHIP SHOULD BE PULLED. YOU HAVE ONE JOB.” Whereas people derided Foster and told him he was to blame for the outcome of the game, others elected to make fun of him.

### *Mocking*

There were some individuals who conveyed ridicule towards Foster, and these expressions appeared in just over 6% of the sample. For instance, “@Foster\_43 Better stay 4 years and get that degree, your obviously not getting drafted;” and “@Foster\_43 tried to hang himself but he couldn't kick the chair from under him. For others, they mocked Foster's previous tweets and retweeted them with snide remarks. For example, “@Foster\_43: It's Tiger week! #BeatAuburn #RollTide lol;” and “It all make sense now @Foster\_43 Got to shake hands with MR. President!!” These expressions were spiteful and scornful towards Foster, for others they elected to poke fun at him, but in less hurtful ways.

### *Sarcasm*

While more light-hearted in nature, some individuals expressed sarcasm toward Foster, although these messages manifested with much less frequency, appearing in just over 3% of the sample. Examples of comments included, “@Foster\_43 niceee;” and “@Foster\_43 FOR HEISMEN!!! #IronBowl #WDE;” and “@Foster\_43 is gonna be booting deep ones in the NFL.” Others conveyed sarcastic accolades such as, “@Foster\_43 congrats on the great game dude!” and “@Foster\_43 thanks so much for missing those field goals. Just some game winners gone down down the drain;” and “@Foster\_43 you're awesome, just awesome.” Other comments referenced the attacks Foster was receiving and expressed faux regret at the way he was being treated. For example, “@Foster\_43 is getting torn up more than wrapping paper on Christmas day #IronBowl;” “Lmao...Leave @Foster\_43 alone!!” and “@Foster\_43 has already blacked his [Twitter] account out. He finna go missing like Lebron's hairline.” Whereas some of the sarcasm was more jovial in nature, some of it reinforced the perception that Foster was culpable for the loss to Auburn. This attribution underpinned one of the more troubling manifestations in the data, as some individuals aggressively lashed out and threatened Foster.

### *Threats*

For some, simply mocking or belittling Foster was insufficient and to compensate, they expressed varying threats towards him. Although these messages comprised the smallest part of the sample (just over 2%) the content of these message were quite vitriolic. Examples included threats of physical aggression such as, “I should kick yo ass since you couldn't a field to save your life today.” Other threats indicated, “@Foster\_43 eat shit;” and “@Foster\_43 go fuck yourself with a fork.” Still others extended threats to Foster's family, “People telling @foster\_43 are so misguided. If anyone should off themselves it's his parents;” “@Foster\_43 YOU FUCKING SUCK BITCH YOU COST US A FUCKING NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP I HOPE YOUR MOM GETS RAPED BY A BLACK MAN FUCK YOUR FAMILY; and “@Foster\_43 you sorry piece of shit!!! I hop you get rapped & your mom gets the shit beat out of her.” Perhaps most troubling were threats that suggested Foster needed to kill himself to atone

for his perceived role in the outcome of the game. These sentiments were typified by comments such as, “@Foster\_43 hey kill yourself. Seriously. Do it.” “@Foster\_43 Bama fans expect you to off yourself;” “@Foster\_43 you should kill yourself you piece of shit” and “Kill yourself you fuckin loser @Foster\_43.”

These statements were disconcerting and problematic, yet they (along with the other maladaptive behavior) seemed to trigger an interesting and unexpected trend in the data – people coming to the aid of Foster and supporting him in a time of need. Thus, just as people with actual social relationships come to the aid of a troubled friend who is being persecuted, individuals also enacted this parasocially with Foster.

### *Support*

Although Foster was attacked for his perceived role in costing Alabama the game, this behavior spurred other people to express encouragement and support. This outpouring was so overwhelming that it exponentially outweighed the maladaptive behavior in the data. Indeed, these messages comprised just over 78% of the data. Examples of support included people encouraging Foster to not let the result of the game affect him, “@Foster\_43 keep your head up big man everybody has bad nights, the Alabama fam still loves you dude #rolltideroll;” “Keep your head up @Foster\_43;” and “hey @Foster\_43 YOU'RE AWESOME! keep your head up & ignore them! roll Tide!” Others conveyed gratitude to Foster for the things he had achieved and the accomplishments he had experienced while at Alabama. For instance, “@Foster\_43 Thank you for all the hard work you have put in over the years. I am proud to say you are the kicker for #Bama. God bless #RT;” “@Foster\_43 Thank you for the effort and what you have give UA. We appreciate and love you;” and “@Foster\_43 Thank for a great season. Sorry it didn't fly your way today. Takes a team to win and it takes a team to lose. Proud.”

An interesting development occurred with the spread of the hashtag #BamaFansForCade. Through this hashtag, people expressed support for Foster and counteracted the critical behavior being leveled at him. Examples included, “#BamaFansForCade cause he works hard and plays hard all the time @Foster\_43;” “#BamaFansForCade standing by @Foster\_43 no matter what #RollTide;” and “#BamaFansForCade will stand behind you through it all @Foster\_43! Keep that head held high. Concentrate on your team, family and God!!” Finally, support manifested through people encouraging Foster to ignore the hateful messages he was receiving, with the admonition that such behavior was not coming from “true” Alabama fans. This was conveyed through expressions such as, “@Foster\_43 you don't deserve all the hate you're getting. True fans don't say things like that. Much love. #RollTide;” @Foster\_43 We love you man! Sorry to hear about the threats. This Alabama fan stands with you! The others aren't true Bama fans. Roll Tide;” and “@Foster\_43 True fans aren't haters! Hold you head high and be proud. Thanks for your effort the last several years & Roll Tide Roll!”

## **Discussion**

This research explored maladaptive parasocial interaction expressed towards a college athlete via Twitter. Beyond the emergent themes, this research has important implications that are now discussed. First, from a theoretical standpoint, this research extended the notion of maladaptive parasocial interaction (Kassing & Sanderson, in press), by classifying particular behaviors that embody this concept. Scholarship in parasocial interaction and sport has noted a

shift towards more overt and emotional behavioral expressions from fans (Gleich, 1997; Kassing & Sanderson, 2009; Sanderson, 2008a, 2008c) and the findings here confirm these trends, but in a divergent direction. In addition to Sanderson's (2008a) research, this work begins to build on a typology of troubling and disturbing behaviors expressed towards athletes via social media. While the behaviors noted in this study are by no means exhaustive, they do provide a starting point to expand this research trajectory.

Additionally, in their article discussing maladaptive parasocial interaction, Kassing and Sanderson (in press) noted that this behavior functioned as a disconfirming bonding agent, which worked to exclude or drive people from participation in sport. It is unclear at this point whether maladaptive parasocial interaction will drive athletes from sport, but what it may do is potentially drive athletes, especially college athletes, from participating on social networks to avoid abusive behavior from fans, even if just temporarily. For example, Auerbach (2013) discussed how University of Kentucky basketball player Willie Cauley-Stein deactivated his Twitter account after receiving negative messages from fans as the team was experiencing a losing streak. While he eventually rejoined Twitter, this may be a choice that more college athletes make in response to fans lambasting them via this platform. Whereas there were a number of fans that came to Foster's aid as a result of the maladaptive expressions being directed at him, it is important that athletic department personnel, particularly those in athlete welfare, ensure provisions are in place to help college athletes deal with these behaviors.

Although not directly tied to the data, we contend this is an important practice, because it is difficult to expect that this type of behavior will entirely be eradicated. Indeed, concerns about problematic online behavior extend well beyond the field of athletics. Nevertheless, the frequency with which athletes, especially collegiate athletes, are subjected to this kind of behavior has been documented in previous research to be difficult for college athletes to process (Browning & Sanderson, 2012). Moreover, the highly identified nature of college football fans, coupled with the all-encompassing coverage of football, including the growth in recruiting coverage, suggests that amateur athletes be given resources and support to cope with being the recipient of such behavior. In short, while fans can somewhat regulate this behavior (as happened here), short of large scale systemic changes, devoting resources to the recipients and targets of this behavior is a more plausible course to pursue.

To that end, there are several ways that athletic department personnel could provide such services. First, social media education seminars could address this behavior towards college athletes and notify athletes that they do not have to tolerate this behavior, and encourage them to report behavior that they find threatening and hostile. Steps along these lines have been taken with other athletes. For example, in the case noted earlier with NBA player Steve Blake's wife, Blake turned over the tweets to team security personnel who kept them on record (McMenamin, 2012). In another case in England, two fans were arrested by police for inciting racial hatred after posting anti-Semitic tweets during a Premier League soccer match (Two men arrested, 2013). Although United States law is not tied to European law, this example shows that there is a possibility of pursuing such a direction. Providing these kind of alternatives to college athletes and simply letting them know this behavior does not have to be passively accepted is an important message to convey from athletic administration.

Although some athletic departments restrict athletes from using social media during the season (and in some cases, this decision is made voluntarily), this is no guarantee that athletes will not be subjected to this behavior during the off-season, therefore, the topic is still worth addressing. Also, it may be beneficial to designate someone outside of the coaching staff, to

whom athletes may be more comfortable reporting this behavior, or to whom this behavior would fall more in line with their job duties (such as athlete welfare personnel). Moreover, as many athletic departments now issue social media policies to college athletes, including language in these policies about athletes being targeted by this behavior and the process by which athletes can report and address this behavior also would be a valuable step.

Along those lines, when college athletes do report being targets of this behavior, those who oversee athlete welfare along with other relevant personnel such as coaches, should discuss how to proceed in terms of using social media. Perhaps it might be best for that athlete to take a hiatus from using Twitter or the particular platform where the abuse is received. It might be wise for coaches to be sensitive to this situation and modify their interaction with the athlete until the athlete has recuperated psychologically, so as not to enflame the mental and emotional stress the athlete is experiencing. In any event, when an athlete reports such behavior, it is important that a plan be put in place to assist the athlete as she/he works to overcome the stress and other issues caused by being the recipient of this behavior.

Another step athletic departments could take is to be proactive in praising the athlete who has been the recipient of this behavior. For instance, the official athletics Twitter account could highlight the athlete's accomplishments, or perhaps a hashtag could be started to encourage fans to show support for the athlete (as was started organically by fans in this study). In this particular case, it might have been beneficial for the Alabama athletics Twitter account to post a message about how Foster had factored into the team's accomplishments over the course of his time in the program. Such action could encourage fans to be positive and support the athlete, as that is the message being conveyed from the main entity with which fans identify.

Second, what about the psychological implications for college athletes who are subjected to such behavior? Browning and Sanderson (2012) interviewed college athletes and discovered that the athletes in their sample were very aware of, and interested in, what was being said about them on Twitter, to the degree that some even checked their Twitter mentions during games. Additionally, the hate directed at college athletes seems to fuel head coaches' views that Twitter is nothing but a waste of time for college athletes. For instance, in 2014, college basketball coaches Rick Pitino (Pitino, Calipari on different sides, 2014) and Tom Izzo (Wetzel, 2014) both lamented that their players were reading abusive comments sent to them on Twitter, and indicated that several of their players had come to them very emotionally disturbed by these messages. Another journalist suggested that when college athletes receive these messages, it can potentially lead to mental health issues and, essentially, this behavior constitutes cyberbullying (Olson, 2013).

These concerns are certainly valid. At times, the volume of these messages can be overwhelming and daunting, as evidenced in this case by Foster, who in approximately 24 hours, received over 12,000 messages. It is important that athletic department personnel provide resources and education for college athletes on how to cope with this behavior. Just as college athletes would be expected to report someone who was abusing them in a face-to-face context, it is crucial that athletic department personnel ensure that similar procedures are provided for college athletes when abusive behaviors occur in online formats.

Finally, although the maladaptive parasocial interaction expressions were abrasive, terse, and abusive, they prompted an outpouring of support for Foster, which results in the final implication of this research. One reason the support came in the manner it did, likely stems from the nature of the threats that were directed at Foster. In other words, while most fans may share frustration or view one player to be responsible for a loss, the manner in which one responds

seems to have boundaries. In this case, when fans begin seeing death threats tweeted at Foster, and wishes for harm to his family being tweeted at him, such behavior “crossed the line” and prompted fans to rush to Foster’s defense. This pattern of behavior - threats followed by an outpouring of support - has larger implications in the context of what it means to be a “true” fan.

Prior research suggests that when a team loses, fans tend to distance themselves or “CORF” (Cutting Off Reflected Failure, Snyder, Lassegard, & Ford, 1986). Perhaps maladaptive parasocial interaction becomes a form of “CORFing” as fans try to disassociate and isolate the person whom they perceive to be responsible for the failure of the team. This categorization functions as an attribution mechanism that enables fans to still feel positively about the team and their individual identity and “make sense” of a threat to their social identity. Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (1999) considered social identity threats to consist of value threats, which undermine the value of group membership, or distinctiveness threats, which result in perceptual changes in-group members whereby they no longer feel remarkably different and perhaps inferior to the out-group.

In this case, it appears that some fans perceived Foster to be responsible for the decrease in the value of Alabama fandom. That is, the loss knocked them out of contention for the national championship game, which then created a distinctiveness threat, as Auburn, the out-group, was likely to (and eventually did) ascend to Alabama’s spot in the national championship game. Previous research also suggests that to preserve group distinctiveness, group members are willing to accept negative reactions from in-group members (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002), yet in this case, group members were not willing to accept this (for the most part) and in fact, chastised those sending these messages to Foster as not being “authentic” fans. Sanderson (2010b) found a similar trend in people posting to Boston Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling’s blog, as participants framed criticism towards Schilling as a visible indicator by which one could tell “true” Red Sox fans from “false” ones. Thus, this behavior could also be a form of BIRGing, as fans rally behind a targeted player and proudly champion their affiliation with him/her.

To be clear, more research is needed to measure whether fans view maladaptive messages directed by fans to athletes as reflecting genuine fandom, but what is interesting, is that an athlete’s Twitter account serves as a mechanism for fans to *have* these conversations. Brock (2012) noted that Twitter functions as a space for cultural conversations to occur, because it eclipses the conversational incoherence of other mediums, and enables people to engage in “open-ended community building discourses in near real-time” (p. 545). Whereas Brock focused his analysis on cultural conversations around race, as evidenced by this research, the premise of Twitter as a site for “cultural” conversations can be transferred to sport. That is, sport-focused cultural conversations about what it “means” to be a fan, play out in a community format that is centered on the athlete.

Other work has noted that using the @” sign (directly addressing a Twitter user) reinforces the notion of “address” and prompts people to act (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009). In this case, addressing the hateful messages directly at Foster facilitated fans to act on his behalf, defending him against those “posing” as fans and in doing so, engage in a sports cultural conversation about what it means to be a “true fan.” The athlete, then, serves as a catalyst for these conversations through Twitter users who include the athlete’s Twitter handle into their comment. It clearly was not Foster’s intent to prompt such a discussion, yet his Twitter account facilitated one, as fans rushed to his defense, and it seems reasonable that other sports cultural conversations can take place in a similar format (e.g., discussions about race/gender/sexuality, health and safety).

Additionally, we wonder to what extent the perception of college athletes reading Twitter influenced these perceptions? In other words, is there an expectation that the athlete is more likely to see/view these messages and that is what makes them a problematic fandom display? For example, comments such as those noted in the data are often made by spectators at sporting events, but athletes rarely “hear” them or at least are only able to discern a small proportion of them. Yet, Foster had over 12,000 messages sent directly to him, and given that previous research has indicated that college athletes do check Twitter to see what is “said” about them (Browning & Sanderson, 2012), this may personalize these attacks more, causing more fans to come to the defense of the athlete, where they may be more unlikely to do so face-to-face at an athletic contest. However, it may be that it is the behavior itself that is problematic, whether the athlete is likely to hear/see it or not. Trying to understand how fans view behaviors as appropriate/inappropriate for “in-game” versus on social media will be an important undertaking in future research to ascertain to what extent maladaptive behaviors signify an inauthentic fan.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

This research was not without limitations. First, this analysis was limited to one college athlete and while there was an abundance of data with Foster, it would be important to look at multiple cases where college athletes receive abusive messages on Twitter. It also would be interesting to examine differences between the school the athlete plays for (e.g., established program vs. a school that does not have a history of success) and also by position (e.g., kicker who missed a game winning field goal vs. a wide receiver who dropped a touchdown pass earlier in the game). Second, the data analysis here was collected in a systematic manner in close proximity after the game ended. It may be more beneficial to take a larger sample at two or three data points, rather than taking the approach we did here. Third, this analysis was focused on a rivalry game, which fans are naturally more invested and emotionally attached to. Thus, it would be beneficial to look at other games that fans may not be as invested in, to determine if similar levels of maladaptive parasocial interaction manifest.

### **Conclusion**

Twitter has become a significant part of the sport landscape, in particular, many college athletes use this platform and discussions around fan behavior towards college athletes are becoming more prominent in sport media. Whereas athletic department personnel should take an active role in providing resources for college athletes to manage this behavior, at some point fan accountability may need to be addressed. For example, in Britain, a fan was arrested for tweeting hateful messages to diver Tom Daley (Dodds, 2012), and perhaps at some point, arrests may follow in the United States (noting that English law does not act as precedent for United States law). Additionally, some defend abusive behavior with “free speech” arguments, or freedom of the press arguments, and at this point, legal opinions are mixed, and there is no definitive view on the degree to which such speech is protected and whether or not social media platforms constitute “press.” There are a number of variables that would likely factor into any legal case (e.g., state-run vs. private school, “proving” that the person actually sent the message, and message content). In any event, it is likely that college athletes will continue to populate social media platforms, and while Twitter may fade away, another medium will take its place, and fan

behavior will migrate as well. Therefore, it is imperative that researchers and athletic department personnel pay close attention to incidents such as Foster's.

## References

- Amiot, C. E., Sansfacon, S., & Louis, W. R. (2013). Uncovering hockey fans' motivations behind their derogatory behaviors and how these motives predict psychological well-being and quality of social identity. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 14*, 379-388.
- Auerbach, N. (2013, January 10). The good and bad of Twitter and college athletes. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/college/other/2013/01/10/college-athletes-twitter-criticism-johnny-manziel-kentucky/1823959/>
- Borchers, C. (2013, November 6). Twitter campaign was the key to bringing Julian Edelman to class. Retrieved from <http://www.boston.com/business/innovation/Blogs/inside-the-hive/2013/11/06/twitter-campaign-was-the-key-to-bringing-julian-edelman-class/uXS9VeW6lGgne6o0j80wl/blog.html>
- Branscombe, N. R., & Wann, D. L. (1994). Collective self-esteem consequences of out-group derogation when a valued social identity is on trial. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 24*, 641-657.
- Branscombe, N. R., Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (1999). The context and content of social identity threat. In N. Ellemers, R. Spears & B. Doosje (Eds.), *Social identity* (pp. 35-59). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101.
- Brock, A. (2012). From the blackhand side: Twitter as a cultural conversation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 56*, 529-549.
- Browning, B., & Sanderson, J. (2012). The positives and negatives of Twitter: Exploring how student-athletes use Twitter and respond to critical tweets. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 5*, 503-521.
- Cialdini, R. B., Borden, R. J., Thorne, A., Walker, M. R., Freeman, S., & Sloan, L. R. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 34*, 366-3765.
- Clavio, G., & Walsh, P. (2014). Dimensions of social media utilization among college sport fans. *Communication and Sport, 2*, 261-281.
- Cohen, J. (2004). Parasocial breakup from favorite television characters: The role of attachment styles and relationship intensity. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 21*, 187-202.
- Dal Cin, S., Zanna, M.P., & Fong, G.T. (2004). Narrative persuasion and overcoming resistance. In E.S. Knowles & J.A. Linn (Eds.), *Resistance and persuasion* (pp. 175-191). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Devine, D. (2012, May 18). Steve Blake, wife, receive death threats via Twitter after Lakers Game 2 loss. Retrieved from <http://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/nba-ball-dont-lie/steve-blake-wife-receive-death-threates-via-twitter-150145008.html>
- Dodds, P. (2012, July 31). Tom Daley Twitter controversy: UK police arrest teen over malicious tweets at Olympic diver. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/31/tom-daley-twitter-police-olympic-diver\\_n\\_1722739.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/31/tom-daley-twitter-police-olympic-diver_n_1722739.html)
- Donavan, D. T., Carlson, B. D., & Zimmerman, M. (2005). The influence of personality traits on sports fan identification. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 14*, 31-42.

- Doyel, G. (2013, November 28). Of the great rivalries in sport, Alabama-Auburn tops them all. Retrieved from <http://www.cbssports.com/general/writer/gregg-doyel/24297688/of-the-great-rivalries-in-sport-alabamaauburn-tops-them-all>
- Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (2002). Self and social identity. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 161–186.
- Eyal, K., & Dailey, R. M. (2012). Examining relational maintenance in parasocial relationships. *Mass Communication and Society*, 15, 758-781.
- Frederick, E. L., Lim, C. H., Clavio, G., & Walsh, P. (2012). Why we follow: An examination of parasocial interaction and fan motivations for following athlete archetypes on Twitter. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 5, 481-502.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine.
- Gleeson, S. (2013, October 27). Kicker blamed for ruining Missouri's perfect season after missed FG vs. South Carolina. Retrieved from <http://ftw.usatoday.com/2013/10/kicker-blamed-for-ruining-missouris-perfect-season-after-missed-fg-vs-south-carolina/>
- Gleich, U. (1997). Parasocial interaction with people on the screen. In P. Winterhoff-Spurk & T. H. A. Van der Voort (Eds.), *New horizons in media psychology: Research co-operation and projects in Europe* (pp. 35-55). Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 701-721.
- Green, M. C., Brock, T. C., & Kaufman, G. F. (2004). Understanding media enjoyment: The role of transportation into narrative worlds. *Communication Theory*, 14, 311-327.
- Greenwood, D. N. (2008). Television as escape from self: Psychological predictors of media involvement. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 44, 414-424.
- Hambrick, M. E., & Kang, S. J. (in press). Pin it: Exploring how professional sports organizations use Pinterest as a communications and relationship-marketing tool. *Communication and Sport*.
- Highfield, T., Harrington, S., & Bruns, A. (2013). Twitter as technology for audiencing and fandom. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16, 315-329.
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction. *Psychiatry*, 19, 215-229.
- Kassing, J. W., & Sanderson, J. (2009). "You're the kind of guy that we all want for a drinking buddy": Expressions of parasocial interaction on Floydlandis.com. *Western Journal of Communication*, 73, 182-203.
- Kassing, J. W., & Sanderson, J. (in press). Playing in the new media game or riding the virtual bench: Confirming and disconfirming membership in the community of sport. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*.
- McMenamin, D. (2012, May 18). Steve Blake, wife get hate tweets. Retrieved from [http://espn.go.com/los-angeles/nba/story/\\_/id/7943732/steve-blake-los-angeles-lakers-wife-receive-threats-twitter](http://espn.go.com/los-angeles/nba/story/_/id/7943732/steve-blake-los-angeles-lakers-wife-receive-threats-twitter)
- Meraz, S. (2009). Is there an elite hold? Traditional media to social media agenda setting influence in blogs networks. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14, 682–707.
- Olson, E. (2013, October 29). Players can struggle when heckle turns to hate. Retrieved from <http://sports.yahoo.com/news/players-struggle-heckling-turns-hate-190735810--ncaaf.html>

- Pitino, Calipari on different sides. (2014, February 20). Retrieved from [http://espn.go.com/mens-college-basketball/story/\\_/id/10481852/rick-pitino-louisville-cardinals-sounds-social-media](http://espn.go.com/mens-college-basketball/story/_/id/10481852/rick-pitino-louisville-cardinals-sounds-social-media)
- Pollakoff, B. (2014, July 28). LeBron's jersey number decision sends Indianapolis adidas manufacturing plant into immediate action. Retrieved from <http://probasketballtalk.nbcsports.com/2014/07/28/lebrons-jersey-number-decision-sends-indianapolis-adidas-manufacturing-plant-into-immediate-action/>
- Rubin, R. B., & McHugh, M. P. (1987). Development of parasocial interaction relationships. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 31*, 279-292.
- Sanderson, J. (2008a). "You are the type of person that children should look up to as a hero": Parasocial interaction on 38pithces.com. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 1*, 337-360.
- Sanderson, J. (2008b). The blog is serving its purpose: Self-presentation strategies on 38pitches.com. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*, 912-936.
- Sanderson, J. (2008c). Spreading the word: Emphatic interaction displays on BlogMaverick.com. *Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications, 20*, 157-168.
- Sanderson, J. (2010a). Framing Tiger's troubles: Comparing traditional and social media. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 3*, 438-453.
- Sanderson, J. (2010b). "The nation stands behind you": Mobilizing social support on 38pitches.com. *Communication Quarterly, 58*, 188-206.
- Sanderson, J. (2011). *It's a whole new ballgame: How social media is changing sports*. New York: Hampton Press.
- Sanderson, J. (2013a). Stepping into the (social media) game: Building athlete identity via Twitter. In R. Luppincini (Ed.), *Handbook of research on technoself: Identity in a technological society* (pp. 419-438). New York: IGI Global.
- Sanderson, J. (2013b). From loving the hero to despising the villain: Exploring sports fans social identity management on Facebook. *Mass Communication and Society, 16*, 487-509.
- Sanderson, J., & Browning, B. (2013). Training versus monitoring: A qualitative examination of athletic department practices regarding student-athletes and Twitter. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication, 14*, 105-111.
- Sanderson, J., & Emmons, B. (2014). Extending and withholding forgiveness to Josh Hamilton: Exploring forgiveness within parasocial interaction. *Communication and Sport, 2*, 24-47.
- Sanderson, J., and Hambrick M. E. (2012). Covering the scandal in 140 characters: A case study of Twitter's role in coverage of the Penn State saga. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 5*, 384-402.
- Snyder, C. R., Lassegard, M. A., & Ford, C. E. (1986). Distancing after group success and failure: Basking in reflected glory and cutting off reflected failure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 382-388.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Suter, E. A., Bergen, K. M., Daas, K. L., & Durham, W. T. (2006). Lesbian couples management of public-private dialectical contradictions. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 23*, 349-365.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). Social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In W. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 33-47). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

- Tsao, J. (1996). Compensatory media use: An exploration of two paradigms. *Communication Studies*, 47, 89–109.
- Two men arrested for anti-Semitic tweets after Spurs v West Ham match. (2013, December 13). Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-25364283>
- Wagner, R. (2011, May 14). Brandon Phillips goes little big league. Retrieved from [http://mlb.mlb.com/fancave/blog.jsp?content=article&content\\_id=19063306#fbid=xEqzr1\\_v7KZ?fbid](http://mlb.mlb.com/fancave/blog.jsp?content=article&content_id=19063306#fbid=xEqzr1_v7KZ?fbid)
- Wakefield, K. L., & Wann, D. L. (2006). An examination of dysfunctional sports fans: Method of classification and relationships with problem behaviors. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 38, 168-186.
- Wann, D. L. (2006). Understanding the positive social psychological health benefits of sport team identification: The team-identification Social psychological health model. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 10, 272-296.
- Wann, D. L., Royalty, J., & Roberts, A. (2000). The self-presentation of sports fans: Investigating the importance of team identification and self-esteem. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 23, 198-206.
- Wetzel, D. (2014, March 29). Michigan State's Tom Izzo makes case of why social media 'hurts kids.' Retrieved from <http://sports.yahoo.com/news/michigan-state-s-tom-izzo-makes-case-of-why-social-media--hurts-kids--204213249-ncaab.html>