FACTORS MOTIVATING COLLEGE FOOTBALL FANDOM AND ATTENDANCE

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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ABSTRACT

The study about college football fandom and attendance trends at the University of Missouri is not entirely groundbreaking but is exploring an academic area still in its relative infancy. Sport fandom research has not been widely examined, particularly at the collegiate level. The researcher used a modified version of two different surveys, the Fan Identification Scale, a scale already designed to measure football fandom, as well as the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale, an instrument originally designed to measure leisure participation of activities, like golf. In addition to completing questions pertaining to the two modified scales, participants answered questions about their demographic information including age, gender, education level, and marital status. A series of questions asking about experiences and time spent as a Mizzou Football fan were also included. Surveys were distributed through several Mizzou-centric Facebook groups, and the PowerMizzou online forum. The researcher collected 975 usable surveys out of 1150 total submissions from Mizzou Football fans. The information collected yielded significant results from three of the four research objectives. The objectives with significant results were to: Examine differences in attendance trends between alumni and non-alumni; Examine differences in attendance trends stemming from social connections to Mizzou; and examine the correlation between level of fan identification, leisure participation, and social identity. Recommendations for further study were conducting a mixed-methods study to understand fans’ motivations more greatly beyond the limitations of closed-ended questions, as well as adding survey questions that distinguish between a participant’s allegiance to the university compared to the athletic team being measured.
I. INTRODUCTION

Sports play an important role in the lives of many in our society today. Sport fandom acts as one of the few things in today’s disunited climate that can unite people from both sides of any given divide, if only for a moment, with a common bond. March Madness, the World Series, the Super Bowl, and the College Football Playoff National Championship are just a few examples of pseudo “national holidays” where sport fans across the country typically tune in, no matter what teams are involved in the championship.

While fan attendance for professional football has been trending down over the past decade, fan attendance at the college level has either increased slightly or remained constant over the same time period (Jones, 2017). Between 2012 and 2017, the number of Americans surveyed identifying as college football fans rose from 54% to 56%. Understanding why college football attendance has not followed the act of its professional counterpart is complex, but not without explanation. College football, specifically Division 1-FBS football, has a longer history, more storied rivalries, and a sense of community throughout the smaller fanbase and physical community where the university is located (Abdallah et al., 2020).

This study incorporates two somewhat related theories to explore sport fandom: social identity theory (Fink et al., 2009a), and the Serious Leisure Perspective (Veal, 2017). Social identity theory explores how a person views themselves as a member of a group, such as a fanbase, and how others group members perceive them. The Serious Leisure Perspective was developed to organize the different classifications of leisure into one theoretical framework. While the Serious Leisure Perspective includes serious
leisure, its naming convention is not meant to imply that serious leisure is more impactful than any other form of leisure. This study is going to explore factors motivating fan attendance for the University of Missouri football team, assess the level of fan identification measured in different fans, and examine the correlation linking leisure participation with fan identification, and social identity, respectively.

Statement of the Problem

Sports fandom is an extensive concept comprised of numerous topics. Some of the associated topics examined within this paper are team identification (Biscaia et al., 2018; Wakefield & Wann, 2006), fan identification (Sutton et al., 1997), social identity theory (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007; Sanderson, 2013), serious and casual leisure (Stebbins, 1982, 1997, 2008), and fandom as a sense of community (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Gibson et al., 2002; Jones, 2000). These topics were selected due to their interrelated nature in previously conducted research. Significant contributions to the field of leisure study stemmed from Stebbins (1992) challenging future researchers to make sure that serious leisure is not pushed aside and is given an important seat at the table through continued research over the coming decades. While serious leisure research has made significant strides since then, sports fandom as its own form of serious leisure has not received much time in the limelight. The work of Jones (2000) and Gibson et al. (2002) remain some of the only prominent research done on the topic. Additional research is needed on the topic as Gibson et al. (2002) determined sports fandom does fulfill all six characteristics of serious leisure, opening the door to countless studies examining sport fanbases at the collegiate or professional level. By studying these fanbases, insight will be gained on the individual motivations behind sport fandom and why sport fandom is a
leisure activity to many, either escalating to the level of serious leisure for some fans or remaining a casual leisure activity for others.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to identify differences in attendance based on motivations among Mizzou Football fans, as well as determining any correlation between fan identification, leisure participation, and social identity.

**Research Objectives**

Based upon the literature and arguments that are presented throughout this paper, the researcher established these research objectives.

1. Examine differences in attendance trends between alumni and non-alumni
2. Examine differences in attendance trends stemming from social connections to the University of Missouri
3. Examine the relationship between the participant’s degree earned at the University of Missouri and their level of fan identification
4. Examine correlation between level of fan identification, leisure participation, and social identity

**Assumptions**

This study is based around several different assumptions. One assumption is that all participants being surveyed answered each question honestly and did not skew their results in any way, intentionally or not. A second assumption is that the surveys utilized in this study were simple for participants to understand and complete, both in-person and online utilizing Qualtrics. A third assumptions is that the surveys used in this study were reliable and valid. A final assumption was that fans would be able to recall how many
games they attended in past years, as well as what age they were when the attended their first Mizzou Football game.

**Delimitations**

A delimitation of the study was the group of people surveyed. The channels targeted by the researcher to complete the survey will all be supporters of the University of Missouri in some manner. By using channels like PowerMizzou.com (PowerMizzou.Com, 2021), Facebook.com groups like Mizzou Tailgating (Mizzou Tailgating, 2021), and University of Missouri Alumni (University of Missouri Alumni, 2021), and in-person interviews at football games, many fans are omitted. Not all fans spend extracurricular time on message boards or attending games which meant they would not be able to have their thoughts shared. Other delimitations were the different websites where surveys were administered, as well as the games in which fans were surveyed prior to kickoff. A final delimitation was the use of only closed-ended questions and Likert-scale questions to encourage completion of the survey.

**Definition of Terms**

- **Casual Leisure**: Immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity, requiring little or no special training to enjoy it (Stebbins, 1997).

- **Serious Leisure**: Systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling for the participant to find a (leisure) career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience (Stebbins, 1982).

- **Fan Identification**: the personal commitment and emotional involvement customers have with a sport organization (Sutton et al., 1997).

- **Social Identity Theory**: Theory that predicts certain intergroup behaviors on the basis of perceived group status differences, the perceived legitimacy and stability
of those status differences, and the perceived ability to move from one group to another.

- **Serious Leisure-Casual Leisure (SL-CL) Dichotomy**: Controversial divide between Serious Leisure and Casual Leisure that implies all activities must fall on one side of the divide or the other, often ignoring the natural gray area between the two types of leisure.

- **Tailgating**: A social gathering, usually involving food, drinks, music, and games, taking place around the back end of a parked vehicle (often a pickup truck with a tailgate) that typically takes place in a parking lot before, during, and after a public event, particularly football games.

- **Sports Fandom**: Actively supporting a sports team by spending one’s time and money to attend and travel to games, purchase merchandise, tickets, and subscriptions, and spending additional time talking or reading about their team outside of gameday.

- **Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS)**: The highest division in college football, comprised of 130 universities.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge of serious leisure and the significantly lacking area of research conducted on sports fandom as serious leisure. This study also contributes to the growing research area of fan identification. This research should provide useful data for managers and administrators wanting to determine how they can market their programs to be more appealing to prospective fans, and to understand the motivations behind why existing fans identifying with a team (Biscaia et al., 2018). Managers and administration can also understand more about attendance trends at their venues. While the population measured may be larger at the Division 1 level than smaller universities, attendance data is just as useful for a small-scale sports team as it is on the professional level (Palanjian, 2012).
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the last four decades, significant research has been conducted on how sports affect fans socially. Research topic areas of interest have ranged from team identification (Biscaia et al., 2018; Wakefield & Wann, 2006), levels of fan identification (Sutton et al., 1997), and fandom as a sense of community (Arai & Pedlar, 1997). Gibson et al. (2002) remarked that scholars have examined the social importance behind sports at both the micro level of individual fans and the macro level of society. While sport scholars have analyzed various aspects of fan-related behaviors and the role of sport in society, the social world of the fan has received scant attention from leisure scholars, a strange omission considering the incredibly important role sports play in our American society (Jones, 2000). Sports certainly fall under the category of leisure, but fandom of said sports has not received enough attention as its own form of serious or casual leisure. Due to the prevalence of sports and associated fandoms in U.S. society, continued research into sports is important to enrich our understanding of leisure behavior (Gibson et al., 2002). Of what little research has been done connecting fandom and leisure, the notable work belongs to Stebbins. Stebbins (1982) defended that spectating a football game does not constitute serious leisure. However, Gibson et al. (2002) argued that fans who exhibit high levels of commitment and identification with a team should be classified as hobbyists, falling under the umbrella of serious leisure.

The following literature examines fandom, the basic concept of casual leisure (Stebbins, 1997), the three forms of serious leisure: Amateurism, Hobbyism, and Volunteerism (Stebbins, 1982, 1997, 2008; Arai & Pedlar, 1997), serious leisure as a framework (Stebbins, 1982, 1997; Veal, 2017), fan identification (Donavan et al., 2005; Dunning, 1990; Wakefield & Wann, 2006) and Social Identity Theory and fans (Boyle &
Magnusson, 2007; Fink et al., 2009; Sanderson, 2013). To understand whether fandom should be classified as a form of serious leisure, you first must understand the distinctions between casual leisure and serious leisure, the three forms of serious leisure, and lastly, how serious leisure has evolved into its own framework with strict classification criteria. After detailing serious leisure, this review will branch into two related topic areas that have been researched extensively: fan identification, and social identity theory and fandom.

**Fandom**

Fandom at the collegiate level, specifically Division 1-FBS, is different than measuring fandom at the professional sport level. At the professional level like the National Football League (NFL), a team such as the Dallas Cowboys fandom is much more impersonal than at the amateur level of collegiate athletics for several reasons. Firstly, a professional team such as the Dallas Cowboys has a wide fan base across the country who may never attend a game their entire life due to their distance from the team in combination with nationally televised games (Abdallah et al., 2020). In contrast, fandom is often fueled by social connections to the university, attending the university, and proximity to the university’s campus and community (Gibson et al., 2002). Research furthering our understanding of how social connections and proximity impact attendance and levels of fan identification are necessary to grow the field of sport fandom. In the following section, one side of the serious leisure-casual leisure dichotomy is explored.

**The Serious Leisure Perspective and Casual Leisure**

To fully understand serious leisure, casual leisure must first be dissected. The father of serious leisure, Robert Stebbins, described casual leisure as a sharpening tool for
the already established serious leisure perspective (Stebbins, 1997). Since its inception, casual leisure has almost always been cast aside and not highly thought of. Stebbins himself takes some of the blame for the lack of research conducted on serious leisure, citing how he typically highlighted characteristics of serious leisure that were shared with casual leisure activities, but were found to be more intense (Stebbins, 1997). Stebbins acknowledged that causal leisure often gets reduced to activities like watching television, but that far more people watch television than bungee jumping, making it a substantial leisure activity. Data gathered by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) found that 29.5% of youth in the US spend over two hours a day watching television and 6.9% spend over five hours, often a family activity (Herrick et al., 2014). This data is relevant to leisure research because it reinforces just how much time people spend watching TV as a form of casual leisure.

Building upon comments about TV watching habits, Elsweiler et al. (2010) performed an experiment in which they collected data from participants who kept a diary of their television watching habits. Participants would detail why they were watching television at any given time and why they were watching the content they were. Some reasons provided for watching television were: wanting to be in a certain mood (thrilled, relaxed, entertained, etc.), because it is a habit, because of personal interest, social motivations, and numerous other reasons. The researcher's results contradict Stebbins (1997)'s claim that all leisure is hedonic. However, three of the eight forms of casual leisure set forth by Stebbins were identified and four of the five benefits of casual leisure were noted from the participants. An interesting conclusion from this study was the identification of a casual leisure benefit not identified by Stebbins: escapism. By taking a
few minutes to sit on the couch and watch a sitcom, people can escape the doldrums of a
boring or unsatisfactory life. While the television is on, real life takes a very temporary
backseat (Elsweiler et al., 2010).

Stebbins (1997) determined that casual leisure has its own place at the table. Serious leisure elevates leisure a step beyond casual, but nonetheless, it is a worthwhile academic pursuit. People are constantly trying to incorporate casual leisure into their lives. In fact, very few people avoid casual leisure meaning that serious leisure occurs less often than casual leisure. To rest and recharge, people utilize casual leisure as an outlet. There is often less motivation to engage in casual leisure, but the comparisons that can be made between serious leisure and casual leisure allow us to explore each type of leisure for its own individual merits (Shen & Yarnal, 2010). These comparisons will be explained further in the review when exploring the maligned Serious Leisure-Casual Leisure dichotomy.

Additional research conducted by Stebbins (2008) continued to advance the field of leisure research by examining the differences between the three types of leisure: casual, serious, and project-based. While his previous works defined serious leisure and then examined the merits of casual leisure, project-based leisure is a much more niche area. Project-based leisure is the most recent type of leisure to be integrated into the Serious Leisure Perspective. It is typically thought of as being a one-off project or an occasional project, certainly not a frequently recurring project. An example of project-based leisure could be a short-term activity such as reading a book one afternoon or completing a craft set. Tracing down a family’s genealogical history or building a fence in the backyard also qualify as project-based leisure. These are all considered one-off
projects because they are unlikely to be repeated frequently. Stebbins (2008) concluded his research on the three forms of leisure by acknowledging the shortcomings of his Serious Leisure Perspective by noting that numerous activities cannot or have not yet been organized into categories. The researcher suggested that just like a city map lacks important details of a city, the Serious Leisure Perspective lacks the ability to catalogue every activity falling under the three subtypes of leisure. In the next section, several activities with debatable leisure designations will be explored as well as a further exploration into the Serious Leisure Perspective.

**Serious Leisure**

Serious leisure is such an important concept due to the sense of community it often instills in participants. Several examples of this sense of community are highlighted within this review. This portion of research also dives into the more exclusive Serious Leisure – Casual Leisure dichotomy which does not recognize project-based leisure. When discussing serious leisure, there is nowhere to start but with the defining characteristics that distinguish it from casual leisure. Stebbins (1982) determined that there were six distinct characteristics: a need to persevere, the availability of a leisure career, the need to put in significant personal effort based on special knowledge, training, or skills, realization of eight durable benefits, a unique ethos within their social world, and a need to identify strongly with their chosen pursuits. Activities classified as serious leisure usually possess all these characteristics, but this is not a concrete rule.

Opposing much of Stebbins’ work on serious leisure, Shen & Yarnal (2010) conducted a study imploring researchers to move away from the SL-CL dichotomy. While acknowledging that the two types of leisure are certainly distinct enough to remain
separated, the researchers argued that a dichotomy is not the proper way to look at the serious leisure perspective going forward. Instead, a more comprehensive theoretical framework is the proper step to describe leisure experiences. They defend by looking at the Serious Leisure-Casual Leisure (SL-CL) dichotomy, researchers can become narrow minded when looking at leisure. The two forms of leisure often cross-pollinate more than previous researchers thought which should result in a less rigid dichotomy as the majority of leisure activities fall somewhere in-between serious and casual (Shen & Yarnal, 2010). An improved multidimensional theoretical framework would ensure researchers examine other aspects of leisure adequately, not just comparing serious leisure to casual leisure. Stebbins (1997) voiced concerns against creating one universal framework that encompasses all forms of leisure, a notion also opposed by Shen & Yarnal (2010). An example of this rigid dichotomy leading researchers astray is the numerous deep psychological benefits of serious leisure activities being exclusively credited to serious, and not casual, leisure. In actuality, the benefits can often be observed after both serious and casual leisure activities. The following studies expand on how serious leisure activities can provide a sense of community for those engaging in them.

The first study highlighting the potential sense of community was conducted by Arai & Pedlar (1997). It examined how serious leisure can foster a sense of community among a group of participants. The qualitative study’s purpose was to assess five potential benefits stemming from serious leisure. Sixteen participants were interviewed personally with lengths ranging from forty minutes to ninety minutes about their involvement in their city’s healthy community initiative. Some of the benefits derived from this initiative were becoming more vocal towards others, fostering group
accomplishment, and the increased connectedness with those around them. These benefits suggested that serious leisure in a community setting can spark meaningful change within people (Arai & Pedlar, 1997).

A great example of an activity within the divide between casual and serious leisure is shag dancing, a cultural staple in North and South Carolina. Brown (2007) conducted a study over the course of three years that looked at these so-called “Carolina Shaggers” and the social aspects that kept the dancers actively involved long-term. The shag dancers were classified as either casual leisure dancers or serious leisure dancers based upon their level of involvement. Brown created five different subsets of dancers with three types falling under the casual leisure umbrella: occasional, recreational, and “wannabes” dancers. The two remaining subsets were competitive shaggers and hardcore shaggers, both forms of serious leisure. Their study determined that casual shag dancers were just as committed to the activity as serious shaggers, but the motivations were often different. While serious shaggers were committed to improving their dancing ability, casual shaggers were committed to the socialization aspects and having fun without getting wrapped up in any competition (Brown, 2007). The author ultimately determined that shag dancing effectively incorporated all six characteristics of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1992) and was a form of serious leisure. This study continues to reinforce the notion that casual and serious leisure can play an impactful role in shaping people’s lives, such as through socialization opportunities.

Similar to shag dancing, another contested form of serious leisure, sports fandom, was tested by Gibson et al. (2002) at the University of Florida. Their study examined fans meanings, rituals, and practices associated with identifying as University of Florida
Gators football fan. For many Gators fans, being a fan is more a way of life than a conscious choice as explained in the following quote:

“For fans of the University of Florida football team, being a Gator appears to be a central source of meaning and identity as evident in the clothes they wear, the adjectives they use to describe themselves, and in some cases the color of the car they drive or the place they live. Some travel hundreds of miles to follow their team, to tailgate with their family and friends, and for some who are alumni of the University, football provides a link with their alma mater. No other sport in the U.S. seems to engender the same pre-game socializing (tailgating), rituals, and atmosphere as football” (Gibson et al., 2002, p.2).

A sister study was released a year later which examined fans as tourists and their travel-related behaviors to home games as well as visiting other towns and campuses for away contests. The research of Gibson et al. (2003) found that serious leisure participation might not only invoke a sense of belonging to those participating in an activity, but the wider community where an activity is taking place as well. This is particularly evident in areas hosting sport events with locals and commuters alike. The researchers affirmed this was likely the case for the city of Gainesville, Florida, the home of the University of Florida Football Gators, during home football game weekends (Gibson et al., 2002). After exploring serious leisure’s ability to foster a sense of community, the next study challenged the Serious Leisure Perspective’s validity.

Moving beyond the extensive amount of research Stebbins has contributed towards serious leisure, Veal (2017) chose to look at the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP) in a more critical light than most researchers. This study determined that leisure should be viewed from the perspective of a continuum, rather than grouped into the three defined categories of serious leisure, casual leisure, and project-based leisure. Veal cast doubt on the Serious Leisure Perspective’s utility by citing Stebbins (1982)’s dissent of his own concept in which he proposed that a more sophisticated construct should replace
the Serious Leisure Perspective.

Veal (2017)’s study also cited research looking at the SL– CL dichotomy that concluded opposed rigid categories like casual or serious leisure (Shen & Yarnal, 2010). There can be shared qualities that make categorizing an activity hard to squarely place in one box. Veal concluded by suggesting further research be conducted on advancing the Serious Leisure Perspective into a theorized Leisure Experience Perspective (LEP) which prioritizes studying experiences instead of classifying activities. In the following section, the three classifications falling under the umbrella of serious leisure will be explained.

Amateurism, Hobbyists, and Volunteerism

After exploring the Serious Leisure Perspective, it is worthwhile to look in-depth at the three types of serious leisure: Amateurism, Volunteerism, and Hobbyists. Examples of amateurism are activities centered around art, science, sports, and entertainment. Volunteerism examples encompass environmental, floral, faunal, or other popular activities. Lastly, activities that fall under the umbrella of hobbyists are collecting, tinkering, or repairing, crafts like wood working, as well as liberal art pursuits. While amateurism and hobbyists have been researched at length, little time or attention has been spent on Volunteerism. Volunteerism has often been overlooked as being a loftier activity that is less frivolous than the other two forms of serious leisure. Volunteerism is often much harder to classify as serious leisure than many other activities would be. Volunteerism can fall under the umbrella of casual leisure, serious leisure, or depending on the obligatory manner of the “volunteering”, it may not actually even be a volunteer activity (Stebbins, 1996). Example activities mentioned were giving blood or donating money to worthy causes. Giving blood or giving away hard-earned money is not typically
a fun activity, but the satisfaction a person receives allows it to be classified as a leisure activity. The moment an activity becomes bothersome is when a once voluntary act becomes the furthest thing from leisure. Obligatory volunteerism that involves monotonous work surely cannot be called leisure because there is no longer satisfaction derived from the act (Stebbins, 1996). In the next section, a handful of studies will be reviewed that explain why fans identify with a sports team, as well as the distinction between a fan and a simple spectator.

**Fan Identification**

After outlining casual and serious leisure activities extensively, it is time to bridge the information gap and understand fan identification. The pair of studies from Gibson et al. showed that fandom can be classified as serious leisure, but several studies within this section seek out answers for why fans identify with a team (or a school). The first study of note was conducted in 2005 and examined the influence that personality traits can have in determining sport fan identification. Donavan et al. (2005) sought to find a link between basic personality traits and a need for affiliation with a group or team. There are a variety of different motivations behind a need for affiliation. This need for affiliation is because identifying with a sports allows a sense of belonging, and allows people to exude “we-feelings”, a phenomenon where fans consider themselves as a part of the team and associate themselves with wins and positive publicity (Dunning, 1990). At the conclusion of their study, a link between basic personality traits and a need for affiliation was found which could provide insight to managers on increasing fan attendance and team loyalty (Donavan et al., 2005).

The more impactful of the first two studies examined is assuredly the work of
Sutton et al. (1997) due to the three tiers of fan identification that were defined. The researchers described fan identification as the commitment and emotional tie fans (customers) have with a team. They deemed fan identification important because, regardless of the product produced on the field year in and year out, fans are the driving force behind long-term fiscal success and flexibility. Their research resulted in three detailed levels of fan identification, noting that not all fans can be equally invested as the next fan. Those three identification tiers are: low identification, medium identification, and high identification. Low identification fans were classified as social fans. Social fans often hold a passive long-term relationship with the team that involves low amounts of emotion, low cost of involvement, and low financial commitment. These types of fans may be more involved purely for the entertainment value of the team. If a person did not regularly attend college football games for the university in their town but were offered free tickets and decided to go because their calendar was free, they are likely a social fan.

The second tier, medium identification, is comprised of focused fans. Sutton et al. (1997) found focused fans to be much more invested than social fans. Focused fans are often attracted to the achievement-seeking aspect of sport. Focused fans are likely to wear team apparel to create a positive association between themselves and the team. Medium identification focuses fans can eventually lose interest and become purely social fans, or the identification can bloom and eventually result in high identification. High identification fans are vested fans which are the result of a heavy financial or time commitment. These fans are fiercely loyal to their team and are unwavering in support, regardless of the outcome year in and year out. Wann & Branscombe (1993) found that individuals with high levels of identification were logically more involved with their
team than the average fan. This involvement usually resulted in more and more years as a fan, increased attendance at road and home games, high expectations for future attendance, and increased time and money spent on following their team.

While the previous study outlined the differences between levels of identification, the next study from Dietz-Uhler & Lanter (2008) outlined the distinction between being a fan and temporarily being a spectator. This study takes a deep dive into the consequences associated with fan identification by explaining the distinction between identifying as a sports fan and a sports spectator. Both sides are equally important because their varying levels of fan identification provide unique research opportunities (Dietz-Uhler & Lanter, 2008). Sport fan identification usually refers to the psychological connection that a fan feels with their team of choice, and it can be measured either directly or indirectly. Dietz-Uhler & Lanter (2008) determined there to be three categories of consequences: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. One notable affective consequence of fan identification is that for those who identify strongly with a team, levels of enjoyment, satisfaction, and anxiety can change frequently depending on the performance of their team. A cognitive consequence of fan identification is a significant bias towards their team’s performance, as well as towards the players and fans of the opposing teams. The researchers considered the third category of consequence, behavioral, to be the most widely understood because they are easily observed. One behavioral consequence of fan identification observed was an uptick in school colors worn by students and faculty on campus following a team’s win.

After establishing the difference between fans and spectators, it is important to discuss why some people tend to become more invested with a team while others remain
casual fans. Wann & Branscombe (1990) studied these tendencies by exploring the concepts of Basking-In-Reflected-Glory (BIRGing) and Cutting-Off-Reflected-Failure (CORFing). Both BIRGing and CORFing are self-esteem related processes. BIRGing essentially refer to a fan riding the high of a team’s successes, an example is exclaiming “We Won!” instead of “My favorite team won!” Attachment to the team continues to grow as the team remains successful, increasing fan self-esteem along the way. CORFing is what happens when a fan’s team loses. By cutting themselves off from the team, however briefly, a fan’s self-esteem can be spared the embarrassment of a defeat. Wann & Branscombe (1990)’s hypothesis was proven to be correct: the more a person identifies with a team, the higher amount of BIRGing and CORFing tendencies they display.

The last study focused on fan identification came from Wakefield & Wann (2006). Their research examined fans who become so involved in their fandom that they began to manifest negative behaviors. This is defined as excessive fan identification. The word “fan” is often forgotten to be derived from the word “fanatic” which means to be filled with or expressing excessive zeal. If looking for negative connotations, a couple synonyms of fanatic are “diehard” and “zealot.” Excessive fan identification can remain relatively harmless, but often times, this excessive identification begins to spiral into sporadic and dangerous behavior, even hooliganism (Van Hiel et al., 2007). In the following section, this review explores social identity theory and its connection to the formation of fandom.

**Social Identity Theory and Fandom**

Social identity theory plays an important role in fandom because it helps dictate how people think about themselves. Continuing the theme of a sense of community from
serious leisure, social identity theory refers to a person identifying themselves with an in-group and being different than those in out-groups. Social identity theory was first proposed by Henri Tajfel in the late 1960s. Since then, the theory has undergone revisions of varying degrees that leave us with the theory we have today. An individual’s social identity is important in determining their self-esteem. By identifying with a group, they can take pride in being a part of something larger than themselves (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). The four studies within this section provide much insight on fan behavior when faced with negative outcomes, as well as research on the social identity-brand equity model.

The first study looking at fan behavior after a negative outcome was conducted by Fink et al. (2009). Their research explored the somewhat unchartered connection between social identity theory and fan reactions to players behaviors. During their research, it was found that negative off-field behavior of athletes can negatively impact a fan’s attachment to a player and even their identification with the team. In fact, they found that the higher the level of fan identification, the higher level of disappointment and outrage the fan will likely exude after learning about unscrupulous off-field behavior. Response from team leaders is another factor that can greatly impact fan identification. When a player acts irresponsibly and is not held accountable by team leaders, fan identification can suffer dramatically because the fan feels that they have nothing positive to attach themselves to within the team. If a player does something embarrassing and team leader or the front office address the issue quickly and effectively, fan identification is likely to remain the same because the threat to positive fan identification was mitigated (Fink et al., 2009a). This is likely a result of the “black sheep” effect. The “black sheep” effect
particularly allows highly identified fans to separate the troublemaker, or the black sheep, from the rest of the team and their identity as a fan as well (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

A similar study conducted by Sanderson (2013) continued to explore the connection between social identity theory and fan reactions by focusing on the University of Cincinnati’s head football coach leaving the program. The purpose of Sanderson’s research was to explore the social identity threat that faces fans when a coach leaves the program by his own volition, changing from friend to foe in their eyes. A fanbase can quickly change from adoring their coach to sending vile messages as they feel threatened. Sanderson found five different reactions from fan responses on Facebook groups formed with the purpose of discussing the team and the coach’s departure. In order of incidents reported, the five types were: Victimization (172), Intimidation (158), Rallying (87), Degradation (76), Stigmatization (56). Sanderson (2013) determined that fans use social media as a shield against social identity threats. By voicing their opinions vocally, they often find fans with the same sentiments trying to boost their own morale as well as the fan base. While a fan’s social identity is influenced by the outcome of each individual contest, it extends well beyond the game-ending buzzer and can permeate decisions made in everyday life such as social media usage (Sanderson, 2013).

Pivoting away from fan behavior, a study performed by Underwood et al. (2001) explored a different angle of social identity theory: brand equity formation and the creation of the social identity-brand equity (SIBE) model. This framework explored the levels of social identification associated with the construction of brand equity in the sports marketplace. This framework was built on levels of consumer commitment and emotional attachment with fans acting as consumers of the product. The researchers
found there to be four characteristics within the sports environment that encourage social identity: the group experience, the history and tradition, the role of the physical facility, and ritual. Several years later, the work of Underwood et al. (2001) was taken a step further by exploring three distinct fan groups and assessed their fan equity: current students of the university, alumni of the university, and the general public (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007a). The pair of researchers proved that all four characteristics encouraging social identity did have an impact on shaping an individual’s social identity.

Utilizing the social identity-brand equity model, Boyle & Magnusson (2007)’s research not only validated the work of Underwood et al. (2001), but produced some important conclusions of their own. They demonstrated that social identity, the focal point of a person’s psychological connection with a team, is affected by market factors. This means that the stronger the social identity, the stronger the brand loyalty exhibited. In fact, amongst all three fan groups studied (current students, alumni, and the general public), social identity was found to consistently have a positive effect on brand equity on university athletic programs. The aforementioned study left the door wide open to significant research in the future in this area. Firstly, they would like to see if a study conducted on a different sport would yield similar social identification. While current students and alumni will likely have a fondness for all a university’s athletic teams, the general public is far less likely to have the same affinity for numerous teams. A diehard football fan may not watch a single men’s or women’s basketball game over the course of a decade and vice versa. A proposed angle to explore further is how rituals play into social identity. The school involved in Boyle & Magnusson (2007)’s study held their contests in an off-campus multipurpose arena. Because of its off-campus location, it was
found to have little impact on social identity. They theorized that a campus built adjacent to a stadium or arena to it would likely impact social identity in a more significant way. Future research must be done to answer these questions and to continue to understand the impact social identity has on fans. The final topic of note explores what happens when fans’ social identity with a team escalates beyond that of a normal fan.

**Summary**

The literature reviewed demonstrates a range of different concepts that influence fan behavior and determine whether an activity like supporting a team as a fan can be classified as anything more specialized than casual leisure. Some of the topics covered were serious leisure, fan identification, and the relationship between social identity theory and fans. The work of Arai & Pedlar (1997) and Stebbins (1982; 2008) explore the six characteristics that define serious leisure. Research conducted by Sutton et al. (1997) established three levels of fan identification based on intensity while Wakefield & Wann (2006) explored aggression related to fan identification. Lastly, studies conducted by researchers like Fink et al. (2009), Wann & Branscombe (1993), and Sanderson (2013) dove into the connections between social identity theory and deep rooted fandom. Beginning with Stebbins’ work on serious leisure in the 1980’s, all the aforementioned topics have continued to grow and be interwoven throughout multiple disciplines. However, further research will always be necessary to continually adapt to new trends and activities as existing research becomes outdated each day.
III. METHODOLOGY

Study Site

The study site for this research was the University of Missouri, a public land-grant institution located in Columbia, Missouri. Columbia is an urban town of about 126,000 people located in the heart of the state, nearly equidistant between St. Louis, Missouri and Kansas City, Missouri (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). The University of Missouri, commonly referred to as Mizzou, has eight men’s sports teams and ten women’s sports teams, all known as the Missouri Tigers (Mizzou Athletics, 2021). The Missouri Tigers are members of the Southeastern Conference (SEC), one of the premier conferences in college athletics. Mizzou Football has a strong fanbase year after year, one such reason being the lack of Division 1-FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) competition in the state. Missouri is one of a handful of states with exactly one Division 1-FBS football team.

Selection of Participants

All participants taking part in this study identified themselves as Mizzou football fans and voluntarily chose to engage in the study. Participants of the study were members of the PowerMizzou online forum (PowerMizzou.Com, 2021), members of the “Mizzou Tailgating” Facebook group (Mizzou Tailgating, 2021), members of the “University of Missouri Alumni” Facebook group (University of Missouri Alumni, 2021), as well as fans who discovered the survey by word-of-mouth from family and friends. Members of the PowerMizzou online forum pay a monthly subscription fee to access the forum comprised of nearly 6,000 active members. The “Mizzou Tailgating” Facebook group has over 5,500 members while the “University of Missouri Alumni” Facebook group has over 5,700 members, both of which are free to access. All participants were over the age
of 18 years old and were assured of the anonymity of the survey and their responses before beginning.

**Collection of Data**

The survey used in this study was submitted to the University Institutional Review Board to be approved before it was given to participants. The survey was created using Qualtrics, a program designed to make surveys and distribute them with ease across various mediums. The survey was optimized to be completed easily on either a computer or a mobile device. In order to reduce the margin of error amongst the surveyed population, the researcher aimed to collect data from at least 100 respondents through the various distribution channels. This survey was administered in November and December 2021 electronically through Facebook and the PowerMizzou online forum.

Posts on both Facebook groups and the PowerMizzou online forum were posted at the same time across all the platforms. The first round of posts containing a link to the Qualtrics survey were made on Friday, November 19th at 2:00pm. This first date’s importance is two-fold. These posts were made the day before a Mizzou home game which means that these Facebook groups are likely to be much more active than normal due to people looking for information about the weekend. Secondly, noon to mid-afternoon is a targeted time for social media posts as people often scroll through their social media during lunch breaks (Wahid & Wadud, 2020). Posts near the middle of the day are preferred to evening posts because people tend to spend less time on social media and more time doing other activities. Each post contained a link to the survey, a short description about the researcher, and a concise request for participation from fellow Mizzou alumni and fans. The same posts were repeated on Saturday, November 27th and
Wednesday December 8th. The first round of posts read as follows:

Hello! My name is Danny Norman. I am a graduate student at the University of Missouri within the School of Natural Resources currently working on earning my master's degree. I am currently writing my thesis entitled "Factors Motivating College Football Fandom and Attendance" and I need your help! I have created a short survey to understand more about Mizzou Football fans and their experiences supporting the Tigers. This survey should take approximately 7 minutes or less of your time. I would greatly appreciate you taking a few minutes out of your day to help out a fellow Tiger. MIZ! If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at drnfy6@mail.missour.edu. Attached below is an anonymous link to the Qualtrics survey.

The survey administered by the researcher modified several existing surveys/scales in order to understand fans’ motivations to attend Mizzou Football games in person. One such scale measuring fan identification was created by Donavan et al. (2005). The original survey, shown in Table 3.1, referenced “XYZ Football” which the researcher replaced with “Mizzou Football” for all eleven questions.

Table 3.1. Fan Identification Scale

1. When someone criticizes Mizzou Football, I take it personally.
2. I am very interested in what others think about Mizzou Football.
3. When I talk about Mizzou Football, I usually say we rather than they.
4. It is very important to me that Mizzou Football wins.
5. I see myself as a big fan of Mizzou Football.
6. It is important for me to be a Mizzou Football fan.
7. I strongly dislike Mizzou Football's biggest rivals.
8. I display Mizzou Football's name or insignia at my place of work, apartment, or on my clothing quite often.
9. I consider myself to be a "real" fan of the Mizzou Football team.
10. I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of the Mizzou Football team.
11. Being a fan of the Mizzou Football team is very important to me.

Note. Modified from Donavan et al. (2005) by replacing “XYZ” with “Mizzou” using a 7-point Likert Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).
A second scale utilized, shown in Table 3.2, was the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale which had been previously modified to measure leisure identity (Jun & Kyle, 2012). The researcher modified it replacing one leisure activity, golf, with another: sport fandom, an activity determined to be serious leisure when interviewing Florida Gator fans (Gibson et al., 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.2. Athletic Identity Measurement Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Identity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Other people see me as a Mizzou Football fan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ It is important that other people know about my involvement in supporting Mizzou Football.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ When I support Mizzou Football, others see me the way I want them to see me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ If I stopped supporting Mizzou Football, I would probably lose touch with a lot of my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusivity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ My involvement as a Mizzou Football fan has influenced my day-to-day decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ I typically organize my week so I can support Mizzou Football.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ I continuously think about how I can support Mizzou Football more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ I make many sacrifices to support Mizzou Football.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Supporting Mizzou Football is an important part of my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Identity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ I consider myself a Mizzou Football fan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ I have many goals related to supporting Mizzou Football.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Supporting Mizzou Football is an important part of who I am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative Affectivity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ I feel bad about myself when Mizzou Football plays poorly in practice or games.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ I feel badly when my goals related to Mizzou Football are not met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Affectivity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ I get a sense of satisfaction when supporting Mizzou Football.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ I feel good about myself when Mizzou Football plays well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ When I am supporting Mizzou Football, I am happy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Modified from Jun & Kyle (2012) by replacing “golf” with “Mizzou Football” using a 7-point Likert Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).*
Along with these modified surveys, questions were asked about topics like fans' time at Mizzou as a student or whether they attended Mizzou, how far they typically drove to attend games, and how many games they attended a year including away games and potential bowl games. Additionally, basic demographic information was gathered from each participant regarding age, gender, ethnicity, income, marital status, and education level, shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Fan Survey Questions

Did you attend the University of Missouri?
- a. Yes  *(Displayed next question if Yes selected)*
- b. No

What degree did you obtain from the University of Missouri?
- a. No degree obtained
- b. Bachelor’s degree
- c. Master’s degree
- d. Doctorate degree

Did your parent(s) attend the University of Missouri?
- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

Did your grandparent(s) attend the University of Missouri?
- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

Did your friends attend the University of Missouri?
- a. Yes
- b. No

If applicable, did your significant other attend the University of Missouri?
- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not Applicable

Do you currently live in Missouri?
- a. Yes  *(Displayed next question if Yes selected)*
- b. No
Do you live in Columbia?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Have you attended a Mizzou Football game before?
   a. Yes  (Displayed next 3 questions if Yes selected)
   b. No

How old were you when you attended your first Mizzou Football game?
   a. 1-10 years old
   b. 11-20 years old
   c. 21-30 years old
   d. 31-40 years old
   e. Above 40 years old

Are you a Mizzou Football season ticket holder?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I have been previously but am not currently.

How would YOU identify yourself as a Mizzou Football fan?
   a. Social Fan (low identification)
   b. Focused Fan (medium identification)
   c. Vested Fan (high identification)

Did you attend a Mizzou Football home game in 2018, 2019, or 2021?
   a. Yes  (Displayed next 6 questions if Yes selected)
   b. No

Did you attend a Mizzou Football home game in 2018?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

How many Mizzou Football games did you attend in 2018?
   a. 1-2 games
   b. 3-4 games
   c. 5-6 games
   d. All 7 games

Did you attend a Mizzou Football home game in 2019?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure
How many Mizzou Football games did you attend in 2019?
   a. 1-2 games
   b. 3-4 games
   c. 5-6 games
   d. All 7 games

Did you attend a Mizzou Football home game in 2021?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

How many Mizzou Football games did you attend in 2021?
   a. 1-2 games
   b. 3-4 games
   c. 5-6 games
   d. All 7 games

Did you attend a Mizzou Football away game in 2018, 2019, or 2021? (Displayed next 6 questions if Yes selected)
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

Did you attend a Mizzou Football away game in 2018?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

How many Mizzou Football away games did you attend in 2018?
   a. 1-2 games
   b. 3-4 games
   c. 5-6 games
   d. All 7 games

Did you attend a Mizzou Football away game in 2019?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

How many Mizzou Football away games did you attend in 2019?
   a. 1-2 games
   b. 3-4 games
   c. 5-6 games
   d. All 7 games

Did you attend a Mizzou Football away game in 2021?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure
How many Mizzou Football away games did you attend in 2021?
   a. 1-2 games
   b. 3-4 games
   c. 5-6 games
   d. All 7 games

Did you attend Mizzou’s 2018 bowl game vs Oklahoma State?
   a. Yes
   b. No

How many miles do you drive to attend a Mizzou Football home game?
   a. 0-25 miles
   b. 26-50 miles
   c. 51-99 miles
   d. 100-150 miles
   e. 151 miles or more

What are you most likely to do during a Mizzou football home game when you cannot attend?
   a. Watch the game on TV at a restaurant/bar
   b. Watch the game on TV at home
   c. Watch the game on TV elsewhere
   d. Listen to the game on the radio
   e. None of the above

What are you most likely to do during a Mizzou football game when you cannot attend?
   a. Watch the game on TV at a restaurant/bar
   b. Watch the game on TV at home
   c. Watch the game on TV elsewhere
   d. Listen to the game on the radio
   e. None of the above

_Treatment of Data_

All survey data collected was gathered electronically using Qualtrics which organized the raw data into an exportable format. After the initial manipulation, the data was imported into SPSS Statistics. Survey responses were first sorted out to compare male vs female respondents, different age brackets, ethnicities, etc. Some significant relationships the researcher looked for were between alumni status and attendance at
home games, bowl games, and at away football games. Objective one examined differences in attendance trends, the dependent variable, between alumni and non-alumni, the independent variable. Objective two examined differences between the dependent variable, attendance trends, and the independent variable, social connections to Mizzou. Both objective one and two were analyzed by running Chi-Square tests.

The researcher ran a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on objective three which looked for a relationship between the dependent variable, the participant’s level of fan identification with the Mizzou Football team, and the independent variable, the highest degree earned at the University of Missouri. Objective four underwent a correlational analysis comparing three variables: average fan identification; average leisure participation; and average social identity. Average fan identification was a variable created by averaging participants’ scores from the Fan Identification Scale found in Table 3.1. Average leisure participation was a variable created by averaging participants’ scores from the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale found in Table 3.2. Average social participation was a variable created by averaging participants’ scores from the Social Identity, and Self-Identity sections of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale found in Table 3.2. Objective four was measured using a correlational analysis which does not utilize independent and dependent variables.
IV. RESULTS

Response Rate

The survey was distributed via an anonymous Qualtrics link on two Facebook groups: “Mizzou Tailgating”, and “University of Missouri Alumni”, in addition to the PowerMizzou online forum. At the onset of survey distribution, PowerMizzou had approximately 6,000 members, the “Mizzou Tailgating” Facebook group had over 5,500 members, and the “University of Missouri Alumni” Facebook group had over 5,700 members. These three mediums had a total potential participant pool of over 17,200 people, not accounting for accounts that are no longer actively in use. Response rate cannot be properly estimated due to the voluntary nature of the survey as participants had to see the post on one of the three pages and then choose to respond. Because the survey was distributed using an anonymous Qualtrics link, no identifying markers were attached to responses to determine how the participant found the survey.

At the conclusion of the survey, a total of 1,155 responses were collected. Five of those surveys were flagged as bot responses by Qualtrics and were filtered out for an updated total of 1150 responses. After partial/incomplete responses were filtered out, a final total of 975 (84.8%) responses were deemed to be usable for analysis. From that total of 975, each of the four analyses were analyzed by removing missing cases listwise for individual objectives. This resulted in research objective one having 970 valid cases, research objective two having 972 valid cases, research objective three having 660 valid cases, and research objective four having 975 valid cases. The survey was distributed in three waves with simultaneous posts beginning on Friday, November 19th. 689 (59.91%) responses were collected during the first wave. The second wave began on Saturday, November 27th and resulted in 211 (18.35%) responses. The third and final wave began on Wednesday, December 8th and resulted in 250 (21.74%) responses. In total, 174 (15.13%) responses were not utilized when analyzing the data due to incompletion in some capacity, often during the matrix-style questions at the conclusion of the survey.
Description of Respondents

The participants of the survey were asked several demographic questions including age, gender, ethnicity, household income, marital status, and education level. The age group with the most responses was individuals who were between the ages of 48 and 57 (30.2%), followed by 38-47 years old (23.5%), 58-67 years old (14.5%), 28-37 years old (13.6%), 18-27 years old (10.1%), 68-77 years old (7%), and 78 years old or above (1.1%). 1 (.1%) respondent preferred not to answer. The age groups set by the researcher were used in order to ensure the groups were large enough to effectively analyze the data. Of the individuals participating in the survey, the majority were men: 638 (65.4%), followed by women: 331 (33.9%), and non-binary/third gender: 2 (.2%). 1 respondent preferred not to answer while three respondents skipped the question entirely.

The education levels of individuals consisted of several groups including those who have a bachelor’s degree: 466 (47.8%), individuals with a Master’s Degree: 279 (28.6%), individuals with a Doctorate Degree: 92 (9.4%), individuals who attended some college: 90 (9.2%), individuals with an Associate Degree: 28 (2.9%), and those with a high school diploma or have a GED: 18 (1.8%). 2 respondents skipped the question entirely. Of the participants who responded to the survey, 937 (96.1%) were White, 7 (.7%) were Hispanic or Latino, 10 (1.0%) Black or African American, 3 (.3%) were Native American or American Indian, 6 (.6%) were Asian, 1 (.1%) were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 10 (1%) identified as Other. 1 respondent skipped the question entirely. These results can be viewed in Table 4.1.
### Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-27 years old</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-37 years old</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-47 years old</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-57 years old</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-67 years old</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-77 years old</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78 years old or above</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary/Third Gender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American or American Indian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Yearly Income</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $49,999</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $99,999</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 - $199,999</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 - $199,999</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 or above</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married or domestic partnership</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school degree or equivalent</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college but no degree</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcomes

Three types of statistical analyses were conducted to understand the survey data collected. The first two research objectives were analyzed by using a Pearson Chi-square test of independence to determine a relationship between the two nominal variables. Effect size was calculated for these two objectives using the Phi (Φ) coefficient. This coefficient is the result of dividing the Chi-square test statistic by \( N \), the number of observations. The second type of analysis performed was a One-way ANOVA used to analyze the third research objective. A Pearson’s correlation was used to analyze the fourth and final research objective. The correlation coefficient conveys the effect size without measurement. All analyses eliminated missing cases listwise to ensure a consistent \( N \) value. The alpha level for all tests was .05 (\( \alpha = .05 \)).

Research Objective 1

Research objective one was to examine differences in attendance trends between alumni and non-alumni. To do this, a Chi-Square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between attendance at a home game in the three surveyed years, and whether the participant attended the University of Missouri (MU). There was a significant relationship between home game attendance and attendance at the University of Missouri, \( \chi^2(1, N = 970) = 12.193, p = .001, \Phi = .112 \). The results can be found below in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3. As noted in Table 4.2, those who attended MU and did not attend any home games, and those who did not attend MU or any home games contributed most to the findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attended MU</th>
<th>Attended a Home Game</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( N )</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>( N )</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FACTORS MOTIVATING COLLEGE FOOTBALL FANDOM AND ATTENDANCE

Table 4.3. Attended MU and Any Home Games Chi-Square Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>12.193</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>11.616</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>11.811</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>12.180</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 67.11.
b. Relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Objective 2

Research objective two was to examine differences in attendance trends stemming from social connections to the University of Missouri. Chi-square tests of independence were also conducted to examine the relationship between four different social connections to the University of Missouri and attendance at a home game in any of the three examined years (2018, 2019, 2021). The results varied for each demographic. Within the research objectives, cases were deleted listwise. There was a statistically significant relationship between parents attending the University of Missouri and recent home game attendance, $\chi^2 (1, N = 972) = 8.162, p = .004, \Phi = .092$. As noted in Table 4.5, those who attended any home games and whose parents attended MU, and those who did not attend MU and whose parents did not attend MU contributed most to the findings. No significant relationship was found between a grandparent that attended the University of Missouri and recent home game attendance, $\chi^2 (2, N = 972) = 2.923, p > .05, \Phi = .055$. The results are shown below in Table 4.6.

Likewise, no significant relationship was found between friends that attended the University of Missouri and recent home game attendance, $\chi^2 (1, N = 972) = .982, p > .05, \Phi = .032$, shown below in Table 4.7. Lastly, there was a statistically significant relationship between significant other attending the University of Missouri and recent home game attendance, $\chi^2 (2, N = 972) = 14.218, p = .001, \Phi = .121$. As shown in Table 4.8, those who did not attend any home games and whose significant others attended MU, and those who did not attend MU and whose
significant others did not attend MU contributed most to the findings. The effect size for each of the four analyses were determined to be small as $\Phi < .3$.

### Table 4.4. Social Connections to Mizzou Frequency and Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended Any Home Games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents attended MU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents attended MU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends attended MU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Others attended MU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.5. Parents attended MU and Any Home Games Chi-Square Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>8.162</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.004b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>7.638</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>8.727</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>8.154</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>972</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 47.31.
- b. Relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Table 4.6. Grandparents attended MU and Any Home Games Chi-Square Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Sig. (2 sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>2.923</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>2.695</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>2.001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>972</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.16.
Research Objective 3

Research objective three was to examine the relationship between the participant’s degree earned at the University of Missouri and their level of fan identification. A One-Way ANOVA was conducted to analyze the third research objective. The analysis was conducted to look for a relationship between the highest degree earned at the University of Missouri and participant’s level of fan identification with the Mizzou Football team. A participant’s Degree Earned at MU was not found to have a significant relationship with Average Fan Identification, \( F(3, 656) = .685, \ p = .562, \ \omega^2 = .000 \). A small effect size was calculated by Omega-squared \( (\omega^2) \), \( \omega^2 < .01 \).

The results are shown below in Table 4.9 and Table 4.10.

Table 4.7. Friends attended MU and Any Home Games Chi-Square Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>.982(^a)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.377</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.332</td>
<td>.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>972</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( a. \) 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 32.41.

Table 4.8. Significant Others attended MU and Any Home Games Chi-Square Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>14.218(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.001(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>14.778</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>5.592</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>972</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( a. \) 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 23.98.

\( b. \) Relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.9. Average Fan Identifications and Degree Earned at MU Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Earned at MU</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No degree obtained</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>1.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.962</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.10. Average Fan Identification and Degree Earned at University of Missouri ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.902</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.634</td>
<td>.685</td>
<td>.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>607.430</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>.926</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>609.332</td>
<td>659</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Objective 4**

The last research objective was to examine the correlation between the level of fan identification, leisure participation, and social identity. The fourth research objective was analyzed through a Pearson correlation. Average leisure participation was found to have a strong positive correlation with average fan identification, \((r(972) = .808, p < .001)\). Average leisure participation also had a strong positive correlation with average social identity, \((r(972) = .937, p < .001)\). Lastly, average fan identification also had a strong positive correlation with average social identity, \((r(972) = .807, p < .001)\), meaning that a strong positive correlation was found between all three variables, pictured in Figure 1. This indicates that within each relationship, higher scores on one characteristic were associated with higher scores of the other characteristic, while lower scores on the given characteristics were associated with lower scores on the other characteristic. The results are in Table 4.11 and Table 4.12 below.

Table 4.11. Average Leisure Participation and Average Fan Identification Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Leisure Participation</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>1.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Fan Identification</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>1.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Social Identity</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>1.036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Valid N (listwise)* 972
Table 4.12. Average Leisure Participation, Fan Identification, and Social Identity Correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Leisure Participation</th>
<th>Average Fan Identification</th>
<th>Average Social Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Leisure</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.808&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Fan</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.808&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Social</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.937&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.807&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

b. Listwise N = 972

Figure 1. Scatterplot Matrix for Research Objective 4
V. DISCUSSION

Research Objective 1

The first research objective examined whether there was a significant relationship between alumni status at the University of Missouri and recent attendance at Mizzou Football games. The researcher concluded that there was a significant relationship found between recent home game attendance and attendance at the University of Missouri, meaning that alumni are more likely to attend Mizzou Football games than non-alumni fans. Given the nature of the survey, the researcher speculated that a large number of participants would have attended both the University of Missouri, and a game in 2018, 2019, or 2021. This proved to be correct with 538 respondents falling under those parameters.

The work of Underwood et al. (2001), furthered by Boyle & Magnusson (2007), was reaffirmed by the results of this study. Boyle & Magnusson (2007) examined fan buy-in for specific groups, particularly current students and alumni to see how their connection to a team varied from someone in the general public. Students and alumni were found to have greater enthusiasm and support for athletic teams due to their connection to the university. Additionally, the study by Boyle & Magnusson (2007) concluded that fan identification for non-student fans, meaning they could have been students and are now alumni, is directly impacted by current success, and more importantly, the nostalgia of previous successes that could have stemmed from their time as a student at the university in question. This previous research coupled with the results of this study examining the relationship between Mizzou Football fans and alumni of the University of Missouri suggest that alumni status is likely to have a positive effect on athletic attendance at other universities.
Research Objective 2

Four analyses were conducted to address research objective two. Each participant’s recent home game attendance at Mizzou Football games (2018, 2019, 2021) was compared to the participant’s social connections to the University of Missouri. These social connections examined were parents who attended the University of Missouri, grandparents who attended the University of Missouri, friends who attended the University of Missouri, and, if applicable, significant others who attended the University of Missouri. Significant relationships were found between Mizzou Football home game attendance and having parents and/or significant others who attended MU, while no relationship was found between grandparents and/or friends who attended MU.

These results reinforce several conclusions made in the study by Gibson et al. (2002) that fandom is often built around family life through activities such as tailgating and traveling to home and away games. The researcher sought to see if this family connection potentially extended beyond parents to grandparents or even friends. Out of 972 responses, only 76 participants had a grandparent attend the University of Missouri while 886 respondents indicated that they had friends who attended the University of Missouri. This suggests that direct relatives like parents are most likely to influence their children’s future attendance due to attending a university, attending athletic events as alumni such as Homecoming, or tailgating, while grandparents and friends are less likely to have an effect. Significant others who attended the University of Missouri were also assessed to see if there was an effect on recent attendance levels. Just under 305 respondents stated that their significant other attended the University of Missouri, but there was no distinction made between whether their significant other simply went to the
University of Missouri, or whether the significant other and the respondent were together at the time.

**Research Objective 3**

The third research objective was designed to assess the relationship between a participant’s highest degree earned at the University of Missouri and their level of fan identification (Donavan et al., 2005; Sutton et al., 1997) with the Mizzou Football team. The researcher concluded that the highest degree earned at the University of Missouri was not related to a participant’s level of fan identification with the Mizzou Football team. As there was a relationship found between alumni status and attendance in research objective one, the researcher presumed that the more time spent at the university, the higher the level of fan identification would be, on average. However, this was not proven to accurate in the study. This lack of a significant relationship is addressed and revised into a recommendation for future study below.

This was not the researcher’s expected outcome due to previous studies conducted by Wann & Branscombe (1990; 1993), and Dietz-Uhler & Lanter (2008) which had generally suggested a link between fan identification level and attachment with a team/school, something that possessing a higher degree from said university should promote. Wann & Branscombe (1993) stated that the higher the level of associations a person has with a team/university, the higher the level of fan identification should be. For example, having earned a doctorate degree at the University of Missouri compared to having earned a bachelor’s degree at the University of Missouri did not result in a higher level of fan identification across all survey participants, even though it stands to reason
that spending twice as much time earning a doctorate compared to a bachelor’s should result in a higher level of association.

**Research Objective 4**

Research objective four sought to assess any relationship between three variables: average fan identification (Fink et al., 2009; Sutton et al., 1997), average leisure participation (Jun & Kyle, 2012), and average social identity (Jun & Kyle, 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Underwood et al., 2001). Average leisure participation was found to have a strong positive correlation with average fan identification. Average leisure participation was also found to have a strong positive correlation with average social identity. Lastly, average fan identification was determined to have a strong positive correlation with average social identity, meaning that a strong positive correlation was found between all three variables. This strong positive correlation means that, on average, as one of these variables increases in a participant, the other variables would increase as well. For example, a fan’s level of fan identification with the Mizzou Football team would rise as their level of social identity with the team rose.

The positive correlation between leisure participation and social identity reaffirms the sense of community stemming from leisure activities, potentially serious leisure, established by Stebbins (1982), expanded upon by Stebbins (1992, 1996, 2008) and Jones (2000) which explored the lack of research conducted on the social world of football fandom. This sense of community and belonging is demonstrated by Gibson et al. (2003), a sister study to Gibson et al. (2002), looking at fans as tourists visiting college campuses like the University of Florida in that study, or the University of Missouri in the case of this study. Underwood et al. (2001) found that the group experience as part of a
community, as well as the history and tradition of a university, play a role in both fan identification and social identity with a team.

The correlation-matrix seen in Figure 1 helps reenforce conclusions made by Dunning (1999) which stated that fans tended to have stronger “we-feelings” with a team when they were having success and would publicly identify with a team more willing when they felt they were a part of something bigger. Being a part of a fandom meant that fan identification was higher which was positively correlated with social identity as those “we-feelings” increased. When identifying with a team, fans often include themselves into the teams’ accomplishments, despite doing nothing more than watching or attending the game in person. Donavan et al. (2005) found that fandom creates a stronger loyalty with a team or a brand. This need for affiliation that fans feel is something that managers and administrators can use to capitalize on during fan acquisition. By understanding why current fans are attached to a team, it will be easier to help new prospective fans develop the same loyalty.

Two preexisting scales were modified to measure research objective four. One scale measuring fan identification was created by Donavan et al. (2005). The original scale, shown in Table 3.1, referenced “XYZ Football” which the researcher replaced with “Mizzou Football” for all eleven questions. A second scale utilized, shown in Table 3.2, was the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale which had been previously modified to measure leisure identity. The researcher modified it replacing one leisure activity, golf, with another: sport fandom, an activity determined to be serious leisure when interviewing Florida Gator fans (Gibson et al., 2002).
Conclusions

When beginning this study, the purpose was to identify differences in attendance based on motivations among Mizzou Football fans, as well as determining any correlation between fan identification, leisure participation, and social identity. The data found significant relationships between the variables in three of the four research objectives presented. While research on sport fandom is growing, the field is still full of gaps and in constant need of future research. Some potential future research concepts are listed below. The importance of this study stems from its range of research objectives.

For managers and administrators of athletic departments, research objective one can help show a sample of who is and who is not attending games while research objective two can help narrow down why those fans are or are not attending games. Research objectives three and four examine the role that identification with a team plays in a fan’s life, and how some fans are incredibly supportive and how some fans are not as involved. Any information that can aid an athletic department in better understanding how to systematically acquire new fans, retain current fans, and not waste money and effort targeting the disinterested is a valuable tool.

Implications. Of the four research objectives, three of them yielded significant results. Research objective one, research objective two, and research objective four all demonstrated relationships between variables that could provide useful information in the future for managers and administrators across the broad field of sport, recreation, and leisure as a whole. Each of the research objectives provides some important information for the future, while leaving plenty to be researched further if one desired.

Research objective one’s relationship between alumni status and attendance at
games helps paint a tangible picture of who is, and who is not, attending games at a particular university. This is not a unique problem and could be applied to any university with a football program, or could be adjusted for further study to understand the attendance of other collegiate or professional sports. Having an established demographic profile, a recent attendance history, a list of social connections, and a fan’s level of fan/social identification with a team are a great place to start to target more likeminded fans. This information allows managers and administrators to be more precise about when and where they try to recruit new fans, saving valuable time and manpower.

Another, and perhaps the most important, implication of the study stems from research objective one. A total of 122 people surveyed attended MU but did not attend a single home game in 2018, 2019, or 2021. One of the hardest jobs a manager or administrator has is figuring out how to get those 122 people into the stadium after a long hiatus. These respondents cared enough about either the University of Missouri, or the Mizzou Football team, to participate in the survey, but do not support the team by attending. Some of these people assuredly have not attended due to having moved a great distance away from Columbia, but that is unlikely to be the motivating factor for all who answered that way. This presents another question. What can athletics departments due to bring people back to games even once a year? Every sports venue in the world is trying to boost attendance, logically. Most universities celebrate a “Homecoming” weekend once a year, typically during football season, where alumni are asked to “come home” and support the university and the team again as many did during their collegiate careers. In the case of the University of Missouri, alumni come back from all over the country, and sometimes beyond, for Homecoming. Determining why some alumni are willing to travel
far and wide, and some alumni will not come back for even one game, is a task that managers and administrators can only continue to educate themselves on further (Gibson et al., 2003).

Attendance from social connections is not a new concept, but this study does present an implication that educational institutions and their associated athletics’ departments may want to work in tandem to recruit students. Attendance at the university was shown to have a positive relationship with attendance at the University’s football games. This implies that the educational institution is critically important in building fans of the athletic teams (Sutton et al., 1997). If a concentrated effort could be undertaken to get more students on campus due to incentives like cheap season tickets, free tailgating passes, or discount athletic merchandise, eventually, those students grow up to be alumni, some of which will raise families that will continue to support the university for years to come. An example of these incentives at a Power 5 university is Clemson University offering over 4,500 free student tickets a year in a ticket lottery. Another example is at Wake Forest University where students incur no additional cost to attend athletics events. All that is necessary is a student ID to gain entry to the event. A cycle of increased university attendance should generate more attendance at athletic events which in turn puts a better product on the court, field, or turf. This begins the cycle again of bringing more and more students to the university because of the greater athletic product.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Study.

Potential limitations for the study that the researcher identified before conducting the survey were the possibility of BIRGing after a win or CORFing after a loss affecting surveys due to participant’s feelings in the aftermath of a Mizzou Football game (Wann
& Branscombe, 1990), as well as the depth of analysis regarding survey questions that did not end up factoring into the analysis of the four research objectives.

The first limitation was the exact timing a participant took the survey. A survey taken shortly after a Mizzou Football game might have skewed levels of fan identification due to Basking-in-Reflected-Glory (BIRGing) after a win or Cutting-Off-Reflected-Failure (CORFing) after a loss. Due to an unknown error in the survey process, the question asked to assess this effect was not recorded correctly, leaving open the door for potential future research to clarify this limitation.

Another limitation acknowledged by the researcher was the depth of analysis of all collected survey questions. Some questions asked in the survey did not end up contributing to the final results because they were not necessary to address any of the four research objectives. One such question asked whether or not a Mizzou Football fan was currently a season ticket holder or had been in the past. Although a limitation in this case, a question like this could be incorporated into future research to examine fan identification as the sole point of study.

This study conducted by the researcher was inspired by a study conducted by Gibson et al. (2002) examining the fanbase of the University of Florida Gators football team. The researcher reached out to one of the authors to learn about some of that study’s survey question, but the original documents had been lost due to the switch to electronic files in the twenty years since that study. The study by Gibson et al. (2002) was a mixed-methods study, while this study was only quantitative in nature so as to keep the scope of the study reasonable for the time constraints given.

Future research could be conducted in a similar manner, but with the addition of
qualitative survey questions in order to fully understand fan’s motivation for allegiance to a team and university, and motivation for attendance year after year. A mixed-methods survey would be able collect data that a quantitative study using closed-ended questions cannot as every fan’s experience is going to be different and may not be able to be fully articulated in a predetermined selection. Some of the information that could be gained via conducting this study again as a mixed-methods study is why or why not the participant is a season ticket holder, why they started or stopped being a season ticket holder, why they think they fall into one tier of fan-identification or not (Sutton et al., 1997), and, specifically, why they, or have not, been attending games recently.

Another recommendation for further study arose during the survey distribution process. The researcher distributed the survey on various Facebook pages, as well as the PowerMizzou online forum. These pages allowed for immediate feedback from those who chose to respond, publicly on Facebook, or anonymously on PowerMizzou.com. For example, during one of the survey distribution waves, the survey link became corrupted and was directing potential participants to an error page from Qualtrics. Participants quickly responded to the link and the researcher was able to reestablish the link within a few minutes to continue to gather responses. A few potential survey responses may have been lost, but if the survey had been entirely anonymous without the ability of interaction, a significant number of responses could have been lost. The recommendation for further study in this case would have been to promise confidentiality instead of anonymity so that a breakdown of responses could have gathered between the Facebook pages, and the PowerMizzou forum (PowerMizzou.Com, 2021). Some participants replied that they had completed the survey, but an interesting data point would have been
to determine which survey distribution area yielded the most results.

A last recommendation for future study that could be implemented would be involving questions that determine whether a fan has an attachment to the university, the football team, or both. Fans can be much more attached to the educational institution than the athletics programs while still having an admiration for it. Looking to see if there is a relationship between high levels of attachment to the university and high levels of attachment to the football team could have significant implications for managers and administrators’ plan to target alumni to become future donors to the athletics’ department (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). By quickly assessing whether someone has no interest in becoming an athletic donor, less money and manpower could be spent on fundraising to a population that is unlikely to donate due to their predetermined attachments.
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APPENDIX

Thank you for your interest in this Mizzou Football fandom research study. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

About the Study
The purpose of this quantitative study is to identify differences in attendance based on motivations among Mizzou Football fans, as well as determining any correlation between social identity and leisure participation. This survey will ask a series of questions about your experiences as a Mizzou Football fan and your recent attendance history. This study should take approximately 7 minutes to complete. This survey was designed to be taken on either a computer or a mobile device.

Anonymity
Your identity and all information obtained through this study will remain completely anonymous. Final results will not uniquely identify individuals.

Risks and Benefits
We do not foresee any risks to those who choose to participate in this study. There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, it is hoped that the information gained from the study will help further the field of sport research.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Taking part in this survey is voluntary, and you may decide to stop participating at any time. All questions are optional, and you may choose not to answer any particular question, or to proceed to the final page and submit your response without answering all questions. By consenting to this study, you acknowledge that you are 18 years or older.

Your decision to not participate or leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Missouri.
Contacts for Questions or Problems
Contact Daniel Norman (student researcher) at dmfy6@mail.missouri.edu, or Dr. Jennifer Wentz (advisor) at upahj@missouri.edu with any questions or comments.

You may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have any questions about your rights as a study participant, want to report any problems or complaints, or feel under any pressure to take part or stay in this study. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights of participants are protected. You can reach them at 573-882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights or any issues related to your participation in this study, you can contact University of Missouri Research Participant Advocacy by calling 888-280-5002 (a free call), or emailing MUREsearchRPA@missouri.edu.

If you have read the consent information and agree to participate in this study, please select Agree below. This is your consent to participate in this research study.

If you have read the consent information and do not desire to participate in the study, please select Disagree below.

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

What is your age?

☐ 18-27 years old
☐ 28-37 years old
☐ 38-47 years old
☐ 48-57 years old
☐ 58-67 years old
☐ 68-77 years old
☐ 78 years old or above
☐ Prefer not to answer

What is your gender?

☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ Non-binary / third gender
☐ Prefer not to say
Please specify your ethnicity.

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other

What is your yearly household income?

- Less than $49,999
- $50,000 - $99,999
- $100,000 - $149,999
- $150,000 - $199,999
- $200,000 or above
- Prefer not to answer

What is your marital status?

- Single, never married
- Married or domestic partnership
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Prefer not to answer

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor’s degree
- Master’s degree
- Doctorate degree
Did you attend the University of Missouri?

- Yes
- No

What degree did you obtain from the University of Missouri?

- No degree obtained
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree

Did your parent(s) attend the University of Missouri?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown

Did your grandparent(s) attend the University of Missouri?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown

Did your friends attend the University of Missouri?

- Yes
- No
Did your grandparent(s) attend the University of Missouri?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown

Did your friends attend the University of Missouri?

- Yes
- No

If applicable, did your significant other attend the University of Missouri?

- Yes
- No
- Not Applicable

Do you currently live in Missouri?

- Yes
- No

Do you live in Columbia?

- Yes
- No

Have you attended a Mizzou Football game before?

- Yes
- No
FACTORS MOTIVATING COLLEGE FOOTBALL FANDOM AND ATTENDANCE

How old were you when you attended your first Mizzou Football game?

- 1-10 years old
- 11-20 years old
- 21-30 years old
- 31-40 years old
- 40 years old and above

Are you a Mizzou Football season ticket holder?

- Yes
- No
- I have been previously, but am not currently.

How would YOU identify yourself as a Mizzou Football fan?

- Social Fan (low identification: low emotion, low financial commitment, low involvement)
- Focused Fan (medium identification: based upon fad, social factors, and team performance)
- Vested Fan (high identification: heavy financial investment and time commitment to support the team)

Did you attend a Mizzou Football home game in 2017, 2018, or 2019?

- Yes
- No
Did you attend a Mizzou Football home game in 2017?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

How many Mizzou Football home games did you attend in 2017?

- 1-2 games
- 3-4 games
- 5-6 games
- All 7 games

Did you attend a Mizzou Football home game in 2018?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

How many Mizzou Football home games did you attend in 2018?

- 1-2 games
- 3-4 games
- 5-6 games
- All 7 games
Did you attend a Mizzou Football home game in 2019?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

How many Mizzou Football home games did you attend in 2019?

- 1-2 games
- 3-4 games
- 5-6 games
- All 7 games

Did you attend a Mizzou Football away game in 2017, 2018, or 2019?

- Yes
- No

Did you attend a Mizzou Football away game in 2017?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
How many Mizzou Football away games did you attend in 2017?

- 1 game
- 2 games
- 3 games
- 4 games
- All 5 games

Did you attend a Mizzou Football away game in 2018?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

How many Mizzou Football away games did you attend in 2018?

- 1 game
- 2 games
- 3 games
- 4 games
- All 5 games

Did you attend a Mizzou Football away game in 2019?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
How many Mizzou Football away games did you attend in 2019?

- 1 game
- 2 games
- 3 games
- 4 games
- All 5 games

Did you attend Mizzou's 2017 bowl game vs Texas, or Mizzou's 2018 bowl game vs Oklahoma State? (Please mark the most accurate answer.)

- Yes, I attended the 2017 bowl game vs Texas
- Yes, I attended the 2018 bowl game vs Oklahoma State
- Yes, I attended both bowl games.
- No, I attended neither bowl game.

How many miles do you drive to attend a Mizzou Football home game?

- 0 - 25 miles
- 26 - 50 miles
- 51 - 99 miles
- 100 - 150 miles
- 151 miles or more

What are you most likely to do during a Mizzou Football home game if you cannot attend?

- Watch the game on TV at a restaurant/bar
- Watch the game on TV at home
- Watch the game on TV elsewhere
- Listen to the game on the radio
- None of the above

What are you most likely to do during a Mizzou Football away game if you cannot attend?

- Watch the game on TV at a restaurant/bar
- Watch the game on TV at home
- Watch the game on TV elsewhere
- Listen to the game on the radio
- None of the above
How much do you agree with each statement relating to fan identification?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When someone criticizes Mizzou Football, I take it personally.</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very interested in what others think about Mizzou Football.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I talk about Mizzou Football, I usually say “we” rather than “they.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is very important to me that Mizzou Football wins.</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself as a big fan of Mizzou Football.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important for me to be a Mizzou Football fan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I strongly dislike Mizzou Football’s biggest rivals.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I display Mizzou Football’s name or insignia at my place of work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I consider myself to be a “real” fan of the Mizzou football team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of the Mizzou Football team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being a fan of the Mizzou football team is very important to me.</td>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other people see me as a Mizzou Football fan.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that other people know about my involvement in supporting Mizzou Football.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I support Mizzou Football, others see me the way I want them to see me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I stopped supporting Mizzou Football, I would probably lose touch with a lot of my friends.</td>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My involvement as a Mizzou Football fan has influenced my day-to-day decision making.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I typically organize my week so I can support Mizzou Football.</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I continuously think about how I can support Mizzou Football more.</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make many sacrifices to support Mizzou Football.</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Mizzou Football is an important part of my life.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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### FACTORS MOTIVATING COLLEGE FOOTBALL FANDOM AND ATTENDANCE

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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself a Mizzou Football Fan.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have many goals related to supporting Mizzou Football.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Mizzou Football is an important part of who I am.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### How much do you agree with each statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel bad about myself when Mizzou Football plays poorly in practice or games.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel badly when my goals related to Mizzou Football are not met.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I get a sense of satisfaction when supporting Mizzou Football.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good about myself when Mizzou Football plays well.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am supporting Mizzou Football, I am happy</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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