Chapter 1

The Roots of Rivalry: Elements and Core Characteristics of Sport Rivalry

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a foundation for those new to rivalry inquiry. First, it introduces seminal social psychology concepts, such as group identity, social identity theory, social categorization theory, and ingroup/outgroup formation. Next, the chapter explains three properties of rivalry and the 100-point single-item measure of rivalry intensity. Study 1 examines these in new leagues (MLB, MLS, NBA), finding robust support for rivalry as 1) non-exclusive (fans perceive multiple rivals), 2) continuous in scale (intensity varies among rivals), and 3) bidirectional (opposing fans rarely share equivalent perceptions of the rivalry). Study 2 explains 11 rivalry antecedents and investigates their manifestation within five sport leagues (MLB, MLS, NBA, NFL, NHL). These are, in descending order of influence: frequency of play, defining moments, recent parity, star factors, geography, relative dominance, historical parity, competition for personnel, cultural difference, unfairness, and cultural similarity. The authors close by noting limitations and future directions for rivalry research.

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INTRODUCTION

Rivalries exist between competing entities, yet not all competitors are rivals. A rivalry holds increased meaning for stakeholders, or as more elegantly written by Louisa May Alcott (1866), “rivalry adds so much to the charm of one’s conquests” (p. 237). Yet beyond the whimsy, rivalry impacts decision-making and results in practical consequences. Within sports, rivalry can bring increased fan interest (Falls & Natke, 2014; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989) and improved performance from athletes (Neave & Wolfson, 2003; Pike, Kilduff, & Galinsky, 2018), but it can also be marked by fan aggression (Dimmock & Grove, 2005; Havard, Wann, & Ryan, 2017; Wann, Haynes, McLean, & Pullen, 2003) and unethical actions by competitors (Kilduff, Galinsky, Gallo, & Reade, 2016).

Sport rivalry is highly visible and pervasive, but the phenomenon is hardly unique to sport fans. Rivalry exists between countries (Colaresi, 2004), fans of consumer products (Berendt, Uhrich, & Thompson, 2018), employees of companies (Wittorp, 2016), and elsewhere. This chapter’s studies are based on fans of elite levels of spectator sport, who provide a valuable context in which to study people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors around rivalry. The relative newness of rivalry inquiry means limited testing of generalizability, but recent work suggests that certain principles and conclusions from elite team sport also hold true for individual sport (Ambrose & Schnitzlein, 2017; Reams & Eddy, 2017) and outside the sport context (Diel, Buck, & Eymann, 2018). Thus, in addition to contributing to the sport literature, findings from within this field inform and grow our understanding within the foundational disciplines on which the research is based, such as psychology, management, and marketing.

In this chapter, the authors begin by grounding rivalry within identity and group identification. They provide an overview of these concepts, elucidate the benefits of group identification, and describe how sport fans categorize themselves and others. Next, they recognize three known properties of rivalry and investigate their applicability within additional sport leagues. In a second study, the authors explain 11 rivalry antecedents and investigate their manifestation within five sport leagues. The authors close the chapter by noting limitations to consider and future directions for rivalry research.
Gender Violence Experiences of Urban Adult Indigenous Women: Case Study


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