

MARGINALIZATION, EMPOWERMENT AND MULTIPLE PERFORMANCES:
AN EXAMINATION OF HIGHLY IDENTIFIED, DISPLACED FEMALE SPORT
FANS

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Katherine Larson Sveinson, candidate for the degree of Master of Science in Kinesiology & Health Studies, has presented a thesis titled, ***Marginalization, Empowerment and Multiple Performances: An Examination of Highly Identified, Displaced Female Sport Fans***, in an oral examination held on August 25, 2014. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

Although research shows women attend and consume sport events and products (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; James & Ridinger, 2002; Robinson & Trail, 2005), they continue to be marginalized as inauthentic sport fans because they are seen as exhibiting non-traditional characteristics and behaviours (Pope, 2011; Pope & Williams, 2011). They are assumed to lack knowledge about the sport and teams, and to attend sport events only to socialize (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte, 2000; Gosling, 2007). Yet, being a sport fan is important for some women and plays a role in the construction of their identity (Gosling, 2007). Gosling added: “what remains missing from research is the role that sport fan culture can play in women’s every day lives and in particular its significance in challenging gender role and empowering women” (p. 260).

This study looked to further our knowledge about highly identified, displaced female sport fans by conducting qualitative research about their experiences. This research project aimed to determine if female fans feel marginalized and excluded or if they have feelings of empowerment. Additionally, by examining multiple facets of their fanship (i.e., gender, identification and displacement), this study also examined how these performances interact and impact their experiences.

Participants included seven highly identified, displaced female sport fans of professional teams (NFL, MLB and NHL). They completed two to three semi-structured individual interviews in which they were asked questions regarding their experiences and the context in which they occurred, how the multiple performances of gender, fan identification and displacement may interact, and the relation of

gender and fanship with respect to empowerment or marginalization. The data was digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically. The findings demonstrated that the participants experienced both marginalization and empowerment. Furthermore, it was found that these women took on multiple performances (i.e., gender, fan identification and displacement) in their fanship.

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Dedication

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Appendices.....	x
Chapter 1 - Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Significance of the Study	2
1.3 Purpose of Study	4
1.4 Researcher Position.....	5
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	7
2.1 Sport Fans.....	7
2.2 Female Sport Fans	12
2.3 Hegemonic Masculinity	17
2.4 Sport and Male Hegemony.....	22
2.4.1 Marginalization of Female Fans	22
2.4.2 Empowerment	25
2.6 Research Questions	29
Chapter 3 – Methodology	30
3.1 Qualitative Research.....	30
3.2 Research Design	31
3.2.1 Pilot Project	31
3.2.2 Participants.....	32
3.3 Data Collection	33
3.4 Research Procedure	34
3.4.1 Ethics.....	34
3.4.2 Procedure	35
3.5 Data Analysis	36
3.6 Place of the Researcher.....	37
3.7 Trustworthiness.....	38
3.7.1 Credibility	38
3.7.2 Transferability	38
3.7.3 Dependability	39
3.7.4 Confirmability.....	39
Chapter 4 – Findings.....	40
4.1 Marginalization and empowerment.	40

4.1.1 Introduction	40
4.1.2 Literature review	42
4.1.3 Purpose.....	50
4.1.4. Methods.....	50
4.1.5 Findings and Discussion.	53
4.1.6 Conclusion	67
4.1.7. References.....	71
4.2 Managing multiple performances.....	79
4.2.1. Introduction.....	79
4.2.2. Literature review.....	80
4.2.3 Methods.....	88
4.2.4 Findings.....	91
4.2.5 Conclusion.....	101
4.2.6 References.....	103
Chapter 5 – Conclusion	111
5.1 Summary and Implications.....	111
5.2 Limitations.....	115
5.3 Future Directions	117
References.....	119
Appendices.....	133
Appendix A – Participant Profiles.....	133
Appendix B – Ethics approval	142
Appendix C – First Interview Guide.....	143
Appendix D – Second Interview Guide.....	145
Appendix E – Third Interview Guide	148
Appendix F – Recruitment Letter	149
Appendix G – Consent Form	150

List of Tables

Table 4.1. Participant demographics.....	88
Table 4.2. Marginalization and empowerment processes and results.....	88
Table 4.3. Participant demographics.....	120

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Masculinities and femininities (adapted from Howson).....	29
Figure 4.1. Intersecting performances.....	120

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Participant profiles	133
Appendix B – Ethics approval	142
Appendix C – First interview guide.....	143
Appendix D – Second interview guide	145
Appendix E – Third interview guide	148
Appendix F – Recruitment letter.....	149
Appendix G – Consent form	150

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Sport, in many forms of participation, is commonly viewed as a male dominated area (Bryson, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Davis & Duncan, 2006).

Furthermore, it is known to reinforce gender norms. For example, some sports are considered more socially acceptable for women than for men (Shaw, 1994), such as figure skating or gymnastics or more acceptable for men than women such as football or ice hockey. Gender disparities also extend to sport spectating. According to Wann, Melnick, Russell and Pease (2001), “far from an innocent and innocuous pastime, sport spectating is viewed as reproducing traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity, thereby helping maintain patriarchal rule in the larger society” (p. 204).

Yet, female fans are becoming more present in the world of sports. It has been noted that in three major sport leagues (National Hockey League, Major League Baseball and National Basketball Association), women represent slightly less than a third of the fan market, whereas women make up almost half of the NFL’s (National Football League) fan market (Dosh, 2012; Thompson, 2014). There has also been a growth in merchandise for female fans of sport teams. For example, actress Alyssa Milano created merchandise targeted for women who follow the NFL, MLB and NHL (“Marketing to Women”, 2010). As well, in 2008 more than \$150 million was spent on NFL merchandise for women (Ricco, 2009). Female fans have also gained a presence on the Internet with websites such as femmefan.com and femalefan.com. It is argued that as there is an increase in female fans whom fill stadiums, hold season tickets, buy licensed

merchandise, and enter fantasy pools, this shift will serve to weaken the gender order in sport fanship and fandom (Wann et. al., 2001).

1.2 Significance of the Study

While there is a growing body of literature on female fans (Farrell, Fink & Fields, 2011; Pope, 2011; Pope & Williams, 2011), there are still many gaps that need to be filled including the lived experiences of female fans. Farrell et al. (2011) noted there is an absence of research about female fans who are intrinsically motivated in their fanship. In addition, very few studies examined displaced fans or fans who are geographically distant from their teams (Andrijew & Hyatt, 2009; Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Farred, 2002; Kraszewski, 2008), and no studies have solely focused on displaced female sport fans. Therefore, this research project sought to add to our knowledge of the experiences of highly identified and displaced female fans. Overall, the goal was to contribute valuable information to eventually form foundational insight of their experiences from which research can build upon further.

Pope (2011) and Pope and Williams (2011) conducted studies about female fans and their experiences. They noted that much more rich data, including experiences, backgrounds and viewpoints of fans, is an area of much needed research to better understand the complex issues that surround female fans. James and Ridinger (2000) suggested that a heavy emphasis should be placed on examining female fans' identity and characteristics. In terms of the experiences of highly identified and involved female fans, there has been little research (Davis, McDonald, & Karg, 2010; Farrell et al., 2011). It is also important to note that teams are developing more geographically diverse fan bases (Foster & Hyatt, 2008) and therefore, there is a need to develop research in this area.

This research will also add to the knowledge of marginalization of female fans by determining which situations lead to these feelings and what the sources are. The literature on female fanship has been increasing over the past 15 years. Research has shown that women attend sport events and purchase sport-related products (e.g., Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; James & Ridinger, 2002; Robinson & Trail, 2005). However, they are assumed to lack knowledge about the sport and teams, and to attend sport events only to socialize (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte, 2000; Gosling, 2007). This study will provide insight that will increase social awareness about the marginalization of women in this setting.

In addition, there is little to no discussion about empowerment among female fans. However, there are a few exceptions. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledge women in general who challenge the views of masculine hegemony, whereas Toffoletti and Mewett (2012) included how female sport fans may resist hegemonic masculinity in their discussion. McGinnis, Chun and McQuillan (2003) noted that women's participation in male dominated areas results in an increased sense of self and autonomy. In other words, the opportunity for female fans to feel empowerment is realistic and reasonable. This study will provide insight into ways that women can experience empowerment in a sport setting.

With the majority of female sport fan research examining one performance (i.e., gender), few studies have sought to examine how multiple performances interact and influence their experiences. Recognizing the lack of research in this area, Osborne and Coombs (2013) developed the Performative Sport Fandom framework, in which they acknowledge that individuals become sport fans through the enactment of multiple

performances. They note that fan identities can interact with others performances, including gender, race, ethnicity, social class and nationality. By using this approach, it is possible to “understand how subjects make meaning of and perform their own identity roles” (p. 679). Therefore, this project will explore how multiple performances affect female sport fans’ experiences.

Furthermore, some of our knowledge about sport fans thus far has been from a sample of undergraduate students who received additional marks for their participation in the research. This is a questionable sample as it can be argued that they do not represent true, authentic fans, who have the financial means to be a fan. Although the research conducted on sport fans is significant, Wann et al. (2001) noted that fan research must not be generalized to a population that was not represented by their sample, whether that is basic demographics or geographical location. In addition, it is important to examine females due to the fact that when it comes to sports, women’s experiences are seen as deviations from men’s, therefore we only know women through the relation to men (Hall, 1988). Even though research has examined gender differences between men and women, we have rarely studied how women differ from men within sport (Hall, 1988). This study will fill gaps in the existing literature related to the lived experiences of female fans who are intrinsically motivated in their fanship and are geographically distant from their teams.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The overall purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of highly identified, displaced female sport fans. This research project aimed to explore if female fans feel marginalized and excluded, if they have feelings of empowerment or if they experience both. A focus was placed on what circumstances and aspects of fanship

provide these experiences. Additionally, by taking into consideration multiple facets of fanship (i.e., gender, identification and displacement), this study also examined how these performances interact and impact their experiences.

1.4 Researcher Position

I have been a football fan for a long time. I grew up watching NFL with my father, which sparked a passion. Since the time I was 12, I have been a serious fan of the Green Bay Packers. I would consider myself quite knowledgeable about the Packers and the NFL, and consider myself a highly identified fan. My experiences that have led me to this particular research project. Whenever I wear one of my Packers jerseys, I am questioned, by those I do not know personally, about my knowledge and dedication to the team. Although I am disappointed in this need to prove myself to others, I find my knowledge about the team and sport to be empowering. Perhaps the empowerment stems from contradicting the stereotype of female fans who are unknowledgeable and only enjoy the social and family aspects of being a fan. Additionally, as a displaced fan, I also felt disconnected to the team and its' fans. Being geographically distant from the team does impact my experience in that it is not part of my identity that I can use to connect to others.

These experiences peaked my curiosity and created a desire to examine if there are other female fans who also feel a sense of empowerment and what role displacement and identification play in their experiences, if any. What is it like to be a female fan in an area so dominated by males? Is sport fanship a way for women to gain their rightful place in the world of sports? Can empowerment be found in the challenges and barriers that are overcome? What does it mean to be a highly identified, displaced female fan? Is it

possible to feel a strong connection to the team even with the distance? Or, even though the numbers of female fans are increasing, is this is another area of sports where not only men but also women contribute to their own subordination through reinforcing viewpoints of hegemonic masculinity?

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the relevant literature regarding sport fans and move into a more detailed section about female sport fans. I will then give a brief overview of hegemonic masculinity as it relates to this specific research project. Finally, I will make the connection between female sport fans and hegemonic masculinity by focusing on marginalization and empowerment.

2.1 Sport Fans

Sport fans have been the topic of many research projects from various disciplines such as sport management, sociology, and leisure studies. This area is relevant to the academic world as studying sport fans can provide an opportunity to examine significant contemporary issues and concerns (Melnick, 1989). To date, the majority of these studies have focused on management concerns such as consumption and marketing (Crawford, 2004; Hunt, Bristol & Bashaw, 1999; Mason, 1999). More recently, social issues such as gender relations (Ben-Port, 2009; McGinnis, et al., 2003) and violence (Dimmock & Grove, 2005; Russell, 2004; Ward, 2002) have surfaced in the literature. However, these social concerns are relatively scarce in sport fan research.

Smith (1988) described sport fans as: “individuals who have a strong emotional involvement in the actual outcome - who wins and loses... [they] spend considerable time, effort, and money to read about, listen to, and watch sporting events” (p. 55). Throughout this thesis, the term ‘fans’ will be used instead of ‘spectators’ as a fan has an allegiance to specific sport or team and a spectator watches without investment (Kolbe & James, 2000). Being a sport fan is rooted in its social characteristics as Melnick (1993) noted: “there can be little if any misunderstanding among spectators regarding who and what they are and

the types of behaviors expected and permitted at sports events” (p. 49). To expand, fans understand they are an integral part of the game and without them, it would not exist (Melnick, 1993). They also understand that there are behaviours associated with their role, which includes yelling, booing, and doing the wave (Melnick, 1993). Sharing the same role (as sport fans) and behaviours allows for fans to connect to one another. Reysen and Branscombe (2010) have also researched sport fans and discussed the difference between an individual’s personal connection to a sport team (fanship) and their connection to other sport fans (fandom). For the purposes of this study, the term fanship will be used.

It should be noted that there are many dimensions to being a sport fan, in terms of fanship and fandom. Areas of focus have included motivation (Fink, et al., 2002), identification (Guilianotti, 2002; Murrell & Dietz, 1992; Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wann & Dolan, 1994), spectating as leisure (Jones, 2000; McGinnis et al., 2003), as well as models and measurement tools of sport fanship (Bahk, 2000; Shank & Beasley, 1998; Trail, Anderson & Fink, 2000; Trail & James, 2001). One of the limitations of these studies is that most treat fans as a homogenous group. There are relatively few which examine differences, for example, based on gender, which then overlooks the possibility of uncovering unique experiences of female sport fans including how multiple performances interact or the possibility of empowerment. Additionally, the majority of these studies used samples derived from undergraduate students. This leaves a notable gap in the literature to examine highly identified female fans who are not students.

As this research project focused on highly identified, displaced female fans, the aspect of identification must be discussed further. Throughout the thesis, terms such as highly identified fans, diehard and serious fans will be used interchangeably. Identity can

be used to refer to the culture of people or common aspects of a social category (Stryker & Burke, 2000). It has been acknowledged that there are varying levels of identification for sport fans (Giulianotti, 2002; Wann, et al., 2001). Involvement is a factor that plays into identification. Involvement is defined as: “a motivational construct to distinguish between levels of psychological connection” (Funk, Ridinger & Moorman, 2004, p. 36). Fans who are low in involvement often have a passive relationship (i.e., the relationship is of relatively little importance) with the team or sport and are mainly attracted to the games and sport for social, entertainment and stress-relieving opportunities (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). Alternatively, fans who are highly involved with a team can be characterized as extremely loyal. They view their favourite team as central to their identity, where the team’s successes and failures are personal ones as well (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). This can be seen through the widely researched characteristic of highly identified fans engaging in BIRGing (basking in reflected glory) and CORFing (cutting of reflected failure) (End, Dietz-Uhler, Harrick & Jacquemotte, 2002; Kimble & Cooper, 1992; Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Ware & Kowalski, 2012). For example, if the Packers won the Super Bowl, I would say (not surprisingly): “*we* won! *We* are the best!”, which is an example of BIRGing. If somehow the Packers managed to lose in the Superbowl, I would say: “*they* lost, *they* did not play well.”

Within fan identification, a focus on team identification is quite popular. Team identification “concerns a fan’s psychological connection to a team and involves the extent to which the fan views the team as an extension of his or herself” (Wann, Waddill, Polk & Weaver, 2011, p. 76). Fans with high levels of identification to a team are more likely to have a strong sense of attachment and belonging to their particular team as well

as to other fans of the same team (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Fink, et al., 2002). As Wann and Branscombe (1993) noted: “individuals who are deeply committed to a sports team should differ from the less identified in terms of investment of time and money, attendance records at performances and attributional patterns for game outcomes” (p. 2). For example, a fan that fits these characteristics may be a season ticket holder, who works his or her schedules around games, and is emotionally affected by wins and losses. These fans are also considered the most knowledgeable about their team. Wann and Schrader (1996) noted that sport team identification is not altered by the team’s performance and remains relatively stable. Yet, the success of a team may be important in generating interest from fans (Branscombe & Wann, 1991).

Consumption and the visibility are also characteristics of highly identified fans. It is found that this type of fan invests time and money to see his or her team play, and is often willing to pay large sums to attend an important game in person (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that: “the diehard fan is not an identity that is implicit; it must be continuously reasserted and re-inscribed with purchased paraphernalia to truly register as ‘authentic’ within the community” (Borer, 2009, p.1).

In addition, this project will seek to understand the meaning of a highly identified fan from a female’s perspective. Scales have been created that measure varying levels of identification (Bahk, 2000; Wann et al., 2001). While examining the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann et al., 2001) as well as the Sport Spectator Involvement Scale (Bahk, 2000), I was hesitant to believe that the characteristics listed would be universal and applicable to women. This viewpoint was also shared by Pope (2013), who discussed

that quantitative fan motivation and identification scales are not efficient for comparison and that a qualitative method may be beneficial for more in-depth analysis. In her research, she created a measure of female fanship similar to Giulianotti (2002) by using the female fans' experiences as guidelines.

This study also examined how being a displaced fan affected the participant's experiences. Few studies have focused on these types of fans, with the exception of Andrijiv and Hyatt (2009), Branscombe and Wann (1991), Farred (2002) and Kraszewski (2008). This is an area of sport fanship that requires attention as people live in geographically remote areas where there are no professional sport teams (Foster & Hyatt, 2008), but due to globalization of media coverage people are connected to teams outside of their local area (Kraszewski, 2008). Additionally, Foster and Hyatt (2008) noted that new technology has provided access to untapped fan markets: "instead of catering to mostly local fans, professional teams can now address a large contingent of nonlocal fans" (p. 266).

The studies that examine displaced sport fans focus on different aspects of their experiences. Kraszewski's (2008) ethnographic study focused on displaced fans who once lived in the same city as their team but moved to a different geographical location. He found that sports bars played a role in connecting with other displaced fans of the same team and to their geographical identity. Farred (2002), in reflecting on his experiences as a displaced fan, touched on the importance of sport media to maintain the relationship with the team, and how fanship is powerful enough to overcome the barrier of distance. Andrijiv and Hyatt (2009) studied individuals who were fans of nonlocal hockey teams even though a local team was geographically close. They found these fans

had a sense of uniqueness with their identity as a fan of a nonlocal team, attempted to connect to fans of the same team from afar and experienced isolation if that did not occur. Branscombe and Wann (1991) focused on identity and found that displaced fans are more likely to become more identified when their team is successful. They noted that team success may be an important factor when generating interest in a team and may also receive the most media coverage. They also mentioned that those fans may not have feelings of belongingness or attachment to their team, unlike fans who are located near their team. This is an interesting finding as more recent research has shown that displaced fans have experienced belongingness and attachment (Andrijew & Hyatt, 2009; Kraszewski, 2008) Foster and Hyatt's (2008) research also spoke to displaced fans, as they suggested that sport teams can use traditions to maintain local fans, as well as attract those who are geographically distant. While little research has solely focused on displaced fans, this is an area of that requires further research to gain a better understanding. Additionally, more research on this topic would also help clarify the idea of "displaced fans". There are fans who never resided in the same city as their team, there are those who have and moved away, there are those who reside in the same city as a professional team but are fans of a distant team, and there are those who do not live in the same city as their team but are geographically close enough to attend games or be involved in the team's culture.

2.2 Female Sport Fans

The majority of research involving female fans is found in the areas of motivation, identification and socialization. The studies examining gender differences related to motivation have generally shown that female fans have social, entertainment

and family reasons for attending games and following teams (Urmilla & Swart, 2010; Wann, 1995; Wann, Schrader & Wilson, 1999). Robinson and Trail (2005) found there to be significant differences by gender and type of sport attended in relation to motives and points of attachment. For example, they found that women were more attached to the players and sport in comparison to men.

Identification has also been an area of research on female fans. James and Ridinger (2002) found that men not only enjoy sports but also derive an important social identity from it whereas women do not. Social identity occurs when an individual understands that they belong to a particular social group, which has a set of commonalities that allows people to classify themselves with it (Stets & Burke, 2000). James and Ridinger (2002) also noted that men scored higher on achievement, empathy and knowledge motivation measures whereas females only felt a sense of achievement if the team won, had no empathy with the team and viewed knowledge as not important. These findings suggested sports have an important role in male's identity that is not shared by females (James and Ridinger, 2002). Additionally, Ware and Kowalski (2012) noted that male fans are more likely to be die-hard fans than females. However, there is no research that has solely examined highly identified female fans, leaving their voice unheard. Farrell and colleagues (2011) noted that further scholarly attention needs to be placed on examining women who truly enjoy attending sport events and being sport fans.

Lastly, many studies have shown that men are gatekeepers and socialization agents to female fans. For a fan, socialization involves learning and internalizing the attitudes, knowledge, values and behaviours associated with fans of the team (Kolbe & James, 2000). Ben-Porat (2009) examined Israeli female soccer fans and found that males

socialize females into soccer early in life. As these women grow up, some become true soccer fans. Yet, males continue to be the mediators between female fans and soccer; that is female fans are always involved through the presence of males. Similarly, Kolbe and James' (2000) research focused on socialization into sport and found that for men and women a father is the most influential person when one becomes a fan of a team. Farrell et al. (2011) also found that males socialized women into sport; none of their female participants mentioned the presence of a female in this process. Additionally, Mewett and Toffoletti (2011) found that there are four common ways that female fans get involved in sport, the most common being 'in-the-blood' or through family. The three other ways included the 'learner', which are fans who gained appreciation for the sport through friends, and importance is placed on attending games as knowledge and enjoyment increases. The 'converts' are fans who are either indifferent or really oppose the support but have a sudden change of heart after attending a game, which leads to becoming a committed supporter. Lastly, 'STF', which stands for sexually transmitted fan are females who were introduced to the sport by their partner. Through attending games and developing knowledge, they become avid supporters. These categories reinforce the idea that men are the gatekeepers of sport (Ben-Porat, 2009) and that women are not assumed to be 'born' fans. Therefore, it is possible to make an indirect connection in which males could contribute to the marginalization of female fans by denying or granting them access to sport fandom.

Female fans are often marginalized as inauthentic sport fans because they are seen as exhibiting non-traditional characteristics and behaviours (Pope, 2011; Pope & Williams, 2011). They are assumed to attend sport events only to socialize and possess

little knowledge about the sport (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Gosling, 2007). Additionally, the women who are actually interested and serious about fanship are considered an exception and do not challenge the norm (McGinnis et al., 2003). Marginalization of female fans will be discussed further in section 2.4.1.

Research on highly identified female sport fans is needed as they are becoming more prominent in professional sports (Markovitz & Albertson, 2012). Pope (2013), Pope and Williams (2011), Pope (2011), Jones (2008) and Sherlock and Elsdén (2000) conducted studies regarding experiences of female sport fans in the United Kingdom. Pope (2011) and Pope and Williams (2011) discussed the modernization of stadiums and being a fan of a local team as reasons female fans felt more included. The authors mentioned that older stadiums were not female friendly and that females can feel they are more likely to be accepted when cheering for the local club. Another commonality was that men play sports such as soccer or rugby and therefore are socialized into these sports as fans differently than females. Females are already marginalized when it comes to participation in sports, so it is understandable that this can spill over into fanship as well. The majority of the studies did discuss some type of marginalization including being treated differently, having their fanship questioned or encountering sexist behaviour (Pope, 2011; Sherlock & Elsdén, 2000). However, the other extreme, empowerment, has received very little academic attention to my knowledge.

To better understand female fans, Pope (2013) used her previous research, as well as other research regarding female fans and general fanship, to develop a preliminary model of female fandom. Sherlock and Elsdén (2000) also tried to further our understanding of female fans by examining their lived experiences in relation to soccer

and culture in the United Kingdom. The findings of the latter study show that the participants felt as though they were constantly negotiating between their fanship and gender. Similarly, Jones (2008) conducted research to determine if women negotiate between their gender and fan identities. In some cases, female fans prioritized their fan identities over their gender identities to gain legitimacy from male fans. For example, some participants felt the need to downplay their femininity to be considered 'real' fans. This involved not appearing overly feminine (wearing make up or dresses) and conforming to the proper fan practices in terms of knowledge, behaviours, desires and attire. However, there was no mention of emphasizing gender over fanship.

Recent research by Osborne and Coombs (2013) mentioned an alternative framework to examining sport fandom, which is known as Performative Sport Fandom. They acknowledged that fandom is a performance and that the "performances are socially constructed and vary based on context and audience" (Osborne & Coombs, 2013, p. 677). It also borrows from performative gender theory by noting that gender is at the core of our actions and those actions either confirm or challenge gender norms. This framework seeks to determine how meanings are created and strengthened by fans as well as the role that social identifiers (e.g., gender, race, class) play in fan performances. Lastly, it recognizes the fluidity of social and fan roles; they are not fixed but continue to change over time and across different situations. This framework was used to examine how female fans manage multiple performances.

Overall, the literature regarding female fans is relatively recent and is at the beginning stages of examining this population in more depth. Some of the research is furthering our knowledge and understanding of female fans' experiences; however that is

mainly found in a European context. It is important to recognize that there may be different gender relations in a North American as compared to a European context.

2.3 Hegemonic Masculinity

A common theme throughout many studies on female fans is marginalization. Although marginalization is likely part of their experiences, it is important to study the other side, which is empowerment. It is possible that women as sport fans may feel some empowerment and some marginalization. In order to look at this issue in more depth, I will borrow aspects of hegemonic masculinity for conceptualization, as this theory can speak to both marginalization and empowerment.

Connell (1987) has done a significant amount of work on the topic of hegemonic masculinity. She recognizes that there is an inherent complexity in the relationships humans have with each other; ethnic and generational differences as well as class patterns are present. However, when examining the organization of gender, she argues there is a “global dominance of men over women” (p. 183). That point provides the essential foundation that allows men to define a hegemonic form of masculinity in society.

Hegemonic masculinity is a pattern of practice that perpetuates the existence of male domination over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). An important piece of the definition is ‘practice’ which reinforces the active participation required to maintain the situation. Hegemony implies that the hierarchy and dominance of men over women is reinforced not through violence or aggression but rather through the: “ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Connell (1987) extends this definition by adding: “hegemony means... a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond the contests of brute

power into the organization of private life and cultural processes” (p. 184). Domination and hierarchy are achieved through social acceptance, rather than violence or forceful acts. Men are able to maintain their status because women as well as subordinate men do not challenge it and accept it as status quo.

Hegemonic masculinity embodies an ideal masculinity and therefore requires other men and women to position themselves in relation to it (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Often, the ideal masculinity may not represent most men in a particular culture, but rather fantasy figures (such as film characters like Rambo or Rocky played by Sylvester Stallone) or real men who have an unachievable ideal that the majority of men could never obtain (such as Muhammad Ali or Green Bay Packer’s linebacker, Clay Matthews). Howson (2006) noted that this ideal also includes “whiteness, location in the middle class, heterosexuality, independence, rationality and educated, a competitive spirit, the desire and the ability to achieve, controlled and directed aggression, as well as mental and physical toughness” (p. 60). Based on Howson’s definition, the hegemonic masculine ideal of sport fans is achievable, as these characteristics represent a large majority of fans.

Connell (1987) noted: “the public face of hegemonic masculinity is not what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support” (p. 185). There are many reasons why there is compliance to this viewpoint, however the major factor is due to the fact that most men receive benefits from the subordination of women as well as their patriarchal positions as leaders in society (Connell, 1987). This can include status and privilege. For example, women working in the United States make anywhere from 67 to 85 cents to a male’s dollar in the same position (Casserly, 2013).

As previously mentioned, the dominant form of masculinity is used in its hierarchal relation to femininities and other nonhegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1987; Messerschmidt, 2012). The result is not only a global legitimization of the subordination of women but other masculinities as well (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Howson (2006) created a visible representation of how women and men position themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinity as well as the hierarchy that exists between hegemonic masculinity and femininities and other non-hegemonic masculinities. An adaptation of this representation can be found below (Figure 2.1).

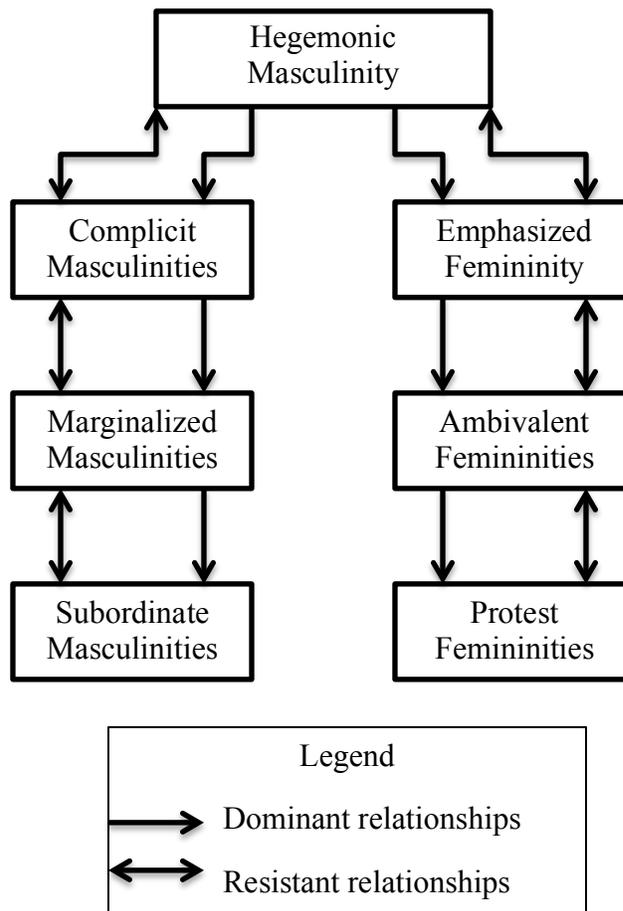


Figure 2.1 Adapted from Howson (2006, p. 59).

Hegemonic masculinity signifies the struggle where its qualities must be privileged over others. “Through this [struggle], hegemonic masculinity becomes central to the cultural legitimacy of hierarchy... which, in turn, protects the balance of power in favour of men” (Howson, 2006, p. 61). Complicit masculinities are lesser forms of masculinity in comparison to the hegemonic model, due to the fact that their advantage is not always obvious. This type of masculinity is complicit with hegemonic masculinity at a personal level, however it can also challenge it through engaging in behaviours such as care and affection for children or egalitarian attitudes about women. Marginalized masculinities are inferior and deviate from hegemonic masculinity due to their relation to other cultural structures such as ethnicity, sexuality, race and class. Subordinate masculinities may experience marginalization by the culture structures as well, however this category would also include homosexuals who are assumed to display traits associated with femininity. Therefore, this masculinity shows a strong resistance to hegemonic masculinity.

On the other side of the figure, Howson (2006) places femininities in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Emphasized femininity involves a pattern that: “expresses a complete compliance and accommodation of the hegemonic principles” (Howson, 2006, p. 67). This is the idea of women emphasizing traditional feminine characteristics to gain social acceptance. Ambivalent femininities, similar to complicit masculinities, can be compliant and cooperative as well as resistant. This resistance occurs in regards to oppressive conditions for women such as the workplace, family, and media. Lastly, protest femininities contradict both emphasized and ambivalent femininities. Howson (2006) described this term best as: “its aspiration is to challenge the foundations of both

intra-relations between femininities and inter-relations between femininities and masculinities, and, more specifically, to expose and question the taken-for-grantedness associated with emphasized feminine characteristics of compliance and accommodation” (p. 71).

Other scholars have examined the concept of emphasized femininity. Connell (1987) stated that this type of femininity receives cultural and ideological support. She mentioned it is similar to hegemonic masculinity in that it is a public cultural construction, even though this particular content is linked to private realms such as the home. This femininity relates to a soft and docile personality, as opposed to technical competencies, and acceptance of marriage and child rearing (Connell, 1987).

Similar to hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity may not correspond to actual femininities, meaning many women may support this notion but it is not necessarily what they are (Connell, 1987). However, emphasized femininity does not establish hegemony over other femininities due to the fact that it is an adaptation to men’s power, as it is performed for men. Although, its maintenance (as with hegemonic masculinity) depends on the prevention of other femininities to gain cultural acceptance. These relations to other femininities are more along the lines of marginalization than dominance, meaning attempted exclusion as opposed to complete oppression (Connell, 1987).

Recent work has been done regarding women’s contribution to the cultivation of hegemonic masculinity. Talbot and Quayle (2010) argued that women themselves are active agents in the production of hegemonic masculinity as well as emphasized femininities. They noted that in order for hegemonic masculinities to be a socially

acceptable subject, there must be some sort of ‘buy-in’ from women, which can include actively participating in the development and preservation of this viewpoint.

2.4 Sport and Male Hegemony

For the purpose of this study, hegemonic masculinity was understood and conceptualized in a sport setting. It is well known that sport, in many forms of participation, is commonly viewed as a male dominated area. Sport can recreate the idea of what it is to be a man through masculine interaction (Davis & Duncan, 2006). For example, men as fans can use harsh and sexist remarks in their interactions surrounding sports. Additionally, Messner and Sabo (1990) noted: “sport... is an institution created by and for men” (p. 9).

Bryson (1987) noted that there are two ways in which sport establishes and reinforces male hegemony: the association of maleness with highly valued and visible talent and skills and the sanctioned use of aggression. Additionally, it could also be reinforced through men dominating leadership positions (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). However, the involvement of female fans can challenge this viewpoint as they “undermine male hegemony by challenging the values, symbols, verbal practices and the physically aggressive gestures men use during the game” (Ben-Porat, 2009, p. 887). This study examined two possible situations for female fans, marginalization or empowerment, which were explored through a hegemonic masculinity viewpoint.

2.4.1 Marginalization of Female Fans

It is important to recognize the systemic role of gender relations in society to better understand these relations in sporting environments. Messner and Sabo (1990) described that these relations between men and women are founded collectively in a

system that reinforces certain constructions. Gender norms at all stages of life and in all relations mesh to create a general and powerful structure. It is acknowledged that this structure represents “male privilege and power and female disadvantage and subordination” (p. 20). With the understanding that women have been undervalued in society in general, it is no wonder that this view has carried over into the sport world. It has been found that: “women are frequently segregated involuntarily into different types of sports, events and competitions specifically targeted to women” (United Nations, 2007, p. 3). The segregation and marginalization of women in sport is evident in the areas of athletic participation (Hoeber, 2007; Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar & Kauer, 2004; Sabo, 1998) and opportunities (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007), and more recently, fans (Jones, 2008; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000).

Since sports are seen as a male dominated area (Davis & Duncan, 2006; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000) and it has been found they have a stronger connection to sports (James & Ridinger, 2002), men set the standard as sport fans. They are known to possess qualities such as dedication, commitment, knowledge, and high levels of identification (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; James & Ridinger, 2002). It has also been found that men are motivated by eustress, escape, entertainment and aesthetics, whereas women were primarily motivated by family, which is associated with lower levels of identification (Wann et al., 1999). Research on female fans has shown that they are viewed as inauthentic fans for two main reasons: lacking knowledge in terms of the sport and teams, and attending sport events for inappropriate reasons (i.e., heterosexual attraction to players or socializing; Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Gosling, 2007). Women who view themselves as authentic fans have a desire to be

recognized as equivalent to their male counterparts, although it has been acknowledged that there is an obvious distinction (Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000). These distinctions include exclusion from conversations as well as inauthentic views of their passion and commitment from males (Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000). This may be a result of men controlling the rules and boundaries of their participation in leisure pursuits like fanship (Ben-Porat, 2009; McGinnis et al., 2003).

The marginalization that female fans' experience often arises from men's perception of women's knowledge of sport. Davis and Duncan (2006) found this to be evident in their research regarding males' viewpoints of females who play fantasy sports. Knowledge plays an important role in fantasy sports as it allows players to draft the best team possible, with a hopeful result of winning the league. They found that these men used fantasy sports as a way to display sport knowledge, socialize with other males, as well as show their control and authority. The men in the study mentioned that females were only invited to fill a vacant position in a pool and that if a female were serious about the league, it would create uneasiness as it would challenge male's supremacy in sport. They concluded that the fantasy sport league is a hostile environment for women and a place in which the construction of femininity is equivalent with weakness.

Research has shown that men tend to question the authenticity of reasons why women attend sport events. One of their 'inauthentic' motives is based on heterosexual attraction to the team's players. Wedgwood (2008) noted that although not every female is motivated by this aspect, it gives men reason to believe that women are not as deeply involved in the sport. Crawford and Gosling (2004) interviewed male fans about their perceptions of female fans of a particular hockey team in the UK. These males viewed

the majority of the female followers as ‘groupies’ or ‘puck bunnies’. These terms are used to imply that: “these supporters are ‘inauthentic’, not ‘dedicated’ in their support, and are more interested in the sexual attractiveness of the players rather than the sport itself” (p. 478). Since this motive does not coincide with male motivations, therefore it would appear to be an indication of lack of commitment and authentic fanship.

There is some evidence of women as active agents in reinforcing hegemonic masculinity in recent research on women as sport fans. Messerschmidt (2012) would agree, as he noted: “the focus can no longer center exclusively on men and instead must give much closer attention to both the practices of women and the social interplay of femininities and masculinities” (p. 70). Jones (2008) found in her study that female soccer fans did not want to be seen as women at these soccer games because of the negative connotations associated with emphasized femininity. As a result, they engaged in demeaning behaviour towards other female fans who were explicitly feminine (i.e., wearing high heels and make up, and only attending a game because their boyfriend or husband took them). Similar findings were echoed by Hoerber and Kerwin (2013) and Pope (2013) as the participants in their studies were quick to judge other female fans based on their appearance, in particular if it was overtly feminine. This finding demonstrates how female fans can play a role in their own oppression in the sporting world.

2.4.2 Empowerment

With the literature on empowerment of women in leisure and sport, and the knowledge that some women challenge the views of masculine hegemony (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), it is reasonable to assume that a sense of empowerment can arise

from being a sport fan. Yet, with the exception of Toffoletti and Mewett (2012), this phenomenon has been relatively ignored in the literature on female sport fans. Some common elements of empowerment include independence, freedom, challenging gender norms, self-esteem, self-determination, acquiring and mastering of skills and social benefits (Brace-Govan, 2004; Green, 1998; Narushima, 2004; Roster, 2007; Shaw, 2001; Wheaton & Tomlinson, 1998; Yarnal, 2006). Raisborough and Bhatti (2007) define empowerment as: “women’s ‘power to’ create new opportunities and identities which are not automatically or uncritically prescribed by traditional gender norms” (p. 463). Through the examination of literature regarding leisure, athletes and active participation in sport fanship, I will demonstrate how empowerment plays a role in the areas of leisure and sports and is therefore an area that requires scholarly attention with respect to fanship.

Attending sporting events and being a fan are leisure activities. Leisure can have a number of benefits on overall health and quality of life as Caldwell (2005) noted: “leisure promotes health because meaningful activity can influence social inclusiveness and encourage self-expression, thus promoting human potential” (p. 9). However, due to the inequality frequently found in sports, it is important to consider if female fans are receiving benefits from this particular leisure activity, as it is assumed males would. Shaw (1994) recognized that dominant ideologies, especially those associated with traditional views of femininity and masculinity, are reproduced through cultural practices, which includes leisure participation. However, “if leisure experiences represent situations of choice and self determination, they also provide opportunities for individuals to exercise personal power, and such power can be used as a form of resistance to imposed gender-related constraints or restrictions” (Shaw, p. 15). Fans are also able to exert their

personal power through acts such as rioting, purchasing merchandise, and getting other fans to cheer.

The topic of resistance to dominant ideologies and power relations has been covered extensively in leisure literature (e.g., Green, 1998; Raisborough & Bhatti, 2007; Shaw, 1994, 2001). Empowerment is found in resistance, as it is a positive outcome as well as part of the resisting process (i.e., women can be empowered through gaining skills or knowledge that allows them to resist; Shaw, 2001). From an interactionist perspective, resistance is said to occur when: “women adopt behaviours or express themselves through activities which provide personal empowerment and which, at the same time, reflect a challenge to dominant, restrictive or constraining views of femininity, sexuality and motherhood” (Shaw, 2001, p. 191).

Furthermore, McGinnis and colleagues (2003) noted that leisure involvement can give women confidence to challenge societal gendered stereotypes and role restrictions. Additionally, women’s leisure participation in male dominated areas can result in an increased sense of self and autonomy. Toffoletti and Mewett (2012) believe there is knowledge that can be gained from examining female fans’ leisure experiences:

The visibility of female fans in academic research at best remains occluded by the relative scarcity of empirical research in this area and by the limited appreciation of the insights into wider gender relations that can be gleaned from deeper understandings of the part women occupy in ‘passive leisure pursuits.’ (p. 2)

What can be gained by studying this population is a greater understanding of how women perceive their place in sport fanship, their relation to male fans, and if engaging in this activity provides benefits of leisure including overall health and quality of life: “because

meaningful activity can influence social inclusiveness and encourage self-expression, thus promoting human potential” (Caldwell, 2005, p. 9).

Research has discussed the concept of empowerment through female athletes as well. This has been gained through their athleticism including strength and skill (Krane et al., 2004). Additionally, Theberge (1987) gave examples of female athletes who played sports in a non-male model, where the emphasis was about fun and pleasant experiences rather than domination and competition. Interaction among these females can result in empowerment. She added that in order to reconstruct power in sport, the male in control of the organization of sport as well as the ideology that legitimizes the subordination of women must be challenged.

Deem and Gilroy (1998) discussed the positive and negative consequences of women participating in physical activity. They found that participation resulted in a developed confidence in themselves and their bodies, enhanced social capital, and increased assertiveness. Combining these benefits led to the women feeling empowered through their engagement in physical activity. Additionally, they discussed that women who participate in predominantly male types of physical activity or sports, such as football or weight lifting, are challenging dominant ideologies. This result is reinforced by Martin, Schouten and McAlexander (2006), who researched female riders of Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Empowerment in this circumstance arose from partaking and mastering an activity that is dominated by males.

Duncan and Brummet (1993) conducted research regarding female sport fans and sport media. Sport media has been found to demonstrate inequality towards females (i.e., less coverage, using gendered language) and reinforce masculinity (Billings & Eastman,

2002). However, in Duncan and Brummet's findings, they discovered that female fans could achieve empowerment by using televised games to extend their identification. These televised games create opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and commitment and therefore, exposing their identification with the team or sport. Additionally, female fans used such strategies as irony and sarcasm to distance themselves in times when the media reinforced gender inequalities in order to avoid feeling disempowered.

Although there is little literature regarding empowerment of female fans, it is important to recognize their experiences because being a fan is important to their identity. Davis et al. (2010) conducted research on female season ticket holders and found that they were highly identified, committed, knowledgeable and high involved. Additionally, Gosling (2007) acknowledged that being a sport fan is important for some women and is involved in the construction of their identity. She added: "what remains missing from research is the role that sport fan culture can play in women's every lives and in particular its significance in challenging gender role and empowering women" (p. 260).

2.6 Research Questions

The project examined three key areas of interest with respect to the lived experiences of highly identified female fans. The three research questions were:

1. What are the lived experiences of female fans with respect to marginalization?
2. What are the lived experiences of female fans with respect to empowerment?
3. What are the lived experiences of female fans with respect to the performances of gender, fan identification, and displacement?

The methodology used for this research will be discussed in the following section.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

In this section, I explain the methodology used for my research project. The chapter will start with a justification for the use of qualitative methods. Then, I explain the research design in detail including information regarding participants as well as data collection. Following, I provide an overview of ethics as well as the procedure. Then I describe the data analysis process. Next, I outline my place as a researcher and how trustworthiness will be met. I end the chapter by examining the implications of the results from the study.

3.1 Qualitative Research

This project was conducted using qualitative methods. A qualitative approach examines issues of human behaviour and functioning and it can give sophisticated details about the phenomenon that may not be conveyed through quantitative methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This method is applicable to this specific study as it focuses on context, is fundamentally interpretive, and occurs in naturalistic settings (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). It is noted that there are two implications of qualitative research (Patton, 2002). First is the subject being studied, which is peoples' experience and interpretations, while the second is the need for observations and in-depth interviews to fully understand someone else's experiences. Much of the research regarding sport fans has taken a quantitative approach (e.g., Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Fink, et al., 2002; James & Ridinger, 2002; Murrell & Dietz, 1992; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010; Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wann & Dolan, 1994). The limitation to using this method is it does not provide rich, in-depth details of sport fan experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Although it is not as common, a few previous studies regarding the experiences of female

fans have also followed a qualitative approach (e.g., Ben-Porat, 2009; Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Farrell et al., 2011; Pope, 2011).

3.2 Research Design

The study used a phenomenological research method. This approach focuses on the exploration of humans' experiences and individual or shared meanings that they associate with those experiences (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological inquiries come from the assumption that: "there is an essence to an experience that is shared with others who have also had that experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 20). Experiences were examined from a unique perspective and then compared to determine the core themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This method was the most suitable for this study as it focused on lived experiences and meanings that are shared and individual. Although the participants had unique experiences as highly identified, displaced female fans, core themes were found within the data.

3.2.1 Pilot Project

I decided to conduct a pilot project in order to make judgments and adjustments to my methodology. This process was quite informative and impacted the design of this research project. The pilot project involved individual, photo-elicited interviews with nine women who self-identified as Saskatchewan Roughrider fans. What I gained from this is the understanding that supporting a local team often results in acceptance and assumptions of fanship by others (Sveinson & Hoeber, in press). Based on this information, I decided to recruit fans of geographically distant teams for this project, in prediction that their fanship of said team would not be assumed.

3.2.2 Participants

This study included 7 participants, as this is where I reached data saturation. Criterion sampling was used, as all participants in this study met three criteria previously mentioned (Creswell, 2009). First, they had to be female. Second, they had to perceive themselves as highly identify fans of a professional team that does not exist in Regina, Saskatchewan (i.e., a team in the NHL, NFL, NBA, MLB). The location of the team was important as the experiences of empowerment and marginalization were expected to be amplified compared to the local fans in the pilot study. Lastly, they had to be intrinsically motivated as a fan, as the purpose of this research was to examine females who truly receive enjoyment from watching games. A table of the participant demographics as well as biographies can be found in Appendix A.

The work of Wann and colleagues (Wann & Branscombe, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann & Nolan, 1994) has recognized certain attributes of highly identified sport fans. These characteristics include being affected by wins and losses, having a social identity with the team, having objective knowledge (team, players, sport itself), and subjective knowledge (traits possessed by fans of their teams, attributes of fans of other teams). These attributes were used as guidelines for recruiting and classifying the participants as highly identified fans. However, a point was made to ask participants their definition of highly identified female fans in order to determine if this area of research requires more attention and clarification.

Participants were recruited through posting notices on my Facebook page and word of mouth. This tactic was used to avoid an all student sample. Research participants were given a \$25 dollar gift card to the league of their team as a sign of gratitude.

3.3 Data Collection

Interviews were an appropriate method for this project as they reflect an interest in understanding lived experiences and the meaning of those experiences from the perspective of participants (Seidman, 2006). Marshall and Rossman (2011) mentioned that interviews have certain benefits including immediate clarification, it provides information on context, data is obtained quickly, and it is useful for describing complex interactions. Additionally: “it focuses on the deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals, assuming that these meanings guide actions and interactions” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 149). As my research focused on the lived experiences of participants, it was essential to take an approach that allows for depth and context to be considered.

Although one-time interviews are commonly used in qualitative research and in research on female fans specifically (Farrell et al., 2011; Jones, 2008; Mewett & Toffoletti, 2011; Pope, 2011), given the time frame, these interviews compromise the researcher’s ability to spend time with the participant to increase the believability of the study and to extract rich, in-depth understandings (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso, 2004; Polkinghorne, 2005). Seidman (2006) suggests the use of a three-interview structure. This interview structure is based on achieving an in-depth look at participants’ experiences by focusing on particular topics during each interview. As Seidman (2006) explains:

The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experiences. The second allows the participants to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the context of which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them. (p. 17)

This structure allowed for both the participant and myself to focus on the purpose of each interview. The process incorporated the context and history of the participants, which allowed for a level of depth. It has also been noted that when examining lived experiences, it is important to acknowledge the historical and sociocultural traditions that give meaning to the way people experience the world (Van Manen, 1990). After conducting three of the first interviews, I realized that the first and second interview could be placed together for participant convenience. As a result, three participants had three separate interviews and four participants had two separate interviews.

Seidman (2006) suggested that the interviews should take place from three days to a week apart, completing the entire series within three weeks. The timing of the interviews was negotiated based on participant availability. The biographies in Appendix A describe the timeline for each interview. The gap between interviews allowed enough time for reflection but did not give enough time to lose the connection between the discussions. Additionally, this allowed time for me to review the previous interviews so I could ask any follow up questions, and reiterate their previous experiences to ensure it is representative of their perspective. This approach was valuable as all the participants made reflective comments throughout the second or third interviews. This included acknowledging the reflection they have engaged in or speaking to previous comments they had made.

3.4 Research Procedure

3.4.1 Ethics

Researching human participants is a way of obtaining valuable information, however there are ethical considerations that must be addressed. I submitted an ethics

application to the University of Regina Research Ethics Board. Information was described concerning the procedures, risks, and benefits associated with the study. Confidentiality and consent were a specific focus in order to protect the research participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were addressed through the use of pseudonyms for participants. Ethics approval can be found in Appendix B. The consent form was emailed to the participants at least one week in advance of the first interview. Each participant was then asked to sign the consent form prior to the first interview, after their questions, if any, were answered.

3.4.2 Procedure

After obtaining ethics approval, I began recruiting participants for my study. Recruitment occurred, as previously mentioned, through Facebook postings and word of mouth. Recruitment ended once data saturation was reached.

Selected participants were emailed the consent form at least one week prior to their interview and the form was signed at the beginning of the first interview. All interviews were conducted at the University of Regina in a private room. Interviews lasted approximately 20-120 minutes in length. The participants were given the option of scheduling all interviews at once or scheduling them one at a time, as long as the three-week period timeline was met.

The first interview (Appendix C) focused on the context in which their fanship developed. Questions were asked regarding how they became interested in sports, how they became fans of specific teams, and any events/people who had a significant impact in their fanship. Additionally, a portion of the first interview was spent discussing why

they view themselves as highly identified fans and what attributes they associate with this level of identification.

The second interview (Appendix D) focused on reconstructing the details of their experiences. Questions were asked regarding their first experiences attending games, anything that has had an influence on their experiences over the years and what their current experiences are like, which includes a discussion regarding performances and visibility. The third and final interview (Appendix E) focused on placing meaning on the experiences they have had. Questions were asked about the impact that being a sport fan had on their lives and if their experiences have led to feelings of marginalization or empowerment, as well as if they felt they had to manage multiple performances in their fanship.

3.5 Data Analysis

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim, which resulted in 253 pages of data. After an initial examination of the data through organizing, reading, and rereading (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), a systematic analysis was completed on all interviews. The data was analyzed through a process of assigning codes, and identifying categories and themes. Coding was done through a three-step process that involves open, axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open codes were assigned to basic and surface-level topics found in the data, such as accepting other fans: “everyone has their own way of expressing themselves as a fan and what that means to them” (Mia). Following, axial coding made connections to group the open codes together using similarities. This was achieved by looking at the similarities surrounding conditions, contexts, action and strategies in the data. For example, the code ‘status’ was placed in

the ‘knowledge’ subcategory as the women frequently associated status with being a knowledgeable fan “the more you know, the more likely you’ll be perceived as a fan” (Lexi). Comparisons were then made across the data sources as well as within each data source. Finally, selective coding was used to refine categories and develop themes by comparing coded data to the literature. For the purpose of this project, I focused on data related to marginalization, empowerment and multiple performances.

3.6 Place of the Researcher

I had numerous assumptions about this research project based on the fact that I am a highly identified female fan of a NFL team, thus also making me a displaced fan. For one, I believed that being a female fan of a displaced team would result in much more marginalization because it is not assumed one would be a fan of a geographically distant team. Two, I thought that empowerment would arise from overcoming the marginalization barrier. It was also my assumption that being displaced would result in feelings of isolation. I believed that being so far removed from not only the team but also the fans would impact how the participants experience fanship.

My connection to this membership was beneficial. In sharing my experiences as a member of this group, I was able to foster a trusting relationship with the participants. I recognized that my intent was to understand their experiences from the extremes of marginalization and empowerment but also understand their perspective the various performances they take on. Being a female was found to be beneficial as I was able to connect with the participants by sharing personal fanship experiences in which my gender played a role.

3.7 Trustworthiness

As suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2011), I followed the elements of trustworthiness as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). They argued that four aspects should be included in qualitative research to ensure trustworthiness is met: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each of these elements will be addressed in respect to this particular research project.

3.7.1 Credibility

One way to ensure credibility is through prolonged engagement. This involves spending enough time in the research site to learn the culture, test misinformation and build trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My membership in the same culture as the participants was beneficial in this case as it enabled a trusting relationship to be built in a shorter period of time. Additionally, persistent observation involves examining the elements of the situation that are the most relevant and focusing on them in detail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was achieved by dividing the interviews into two or three separate times, which is longer than the one-off interviews typically used in research. Lastly, credibility can be achieved through triangulation, which involves using multiple data sources and building justification for the themes (Creswell, 2009). For this project, triangulation was used by focusing on the perspectives of the numerous participants to build sound themes. Additionally, these participants represented different types of fans, as they followed different leagues. This demonstrates the use of multiple data sources.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that it is not an issue of external validity. Transferability addresses whether the results: “hold

in some other context, or even in the same context at some other time, is an empirical issue, the resolution of which depends upon the degree of similarity between sending and receiving (or earlier and later) contexts” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). It is based on a thick description including the widest range of information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It was my responsibility to describe the time and context in which the results were found in order to allow future researchers to make judgments on the transferability of the findings to similar contexts. The three-interview structure approach that I used allowed for greater depth in the description of the context.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability looks at whether similar results would be obtained if different researchers conducted the research project or if it was conducted at different times (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba discuss the use of an “auditor” who examines the process and attests to the dependability. I engaged in frequent meetings about the research process as well as debriefing sessions with my supervisor to ensure dependability.

3.7.4 Confirmability

The last element of trustworthiness mentioned by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is confirmability. This refers to the extent to which others can authenticate the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way to ensure confirmability is to audio tape the interviews, as it helps to capture the participants’ experiences in their words (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of data reconstruction (themes, relationships) and member checks (asking participants if my interpretation of the interview is accurate) was used in the confirmability process of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Chapter 4 – Findings

The findings are presented in the form of two articles. The first examines marginalization and empowerment in female sport fans' experiences. The second focuses on how females manage multiple performances including gender, identification and displacement.

4.1 Marginalization and empowerment.

4.1.1 Introduction.

Sport is understood as a male dominated area (Bryson, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Davis & Duncan, 2006). Furthermore, it is known to reinforce gender norms. For example, some sports are considered more socially acceptable for women than for men, such as figure skating or gymnastics. Gender disparities also extend to sport spectating and fanship. According to Wann, Melnick, Russell and Pease (2001), “far from an innocent and innocuous pastime, sport spectating is viewed as reproducing traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity, thereby helping maintain patriarchal rule in the larger society” (p. 204). Yet, female fans are becoming more present in the world of sports. Women make up almost half of the National Football League's (NFL) consumer market (Dosh, 2012), while female fans of the National Hockey League (NHL), Major League Baseball (MLB) and National Basketball Association (NBA) make up slightly less than a third of the fan segment (Thompson, 2014). It is argued that as there is an increase in female fans that fill stadiums, hold season tickets, buy licensed merchandise, and enter fantasy pools, this shift will serve to challenge the dominant gender order in sport fanship (Wann et. al., 2001).

While there is a growing body of literature on female fans (e.g., Farrell, Fink &

Fields, 2011; Jones, 2008; Osborne & Coombs, 2013; Pope, 2011), there are still many gaps that need to be filled including the lived experiences of female fans, and specifically the experiences of highly identified, displaced female fans. In Pope's (2011) and Pope and Williams' (2011) studies, they noted that much more rich data, including experiences, backgrounds and viewpoints of fans, is needed to better understand the complex issues that surround female fans. James and Ridinger (2002) suggested that a heavy emphasis should be placed on examining female fans' identity and characteristics. Additionally, in terms of the experiences of highly identified and involved female fans, it has been noted that there has been very little research on this segment of the fan market (Farrell et al., 2011). Reysen and Branscombe (2010) have also researched sport fans and have discussed the difference between the individual's personal connection to a sport team (fanship) and their connection to other sport fans (fandom). Therefore, this article will generally use the term fanship as opposed to fandom¹.

The majority of female sport fan research has focused on experiences of marginalization (e.g., Jones, 2008; Pope, 2011; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000), which is understood as the exclusion of individuals from the dominant majority (Hall, 1998). However, there is little to no discussion about empowerment and female fans. That is, do their experiences involve opportunities to express confidence, independence, challenge gender norms, or the mastering of skills (e.g., Green, 1998; Raisborough & Bhatti, 2007; Roster, 2007)? McGinnis, Chun and McQuillan (2003) noted that women's participation in male dominated areas, such as sports, results in an increased sense of self and

¹ Note: Fandom will be used when discussing the framework of Performative Sport Fandom by Osborne and Coombs (2013) to maintain consistency.

autonomy. In other words, the opportunity for female fans to feel empowerment is realistic and reasonable.

4.1.2 Literature review.

The following section will begin with the conceptual framework of the study, hegemonic masculinity. For the remainder of the section, I will focus on sport and male hegemony through the experiences of women's marginalization and empowerment.

4.1.2.1 Hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity is a pattern of practice that perpetuates the existence of male domination over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell (1987) describes this term by noting: "hegemony means... a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond the contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes" (p. 184). Domination and hierarchy are achieved through social acceptance, rather than violence or forceful acts. Men are able to maintain their status because women as well as subordinate men do not challenge it and accept it as status quo (Connell, 1987). However, hegemonic masculinity is not only the subordination of women by men but also the notion of the ideal masculinity and the complimentary femininity (Connell, 1987).

Hegemonic masculinity embodies an ideal masculinity and therefore requires other men and women to position themselves in relation to it (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Howson (2006) noted that this ideal includes "whiteness, location in the middle class, heterosexuality, independence, rationality and educated, a competitive spirit, the desire and the ability to achieve, controlled and directly aggression, as well as mental and physical toughness" (p. 60). From this, we can understand that hegemonic masculinity

can be displayed through symbols and interactions in media. For example, reflecting on who is frequently seen as the leads in television or movies, there is very little deviation; it is usually white, heterosexual, middle class men. Connell (1987) noted: “the public face of hegemonic masculinity is not what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support” (p. 185). There are many reasons why there is compliance to this viewpoint, however one major factor is that most men receive benefits from the subordination of women as well as their patriarchal positions as leaders in society (Connell, 1987). For example, women working in the United States make anywhere from 67 to 85 cents to a male’s dollar in the same position (Casserly, 2013).

Within this theory, it has been noted that there are different masculinities (Howson, 2006). Hegemonic masculinity signifies the struggle where its qualities must be privileged over others. “Through this [struggle], hegemonic masculinity becomes central to the cultural legitimacy of hierarchy... which, in turn, protects the balance of power in favour of men” (Howson, 2006, p. 61). Complicit masculinities are lesser forms of masculinity in comparison to the hegemonic model, due to the fact that their advantage is not always obvious. This type of masculinity is complicit with hegemonic masculinity at a personal level, however it can also challenge it through engaging in behaviours such as care and affection for children or egalitarian attitudes about women. Marginalized masculinities are inferior and deviate from hegemonic masculinity due to their relation to other cultural structures such as ethnicity, sexuality, race and class. Subordinate masculinities may experience marginalization by the culture structures as well, however this category would include men who display characteristics such as emotiveness,

passivity, lack of authority or domesticity, which are viewed as deviant from the hegemonic worldview.

It is also important to acknowledge the role of women in this theory. Recent work has been done regarding women's contribution to the cultivation of hegemonic masculinity. Talbot and Quayle (2010) argued that women themselves are active agents in the production of hegemonic masculinity as well as emphasized femininities, which is the compliance to hegemonic masculinity principles. They noted that in order for hegemonic masculinity to be a socially acceptable subject, there must be some sort of 'buy-in' from women, which can include actively participating in the development and preservation of this viewpoint. This is due to the fact that women also: "actively and passively coproduce, normalize, and even fetishize masculinities" (p. 256).

Sport is a space for men, through their interactions with each other, to recreate the idea of what it is to be a man (Davis & Duncan, 2006). For example, men can use harsh and sexist remarks in their interactions surrounding sports (i.e., conversations and/or Internet postings). Additionally, the foundation of sports is created for and by men (Messner & Sabo, 1990). However, the involvement of female fans can challenge this viewpoint as they "undermine male hegemony by challenging the values, symbols, verbal practices and the physically aggressive gestures men use during the game" (Ben-Porat, 2009, p. 887). Howson (2006) acknowledged the role of emphasized femininity in relation to hegemonic masculinity, as it involves a pattern that: "expresses a complete compliance and accommodation of the hegemonic principles" (p. 67). This is the idea of women emphasizing traditional feminine characteristics to gain social acceptance. Ambivalent femininities are another type which can be compliant and cooperative to

hegemonic masculinity, as well as resistant. This resistance occurs in regards to oppressive conditions for women such as the workplace, family, and media. Lastly, protest femininities contradict both emphasized and ambivalent femininities. Howson (2006) described this as: “its aspiration is to challenge the foundations of both intra-relations between femininities and inter-relations between femininities and masculinities, and, more specifically, to expose and question the taken-for-grantedness associated with emphasized feminine characteristics of compliance and accommodation” (p. 71). Therefore, resisting hegemonic masculinity can provide opportunities for empowerment. This study will examine two possible situations for female fans, marginalization or empowerment, which can be explored through a hegemonic masculinity framework.

4.1.2.2 Marginalization.

The segregation and marginalization of women in sport is evident in the areas of athletic participation (Hoeber, 2007; Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar & Kauer, 2004), career opportunities (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007), and more recently, fans (Jones, 2008; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000). For the purpose of this article, marginalization will be defined as: “the peripheralization of individuals and groups from a dominant, central majority” (Hall, 1999, p. 89).

It has been found that men have a stronger connection to sports than women (James & Ridinger, 2002), and thus they set the standard as sports fans and their characteristics are understood as the ‘norm’. Fans are said to possess qualities such as dedication, commitment, knowledge, and high levels of identification, which are often associated with male fans (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Davis & Duncan, 2006; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; James & Ridinger, 2002). Many studies have shown that men are

gatekeepers and socialization agents to female fans. For a fan, socialization involves learning and internalizing the attitudes, knowledge, values and behaviours associated with fans of the team (Kolbe & James, 2000). Ben-Porat (2009) examined Israeli female soccer fans and found women are socialized into sport through men. While women become true fans, their involvement in fanship remains through the presence of males. Similarly, Kolbe and James' (2000) research focused on socialization into sport and found that the father is the most influential person when one becomes a fan of a team for both women and men. Farrell et al. (2011) also found that males socialized women into sport. Notably, none of their female participants mentioned the presence of a female in this process. These findings reinforce the dominant role that men play in indoctrinating girls and women into sport fanship and also suggest that women are not assumed to be 'born' fans.

Additionally, research on female fans has shown that they are viewed as inauthentic fans for two main reasons: lacking knowledge in terms of the sport and teams, and attending sport events for inappropriate reasons (i.e., heterosexual attraction to players or socializing) (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Dietz-Uhler, End, Harrick, & Jacquemotte, 2000; Gosling, 2007; Wedgwood, 2008). Knowledge plays a significant role in being a sport fan (Wann & Branscombe, 1995) and it is assumed that this trait is more commonly found in men than women (Davis & Duncan, 2006; Sveinson & Hoerber, in press). Therefore, while women may not be expected to have knowledge, it is an expected characteristic of sport fans. The 'inauthentic' motive for attending games is based on heterosexual attraction to the team's players. Wedgwood (2008) noted that although not every female is motivated by this aspect, it gives men reason to believe that

women are not as deeply involved in the sport. Crawford and Gosling (2004) interviewed male fans about their perceptions of female fans of a particular hockey team in the UK. These males viewed the majority of the female followers as ‘groupies’ or ‘puck bunnies’. These terms are used to imply that “these supporters are ‘inauthentic’, not ‘dedicated’ in their support, and are more interested in the sexual attractiveness of the players rather than the sport itself” (p. 478). As previously mentioned, this motive does not coincide with male motivations, and therefore would appear to be an indication of lack of commitment and authentic fanship. As a result, they are not seen to fit the ‘norms’ of sport fan behaviours and characteristics.

It has been acknowledged that there are obvious distinctions between male and female sport fans (Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000). These distinctions include the exclusion of women from conversations as well inauthentic views of their passion and commitment based on their gender (Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000). This division may be a result of men controlling the rules and boundaries of women’s participation in leisure pursuits like fanship (Ben-Porat, 2009; McGinnis et al., 2003).

Female fans continue to be marginalised as inauthentic sport fans because they are seen as exhibiting non-traditional characteristics and behaviours (Pope, 2011; Pope & Williams, 2011). They are assumed to attend sport events only to socialize and possess little knowledge about the sport (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Gosling, 2007). Additionally, the women who are actually interested and serious about fanship are considered an exception and do not challenge the norm (McGinnis et al., 2003). Research work (e.g., Jones, 2008; Pope, 2011; 2013; Pope & Williams, 2011; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000) has focused on the lived experiences of female fans. The

majority of these studies did discuss some type of marginalization including being treated differently, having their fanship questioned or encountering sexist behaviour.

4.1.2.3 Empowerment.

Raisborough and Bhatti (2007) refer to empowerment as: “women’s ‘power to’ create new opportunities and identities which are not automatically or uncritically prescribed by traditional gender norms” (p. 463). With the literature on empowerment of women in leisure and sport, and the knowledge that some women challenge the views of masculine hegemony (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), it is reasonable to assume that a sense of empowerment can arise from being a sport fan. Yet, with the exception of Toffoletti and Mewett (2012), this phenomenon has been relatively ignored in the literature on female sport fans.

Attending sporting events and being a fan are leisure activities. Shaw (1994) recognized that dominant ideologies, especially those associated with traditional views of femininity and masculinity, are reproduced through cultural practices, which includes leisure participation. For example, an appropriate leisure activity for women may involve shopping, whereas an appropriate leisure activity for men may be to go to a sporting event. However, she does recognize: “if leisure experiences represent situations of choice and self determination, they also provide opportunities for individuals to exercise personal power, and such power can be used as a form of resistance to imposed gender-related constraints or restrictions” (p. 15). Empowerment is a positive outcome of resistance as well as part of the resisting process (i.e., women can be empowered through gaining skills or knowledge that allows them to resist; Shaw, 2001). Resistance is said to occur when: “women adopt behaviours or express themselves through activities which

provide personal empowerment and which, at the same time, reflect a challenge to dominant, restrictive or constraining views of femininity, sexuality and motherhood” (Shaw, 2001, p. 191). Furthermore, McGinnis and colleagues (2003) noted that leisure involvement can give women confidence to challenge societal gendered stereotypes and role restrictions. This result is reinforced by Martin, Schouten and McAlexander (2006) and Roster (2007) who researched female riders of Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

Research has discussed the concept of empowerment through women being involved in physical activities and sports. Empowerment is gained through their athleticism including strength and skill (Krane et al., 2004). Additionally, Deem and Gilroy (1998) found that for females’ participation in physical activity resulted in developed confidence in themselves and their bodies, enhanced social capital, and increased assertiveness. Combining these benefits led to the women feeling empowered through their engagement in physical activity. Furthermore, they discussed that women who participate in and master predominantly male types of physical activity or sports, such as football or weightlifting, are challenging dominant ideologies.

This previous research has opened the doors to examine empowerment of female sport fans of male dominated sports. Duncan and Brummet’s (1993) research regarding female sport fans and media began to tap into the idea of empowerment. Their study found that female fans could achieve empowerment by using televised games to extend their identification. These televised games create opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and commitment and therefore, expose their identification with the team or sport. With the majority of female sport fan research focusing on marginalization, there is a gap in which to explore empowerment.

4.1.3 Purpose.

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of highly identified, displaced female sport fans. The objectives of the research project were to explore if female fans feel marginalized and excluded, if they have feelings of empowerment or if they experience both. A focus was placed on what circumstances and aspects of fanship marginalize or empower them.

4.1.4. Methods.

I used qualitative methods because it recognizes the importance of context, is fundamentally interpretive (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) and provides sophisticated details about the phenomenon that may not be conveyed through quantitative methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A phenomenological research design was implemented because it focuses on humans' experiences and individual or shared meanings that they associate with those experiences (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological inquiries assume that: "there is an essence to an experience that is shared with others who have also had that experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 20). This is an appropriate approach to use when examining lived experiences of female sport fans in regards to organizational boundaries, as their individual experiences provide insight into their complex roles on the margins.

4.1.4.1 Participants.

For this study, I used criterion sampling (Creswell, 2009) to recruit women who were age 18 or older, and self-identified as a highly identified fan of a professional sport team in the NBA, NHL, MLB or NFL. Additionally, the women had to be "displaced fans", that is they lived in a different community than their sport team (Branscombe &

Wann, 1991). This was to emphasize experiences surrounding marginalization and empowerment. The work of Wann and colleagues (Wann & Branscombe, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann & Nolan, 1994) has recognized certain attributes of highly identified sport fans, including being affected by wins and losses, having a social identity with the team, having objective knowledge (team, players, sport itself), and having subjective knowledge (traits possessed by fans of their teams, attributes of fans of other teams). The last criterion was that they had to be intrinsically motivated as a fan. This limited the research to females who truly receive enjoyment from watching games. The purpose of using these criteria was to gain a deeper understanding of sport fan populations that are missing in the literature: female, highly identified, displaced sport fans.

A recruitment message was posted on my Facebook page. Personal contacts shared this post to create awareness for the project. Seven participants, whose ages ranged from 23-38, agreed to take part in the study. Four participants were fans of three different NFL teams, two were fans of two different NHL teams and one participant was a fan of an MLB team. At the time of the study, all the participants resided in the same Canadian city, which is geographically distant from their teams. Demographic information and their assigned or chosen pseudonyms can be found in Table 4.1.

Insert Table 4.1 here

4.1.4.2 Data collection.

Data was collected using individual, multiple-interview series (2-3 per participant based on their availability). One-time interviews are commonly used in qualitative research, but given their time frame, they compromise the researcher's ability to spend time with the participant to increase the believability of the study and to extract rich, in-

depth understandings (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso, 2004; Polkinghorne, 2005). To address this situation, Seidman (2006) suggested the use of a three-interview structure, which is based on achieving an in-depth look at participants' experiences by focusing on particular topics during each interview. This structure encouraged the first interview to examine the context of the participants, the second interview to focus on current experiences and the last to examine the bigger picture, keeping their context and experiences in mind. Therefore, in the first interview, the participants were asked questions about who or what influenced their fanship. Whereas the second interview examined events such as what they do on game day and who they watch games with. Lastly, the final interview was concerned with their overall experiences as fans, such as if they thought male and female fans differ and if their gender ever positively or negatively affected their fanship. The interviews followed an interpretivist approach, with participants being asked open-ended questions about their experiences.

Three participants had three separate interviews and four participants combined either the first and second or second and third interviews resulting in two distinct interviews. These lasted a total of 90 to 180 minutes and were held in private room on campus. This strategy was successful in that many participants engaged in reflective behaviour either at the beginning of the interview, when they were asked if there was anything that they had thought of since the previous interview they wanted to mention, or during the interview.

4.1.4.3 Data analysis.

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. After an initial examination of the data through organizing, reading, and rereading (Marshall & Rossman,

2011), a systematic analysis was completed on all interviews. The data was analyzed through a process of assigning codes, and identifying categories and themes. Coding was done through a three-step process that involves open, axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open codes were assigned to basic and surface-level topics. Following, axial coding made connections to group the open codes together based on similarities in conditions, contexts, action and strategies in the data. Finally, selective coding involves “selecting a core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development” (p. 116).

I consider myself to be a highly identified, displaced sport fan of the Green Bay Packers. Given my shared lived experiences with the participants, I employed various approaches to establish trustworthiness. Credibility of the themes was established through the use of multiple data sources (Creswell, 2009). That is, the data was collected from different fans of different teams. I coded the transcripts individually and discussed these with the second author weekly to check for relevancy. Finally, member checks were conducted by sending a summary of the findings to each of the seven participants for verification.

4.1.5 Findings and Discussion.

The findings provided evidence of marginalization and empowerment. Marginalization occurred because women, by virtue of their gender, were not expected to be sport fans. As a result of this marginalization, women tended to negotiate their gender to become accepted by male sport fans, as well as marginalize other women through questioning their fanship, appearance, and knowledge. This demonstrates that women

would conform to the sport fan norms in order to be accepted by the dominant group (highly identified male sport fans) and exclude others (less highly identified female fans).

Additionally, the participants experienced feelings of empowerment when they were viewed as authentic, that is they met the masculine norms of sport fanship (i.e., demonstrate characteristics of highly identified, authentic fans) and therefore, felt accepted into this culture. In this context, the women were legitimate in that they possessed knowledge and a strong identity to the team. As a result, these women possessed a strong sense of pride in their fanship and found enjoyment in their unique position as highly identified, displaced, female fans. Table 4.2 demonstrates a visual summary of the findings.

Insert Table 4.2 here

4.1.5.1 Marginalization: Women as inauthentic sport fans.

Marginalization was found in multiple areas of their experience. This finding was based on discussions surrounding disadvantage or disempowerment. The majority of these feelings stemmed from their gender and the assumption that female fans are inauthentic. The women felt that they needed to prove their fanship to male fans to gain legitimacy. They also needed to negotiate or downplay their gender identity as a fan. Notably, the participants spoke of marginalizing other female fans.

4.1.5.1.1. Prove it: "I feel like I have to prove myself more because I am female".

Being female was most commonly mentioned as the origin of being marginalized. These participants noted that due to their gender, others did not assume they were fans or were surprised by their fanship. It was noted that this expectation stemmed from the socialization process, in which Olivia spoke to: "there aren't as many female sport fans as

there are male sport fans, and that all goes to how we're raised." All seven participants noted that men form their attachment to sport teams at a young age, whereas women do not: "[loyalty to a team] stems from a very young age in men where women tend to...develop those relationships later in life" (Lexi). As a result, there is an assumption that most males are sport fans: "they just get to be a fan because they're a guy and they're expected to be fans" (Emma).

Five of the seven participants noted that others, in particular males, are often surprised by their fanship. Zoey noted that this unexpected interest causes sceptical reactions: "they question it, like 'why are you a Packers fan?'... I would definitely say people are surprised, especially because as a woman, you are a minority when it comes to being a football fan." Mia explained her experience based on the stereotype that women do not know anything about sport: "if you think about female fans, I think people sometimes are a little bit surprised at how much I know about it". Chloe shared a story about how females may be surprised as well:

The very first time I ordered the NFL Sunday Ticket, I called the [cable company] and the girl I was talking to on the phone says 'oh your boyfriend or husband must really love you'. I was like 'no, this is for me'.

Despite the significant amount of female fans that are present in major leagues markets (Dosh, 2012; Thompson, 2014), it appears that they are assumed to be passive spectators, and not 'real fans.'

Knowledge played a role in the feelings of being marginalized because it is assumed that men are more knowledgeable than women about sport (Davis & Duncan, 2006; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Farrell et al., 2011). This may be due to the fact that men

typically play sports as youth and adults and therefore are assumed to possess foundational knowledge. Olivia found this in her experiences: “my brother has probably known about all sports his whole life, like he didn’t have to put the effort into learning it. I did but just because he started earlier, he knows it all”. Knowledge is a critical source of power for fans as it is often associated with being highly involved and identified (e.g., Wann & Branscombe, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994). This difference in knowledge by gender was a frequent topic of discussion among participants:

I think it is assumed that there would be a lot of male, highly identified fans and males with a lot of knowledge but I think it’s not assumed that there is a lot females with that. So you feel a sense of needing to prove that knowledge or that you are a fan (Lexi).

They also noted that others frequently questioned their knowledge, and this became a source of frustration: “I understand that I am a girl. I understand that I have boobs. It doesn’t mean I don’t pay attention” (Chloe). This requirement of proving fanship through their knowledge of sport has been noted in other research regarding female fans (e.g., Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Hoerber & Kerwin, 2013) Overall, these women not only needed to deal with assumptions that they are not fans and questioning from others, but also prove they had knowledge in an attempt to gain some legitimacy.

4.1.5.1.2 Negotiation of gender: “I am way more masculine when the game is on”.

Since the participants are marginalized as fans as a result of being female, five of the seven women discussed a negotiation of their gender between their everyday life in society and the life as a sport fan. Similarly, Jones (2008) concluded in her study that

women experience tension between their fan and gender identities. Of note, two participants felt that they did not negotiate their gender. However, their strong supportive social circles and engagement in sport for a long period of time contributed to this result.

In their experiences, the participants are frequently viewed as female first and a fan second. Interestingly, out of the four participants who spoke to this, three had mentioned in other stories that they felt their gender did not impact their fan experiences. This contradictory finding demonstrates the complex and competing identities of female fans (Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012). Olivia discussed her interactions with a male friend she gained while traveling to watch baseball:

I always got the feeling he was going to ask me out or hitting on me a little bit too. I was always like ‘I just want to watch baseball. Let’s just not go there’ ... I just want to watch the Yankees. I don’t want to be a girl right now. I just want to be a fan.

Emma had conflicting views of gender, as she felt she needed to prove herself as a legitimate fan but also discussed the irrelevance of her gender when it came to others being surprised about her fanship, noting: “I don’t think it has anything to do with the fact that I am girl though.” It is important to note that this view of being a female first is primarily forced on by other, primarily male fans, whereas the women themselves do not necessarily view that as the most important part of their fan identity: “I like being a fan but I don’t think of it as I’m a female fan. I never thought of myself as that” (Mia). Olivia added: “When I think about being a Yankee fan, I don’t think about I’m a girl Yankee fan [or] I’m a female Yankee fan. I just think I’m a Yankee fan; it’s just part of who I am”. This is an interesting concept for team organizations in the areas of merchandising,

marketing and game day operations, as women are not looking to be segregated from other, notably male, fans.

The negotiation of gender also came in the form of shifting between masculine and feminine behaviours and characteristics. The participants were asked how they behave and dress in everyday life and if that changes when engaging in fanship. Five of the participants thought they landed in the middle of the continuum for every day life (in between masculine and feminine). Chloe viewed herself as feminine and Lindsey viewed herself as slightly more masculine. All participants, except Mia², felt that they became more masculine while watching or discussing sports. Emma explained the shift that takes place for her: “if I was watching a sporting event, I don’t think I would have a Bellini or a fruity drink or sangria while watching the game. Whereas, if I was just out on a Tuesday night with friends or whatever, I would definitely have a fruity drink”. Participants said they shifted to masculine behaviours as fans to gain acceptance: “I’d say that the more you move towards the masculine side, the more accepted you are” (Lindsey). Zoey added that being engaged in sports and football in particular “brings out the man in me”. She continued to note:

Sports that we watch are played by men. We naturally, kind of instinctively, change our behaviour to suit that... we have this idea of what a fan is and what a fan should be then we slide ourselves along the continuum to achieve that.

The idea that fanship is ‘naturally’ masculine connects to the work of Jones (2008) who noted that some of her participants accepted the traditional notions of gender (i.e.,

² Mia was the outlier in this sample. Her profession as a police officer (a male dominated area) and primarily watching football with women from her touch football team resulted in rarely feeling marginalized or unaccepted.

masculine behaviours associated with homophobic and sexist comments) found in European football. Additionally, this shift can be connected to changing behaviours to become part of the in-group, which has been examined in previous research (Platow et al., 1999; Wann & Grieve, 2005).

The notion that femininity and fanship are incongruent was another reason the participants behaved in a more masculine manner as a fan. While only three participants mentioned that they do not believe femininity and fanship fit together, all participants, except Mia, passed judgment on other females based on the assumption that their femininity meant they were not “real fans” (a deeper discussion on this topic is found in the following paragraphs). Lindsey explained the consequences of being overly feminine: “people wouldn’t take me seriously if I was being ultra feminine and considered myself like an ultra fan”. With the male dominance of sports (e.g., Bryson, 1987; Davis & Duncan, 2006) it can be understood how femininity may not seem to fit. Lexi notes this natural separation: “as a highly identified fan, there is not a ton femininity that really goes along with it. Most of the attributes are fairly masculine”. Interestingly, while the participants understand fanship to be naturally masculine, as fans themselves, they do not take their role as women who have feminine qualities, into consideration. This reiterates previous research (e.g., Jones, 2008; Pope, 2013) that shows women may take on masculine qualities when engaging in sport fanship. However, femininity has also been emphasized for female athletes, as a way to accept their participation in sport (e.g., Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Roth & Basow, 2004). This raises the question whether the display of femininity from female sport fans would be more suitable for fans of women’s sports.

4.1.5.1.3 Marginalizing other female fans: “I guess I am just a little more sceptical of them”.

While the participants felt marginalized because of the stereotypes associated with being a female fan, acceptance came from the approval of males. This is no surprise since men are viewed as the gatekeepers of sport (Ben-Porat, 2009; Farrell et al., 2011). Interestingly, while men marginalized female fans, the female participants in this study engaged in the same marginalization behaviours with other female fans. Olivia explained her scepticism: “I might take a guy’s word for it, that he’s a sports fan, but I wouldn’t necessarily take another women’s word for it.” The participants noted that many female fans are just “there to be a part of it” (Chloe) meaning they lack interest and investment in the sport, or as Lindsey puts it: “I feel like women are just tagging along, it’s almost like they’re supporting cast members sometimes”. They were sceptical of other females because they did not know whether they were social fans, physically attracted to the players (similar to previous research by Mewett and Toffoletti, 2011; Wedgwood, 2008), attempting to get attention from other male fans or tagging along with their significant other. All of these were viewed as inappropriate reasons to be a fan from the participants’ perspectives.

Similar to the findings of Jones (2008), Hoerber and Kerwin (2013), and Pope (2013), these women were quick to judge other female fans based on their appearance, in particular if it was overtly feminine. “I would take fandom from a female who wasn’t considered super girly or super feminine more seriously than I would from someone who was really girly or ultra feminine” (Lindsey). This included women who dress “extreme”, as Chloe explained: “the bikini tops and hair sprayed colours? Really? Can you even tell

me who the quarterback is?” Additionally, a few participants noted that while they should not judge a book by its cover, they still tended to: “if a girl comes to a ball park wearing skimpy clothes and a Jeter³ shirt, I am going to take her less seriously. I shouldn’t because she could be a bigger fan than me but I would probably take it less seriously” (Olivia). The discussion also included their perceptions of females who wear pink, which frequently received a reaction of “I can’t stand them” (Lexi). In Sveinson and Hoerber’s (in press) study of female fans of a local sport team, they also found that female fans reacted negatively to pink merchandise, frequently questioning the women who wear it.

The women in this study had knowledge of the sport and team, but they also assumed that other female fans did not. As Lindsey clearly explains: “I feel like female fans are less knowledgeable, and that’s an awful thing for me to say as a female.” Chloe also discussed her interactions with other female fans: “You kind of get that sense, really? Really? What do you know about them? Not that you interrogate them but you try to bring it up in conversation to see how much they know”. Of note, three of the participants played collegiate sports. As a result, they often questioned females who never played the sport, frequently due to an assumption that they do not have the foundational knowledge for the game.

It became apparent there is a pecking order to be accepted as a true fan. While these participants would question other female fans, they also noted their appreciation for women who displayed authentic fan characteristics: “I respect any female fan of any team as long as she’s a true fan and not doing it to try and get guy’s attention or nonsense like that” (Chloe). Six of the seven participants noted that they accept ‘real’ female fans,

³ Derek Jeter plays on the New York Yankees baseball team.

albeit those are ones who can “pass the test” (Zoey). It was also noted that they would “want to feel them out before making a firm judgement” (Lexi) and “I can’t just take [their] word for it” (Olivia). This acceptance of female fan was based on their ability to demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the team. The participants noted that these marginalization behaviours are due to a “natural instinct to compete with each other” (Chloe). Unprompted, three participants noted this natural competitiveness. When prompted, two more agreed: “women are very competitive...in subtle ways” (Zoey). Perhaps the marginalization of other women is rooted in a competitiveness to distinguish themselves from each other.

4.1.5.2 Empowerment: Women as authentic sport fans.

Empowerment was established by identifying experiences of confidence, independence as a sport fan, challenging gender norms, and mastering skills (e.g., Green, 1998; Raisborough & Bhatti, 2007; Roster, 2007). This was found in their overall experiences of being a highly identified, displaced fan, with a specific focus on fan identity and gender.

4.1.5.2.1 Identity: “I have been cheering for them for so long, it’s just part of who I am now”

Being a highly identified fan was a criterion required for participation in this study, and therefore it is understood that these participants viewed fanship as an important part of their identity. Nonetheless, some research would argue that women are less likely to be highly identified (e.g., Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; James & Ridinger, 2002). Yet, in Pope’s (2013) study, she noted that the majority of the soccer fans and just under

half of the rugby fans in her study would be categorized as highly identified. It is obvious that these female fans exist, but are not receiving academic attention.

While men introduced all of the seven participants into sports, eventually they no longer felt the need to engage in their fanship in the presence of males. Olivia notes: “regardless of whether my dad or brother were watching, I would be watching. I had to follow. I cared probably as much or more than they did at that point”. The fact that they made a choice to follow a team left them with a sense of ownership over their fanship: “it makes me more comfortable and confident with my fandom knowing that I made my own decision to follow them. I like knowing it was my own personal choice and I didn’t just follow someone else” (Emma). While previous literature has acknowledged the role of males in socialization (e.g., Ben-Porat, 2009; Kolbe & James, 2000; Mewett & Toffoletti, 2011), research is lacking about the processes that occur afterwards, and whether women develop independent fan identities.

The women in this study expressed a sense of empowerment through this identity. Zoey, Emma and Olivia noted that their fanship is engrained in their identity; “it’s a big part of who I am. I would say when people think of me, they think of football and I like that” (Zoey). This is new to the literature, as previous research has noted that men are more likely to have a stronger identity with a team (James & Ridinger, 2002). Additionally, almost all the participants, even though they are displaced, noted a sense of belonging to the team and a connection with other fans. Lexi described it as “a great feeling to be a part of. You’re sort of living or dying together type of thing”, whereas Mia noted “I think you feel sort of part of a bigger thing”. This finding could be explained by the knowledge that female fans are motivated by social interactions (Wann et al., 2001).

Of note, these interactions do not need to take place in person, but can be through social media or other forms of communication, as Emma explained: “even though I don’t have anyone to share it with, it feels like I do because of [the team’s] Facebook fan page.”

Even though being a displaced fan was not central to their experience, it did play a role in their sense of empowerment. Many participants felt an even stronger sense of attachment because they were not situated in the same location as the team: “because [the team] isn’t anywhere near here, you almost feel like more of a fan” (Lindsey). Perhaps this is due to the fact that there is no expectation to be a fan of that team, and because they were able to overcome the distance between them and the team and its other fans. This strength of fanship was also an opportunity to demonstrate their high levels of identification: “I think when you are removed, it really shows how much you are... it really does make you stand out, as ‘yeah she’s a real fan’” (Olivia). This long-distance relationship between fan and team created a strong sense of loyalty, as Chloe noted that finding a new team would be similar to “finding a new mom.” Additionally, this distance also provided them with a sense of empowerment, as they felt unique in that they were fans of team that did not reside in their city, even though a very popular professional sport team was located there.

Knowledge also became a source of empowerment in relation to their identities as sport fans. As highly identified fans, these women possessed a significant amount of knowledge about their team. When the participants were asked to demonstrate their deep understanding of the game/team, they felt liberated: “if a guy were to challenge me or talk down to me about sports or something, I could hold my own. I know, I am a Yankee fan, I get it” (Olivia). Knowledge was often used as a resource to prove their fanship; it

provided them with an opportunity to break through stereotypes: “the more knowledge you have, the more people are like ‘oh, she knows her stuff’” (Zoey). Mia explained how knowledge allows her to feel empowered as a woman in a male dominated area:

You sort of have that sense of accomplishment when you can hold your own in that male-dominated world. You’re sort of like ‘yeah, I’m an equal’. It just proves that just because I couldn’t really ever play football doesn’t mean I can’t be a part of it, or be a fan or understand it.

Knowledge has been used to exclude females from sport fanship participation in fantasy leagues (Davis & Duncan, 2006) and conversations (Farrell et al., 2011). But demonstrating knowledge is a way for women to be accepted. It was not just being included but also their ability to contribute which Lindsey explained: “when I am hanging out in a group and its 90% males and 98% of the time they’re talking football, knowledge definitely makes me more respected and I can actually contribute to the discussion”.

4.1.5.2.2 Gender: “I am just a normal woman but I am a sport fan”.

Six of the seven participants mentioned that their gender plays a role in feeling empowered in their fanship. More specifically, they overcame and challenged the stereotypes associated with “typical” female sport fans, as Chloe explained:

People assume that because you’re a girl, you don’t really watch sports and you don’t know what you’re talking about. But then you get that moment of glory when you do and everyone’s jaws drop and you’re like ‘yup! I just said that! In your face’.

Chloe also described how she feels in those times of empowerment: “it’s just like those moments where your inner goddess goes ‘[sigh] I rule’”. This empowerment was also

described as pride in their gender as they were not expected to be a sport fan, as Zoey described: “there is a part of me that likes being part of the minority, I am proud of that”. Emma reiterated that being a female in a male dominated area provides her with liberation: “I think it’s really positive that I can associate myself with something that is typically geared towards males... it gives me the feeling of ‘I can do it too’”. These findings reinforce the current literature which noted that being involved in male dominated leisure activities can lead to empowerment for women (Deem & Gilroy, 1998; Martin et al. 2006; Roster, 2007).

For these participants conforming to stereotypical sport fan behaviours and characteristics allowed them to feel accepted by their male counterparts. One participant noted that since being a highly identified female fan was rare, it was an even more positive experience: “I would say it’s an added bonus being a female accepted into a sporting community” (Lindsey). Zoey noted that once she reached this stage, the barriers of being a female fan began to dissolve:

Once you’re accepted, I feel like this fandom isn’t questioned. You feel sort of respected or appreciated and you’re not faking it so you must know a lot. You must know enough to earn [the title] of a highly identified fan and males’ respect.

Mia explained that her profession in a male dominated area, she is used to being a minority. However, her male co-workers accepted her status as a female fan. She noted that this may be a result of “women becoming bigger sport fans.” Perhaps as we see the numbers of female fans increase, acceptance will become more common than not.

4.1.5.2.3 Pride and enjoyment in fanship: “I do take pride in the fact that I am a female sport fan”

Pride and enjoyment came from being a highly identified fan of the team, being a female fan, and being a displaced fan. Being a fan of the team gave a sense of belongingness to other fans of the same team. Lexi noted “it kind of gives you a sense of pride of being part of something”. This pride also related to their knowledge, which many alluded to: “it’s almost a source of pride or something. I know my team.” (Olivia). They took pride in being part of something bigger than themselves. This finding is interesting as previous work from Branscombe and Wann (1991) found that displaced fans lack a sense of belongingness and attachment. Pride in being a legitimate female fan was one of the most discussed topics in regards to empowerment, which Zoey describes: “there is a lot of pride that comes with my female fandom.”

While they enjoyed a sense of belonging, ironically a sense of pride also stemmed from being isolated. This characteristic allowed them to “stand out” (Lindsey) or that “it makes me a little unique and different” (Lexi). It is interesting that the women enjoyed being a part of something but also being unique. This finding reinforces the ideas that female fans’ experience vary with different factors playing a role (Osborne & Coombs, 2013) and that their experiences are complex and contradictory (Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012). Overall, distance was not a significant issue, as their sense of pride overruled the need to be located where their team is: “I’m this far away and yet I’m still a huge fan and support them in the ways I can; even if it’s just cheering for them in front of the TV. You do feel a little unique” (Mia).

4.1.6 Conclusion

Generally, the women in this study experience both marginalization and empowerment as highly identified, displaced female fans. While marginalization of

female fans is not new to research (e.g., Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Gosling, 2007; Jones, 2008; Pope, 2011; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000), empowerment is a new concept for this particular area of research. The findings of this study have shown how the experiences of female sport fans can be complex, contradictory and complimentary, as summed up by Lindsey:

So as a fan who's female and as a knowledgeable fan that's female, I feel like I'm almost more respected because I actually know what I am taking about and I can contribute to intelligent conversations. But at the same time because I am female, I feel inferior sometimes to other people because they're like 'oh you're just a girl watching football'. It kind of works both ways.

From an organizational perspective, it can be understood how women are on the margins of sport fan culture simply by being women. They are not accepted and welcomed at first glance. By conforming to these sport norms, the participants felt accepted, by men, into the sport fan culture. Interestingly, while the conformation led to empowerment (acceptance from men), the fact that they were challenging the stereotype by being knowledgeable, highly identified, female fans and on the edges of the boundary, also led to empowerment. Additionally, once the women were accepted, they reinforced these norms by demanding other female fans to demonstrate the same behaviours. This brings to question the role of women as fans within sport organizations. What does the organization do to address these fans? Is the organization's purpose to satisfy only those who fit neatly inside the culture or are seen as traditional fans? While there have been discussions regarding the increase of merchandise for women (Dosh, 2012), this is a small move to bring these fans into the culture. As Barton (2013) noted in her article from

The Atlantic: “Not every woman wants team-logo panties or a ‘fanicure.’ The NFL could woo even more female consumers by also making games safer and more inviting for women and families” (para. 1). This quote illustrates how it is important for the team organization to acknowledge and address the concerns and desires of fans, even those who are not seen as central to the organization.

Hegemonic masculinity is not only the subordination of women by men but also the notion of the ideal masculinity and the complimentary femininity (Connell, 1987). However, it is important to note how this ideal might change from everyday society to sport fanship. That is in every day society, the accepted ideal for women involves emphasizing femininity, such as demonstrating behaviours and physical appearances similar to Marilyn Monroe. In contrast, in sport fanship, the accepted ideal for women is to take on more masculine qualities. That is, the more knowledge and identified a female sport fan is, which are traits commonly associated with male sport fans (Davis & Duncan, 2006; Dietz-Uhler, et al, 2000; James & Ridinger, 2002), the more likely she is to be accepted as a true and authentic fan. As a result, sport fan norms are often associated with male characteristic and behaviours, and women feel accepted when they fit those norms. However, other research noted that males rated females who were feminine, highly identified with a local sports team and had high levels of sport fanship most favorably (Galyon & Wann, 2012). The participants noted that while femininity and fanship can go together, they often viewed women who displayed emphasized femininity to be lesser fans. As a result, the “ideal” display of gender may differ from everyday life to sport fanship and this may cause women to constantly shift between cultures.

While research thus far has focused on marginalization, research regarding female fans needs to start examining different components of their experiences, such as feelings of empowerment or inclusion. Future research could examine the topic of empowerment with males as well to determine if and how they may experience it and if overcoming barriers is a requirement in this process. Additionally, research could focus on those female fans who do not conform to these sport fan norms and embrace femininity as part of their fanship. Knowing that female fans have complex and contradictory identities (Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012), future research should take a multi-dimensional approach (i.e., focusing on more than just gender) to gain a better understanding.

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Table 1. Participant demographics

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Team</u>
Chloe	29	Cardiac Technologist (FT)	Philadelphia Eagles (NFL)
Lindsey	26	Exercise Therapist (FT)	Baltimore Ravens (NFL)
Zoey	24	Waitress (FT)	Green Bay Packers (NFL)
Mia	38	Police Officer (FT)	Green Bay Packers (NFL)
Lexi	26	Catering Manager (FT)	Edmonton Oilers (NHL)
Emma	27	Teacher (FT)	Detroit Red Wings (NHL)
Olivia	23	Student (FT)	New York Yankees (MLB)

Table 2. Marginalization and empowerment processes and results

Marginalization → Overcoming barriers → Empowerment

Experience	Description	Occurs through (Process)	Result
Marginalization	Women as inauthentic sport fans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender (negative assumptions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation of gender • Marginalizing other women
Empowerment	Women as authentic sport fans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment • Knowledge • Displacement • Gender (positive) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance from males • Pride and enjoyment in fanship

4.2 Managing multiple performances.

4.2.1. Introduction.

Female sport fans at sporting events are becoming more prevalent (James & Ridinger, 2002; Markovits & Albertson, 2012). It has been noted that in three major sport leagues (National Hockey League, Major League Baseball and National Basketball Association), women represent slightly less than a third of the fan market, whereas women make up almost half of the NFL's fan market (Dosh, 2012; Thompson, 2014). Women are also present in other areas of fandom, such as fantasy leagues (Ruihley & Billings, 2013). In 2013, 20% of fantasy participants were women (Fantasy Sport Trade Association, 2013). Additionally, there has been a surge in fan merchandise available for women. For example, the major leagues have partnered with actress Alyssa Milano to create her line called "Touch", as well as Victoria Secret and Hello Kitty to target women (Campbell, 2014). It is clear that female sport fans are beginning to make their mark on sport fandom. Yet research is just beginning to focus on their experiences (e.g., Farrell, Fink & Fields, 2011; Pope, 2011, 2013; Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012).

Overall, the literature shows that as women participating in a male dominated area (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Davis & Duncan, 2006), they are frequently marginalized, questioned and viewed as inauthentic (Gosling, 2007; Pope, 2011; Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012). Much of this research has examined women's experiences in an exploratory manner (Farrell et al., 2011; Jones, 2008; Pope, 2011, 2013). Since there is much to learn about this specific fan group, research has not focused on more than two performances that women may engage in (i.e., being highly identified and a female fan). Yet, Osborne and Coombs (2013) noted that fan identities interact with other identities, such as social

class, sexual orientation, gender and race. Therefore, to develop a deeper understanding of female sport fans, it is important to examine how multiple performances interact and affect their experiences as sport fans.

While we are beginning to develop a better understanding of female fans, it is important to note that: “women’s fans experiences [are] more varied and complex” (Mewett & Toffoletti, 2012, p. 1). Acknowledging the complex and sometimes competing identities of female fans, this research looks to gain an understanding of the intersectionality of identification, displacement and gender as they relate to and inform their experiences.

Of note, fandom has been defined as an individual’s connection to other sport fans, whereas fanship is about an individual’s connection to a sport team (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). For the purpose of this article and the use of the Performative Sport Fandom framework, the term fandom will be used to refer to the connection of an individual to the team.

4.2.2. Literature review.

In order to discuss the intersecting performances of identification, displacement and gender, we must examine the literature of each area. Osborne and Coombs’ (2013) Performative Sport Fandom theory will be discussed first, as it is the framework for this study.

4.2.2.1 Performative sport fandom.

Performative Sport Fandom was used as the framework for this study (Osborne & Coombs, 2013). This concept shifts the focus away from motivations and classifications of sport fans and examines fandom as a performance. It borrows from performative

gender theory, which discusses how gender is at the core of our actions and these acts either confirm or challenge expected gender norms (Butler, 1988). Butler (1988) noted that gender is not only a social construction but it also a social act. However, Osborne and Coombs (2013) noted that acts are not innately gendered. For example, a female who wears make up such as mascara or eye shadow is expressing femininity. Yet a woman could be wearing make up to paint her face for a game. The authors noted that these acts: “take on a different meaning, either reinforcing femininity or resisting it, and can only be understood within the larger context of the performance” (p. 676). Osborne and Coombs’ (2013) framework adds to performative gender theory by examining how other roles (i.e., gender, race, sexual orientation, social class) interact with fan identities.

Performative Sport Fandom describes that people become sport fans through performances: “those performances are socially constructed and vary based on context and audience” (Osborne & Coombs, 2013, p. 677). The authors acknowledged that there are three parts to performances: relational, contextual and negotiable. Relational refers to the idea that these performances relate to specific elements (i.e., people, situations and/or events). That is, a female sport fan who is socialized by her father may perform fandom differently than if she was socialized by her mother. However, that is not to say she would not exhibit masculine tendencies if she were socialized by a female. Next, contextual notes that roles should be understood in the context in which they occur, as opposed to only focusing on the behaviour that is displayed. For example, a woman wearing a bikini top at an outdoor sport event in the summer may be understood differently than a woman wearing a bikini while attending an indoor ice hockey game. Lastly, negotiable recognizes the involvement of relations and contexts in roles and as a

result, negotiation occurs between roles and performances. Often times, this results in a prioritization of roles and how they will be performed.

This framework seeks to determine how meanings are created and strengthened by fans as well as the role that social identifiers (e.g., gender, race, class) play in fan performances. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, Performative Sport Fandom recognizes the fluidity of social and fan roles; they are not fixed but continue to change over time and across different situations. For example, a female sport fan in her 20s might have time to engage in behaviours associated with being highly identified. However, if she becomes a mother, her role as a highly identified fan may shift because of different priorities related to child rearing.

The study used this framework as a way to examine the intersectionality amongst different performances (i.e., identification, displacement and gender). Intersectionality is a term commonly used with feminist research to examine the interactions of multiple oppressions (Mann, 2012). For the purpose of this article, intersectionality will be used to explore the interactions between multiple performances, not all of which would be considered oppressive (i.e., being highly identified).

4.2.2.2 Highly identified fans.

Much of the sport fan and spectatorship literature has focused on identification with the sport, league, team, and / or player (e.g., Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Sutton, McDonald, Milne & Cimperman, 1997; Wann, 1995; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Team identification can be defined as one's psychological commitment to the team (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). This line of research tends to focus on how characteristics fluctuate at different levels of identification. For example, fans who have

lower levels of identification tend to lack commitment, do not invest much time and money into their fandom and are not concerned with attending games (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Fink, Trail & Anderson, 2002; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Fans who would be considered as highly identified possess traits such as a strong attachment to the team and its other fans, knowledge of the team, loyalty, a social identity with the team and being affected by wins and losses (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Mahony, Madrigal & Howard, 2000; Wann & Branscombe, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann & Nolan, 1994).

Gender differences have been found with respect to identification. That is, men are more likely to be highly identified sport fans than women (Ware & Kowalski, 2012). As well, men develop an important social identity with sports, which is not typically found with women (James & Ridinger, 2002). In Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End and Jacquemotte's (2000) study, they found that while women consider themselves a sport fan, they are less likely to highly identify with this activity. This is similar to James and Ridinger (2002), as they found that even the females who were sport fans noted that their fan identity was not crucial for them. However, with the increase in female sport fans (Thompson, 2014), it would be ignorant to assume that none of them are highly identified. Interestingly, little research has focused solely on those highly identified and female fans. Farrell and colleagues (2011) recognized the need to research women who are intrinsically motivated in their fandom. Additionally, the majority of these findings regarding gender differences and identification demonstrate how gender does interact with fan identities.

4.2.2.3 Displaced fans.

Few studies have focused on displaced fans, or those who are geographically

distant from their team (Andrijew & Hyatt, 2009; Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Farred, 2002; Kraszewski, 2008). This is an area of sport fandom that requires attention as people live in geographically remote areas where there are no professional sport teams (Foster & Hyatt, 2008; Kerr & Gladden, 2008), but due to globalization of media coverage people are connected to teams outside of their local area (Kraszewski, 2008; Whitson, 1998). Additionally, Foster and Hyatt (2008) note that new technology has provided access to untapped fan markets: “instead of catering to mostly local fans, professional teams can now address a large contingent of nonlocal fans” (p. 266). Kerr and Gladden (2008) also acknowledged the increase in geographically displaced fans who support their team emotionally and financially, as well as the fact that some teams have fans abroad that exceed the number of local fans for particular teams.

It is important to note that there are varying degrees of being displaced. For example, there are fans who never resided in the same city as their team or “satellite fans” (Kerr & Gladden, 2008), there are those who have moved away from their hometown team, and there are those who do not live in the same city as their team but are geographically close enough to attend games or be involved in the team’s culture. Kraszewski’s (2008) ethnographic study focused on displaced fans who once lived in the same city as their team but moved to a different geographical location. He found that sports bars played a role in connecting with other displaced fans of the same team and to their geographical identity. Farred (2002), in reflecting on his experiences as a displaced fan, touched on the importance of sport media to maintain the relationship with the team, and how fandom is powerful enough to overcome the barrier of distance. He was a displaced fan in that he never resided in the same city as his team. Andrijew and Hyatt

(2009) studied individuals who were fans of nonlocal hockey teams even though a local team was geographically close. They found these fans had a sense of uniqueness with their identity, attempted to connect to fans of the same team from afar and experienced isolation if that did not occur. Branscombe and Wann (1991) focused on identity and found that displaced fans are more likely to become more identified when their team is successful. They noted that team success may be an important factor when generating interest in a team and may also receive the most media coverage. They also mentioned that those fans may not have feelings of belongingness or attachment to their team, unlike fans who are located near their team. Foster and Hyatt's (2008) research suggested that sport teams can use traditions to maintain local fans, as well as attract those who are geographically distant.

With such little research solely focusing on displaced fans, there has not been much discussion about this performance. From the previous literature, it can be gathered that part of these performances could involve connecting with other fans of the same team (Kraszewski, 2008), as well as using media to connect with team from a distance (Foster & Hyatt, 2008). However, no research has solely focused on how these experiences of displacement could vary by identification or gender.

4.2.2.4 Female fans.

The majority of research that includes female sport fans as participants has focused on gender differences in regards to identification, motivations, points of attachment and socialization. The studies examining gender differences in motivations have generally shown that female fans have social, entertainment and family reasons for attending games and following teams (Urmilla & Swart, 2010; Wann 1995; Wann,

Schrader & Wilson, 1999). In contrast, men were more motivated by achievement (pride with team), empathy (emotions from team performance) and knowledge (James & Ridinger, 2002). When examining points of attachment, Robinson and Trail (2005) found that women were more attached to the players and sport in comparison to men. It was found that men have a significant role in socializing women into sport fandom (Ben-Porat, 2009; Farrell et al., 2011; Kolbe & James, 2000; Mewett & Toffoletti, 2011). A piece that is missing is how gender impacts fandom.

More recently, research has begun focusing solely on female sport fans and their experiences (e.g., Farrell et al., 2011; Jones, 2008; Pope, 2011, 2013; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000). Overall, the findings demonstrate that women are marginalized and viewed as inauthentic for various reasons, including exhibiting characteristics and behaviours that differ from male sport fans (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Pope, 2011; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000). A brief discussion of this research regarding the intersection of gender and fan identification will follow.

In Pope's (2013) study, she created a preliminary model of female sport fans, in which she divided fans into "hot" (i.e., those who noted that sport was important to their identity) and "cool" (i.e., those who viewed fandom as an insignificant part of their identity) fans. The findings showed that the more feminine a fan was, the less likely she would appear in the "hot" category. Therefore, the performance of fan identity and femininity may not be congruent. This result may be due to both female and male fans reinforcing typical sport fan norms, which are associated with masculine characteristics.

Jones' (2008) study examined how women deal with sexist atmosphere at games and found that they use three strategies: defining sexist and homophobic abuse as

disgusting; down playing homophobic and sexist abuse and embracing gender stereotypes as part of the game. Her findings revealed that a part of these strategies result in female fans negotiating between their gender and fan identities. Similarly, Sherlock and Elsdon (2000) examined the lived experiences female soccer fans in the United Kingdom. They found that distinctions were made between male and female fans. This resulted in exclusion of women from conversations as well inauthentic views of their passion and commitment based on their gender. As a result, they were constantly negotiating between their fandom and gender. Lastly, Farrell and colleagues (2011) examined why female fans attend male sporting events as opposed to female sporting event. The results demonstrated an overwhelming influence of men on the sport consumption choices of women. They also found that women sacrifice their own interests to watch sport with men. With female sport fans' experiences revolving around men, it may be a reason why they are not as highly identified or involved. Again, this acknowledges the intersection of fan identities and gender.

While the current research is furthering our knowledge and understanding of female sport fans' experiences, it has yet to focus on multiple performances of their fandom (i.e., gender, identification, displacement, race, sexual orientation, etc.) and how they may intersect and impact their experiences. This is an important piece to examine as Osborne and Coombs (2013) noted that by taking this approach: "researchers can better capture the complexities of fan experiences and behaviours, including those of women" (p. 673).

Based on the previous literature and the Performative Sport Fandom framework, the purpose this study was to examine how the performances of identification,

displacement and gender intersect and impacts female sport fans' experiences.

4.2.3 Methods.

Qualitative methodology was used for this study, as it acknowledges the importance of context, is interpretive and is within the nature of the research question (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Additionally, this method provides opportunities to collect in-depth and contextually relevant details to uncover what occurs behind the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This project implemented a phenomenological approach, as it emphasizes humans' experiences and the individual or shared meanings that they associate with those experiences (Patton, 2002). This approach allows the data to be analyzed uniquely, then compared to determine the essences of the experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This approach is applicable in this context, as the participants had individual and shared experiences with their performances as women, high-identified, and displaced fans.

4.2.3.1 Participants.

Criterion sampling was used to recruit participants (Creswell, 2009). Participants had to be female and 18 or older, and identify as a fan of a professional sport team that is geographically distant from their current location. Teams of four major leagues in North America (NHL, NBA, NFL, or MLB) were used. Lastly, participants were required to demonstrate at least two of the following traits associated with highly identified fans: objective knowledge (which involves knowledge about team's history, players and sport in general), subjective beliefs (demonstrate motivation to maintain a positive social identity), a social identity with the team and affected by their team's wins and losses (Wann & Branscombe, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann & Nolan, 1994). While

criteria were required to identify the sample, participants were asked to provide their own definition of highly identified fan characteristics, recognizing that these may not be reflective of female fans' perspectives (Osborne & Coombs, 2013; Sveinson & Hoerber, in press).

Recruitment for this project occurred through social media and word of mouth. The purpose of this recruitment method was to eliminate the over-reliance of convenient samples recruited from university classes, which is common in sport fan research (e.g., Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994). This process resulted in seven participants, which included one fan of an MLB team, two fans of NHL teams and four fans of NFL teams. They ranged in age from 23-38. All participants resided in the same Canadian city, which has one Canadian Football League team, but no other major sport league team. The next closest professional team is a NHL team almost 600 kilometres away. It is important to note that these participants never lived in the same city as their team. Demographic information and their assigned pseudonyms are found in Table 4.3.

Insert Table 4.3. here

4.2.3.2 Data collection.

Data was collected through 2-3 individual interviews per participant. A multiple interview structure was used as one-time interviews often lack details and rich descriptions (Polkinghorne, 2005). Spending more time with participants is crucial as it adds to the believability of the study (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso, 2004). The interview format was based on Seidman's (2006) three-interview structure. The first interview focused on the context of their fandom, and included questions about how they became

fans of particular teams and who or what influenced their decision. In the second interview participants were asked about current experiences, such as who they watch games with and what merchandise they own. Lastly, the third interview brought their context and experiences together, and required a deeper reflection. Typically, the last interview was conducted 2-7 days after the first and second interviews to allow participants time to reflect on their previous discussions. In the last interview, questions such as “based on your experiences, do you think that male and female fans differ?” were asked. The multiple interview structure, with time between interviews, proved beneficial, as many participants made reflective comments throughout the process. Based on availability, the participants either had three separate interviews or two were merged for only two separate interviews. The interviews took place in a private room on campus and lasted anywhere between 90 to 180 minutes combined.

4.2.3.3 Data analysis.

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis began with organizing, reading, and rereading the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The data was then analyzed by assigning codes, determining categories and identifying themes. This followed Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) process of open, axial and selective coding. Open codes were assigned to basic topics that were found in the data, such as ‘sports as a male domain’ “really when it comes to sports, it’s still very much a guy’s world” (Chloe). Axial coding was used to group the open codes together. For example, the code ‘family’ was placed in the ‘influence of fandom’ subcategory as the women spoke about the role of their family, especially males, in generating interest in fandom: “my dad would watch them... I kind of wanted to be like him or just thought it would be a chance to bond or

hang out with my dad kind of thing” (Emma). Lastly, selective coding was used to find an overarching category and relating it to other categories and the literature. That is, gender, knowledge and being highly identified subcategories all related to marginalizing other female sport fans, which has been noted in the literature (Hoerber & Kerwin, 2013; Jones, 2008; Pope, 2013).

I consider myself to be a highly identified sport fan of the NFL, in particular, the Green Bay packers. Due to the fact that I may share experiences with the participants, I put in place various techniques to establish trustworthiness. I used tactics which included: looking for alternative explanations and triangulation of sources (examining the consistency amongst each interview and across all interviews; Patton, 1999) to ensure credibility of the themes. Regular debriefing meetings were also held with my supervisor. Additionally, the transcripts were coded individually and a second individual was asked to check for relevancy. Finally, I sent a summary of the findings to each of the seven participants for verification.

4.2.4 Findings.

The findings demonstrate that intersectionality occurs, in various ways, between fan identification and gender, fan identification and displacement, and gender and displacement as well as between all three (see figure 4.1). The intersectionality between gender and identification elicited the most discussion amongst the participants. These performances tended to work against each other, whereas identification and gender appeared to work harmoniously or in a complementary manner. While these interactions had an impact on their experiences, the intersection between gender and displacement was really not a factor in their experiences and did not complement or contradict each

other. Lastly, the intersectionality between all three performances resulted in unique and enjoyable experiences for the participants. Additionally, the participants noted the work that is involved to ensure authenticity while managing these performances.

Insert Figure 4.1 here

4.2.4.1 Gender and Identification.

This section will discuss the intersecting performances of gender and fan identity. There will be a brief discussion of socialization, followed by a discussion of how these performances clashed with one another.

4.2.4.1.1 Socialization and choice.

Gender was at the core of their experiences and played a role from the very beginning of their fandom. All seven participants acknowledged the socialization of males in their initial interest in fandom. Four of the participants mentioned their fathers, two noted their husbands and one recognized her step-brother as the strongest influence. While this reiterates findings in previous studies (e.g., Kolbe & James, 2000; Ben-Porat, 2009), research has yet to focus on the process that occurs after socialization. When asked, all seven participants noted that they made a choice to follow their team. While the male may have played a role in the team they chose to follow, the women felt they made an independent decision, which played a role in becoming highly identified, as Emma noted:

I didn't make a choice because the male told me to cheer for them. I just watched some games with him and made the decision to follow on my own. I could have cheered for any team at that point in my life. It makes me more comfortable and

confident with my fandom knowing that I made my own decision to follow them.

I like knowing it was my own personal choice and didn't just follow someone else.

Three participants noted that they often watched the games alone, and one participant frequently watched with other women. This finding demonstrated they no longer needed to engage in sport fandom in the presence of men. While their gender played a role in that males introduced the females to sports, they took it upon themselves to follow this interest and take on the identity of a sport fan.

4.2.4.1.2 Unexpected combination.

For most participants, their performances of gender and being a highly-identified fan created tension as women are not expected to be sport fans, nonetheless, highly identified: "there is a very small population [of women] that would be highly identified fans" (Lexi). The tension amongst these performances is rooted in the differences between women's interests and fans' interests. Women are assumed to be social fans (i.e., they have little interest in the outcome of the game) and lack knowledge of the team and sport (Davis & Duncan, 2006; Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Gosling, 2007; Wann et al., 2001). As a result, women are expected to display non-traditional behaviours and characteristics of sport fans. This understanding has frequently stereotyped women as inauthentic sport fans (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Gosling, 2007; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000; Sveinson & Hoerber, in press). They noted the constant struggle to prove their fandom and be accepted as highly identified, female sport fans, as Olivia described: "I do think that female fans who consider themselves highly identified probably have to put in more effort into proving that they are highly identified fans. They put in more work". As highly identified fans, these women were expected to demonstrate and share their knowledge of sport. Yet

as females, they are expected not to care or possess knowledge about sport. As a result of this tension, the participants sought to maintain legitimacy as fans through possessing knowledge, demonstrating appropriate fan appearance and downplaying their femininity. All seven participants mentioned that, at some point, males always questioned their fandom: “I would say that men want to make sure you’re a real fan, not just some floozy who loves football because of the hot boys” (Zoey). Previous research has suggested that female sport fan are motivated by the physical attraction of the male players (Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012; Wedgwood, 2008). Of note, only one out of the seven participants noted physical attraction as a motivator.

Knowledge of the team (including history and players) is a characteristic that is strongly associated with being highly identified (Wann & Branscombe, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994, Wann & Nolan, 1994) and typically is connected to male fans (Davis & Duncan, 2006; Farrell et al., 2011). Therefore, it can be understood that these participants found it a struggle to be acknowledged as a knowledgeable female fan. Out of the seven women, all noted that knowledge is a very important characteristic to define highly identified fans. Additionally, two of the seven mentioned that it is the most important attribute (three noted that emotional investment was most important, and two spoke of loyalty). However, proving that they have a deep understanding of the team and/or league allowed them to feel a sense of legitimacy: “[knowledge] makes me feel more accepted... and it also makes me feel more respected by my peers” (Lindsey). For these women, knowledge plays an important role in being accepted when gender and fan identification intersect. Interestingly, Chloe, who viewed herself as quite knowledgeable about her team and the league, was cautious to demonstrate her knowledge around males:

“I think even just hanging out with guys, you just kind of listen to the conversation... I don’t want to stick my foot in my mouth”. This finding demonstrates that gender and identification performances may differ depending on the situation.

The participants performed their fandom by ensuring that they physically appeared to be highly identified fans. Many participants noted that they would simply wear “jeans and a jersey” (Chloe) as highly identified fans. Olivia explained how her behaviour and appearance change from being a sport fan to every day society “I’ll swear at the TV. I’ll wear my jerseys. That’s very different from who I am day-to-day, just how I dress is different”. Six of the seven participants acknowledged that the more feminine a fan appears, the less likely she is to be labeled a die-hard or authentic fan: “there are girls who take it to the extreme, the bikini tops and their hair sprayed... really? Can you even tell me who the quarterback is?” (Chloe). Similar results have been found as well in Jones’ (2008) and Pope’s (2013) studies, in which feminine fans were questioned and viewed as inauthentic. Overall, the participants felt the need, as women, to forgo a feminine appearance in order to demonstrate their high levels of fan identification. That is, they could not be feminine and a sport fan simultaneously. Yet again, this demonstrates the complexity between being a female and a highly identified fan.

Another example of the tension between these performances is the negotiation of gender. While two of the seven participants said they felt that they did not negotiate their gender, five noted that they became more masculine when engaging in sport fandom. This was believed to stem from the male domination in sports: “being masculine is associated with being a sport fan” (Olivia). As a result, many participants noted how it is assumed that all men are sport fans. Lexi explains this situation: “I think it is assumed

that there would be a lot of male, highly identified fans and males... I think it's not assumed that there is a lot of females like that". Both Jones (2008) and Sherlock and Elsdon (2000) also noted in their studies that the female participants were more likely to prioritize their fandom over their gender. Emma explains how she would make different choices based on the environment:

If I was watching a sporting event, I don't think I would have a Bellini or a fruity drink or sangria while watching a game; whereas, if I was just out on a Tuesday night with friends or whatever, I would definitely have a fruity drink.

This negotiation of gender explains how the participants are seeking to fit the norms of highly identified fans, which is not female fans. Overall, this section has demonstrated that the performances of gender and identification tend to compete as opposed to compliment each other.

4.2.4.2 Identification and displacement.

In contrast to the previous section, the performances of identification and displacement appear to go hand in hand. This may be due to the availability of information regardless of the location of fans, meaning fans can access information about the team using websites and social media. Also, due to the distance between fan and team, it can be argued that there would be a strong level of identification.

Overall, the participants noted that fan identification and displacement was not a source of tension in their experiences. With fans around the globe utilizing technology to access information (Foster & Hyatt, 2008; Whitson, 1998), it is understandable that they are able to stay connected with their teams. The majority of the participants were frequent visitors of the team's and league's websites: "I am checking online a lot and seeing

what's happening" (Mia). They also used social media such as Facebook and Twitter to stay updated: "I like the Facebook page so usually I get updates there and I also follow them on Twitter" (Emma). Williams and Chinn (2010) noted that: "the emergence of social media... technologies has the potential to significantly affect connections with consumers" (p. 423). The real time of social media allowed the participants to feel involved in the team's events as they are happening: "I don't have to do future research on the Ravens because I already subscribe to them on Twitter, so I am getting everything that happens, when it happens" (Lindsey). The participants check information on the team almost daily, as staying up to date is found to be an important part of their identification. Thus, with the convenience of the Internet and social media, their displacement does not negatively affect their relationship with the team.

Interestingly, the participants noted that being a highly identified fan of a displaced team was not uncommon, as those two performances demonstrate a strong connection and attachment to the team. The participants acknowledged that the location of the team was never "a big factor" (Mia). At times, they felt disconnected from other fans, but that created a strong desire to travel for a game: "because they don't play here, it's something you almost strive to do in your life. I am going there to watch at some point. I don't care if I am 50 or 90, I am going" (Chloe). While there were four participants who travelled to see their team play (two at home games, two at away games), it is not always feasible with the expenses of the trip, as well as requiring time off to travel a significant distance. However, all participants discussed the desire to attend games and the importance that those experiences have or will play in their fandom. Sport tourism literature has noted that traveling demonstrates commitment and loyalty to the

team (Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2002; Smith & Stewart, 2007), which correspond to characteristics of highly identified fans.

This long-distance relationship between fan and team caused the participants to view themselves as dedicated and committed. Lindsey explained how living apart from the team elicits the idea of “almost feeling like more of a fan”. It is interesting to see that these female participants felt like “bigger” fans because of the distance. In contrast, the displaced fans in Kraszewski’s (2008) study, who used to live in the same location as the team, sought a way to reconnect with their local identity after moving away from the team’s location. Olivia described how being displaced demonstrates the authenticity of fandom:

I have always thought of being a real fan as you actually are in it for yourself and not just going to the game with everyone else. I think when you are removed, it really shows whether or not you are [a fan] and how much you care.

Additionally, Zoey noted this distance results in “a greater level of respect” in which “others can truly appreciate your fandom and your love for the team” because of the displacement. In summary, being highly identified and displaced were performances that complimented each other, as their loyalty despite not being able to attend games in person or to socialize with a large group of fans demonstrates a strong connection to the team.

4.2.4.3 Gender and displacement.

Overall, the intersectionality of these two performances was discussed the least. Perhaps this was due to the participants’ views on the strong identification that is involved when being displaced: “I think it’s fair to say when you see someone with an NFL jersey, they’re a pretty devoted fan, because you are so far removed” (Mia).

However, the combination of these performances still played a role in their experience. The participants acknowledged barriers in being female fans, so being displaced as well added to the unique situation: “I think in some ways, you feel a sense of pride for being away from [the team] and a female” (Lexi). Olivia also mentioned that perhaps gender was significant when paired with being displaced: “being far removed really does make you stand out as ‘yeah, she’s a real fan’ ... maybe a guy who is removed wouldn’t feel the need to be seen as a real fan, he just kind of would be”. This could relate back to the assumption that men are sport fans. Since it is not assumed that women would be, it may enhance their sense of uniqueness. Interestingly, while the majority of the research shows female fans are often marginalized (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Gosling, 2007; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000), only three participants noted that others questioned their fandom as a result of the distance between them and the team.

4.2.4.4 Gender, identification and displacement.

The intersection between these three performances resulted in tension and difficulties for the participants part of the time, and enjoyment the other. Tension was experienced in the sense of ‘work’; the effort required by these women to perform all these roles and still be viewed as authentic. This is interesting, as there tends to be a dichotomy between work and leisure. Trenberth and Dewe (2002) found that leisure provides opportunities to be completely immersed in an activity, as well as the ability to disconnect and be laidback, which allows one to recover from work. For these women, their performances as highly identified, displaced female fans may be a case of serious leisure, which involves: “the development of skills and knowledge, the accumulation of experience, and the expending of effort” (Stebbins, 1982, p. 267). With the exception of

Jones (2000), serious leisure has been rarely used in research regarding sport fandom. Emma acknowledged the effort required: “I think you have to work a little harder to prove yourself than [men] do”. Olivia added to this statement “we work a little harder to show we are sport fans because we want to prove it”. Since women are not expected to sport fans, nonetheless highly identified and displaced, they talked about ‘putting in work’ to prove themselves. Zoey explained how she works to maintain current knowledge:

You put in the time to know all that you can about your team and I think females do that more. Because we want to be able to stand by being a female fan and wanting to be able to explain to someone when they question you or talk about it with someone and not feel the pressure of not knowing enough to talk about it. So even that time put in, that effort may be a little bit more as a highly identified fan too.

While often leisure and work are seen as mutually exclusive, this finding provides some insight into another possibility. Future research could take a serious leisure approach to sport fans to further our knowledge in the area of work and fandom.

While these performances may have involved work, they also yielded a sense of enjoyment and uniqueness in fan experiences. This result stemmed from the mentality that women are not expected to be fans, nonetheless highly identified fans, and particularly not displaced fans (especially when there is a local team in their location). Zoey described this as “being part of the minority, being unique and original. Not doing what everyone else is doing”. She went on to describe her pride and enjoyment in this unique identity. These feelings of uniqueness were discussed by all seven participants, who described these experiences as “something that sets me apart” (Olivia). Interestingly,

in Andrijiw and Hyatt's (2009) all male study, they found that some participants chose to follow a distant team in an effort to create individuality and uniqueness. This brings to light to similar experiences among male and female fans, such as a feeling of uniqueness, however it demonstrates the different routes to get there.

While research regarding female sport fans continues to develop, it has yet to find much beyond being marginalized and viewed as inauthentic (except Mewett & Toffoletti, 2011; Pope, 2013). While these participants were not exempt from these experiences, examining the intersection of multiple performances resulted in uncovering new experiences that are not present in the literature. Osborne and Coombs (2013) has brought attention to this fact and noted it as an area of focus for future studies.

4.2.5 Conclusion.

With research on female sport fans gaining momentum, little research has focused on more than one performance, which is frequently gender (e.g., Farrell et al., 2011; Jones, 2008; Pope, 2011). This article focused on the intersectionality between multiple performances of female sport fandom. The findings demonstrated that these experiences can be complex, complimentary and contradicting, which has been noted by other scholars (Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012). While all three performances of gender, identification and displacement interact to create a unique experience, each interacts with other, with gender and identification being the most significant. Identification and displacement were discussed slightly less and gender and displacement was mentioned the least. The findings acknowledge the importance of examining multiple performances as their interaction does have an impact on how these participants performed fandom.

Gender was found to be at the core of their experiences, frequently being the single performance that affects their experiences the most, followed by identification and then displacement. It would be interesting to examine males with these performances, to determine what role gender plays in their experiences. Additionally, it was assumed that displacement would have been more significant due to an expected disconnection to the team and its' fans. However, it really appeared to have little to no effect on their experiences. This again could be due to information being easily accessible (Foster & Hyatt, 2008; Whitson, 1998). This is yet another area of research regarding sport fans that has had little focus (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Farred, 2002; Kraszewski, 2008).

As a result of examining multiple performances and their interactions, new findings on this population were discovered. These women do not view fandom as a linear or singular experience, but rather as a complex identity in which different elements (being displaced, highly identified, and female) affects how they perform fandom. The findings show that while some previous research is being supported (i.e., they still experience feelings of marginalization), this research has exposed new findings in which female sport fans embrace feelings of uniqueness and isolation when engaged in multiple performances. By spending more time with the participants, new perspectives are exposed about highly identified, displaced, female sport fans.

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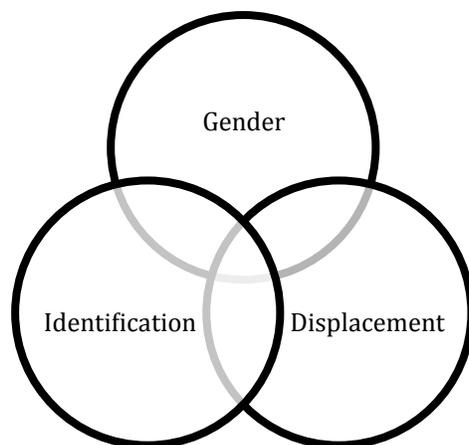
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Table 1. Participant demographics

Name	Age	Team
Chloe	29	Philadelphia Eagles (NFL)
Emma	27	Detroit Red Wings (NHL)
Lexi	26	Edmonton Oilers (NHL)
Lindsey	26	Baltimore Ravens (NFL)
Mia	38	Green Bay Packers (NFL)
Olivia	23	New York Yankees (MLB)
Zoey	24	Green Bay Packers (NFL)

Figure 1. Intersecting performances.



Chapter 5 – Conclusion

5.1 Summary and Implications

This study added valuable insight to the female fan research, an underdeveloped area in the sport fanship literature. It provides insight into potential contexts where female sport fanship challenges hegemonic masculinity as well as contexts in which women become active agents in their own oppression by adhering to this viewpoint (Messerschmidt, 2012). It also adds to the current literature by exploring how women manage and negotiate various performances of fanship. Lastly, it contributes to the current understanding of humans, as it has been noted that we must examine the lived experiences they face. As Melnick (1989) noted: “what matters is that we begin listening to what the sport fan can tell us about ourselves and the sociocultural system that shapes and molds our everyday lives” (p. 171).

The intent of this study was to examine the lived experiences of highly identified displaced, female sport fans. A focus was placed on experiences regarding marginalization and empowerment, as well as the interaction amongst multiple performances, which included gender, fan identification and displacement. Through the use of multiple individual interviews, in-depth and rich data was gathered focusing on the context and experiences in their fanship. The findings demonstrate that the participants’ experienced both marginalization and empowerment. Additionally, it was found that interactions and negotiations occur amongst the performances of gender, fan identification and displacement.

One objective of this project was to determine if female fans felt marginalized, empowered or both. The majority of research notes that female sport fans are frequently

questioned and view as inauthentic (Crawford & Gosling, 2004; Jones, 2008; Pope, 2012; Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012). Marginalization primarily occurred when it was assumed that female sport fans deviated from sport fan norms. These norms are often associated with highly identified male fans and include characteristics such as emotionally invested, loyalty, having a social identity with the team and knowledge (Wann & Branscombe, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann & Nolan, 1994). While it appeared the participants had these traits, their gender was the main reason why others assumed they would not.

Similar to previous literature (Hoerber & Kerwin, 2013; Jones, 2008; Pope, 2013), the participants in this study marginalized other female sport fans if they deviated from these norms. This cycle demonstrates women's active participation in reinforcing these hegemonic ideas of authentic and true fans. Yet, it has been argued that the definition of fanship is subjective in which individuals are able to self-identity as fans (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Mahony, Madrigal & Howard, 2000; Osborne & Coombs, 2013; Sveinson & Hoerber, in press). It appears that those who are part of the fan culture dictate what fanship means and prioritize characteristics based on authenticity. Sveinson and Hoerber's (in press) work studied female sport fans and found that the most important traits for women were: enjoyment of the game and team, demonstrating positive support, and wearing team colours. These characteristics are rarely mentioned in regards to 'authentic' fans, however the participants self-identified as such. In order to break the cycle of marginalizing others based on their fan characteristics, those fans with the power to dictate who is and is not a fan should recognize the subjectivity and individuality that exists in fanship.

The source of this marginalization appeared to be based on male dominance in sport (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Since men are understood as the standard sport fan, those who deviate could easily be seen as inauthentic. However, with the growing number of female sport fans in the four major leagues (NFL, MLB, NHL, NBA; Dosh, 2012; Thompson, 2014), they are becoming much more common. While certain leagues have acknowledged this increase by creating more female branded merchandise (Dosh, 2012), I would argue that it is not enough to integrate them into the organization. However, since women's fans experiences are complex with many variations (Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012), it is difficult for an organization to address the needs of each individual fan. Taking that into consideration, female sport fans' needs should still be addressed beyond clothing, in areas such as game day operations, marketing and communications.

Opportunities should be in place to recognize female sport fans as authentic and valuable members to the organization. Some organizations, such as the Baltimore Ravens, have events specifically for their female fans, in which include: "on-field drills & activities... Football 101 teaching sessions, a Ravens style lounge, exclusive stadium access, player appearances and autographs and the Lombardi Trophy from Super Bowl XLVII" (Baltimore Ravens, 2014, para. 5). Other organizations, like the Houston Astros, took a different approach to their ladies night, which included: "Baseball 101' talk, a diamond, bling and glittery things happy hour, complimentary beauty treatments and a State Farm Insurance-branded 'exclusive ladies night gift'" (Binckes, 2013, para. 4). While the difference between the two 'ladies nights' might be representative of varying marketing strategies, the latter uses an outdated, stereotypical approach to engaging female sport fans. While this approach may appeal to some women, there are many

whose interests go beyond all things pink and glittery, such as female friendly stadiums (Barton, 2013).

While they did experience feelings of marginalization, they also felt empowered by their fanship. This often arose from overcoming barriers, such as the assumption that all female fans are motivated by social interactions or physical attraction to the players (Wann et al., 2001; Wedgwood, 2008), with little investment in the outcome of the game. Through the process of proving themselves and being accepted as legitimate sport fans, empowerment occurred. Therefore, when female sport fans demonstrate typical sport fan norms, they no longer feel marginalized. This reinforces the idea that sports remains a male dominated domain, in which women only seek to fit in and not to be trailblazers.

The finding of empowerment both compliments and contrasts results found in leisure research. The similarities exist as the participants found that they were empowered by being a female in a male dominated environment as well as challenging gender norms by being women who are highly identified sport fans (e.g., Raisborough & Bhatti, 2007; Roster, 2007). While the participants may have been challenging gender norms, they were empowered by being accepted through the demonstration of sport fan norms. Therefore, while they may have resisted gender ideologies, they sought to comply with fan ideologies.

The other objective of this study was to examine how female sport fans perform their fanship. The majority of this research has mainly focused on the role of gender in their experiences (Gosling, 2007; Jones, 2008; Sherlock & Elsdon, 2000), and rarely considered other performances that could have an impact. Therefore, this study examined the performances of gender, fan identification and displacement. While each of these

performances interacted with each other (gender and identification, identification and displacement and gender and displacement), the interaction that occurred amongst all three resulted in feelings of enjoyment and uniqueness. These findings demonstrate that female fan experiences are not linear or singular, but rather complex with multiple performances interacting simultaneously and with difficulty to determine separation from each other (Osborne & Coombs, 2013).

Overall, gender was at the root of their experiences and was the main contributor to feelings of marginalization, empowerment and how they performed fanship. They were marginalized because they were female, they felt empowered by overcoming the stereotypes of typical female sport fans and being a highly identified, displaced female sport fan provided an enjoyable and unique experience for them. The role of gender may not be identical experiences for males as it is assumed that males are not only fans, but also are viewed as authentic and “real” fans (Osborne & Coombs, 2013). These findings reinforce the notion that female sport fans’ experiences are varied and complex (Toffoletti & Mewett, 2012), and as a result, research needs to focus on more than one dimension of their experiences.

5.2 Limitations

This study is limited due to the small sample size. In order to ensure this project was timely and manageable, seven women were accepted as participants. As well, since this project used quite specific criteria, there were a limited number of participants who fit the requirements. Additionally, this sample was composed of young, Caucasian women, which may have resulted in more similarities than if the sample involved a variety of ages and races. The use of the multiple interview structure appeared to be

beneficial, however it also resulted in opportunity for outside influence (i.e., opinions or views of others who they spoke to about the study) to be brought into the following interviews. As a result of participant availability, the interview structure had some variations: three participants had three separate interviews and four participants had two separate interviews (three combined the first and second interviews and one combined the second and third interviews). While there was an effort to maintain consistency, there could have been discrepancy in the individual and combined interviews. For example, this discrepancy could have occurred during the combined interviews, where I could ask a follow up question about the first interview during the second interview questions. Also, the participant's ability to reflect between three individual interviews could have brought forward different insights than those who only had time to reflect once.

Another limitation is that while four participants were fans of NFL teams, only two were fans of NHL teams and one was a fan of an MLB team. I was unable to find participants who were fans of NBA teams, as that was my original goal. It would have been beneficial to have equal numbers, as I would have been able to compare experiences across sports to determine if the fan culture varied. Furthermore, four participants have attended games of their teams while the other three have not. Therefore, some of the participants were able to speak to experiences of attending games and what it felt like to become part of the environment. The rest mentioned a strong desire to attend games. This could have affected the discussion of displacement, as those who have attended games may view it as less significant than those who have not.

Since I fit the participant criteria, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, form a connection for them and help them to feel comfortable

during the discussion. However, this familiarity could also have resulted in not following up for clarification or assumptions of what the participant was discussing. I tried to rectify this by having debriefing meetings with my supervisor, in which she was able to serve as an outside perspective. Furthermore, since I was part of the membership, I was hyper aware of asking them to explain their responses.

5.3 Future Directions

Based on the findings, there is much potential for future directions. While this sample size was derived from the same geographical location, future research could compare the experiences of female fans based in different locations, to determine if and how their experiences would differ. Pope (2011) also noted the need for similar research: “it would also be interesting to compare these findings with findings from female fans of other clubs, both in the UK and worldwide” (pg. 483). It is possible that due to different cultures and sport fan norms in different geographical location that there would be some discrepancy in female sport fans’ experiences. The participants in this study found gender to be at the core of their experiences, therefore it would be interesting to study highly identified, displaced male fans to determine if and what type of role gender plays in their experiences. Additionally, it would be interesting to look at what role other social identifiers play in experiences of marginalization, empowerment and intersecting performances. For example, how would these experiences be impacted based on race, sexual orientation, nationality or social class?

Furthermore, future studies could take a broader approach to female sport fan research. For example, where do female sport fans see themselves fitting in the overall organization? Are their needs and positions as fans addressed in the mission, vision and

values? Since male fans represent more than half of the fan market in major leagues (Dosh, 2012; Thompson, 2014), it could be argued that team organization's focus more heavily on this segment through marketing, merchandise and game day operations (i.e., cheerleaders, selling beer). In order for these organization's to continually grow, increase their sales and increase their market, they need to acknowledge the fans that may not always be central to their organization, including women, immigrants and homosexuals. Since this project only interviewed fans, it would be interesting to interview sport organizations and examine their view of this newer market segment. As well, future research could examine other fan segments (i.e., immigrants or homosexuals) to determine how they see themselves fitting (or not) into the sport organization.

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