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# Fan Culture in the American Hockey League

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## Abstract

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### Fan Culture in the American Hockey League

If a person wears sweatpants to a black tie affair everyone knows that they don't fit into that posh high class culture. In sports it is the same way for a fan that wears a rival team's jersey to a home game. For example if a Rochester Americans fan wears an Americans jersey to a Syracuse Crunch Game in Syracuse, they are treated the same way as the person who wore the sweatpants to a black tie event. However that one Rochester Americans fan can find someone else who is outside the Crunch culture, and perhaps a part of their own culture. People are known for being social creatures; they have a need to interact with others (Gau, 2013). These people find their own group, whom have similar interests, values, or beliefs (Gau, & Kim, 2011). The groups can be as broad as people who enjoy sports as a whole, to those who have a favorite sport, down to those to have a favorite team, and even a group who has the same favorite player. These groups are made up of different types of people that form their own culture.

Existing research has explored these cultures by looking into what has attracted people to those cultures. While some research focuses on specific parts of culture, others focus on specific groups of fans, all of which further develop understanding of fan behavior regarding sport teams. However, no previous research has looked in depth into why people have chosen to be a part of a certain culture. This paper will focus on the fan culture of sports, specifically the American Hockey League.

#### **Motivations**

In previous literature, researchers have taken psychological and sociological approaches to look at what has attracted consumers, both fans and non-fans, to games. Two motivations discovered by Koo and Hardin are self-esteem, and identification (2008), with additional motivations added; escape, economic, group affiliation, and family by Wann, Grieve, Zapalac,

and Pease (2008). Motives such as those give the different sport leagues the ability to flourish because it can bring in more than just a team's fans but the fans from other teams as well (Fink & Parker, 2009). Bringing in more fans to games, especially fans of a different sport will create more revenue for the league (Zetou, Kouli, Psarras, Tzetzis, & Michalopoulou, 2013). These revenues will not only come from ticket sales, but concessions, or apparel and it could bring new fans to the sport.

Fans relate to their team's success and achievements as if it were their own success, which creates an increase in their self-esteem giving them a desire to attend more games; this is called the self-esteem motive (Pease & Zhang, 2001). People use sport as an escape because they are unhappy with some aspect of their home life (Wann et al., 2008). For example if a man is going through a tough time with his wife he may attend a sporting event to get away from everything that has been creating the rough patch and focusing his attention on something else. Or, people use escape to get away from the monotony of everyday life (Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003). The economic motive is through betting on the better team or the underdog, which creates a money-making scheme (Kim, Greenwall, Andrew, Lee & Mahony, 2008). To put it simply it is gambling. Those who go to games simply for economic purpose go to primarily see the outcome of the game or to make bets during the game. For example at a hockey game, a person might turn to the man or woman next to them and make a bet on who will win in a fight if the fight breaks out. In one study it was found that the economic motive was seen more at aggressive sporting events than nonaggressive sporting events (Bernthal & Graham, 2003). Showing that this motive would be seen more at hockey games than at baseball games.

Family motive is to go to games in order to spend time with family members who enjoy the sport (Wann et al., 2008). However stereotypical it is, the family motive is more prevalent in

females than their male counterparts (Robinson & Trail, 2005). An example of family motive is a mother going to a baseball game because her children and husband enjoy going to the game and all she wants to do is spend quality time with her family. These motives may be important to know in order to see how fan cultures of a certain team or sport are built upon, in other words what attracts a fan to attend the game in the first place.

Taking a different approach, previous literature has also looked at what attracts or motivates consumers to sporting events based on the game itself, rather than factors intrinsic to fans. These motives are: eustress, entertainment, and aesthetic (Wann et al., 2008). People attend games with the motive of eustress in order to gain pleasure and stimulation through the sport because of the drama sporting events can bring (Kruger & Saayman, 2012). This does not mean it has to be positive stimulation; people may attend games to adhere to their needs of stress, and/or risk taking, in order to provide stimulation in their everyday life (Pease & Zhang, 2001). For example, those who attend football games for eustress tend to gain pleasure and stimulation from the violent tendencies in a football game. Entertainment motive is self-explanatory which is that the “sport is considered as an enjoyable pastime” (Wann et al., 2008, p.7). In other words one would attend a sporting event for the pure pleasure of watching the game. People see sport as an entertainment when they see less of a show of athletic ability and more of a competition that has to be hard fought (Pease & Zhang, 2001). The ability to enjoy the beauty of a game or sporting event is the aesthetic motive (Wann et al., 2008). This type of fan is able to enjoy the game simply for what it is, they are not attracted to the game because of the intermission games, or pregame concerts, they are only attracted to the game itself.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Interaction Ritual (IR) Theory is commonly used to examine the exchanges that make up the social encounters everybody partakes in everyday as well as the importance of these encounters for not only the society as a whole but for oneself as well (Cottingham, 2012). IR Theory is based on the importance of social interaction (Hausmann, Jonason, & Summers-Effler, 2011). The IR Theory can create a sense of community among people and bond them socially to each other (McFarland, Jurafsky & Rawlings, 2013). According to highly regarded sociologist, Randall Collins, in order for an interaction ritual to be considered successful it needs to have the following elements; two or more people need to be gathered in the same place, these people need to mingle with each other, these people need to have a shared focus whether it be an object or activity, they must have similar emotions or moods based off of said object or activity and lastly they must withstand the test of time, which means it has to continue beyond that of the main event (Cottingham, 2012; Hausmann et al., 2011; Collins, 1981; Collins, 2004; Collins, 2008). When this success occurs, the interactions become predictable and the people understand one another on a higher level than everyday life interactions (McFarland, et al., 2013).

This theory can be used to explain the ritualistic phenomenon that is seen within the sport world that can be believed similar to that of religious practices (Birrell, 1981). These religious practices can be seen as superstitions, which are the irrational beliefs or practices thought to influence the outcome of a game (Wilson, Grieve, Ostrowski, Menaltowski, & Cyr, 2013). Taking a look into professional sport, there are two or more fans that attend the games, which meets the need of the first element of the IR Theory (Hausmann et al., 2011; Collins, 1981; Collins, 2004; Collins, 2008). These sport fans become social with each other through various ways; one of the main ways is through rituals (Cottingham, 2012). Rituals can be seen as the way fans should act with each other and individually while in the presence of other fans or that of a

sacred object (Birrell, 1981). These sacred objects can be considered part of the shared focus of the fans, some fans may view the sacred object as a logo or a championship trophy, and however the main one tends to be the sporting event itself that the fans are either attending or watching together in a common area (Ahn, Suh, Lee, & Pedersen, 2012). Fans of a certain team will have the same emotions depending on the outcome of the game; they will either be happy because of the win or sad because of the loss.

In order to demonstrate a link between sport and the last element of the Interaction Ritual Theory, Cottingham (2012) observed the Pittsburgh Steelers fans on multiple occasions during the season on game days as well as during the offseason. Her findings showed that during the offseason Steeler fans still continued with rituals and wore or presented sacred objects at events other than the games, such as weddings or funerals (Cottingham, 2012). That is what Collins (2008) considered outside the realm of the main event, thus withstanding through the test of time.

## **Literature Review**

### **Team Identification**

Previous research has taken into consideration the different types of fans, looking from high team identification to those who have a low identification. Identification can be referred to as a placement of oneself in favor to another person or group that ends with emotions of close attachment (Wu, Tsai, & Hung, 2012). Team identification has been defined as “the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as fans of the team, are involved with the team, are concerned with the team’s performance, and view the team as a representation of themselves” (Branscombe & Wann, 1995, p. 377). Using this definition, Bodet and Bernache-Assollant (2011), have researched why fans attend games and come to the conclusion that there is a direct

relationship between an intention of a fan to attend a game and the level of team identification both when the team is doing well, and when they are doing poorly. That is, fans that have high team identification are more likely to have found a team that not only provides its fans with a sense of community and feelings of companionship it can also develop self-esteem as well as social regard (Andrijew & Hyatt, 2009; Murrell & Dietz, 1992; Wann, 2006; Wann, Dunham, Byrd, & Keenan, 2004; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001; Zillmann, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989).

Groups of sport fans can be identified in different ways; usually they are compared to one another. One way is to differentiate between fandom and fanship. Fandom is when fans identify with other fans of the same team, while fanship is a fan having a connection with the sport team (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). An example of a fandom is team blogs that are run by fans; these blogs consist of fans communicating with other fans of the same team from places around the world. While fanship is those fans that may connect with a team because of the goals or mission statement of a team that a fan identifies with in everyday life. With this being said fandoms and fanships go hand in hand, which means that fans can either be considered in both groups or they might only identify in one of the groups.

Another way fans are identified is how loyal or devoted they are to their favorite team. Fan devotion can be defined as how far a fan would go for their team no matter what happens (Cottingham, 2012). In other words some fans would travel across the country to go to games, or stand outside in bad weather during a sold out game to show support for their team. An example of this is when the Buffalo Sabres go into the playoffs fans gather in the 'Plaza' wearing Sabres gear and watch the game standing the entire game, no matter what the weather is that day (Harrington, 2011). Fan/team loyalty is the attachment of a fan to their team based off of external

factors such as social identity, which is when a person believes they belong in a group; the attachment becomes so deep that it is almost impossible to switch to another team and break that attachment (Heere & James, 2007).

The variance of fans can be broken down into: bandwagon, fair-weather, and hardcore (Park, Mahony & Greenwall, 2010). Bandwagon fans are those who become fans of a team only because of their recent successes not because they have an attachment to the team and tend to switch favorite teams frequently. Fair-weather fans are considered fans who do not know much about the format and game itself and will only show up for games when the weather is nice or the team is playing well (Hall, Thomson, Rodrique-Davies, Mayer, & Hall, 2012). Diehards or hardcore fans are the opposite of fair-weather fans. This type of fan will continue to go to games no matter how bad the weather is or how bad the team is doing that season, and this type of fan knows the ins and outs of the game (Cottingham, 2012). These breakdowns of fans are only parts of the whole of what is considered fan culture. All of these variations are interrelated and most cannot exist without the other. The ability to understand these concepts make understanding fans as a whole, that much easier.

A potential fan will explore many aspects of a team when deciding on whom to be loyal to. The team that has the most desirable attributes will win that fan's loyalty. Much of the information on attributes of a team is dependent on how a team brands themselves. (Lock, Taylor, Funk & Darcy, 2012). The team must brand themselves through their values and goals to the outside world in order to create desirable aspects to those potential fans. "Values have been identified as influential factors for attitudes, personal involvement, brand choice, goals and behaviors of fans to choose a team (Lee & Trail, 2011, p. 594). This shows that a person would identify with whatever team they deem would benefit them most. So if a team has similar goals

and values that the fan does, the fan is more likely to identify with that team because of the correspondence of the values between the team and the individual (Lock, et al., 2012).

Another way that Wann defined team identification is the psychological connections an individual forms with a team, which may create a personal involvement with that team as well. (Wann, 1997). This explains why the fan has a deeper connection with their team which may make the fan use words like ‘my’ ‘our’ and/or ‘we’ when talking about their favorite team. Heere and James describe it as providing “fans with a sense of belonging and attachment to a larger social structure” (2007, p. 320).

Team identification is split into two different levels. The level of a fan can be determined by “...the extent to which the fan views the team as an extension of his or herself” (Wann, 2006, p. 273). Someone with a high level of team identification can be considered a diehard fan or a committed fan. Fans with high level of team identification will be able to get emotional benefits just because of the association with the other people who identify highly with the group (Wann, 2006). These committed fans have identified so much with a team that the team becomes integrated in the fans everyday life (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). While someone with a lower level of team identification is more of a causal fan, or fair-weather fan. These types of fans only identify with their team during/while attending the game itself and tend to forget about it once they leave (Wann, et al., 1993). Team identification does not take in consideration bandwagon fans because those types of fans do not identify with one team but go from team to team depending on how well that team may be doing in a particular season.

Research by Reysen and Branscombe went through fanships and fandoms of sport fans vs non-sport fans. They figured out that sport fans and non-sport fans are similar to each other, which created the definition of fan as “any individual who is an enthusiastic, ardent, and a loyal

admirer of an interest” (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010, p. 177). Sport fandoms are those fans that identify with other fans of the same team (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). With this being said fandom for non-sport fans would be identifying with other fans of the same interest. For example the Harry Potter Series has their own fandom, where fans go to events across the world in order to interact with other fans like themselves (Ramano, 2012). This shows how fandom exists for both non-sport and sport fans. Like fandoms and fanships, fan culture is not just related to sport fans but non-sport fans as well.

### **Fan Culture**

Reysen and Branscombe define fan as “individuals who are devoted to a myriad of interests, not only sports teams and celebrities” (2010, p. 177). But when society uses the word fan, it is most often intending relation to sports teams. When these fans come together, they create a unique culture. Most often these fans come together around a certain team.

Fan nations and sport communities are considered a broader term to fan culture (Heere & James, 2007; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Fan nations consist of three different parts; part one is fans who no longer like a team on just a whim but who have become attached to the team, part two are fans who currently have a deep bond with the team, and part three are fans who are committed to the team from any and every possible aspect (Foster & Hyatt, 2008). Sport communities are a group of people from everywhere who have the same ideas, behavior, values and goals, they either relate around one specific sport or one specific team (Heere & James, 2007).

A group of fans who identify with teams at a high level have the tendency to form their own sport communities which then creates their own fan culture because of their similar dedication to a particular team (Aden et al., 2009). In Foster and Hyatt’s (2008) article they

explain that those who have a strong bond, or are highly identified with the team, are those who make up the fan culture.

Research has found that those who are involved in positive fan culture have an increased mental well-being than those who are not identified with any type of groups or people to a higher extent (Wann, 2006). Benefits of the fan culture can be dependent on the type of person, if he/she is an independent, self-directive person they can benefit from joining a fan culture simply by satisfying the human need of social interaction (Gau, 2013). This type of culture brings a sense of belonging to the fans that are only native to those in sport (Melnick 1993). However it isn't only a sense of belonging that is brought to a fan but a sense of self, and the ability to find out who they are, especially if the sense of self is intertwined with the fate of the team and other fans in the culture (Armstrong, 2007). These fan cultures have created more of a meaning in the lives of those who are a part of that culture (Andrijew & Hyatt, 2009).

These fan cultures are not only found in close proximity of the team that they are identified with but everywhere a fan may be located (Wann, 2006). Team fans that do not live within the vicinity of the team may form 'watch parties' in public places, such as bars where fans of the same team will congregate and watch the same game together (Aden, et al., 2009). An example of these displaced fans are the Nebraska Cornhusker fans who live outside of the state, have gathered in a private room in a bar, decorated the room, and turned up the game so loud that the other patrons watching football in another room would still hear the Nebraska game (Aden et al., 2009). Fans that are a part of the culture but are in a different city or state can still benefit from the aforementioned psychological benefits that other fans who are a part of the same fan culture but live in the same vicinity benefit from (Wann, 2006).

No matter what type of culture a person is in, it must include certain elements in order to be considered a culture (Dunk, 2000). One of the elements that make a culture is tradition. Tradition is “the repetition of rituals that honour and emphasize current symbols, evoke deep emotions that are located within a nation’s [sport teams] past” (Foster & Hyatt, 2008, p. 273). An example of tradition could be as general as someone singing the national anthem at the beginning of each game. Or it could be more specific, for example during the national anthem at Chicago Blackhawk games, Blackhawk fans will cheer throughout the entire national anthem, something that is usually only seen in Chicago (Strauss, 2013).

Another element of culture is rituals. Rituals in the sport sense can be broken up into different type of rituals. The first being communication rituals which is the act of chanting and cheering with other fans during certain parts of a sporting event (Aden et al., 2009). For example at Buffalo Sabres games, Sabres fans will chant together “Let’s go Buffalo” periodically throughout the game. The second type of rituals is personal ritual. These rituals are ones that are done individually by fans that give them a sense that they have influenced the outcome of the game by completing the ritual (Aden et al., 2009). Personal rituals usually depend on the person but one example is Boston Bruins fan Candee Stuchlik. Candee will wear the same shirt and eat the same chips during a Bruins game in order to feel as if she has control over an uncontrollable situation (Annear, 2013).

A third element of culture is language. Language can be a range anywhere from what people say to the gestures people give (Stern, 1929). Sport fans have their own language and depending on what sport or team they are fans of, the language will change. In hockey, the referees give ice officials, coaches, and fans signals that explain what happened, if one is not a part of this culture these signals will not mean anything to them.

A fourth element of culture is symbols. Symbols are a shared depiction of the values and beliefs of one's community or culture; it serves as a reminder to those in the culture in order to sustain their identity within (Birrell, 1981). Using Cottingham's research, she figured out that symbols for Steeler fans contained but were not limited too; team logo, colors of the team, terrible towels, Steeler-themed coats, sweaters, hats, gloves, scarves, bags, tablecloths, lawn chairs, car decals, inflated figurines, and painted faces (Cottingham, 2012).

People attend sport games on a regular basis, however they have different motives behind why they attend the game; self-esteem, identification, escape, economic, group affiliation and family. Each person may also have different team identification, how a fan connects with a team. A culture forms among the fans of the same team; such culture is made up of elements. In the past researchers have observed the culture but have not looked into why the fans have become part of that culture and what aspects of the culture do they enjoy the most, specifically in the American Hockey League (AHL). This research attempts to fill this gap in knowledge by asking

- 1) Why AHL fans have chosen to become part of a particular team's culture?
- 2) What aspects of various team cultures do they enjoy the most?

## **Method**

### **Sample**

A convenience sampling method was used to survey fans of American Hockey League (AHL) teams. These teams included; the Abbotsford Heat, Adirondack Phantoms, Albany Devils, Binghamton Senators, Bridgeport Sound Tigers, Charlotte Checkers, Chicago Wolves, Grand Rapids Griffins, Hamilton Bulldogs, Hartford Wolf Pack, Hershey Bears, Iowa Wild, Lake Erie Monsters, Manchester monarchs, Milwaukee Admirals, Norfolk Admirals, Oklahoma City Barons, Portland Pirates, Providence Bruins, Rochester Americans, Rockford IceHogs, San

Antonio Rampage, Springfield Falcons, St. John's IceCaps, Syracuse Crunch, Texas Stars, Toronto Marlies, Utica Comets, Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins, and Worcester Sharks. The survey was distributed through the team's social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook as well as posted to reddit.com. In order to post the survey to team's social media sites, permission was asked (see Appendix A).

In order to show how many people could access the survey a quick evaluation was done to see the users on the three social media used to distribute the survey. The total number of likes of Facebook for all 30 American Hockey League teams is 856,007 (see Appendix B). Followers on Twitter of all of the 30 American Hockey League team's totals 434,218 (see Appendix C). Reddit.com has a total of 2.45 million redditors and 139,470 of them have subscribed to the subreddit hockey board. With the use of these three mediums 285 surveys were taken, and 276 of were completed.

With the approach that was taken the research was able to get 210 participants who had favorite team from 28 of the 30 AHL teams. Since the participants of this survey were from multiple teams it will give a better understanding to AHL fan culture as a whole and not just specific team fan cultures. These 210 surveys give enough information to analyze the information received. With these surveys being easily accessible to everyone who likes or follows one of the four teams on Twitter or Facebook it creates a diverse group of participants both male and female. One problem, however, is the ages of the participants of the survey, this could be caused by the fact that 83% of social media users are between the ages of 18-29 (Piombino, 2013).

## **Variables**

This research defined sport fans as “individuals who have an interest in and follow a sport, player, and/or team” (Park, Mahony & Greenwell, 2010, p. 434). With this definition the research looks at how identified the sport fans are; diehards, fair-weather, or bandwagon fans (Cottingham, 2012). This will help to see if the different identifications of fans have different ideas about their motivations in joining the fan culture of a certain team, and to see why they left that team’s fan’s culture if they consider themselves a bandwagon fan.

The research also took a look at the longevity of fans. This is important because over time fans may change their reasons of why they originally joined a fan culture as well as why they have stayed with that specific fan culture for as long as they have. Certain demographic information will help with the research as well. Finding the age of those who take the survey is important because the research can then take into consideration a difference between generations on what they look for in a fan culture, or why they stay with a certain team if there is one. Gender is another demographic that will be helpful in the research. Finding out if the participant is a male or female may help with finding out if they have different reasons for joining a fan culture than their counterparts. Getting the fans’ zip code will help knowing that proximity to the fan’s favorite team may be a factor.

Other aspects this research took a look at were what parts of the culture the fans take part in. This gives us the opportunity to look at how involved they are within the culture, which can support or negate Foster and Hyatt’s (2008) statement that fans who are more highly identified with the team are the ones that make up the fan culture. These elements of culture that the research will take a look in are that of; tradition (Foster & Hyatt, 2008), rituals (Aden et al., 2009), and symbols (Birrell, 1981). In order to take a look at tradition, the research must figure out what type of tradition happens in their specific fan culture that they take a part in. For ritual,

the research will find out whether or not the fan takes a part in the chants that happen throughout the game. Finally, for symbols the research will figure out whether or not these fans wear the logo of the team (jerseys, shirts, hats, etc.) at the games. All of which will help identify how strong these fans are a part of the culture.

The survey took a look at those who are not a fan of a specific team and why they are not. This will give those fans of the AHL but not a specific team their input into why they did not become a part of a fan culture. With this information teams may benefit from learning how to get a group of AHL fans to become a part of their culture that was not an option before.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The survey was piloted by two professors and two student peers. With their helpful comments and suggestions it was changed to be easier understood which will help keep the clarity and validity of responses possible. With the permission of all the aforementioned teams, some through email and some verbally the survey was distributed (see Appendix D). The post on Facebook and Twitter gave fans brief instructions about the survey as well as the nature of the study, including the purpose of the study, which is to find out why people have chosen to be a part of a fan culture and stuck with that fan culture for however long they have, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of the information of which they provide. As stated earlier, the survey was distributed on all 30 American Hockey League teams' Facebook and Twitter pages. The survey was initially posted on Facebook and Twitter on February 25, 2014, with a repost on March 11, 2014 and posted on reddit.com on April 5, 2014. The survey was closed on April 14, 2014.

### **Analysis**

After the data had been collected, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS) was used to analyze the information gathered. The data was coded and imputed into various statistical analyses. Analyzing the data the research tested for spearman correlations, which is whether there is a relationship between categorical variables. This test was done to see if there was a relationship between the age of fan and longevity of the fan, diehard identification and participation in fan culture, gender and identification. The rest of the results were done using quantitative data analysis. This quantitative analysis has discovered whether the motivations of a high identified fan are similar to that of a low identified fan. As well as if the motivations of males are the same as the motivations of females. Other analysis that it were found were whether fans who have a high identification participate in elements of fan culture more than those who have a low identification.

### Results

With the use of the spearman correlation in SPSS it was found that there is a significant relationship between how identified a fan is with their favorite team and how often they start a chant of a cheer,  $r = .007$   $p < .05$ . A significant relationship was also found between how identified a fan is and what they wear to games,  $r = .000$   $p < .001$ . However there was no significant relationship found between how identified a person is with how often they join chants  $r = .234$ ,  $p = .234$  (see Appendix E for complete correlation analysis).

In order to fully understand the results of the survey, the research must know the demographics of who took the survey. A close look shows that 84% of the survey participants were between the ages of 18-28, while 9% of the participants are between the ages of 29-38, and only 7% of the participants are 39 or older. (see Appendices F for complete age analysis). Those who participated in the survey also broke into four fan identification categories; the two most

dominate categories were diehard fans, 42%, and fair-weather fans, 29%. (see Appendices G for complete fan identification analysis). For those fans that have a favorite team 29% of them have been fans of their favorite team for 3-5 years. While 28% have been fans for more than 12 years. (see Appendices H for complete longevity of fans analysis).

Using quantitative analysis it was found that the majority of people, both fans and non-fans are motivated to attend games because of self-esteem reasons, 69%. Family is the second most popular motivation to attend games at 65%. With proximity to the American Hockey League team becoming the third highest motivation to attend games with 57%. The other motivations followed as; fan of parent team, 51%, group affiliation, 48%, escape, 26%, and economic, 1%. (see Appendices I for the complete analysis of motivations).

A chi-square test was done to find out if there was a relationship between identification and motives of fans to attend AHL games. The results showed there was a significant relationship  $r=.006$   $p<.05$ . To explore what the differences were between motivation and identification, a quantitative analysis was done comparing the motivations of bandwagon fans to fans that identify as fair-weather fans and to diehard, as well as comparing diehard to fair-weather. This analysis showed that 17% of bandwagon are motivated to attend games because of their family while 63% of fair-weather and 68% of diehard fans said that family is a motivation for them to attend American Hockey League games. For the self-esteem motive 83% of the diehard fans and bandwagon fans admitted that this was a reason why they would attend AHL games, while only 50% of fair-weather fans said this was one of their motives for attending the game. 55% of diehard fans said that one motive to attend games is because it provides escape from their everyday life, 27% of the fair-weather fans agreed with this statement while only 17% of the bandwagon fans agreed. Only 4% of fair-weather fans said that one of their motives for

attending games as for economic purposes while no bandwagon fan or diehard agreed with this statement. The National Hockey League team affiliate has no impact in motivations for attending AHL games for bandwagon fans however 50% of fair-weather fans and 59% of diehard fans agree that this is a motive. (see Appendices J for the complete analysis of motivations based on identification).

The analysis also looked into the starting and joining in on cheers and/or chants. It showed that only 5% of fans actually start chants often, while 52% of the fans join in chants often. 29% of fans join into chants sometimes, and 20% start the chant sometimes. An astonishing 75% of fans never or rarely start a chant/cheer, while 16% of fans never or rarely join a chant. (see Appendices T for complete data analysis of chants/cheers).

The data analysis also quantitative to find out what the fans favorite traditions were of their favorite team. The highest percentage of fans had some form of in game promotions as their favorite tradition, 33%. 12% of fans agreed that the interaction between fans was the best tradition. There was a three way tie for the third favorite tradition with; chanting/cheering, family/friends, and interactions with the players during outside events, 12%. 10% of fans have found that their favorite tradition is in a form of a charity or community event that their specific teams put on. While only 8% of fans say that winning is their favorite tradition of their team's. (see Appendices K for the complete analysis of favorite traditions).

Looking into reasons why fans stay a fan the quantitative data analysis found that 21% of fans stay fans with their favorite team because of the proximity to the team. 19% stay fans because of their affiliation with their National Hockey League teams. While family constitutes as 14% of the fans reasons to stay fans of their favorite American Hockey League team. (see Appendices L for the complete analysis of reasons why fans stay fans).

The analysis compared male's motivations against female's motivations. Out of the females who participated in the survey 65% said that they are motivated to attend games because of family reasons while 75% of males said that family was a reason why they attended games. The results also showed that 62% of males are motivated to go to games in order to increase their self-esteem while 42% of females are. 53% of males have said they are motivated to attend AHL games as an escape from their everyday lives, while only 19% of females see it the same way. Only 1% of both male and female motives to attend games are because of economic purposes. (see Appendices M for the complete analysis of gender differences for motivations).

The data analysis compared whether or not males or females identified themselves as one type of fan over another. The analysis found 6% of females identified themselves as bandwagon fans, while only 1% of males identified that way. As for fair-weather fans 31% of males identified as so and 20% of females did. There is a 21% difference in favor of males on those who identify as a diehard fan, with 53% of males identifying as so and 32% of females. (see Appendices N for the complete analysis of gender differences for identification).

Proximity to the participant's favorite team was taken into consideration while doing data analysis. It was found that 65% of participants who identified as fans with a specific team lived within 30 miles from their team. While 20% of fans lived between 30.01 and 90 miles of their favorite team and 15% of fans lived more than 90.01 miles of their team. (see Appendices S for the complete analysis of proximity).

The final three analysis paid closer attention to the participants of the survey who were not fans of a specific team. The analysis found out the reasons why they were not fans of an American Hockey League team, the number one reason was because they were not a hockey fan, 74%. While 11% of people explained that the reason was that the AHL is minor league. 4% said

that they didn't have a favorite AHL team because they didn't have any knowledge of hockey. Yet the final 6% had other reasons for not having a favorite hockey league team. (see Appendices O for the complete analysis of reasons behind not having a favorite AHL team).

With the analysis the research could also find reasons not to attend American Hockey League games. 65% of participants who do not have a favorite AHL team say it's because they are not a fan. While 10% believe it's because it's minor league. 5% say it's because they have don't have any many. The remaining 20% had other reasons for not attending American Hockey League games. (see Appendices P for the complete analysis of reasons for not attending AHL games).

The final analysis was the differences between motivations of fans and non-fans. It was found that 53% of fans are motivated to attend AHL games because of the parent team affiliation, while a mere 13% of non-fans are. 75% of non-fans are motivated to attend games due to the proximity of the team, while 57% of fans are motivated because of the area of the team. Family is another big reason that non-fans attend games, 75%, while only 65% of fans agree with this. (see Appendices Q for the complete analysis of fan motivations vs. non fan motivations).

### **Conclusion**

According to the results of this study, there are many different aspects of team culture that fans enjoy. Based off of the favorite fan traditions chart, some sort of in game promotion that is put on by a specific team is the aspect fans enjoy the most. Interaction with other fans comes in second on the favorite traditions, followed by chanting and cheering. It also showed that even though many fans of all identifications will join in on chants and cheers very few frequently start the chant themselves. While there are multiple aspects of a fan's team's culture

that are enjoyed by the fans, the team has the ability to control many of these favorite aspects or develop them since it is based on things outside the game itself, such as pregame shows, promotions, intermission games and many other opportunities. As long as fans are able to be engaged and entertained they will feel a part of the culture and feel a need to come back.

After fans attend AHL games, the research shows that there are many reasons why the fans stay within their specific team fan culture. The top three reasons are; team proximity, the fans enjoy supporting their local team, team affiliation, fans decision on their AHL team is primarily affected by who their favorite NHL team is, and family, being able to have the same pastime with family members can bring a family closer together. With these results American Hockey League teams can prioritize how they want to sell their team to their fans and potential fans. It gives them the opportunity to build new traditions through in game promotions, or find ways to increase fan involvement through chants and cheers by starting the chants themselves. This information can give American Hockey League teams a better understanding of what their fans need and want and work to better their relationship with those fans.

The results prove Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, and Pease's (2008) belief of motivations in attending games are because of escape, group affiliation, and family, but economic motivations are not very present within the AHL fan culture. It also proved that those who have identified higher with a hockey team participate in the culture at a higher level, which was stated by Brysen and Ranscomb (2010).

Future explorations should include the exploration of proximity to one's favorite American Hockey League team and the identification of fan they are. As well the research should look at the proximity of one's fan and gender and the distance of fans and their motivations to attend. This information would give the organizations a better understanding on

who their target market is and could be, which could potentially allow them to focus their marketing strategies on those markets.

The study did have a few limitation as stated earlier, the age of the participants were primarily 18-29. This could have potential issues when teams try to reach all demographics. An older group of participants could have given the research a completely different set of results. Another limitation is that even though there were a few fans from 28 of the 30 teams, the majority of participants who took the survey were Rochester American Fans.

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*Appendix A: Permission Letter*

January 31, 2014

Dear Team Name:

My name is Julie Mros and I am a Sport Management major at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. For my senior thesis, I am examining fan culture at American Hockey League games. Because you are a team within the American Hockey League, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by sharing this survey to your fans through your Facebook and Twitter pages.

There are a few options in order to distribute this survey. Option number one is your organization would post the survey link on your Facebook and Twitter pages. The second option is that I would be able to post the survey link on your Facebook page under my own name and tweet the link at you. The final option would be QR code flyers that would be put up around the arena that would bring the participant to the survey.

The web-based survey will require approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. The results of the survey will remain confidential. Results of this questionnaire will be provided to my professor, Dr. Emily Dane-Staples as well as your organization if you choose so. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time.

If you have any questions about the distribution options or ethics of this survey you can contact me via email [jam09170@sjfc.edu](mailto:jam09170@sjfc.edu) or via phone (585)760-9756. Or you can contact my professor, Dr. Emily Dane-Staples via email [edane-staples@sjfc.edu](mailto:edane-staples@sjfc.edu) or via phone (585)899-3803.

Since your approval is essential for my project to continue I ask that you reply by February 7, 2014 with a response to my request. The data will provide useful information regarding how fans choose favorite AHL teams and how they become loyal to that team.

Thank you for helping me with my educational endeavors.

Sincerely,  
Julie Mros

*Appendix B: Facebook Statistics*

| <b>Team</b>                    | <b># of Likes<br/>on<br/>Facebook</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Abbotsford Heat                | 9,489                                 |
| Adirondack Phantoms            | 17,642                                |
| Albany Devils                  | 10,887                                |
| Binghamton Senators            | 8,258                                 |
| Bridgeport Sound Tigers        | 11,638                                |
| Charlotte Checkers             | 43,166                                |
| Chicago Wolves                 | 26,338                                |
| Grand Rapids Griffins          | 80,476                                |
| Hamilton Bulldogs              | 37,291                                |
| Hartford Wolf Pack             | 8,154                                 |
| Hershey Bears                  | 49,458                                |
| Iowa Wild                      | 14,947                                |
| Lake Erie Monsters             | 22,816                                |
| Manchester monarchs            | 29,290                                |
| Milwaukee Admirals             | 28,861                                |
| Norfolk Admirals               | 21,517                                |
| Oklahoma City Barons           | 30,843                                |
| Portland Pirates               | 25,877                                |
| Providence Bruins              | 42,657                                |
| Rochester Americans            | 35,996                                |
| Rockford IceHogs               | 37,626                                |
| San Antonio Rampage            | 56,647                                |
| Springfield Falcons            | 9,311                                 |
| St. John's IceCaps             | 25,000                                |
| Syracuse Crunch                | 19,225                                |
| Texas Stars                    | 32,875                                |
| Toronto Marlies                | 33,527                                |
| Utica Comets                   | 13,680                                |
| Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins | 39,700                                |
| Worcester Sharks               | 32,815                                |

*Appendix C: Twitter Statistics*

| <b>Team</b>                    | <b># of<br/>Twitter<br/>Followers</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Abbotsford Heat                | 10,400                                |
| Adirondack Phantoms            | 14,500                                |
| Albany Devils                  | 9,019                                 |
| Binghamton Senators            | 12,100                                |
| Bridgeport Sound Tigers        | 9,028                                 |
| Charlotte Checkers             | 15,600                                |
| Chicago Wolves                 | 14,900                                |
| Grand Rapids Griffins          | 24,300                                |
| Hamilton Bulldogs              | 16,100                                |
| Hartford Wolf Pack             | 13,900                                |
| Hershey Bears                  | 17,800                                |
| Iowa Wild                      | 9,040                                 |
| Lake Erie Monsters             | 14,600                                |
| Manchester monarchs            | 10,400                                |
| Milwaukee Admirals             | 12,100                                |
| Norfolk Admirals               | 10,400                                |
| Oklahoma City Barons           | 11,000                                |
| Portland Pirates               | 6,598                                 |
| Providence Bruins              | 21,800                                |
| Rochester Americans            | 22,300                                |
| Rockford IceHogs               | 16,900                                |
| San Antonio Rampage            | 9,064                                 |
| Springfield Falcons            | 6,888                                 |
| St. John's IceCaps             | 18,300                                |
| Syracuse Crunch                | 10,500                                |
| Texas Stars                    | 13,200                                |
| Toronto Marlies                | 40,900                                |
| Utica Comets                   | 7,581                                 |
| Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins | 24,100                                |
| Worcester Sharks               | 10,900                                |

*Appendix D: Survey*

## Fan Culture Survey

The purpose of this survey is to examine fan culture at American Hockey League games. Please answer these questions honestly and the best to your ability. This survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to take. The results of the survey will remain confidential. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time. Thank you for your participation.

Do you have a favorite American Hockey League team?

- Yes
- No

(If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Why don't you have a favorite America...)

Who is your favorite American Hockey League team (AHL)?

- Abbotsford Heat
- Adirondack Phantoms
- Albany Devils
- Binghamton Senators
- Bridgeport Sound Tigers
- Charlotte Checkers
- Chicago Wolves
- Grand Rapids Griffins
- Hamilton Bulldogs
- Hartford Wolf Pack
- Hershey Bears
- Iowa Wild
- Lake Erie Monsters
- Manchester Monarchs
- Milwaukee Admirals
- Oklahoma City Barons
- Portland Pirates
- Providence Bruins
- Rochester Americans
- Rockford IceHogs
- San Antonio Rampage
- Springfield Falcons
- St. John's IceCaps
- Syracuse Crunch
- Texas Stars

- Toronto Marlies
- Utica Comets
- Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins
- Worcester Sharks

How identified are you with your favorite AHL team?

- Bandwagon (Jump from team to team)
- Fair-Weather (Only a fan when your team is doing well)
- Diehard (Go to as many games or watch as many games on TV no matter how poorly your team is doing)

Check all of the reasons why you have attended an AHL game.

- I attend games as something to do with my family.
- I attend games because it makes me feel good/happy.
- I attend games because it provides an escape from my day to day.
- I attend games because I enjoy placing bets on and during games.
- I attend games because I enjoy being part of the group atmosphere at games.
- I attend games because they are the closest team to where I live.
- I attend games because I am a fan of the parent team.

When attending a game how often do you START a chant or cheer with fellow fans?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

When attending a game how often do you JOIN in on a chant or cheer with fellow fans.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

When attending a game what type of clothing do you wear?

- Team's jersey
- Affiliate Team's Jersey
- A shirt with the teams or parent teams logo
- Nothing relating to the team

In the space below, please describe any favorite traditions of your favorite AHL team.

How long have you been a fan of your favorite AHL team?

- 0-2 year(s)
- 3-5 years
- 6-8 years
- 9-11 years
- 12 or More years

What has kept you a part of your specific fan culture for as long as you have associated with your team?

(If What has kept you a part of... Is Equal to, Then Skip To What is your gender?)

(Answer If Do you have a favorite American Hockey League team? No Is Selected)

Why don't you have a favorite American Hockey League team?

(Answer If Do you have a favorite American Hockey League team? No Is Selected)

Do you attend AHL games?

- Yes
- No

(If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Why don't you attend AHL games?)

(Answer If Do you have a favorite American Hockey League team? No Is Selected)

Check all the reasons you have attended an AHL game.

- I attend games as something to do with my family.
- I attend games because it makes me feel good/happy.
- I attend games because it provides an escape from my day to day.
- I attend games because I enjoy placing bets on and during games.
- I attend games because I enjoy being part of the group atmosphere at games.
- I attend games because they are the closest team to where I live.
- I attend games because I am a fan of the parent team.

(Answer If Do you have a favorite American Hockey League team? No Is Selected)

When attending AHL games how often do you chant with the fans?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

(Answer If Do you have a favorite American Hockey League team? No Is Selected)

When attending AHL games how often do you start a chant?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

(Answer If Do you have a favorite American Hockey League team? No Is Selected)

When attending a game what type of clothing do you wear?

- Team's jersey
- Affiliate team's jersey
- A shirt with the teams or the affiliate teams logo
- A jersey from another team all together
- Nothing relating to a team

(If Team's jersey Is Selected, Then Skip To What is your gender?If Affiliate team's jersey Is Selected, Then Skip To What is your gender?If A shirt with the teams or t... Is Selected, Then Skip To What is your gender?If A jersey from another team ... Is Selected, Then Skip To What is your gender?If Nothing relating to a team Is Selected, Then Skip To What is your gender?)

(Answer If Do you attend AHL games? No Is Selected)

Why don't you attend AHL games?

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age?

- 18 - 28
- 29-38
- 39-48
- 49-58
- 59-60
- 61 or Older

What is your zip code?

*Appendix E: Fan Identification Correlation*

## Fan Identification Correlation

|  | <i>r</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--|----------|----------|
| How identified are you * starting a chant with fellow fans | .212     | .007     |
| How identified are you * wearing team clothing             | -.352    | .000     |
| How identified are you * joining a chant with fellow fans  | .096     | .234     |

*Appendices F: Age*

| <b>Age</b> | <b># of People</b> |
|------------|--------------------|
| 18-28      | 176                |
| 29-38      | 19                 |
| 39-48      | 11                 |
| 49-58      | 1                  |
| >59        | 3                  |

*Appendices G: Fan Identification*

| <b>Identification</b> | <b>Count</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Bandwagon             | 9            |
| Fairweather           | 74           |
| Diehard               | 106          |
| Not a Fan             | 66           |

*Appendices H: Longevity of Fans*

| <b>Longevity</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 0-2              | 21%               |
| 3-5              | 29%               |
| 6-8              | 16%               |
| 9-11             | 6%                |
| >12              | 28%               |

*Appendix I: Fan Motivations*

| <b>Motivations</b> | <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Count</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Family             | 65%               | 109          |
| Self-Esteem        | 69%               | 115          |
| Escape             | 26%               | 70           |
| Economic           | 1%                | 2            |
| Group Affiliation  | 48%               | 80           |
| Team Proximity     | 57%               | 96           |
| Fan of Parent Team | 51%               | 86           |

*Appendix J: Motivations Compared to Identification*

| <b>Motivations</b> | <b>Bandwagon</b> | <b>Fairweather</b> | <b>Diehard</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Family             | 17%              | 63%                | 68%            |
| Self-Esteem        | 83%              | 50%                | 83%            |
| Escape             | 17%              | 27%                | 55%            |
| Economic           | 0%               | 4%                 | 0%             |
| Atmosphere         | 50%              | 39%                | 55%            |
| Proximity          | 33%              | 55%                | 59%            |
| Parent Team        | 0%               | 50%                | 59%            |

*Appendix K: Favorite Traditions*

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### **Chanting/Cheering Traditions**

---

Always chanting no matter how the game is going, keeps the atmosphere fun and engaging

Singing the Zamboni song with other fans during intermission

Adie Hard Fan gets up and gets the crowd to spell Amerks then ends the cheer with Hockey, Hockey, Hockey.

Fans in Section N at the games have started a “Section N Hecklers” group. It’s a fairly new thing the fans started doing. The obviously tease the opposing teams and refs. The section is near/behind the opposing teams bench so it’s uber convenient

Since moving to the new arena we’ve picked up a new goal chant that has become a fan favorite and I still chant it even when I am listening to them on the radio

The chanting of “Hey! Guess What? Your goalie sucks” during the empty bars of Mony Mony. The shouting of “Easy on the door” by home fans sitting near the away bench during shift changes.

---

### **In Game Promotions/Presentation**

---

Playing Timber by Pitbull and Ke\$ha at every game

Score-o

Friend took me to a game where I was a part of a promotion which was awesome. Been a fan since

Kiss Cam, Guitar Hero, Signs of the Game, Chuck A Puck, and Human Bowling

Whiteout during the Calder Cup playoffs

Wayne Messmer and the National Anthem.

Fireworks and awesome pregame show

Mascot who is AWESOME with the kids

Intermission Blimp, Red Third Jerseys, American Flag (Throwback) Jerseys

Moose

Happy Hour every Friday Game

How they allow kids to line up outside the entrance tunnel and glove-tap them all as they go by.

Theme nights. Pink in the rink is always a great event to be a part of

The opening video montage

The in game activities

The heritage jerseys

Pregame fireworks show

---

### **Fan to Fan Interaction**

---

Playing soccer before game

Tailgating with other fans

I enjoy wearing one of my many Toronto Maple Leafs jerseys and celebrating with fellow Leaf fans.

When they were the Manitoba Moose, we’d get a really good wave going

Drinking beer, watching hockey with other fans

When the Albany River Rats were still around, everyone had a cowbell

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Interacting with locals before and after games. Discussing the team

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### **Family/Friends**

Dancing in the aisle with my brother to try to get on camera

Going to as many games as I can with my whole family

Going with friends or family

Watching the games when I am able, and attending it with a group of friends

Just watching games with my family is awesome enough

Me and my friends who have season tickets together

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### **Player Interactions**

In the past our team did "Checkers with the Checkers" where you could play against the guys. This year they did bowling with the team and it was awesome. It was limited to how many people could go and you had a couple players in each lane with a couple fans. It really gave you a chance to get to know them

Stick salute by players to fans after a win

I love meeting the players after the games

Players interact with the fans. Also, there is a beer/wine tasting event where the Griffins serve the drinks. It's a great opportunity to get to know the players.

I used to go to Amerks games as a kid and have been a fan of the Sabres for a while so it's nice to see who's coming up

The team will always salute the crowd (always sold out) at center ice after every win

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### **Winning**

Winning

We only hang Championship banners

Winning the Calder Cup

Used to enjoy when they made playoffs

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### **Charity Events**

Going to the various fund raisers during the year

I am a huge fan of the Great Skate in Grand Rapids. It's a time when the players raise money for charity

Community Service

When they do charity food drives like bring canned goods and get free parking (It varies year to year but they are partnered with HEB)

Lots of charity

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| <b>Traditions</b>      | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Chanting/Cheering      | 12%               |
| In Game Promotions     | 33%               |
| Fan to Fan Interaction | 13%               |
| Family/Friends         | 12%               |
| Player Interaction     | 12%               |
| Winning                | 8%                |
| Charity Events         | 10%               |

*Appendix L: Reasons to Stay a Fan*

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**Hardworking/Winning Team**

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Good Team, Always fun to watch

They are good

Reputation for overcoming obstacles

Team is great

Hardworking team

They have established a tradition of hard work and charity to what they do

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**Players**

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Personal connections with players

Players

Good looking players

The passion the players have

The players are great

Watching the young players develop

Following players who might be on the big team one day

I'm invested in the careers of a few of the players

The players are great

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**Fans**

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Other Fans

I've made friends with other season ticket holders

Making friends in the Booster Club

The fans are great

People to talk to every weekend/game is just a great tradition to keep up. Arriving an hour before the doors open and just hanging out with other fans before the game that you've known for years is always a blast, unless it's cold out.

The fans are all great

I like the people that attend the games

Other fans camaraderie

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**Staff Members**

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Staff Members

Opportunity to feel a part of the team and staff

Just feel like part of the family with the staff

Staff makes a great atmosphere

Being an intern helped me feel affiliated with the team

My paycheck

Friends that work for the team and are fans

I've never had a negative experience in the arena or at an event

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The event and media staff

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### Love of the Game

Love of game

Love of the game of hockey

Love for the game

My love of the game

Hockey is my life

Love for the game of hockey

I like hockey

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### Proximity of Team

Home team

The city I live

Living close to the team

To have a team so close that I can attend games is a bonus

Just love supporting out home town team

I live in the area

I am from Rochester

Where I live

Local team

Their close location

I live in Rochester

It's my hometown

Being born and raised in Rochester

They were in my hometown

Local team

Being one town over from where they play

They are the closest AHL team to where I live

Have lived in Albany my whole life, was an Albany River Rats fan

I'm relatively close

Close proximity to the team

Local team

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### Family

History of being a fan in my family

My husband

Family

Going to all the games with my family

The intense interest my family members have in the game

My family likes them so I do

Parent-great fun for kids

Family tradition

It helps out that my boyfriend enjoys the team as well. It gives us something to do with friends

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and together

My niece is a huge fan

My family is really into hockey

Nostalgia from being a kid and always going to the rink

Because it's something me and my Uncle did before he passed away

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## Team Affiliation

Because of the parent team

Huge Hab's fan

When they moved to St. John's, they became our farm team, so I have an interest in how they do

Their NHL affiliate the Philadelphia Flyers

Mostly that they're the affiliate of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

They are where my NHL teams prospects play, the ones who don't make the millions but go out every night trying to impress

For me it is about supporting future Maple Leaf players

I pay close attention to my AHL team and try to make it to every game when they visit Rochester

The teams connection to the parent team

Sabres

Teams association with the Buffalo Sabres

I only follow them because I'm a big fan of their parent team, the Colorado Avalanche.

They are the farm league for my favorite NHL team

The Rochester Americans are the farm team of the my favorite NHL team, the Buffalo Sabres.

I'm a Buffalo Sabres fan

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## Community

They do lots of community events that people can participate in and they do an excellent job of inspiring people to join and participate in their community

The involvement they have with the community

They do awesome stuff in the community

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## Ticket Affordability/Accessibility

Accessibility to tickets

The tickets are incredibly cheap

The tickets aren't ridiculously expensive

Far reduced cost of a Leafs ticket, which is out of my price range

Affordable pricing

Tickets are accessible

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| <b>Reason</b>            | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Hardworking/Winning Team | 6%                |
| Players                  | 9%                |
| Other Fans               | 7%                |
| Proximity to Team        | 21%               |
| Staff Members            | 9%                |
| Love of the Game         | 7%                |
| Family                   | 14%               |
| Team Affiliation         | 19%               |
| Community                | 3%                |
| Ticket Affordability     | 5%                |

*Appendix M: Gender Difference and Motivations*

| <b>Motivations</b> | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Family             | 65%           | 72%         |
| Self-Esteem        | 42%           | 62%         |
| Escape             | 19%           | 53%         |
| Economic           | 1%            | 1%          |
| Atmosphere         | 30%           | 46%         |
| Proximity          | 28%           | 60%         |
| Parent Team        | 22%           | 61%         |

*Appendix O: Gender and Identification*

| <b>Type of Fan</b> | <b>Female</b> | <b>Male</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Bandwagon          | 6%            | 1%          |
| Fairweather        | 20%           | 31%         |
| Diehard            | 32%           | 53%         |
| Not a Fan          | 42%           | 15%         |

*Appendix P: Reasons behind Not Having a Favorite Team***Not a Hockey Fan**

Because I do not follow hockey

I don't have a favorite AHL team because I don't like hockey

I've never really gotten into hockey as a spectator

Not a huge hockey fan

Not into hockey as a sport

I never got into hockey

I don't watch hockey

Hockey has never been a major part of my life

I prefer the NBA

I don't watch professional hockey

I don't watch hockey

Not a big fan of hockey

I am not a person who gets involved in sports in general

Not a sport my family has ever watched

Do not follow the sport

I don't like hockey

I personally have never really watched enough hockey to have a favorite team

I don't think sports are exciting and don't watch enough to have a favorite team

I don't really pay much attention to hockey unless it is teams from my hometown

I don't watch hockey

Never really followed hockey

I don't like hockey

Not a big hockey person

I don't care

I don't watch hockey that often

I am not interested in hockey

I am not a big hockey fan

Not interested in hockey

I don't watch hockey

Don't follow hockey

Not really a hockey fan

I don't follow

Not into hockey

I do not follow hockey

**Other**

I don't have time to watch TV and so I don't think about following a American Hockey League team

Ain't nobody got time for that

Did not grow up around a team, would consider myself a playoff NHL fan

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### Little Hockey Knowledge

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Dunno enough about hockey

I don't know much about it

Don't know enough the AHL and don't have enough interest to follow any teams

The only team I know of is the Amerks

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### Minor League

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It's minor league

I prefer to watch the NHL

I don't watch AHL games only NHL

It's minor league hockey, who cares?

I would rather watch the NHL

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| Reason                 | Count |
|------------------------|-------|
| Not a Hockey Fan       | 74%   |
| No Knowledge of Hockey | 9%    |
| It's Minor League      | 11%   |
| Other                  | 6%    |

*Appendix Q: Reasons Not to Attend Games***Not a Fan**


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I don't like it enough to attend games

I'm not that much of a sports fan

Not interested

I have never been a huge fan of hockey

Don't like hockey

I attend occasionally, but does not appeal to me

My friends and I don't watch hockey

Because I never grew up having an interest in hockey

Not interested

Hockey is one of the few sports I don't like

Not interested

Do not follow the sport

Not interested enough

I have never watched enough hockey to have a desire to go to a professional game

I don't like hockey enough to spend money on it

I don't watch hockey

Don't care

Don't like hockey

Boring to me

I don't enjoy watching hockey

I am not a big hockey fan

I am not interested in hockey

I am not interested in hockey

Not a hockey fan

I don't find watching hockey interesting

Not interested

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**Minor League Team**

No interest in hockey at the minor league level

I prefer NHL games

It's minor league hockey, who cares?

I don't follow AHL. I only attend hockey games in my hometown

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**No Money**

Don't have the money

No money

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**Other**

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|  |
|--|
| Don't drive at night                           |
| Isolation                                      |
| Too far  |
| Don't know the teams well                      |
| Ain't nobody got time for that                 |
| I have never had the opportunity to attend one |
| I don't feel like going                        |
| I never grew up watching it                    |

---

| <b>Reasons</b>    | <b>Count</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Not a fan         | 26           |
| No Money          | 2            |
| Minor League Team | 4            |
| Other             | 8            |

*Appendix R: Motivations of Fans vs. Motivations of Non-Fans*

| <b>Motivations</b>      | <b>Fan</b> | <b>Non-Fan</b> |
|-------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Family                  | 65%        | 75%            |
| Self-Esteem             | 71%        | 25%            |
| Escape                  | 43%        | 13%            |
| Economic                | 1%         | 0%             |
| Group Affiliation       | 48%        | 38%            |
| Team Proximity          | 57%        | 75%            |
| Parent Team Affiliation | 53%        | 13%            |

*Appendix S: Proximity to Favorite Team*

| <b>Team</b>             | <b>Distance (Miles)</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Adirondack Phantoms     | 31.1                    |
| Albany Devils           | 8.2                     |
| Albany Devils           | 25.9                    |
| Binghamton Senators     | 211                     |
| Binghamton Senators     | 18.1                    |
| Bridgeport Sound Tigers | 1                       |
| Bridgeport Sound Tigers | 76.6                    |
| Charlotte Checkers      | 35                      |
| Charlotte Checkers      | 19.8                    |
| Charlotte Checkers      | 19.9                    |
| Charlotte Checkers      | 2.3                     |
| Charlotte Checkers      | 0                       |
| Charlotte Checkers      | 94.5                    |
| Charlotte Checkers      | 2.2                     |
| Chicago Wolves          | 29.4                    |
| Chicago Wolves          | 78.7                    |
| Chicago Wolves          | 29.4                    |
| Chicago Wolves          | 6.6                     |
| Chicago Wolves          | 29.9                    |
| Chicago Wolves          | 14.3                    |
| Chicago Wolves          | 5.1                     |
| Chicago Wolves          | 27.2                    |
| Grand Rapid Griffins    | 6.4                     |
| Grand Rapid Griffins    | 10.6                    |
| Grand Rapid Griffins    | 172                     |
| Grand Rapid Griffins    | 179                     |
| Grand Rapid Griffins    | 44                      |
| Grand Rapid Griffins    | 660                     |
| Hamilton Bulldogs       | 26                      |
| Hamilton Bulldogs       | 1.3                     |
| Hamilton Bulldogs       | 34                      |
| Hamilton Bulldogs       | 30.9                    |
| Hartford Wolf Pack      | 8.6                     |
| Hartford Wolf Pack      | 11.3                    |
| Hartford Wolf Pack      | 2.9                     |
| Hershey Bears           | 14.4                    |
| Hershey Bears           | 0                       |

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Hershey Bears       | 267  |
| Hershey Bears       | 15.9 |
| Hershey Bears       | 145  |
| Iowa Wild           | 34.6 |
| Lake Erie Monsters  | 294  |
| Manchester Monarchs | 24.8 |
| Portland Pirates    | 35.9 |
| Portland Pirates    | 12.1 |
| Rochester Americans | 17.9 |
| Rochester Americans | 2.9  |
| Rochester Americans | 5.3  |
| Rochester Americans | 15   |
| Rochester Americans | 21.4 |
| Rochester Americans | 16.9 |
| Rochester Americans | 15   |
| Rochester Americans | 23   |
| Rochester Americans | 28.5 |
| Rochester Americans | 3.8  |
| Rochester Americans | 16.9 |
| Rochester Americans | 19.6 |
| Rochester Americans | 28.5 |
| Rochester Americans | 23   |
| Rochester Americans | 50.2 |
| Rochester Americans | 11.3 |
| Rochester Americans | 9.7  |
| Rochester Americans | 3.8  |
| Rochester Americans | 61.7 |
| Rochester Americans | 9.3  |
| Rochester Americans | 5.7  |
| Rochester Americans | 11.3 |
| Rochester Americans | 15   |
| Rochester Americans | 80.3 |
| Rochester Americans | 6.1  |
| Rochester Americans | 64.1 |
| Rochester Americans | 1.5  |
| Rochester Americans | 21.4 |
| Rochester Americans | 67.8 |
| Rochester Americans | 25.2 |
| Rochester Americans | 1.5  |
| Rochester Americans | 10.8 |
| Rochester Americans | 8.2  |
| Rochester Americans | 72.1 |

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Rochester Americans            | 57.6   |
| Rochester Americans            | 9.6    |
| Rochester Americans            | 78.1   |
| Rochester Americans            | 20.6   |
| Rochester Americans            | 10.8   |
| Rochester Americans            | 2.4    |
| Rochester Americans            | 17     |
| Rochester Americans            | 43.7   |
| Rochester Americans            | 5.2    |
| Rochester Americans            | 25.3   |
| Rochester Americans            | 228    |
| Rockford IceHogs               | 64.6   |
| Rockford IceHogs               | 700    |
| Rockford IceHogs               | 17.6   |
| Rockford IceHogs               | 80.6   |
| Rockford IceHogs               | 90.7   |
| Rockford IceHogs               | 87     |
| Rockford IceHogs               | 55.8   |
| St. John's IceCaps             | 3335.9 |
| St. John's IceCaps             | 5.7    |
| Syracuse Crunch                | 5.7    |
| Syracuse Crunch                | 183    |
| Syracuse Crunch                | 22.5   |
| Syracuse Crunch                | 7.1    |
| Texas Stars                    | 178    |
| Toronto Marlies                | 4.8    |
| Toronto Marlies                | 3.9    |
| Toronto Marlies                | 1056.3 |
| Utica Comets                   | 129    |
| Scranton Wilkes-Barre Penguins | 0      |
| Scranton Wilkes-Barre Penguins | 328    |

| <b>Distance (Mi)</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 0-30                 | 65%               |
| 30.01-60             | 10%               |
| 60.01-90             | 10%               |
| >90.01               | 15%               |

*Appendices T: Chanting/Cheers*

|                  | <b>Start</b> | <b>Join</b> |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Never</b>     | 43%          | 4%          |
| <b>Rarely</b>    | 32%          | 12%         |
| <b>Sometimes</b> | 20%          | 29%         |
| <b>Often</b>     | 5%           | 52%         |