I. Research Problems Addressed

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact team identification with a favorite team and gender would have on (1) perceptions of a rival team and (2) consumption intentions when the favorite team plays the rival team.

II. Issues

Rivalry in sport has started to receive attention in the sport management literature, and is important to practitioners because teams and schools are increasingly making use of rival teams to promote the on-field sport product. However, to this point, most attention has been paid to how the phenomenon impacts highly identified male fans. The current study extends research into sport rivalry and fan behavior by investigating what impact team identification and gender has on the way a person perceives a rival team and fan intentions to consume the favorite team when playing the rival team.

Proximity, history, and relative competitiveness with a team can lead to feelings of rivalry, and fans of teams involved in a rivalry typically treat rival fans differently than fans of their favorite team. In intercollegiate athletics, Glory Out of Reflected Failure (GORFing) explains the tendency of fans to celebrate or rejoice when their rival is defeated in a competition not involving their favorite team. Additionally, intercollegiate fans experience differing physiological reactions when watching a game between their favorite and a rival team, and tend to describe the actions of the favorite team fans and players more favorably than that of rival teams.

Consumption behaviors such as type of team (football or men's basketball), season ticket holder status, and the outcome of the most recent rivalry contest can impact a fan's perceptions of a rival team. Additionally, fans impacted by confer-
ence realignment reserved stronger negative feelings for the rival in the conference they were leaving than the rival in the conference the team was joining. Further, the team a person follows and conference affiliation can impact the perceptions they have of rival teams.

Identification and gender both play an important role on fan consumption of a favorite team. For example, highly identified fans can garner more satisfaction from a favorite team win, find it harder to distance from a loss than fans at lower levels of team identification, and lead to loyalty with the sport brand. Men have generally been found to be stronger fans of certain sports in a general sense, but women have been found to garner stronger connections to their favorite teams. Additionally, female fans of intercollegiate athletics have reported higher levels of vicarious achievement and higher levels of university pride. Female fans have also been found to be less critical of their favorite team’s performance than men, are more likely to continue being loyal to their favorite team regardless of the team’s performance than males, and it has been suggested than men display stronger CORFing (Cutting Off Reflected Failure) behavior than females.

The current study was guided by one hypothesis and two research questions. Specifically, it was hypothesized that fans with higher levels of team identification would display stronger negative perceptions of the rival team than fans with lower levels of identification with the favorite team. The research questions asked whether gender impacted rival team perceptions, and how team identification and gender impacted a fan’s intentions to consume their favorite team when playing a rival team.

III. Summary
An online survey constructed using Qualtrics software was distributed using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Data collection resulted in 118 usable surveys. The sample was moderately identified with their favorite teams (a 5.84 out of 7 on the Team Identification Index). The majority of fans were Caucasian (84.7%), male (66.7%), and 44.1% of the sample were 26 to 35 years of age.

The instrument contained four sections, beginning with participants identifying their favorite intercollegiate team and the sport with which the participant most strongly identifies. Fan identification was measured using the Team Identification Index (TII). The second portion of the survey asked participants to identify the biggest rival of their favorite team, and complete the Sport Rivalry Fan Perception Scale (SRFPS), which measures a person’s perceptions of the rival team regarding indirect competition, academic prestige, fan behavior, and the sense of satisfaction received when the favorite team defeated the rival. Next, participants responded to questions asking their intentions to consume their favorite team against a rival and a non-rival team. For each team scenario, participants were asked whether they would: (1) attend the game, (2) watch the game on television or the Internet, (3) wear favorite team identifying merchandise because of the
game, (4) read about the favorite team in the game, and (5) purchase favorite team merchandise because of the game.

Results found that participants indicated they would not support their rival in indirect competition, felt the academics at their rival school were somewhat prestigious, rated the behavior of rival fans neutral to somewhat positive, and experienced satisfaction when their favorite team defeated the rival in direct competition. Highly identified fans experienced greater satisfaction when their favorite team defeated the rival in direct competition than fans with lower levels of identification. Further, male and female fans did not differ in the way they perceived their rival team.

Regarding fan consumption intentions when the favorite team was playing the rival team, results showed that fans were more likely to attend the game, watch the game on television or the Internet, and read about the favorite team when playing a rival than a non-rival team. Because of this preliminary finding, these three consumption questions were retained and further analysis was conducted to determine how team identification and gender impacted fan intentions to consume the favorite team when they were playing the rival team. Fans with higher levels of team identification were more likely to attend the rival game, watch the game on television or the Internet, and read about the game than fans with lower levels of identification. Female fans were more likely to watch the rivalry game on television or the Internet than male fans, and lowly identified male fans were more likely to attend the game than lowly identified female fans.

IV. Analysis

The current study found that level of team identification impacted rival perceptions, and both team identification and gender impacted fan intentions to consume their favorite team when playing the rival team. Findings from the current study add to the sport rivalry literature by (1) utilizing the SRFPS with intercollegiate athletics fans with various levels of favorite team identification, (2) determining how fans of various levels of team identification react to the rivalry phenomenon, and (3) showing an interaction between team identification and gender on fan intention to consume the favorite team when playing a rival.

Practitioners should take notice of the impact team identification can have on rival perceptions and consumption intentions. For example, knowing that highly identified fans experience more satisfaction at the defeat of the rival team in direct competition, practitioners can choose to highlight this fact among fans commonly believed to be highly identified or attached to a team (e.g., season-ticket holders, donors, active alumni, and current students). Athletic administrators should also consider focusing greater attention on the highly-identified female fan, as this study followed findings from previous research that these women tend to have strong consumption intentions and behaviors that are less sensitive to team performance, which is outside of the control of administrators and marketers. Since
a rivalry game had a larger impact on attendance at live games for females than males, perhaps practitioners should begin to target messages and advertisement toward this group in an attempt to engage more highly identified female fans.

V. Discussions/Implications

Findings from the current study are appropriate for both academics and practitioners in a myriad of ways. Information from the current study can impact future research by academics, and should help drive decisions made by practitioners regarding favorite and rival teams in intercollegiate athletics.