Alcoholics Fanonymous: The Relationship between Reasons for Drinking, Aggression, and Team Identification in Sports Fans

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Introduction
Sporting events often involve the consumption of not only live entertainment, but also various products (e.g., team apparel, food, and drink; Wenner, 1989). Reflecting on the various behaviors sports fans engage in while watching sporting events, drinking alcohol before, during, and after games is widely considered one of the most prominent activities. This is not surprising given that alcohol manufacturers spend hundreds of millions of dollars sponsoring sporting events, teams, and athletes (Federal Trade Commission, 2014). Fans drink during sporting events for a variety of reasons. For example, fans may be motivated by social or habitual factors and, for some, drinking could be related to team performance, such as celebrating a win or mourning a loss (Gantz, 1981). However, such drinking may result in negative outcomes. For example, Toben and Wechsler (2003) have described that sports fans are more inclined to experience more negative alcohol-related outcomes, such as police encounters, acts of vandalism, or drunk driving, than are individuals who do not identify as sports fans. These negative outcomes may also take the form of aggressive behaviors directed at specific entities, such as players or fans of the opposing team. Accordingly, these reasons for drinking have been quantified by Farber, Khavari, and Douglass (1980) in the Reasons for Drinking Questionnaire (RFDQ) as escape-drinking/negative-reinforcement and social-drinking/positive-reinforcement. In the current study, we examined the relationship between the reasons for drinking alcohol and fan aggression during sporting events.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses
Sports fans differ with respect to how strongly they feel a psychological connectedness towards a team, termed team identification (Branscombe & Wann, 1990). When their favorite team suffers an unfavorable outcome, sports fans with high team identification will inevitably be confronted with a degree of situational threat and may respond with certain troublesome behaviors (Branscombe & Wann, 1990), such as aggressive acts, to cope with the stress that is brought on by this threat. Aggressive behavior can be categorized into two principal dimensions: instrumental (i.e., premeditated and motivated by an external goal) and hostile (i.e., reactive and motivated to cause someone physical harm) aggression. Fan aggression can often take the form of fan-on-fan aggression or behavior directed towards opposing teams, coaches, players, or the officiating crew (e.g., referees; Wann, Carlson, & Schrader, 1999). We examined the relationship between motives to consume alcohol, different types of fan aggression, and team identification in an experimental setting with manipulated antecedent videos. These videos depicted winning and losing outcomes of sporting events to determine if they would influence sports fans’ stated reasons to consume alcohol and their propensity to engage in the various forms of aggression. Based upon previous research, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1a: Highly identified fans will report elevated hostile and instrumental aggression than lower identified fans.

H1b: The antecedent video will act as a moderator in this relationship.

H2: Higher hostile and instrumental aggression will be positively related to negative-reinforcement reasons for drinking and will be negatively related to positive-reinforcement reasons.

Method
Two hundred ninety-two self-reported fans of the San Francisco 49ers (128 male, 164 female; MAge = 21.05 years, M...
SD = 7.71) recruited from a large, metropolitan, Western, public university and Craigslist participated in this online study. Participants first completed a measure of team identification (i.e., Sport Spectator Identification Scale [SSIS]; Wann & Branscombe, 1993) and were then randomly assigned to view either a winning, losing, or neutral video approximately 2 min in duration. The winning video showed the San Francisco 49ers’ 2013 NFC Divisional Playoff win against the Green Bay Packers. The neutral video consisted of interviews of players, coaches, and personnel for the San Francisco 49ers. The losing video showed a clip of the 2014 NFC Championship Game loss by the San Francisco 49ers against the Seattle Seahawks. In an effort to make the nature of the video more explicit, a short vignette preceded the viewing of each clip. Participants then completed a measure of aggression (i.e., Hostile and Instrumental Aggression of Spectators Questionnaire [HIASQ]; Wann et al., 1999), a filler task, and a measure to assess motives to consume alcohol (i.e., RFDQ; Farber et al., 1980).

Results
Reliability analyses indicated that measures used in the current study were internally consistent (all \( \alpha \) values > .85). We used a median split to create team identification groups: lower identified fans (n = 153) and highly identified fans (n = 139). We tested our first hypothesis using a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using team identification (lower and high) and antecedent condition (winning, losing, and neutral) as independent variables and hostile and instrumental aggression as the dependent measures. The results yielded a main effect of team identification such that highly identified fans reported higher levels of both hostile and instrumental aggression than did lower identified ones (p < .001). Although the main effect for antecedent video was not significant for instrumental aggression (p = .14), we did find that the antecedent videos increased hostile aggression (p = .02). A Tukey’s HSD test was conducted to examine hostile aggression among the conditions. We found that fans in the losing condition reported generally higher levels of aggression than did fans in the winning condition; however, this outcome was only marginally significant (p = .07). Although the composite team identification antecedent condition interaction term was not significant (p = .61), Tukey’s HSD comparisons revealed several notable differences (all p values < .05). Highly identified fans who viewed both winning and losing videos reported higher instrumental and hostile aggression than did lower identified fans who were exposed to the winning video. In addition, highly identified fans subjected to the winning and losing videos reported higher levels of instrumental aggression than did lower identified fans exposed to a losing video. We examined our second hypothesis using a Pearson’s correlation. We found positive, moderate relationships (all p values < .001) between positive reasons for drinking and hostile aggression (r = .27), positive reasons and instrumental aggression (r = .32), negative reasons and hostile aggression (r = .33), and lastly, negative reasons and instrumental aggression (r = .34).

Discussion
The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships among the reasons for consuming alcohol, likelihood of committing acts of instrumental and hostile aggression, and team identification among a sample of self-identified fans of the San Francisco 49ers. Our results provided support for research by Wann et al. (1999), demonstrating that team identification was positively related to self-reported hostile and instrumental aggression. Notably, our antecedent videos functioned to elevate these relationships, as we had expected. In light of research by Wann, Culver, Akanda, and Daglar (2005), we found that highly identified fans who experienced a defeat were more likely to engage in acts of instrumental aggression than were their lower identified counterparts. However, highly identified fans who viewed outcomes involving wins reported intentions to engage in hostile as well as instrumental aggressive behavior. Overall, it appears that regardless of the type of reason for drinking, positive or negative, stronger levels of reasons for drinking are related to higher levels of both instrumental and hostile aggression. From a practical standpoint, our results have several implications for sport and society. Our study sheds light on the potential for negatively and positively motivated drinkers to commit actions of aggression. We have also elucidated how various game outcomes can impact the type of aggression that fans may display (i.e., hostile or instrumental).