Maintainers and Modifiers: How New Parenthood Impacts Sport Fandom

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An individual’s identities (e.g., spouse, student, sport fan) exist within a “salience hierarchy.” The introduction of a new identity (e.g., parent) disrupts this hierarchy, forcing individuals to evaluate which identities they can comfortably maintain. Scholars recently began exploring how parenthood impacts individuals’ psychological attachment to sport teams. Limited attention, however, has been devoted to new parents, and to how their new identity impacts their fandom. To this end, I completed semi-structured long interviews with 27 self-identified sport fans who are raising young children (i.e., individuals who became parents within the previous six years). Using identity theory as a theoretical lens, I explore these individuals’ lived experience and discover how they have negotiated their salience hierarchy, thereby maintaining or modifying their fandom. This research provides a theoretical understanding of how new parenthood impacts fan identification, as well as practical and easily implementable insights on the new-parent consumer base for sport marketers.