Us vs. Them: Exploring the Relative Effectiveness of Shared Emotion, Prejudice, and Entitativity on Sport Consumer Behavior

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Attendances at an event are not necessarily arise from formerly established groups in which each individual knows each other. It is common conception that people tend to perceiving an entire stranger as an ingroup or outgroup member in a very short period of time, as well as treat the outgroup member unfairly without a meaningful reason. For instance, sports spectators immediately distinguish between “us” and “them” according to perceived similarities and differences, regardless of the preferred team. Although two groups may cheer for the same team, when one group displays extremely hostile behaviors towards the other team, the other group may be inclined to draw a line between “them” and “us”. What causes them to categorize into ingroups and outgroups? To answer these questions, this study suggests the concept of shared emotion to explore the effect on prejudice and entitativity which may be an important factor explaining the mechanism through which ingroups and outgroups are divided. Also, its conditional effect depending on the level of team identification.

Spectators may share emotions through social interactions such as conversations about emotional situations that arise throughout the event. However, given that emotions are spontaneous reactions to internal and external stimuli, they may arise from non-event related stimuli such as the behavior or words spoken by fellow spectators. Based on shared emotions, the five emotions of boredom, discontent, excitement, joy, and pride are used in this study. Entitativity refers to the psychological cohesion of social groups and arises when there is a significant perception of group similarity where members share fundamental psychological traits. When emotion shared at an event, people tend to engaged in ideas such as group entitativity. Accordingly, we predicts that when spectators share emotions, it brings them together and causes group entitativity (H1). Previous literature supports the widespread acceptance of the view that shared emotions can affect outgroup prejudice. Shared emotions are acknowledged to increase heuristic processing of social information which, in turn, intensifies stereotypic judgments. This implies that shared emotions positively impacts prejudice (H2). Most past studies have conceptualized entitativity as a predecessor of group prejudice. Advocating the prejudiced attitudes toward an outgroup may increase ingroup entitativity, because they can appear to be strongly interconnected through the prejudice that is applied to them. The current study will explore entitativity as a consequence of prejudice (H3). Taken together, we can predict that prejudice positively mediates the relationship between shared emotion and entitativity (H4). Furthermore, the relationship between team identification and prejudice may occur due to group members actually reacting more negatively toward strongly identified groups than they do toward weakly identified groups (H5-a). Also, Lickel et al. (2000) had shown that a positive relationship between team identification and entitativity exists (H5-b).

To test the hypotheses, we will conduct a survey study targeting sport consumers who attend a game between two NCAA college football teams. The collected data will be analyzed with conditional PROCESS macro using Hayes Model 4. Detailed results as well as implications will be discussed in the presentation.