Griffith Business School

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Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Rise Up Suns:
A Longitudinal Study of Sport Fan Development

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ABSTRACT

Sport fans are key stakeholders for professional sport teams. Fans contribute both indirectly and directly to revenue streams and thus help teams to remain sustainable. However, the sport marketplace is an increasingly competitive landscape where a growing number of teams compete to attract, retain and develop fans. Such competition necessitates research that better outlines how and why individuals become team fans. Building on this opportunity, the current research investigates how the process of team identification can be used to understand fan development. Overall, this research contributes to existing theory by detailing the factors and processes that underpin fan development.

The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) was used as the theoretical framework to guide this research. The PCM provides a developmental framework that can be used to understand the progression of psychological connections with sport objects. Specifically, the PCM conceptualises how an individual may move from simply being aware of a team through three additional stages of team connection, culminating in team allegiance. The current research advances the PCM as a fan development framework by incorporating social identity theory into the model. In doing so, team identification was identified as a construct that can be used to examine the processes that lead to fan development. To better understand the processes that explain fan development, three studies were conducted. These studies gathered both quantitative (Study 1) and qualitative (Study 2 and Study 3) data, providing the researcher with cross-sectional and longitudinal data relevant to the investigation. All data were collected from fans of a new professional sport team located in Australia.

Study 1 determined how the dimensions of team identification changed and how these dimensions interrelated with each other over time. Study 1 consisted of three
questionnaire distributions that collected quantitative cross-sectional (Phase 1 \( N = 1628 \); Phase 2 \( N = 1683 \); Phase 3 \( N = 899 \)) and longitudinal (Panel \( N = 165 \)) data. The cross-sectional data were used to support a five-factor measure of team identification. Next, the composition and structural stability of the five-factor measure was examined using the longitudinal data. Results indicated that team identification was relatively stable and that the cognitive dimension of identification increased in salience over time. Consequently, qualitative data were collected to determine the factors that influenced team identification development and contributed to increased cognitive awareness.

Study 2 utilised semi-structured interviews \( (N = 20) \) to gather qualitative data. These data outlined the team-specific factors that contributed to fan development. Study 2 also gathered data which explained how participants’ team support led to social–psychological health benefits. Study 3 \( (N = 8) \) consisted of follow-up semi-structured interviews with participants from Study 2. These data explained how fan development occurred through a dynamic process of internalisation. Conducting Study 3 contributed a longitudinal component to the qualitative research phase, which enabled participants to consider a broad range of experiences that exerted influence on their team identification and overall connection with the team.

Findings indicated that fan development occurs based on a process of internalisation, which explains how and why an individual may derive meaning and personal relevance from his or her team connection. Four themes: Local Connection, Experiencing Historic Moments, Sport Priority and Entertainment and Accessibility, explained fan development initiation; whereas three themes: Organisational Touchpoints, Seminal Moments and Co-Creation explained fan development continuation. These themes highlighted how psychological, team-related and environmental factors are processed and evaluated to determine the extent to which fan
development may occur. Additionally, findings revealed strong interactions existed between the initiation and continuation themes.

Finally, two broad social–psychological health benefits linked to team support were identified in this investigation. These themes indicated how identification with teams can provide social–psychological health benefits in the form of Reduced Personal Loneliness and Reduced Social Loneliness. Furthermore, results indicated that improved social–psychological health can operate as both an antecedent and a manifestation of team identification, extending upon previous research. Based on these findings, the current research proposes the Team Internalisation Model (TIM), which can be applied to understand how and why individuals develop meaningful connections with sport teams.

Collectively, this research provides theoretical contributions and advances practical implications for sport marketers and broader policy makers. From a theoretical perspective, this research extends the PCM framework by providing empirical evidence that the processes guiding fan development may be understood using a social identity approach. The TIM explains how internalisation can produce team-specific and individual-specific subordinate outcomes which lead to superordinate outcomes, such as those posited by the PCM. Contributions to team identification knowledge are also provided in the form of insights into the dimensionality and stability of the construct. These findings are relevant to not only managers employed by new sport organisations, but also established sport organisations that seek to build relationships with existing fans and attract and develop new fans. Overall, the current research offers new insights into the processes explaining fan development and provides a basis for future research that seeks to understand how and why individuals develop bonds with sport teams.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

______________________________
Jason Patrick Doyle

September 2013
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my brother

Shane Bernard Doyle

(09.06.1977 – 06.09.2004)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could not have been completed without substantial support from the following people and organisations. First and foremost, I would like to thank Professor Daniel Funk for being the catalyst that encouraged me to pursue a PhD degree and for acting as my principal supervisor. Throughout my candidature, you have pushed me to think critically and have helped me to develop as a researcher tremendously. Thanks for providing me with feedback, guidance and support over the last four years and for continuing your supervisory role from Temple. Thanks also for encouraging me to attend conferences and publish papers throughout the candidature and for generously hosting me at your house in Philadelphia earlier this year. I hope that I can continue to work with you long after the PhD journey has ended.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to my associate supervisors Dr. Kevin Filo and Dr. Daniel Lock for your massive contributions to this thesis. Thanks for the great deal of feedback and support along the way and for involving yourselves with this large research project. Thanks for the considerable amount of time you invested in this thesis and in my personal development. Thank you both for the encouragement during the many times I felt in over my head and especially for the guidance over the final stages of my candidature. Kevin, thanks for running things behind the scenes and always having time for me, inside and outside of our scheduled meeting times. Dan, thanks for accepting unsolicited emails and video chats when I was overwhelmed (“stop being a spanner”) and for helping me persevere when things were tough. Thanks also for regularly commuting from Brisbane for our meetings.

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Last, but definitely not least, a huge thanks to my family for the support over the last 26 years. Thanks to Michael for the banter and laughs. To my parents, Marilyn and Bernard Doyle – thanks for being a source of comfort, inspiration and for your unconditional love. I appreciate all the sacrifices you’ve made for me and without you I would have never been in the position to complete this thesis, let alone begin an undergraduate degree. Thanks for the untiring support, always believing in me and for enabling me to become a sport tragic by paying for Foxtel for all those years. You rock.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>α</td>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>Chi-square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>Degrees of freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2 / df$</td>
<td>Normed chi-square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFL</td>
<td>Australian Football League</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMOS</td>
<td>Analysis of Moment Structures</td>
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<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>Analysis of Variance</td>
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<td>AVE</td>
<td>Average Variance Extracted</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEH</td>
<td>Behavioural Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIRG</td>
<td>Bask in Reflected Glory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Construct Correlations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</td>
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<td>Comparative Fit Index</td>
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<td>COG</td>
<td>Cognitive Awareness</td>
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<td>CORF</td>
<td>Cut-Off Reflected Failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>F statistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAN</td>
<td>Fan Attitude Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>Football Club</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Factor Loadings</td>
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<td>GWS</td>
<td>Greater Western Sydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>Interconnection with the Group</td>
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<td>IND</td>
<td>Sense of Interdependence with the Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item-Total</td>
<td>Corrected Item-to-Total Correlations</td>
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<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>Sample Mean score</td>
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<td>MCAR</td>
<td>Missing Completely at Random</td>
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<td>Model of the Internalisation Process</td>
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<td>MLB</td>
<td>Major League Baseball</td>
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<td>MLE</td>
<td>Maximum Likelihood Estimation</td>
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<td>MPEG-4 Audio File</td>
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<td>National Football League</td>
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<td>National Rugby League</td>
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<tr>
<td>NVIVO</td>
<td>NVIVO Qualitative Software Package</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>Probability</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCM</td>
<td>Psychological Continuum Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>Private Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUB</td>
<td>Public Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>Root Mean Square Error of Approximation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRMR</td>
<td>Standardised Root Mean Square Residual</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSIS</td>
<td>Sport Spectator Identification Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t$-value</td>
<td>Parameter Estimates</td>
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<td>TIM</td>
<td>Team Internalisation Model</td>
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<td>TIS</td>
<td>Team Identification Scale</td>
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<td>TISPH</td>
<td>Team Identification-Social Psychological Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>Tucker-Lewis Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAFL</td>
<td>United States Arena Football League</td>
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<tr>
<td>$V$</td>
<td>Pillai’s Trace</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFL</td>
<td>Victorian Football League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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PUBLICATIONS FROM THIS THESIS

Refereed Journal Articles


Refereed Abstracts in Conference Proceedings


STATEMENT OF ETHICAL CLEARANCE

This research was conducted in accordance with the approved protocol granted by Griffith University’s ethics committee in 2010.

(HSL/28/10/HREC)
1 INTRODUCTION

This research examines how the process of team identification extends understandings of why individuals develop strong bonds with sport teams (hereafter termed fan development). The introductory chapter positions this study of fan development by first providing an overview of the research background and rationale. Second, an outline of the research purpose and specific questions which guide the current investigation are provided. Third, an overview of the research design is included to summarise the method used to collect data. Finally, the chapter concludes by delimiting the scope of the research and providing an outline of the thesis structure.

1.1 Research Background and Rationale

An individual may choose to spend his or her leisure time engaging in a variety of freely elected activities. Arguably one of the most popular leisure pursuits in modern society is sport spectatorship, which involves watching, supporting and in certain instances, developing an identification with a particular sport team. The extent to which individuals derive meaning and value from the teams they follow varies, as evidenced by the heterogeneous cohorts present within sport spectator populations (Quick, 2000; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). Scholars have noted that spectators range from mere observers, who will forget about a contest immediately after viewing it; through to highly committed fans, who dedicate large portions of time, money and emotion into following sport as a leisure pursuit (Pooley, 1978; Sloan, 1989). Fans\(^1\) are considered key stakeholders of professional sport teams as they help these organisations to fulfil their financial objectives and contribute to operating revenue (Mason, 1999; Sloan, 1989).

\(^1\) Previous research (e.g., Sloan, 1989; Wann et al., 2001) has differentiated between ‘spectators’ and ‘fans’ to describe individuals with varying interests in sport. Typically, spectators are described as casually interested individuals; whereas fans are more interested in specific sports and teams. As the current research examines the process of fan development, these terms are used interchangeably within this thesis to better explain how a spectator may become a fan. Both terms are also used to align with terminology used in existing literature.
McDonald, Karg, & Vocino, 2013). For these reasons, understanding sport spectators, and particularly how to develop spectators into fans, has become a central objective for sport academicians and practitioners.

This research focuses on two key areas of interest linked with fan development. First, the current research seeks to build on calls from the literature to provide a better understanding of the specific factors and processes that lead to the development of highly committed fans (e.g., Funk & James, 2001, 2006; Park, Mahony, & Greenwell, 2010; Spaaij & Anderson, 2012; Stewart, Smith, & Nicholson, 2003). Second, this research seeks to extend an emergent line of scholarship by examining the positive social–psychological benefits derived from sport spectatorship and how such benefits relate to fan development (Wann, 2006c). Overall, this research adopts a multidisciplinary approach by amalgamating literature on sport spectators and fans to help achieve these aims.

The PCM (Funk & James, 2001, 2006) provides the theoretical framework used within this research. The PCM was selected as it serves as a leading theoretical model that has been used to understand attitude formation and change in both active and passive sport settings (Beaton & Funk, 2008; Stewart et al., 2003). Additionally, the PCM offers a suitable theoretical framework for the current enquiry given its progressive approach to fan development, which for the purposes of this research describes the strengthening of the psychological connection between an individual and a sport team (e.g., Funk & James, 2001). Funk and James (2001, 2006) posited that psychological links with sport teams may strengthen when inputs (i.e., socialisation agents, hedonic motives and dispositional needs) are processed and ultimately lead to teams taking on functional, emotional and symbolic meaning. Other research (e.g., Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003) has indicated that a process of internalisation can
explain how and why such fan development occurs. However, little empirical research exists to support this line of theorising.

The current research extends understandings of fan development by empirically examining the factors and processes that explain sport team internalisation. Specifically, the current research adds to fan development knowledge by integrating the PCM and social identity theory to examine how and why individuals derive identification from sport teams. To achieve this aim, a longitudinal, mixed methods research project focused on fans of a new professional sport team located in Australia is developed. To address the central research objective, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) is integrated within the PCM to understand how sport teams may become internalised\(^2\) to form a meaningful and central part of an individual’s self-concept and social identity (e.g., Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003).

The integration of social identity capitalises on the PCM’s utility as a framework designed to integrate complementary theory (Beaton & Funk, 2008). This amalgamation is also consistent with recent sport management literature, which has used social identity theory to explore PCM movement and, consequently, fan development (e.g., Lock & Filo, 2012; Lock, Taylor, Funk, & Darcy, 2012). Additionally, the inclusion of social identity theory enables the current research to examine positive social–psychological benefits linked with team support, building upon an emergent area of research (e.g., Wann, 2006c). Therefore, it is envisioned that this research will provide not only an improved understanding of the fan development process, but also expand upon the broader social outcomes linked with sport team support. The research purpose and research questions guiding the current investigation are now discussed.

\(^2\) Internalisation refers to a cognitive psychological process which determines the extent to which an individual’s self-concept is derived from his or her identity as a team fan (Kolbe & James, 2003).
1.2 Research Purpose and Research Questions

As outlined above, this research seeks to enhance understandings related to sport spectatorship by examining the factors and processes which explain fan development. Based on Funk and James’ (2001, 2006) suggestions regarding the processes that may explain PCM movement and sport-related social identity theory research (e.g., Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003; Lock & Filo, 2012; Lock et al., 2012), team identification represents the focal construct relevant to this research. The similarities that exist between Funk and James’ (2001, 2006) theorising on fan development and the relationship between strengthened team identities and attitudinal outcomes provides support for this approach. These theoretical interactions were conceptualised within the Fan Attitude Network (FAN) model (Funk & James, 2004) and later described by Lock et al. (2012) who noted that:

There are distinct synergies between social identity theory and the PCM. For example, progression to higher stages in the PCM is accompanied by strengthened cognition of support, interaction with the self-concept, affective significance and attitude persistence (Funk & James, 2001, 2006), which are all fundamentally linked with the central propositions of social identity theory. (p. 284)

Considering the above, the current research examines fan development via investigating the factors and processes which lead to a strengthening in the sense of identification an individual derives from his or her team support. Consequently, the overall purpose of this research is to provide a better understanding of fan development. Specifically, this research aims to explore the factors and processes that explain why an individual internalises a team identity into his or her self-concept. To achieve this aim, the current research addresses the following research questions:
Research Question 1: How does the structure of team identification change over time?

Research Question 2a: What are the team-specific factors that influence team identification?

Research Question 2b: What are the non team-specific factors that influence team identification?

Research Question 3: What processes explain team identification formation and change?

The following section describes the research design employed to examine these stated research questions.

1.3 Research Design

To investigate fan development from an early point, this research focuses on individuals who chose to support a new Australian Rules football team located on the Gold Coast, Australia, during its formative stages of existence. To examine the abovementioned research questions, a mixed methods longitudinal research design is employed. The quantitative component consists of three phases that combine to form Study 1. Building upon the results gleaned from the quantitative data, cross-sectional and longitudinal qualitative data are then collected. The qualitative component of the research design consists of two phases of interviews, which form Study 2 and Study 3, respectively.

Gathering both quantitative and qualitative data enabled the research purpose to be examined from multiple perspectives, provided depth to the findings and minimised the limitations of using one method in isolation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Jones,
Collecting qualitative data after gathering quantitative data allowed the researcher to uncover meaning behind the quantitative findings, consistent with the sequential explanatory approach (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Overall, this research design was considered the most appropriate means of addressing the guiding research purpose and research questions. Figure 1 provides an overview of the research design and the interrelationships between the three studies. A broader discussion of each study is provided after Figure 1.

**Study 1 (October 2010 – April 2012)**
- Three phases of online questionnaires (Phase 1 $N = 1628$; Phase 2 $N = 1683$; Phase 3 $N = 899$) and a longitudinal panel ($N = 165$)
- Collect quantitative data used to address RQ1
- Results used to develop RQ2a and RQ2b and to inform Study 2 and Study 3

**Study 2 (June – July 2012)**
- Semi-structured interviews ($N = 20$)
- Collect qualitative data used to address RQ2a and RQ2b
- Results used to develop RQ3 and to inform Study 3

**Study 3 (November – December 2012)**
- Follow-up semi-structured interviews ($N = 8$)
- Sample for Study 3 drawn from participants in Study 2
- Collect qualitative data used to address RQ3

*Figure 1. Overview of Sequential Mixed Methods Explanatory Research Design*

Study 1 consisted of three online questionnaires, which collected quantitative data. The questionnaires individually collected cross-sectional data and jointly provided longitudinal data. These data were collected over an 18-month period at points prior to
the team’s first elite-level game (Phase 1; October 2010) and during the team’s first
(Phase 2; April 2011) and second (Phase 3; April 2012) seasons respectively. The
objective of Study 1 was to address Research Question 1 by observing the dimensional
composition of team identification over time. The cross-sectional data provided in each
phase enabled the researcher to compare the results of Confirmatory Factor Analyses
(CFA) at the three data collection points, providing a rigorous examination of the
structural fit of the multidimensional scale employed. The longitudinal data were then
used to determine how the dimensional composition of the team identification scale
operated over time. These analyses enabled the researcher to address Research Question
1. Additionally, results from Study 1 helped to guide the development of Study 2 and
Study 3.

Study 2 consisted of semi-structured interviews, which gathered qualitative data
from respondents during the 2012 Australian Football League (AFL) season. Questions
developed for Study 2 were informed by results gleaned from Study 1. The objective of
Study 2 was to address Research Question 2a and Research Question 2b and to inform
Study 3. Study 2 data were subsequently analysed to uncover the factors that
contribute to identification with the team. Within Study 2, both team-specific and
individual-specific factors were identified. These results helped to explain results from
Study 1 and to develop Study 3.

Study 3 was comprised of follow-up interviews with individuals who
participated in Study 2. The interviews were conducted after the 2012 AFL season and
followed a semi-structured format, following Study 2 protocols. The objective of Study
3 was to understand the processes that explain fan development. Consequently, Study 3
built on the results of Study 2 and examined Research Question 3. Collectively, the
findings led to the creation of the TIM, which adds to existing theory by identifying the factors and processes which facilitate fan development.

1.4 Delimitations of Scope

The following three delimitations are advanced to clarify the scope of this thesis. First, although sport spectators and fans can follow teams via numerous means (e.g., Foster & Hyatt, 2008; Kerr & Emery, 2011; Kerr & Gladden, 2008; Pritchard & Funk, 2006); this research collects data from fans actively involved with the team only. The sampling approaches utilised meant that only individuals who signed up to receive email communications from the club and who attended games were afforded the opportunity to participate. Second, the PCM is employed in this research as a guiding framework, rather than as a more applied segmentation tool. Although researchers can successfully segment sport fans into the four PCM stages by measuring the pleasure, centrality and symbolic value derived from the team (e.g., J. Doyle, Kunkel, & Funk, 2013), the PCM was employed at a conceptual level only within this research. Last, data were collected over a 24 month time frame capturing a period before and during the target team’s first two seasons. Thus, results pertain to this time frame only and do not explain fan development which may have occurred outside of this period.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is presented over 12 Chapters organised according to the following structure. The first chapter provided an overview of the research and outlined a rationale for conducting the research. The introduction also presented the research purpose, research questions and the design implemented to collect data. Following the introduction chapter, an outline of the research context is included in Chapter 2. This
outline provides an overview of the Australian sports landscape alongside a discussion of new sport teams to contextually position the research.

Chapter 3 contains a review of extant literature relevant to understanding how and why individuals may develop strong bonds with sport teams. Chapter 3 also discusses how social-psychological benefits may be derived from team support. The literature review begins with an introduction of the PCM (Funk & James, 2001, 2006), which acts as the theoretical lens used to understand fan development. Next, a discussion of social identity theory and team identification is included to enable better exploration of the processes underpinning fan development. Subsequently, team internalisation is reviewed as a mechanism which can help to explain fan development. Finally, the literature review concludes by outlining identified research opportunities and providing a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 4 outlines the method used to guide the current research. Within Chapter 4, the paradigmatic position of the researcher is described and justified. Following this, the mixed methods approach taken is explained and the research design is presented. The research design outlines the studies used to collect data and explains how each study contributes to the overall research agenda. Next, the decision to collect longitudinal data within a sequential explanatory design is supported. Finally, the chapter concludes by providing a summary of the chapter’s contents.

Chapter 5 first outlines the participants, materials and procedures used to collect quantitative data for Study 1. Next, the data-cleaning steps employed to improve data integrity and reliability are described. Finally, Chapter 5 provides an overview of the analysis procedures alongside a discussion of the criteria used for the analyses pertinent to addressing Research Question 1.
Chapter 6 details the results arising from the analyses conducted on three cross-sectional phases comprising Study 1. Within this chapter, model fit statistics derived from the three datasets are presented and scrutinised against criteria sourced from the literature. Next, decisions to modify the model are discussed, leading to model re-specification. These re-specifications are then justified, leading to the selection of a revised model suitable for longitudinal testing.

Chapter 7 discusses the participants, materials and procedures relevant to the longitudinal panel component of this research. The procedures for creating the panel and the demographic makeup of participants are detailed and compared with the three individual research phases. Finally, Chapter 7 provides a rationale for selecting the specific analysis procedures utilised to address Research Question 1.

Chapter 8 presents the results derived from data collected from the longitudinal quantitative panel of interest. These results are used to address Research Question 1 and determine the stability, or instability, of team identification. Chapter 8 outlines the compositional structure of team identification and how this structure operates over time. Chapter 8 concludes by offering a rationale for conducting further qualitative research to build on the results of the quantitative research component.

Chapter 9 discusses the method that guided the qualitative component of the research. The participants, materials and procedures employed within both Study 2 and Study 3 are outlined in this chapter. Chapter 9 concludes by providing a rationale for selecting the specific procedures employed to analyse the data in a manner that best addresses Research Question 2a, Research Question 2b and Research Question 3.

Chapter 10 outlines results relevant to Research Question 2a and Research Question 2b stemming from Study 2. The specific themes identified which characterise
the factors influential to fan development are discussed here using personal narratives. Additionally, themes representative of social–psychological health benefits linked with team support are also presented and described using quotes from respondents.

Chapter 11 presents results that confirm and build upon those presented in Chapter 10 by examining Study 3 data. Within Chapter 11, a longitudinal narrative is provided to explain the processes which led to initial and continued fan development and to chart the social–psychological health benefits derived from team support. Similarly to Chapter 10, these themes are discussed and presented in the form of personal narratives that contain direct quotes provided by respondents.

Chapter 12 provides a discussion of the findings of this research. This discussion begins by forwarding a model that explains the factors and processes which influence team internalisation and how these processes relate to fan development. From here, a discussion of findings relevant to the proposed research questions is included. Next, an overview of the main theoretical contributions and practical implications stemming from this research are described and related to relevant literature. Finally, the limitations of this research and future research directions are outlined before a conclusion summarising the entire thesis is provided.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has identified that sport spectatorship represents an area of research that holds interest to academics and sport management professionals. Although there have been significant contributions outlined in the existing literature on this topic, there are still areas that require further exploration. Acknowledging these opportunities, this chapter outlined a research purpose and specific research questions which were designed to provide a better understanding of the factors and processes that explain fan
development. To position the research, the following chapter discusses the Australian sport landscape and elements of Australian sport relevant to the research. Additionally, the context chapter reviews knowledge surrounding new sport teams, as the present research focuses on a newly created team.
2 RESEARCH CONTEXT

Chapter 2 describes the context within which the current research is conducted. Fans of the Gold Coast Suns, a recently established Australian Rules football team, provide the context for this research. Therefore, this chapter begins with an overview of the Australian sports landscape and Australian Rules football. Next, the strategic decision making behind establishing new sport teams is outlined and related to the Australian sport context. Within this outline, an overview of the Gold Coast region is also provided. Finally, to position the current research, a review of the challenges faced by new teams is included.

2.1 The Australian Sports Landscape

A large percentage of the Australian population chooses to invest leisure time in following professional sport teams. Strong attendance and television viewership figures support this claim. For example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2010a) reported that 43% of Australians aged 15 or above attended at least one sport event in 2009-2010. Additionally, more than half of the 50 most watched programs on free-to-air television in Australia during 2012 were sport programs (ThinkTV, 2013). These statistics illustrate the key role that sport plays as a leisure pursuit, and as a visible part of Australian society.

In terms of spectator sport offerings, Australia plays host to a large number of semi-professional and professional sport competitions. Cricket, basketball, netball and baseball leagues represent some of the national competitions that attract attention from the Australian public. Although these codes enjoy their own levels of popularity, the most popular Australian spectator sport competitions exist in the form of four codes of football. These codes provide professional-level Australian Rules football (AFL), Rugby League (National Rugby League [NRL]), Rugby Union (Super 15) and Soccer
(A-League). Each code is seen as a viable spectator sport and boasts teams from regions across Australia (Heffernan & O’Brien, 2010). Table 1 lists the average attendances of each football code over the past decade.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Australian Rules (AFL)</th>
<th>Rugby League (NRL)</th>
<th>Rugby Union (Super 15)</th>
<th>Soccer (A-League)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>34,333</td>
<td>15,321</td>
<td>24,563</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>34,432</td>
<td>15,567</td>
<td>24,830</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>36,561</td>
<td>17,337</td>
<td>25,909</td>
<td>11,636 (2005/06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>36,412</td>
<td>16,484</td>
<td>24,017</td>
<td>14,052 (2006/07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>38,287</td>
<td>16,321</td>
<td>20,621</td>
<td>13,014 (2008/09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>37,760</td>
<td>17,094</td>
<td>19,392</td>
<td>10,443 (2009/10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>38,423</td>
<td>17,367</td>
<td>19,933</td>
<td>8,746 (2010/11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>36,428</td>
<td>17,243</td>
<td>20,666</td>
<td>10,808 (2011/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>32,748</td>
<td>17,346</td>
<td>21,230</td>
<td>12,652 (2012/2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The A-League commenced in 2005. Sources: AFL Tables (2013); Austadiums.com (2013a, 2013b); McDonald, Karg, & Lock, (2010); Rugby League Tables (2013).*

The four football codes compete for consumer interest in the highly contested and crowded Australian marketplace (Lock, Darcy, & Taylor, 2009). Typically, the code which an individual refers to simply as “football” refers to his or her personal favourite. This preference is largely determined by where the individual resides, spent his or her formative years and by his or her cultural heritage (Australian Government, 2008). Thus, although each code attracts a following across Australia; different regions display clear preferences for one code over the others (McDonald et al., 2010). For example, the AFL is the dominant football code in Australia’s southern and western
states; whereas the NRL is typically the sport league of choice in the eastern states of Queensland and New South Wales.

As part of a strategic push to capture more interest in non-traditional regions, recent expansion has seen Australia’s football codes establish new teams in areas outside of their traditional strongholds (McDonald & Stavros, 2012; Stewart & Dickson, 2007). Illustrative of the popularity of such a strategy, each of the four codes have admitted at least one new team to their respective competition since 2007. As a result, the Australian sports landscape today represents an increasingly competitive environment whereby an expanding number of teams compete for consumer interest. Table 2 illustrates the breakdown of the Australian-based teams across the four professional football codes for 2010-2013.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRL</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super 15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-League*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The existing North Queensland Fury franchise had their licence revoked by the game’s governing body in 2011. Additionally, the Sydney Rovers were due to enter the A-League in 2011 but experienced financial troubles. The Gold Coast United franchise had their licence revoked in 2012 and were replaced by the new Western Sydney Wanderers franchise.

To ensure new teams become successful and sustainable, there is an increased need to understand how fans form and develop meaningful team connections. As illustrated in Table 2, there have been recent instances in Australia where new teams
have been unable to convince the league they are sustainable and have consequently had their licences revoked or cancelled (e.g., Gold Coast United). To prevent this undesirable occurrence, it is vital that teams develop a better understanding of how to attract, retain and develop fans, as these individuals are a key stakeholder for sport organisations (e.g., James, Kolbe, & Trail, 2002; McDonald et al., 2013). The importance of such an understanding is arguably most pronounced for new sport teams who begin without fan bases and must compete with more established counterparts for fans. To position the current research, an overview of Australian Rules football and the code’s history of expansion is now presented.

2.1.1 Australian Rules Football and Expansion

Australian Rules football is unique in that it is the only football code native to Australia and remains an “indigenously developed hybrid of other sport and football codes” (Skinner, Zakus, & Edwards, 2008, p. 394). Australian Rules football has been played in Australia since the late 1850s, when the game gained popularity in South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria. The game gained particular prominence in Victoria, which led to the establishment of the Victorian Football League (VFL) in 1897 (Stewart & Dickson, 2007). The VFL first expanded outside of Victoria in 1982 when the South Melbourne club moved interstate, relocating to Sydney. This expansion was built on a desire to promote Australian Rules football as the nation’s premier sport and introduce the sport to non-traditional regions (Stewart & Dickson, 2007). Continuing this desire, the code expanded into a 16-team competition by including teams from Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia between 1987 and 1997. Following the 1989 season, the elite competition rebranded from the VFL to the AFL, as a reflection of the increasingly national presence of the game.
Continuing a strategy to expand into new regions and increase market share, the AFL has most recently introduced teams to two non-traditional regions, Queensland’s Gold Coast and New South Wales’ Western Sydney, respectively (McDonald & Stavros, 2012). Today, the AFL is an 18-team competition and represents the most popular spectator sport competition in Australia. The code is the most-watched sport on Australian television and attracts average attendances comparable to leagues such the English Premier League and Spanish soccer’s La Liga (McDonald & Stavros, 2012; Skinner et al., 2008). Appendix A details the 2013 AFL club roster along with each team’s debut year and home state. The Gold Coast provides the context for this research and, as such, an overview of the region is now provided.

2.1.2 The Gold Coast

The Gold Coast is Australia’s sixth-largest city with a population of approximately 515,000 and is one of the country’s fastest-growing regions (ABS, 2010b; Gold Coast City Council, 2013). For this reason, the Gold Coast is viewed as a sought-after location for professional sports franchises (Dickson, O’Brien, & Cousens, 2005). Despite this appeal, previous attempts to establish professional teams on the Gold Coast have been largely unsuccessful. The region has hosted teams from sports including rugby league, soccer, basketball and baseball, which have failed to attract sustainable interest and ultimately folded or relocated to other cities (Dickson, O’Brien, et al., 2005; Heffernan & O’Brien, 2010). Despite this history and their own brief unsuccessful experiment placing a team in the region, the AFL announced plans to introduce a Gold Coast based team into the league ahead of the 2011 season.

3 In 1986 a new franchise known as the Brisbane Bears were created to enter the VFL competition. Although representing the city of Brisbane, the team was initially based on the Gold Coast and reported limited on-field and off-field successes. The Brisbane Bears were merged with the Fitzroy Lions club and relocated to Brisbane ahead of the 1997 season. For a detailed review of the Brisbane Bears expansion process see Dickson, Arnold and Chalip (2005).
The decision to expand to the Gold Coast was made after the AFL announced their intention to introduce two new teams to the competition by 2012 and invited interested consortiums to submit bids for these licences (McDonald & Stavros, 2012). The AFL subsequently evaluated submissions in consideration with a number of key performance indicators. These included determining the current interest in the AFL in each region, assessing the likelihood that a new team would attract initial support and evaluating the long-term potential for growth in the area. To assist with evaluating submissions, the AFL required all applicants to submit detailed business plans and provide evidence that a pre-determined number of committed supporters, sponsors and community groups would support the team if successful.

A Gold Coast based group (branded as GC17) submitted their application to the AFL for consideration after substantial work aimed at meeting these criteria. The AFL determined that the Gold Coast bid had satisfied their criteria and offered other strategic benefits which other applicants could not provide to the league. Specifically, establishing a team on the Gold Coast ensured that there would be AFL played in Queensland every week during the season, helping to grow the game in a region defined by the AFL as strategically important (McDonald & Stavros, 2012). Consequently, the GC17 consortium was granted the AFL’s 17th franchise licence in 2009 and used the following two years to develop a team name, colour scheme, uniform and playing roster ahead of their inclusion in the 2011 AFL season as the Gold Coast Suns (McDonald & Stavros, 2012).

The above review highlights the strategic decision making and substantial resources which are required to create new sport teams. For this reason, research which can contribute to understandings of how new sport teams can be successfully established and remain sustainable is vital. The previous unsuccessful attempts to
establish professional sport teams in the region positions the Gold Coast as an ideal setting for such current research. From a pragmatic perspective, the creation of the Gold Coast Suns as a new franchise enabled the current research to examine fan development within a region that has faced challenges in sustaining professional sport teams, thus providing both theoretical and practical relevance. To better understand some of these challenges, a review of literature surrounding new sport teams now follows.

2.2 New Sport Teams

New sport teams are created to facilitate the formation of a new league or to augment the offerings of an existing sport league. Adding a new team to an existing league may be viewed as a brand extension and illustrates the close relationship that exists between leagues and their teams (Kunkel, Funk, & Hill, 2013). Brand extensions are strategic initiatives employed by organisations to create additional revenue streams and enhance brand strength (Apostolopoulou, 2002). In the case of the AFL, the decision to expand to the Gold Coast provides the master AFL brand with a presence in a new market and the ability to reach more consumers (Kunkel et al., 2013; McDonald & Stavros, 2012). A new team also results in a higher number of league fixtures each season, thereby providing increased revenue to the league. Examples of increased revenue include profits generated from additional ticket sales, merchandise takings and income generated by television rights and sponsorship agreements.

For these reasons, the introduction of new teams has been a popular competitive strategy employed by leagues from around the world. This is certainly true of the competitive American sports industry, where approximately 170 new teams were introduced to the country’s sport landscape during the 1990s (Mahony & Howard, 2001; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003). Commenting on expansion and the increased
challenges faced by sport teams to form and continue relationships with fans, James et al. (2002) noted:

The cornucopia of sport options and new franchises in new venues has created a highly competitive environment. A team’s financial success is predicated, in large part, on the creation of an adequate income stream. This necessitates that sport teams attract, develop, and maintain a relationship with a substantial number of sport consumers. (p. 215)

This statement highlights the significance of the current research by outlining the importance of understanding how and why individuals develop deep bonds with sport teams, an area of research which has not yet been exhaustively examined (Park et al., 2010). Although relevant to all professional sport teams, this importance is amplified for new teams, who must overcome a number of additional obstacles to remain financially viable. New sport teams must compete with a range of alternate consumption options and overcome a number of constraints to attract spectators and, ultimately, develop fans (Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002; Grant, Heere, & Dickson, 2011; James et al., 2002; Lock, Taylor, & Darcy, 2011; Trail, Robinson, & Kim, 2008). Examples of such competitors include other sport-related options both within a team’s league and from other sport leagues. Additionally, non-sport-related entertainment (e.g., movie theatres) and leisure activities (e.g., going to the beach), also represent alternative consumption outlets that individuals may choose over supporting a sport franchise (Mason, 1999; Trail et al., 2008).

Compounding these challenges, new teams also typically must achieve their goals whilst relying on smaller potential consumer bases and outlets for distribution (cf. J. Doyle, Filo, McDonald, & Funk, 2013; Ehrenberg, Goodhardt, & Barwise, 1990). Additionally, new teams are unable to rely on already-loyal fans common amongst
existing teams and must attract, retain and develop fans without being able to rely on past achievements, historic moments or developed traditions (Grant et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2011; Mahony, Nakazawa, Funk, James, & Gladden, 2002). These challenges necessitate the need for research that will provide new sport teams with improved knowledge on how to attract, retain and develop fans. Research that highlights how spectators come to form a preference for new teams, alongside the reasons that enable this preference to be retained and developed, is likely to be effective in this regard.

2.3 Justification of the Research Context

The Gold Coast Suns provide a suitable context for the current research for two reasons. First, the Gold Coast Suns are a recently established sport team, and as such, provide a unique context to examine fan development (Lock et al., 2012). There are scant opportunities to research fans of new sport teams, especially from points early in the team’s formation, when the team is still deriving an identity and individuals are likely to be in early stages of fan development. The current research commenced in 2010 at a time when the team was in its formative stages, had yet to compete in the AFL and carried no developed history or rivalries with other teams. This environment provided a distinct research setting different from other contexts, such as those investigating fans of established or relocated teams. Research on such teams, whilst important, does not provide the opportunity to examine how and why individuals develop psychological connections with sport teams without histories and past achievements. For these reasons, researching a new team was deemed to represent an optimal environment to examine fan development within the longitudinal research design previously discussed. This context also provided an inimitable setting to explore the social–psychological benefits that have been linked with team support and extend understandings of how such benefits are linked with overall fan development.
Second, the Gold Coast’s general inability to sustain professional sport teams previously also contributed to the suitability of this particular research context and was deemed likely to provide interesting theoretical and managerial contributions. In selecting this particular context, it was anticipated that the current research would build on fan development knowledge broadly, as well as informing existing understandings surrounding fans of new sport teams more specifically. Thus, the Gold Coast Suns provided a suitable context both practically and theoretically.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the context in which the current research was conducted. First, a review of the Australian sports landscape outlined how a variety of codes compete to develop fans in a highly competitive marketplace. Within this review, Australian Rules football was identified as the nation’s most popular spectator sport and a context that is suitable for this research. The Gold Coast region was then described as an opportune setting to examine fan development due to the region’s history of failed sport franchises and, more importantly, given the establishment of a new team in the region. Overall, this chapter explained the context in which the current research took place and provided a justification for selecting this context. A review of the relevant literature, which begins with the selection of a viable theoretical framework suitable for this research, is now provided.
3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 3 presents a review of literature on sport fandom and the development of the fan-team bond. In turn, the chapter summarises literature relevant to understanding the factors and processes important in facilitating fan development. The literature review consists of the following sections. First, the PCM (Funk & James, 2001, 2006) is selected as the theoretical framework used to guide the current research. Second, an overview of social identity theory and its sport-specific application (team identification) are introduced and integrated within the theoretical framework. Third, a discussion of the relationship between social–psychological health and fan development is provided. Fourth, an overview of sport team internalisation and its applicability as an underlying mechanism to explain fan development follows. Last, an overview of opportunities identified to extend current knowledge is presented.

The literature review synthesises social identity theory within the PCM to help examine the process of fan development. This approach extends previous sport management research (Lock & Filo; 2012; Lock et al., 2012) and conceptual thought which posits that attitudes are inherently influenced by social surroundings and interactions (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Terry, Hogg, & White, 2000; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Particular attention is dedicated to the PCM’s usefulness as a theoretical framework that charts the development of psychological connections with sport teams. Building upon an opportunity to strengthen knowledge concerning the processes that explain fan development, social identity theory is then reviewed. Team identification research is used to better understand why individuals initially develop team bonds, and why these bonds may, or may not, strengthen (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Consequently, a rationale is built to select team identification as a suitable outcome variable explaining how and why fan development occurs from a psychological and social–psychological perspective. Overall, the strengthening of team
identification is conceptualised as following a process of sport team internalisation, which acts as a mechanism to explain broader fan development.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Sport fans vary in terms of their wants, needs, attitudes and behaviours (Kolbe & James, 2003; Quick, 2000; Stewart et al., 2003; Wann, 2006b). Within current literature, researchers have proposed various conceptual frameworks to analyse how and why an attitude toward, or an identification with, a sport team may develop (e.g., Crawford, 2003; Funk & James, 2001, 2006; Kelley, Hoffman, & Carter, 1999). Such research holds interest to academics and sport marketers, who are typically concerned with understanding ways to strengthen the fan connection to reap organisational benefits (e.g., Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Significant attention has been directed toward understanding sport fandom through a developmental lens given that “it seems unlikely that a person wakes up one day and finds that he or she is a loyal fan (buying season tickets, wearing related apparel, conversing about a team with friends, sharing in a team’s wins and losses)” (Funk & James, 2001, p. 121). Thus, uncovering the processes that explain sport fan development remains a central objective for sport researchers.

Fan development has been studied from a number of perspectives within the literature (e.g., Crawford, 2003; Funk & James, 2001, 2006; Kelley et al., 1999). Fan development has been likened to a career (Crawford, 2003), said to follow a course of adoption (Kelley et al., 1999) and described as a complex psychological process comprised of various inputs, processes and outputs (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). A common theme in each perspective is that bonds with sport teams develop and evolve, albeit on varying paths and trajectories, beginning from a formative point whereby an individual must first become aware that a team exists. Adopting a sociological perspective, Crawford (2003) outlined a seven-step theoretical model charting how an
individual may progress from merely being aware of a sport team to more complex levels of fandom. Crawford’s mixed methods study of ice hockey fans in Britain illustrated that fan development followed a status passage, or career path, whereby an individual’s life circumstances, team experiences and motives for team support combined to determine the nature of his or her team connection.

Other research has used a marketing perspective to understand how communities adopt relocated sport franchises (Dwyer, Le Crom, Tomasini, & Smith, 2011; Kelley et al., 1999). For instance, Kelley et al.’s (1999) examination of the relocated Carolina Hurricanes ice hockey franchise (originally from Hartford, Connecticut) outlined the importance of activating team awareness via marketing campaigns to develop fans. In this case, sufficient levels of awareness were leveraged by marketing campaigns designed to provoke interest in the team and ultimately encourage individuals in the new community to adopt the team as their own. Although the models advanced by Crawford (2003) and Kelley et al. (1999) offer interesting sociological and marketing perspectives on fan development, a third model more suitable for the current research is provided by the PCM (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Funk and James’ (2001, 2006) PCM best fits the current research due to its multidisciplinary grounding, focus on consumer behaviour and ability to chart attitude formation and change. A review of the PCM is now provided.

3.2 The Psychological Continuum Model

The PCM is a theoretical framework used to understand the diverse connections individuals develop with various leisure pursuits (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). In relation to this research, the PCM offers a consumer-focused developmental framework which outlines how, and the extent to which, fan development may occur (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). The PCM has been described as a suitable framework for fan
research, as it was developed from a solid theoretical grounding, addresses the inputs and outcomes that underpin fan development, accounts for various motives related to fan behaviour and provides an overarching framework with an ability to integrate complementary literature (Beaton & Funk, 2008; Stewart et al., 2003). Funk and James (2001) also briefly discuss the processes that facilitate fan development over time, but to date scant empirical work has tested these propositions (de Groot & Robinson, 2008). Therefore, the PCM possesses the characteristics needed to address the current research objective and is subsequently employed as the guiding theoretical framework within this research.

Selecting the PCM as the framework to direct this research serves three purposes. First, the PCM provides a strong theoretical underpinning and an established basis to examine sport fan development from a formative point. Second, the application of the PCM provides an opportunity to investigate theorised, yet currently unexamined research areas, such as the processes that explain fan development. Third, the PCM is a framework that can be augmented with the inclusion of complementary literature, enabling the current research to integrate social identity theory within the model. The inclusion of social identity theory provides a means to examine fan development by understanding the processes which explain how and why individuals internalise sport teams into their self-concepts (e.g., Lock et al., 2012). A review of the PCM’s current applications and theoretical premises is now provided.

3.2.1 Using the PCM to Understand Sport Consumers

The PCM has been used to understand how people form and develop psychological bonds with various participatory sports (Beaton, Funk, Ridinger, & Jordan, 2011; Filo, Funk, & O’Brien, 2008b, 2011; Funk, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2011), tourism destinations (Filo, Chen, King, & Funk, 2013) and broader leisure offerings
(Beaton, Funk, & Alexandris, 2009). Previous research efforts have used the PCM to examine how individuals develop meaningful connections with leisure pursuits such as playing rugby league (Beaton et al., 2009), playing golf (Funk et al., 2011), skiing (Beaton et al., 2009) and marathon running (Beaton et al., 2011). Illustrative of the PCM’s utility, the framework has also been used within sport spectatorship contexts, which are more important to the current research (e.g., de Groot & Robinson, 2008; J. Doyle, Kunkel, & Funk, 2013; Foster & Hyatt, 2008; Hyatt & Andrijiw, 2008; Kunkel et al., 2013; Lock et al., 2012).

The PCM has been described as a leading theoretical model for sport spectator applications (e.g., Beaton & Funk, 2008; Stewart et al., 2003). For this reason, researchers have utilised the PCM to guide investigations concerned with developing fan nations (Foster & Hyatt, 2008), understanding the reasons behind non-local team support (Hyatt & Andrijiw, 2008) and explaining the fan lifecycle and fan biography of one individual (de Groot & Robinson, 2008). Most recently, the PCM has helped direct investigations concerned with uncovering the reasons behind non-attendance (Lock & Filo, 2012), assessing the role of the league on team support (Kunkel et al., 2013), sport spectator segmentation (J. Doyle, Kunkel, & Funk, 2013) and exploring the development of team identification (Lock et al., 2012). The use of the PCM within a range of spectator enquiries indicates the framework provides clear explanations of the key concepts and variables involved in fan development. With respect to the current research purpose, a review of the PCM’s conceptual propositions related to fan development now follows.

In developing the PCM, Funk and James (2001, 2006) posited that fan development occurs across a vertical continuum characterised by four general stages. Each stage of the PCM’s hierarchy consists of various inputs, processes and outputs.
Inputs represent personal, psychological and environmental determinants which are processed and subsequently lead to outcomes (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). The outcomes at each stage may be used to understand attitude formation and change, and outline the strength and favourability of an individual’s attitudes toward a team. The outcomes at each stage act as inputs into the next level. In the event that inputs are processed favourably, fan development outcomes such as increased attitudinal (Funk & James, 2001, 2006) and behavioural manifestations of team support are likely (e.g., Funk et al., 2011). Figure 2 outlines the inputs, processes and outcomes of fan development within the PCM. The left-hand side of Figure 2 overviews the inputs and processes that lead to outcomes illustrated on the right-hand side of the model. Figure 2 also indicates how the outcomes at each stage influence the outcomes of higher stages and feed into the inputs at the next stage.
As illustrated in Figure 2, Funk and James (2001, 2006) conceptualised how four stages of fan development could be used to depict the various bonds an individual may develop with the sport teams he or she knows to exist. It is important to recognise that although these stages help clarify the dynamic interaction between individuals and sport teams; the PCM represents a continuum. This approach aligns with the theoretical tenets proposed by the PCM’s authors (Funk & James, 2001) and is consistent with research that suggests individuals within the stages are not completely homogenous.

Figure 2. The Psychological Continuum Model (Funk & James, 2006)
(e.g., Lock & Filo, 2012). A review of the PCM’s four fan development stages and an overview of the inputs, processes and outputs that characterise each are now presented.

### 3.2.2 Awareness

Prior to developing a bond with a sport team, an individual must be aware of that team’s existence. The PCM’s awareness stage is the floor of the continuum, which is reached the moment an individual gathers knowledge that a team exists (Funk & James, 2001). Awareness as an outcome is gained through exposure to various socialisation agents that act as inputs to the awareness process. Socialisation agents include significant others (e.g., family and friends) and social institutions (e.g., the media and community groups), which enable an individual to learn about various sport teams and their offerings (Funk & James, 2001). An individual may become aware of a team at any age through a variety of socialisation agents, with specific agents exerting greater influence than others during certain life periods (Funk & James, 2001; Spaaij & Anderson, 2012). For instance, in qualitative work, James (2001) found that the sport preferences of a sample of children aged 5–9 were largely consistent with those of the children’s fathers. Other research indicates that during adolescence and adulthood, an individual’s other family members, friends, peers, work colleagues and the media take on increased importance as socialisation agents (e.g., Crawford, 2003; Melnick & Wann, 2011; Spaaij & Anderson, 2010).

The importance of socialisation agents in the early stages of fan development has been detailed within the literature. Existing research explains how socialisation agents combine to facilitate information transference, which provides the individual with knowledge that certain sport teams exist (e.g., de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Funk &

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4 The PCM may be used to understand developmental bonds which exist between individuals and a variety of sport offerings (e.g., sports, leagues, teams and individuals within each). Based on the current research focus and for consistent terminology, the PCM stages are herein discussed in relation to bonds individuals may form with sport teams specifically.
Socialisation agents also determine the valence of the information transmitted and therefore can also help to determine if the individual develops initial positive, neutral or negative attitudes toward a specific team. However, socialisation agents alone do not explain how or why an individual may develop a meaningful bond with a sport team. Funk and James (2001, 2006) emphasise this point, articulating that as an outcome of the awareness stage the individual possesses information relevant to his or her sport-consumption opportunities; however he or she has not yet developed a preference for any given team. The development of such a preference indicates that the individual has moved on from the awareness stage onto the PCM’s next stage – attraction.

### 3.2.3 Attraction

Progression from awareness to attraction is reliant upon awareness outcomes interacting with attraction processes (Funk & James, 2001). The processes underlying attraction development include interactions between what an individual knows about a team (e.g., awareness outputs) and his or her hedonic motives, dispositional needs and social–situational factors (Funk, 2008; Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Although individuals in attraction have developed a preference for a specific team, it is important to note the instability of the bond at this stage. Attraction characterises a low-level connection that is not yet resilient or stable, as motives for support are primarily extrinsically driven (Funk & James, 2001). Extrinsic sources of attraction include temporal situational factors that satisfy hedonic motives or dispositional needs, such as a need for vicarious achievement.

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5 Hedonic motives include the desire to experience emotional stimulation and enjoyment. Dispositional needs include psychological requirements, individual attributes and individual personality traits. Social–situational factors represent external influences which surround the individual (Funk & James, 2001, 2004, 2006).
Researchers have described ‘interested’ (Crawford, 2003), ‘casual’ (Bernache-Assollant, Laurin, & Bodet, 2012) and ‘fair-weather’ (Wann & Branscombe, 1990) fans, which display traits consistent with the attraction stage. Wann and Branscombe’s (1990) ‘fair-weather’ fan typology provided a good example of the low-level strength of connection present within the attraction stage. Unlike ‘die-hard’ fans, who remained visible team supporters regardless of success; ‘fair-weather’ fans expressed an association with the team only in times of success and sought to Cut-Off the Reflected Failure (CORF) following losses (e.g., Snyder, Higgins, & Stucky, 1983; Snyder, Lassegard, & Ford, 1986). This dependency on extrinsic factors explains how an individual’s attraction may weaken or end should team circumstances change.

On the other hand, the ongoing satisfaction of such extrinsic motivations also illustrates how it is possible for a person to remain in the attraction stage for an extended period of time (e.g., Beaton et al., 2011) and begin to place more emphasis on intrinsic elements of his or her team support. If the individual’s team connection moves from being primarily extrinsically motivated to intrinsically meaningful, this indicates that the group has become a part of his or her social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Furthermore, an increase in the group’s relevance and salience indicates that the individual has reached the next stage of the PCM continuum – attachment.

3.2.4 Attachment

Progression to the attachment stage occurs through complex internal processes whereby steady and enduring team connections begin to develop and interact with the individual’s self-concept (Funk & James, 2001). Such processing involves attraction outcomes interacting with attachment inputs in a manner that results in the team becoming an important and internalised part of the individual’s social identity. In attachment, intrinsic rather than extrinsic motives drive the connection, which takes on
relevance, meaning and stability at functional, emotional and symbolic levels (Filo, Funk, & Alexandris, 2008a; Funk & James, 2006). Illustrating this perspective, Funk and James (2001, p. 133) argued that “attachment develops when the team elicits responses and tendencies from memory that strengthen internal links between the team and other important attitudes, values, and beliefs (core characteristics related to self-concept).” Given these strong links, attachment outcomes include a strengthening of the fan-team connection, which results in the team bond becoming stabilised, personally relevant and multifaceted (de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Funk & James, 2001, 2006).

Based on the development of a strong, multifaceted connection, individuals in the attachment stage possess strong attitudes and are resistant to alternate consumption options (Beaton et al., 2011; Funk & James, 2001). In contrast to an individual in the awareness or attraction stage who may end his or her association in times of reduced success, individuals in attachment are more inclined to remain fans regardless of team circumstances. Demonstrative of attachment, Gibson, Willming and Holdnak’s (2002) research on fans of the University of Florida’s Gators football team found that individuals considered themselves ‘Gators’ as opposed to simply ‘Gator fans’. These strong connections meant that these individuals derived significance from their role as a ‘Gator’ regardless of how the team performed on the field. Speaking of the broader social implications of team identification, Gibson et al. (2002) further argued that by being a ‘Gator’, individuals were able to derive a sense of community belongingness fostered through their group memberships.

Within the attachment stage, a wider range of elements linked to the team take on increased salience and importance enabling the individual to derive meaning from multiple sources, or points of attachment (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Lock et al., 2012). Fans have been observed to show affinities with broader organisational characteristics
of the sport organisation, the type and level of sport played, specific players and coaches, and the university or the region the team represents (e.g., Kwon & Armstrong, 2004; Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005; Lock et al., 2011; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997). Research in this area has contributed to knowledge related to fan development by showing the differences in points of attachment for individuals with varying team connections (Robinson, Trail, Dick, & Gillentine, 2005; Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003) and providing support that points of attachment diversify as the fan-team bond develops (Funk & James, 2001; Lock et al., 2012). Feedback loops between attachment outcomes and attachment processing may culminate in the individual further developing his or her team connection and moving onto the PCM’s most advanced stage – allegiance.

3.2.5 Allegiance

Allegiance is the highest stage of the PCM and signifies that a durable and persistent bond has formed between the individual and the team (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Progression to the allegiance stage is reliant upon attachment outcomes strengthening to align with the individual’s values and beliefs so that the team is highly congruent with his or her self-concept (Beaton et al., 2009; Funk & James, 2006). The differences between the attachment and allegiance stages can be explained by the attitudinal stability and the information processing mechanisms employed within each stage.

When encountering information surrounding the team that is inconsistent with his or her beliefs, the attached individual is likely to re-evaluate and re-process the information to reaffirm his or her beliefs (e.g., Funk & James, 2006). In such a scenario, the individual will seek to preserve the positive and distinct nature of the group by selecting a more favourable dimension of comparison to evaluate the team (Tajfel &
Turner, 1979). Alternately, the allegiant individual has developed a more internally stable and positive team attitude and thus will automatically reject or dismiss information that is inconsistent with his or her beliefs (Funk & James, 2001). Hence, allegiance can be best viewed as a manifestation of attachment outcomes strengthening and interacting with attachment processes, producing durable outcomes which are resistant to change (Funk & James, 2001).

High levels of loyalty exhibited by allegiant individuals influence the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes in this stage of the hierarchy. Attitudes of allegiant individuals are said to remain stable over time and bias cognition (Funk & James, 2001). Similarly, allegiant individuals participate in a wider range of team-supportive behaviours (e.g., attending or watching team games) and do so more frequently than individuals in the lower stages (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Participating in such behaviours is important to the allegiant individual and thus he or she will typically overcome barriers that may prevent less passionate individuals from following the team and attending games (e.g., Bernache-Assollant et al., 2012; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Hill & Green, 2000; McDonald & Stavros, 2007; Pritchard, Funk, & Alexandris, 2009). Ultimately, the allegiant individual is likely to invest significant amounts of time and money into supporting the team, display intense emotional reactions to team occurrences, purchase team merchandise and memorabilia, and solidify team links in permanent, identifiable ways (e.g., getting a team tattoo) (de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Gibson et al., 2002).

3.3 PCM Summary and Research Purpose

The above review illustrates how the PCM can be used to understand the various connections individuals may develop with sport teams. Although the PCM provides an outline of the stages of fan development, presently there is a lack of empirical evidence
available concerning the processes explaining movement across the continuum. Thus, an opportunity exists to further the PCM by elaborating on the factors and processes that underpin fan development. As outlined in the above review, one central proposition offered by Funk and James (2001) is that strong connections are predicated on the team taking on personal meaning and relevance through interactions with the individual’s self-concept. Ultimately, the adoption of a team identity as a valuable part of the self describes sport team internalisation, which refers to the extent to which an individual adopts a sport team into his or her self-concept (Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003).

Kolbe and James (2003) argued that an outcome of team internalisation is team loyalty, a point consistent with progression within the PCM. Similarly, Funk and James (2004) highlighted conceptual overlaps between internalisation literature and the PCM, which are both characterised by increased attitudinal responses. These conceptual positions support that fan development may follow a process of internalisation. Thus, the extent to which an individual has internalised a team appears to be a suitable barometer to distinguish between individuals who are simply aware of or possess a low-level team bond (e.g., awareness and attraction) and individuals who have more stable connections (e.g., attachment and allegiance).

This perspective is consistent with that of Lock and colleagues (2012), who suggested that understanding the extent to which an individual identifies with a team serves as one way to explain PCM progression. Extending this viewpoint, Lock and Filo (2012) provided some initial evidence of internalisation guiding fan development by examining how perceptions of a team’s congruence, or incongruence, with an individual’s self-concept impacted upon his or her involvement with the team. Through this PCM-driven research, Lock and Filo (2012) demonstrated how individuals who
deemed the team incongruent or irrelevant with their view of self were unlikely to form a preference for that team. On the other hand, individuals who found that the team’s values were consistent with their desired self-concept were more likely to form an attraction to that team.

Elsewhere, other research also suggests fan development can be understood via examining internalisation; however, this research has been limited to conceptual work (Spaaij & Anderson, 2012) and exploratory research (de Groot & Robinson, 2008). In their study, de Groot and Robinson (2008) provided a retrospective account of one passionate AFL supporter’s team fandom and highlighted how his team affiliation developed into an important part of his identity. More recently, Lock et al. (2012) collected interview data that detailed how fans of a new team derived personal meaning from their connection with a new Australian soccer team over the course of one season.

Such research has provided valuable contributions and also outlined areas for future research. Spaaij and Anderson (2012) noted there is a need for research that further explains the team identification process and also considers the social–psychological processes explaining the development of durable bonds with sport teams. Similar opportunities exist to extend the work of de Groot and Robinson (2008) and Lock et al. (2012) by examining the factors and processes explaining fan development through the implementation of longitudinal research designs. By doing so, the current research seeks to contribute to knowledge surrounding the factors and processes important to fan development. Consequently, the purpose of this research is to provide a better understanding of fan development by exploring the factors and processes that explain why an individual may internalise a team identity into his or her self-concept.

To address the research purpose stated above, it is necessary to augment the PCM with complementary literature that can explain why an individual may internalise
a social group membership into his or her sense of self. Such integration elucidates understandings related to the PCM by offering a perspective on how social identifications can influence individual-level attitudes, through the processing and adoption of the group’s norms, expectations and behaviours (Terry et al., 2000). An established theory for understanding why individuals may associate with social groups is offered by social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). A review of social identity theory and its applicability to sport fan development research now follows.

3.4 Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was developed by social psychologists Tajfel and Turner during the 1970s as a means to understand intergroup behaviour. Social identity describes “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) noted that individuals use (and choose) social group memberships as reference points to make sense of who they are, define their place in the world and to achieve a positive social image. Given the collective nature of sport team support, social identity theory is appropriately used to understand the varying bonds that exist between fans and their preferred sport teams (Lock et al., 2011).

Social identity theory provides a basis to understand the development of bonds that persevere regardless of team circumstance, consistent with the upper stages of the PCM. According to social identity theory, individuals associate with groups that are perceived to be congruent with their own desired self-concepts, as explained by the PCM’s attachment process. The implication being that to achieve a positive image, an individual will only join a social group if membership is perceived to provide positive
self-reflections onto some dimension of the individual’s social identity. Tajfel and Turner (1979) expanded upon this notion, defining three key principles that explain identification with social groups:

1. Individuals strive to achieve or to maintain positive social identity;
2. Positive social identity is based to a large extent on favourable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups: the in-group must be perceived as positively differentiated or distinct from the relevant out-groups;
3. When social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to leave their existing group and join some more positively distinct group and/or to make their existing group more positively distinct. (p. 40)

These three principles provide a basis to understand how and why individuals develop, or do not develop, strong affinities with social groups. First and foremost, individuals will only identify with groups that they perceive are equal to, or greater than, their evaluations of self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). By identifying with social groups that are perceived favourably, an individual is able to improve his or her self-concept and achieve a desirable social identity (Tajfel, 1978). On the other hand, social identity specifies that individuals will not derive identification from groups that are perceived as worse than their evaluations of self; as such associations will not facilitate a positive social identity.

Second, as well as evaluating the group in relation to the self, group perceptions are largely based on comparisons made between the member group (in-group) and relevant alternate groups (out-groups). Individuals develop and maintain links with social groupings that they perceive are superior from other relevant out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). To manage their social identities, members continually evaluate the
in-group in relation to salient out-groups to ensure that the in-group is positive and distinct from these relevant rival groupings. These comparisons determine the extent to which an individual may derive affective significance from his or her group membership, influencing his or her attitudes toward the group. Whereas favourable comparisons generally seek to reaffirm the individual’s group membership; unfavourable comparisons introduce uncertainty to that part of his or her social identity.

The third principle specifies how individuals manage threats to their social identities when the in-group is deemed to be unsatisfactory. Tajfel and Turner (1979) explained that when an individual’s group is threatened or group membership becomes uncertain, group members will employ image-maintenance strategies to protect their social identities and the positivity of the group. Preserving the group’s status is imperative to satisfy the underpinning condition of the framework – that social identity must be positive and distinct in some way (Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The three image-maintenance strategies available to group members are now discussed.

### 3.4.1 Individual Mobility

The first image-management strategy, individual mobility, is the sole individual-level strategy available (L. Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996) and describes an individual’s choice to either leave a group, or to increase his or her status in the group. For instance, a fan who has just witnessed his or her favourite team experience an unsuccessful season may seek distance from the negative connotations associated with the team by ceasing his or her support. This type of image-maintenance strategy is likely to be enacted by individuals in the lower PCM stages who Bask in the Reflected Glory (BIRG) of successes (Cialdini et al., 1976) and CORF after defeats (Snyder et al., 1983; Snyder et al., 1986; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Although a lowly identified individual (e.g., awareness or attraction) may leave an in-group if he or she believes
membership reflects negatively on him or her, individual mobility may also manifest with a strongly identified group member (e.g., attachment or allegiance) seeking to increase his or her status within the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Therefore, individual mobility elucidates an identity-maintenance strategy that potentially influences fan development in positive or negative ways. Providing a positive example of individual mobility, Bristow and Sebastian (2001) found that fans of an under-performing American baseball team increased their status within the group as a means to lend legitimacy to their group membership.

3.4.2 Social Creativity

The second image-maintenance strategy, social creativity, involves shifting key dimensions of social comparison to create more favourable intergroup evaluations (Lalonde, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Whereas individual mobility strategies manifest in the manipulation of an individual’s status within the in-group; social creativity strategies are employed to alter perceptions of the group as a whole. Researchers typically attribute such strategies to highly identified fans that are unable to CORF or leave the group (e.g., individual mobility), as the team has already formed an important part of his or her self-concept (Bernache-Assollant, Laurin, Bouchet, Bodet, & Lacassagne, 2010; Tropp & Wright, 2001; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). For these individuals, enacting social creativity during instances where the in-group becomes threatened helps to manage threats to the group and in turn, their own social identities. Social creativity may be exhibited in three general ways now discussed.

The first manifestation of social creativity involves shifting the dimension of comparison used to evaluate the in-group. This option is employed when a relevant out-group is perceived more favourably on a key dimension (i.e., team success). In a participatory setting, Lalonde (1992) found that players on a losing ice hockey team
(e.g., negative comparison of the in-group’s value of success) perceived that opposition teams engaged in dirty play, whilst describing their own playing style as fair (e.g., positive comparison of the in-group’s value of fair play). Similarly, a fan of a losing team may emphasise that his or her team plays in a more attractive style than a more successful out-group team, shifting the dimension of comparison. These examples illustrate how altering the dimension of comparison to a value more likely to reflect positively on the in-group can preserve the in-group’s status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The second option available in social creativity involves downplaying the valence of the negatively perceived dimension, or by assigning a positive value to the attribute (L. Jackson et al., 1996). Within the sport context, individuals who identify with rogue teams such as the NRL’s Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles or the National Football League’s (NFL) Oakland Raiders, often do so based on their outlaw images (Fink, Parker, Brett, & Higgins, 2009). In these examples, the source of the fan’s identity is derived, at least in some part, from the negative valence attributed to the in-group by others. To ensure a positive social identity can be derived from such group memberships, fans of these teams may downplay the negativity others attribute to their group (e.g., “We don’t care that we are hated”) or embrace the distinctiveness of this attribute (e.g., “We love that we are hated”). In these instances, the dimension of comparison (team reputation) remains constant, but the valence attributed to the dimension is readjusted to favour the in-group.

The third social creativity option involves choosing a different out-group for comparison. To achieve a positive social comparison, the new out-group selected must be inferior to the in-group on one or more characteristic (Wann, 2006b). For instance, an Arsenal fan who has evaluated the team’s success relative to Manchester United’s as negative may state, “We haven’t won as many titles as Manchester United, but we’ve
won more than Tottenham.” In this example, the dimension of comparison remains constant (success), but the salient out-group changes to favour the in-group.

3.4.3 Social Competition

The third image-maintenance strategy available when an individual’s social identity becomes threatened is offered by social competition. In this instance, the individual seeks to change the relative status of the in-group compared to an out-group on one or more dimension (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social competition is predicated on group members enhancing their group’s position in society by means of affirmative action, which in sporting terms may manifest in various ways.

Sport fans face a unique situation in that member groups directly compete with out-groups throughout the course of the season. Such competition potentially offers many varied challenges to the status of the in-group (e.g., in the event of losses). To transcend this, fans may wish to enact societal change to improve group perceptions. Teams who are linked with actions that society denounces (e.g., violence against women) may become pressured by fans to visibly support organisations combating this behaviour. In this example, fan power may improve the awareness of the team through positive action and in turn help the team improve their societal status and likeability. Bernache-Assollant et al. (2010) observed ‘blasting’, which describes the derogation of out-groups and their fans (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980), as another strategy whereby competitive means are used to improve the in-group. This strategy does not directly improve the status of the in-group, but rather indirectly positions the group positively by reducing the favourability of other relevant out-groups.
3.5 Social Identity Theory and the PCM

The above review summarises the key principles of social identity theory and articulates how group memberships may be used to enhance an individual’s social identity. Social identity theory may be used to explain the psychological processing underpinning PCM progression as it outlines the processes which determine if an individual will derive identification from a social group, and to what extent this identification may form a part of the individual’s social identity. In regards to the sport context, social identity theory has the utility to explain why some people never move beyond being aware of or casually attracted to a team, whilst others become passionate and committed fans. Consequently, social identity theory can be used to understand the factors and processes which facilitate fan development.

For these reasons, social identity theory was integrated within the PCM for the purposes of the current research. This approach aligns with theoretical frameworks used in recent fan development research (Lock et al., 2012) and has been conceptually supported in sport research charting attitude formation and change (Funk & James, 2001, 2004, 2006). Thus, the decision to use the PCM and social identity theory in concert was supported. A common point to the above research is the conceptual links that exist between increased identification and fan development outcomes. Sport research which has used social identity theory to understand sport spectators has predominantly used team identification, reviewed next, as a key construct to chart fan development.

3.6 Team Identification

Team identification refers to an applied social identification where a sport team represents the group and source of identification. More specifically, team identification describes the extent to which an individual maintains a psychological connection with a
sport team, coupled with the emotional value he or she attaches to his or her team support (Wann, Melnick et al., 2001). Outlining how team identification may be used in fan development research, Wann (2006b) acknowledged the utility of the construct in differentiating between the heterogeneous cohorts that exist within sport fan populations (Quick, 2000; Wann, Melnick et al., 2001). Consequently, much of the work surrounding team identification to date has focused on exploring the unique context sport teams provide as sources of identity for individuals (e.g., Wann & Branscombe, 1990, 1993; Wann, Ensor, & Bilyeu, 2001; Wann et al., 1996).

Wann, Melnick et al.’s (2001) definition outlines that cognitive and affective dimensions are salient elements of team identification. Such a conceptualisation aligns with social identity theorising, which argues that identification is comprised of cognitive, affective and evaluative components (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Despite this theoretical position, much of the work to date concerning team identification has employed unidimensional measures of the construct. The current body of research has primarily relied on unidimensional measurements of team identification such as the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) (Wann & Branscombe, 1993), the Team Identification Index (TII) (Trail & James, 2001) and the Connection to the Team scale (James et al., 2002).

Researchers have utilised such team identification measures in diverse research applications. These include efforts concerned with understanding the link between individual motives and team identification (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002), fan reactions to negative information surrounding the in-group (Fink et al., 2009), the influence of team identification on intentions to purchase team merchandise (Kwon, Trail, & James, 2007) and identification with new professional sport teams (Lock et al., 2009; Lock et al., 2011). Although there are conceptual disconnections associated with a
unidimensional application of team identification, this existing research has provided substantial insights into sport spectator knowledge, primarily through examining the antecedents and manifestations of team identification.

Building upon multidimensional measures developed in social psychology and management literature (e.g., Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999), sport management scholars have begun to introduce multidimensional measures of team identification to capture the cognitive, affective and evaluative components of identity. Recognising the conceptual limitations of unidimensional measures, Dimmock, Grove and Eklund (2005) developed the first multidimensional measure of team identification, which was later titled the Team Identification Scale (TIS). Despite seeking to develop a scale reflective of a tripartite dimensional structure consistent with social identity theory (cognitive, affective and evaluative dimensions), Dimmock et al. (2005) could not provide support for the desired three-factor model. The resultant TIS consisted of three factors made up of a combined cognitive and affective dimension alongside an evaluative component split into two factors (personal and other). The cognitive/affective, personal evaluative and other evaluative dimensional structure of the TIS has since been supported in subsequent research (Dimmock & Grove, 2006; Theodorakis, Dimmock, Wann, & Barlas, 2010; Theodorakis, Wann, & Weaver, 2012).

More recently, Heere and James (2007a) recognised that the TIS provided an important first step in multidimensional team identification scale development, as well as an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive scale. Complementing social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) with literature on collective identity (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004), self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987), identity theory (Stryker, 1980) and the stage-based theory of Nigrescence (Cross, 1971),
Heere and James developed a six-dimensional scale. The resultant Team*ID scale measured the dimensions: Private Evaluation, Public Evaluation, Sense of Interdependence with the Group, Sense of Interconnection with the Group, Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement. Conceptually these dimensions capture cognitive, affective and evaluative (and other) components of team identification. Despite reporting some concerns with discriminant validity, Heere and James (2007a) argued that the Team*ID scale represented an appropriate tool to measure the distinct components of identification. In subsequent work, the Team*ID scale has been used across a variety of research settings, which have confirmed parts of the scale are valid and reliable (Heere, James, Yoshida, & Scremin, 2011; Heere, Walker, et al., 2011).

In comparison with unidimensional measures, multidimensional measures such as the TIS and Team*ID scales better align with social identity theory and provide researchers with opportunities to best understand team identification. A key area of interest for fan development research in this regard concerns assessing the stability and structure of team identification over time. However, researchers have continued to use unidimensional measures of the construct, despite multidimensional tools now being available. Research of this kind has also thus far been limited to US collegiate contexts, despite an acknowledgement that research in other areas (e.g., professional sport) should be conducted (Wann, 1996). Such research has observed differences in team identification throughout a season (Wann, 1996), assessed the stability of team identification over the course of one season and its relationship with entertainment and social motives (Gau, Wann, & James, 2010), examined the relationship between identification and social–psychological health in a cross-lagged panel design (Wann, 2006a) and uncovered some of the strategies employed by fans with differing levels of team identification over the course of one season (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999). Despite employing unidimensional scales, these efforts have provided insights into the
stability of team identification and opportunities to build upon this knowledge through the employment of multidimensional scales.

Wann’s (1996) longitudinal examination assessed how the identification of fans of US collegiate basketball and football teams changed over the course of one season. Findings indicated that team identification decreased significantly throughout the team’s season, with fans high, medium and low in identification reporting similar mean score changes. Ultimately, small mean score changes indicated that fan identification was stable, but not immune to change (Wann, 1996, 2006b). Dietz-Uhler and Murrell’s (1999) examination of collegiate football fans’ reactions to game outcomes also provided evidence of the stability of team identification by evaluating fan perceptions after 11 separate games. Findings indicated that fans low in identification did not change their evaluation of the team as the season progressed; whereas highly identified fans reported a general increase in team perceptions over time. These research pieces complement other work, which has provided evidence that identification with sport teams remains relatively stable across time (e.g., Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, Dolan, McGeorge, & Allison, 1994; Wann & Schrader, 1996).

More recent research utilising cross-lagged panel model research designs has provided evidence that unidimensional measures of team identification remain stable over time. In their research on the entertainment and social motives linked to identification with a US collegiate football team, Gau et al. (2010) demonstrated that the sample’s overall identification at the beginning of the season was correlated with identification at the end of the season. Using a similar methodological approach, Wann (2006a) found that an initial measurement of identification with a US university’s basketball team reported a significant relationship with a second measurement taken three months later. Collectively, these studies have illustrated that team identification is
a reasonably stable construct; however, this body of research also provides evidence that identification is not immune to change (e.g., Wann, 2006b).

The current research seeks to build on current knowledge by examining the temporal nature of team identification and, in particular, detail how the multiple dimensions of identification operate over time. Determining how the components of identification may change and interrelate over time is likely to add to knowledge surrounding the underlying processes that facilitate fan development. From this perspective, it may be possible to determine which are the most salient dimensions of identification, alongside which of those are most susceptible to change. However, to date, multidimensional scales of identification have thus far been employed in cross-sectional research and are yet to be examined longitudinally. Seeking to expand upon the current knowledge that is pertinent to team identification and fan development, the following research question is offered:

**Research Question 1:** How does the structure of team identification change over time?

Addressing Research Question 1 offers the ability to identify structural fluctuations, or stability, in the dimensional makeup of team identification. Identifying the structural stability or temporal nature of team identification through Research Question 1 is likely to offer an improved understanding of fan development. Such results can be used to confirm or contrast previous unidimensional efforts (e.g., Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Gau et al., 2010; Wann, 1996, 2006a) and to provide insights into the dimensional operation of identification over time. Should results reveal dimensional change, it would then be important to determine the underlying causes of such change and build upon Research Question 1. Thus, it is important to understand
some of the factors related to the team and the individual that have the potential to influence changes in identification.

Sport researchers contend that a range of internal and external factors (e.g., hedonic motives, dispositional needs and social–situational factors, Funk & James, 2001; psychological, team-related and environmental factors, Wann, 2006b) influence the degree to which an individual may become a team fan. The forthcoming sections summarise and present literature surrounding the antecedents and manifestations of team identification, which helped to guide the development of additional research questions. With respect to antecedents, three broad categorical factors (psychological, team-related and environmental\(^6\)) are discussed. Following this discussion, the attitudinal and social–psychological manifestations of team identification are presented and additional research questions are then offered.

3.7 Team Identification Antecedents

Wann (2006b) discussed how an individual’s team identification can be influenced by a wide array of factors, including seemingly arbitrary reasons such as liking a particular team based on the colours they wear or the sound of the team’s name. Scholars have also noted that antecedents to team identification are context specific (i.e., socially constructed; Jones, 1997a). For these reasons, efforts to exhaustively list all of the reasons for initially identifying with a sport team have proven to be challenging (Wann, 2006b). However, research has uncovered some of the common antecedents which represent the factors influential to team identification.

\(^6\) Psychological, team-related and environmental factors included within the forthcoming sections are interchangeable with the hedonic motives, dispositional needs and social–situational factors discussed within the PCM. The conceptual similarity which exists between these factors supports the synergistic approach of utilising team identification within the PCM to explain fan development.
In an exploratory study, Wann et al. (1996) sampled 91 college students, who provided 315 reasons (condensed into 42 categories) for initially identifying with a favourite team. Illustrating the complexity underpinning sport team identification formation, respondents described an average of 3.46 reasons for support, with some participants describing up to 15 reasons. The top five reasons were the team’s geographic placement, team successes, family members following the team, peers following the team and a preference for the team’s players (Wann et al., 1996). These antecedents were later categorised as psychological, team-related and environmental factors (Wann, 2006b), providing parallels with the inputs described within the PCM (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). An overview of the psychological, team-related and environmental factors described in sport spectator literature is now provided.

### 3.7.1 Environmental Factors

An individual’s environment consists of a myriad of factors that may contribute to his or her fan development. Environmental factors leading to team identification are similar to the social and situational factors described within the PCM (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). These include special consumptive scenarios such as two-for-one ticket deals (Funk & James, 2006), existing group memberships (Heere & James, 2007b; Lock et al., 2011), the geographic placement of the team (Jones, 1997a; Kolbe & James, 2000) and the influence of family members and peers (Crawford, 2003; de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Funk & James, 2001, 2006; James, 2001; Melnick & Wann, 2011; Spaaij & Anderson, 2010, 2012). Additionally, environmental factors may also include the amount of exposure the team receives via media coverage (Mahony et al., 2002; Sutton et al., 1997) and the sport or the league in which the team competes (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Funk et al., 2002; Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2003; Kunkel et al., 2013; Lock et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2005).
One prominent environmental factor is the geographic placement of the team. The city or town which a particular team represents has been shown to be an important environmental factor influencing team identification (Jones, 1997a; Kolbe & James, 2000; Lock et al., 2011). Researchers posit that the location of a particular team influences the extent to which individuals may feel a sense of connection with the team (R. Doyle, Lewis, & Malmisur, 1980; Greenwood, Kanters, & Casper, 2006; Lewis, 2001). This may be due to the existing affiliations or bonds that an individual holds toward the region and through the influence this factor plays in determining the extent to which direct team experiences may occur (Funk & Pastore, 2000). From a conceptual perspective, individuals who are located near a particular team should also be less inclined to view following the team as an arduous task made difficult by perceived time and money constraints (e.g., Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Pritchard et al., 2009).

However, a close geographic proximity to a team does not guarantee that an individual will form a team preference; nor does geographical displacement prohibit him or her from developing a deep bond with that same team. Whannel (1992) suggested that significant improvements in broadcasting technology in the early 1990s (e.g., close-up camera angles and player profile displays) allowed individuals to become deeply immersed in the game and feel more like a part of the team. Such technological advancements have since been noted as important catalysts that enable displaced, expatriate and overseas fans to form and maintain identification with geographically distant teams (Andrijiw & Hyatt, 2009; Foster & Hyatt, 2008; Kerr & Emery, 2011; Kerr & Gladden, 2008).

The influence of socialisation agents such as family members and peers is also an important environmental factor. As discussed in relation to the awareness stage of the PCM, socialisation agents influence the type of sports and specific teams that an
individual learns about and may ultimately support (Crawford, 2003; James, 2001). Previous studies focused on Australian Rules football have outlined the importance of socialisation agents in facilitating game attendance (Neale & Funk, 2006) and how parents and friends play an important role in the socialisation process during childhood and early adulthood (e.g., Melnick & Wann, 2011; Spaaij & Anderson, 2010). For similar reasons, exposure to media outlets has also been found to be an important environmental influence (Mahony et al., 2002; Sutton et al., 1997).

Extending this line of thought, J. Doyle, Filo, et al. (2013) recently espoused that the market share of a team influences the loyalty fans exhibit toward that same team. In this study of high (NRL) and small (AFL) market share teams in Sydney, the authors contended that observed differences in loyalty could be explained by the increased salience and accessibility of high market share teams. The implication from this research is that the type of sport and the sport league popular in a particular region can have a positive effect on fan development, as highlighted in previous research (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Funk et al., 2002; Funk et al., 2003; Kahle, Kambara, & Rose, 1996; Kunkel et al., 2013; Lock et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2005). The environmental factors reviewed above influence the amount and type of contact an individual may have with a specific team. Consequently, these environmental factors affect the opportunities an individual may have to develop a team preference and subsequently derive meaning from his or her team bond.

3.7.2 Team-Related Factors

Team-related factors represent the attributes and successes of the team, alongside perceptions of individual players and the overall sport organisation (Wann, 2006b). Team-related attributes include on-field and off-field determinants such as team histories and rituals (Underwood, Bond, & Baer, 2001), team successes (Fisher &
Wakefield, 1998; Neale & Funk, 2006) and broader organisational characteristics (Sutton et al., 1997). These attributes are often salient amongst popular sport teams. For example, Kerr and Emery (2011) found that fans identified with English soccer team Liverpool FC due to perceptions that the team played in an attractive style propagated by star players, were established in the highest division and had a successful history.

End, Dietz-Uhler, Harrick and Jacquemotte (2002) also found a successful past was an important factor in their study on the likelihood of fans to identify with various collegiate and professional sport teams. Results revealed individuals were more likely to identify with successful teams rather than teams who were not often victorious. Previous enquiries have supported the importance of deriving vicarious achievement, finding it was the strongest motive for team identification amongst fans of established teams (e.g., Fink et al., 2002; Wann et al., 1996). From this perspective, team-related factors can explain how sport teams are able to satisfy the hedonic motives and dispositional needs of fans, such as the need to experience positive esteem or entertainment (Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009; Funk & James, 2001, 2006).

Although the associative benefits that come with supporting a successful team have been widely observed as an antecedent to team identification, some sport fans are able to maintain or even increase their associations with perennially unsuccessful sport teams (e.g., Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Fisher, 1998). Thus, team-related factors extend past on-field performances. Fisher and Wakefield’s (1998) research into the determinants of identification for fans of one successful and one unsuccessful US ice hockey team revealed the influences of identification varied in terms of magnitude and composition between the groups. Findings indicated that team performance was a significant determinant of identification for fans of a successful team; but not a significant factor for fans of a similar yet less successful team. In the absence of
successes, fans of the unsuccessful team derived their team identification largely from the sport of ice hockey and from an appreciation of individual players on their preferred team (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998).

Elsewhere, researchers have concluded that team identification can be borne from positive perceptions of team attributes not linked to performances, such as the team’s stadium (Kerr & Emery, 2011; Underwood et al., 2001), organisational image (Sutton et al., 1997) and individual player characteristics (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). Such research has indicated that the appeal of players (player attractiveness) and the extent to which fans relate to players (player similarity) can lead to team identification (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Wann et al., 1996). Fisher (1998) elucidated upon this understanding by providing support that similarity with players was a significantly better predictor of team identification than was player attractiveness. With respect to non-player related team characteristics, researchers have observed the importance of historic stadiums (e.g., Liverpool’s Anfield Stadium) in fostering identification (Kerr & Emery, 2011). Other non-player related antecedents include broader organisational characteristics of the sport team, including perceptions of the team’s brand (e.g., Dwyer et al., 2011) and evaluations of team owners and managers (Sutton et al., 1997).

The above environmental and team-related antecedents identified in the literature can be understood through a social identity theory lens. Relating back to social identity theory, individuals identify with teams which possess favourable attributes so that those same attributes can be reflected on their social identities and self-concepts (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity theory also explains how psychological factors, reviewed next, act as antecedents to team identification, and how psychological needs can be satisfied by the processing of environmental and team-related factors.
3.7.3 Psychological Factors

Environmental and team-related determinants influence the likelihood that psychological factors important to the individual may be satisfied. The psychological antecedents of team identification can be used to explain the development of low-level connections, such as an initial team attraction (Funk, Haugtvedt, & Howard, 2000; Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Psychological factors contributing to team identification centre largely on the hedonic motives and dispositional needs discussed within the PCM and include needs to affiliate with others and to derive a sense of belongingness from team support (e.g., Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Hirt, Zillmann, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992; Underwood et al., 2001; Wann et al., 1996). From this perspective, sport teams can act as vehicles that satisfy motives and needs related to desires to experience socialisation, performance, esteem, excitement and diversion (Funk et al., 2009).

The desire to belong (e.g., esteem) has been described as the most significant contributor to team identification (Sutton et al., 1997). This aspiration aligns with social identity theory, which proposes that social groups act as mechanisms which can facilitate feelings of social approval and belongingness (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this case, feelings of belongingness may manifest through teams acting as social catalysts by facilitating inclusion in social activities that foster a sense of solidarity with a broader group of people, or wider community classification (de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Funk et al., 2002; Wann, 2006c). Research conducted in US, UK and Greek sport settings has provided empirical support for this antecedent (Jones, 1997a, 2000; Kolbe & James, 2000; Theodorakis, Wann, Nassis, & Luellen, 2012; Wann et al., 1996).

Kolbe and James (2000) found that fans of the NFL's Cleveland Browns became fans due to the societal standing of the team in the city. This research found that support
for the Browns was derived from an acknowledgement that the team was an important
part of Cleveland. For respondents who had either grown up in or now lived in
Cleveland, the team’s link to the city provided personal meaning and relevance to their
team support. Similar findings were reported by Jones (1997a), who found the most
common reason for identification within professional football in the UK was a desire to
support the local team. These results contrasted with those reported by Wann et al.
(1996) in terms of the order of importance of the reasons for support, which Jones
(1997a) suggested was due in part to the differences between the US and the UK
contexts. In later research focusing on one specific team, Jones (2000) argued that an
existing identification with the town of Luton was an important factor in the
development of identification with Luton Town FC, supporting his previous research.
These findings were further validated by research conducted in US and Greece college
settings which found a positive correlation existed between identification with a local
team, but not a distant team, and subjects’ desire to feel belongingness with others
(Theodorakis, Wann, Nassis, et al., 2012). Taken together, the above research illustrates
how becoming a fan of a local team can enable individuals to derive belongingness from
specific geographical locations and with likeminded others.

In a similar vein, other research has found that an existing identification with the
sport or league in which the team plays is an antecedent to team identification. Research
focused on fans of US ice hockey (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998), US women’s soccer
(Funk et al., 2002), US collegiate football (Robinson et al., 2005) and Australian soccer
(Lock et al., 2011) has found that the sport represented an important factor leading to
team identification. Similar findings have been reported with respect to motivations for
game attendance in settings such as women’s professional basketball (Funk et al.,
2003), Australian Rules football (Neale & Funk, 2006) and US collegiate football
(Kahle et al., 1996). For instance, Kahle and colleagues (1996) found that an existing
connection with the sport of football was an influential factor in determining attendance at a college football game. Although a team’s city, town or representative league or sport may be considered as environmental factors, they can also explain deeper underlying psychological motives of team support. Specifically, these points of attachment may enable fans to feel a sense of community and camaraderie with others who share similar affinities for the region or sport.

3.8 Identification with New Sport Teams

Although limited in its quantity and still an emergent area of scholarship (Lock et al., 2011), research on fans of new teams has commenced, providing important contributions to fan development knowledge. Similar to established team literature, this body of work indicates how a variety of psychological, team-related and environmental factors contribute to the formation of connections with new teams. Research conducted in US Major League Baseball (MLB) and Japanese professional soccer contexts suggests new leagues and teams attract initial interest as they represent a novelty (James et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2002). Research has shown that the curiosity attributed to new and novel sports is positively related to a range of subsequent behaviours (e.g., Park, Andrew, & Mahony, 2008; Park et al., 2010). Although such curiosity and novelty may help boost interest in the short-term, long-term success is predicated on teams developing fans that resist alternate consumption options and participate in a variety of behaviours supportive of the team (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Consequently, new team researchers have dedicated their efforts to understanding how fans may form and more importantly, develop bonds with new teams.

Researchers have measured the relative strength of the fan-team bond from early points in the team’s lifecycle (James et al., 2002; Lock et al., 2009), studied the formation of team identification (Greenwood et al., 2006; Lock et al., 2011) and
explored the processes and outcomes associated with developed team identities (Lock et al., 2012). In their study of season ticket holders of a new MLB franchise, James et al. (2002) determined that fan development may occur rapidly, finding that strong fan-team bonds were present prior to the team’s first competitive match. This demonstrated that individuals are able to develop deep psychological connections with new teams despite a lack of direct team experiences or history. Extending the work of James et al. (2002), more recent research has explored the formation of team identification in the context of a mid-level professional US Arena Football League (USAFL) team (Greenwood et al., 2006) and a new professional soccer team located in Australia (Lock et al., 2009; Lock et al., 2011).

Focusing on fans of a second-year USAFL team, Greenwood et al. (2006) explored the factors relevant to the formation of team identification by testing the predictive ability of a range of motives for initially becoming involved. Finding parallels with research concerning established team identification, individuals who were motivated to initially support the team based on the recommendation of family, a close geographic proximity to the team, the presence of particular players and coaches and a desire to experience entertainment and atmosphere, were likely to identify with the team. Research within Australia by Lock et al. (2009) found that fans of a new professional soccer team displayed strong cognitive, affective and behavioural identification toward a particular team; despite having less than one year of direct team experiences. Notably, the overall strength of identification reported by respondents in this study had already surpassed the strength of identity reported in literature regarding fans of established teams (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

More recent research has aimed to uncover the factors that motivated individuals to identify with new teams and determine if this process may be conceptually different
from established team identification. Lock et al. (2011) noted that in a new team context, fans are unable to derive an identity from the team’s prior achievements, as new teams tend to have little, if any, history. Instead, these fans formed their team identifications around connections with related social groups. Specifically, Lock et al. (2011) found the formation of identification with a new soccer team was largely driven based on an existing identification with the sport of soccer, and to a lesser extent, a desire to support the team’s home city and to participate in the occasion of match days.

3.9 Attitudinal Manifestations of Team Identification

As outlined above, a range of psychological, team-related and environmental factors influence the overall extent to which an individual may identify with an established or newly created sport team. Research has revealed that individuals display varying levels of identification ranging from an active disidentification (Foster & Hyatt, 2007; Lock & Filo, 2012) through to low, medium and high levels of identification (Bernache-Assollant, Laurin, & Bodet, 2012; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). The varying levels of team identification present in fan populations provide a predictor of the favourability and durability of the bond that exists between an individual and his or her favourite team. This is consistent with research that has found identification to act as a predictor to attitudinal components of team support (e.g., Murrell & Dietz, 1992). Consequently, team identification can be used to understand variations within sport fan populations, another point consistent with progression within the PCM.

Individuals who identify strongly with a team are said to possess a biased view favouring the team (Wann & Dolan, 1994), evaluate other fans of the team more favourably (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999), respond to team successes and failures as personal successes or failures (Cialdini et al., 1976; Hirt et al., 1992) and respond more emotionally to team wins and losses (Madrigal, 1995; Wann et al., 1994). Additional
enquiries have linked team identification with increased self-esteem (Wann & Branscombe, 1990) and higher perceived values of team-related merchandise (Kwon et al., 2007). Similar to the links described in the PCM’s attachment stage, identification has been positively linked to loyalty, satisfaction and the likelihood of continuing to support the team in the event of poor performance (Fink et al., 2002). When considering the core assumptions of social identity theory, these attitudes and perceptions may be interpreted as mechanisms enhancing or protecting one’s group, and in turn, self-concept (Cialdini et al., 1976; Snyder et al., 1986; Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986).

Due to the increased reflection of team onto self-concept amongst the highly identified (Wann, Royalty, & Roberts, 2000), these individuals have the most to gain or lose in the event of team victories and defeats (Wann, Ensor, & Bilyeu, 2001). Therefore, a highly identified individual tends to possess perceptions that favour his or her team to maintain a positive self-concept. For this reason, identification has been shown to impact intentions to behave and expectations of team performances. For example, Wann and Branscombe (1993) found identification to be positively related to game attendance intentions and team performance expectations. Specifically, highly identified individuals had greater intentions to attend the team’s matches and possessed more optimistic outlooks regarding the team’s possible success than did lowly or moderately identified individuals. Supporting these results with research on French spectators, Bernache-Assollant, Bouchet and Lacassagne (2007) found a positive correlation existed between team identification and fan’s future team performance expectations.

As discussed earlier, social identity theory outlines that should these expectations (i.e., winning a game) not eventuate, a group member will seek to employ
methods to protect his or her self-concept. Wann and Dolan (1994) reported that for the highly identified fans, wins are viewed as the result of internal factors such as the skill of the team; whereas defeats are attributed to external factors such as poor refereeing. The implication is that highly identified fans are unable to CORF (Snyder et al., 1983; Snyder et al., 1986) and will instead employ alternate methods to preserve their social identity. These methods may include enacting social mobility, social creativity and social comparisons which are dependent on an individual’s strength of identification with the team. Additional image-management techniques, in some cases involving illegal acts, have also been noted as being more likely to be considered by fans with high levels of team identification.

Within existing team identification literature, highly identified individuals have been shown to be more likely to consider engaging in anti-social or illegal acts to assist their teams (Wann, Hunter, Ryan, & Wright, 2001). This behaviour includes an increased likelihood that the individual would consider assaulting an opposition team player or coach (Wann, Peterson, Cothran, & Dykes, 1999). Further research indicated that those high in identification would be willing to consider injuring or assaulting a player or coach from an opposing team post season; despite the action providing no direct benefit for the in-group team (Wann, Haynes, McLean, & Pullen, 2003). Given the lengths to which these individuals are willing to go to preserve their group’s status, such research indicates that the team has been strongly internalised and represents a large component of the individual’s identity.

Although the focus of the current research is not on the violent behaviour of sport fans, these results indicate highly identified fans have developed strong psychological ties to their preferred sport teams, reflective of the PCM’s attachment and allegiance stages. Although the above review details some of the negative consequences
which may emanate from an individual’s team identification, researchers have also proposed that there is a link between identification and positive psychological outcomes. This emergent area of research posits that team identification is related to benefits in social–psychological health (Wann, 2006c), as discussed in the following section.

### 3.9.1 Team Identification and Social–Psychological Health

Wann’s (2006c) Team Identification–Social Psychological Health (TISPH) model was developed to examine how following sport teams may lead to positive states of social–psychological well-being. Drawing upon Diener, Suh, Lucas and Smith’s (1999) definition of well-being, Wann (2006c) defined social–psychological health in this context as an individual’s level of positive (e.g., happiness) and negative emotions (e.g., loneliness) and overall satisfaction with his or her social life. Thus, the TISPH model aims to explain how team identification can lead to an individual enhancing his or her emotional state and overall social life. Building upon his early theorising, Wann (2006c) articulated how any benefits to well-being would be moderated by threats to the team identity, alongside how well the individual copes with, or manages, potential threats. These coping mechanisms include individual mobility, social creativity and social competition strategies discussed earlier, which are used to position the group (and group membership) positively (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The TISPH model offers the following three propositions, which explain how sport teams may provide individuals with opportunities to receive benefits to their state of social–psychological health and well-being (Wann, 2006a, 2006c). The first proposition of the TISPH contends that higher levels of team identification can result in higher levels of social–psychological health based on increased opportunities to interact with others. Wann, Dimmock and Grove (2003) clarified that not all highly identified
individuals capitalise on opportunities to create social connections and, thus, would not be expected to receive social–psychological benefits from possessing a strong identification alone. Researchers have provided empirical support to confirm that sport spectatorship can lead to social connections (e.g., Clopton, 2008; Palmer & Thompson, 2007; Wann, Waddill, Polk, & Weaver, 2011) and outlined some of the scenarios in which individuals with strong team identifications are afforded opportunities to interact with others and with the community through their team affiliations. For instance, Gibson et al. (2002) explained how individuals could build connections with others via attending events scheduled around team games including tailgating and at other alma mater events. Consequently, such previous research findings outline when an individual may, or may not, be expected to derive social–psychological benefits from his or her team support and illustrates the importance of developing connections with others within Wann’s (2006c) TISPH model.

The second proposition contends that such benefits will only be relevant when an individual identifies with a local team and not a team that is geographically distant. Wann (2006c) noted that in certain instances, fans of distant teams may derive social–psychological health benefits through their team identification; however, these benefits are likely to be temporary rather than enduring. On the other hand, fans of local teams are purported to be offered increased chances to display their team affiliation in a variety of settings and develop lasting connections with others through their team support. As a result of these increased connections, individuals may experience benefits to social well-being via boosts in social self-esteem and positive emotions, and through reductions in negative emotions such as loneliness and depression (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann, 2006c; Wann, Dimmock, & Grove, 2003, Wann & Pierce, 2005). The third proposition builds upon this notion and states that social–psychological health benefits are only related to identification with specific teams, as opposed to identifying
with sport in general. The underpinning of the TISPH model is that social–
psychological health is borne from increased connections with others, which explains
why benefits are not expected from mere sport fandom or identification with distant
teams (Wann, 2006c).

Research into the positive social–psychological benefits of identification has
largely confirmed the TISPH model and shown that identification with a team can
provide temporary and enduring boosts to psychological well-being (e.g., Wann, 2006c;
Wann, Dimmock & Grove, 2003; Wann, Keenan, & Page, 2009; Wann & Pierce, 2005;
Wann, Rogers, Dooley, & Foley, 2011; Wann, Waddill, et al., 2011; Wann, Walker,
Cygan, Kawase, & Ryan, 2005; Wann & Weaver, 2009). The above studies have all
used the TISPH and provided support for elements of the model as well as opportunities
for future research. Adopting a more rigorous statistical approach, Wann (2006a)
utilised a cross-lagged panel model to highlight a significant link between team
identification and social–psychological health within a US collegiate setting. Results
extended previous cross-sectional work by finding a positive relationship existed
between team identification and a measure of social–psychological health taken three
months later.

To date, empirical work concerning team identification and social–psychological
health has been exclusively quantitative and largely utilised collegiate samples (e.g.,
Wann, 2006a; Wann et al., 2009; Wann & Pierce, 2005; Wann, Waddill, et al., 2011;
Wann et al., 2005; Wann & Weaver, 2009). Opportunities exist to examine the
relationship between team identification and social–psychological health in a variety of
research settings, in line with suggestions made in the literature (Wann 2006a, 2006c;
Wann, Dimmock, & Grove, 2003; Wann et al., 2009; Wann, Rogers, et al., 2011; Wann,
Waddill, et al., 2011). Additionally, researchers have called for qualitative research to
provide further insights into the relationship between team identification and social–
psychological health and to examine the underlying causes of this link (Wann,
Dimmock, & Grove, 2003). Thus, although the established body of research has
provided important contributions to understanding the positive social–psychological
outcomes of team identification, opportunities exist to extend this knowledge further.

3.10 Summary of Team Identification Antecedents and Manifestations

The above review has provided a discussion that conceptually links and
integrates the PCM with social identity theory, and more specifically positions team
identification as a central construct of interest to this investigation. Based on the above
review, clear links between the antecedents and manifestations of team identification
and the PCM are evident (e.g., Lock et al., 2012). For example, progression within the
PCM and the formation of team identification are both said to be influenced by a variety
of internal and external factors that consider the needs and motives of the individual,
alongside his or her perceptions of the team and environmental influences. These factors
conceptually consist of both team-specific factors and factors that may be specific to the
individual and his or her social–psychological determinants. In light of identified
opportunities to extend fan development knowledge, the current research seeks to
develop understandings of team support within a broader fan development perspective
by addressing the following research questions:

**Research Question 2a:** What are the team-specific factors that influence team
identification?

**Research Question 2b:** What are the non team-specific factors that influence
team identification?
These additional research questions were developed to build on Research Question 1 and to determine the factors which may explain reported stability or change in identification. However, Research Question 2a and 2b do not have the capacity to determine the underlying processes explaining how these factors may be cognitively processed and lead to fan development. As illustrated by the literature reviewed, numerous overlaps exist between the PCM’s conceptual outcomes and the positive consequences linked with increased team identification. Amalgamating these literature streams provides a basis to understand the processes guiding fan development, identified earlier as an understudied area of scholarship. One means of examining the processes that explain why team identification strengthens is provided by team internalisation literature which explains how fan development occurs when teams become internalised into important components of an individual’s self-concept (e.g., Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003). A review of sport team internalisation literature now follows.

3.11 Sport Team Internalisation

Kolbe and James (2003) defined sport team internalisation as a strengthening of team connection based upon an integration of a sport team identity into an individual’s self-concept. Figure 3 depicts the inputs, stages and outcomes proposed by Kolbe and James’ (2003) Model of the Internalisation Process (MIP), which explains how the integration of a team into the self occurs across three stages. These stages are termed the initial stage, the identification stage and the optimal internalisation stage. These inputs, stages and outcomes, which are conceptually similar to the PCM, are now reviewed.
The initial stage describes a connection similar to the PCM’s awareness and attraction stages. In the initial stage, an individual’s socialisation agents have introduced him or her to the team. At this stage, he or she is yet to develop a personally meaningful connection with the team. Progression to the identification stage occurs based on the team interacting with intrinsic and extrinsic factors important to the individual, resulting in the creation of a team affiliation. The identification stage is somewhat similar to the PCM’s attachment stage. Perhaps paradoxically, although termed the identification stage, individuals at this point have not internalised the team into their self-concept and therefore do not consider the team as self-defining.

This is not the case for individuals who have reached the internalisation stage, which is similar to the allegiance stage of the PCM. At this point, Kolbe and James (2003) argue that the individual has consciously assimilated the team into his or her self-concept and has developed a loyal connection to the team. Despite some nuances, these stages are conceptually similar to the PCM’s hierarchy and further outline the utility of identification as a construct that can be used to understand fan development. Offering a similar perspective, Funk and James (2004) discussed sport team
internalisation and its impact on fan development by conceptualising the Fan Attitude Network (FAN) model (see Figure 4).

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 4. The Fan Attitude Network Model (Funk & James, 2004)*

Similar to Kolbe and James’ (2003) assertions, the FAN model outlines the importance of internalisation in attitude formation and change relative to sport teams. Adding to conceptual thoughts on fan development raised by the PCM, the FAN model proposes that when a sport offering is perceived as being able to satisfy dispositional needs (e.g., vicarious achievement, social interactions), individuals derive psychological significance and value from internalising the sport offering. The associations that an individual links to the team (described as endearing features within the FAN model) help him or her to determine whether the team can satisfy these needs and act as a catalyst to the internalisation process, which culminates in the individual developing a team identity. According to Funk and James (2004), the internalisation of the team manifests in the development of a sport team identity that, in turn, mediates subsequent attitudinal evaluations relevant to the team. The contributions of the PCM, MIP and the FAN model provide important direction for fan development research. The processes described above illustrate how sport team internalisation may be used as a basis to understand PCM movement. Kolbe and James’ (2003) research illuminates the potential
catalysts of fan development and outlines the importance of internalisation and subsequent identification within the fan development process.

Kolbe and James’ (2003) identification and internalisation stages possess similar characteristics to the hierarchical stages outlined by the PCM and its various inputs, processes and outputs. For example, the initial stage is similar to the awareness and attraction stages, where socialisation agents and extrinsic motives are the key inputs and outcomes include team knowledge and a low-level connection. Similarly, the identification stage overlaps with the attraction and attachment stages, as it is characterised by the formation of distinct team preferences and, in the case of attachment, a meaningful connection. Lastly, the optimal internalisation stage describes outcomes consistent with the PCM’s attachment and allegiance stages, such as an increased congruence between the team and the individual’s self-concept.

Although the work of Funk and James (2004) and Kolbe and James (2003) suggests internalisation offers a means of understanding increasingly positive team outcomes, research within this area remains largely conceptual and is yet to be empirically examined in detail. The FAN model (Funk & James, 2004) remains conceptual, whilst Kolbe and James (2003) provided only preliminary support for their model through the use of a single-item, self-developed measure of identification. Indeed, Kolbe and James (2003, pp. 40-41) noted that “the proposed model of internalization is clearly in a formative stage of development” and that future research should “enumerate the catalysts that are most influential at each stage and determine the nature of their effects on movement along the continuum.”

Such research has commenced, utilising the new team context to provide contributions to team internalisation knowledge. In their research, Lock and colleagues (2012) provided support that identification development is governed by internalisation,
finding that 20 out of 21 interviewees agreed that their team identification was more internalised and meaningful after sharing in the team’s first season. Two themes, titled Centrality and Personas, respectively, characterised why the interviewees derived more internal meaning from the team at a point after the team’s first season than they did at a reference point gathered prior to the season’s commencement.

The Centrality theme reflected how directly experiencing the team’s matches and sharing in team moments resulted in the team becoming an important part of fans’ lives and led to an increased internal meaning being placed on the team (Lock et al., 2012). Consequently, increased Centrality repositioned the team from an external, substitutable group to an internalised part of fans’ self-concepts (Funk & James, 2004; Lock et al., 2012). The Personas theme described how increased opportunities to learn about the team, individual players and the coach led to increased meaning being ascribed to various components of the team (Lock et al., 2012). These direct experiences permitted the team’s purpose to be disseminated and communicated to fans, which ultimately manifested in increased positive perceptions of the team (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Funk & Pastore, 2000).

Although the work of Lock et al. (2012) supports the conceptual propositions of team internalisation theorists (Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003) the authors noted a need for future fan development research of this type. Lock and colleagues (2012) acknowledged the need for future research to build on their findings, both contextually and methodologically, to further elaborate on the processes leading to team identities becoming internalised. Consistent with this view, Spaaij and Anderson (2012) suggested that there remain significant gaps in knowledge concerning the team identification process and how social–psychological determinants contribute to overall fan development. Therefore, the current research seeks to use a new team context to
contribute to understandings and address these identified gaps. Thus, the following research question is offered:

**Research Question 3:** What processes explain team identification formation and change?

### 3.12 Literature Review Summary

The above literature review provided an overview of existing knowledge concerning fan development and identified opportunities to contribute to current understandings of sport spectators. The literature review chapter integrated social identity theory within the PCM as a means to examine fan development. More specifically, the literature review chapter amalgamated relevant literature to build a rationale for examining fan development via understanding how and why an individual’s team identification may become an internalised component of his or her self-concept.

The conceptual overlaps between the PCM and sport research grounded in social identity theory supports this approach. Funk and James (2001, 2006) suggested that individuals develop positive psychological bonds with sport teams as a result of a process influenced by internal (hedonic motives and dispositional needs) and external (social–situational) factors. Social and team identification literature also outlines how a range of internal (psychological) and external (environmental, team-related) factors influence the extent to which a person may identify with a team, and how identification impacts upon fan attitudes. Thus, within this thesis, the PCM offers a developmental framework providing a theoretical lens to examine team identification as a key variable that can explain fan development. Based on this integration, a better understanding of the internalisation process governing fan development may be realised.
Three broad opportunities were identified as areas where current knowledge could be extended. To address these opportunities, three research questions relevant to this research were proposed. The first opportunity relates to extending knowledge by examining team identification using a multidimensional and longitudinal perspective. Although the unidimensional body of research has provided many valuable contributions, such a conceptualisation does not consider the individual cognitive, affective and evaluative components of the construct that theoretically exist (e.g., Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wann, Melnick et al., 2001). Research that has included multidimensional scales has thus far been primarily concerned with scale development and validation (e.g., Dimmock et al., 2005; Heere & James, 2007a). Thus, Research Question 1 was offered to address an opportunity to examine how the dimensions and dimensional composition of team identification may fluctuate over time.

The second opportunity to extend current understandings of fan development relates to deriving a better understanding of the factors explaining team identification. Research Question 2a was developed to confirm which psychological, team-related and environmental factors influence team identification. Research Question 2b was developed based on an opportunity to extend understandings of an emergent area of scholarship by exploring the social–psychological outcomes which are related to team support. Thus, Research Question 2b has the potential to extend understandings of the social–psychological factors that are important to identification. Wann (2006a, 2006c) suggested research of this kind utilising multidimensional perspectives of team identification may contribute by pinpointing which dimensions of identification are most relevant to deriving social–psychological health benefits.

Elsewhere, Wann et al. (2011) suggested more work is needed to investigate the directionality between team identification and well-being, arguing that the relationship
may operate in either direction (e.g., social–psychological health benefits lead to strong team identification) or reciprocally. To address the lack of evidence for such causality, longitudinal investigations have been encouraged (Wann, Dimmock, & Grove, 2003; Wann, Waddill, et al., 2011). Additionally, Wann, Dimmock, and Grove (2003) noted a need for qualitative work to determine the breadth and depth of connections and provide further insights into how improvements in social–psychological health manifest and develop.

The third opportunity to extend current understandings of fan development is to provide improved knowledge surrounding the processes which explain fan development. Research Question 3 builds upon Research Question 2a and Research 2b by examining how these factors interrelate and aims to explain the processes that lead to an individual internalising a sport team into his or her identity. This approach capitalises on an opportunity to contribute to the PCM by better detailing the processes that explain fan development. Utilising a social identity perspective to do so represents a theoretically sound position that has been forwarded conceptually (Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003) and used by other researchers to chart fan development (e.g., Lock & Filo, 2012; Lock et al., 2012). Overall, the current research questions have been developed to uncover how a range of psychological, social–psychological, team-related and environmental determinants can explain how and why individuals may develop strong bonds with sport teams. The method used to address these identified research opportunities is provided following Table 3, which restates the research questions guiding the current research.
Table 3

*Summary of Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>How does the structure of team identification change over time?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2a</td>
<td>What are the team-specific factors that influence team identification?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2b</td>
<td>What are the non team-specific factors that influence team identification?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3</td>
<td>What processes explain team identification formation and change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4 outlines the method used to guide the current research. In this chapter, the research paradigm, design and procedures used to collect and analyse data are discussed. To address the research questions presented in the previous chapter, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. The quantitative component (Study 1) consisted of three phases that involved collecting cross-sectional and longitudinal data. The qualitative component was informed by the quantitative results and consisted of two studies. Study 2 collected qualitative interview data, which provided a cross-sectional account of the factors and processes explaining fan development. Study 3 built on Study 2 by collecting longitudinal qualitative data, which further explained the processes of fan development and the relationships between the factors identified in Study 2. An overview of the research paradigm is now included.

4.1 Research Paradigm

It is important to understand the paradigmatic orientation and perspective of a researcher to understand how and why certain methodological steps were taken. Within the social sciences, a variety of competing approaches describe ways to measure and interpret social reality (Neuman, 2006). Research paradigms represent the general framework used to organise theory and incorporate a basic belief system borne from the researcher’s worldview (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Neuman, 2006). The worldview of the researcher is an important consideration as it impacts how research is conducted, interpreted and ultimately understood. Traditionally, social scientists favour two main orientations: positivism and interpretivism.

Positivists possess a realistic ontological viewpoint and believe that as researchers they are independent of the phenomena studied. On the other hand, interpretivists acknowledge that they have an influence on designing and interpreting
subjective experiences and impact the construction of reality (G. Morgan, 1980). Based on these dispositions, positivists typically gather quantitative data; whereas interpretivists tend to favour qualitative designs. Both approaches have different strengths and weaknesses (e.g., Creswell et al., 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Jones, 1997b) which are now discussed.

Quantitative research involves deductively testing research questions and hypotheses through the analysis of large quantities of numerical data (Creswell, 2009). Thus, quantitative research facilitates objective studies of social phenomena and is useful in determining the strength of certain constructs and how they operate over time. However, quantitative research does not facilitate explorations of the meaning and underlying causes that explain why constructs may change over time (Jones, 1997b). Qualitative research usually involves open-ended questioning, which can be targeted to explore the underlying meaning behind participant responses and direct experiences (Creswell, 2009; Silverman, 2005). Thus, qualitative research allows for deeper exploration of social phenomena; but can be influenced by biases introduced by the researcher as data are subjectively interpreted (Jones, 1997b). An alternative offered to researchers is a mixed methods approach, as discussed in the following section.

4.1.1 Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods research is borne from pragmatism as instead of relying solely on one paradigmatic position, it draws upon both positivism and interpretivism (Creswell, 2009). Pragmatists believe that truth can be derived objectively and subjectively and select methods to collect data most relevant to addressing the research questions at hand (Creswell, 2009). Consequently, mixed methods researchers employ both quantitative and qualitative procedures to collect and analyse data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; D. Morgan, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Utilising both
methods enables researchers to collect robust data and minimises the limitations of using one method in isolation. For these reasons, mixed methods research designs are an increasingly popular approach within many disciplines and have been described as a suitable paradigm for sport management researchers (Jones, 1997b; Rudd & Johnson, 2010).

The current research employed mixed methods to investigate the research objective and research questions at hand. Data were collected both inductively and deductively through the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Consequently, knowledge was derived from multiple sources, viewpoints and perspectives, which minimised the limitations associated with wholly quantitative or qualitative designs (e.g., Creswell et al., 2003; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Jones, 1997b). The use of a mixed methods design provided the opportunity for data triangulation, leading to benefits such as convergence (e.g., corroboration of data collected via multiple methods), elaboration (e.g., enhanced meaning provided by expanding upon results of one method with those from another) and question development (e.g., using the results from one method to guide another method) (Bryman, 2006; Denzin, 1989; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). The ontological, epistemological and axiological orientations of the researcher are now discussed.

The current research was guided by a pragmatic ontological position. This fluid ontological positioning enabled the researcher to collect data most appropriate to addressing the stated research questions and in light of the results encountered throughout the overall research process (Creswell et al., 2003). Numerical data collected via quantitative means enabled the construction of an objective reality where data could be examined deductively and with minimal influence from the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These data were complemented with qualitative data, which is
inherently rich in meaning and subjectively collected and interpreted. This approach positioned the research within the socially constructed world of both the interviewees and interviewer, enabling the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the observed social phenomenon studied (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The epistemological orientation of the researcher also reflected both positivistic and interpretivistic traits. The researcher was able to remain independent from the research during the quantitative phases; yet become immersed in the research throughout the qualitative phases. This perspective reflected the researcher’s pragmatic approach whereby the adopted worldview and methods selected were fluid and guided by the specific research questions at hand (Creswell et al., 2003). The use of online questionnaires throughout the quantitative phases enabled the researcher to maintain distance from research subjects and analyse numerical data in an impartial manner. Conversely, during the qualitative phases the researcher interacted with the interviewees both at games and during the interviews. Interacting with interviewees over the course of the research period enabled the researcher to better understand the lived experiences of the respondents and gather richer data that complemented the objective results provided by the quantitative element of the research.

The axiological orientation of the researcher reflected elements commonly attributed to both positivist and interpretivist paradigms. The researcher’s status as a season ticket holder meant that he had experienced the team’s development first-hand and thus had developed his own beliefs surrounding the team and the team’s fans. To minimise this potential influence, during the qualitative phases, selected interviewees were provided with summarised findings and asked to provide comments on the validity of the analysis. This process ensured that the researcher was not imposing his values on the research and that the themes that were emerging accurately reflected the lived
experiences of the interviewees (Creswell, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Consequently, the biases which may have been introduced by the researcher’s own group membership were minimised. The ontological, epistemological and axiological positioning that guided the current research was important in determining the overall research design employed, which is now discussed.

4.2 Research Design

Zikmund (2003) defined research designs as “master plan[s] specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the needed information” (p. 65). Therefore, research designs must be well planned and appropriately address the research questions offered. For the same reasons, mixed methods research must carefully consider the positioning and order of the qualitative and quantitative phases; however, this is not always the case. Bryman (2006) noted that in practice it is not uncommon for a general disconnection to exist between the rationales for combining methods and the eventual uses and interpretation of the data collected. Thus, the current research employed a research design that was able to best address the overall research objective, which was to provide a better understanding of the factors and processes that explain why an individual internalises a team identity into his or her self-concept.

Based on this objective and the related research questions offered, a research agenda consisting of three quantitative questionnaires followed by two qualitative interview rounds was designed. This research design was deemed to be the most appropriate to address the research objective and is consistent with a sequential explanatory research design (Creswell et al., 2003). Figure 5 provides a diagrammatical overview of the employed research design. Further justification for using this type of design and for collecting longitudinal data is provided in the following section.
4.2.1 Longitudinal Research

To best understand the factors and processes pertinent to fan development, both longitudinal quantitative and longitudinal qualitative data were collected. Longitudinal research involves investigating the same phenomena using multiple points of data collected over time (Babbie, 2010; Neuman, 2006). Thus, longitudinal research permits researchers to study an area of interest whilst considering the effects of time and other external influences. Conducting longitudinal research requires a significant investment of time and resources; however, the data are generally considered to be more powerful than cross-sectional data. More importantly, longitudinal studies are considered the best approach for studying changes that may occur for one or more variables and to understand the factors behind any respective changes (Babbie, 2010; Menard, 2008).

For these reasons, sport management researchers have called for more longitudinal research designs to build upon knowledge derived from cross-sectional enquiries (e.g., Hirt et al., 1992; Stewart et al., 2003). These calls have also been prominent in research focused on newly established teams (James et al., 2002; Lock et al., 2009; Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012). New teams provide an optimal context to...
explore why individuals become team fans, and how such relationships may be maintained and developed as the team matures (James et al., 2002). Additionally, given the early nature of the team connection that exists between new teams and their fans, such research can contribute to, and explain, the relationship between sport team identification and benefits to social–psychological health, answering calls from existing research (Wann, Dimmock, & Grove, 2003; Wann, Waddill, et al., 2011).

Longitudinal research may be implemented using three main designs: trend, cohort and panel studies. These approaches are all suitable in monitoring a specific phenomenon over time, but vary in terms of their sampling, distribution and applicability to a given research objective. Whereas trend and cohort studies sample different individuals at each data point; panel studies provide a more rigorous approach to sampling and data collection. Specifically, panel studies gather data over a period of at least two intervals using exactly the same set of people, groups or organisations each time (Babbie, 2010; Neuman, 2006). Although panel studies traditionally require a heavy investment of time and resources, they also gather the most robust and comprehensive data of the longitudinal techniques, accounting for individual-level change (Babbie, 2010; Menard, 2008; Neuman, 2006). Given the focus of the current research on examining sport fandom using a developmental perspective, a panel approach was adopted for both quantitative and qualitative phases. This decision was made to collect robust data that would best allow the researcher to understand how and why individuals develop bonds with sport teams.

4.2.2 Sequential Explanatory Approach

Mixed methods researchers argue that the order in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected should be determined by the specified objectives of the research (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, 2009). Dependent on the research focus, mixed
methods researchers may employ six broad strategies (convergent, explanatory, exploratory, embedded, transformative and multiphase strategies) when collecting integrated quantitative and qualitative data (e.g., Creswell et al., 2003). The research design employed by the present research is most closely related to the sequential explanatory approach, reviewed below.

The sequential explanatory design consists of first collecting quantitative data, followed by qualitative data. According to Creswell (2009) and Creswell and colleagues (2003), sequential explanatory research is conducted using the following three steps. First, quantitative data are collected, analysed and interpreted to observe a phenomenon. Second, the researcher uses the results of the quantitative component to help design a qualitative phase with the express purpose of revealing more information surrounding the quantitative research findings. Third, the researcher analyses the qualitative data and interprets how the qualitative results explain and add insight to the quantitative results and how the phases collectively address the overall research purpose.

The current research was designed to collect quantitative and qualitative data that could provide a better understanding of the factors and processes important in facilitating fan development. Study 1 was designed with a specific focus on addressing Research Question 1. Within Study 1, cross-sectional and longitudinal quantitative data were collected to statistically examine the structure and stability of a multidimensional team identification scale and its respective dimensions. Once the quantitative component was complete, cross-sectional and longitudinal qualitative data were gathered and analysed. The qualitative component of this research consisted of two studies (Study 2 and Study 3), which were designed to address Research Question 2a, Research Question 2b and Research Question 3, respectively. These data complemented
the quantitative data gathered by determining how the actual lived experiences of respondents enlightened the observations made during the quantitative phase.

4.3 Summary of Method Used

This chapter has presented an overview of the methodological approach employed to address the previously stated research questions. The researcher adopted a pragmatic philosophical position in using a mixed methods approach to best address the research purpose and the specific research questions of interest. Consequently, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative surveys were followed by qualitative semi-structured interviews, reflective of the sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2009; Creswell et al., 2003). The quantitative and qualitative components both collected longitudinal data from panels of participants.

This methodological approach was selected as it allowed the research questions to be investigated thoroughly and in a way that enabled meaning to be ascribed to objective observations. Providing further justification to this approach, sport management researchers have called for more longitudinal (Hirt et al., 1992; James et al., 2002; Lock et al., 2009; Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012; Murrell & Dietz, 1992; Stewart et al., 2003) and mixed methods (Jones, 1997b; Rudd & Johnson, 2010) research designs. Table 4 summarises the research design and outlines the purpose of each individual study. A discussion of each individual study and the longitudinal quantitative and qualitative phases, respectively, is presented following Table 4.
### Table 4

*Research Design Overview, Data Collection Phases and Purposes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oct / Nov 2010</td>
<td>Online Questionnaires</td>
<td>Investigate RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 2011</td>
<td>Online Questionnaires</td>
<td>Investigate RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
<td>Online Questionnaires</td>
<td>Investigate RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>June / July 2012</td>
<td>Semi-Structured Interviews</td>
<td>Investigate RQ2a, RQ2b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nov / Dec 2012</td>
<td>Semi-Structured Interviews</td>
<td>Investigate RQ3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 QUANTITATIVE METHOD

The following section includes an overview of the participants, materials, procedures and analyses used to guide the quantitative component of the current research. The quantitative component of this research (Study 1) consisted of three phases, which collected cross-sectional and longitudinal data. Each phase provided cross-sectional data capturing numerical data representative of a static point in time. Collectively, the three phases provided longitudinal numerical data enabling the researcher to measure the structural properties and development of team identification (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Rudd & Johnson, 2010). For reasons of parsimony and readability, the forthcoming section discusses the participants, materials, procedures and analyses employed in Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 together. Next, the participants, procedures and analyses relevant to the longitudinal panel that served as the basis to investigate Research Question 1 are outlined.

5.1 Online Questionnaires: Study 1

The quantitative component within the current research’s sequential explanatory research design was comprised of three phases (Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3). Each phase utilised questionnaires designed, distributed and completed online. Online research has increased in popularity in recent years as it provides advantages over other traditional methods. Suggested advantages include increased distribution reach, higher response rates, reduced overall costs, faster turnaround times, less respondent error and improved aesthetic and design capabilities (Bech & Kristensen, 2009; Birnbaum, 2004; van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). For these reasons, sport researchers have found online research to be an effective and reliable data collection method. Lonsdale, Hodge and Rose (2006) compared the responses to a sport psychology questionnaire distributed both online and offline. Comparison of the two approaches revealed the data collected
did not significantly differ, but the online surveys reported a greater response rate, faster completion times and contained less missing data than the hard-copy versions. After considering these factors, an online approach was utilised in this research.

5.2 Participants: Study 1

Data for Study 1 were gathered from online questionnaires administered to individuals identified as fans or members of the Gold Coast Suns. Study 1 was comprised of three phases. Phase 1 was administered in October and November 2010, Phase 2 followed in April 2011 and finally, Phase 3 took place in April 2012. Participants were drawn from a sample of Gold Coast Suns members and fans who had agreed to receive marketing and promotional information from the club. Potential participants were randomly drawn from a sample of the team’s total database population at the time of Phase 1 and Phase 2. Thus, any individual who was on the list at the time of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 may have received an invitation to one, both or no surveys. At the request of the club and to collect longitudinal data, invitations to participate in Phase 3 were only sent to individuals whom had completed either or both Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires. The final sample for each phase was comprised of individuals who had completed the respective survey and were deemed to provide reliable data after being subjected to a data-cleaning process. Appendix B contains the demographics of participants who formed the Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 samples, respectively.

Participants for Phase 1 were drawn from a total of 16,776 successfully delivered email invitations. From these invitations, 1721 questionnaires were returned. Data cleaning resulted in the removal of 93 cases. Thus, 1628 cases which were deemed reliable remained and were retained for analysis. The final sample of participants was

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7 The data cleaning process, which was used across Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3, is explained in further detail in the Analysis section (Section 5.5.1).
comprised of 1085 males (67%) and 543 females (33%). The age of the respondents ranged from 18-89, with a mean age of 46 years. The sample included an almost even split of members (49%) and non-members (51%)\textsuperscript{8}. In regards to cultural background, most respondents identified as an Australian, New Zealander or Pacific Islander (78%). In terms of education and annual income demographics, respondents were most likely to possess a Bachelor’s degree or higher (55%) and earn an income of between $51,000 - $100,999 Australian dollars per annum (35%).

Participants for Phase 2 were drawn from 24,633 individuals who received an email invitation to complete the questionnaire. The researcher received 1738 completed questionnaires. Fifty five cases were defined as unreliable due to response biases or missing data and were subsequently deleted, resulting in a total usable sample consisting of 1683 cases. Respondents consisted of 1110 males (66%) and 573 females (34%). The majority of participants were members (73%) as opposed to non-members (27%). With respect to age, respondents ranged from 18–85 years with a mean age of 48 years. In regards to cultural background, most respondents identified as an Australian, New Zealander or Pacific Islander (78%). In terms of education and annual income demographics, respondents were most likely to have obtained a Bachelor’s degree or higher (52%) and earn between $51,000 - $100,999 Australian dollars per annum (32%). The demographic characteristics of the sample in Phase 2 closely mirrored those reported in Phase 1 except for a notable increase in the percentage of members. This increase is most likely explained by the timing of Phase 2, which occurred during the team’s first AFL season. Given the increased salience and benefits provided by membership at this point in time (e.g., the team were now playing in the AFL), the increase in member numbers was unsurprising.

\textsuperscript{8} In Australia, a member is similar to season-ticket holder. Membership typically includes tickets to games, but there are also a variety of non-ticketed membership packages available to fans.
The sample for Phase 3 was gathered from 2760 invitations sent to email addresses of individuals who participated in the earlier research phases. Nine hundred and thirty seven questionnaires were completed. Thirty eight cases were removed as they displayed response biases, had a large amount of missing data or were identified as outliers. After these cases were removed, 899 cases remained and were retained for analysis. Responses came from 582 males (65%) and 317 females (35%). The majority of respondents (75%) held a current Suns membership. In terms of ethnicity, most respondents identified with an Australian, New Zealander or Pacific Islander heritage (77%). In response to concerns voiced by the club in terms of survey length and potentially overburdening respondents, demographic information surrounding income, age and education was not collected during Phase 3. The absence of such data limited the ability of the researcher to compare the characteristics of Phase 3 participants with individuals who participated in Phase 1 and Phase 2. However, the observed demographic indicators included in Phase 3 closely matched those from Phase 1 and Phase 2. Overall, this suggested that Phase 3 respondents were similar to those in the earlier research phases.

5.3 Materials: Study 1

An online questionnaire collected data relevant to Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3. The questionnaire was developed in conjunction with the Gold Coast Suns as part of the club’s broader marketing research program and therefore contained some questions that were beyond the scope of this research. Demographic data such as gender, age, education and income were captured using both categorical and numerical formats, which collected parametric and non-parametric data. Due to the inclusion of other

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9 To check for response bias and determine the representativeness of the samples, the demographic information of respondents in Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 were compared with statistics provided to the researcher by the Gold Coast Suns football club. These comparisons revealed that the samples were largely representative of the broader Gold Coast Suns’ fan population.
questions, some demographic questions were omitted from the questionnaire used in Phase 3. Despite these space restrictions, respondent identification was measured across Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3, enabling the researcher to address Research Question 1.

The most widely adopted team identification measurement is provided by the SSIS (Wann & Branscombe, 1993); however, the SSIS measures team identification as a unidimensional construct. Although applications of the SSIS have made substantial contributions to team identification knowledge, opportunities to employ multidimensional scales are now present. As outlined in Chapter 3, multidimensional conceptualisations of team identification better align with the theoretical tenets of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and current applications in the sport management literature which consider identification to be a dynamic and multifaceted construct (Dimmock et al., 2005; Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011; Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). Therefore, the decision to employ a multidimensional construct was made due to theoretical considerations and to best address Research Question 1.

As previously outlined, at least two multidimensional team identification scales have emerged within the sport management literature. Although both the Team*ID scale (Heere & James, 2007a) and the TIS (Dimmock et al., 2005) offer their own advantages and limitations (reviewed in Chapter 3), the Team*ID scale was used for two reasons. First, the Team*ID scale has been utilised in a broader number of research contexts than the TIS, including collegiate and professional sport in the US and professional netball in New Zealand (Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011; Heere, Walker, et al., 2011). Second, the Team*ID scale draws upon a wider theoretical base and measures a broader spectrum of the dimensions of identification than does the TIS, given the inability of the latter to differentiate between cognitive and affective dimensions in
research to date (Dimmock & Grove, 2006; Dimmock et al., 2005; Theodorakis et al., 2010; Theodorakis, Wann, & Weaver, 2012). For these reasons, the Team*ID scale was utilised in the present study to measure team identification.

A revised version of the original Team*ID scale, refined by Heere, Walker, et al. (2011) was included in the questionnaire. The revised scale includes 18 items measuring six dimensions (three items each) of team identification. These dimensions are: Private Evaluation, Public Evaluation, Sense of Interdependence with the Group (hereafter referred to as Interdependence), Interconnection with the Group (hereafter referred to as Interconnection), Behavioural Involvement and Cognitive Awareness. Each item was measured on a seven-point Likert scale with a response range from strongly disagree [1] to strongly agree [7]. A list of the 18 Team*ID items included on the survey and a definition of each dimension is included in Table 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>The degree of positive or negative thought the individual holds toward the group</td>
<td>I feel good about being a Gold Coast Suns fan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am glad to be a Gold Coast Suns fan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am proud to think of myself as a fan of the Gold Coast Suns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>The individual’s perceived positive or negative evaluation of the group by others</td>
<td>Overall, the Gold Coast Suns are viewed positively by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In general, others respect the Gold Coast Suns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, people hold a favourable opinion of the Gold Coast Suns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interdependence</strong></td>
<td>The degree that the individual feels his or her fate depends on the fate of the group</td>
<td>What happens to the Gold Coast Suns, will influence what happens in my life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Changes that impact the Gold Coast Suns will have an impact on my life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What happens to the Gold Coast Suns will have an impact on my life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interconnection</strong></td>
<td>The extent that the individual feels the group is a part of him or herself</td>
<td>When someone criticises the Gold Coast Suns, it feels like a personal insult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being associated with the Gold Coast Suns is an important part of my self-image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When someone compliments the Gold Coast Suns, it feels like a personal compliment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive Awareness</strong></td>
<td>The degree of knowledge an individual has regarding a team</td>
<td>I am aware of the tradition and history of the Gold Coast Suns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I know the ins and outs of the Gold Coast Suns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have knowledge of the successes and failures of the Gold Coast Suns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioural Involvement</strong></td>
<td>The extent the individual actively engages in relevant group behaviours</td>
<td>I participate in activities supporting the Gold Coast Suns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am actively involved in activities that relate to the Gold Coast Suns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I participate in activities with other fans of the Gold Coast Suns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Procedures: Study 1

Invitations to participate in the research were sent to a sample of email addresses managed directly by the Gold Coast Suns’ fan and member relations department. This database includes individuals who held a current membership and others whom had provided contact details and agreed to receive team-related news and information. For ethical reasons and at the request of the club, the researcher did not have direct access to the contact details of those on the list. Research invitations including a hyperlink redirecting potential participants to the online questionnaires were provided to the club shortly before each study took place. These hyperlinks were subsequently included in the Gold Coast Suns’ official online newsletters for the months of October 2010 (Phase 1), April 2011 (Phase 2) and April 2012 (Phase 3).

The invitation to participate in Phase 1 was included in the October 2010 newsletter, which was sent out in the last week of October 2010. The hyperlink and subsequent questionnaire remained active until the second week of November 2010. The timing of this data collection point represented a chance to assess the identification of fans six months prior to the team’s first match, which is a scarcely studied period (James et al., 2002). The invitation to Phase 2 was included in the April 2011 newsletter. This newsletter was sent out in the first week of April 2011 and remained active for two weeks. The timing of this data collection point coincided with the target team’s first three matches, all of which resulted in lopsided defeats. The invitation to participate in Phase 3 was included in the April 2012 newsletter. The hyperlink remained open for two weeks. The timing of Phase 3 enabled data to be collected during the team’s second season and represented a point where the team had experienced a full season in the AFL competition. Similar to Phase 2, data collection for Phase 3 occurred at an early point in the 2012 season when the team had played, and lost, three matches.
In accordance with the ethical clearance granted by the researcher’s university, a purpose statement accompanied each research invitation and gathered informed consent. These statements informed potential respondents about the nature of the research and the anticipated outcomes. Subsequent information outlined the purpose of the questionnaire and invited each recipient to click on a hyperlink if he or she wished to participate. Individuals who clicked on the link were then redirected to an information sheet which described the research, outlined the prize draw conditions and gathered informed consent. The research invitation and information sheet utilised are included in Appendix C and Appendix D, respectively.

After reading the informed consent sheet, individuals were given the option to either close their web browsers or to begin the survey. For panel-matching purposes and to facilitate the distribution of prizes, individuals who chose to participate were asked to enter a permanent email address and a unique fan number provided to them by the club before completing the questionnaire. After each questionnaire was closed, all data were downloaded into statistical software packages (SPSS version 20.0 and AMOS version 21.0) and prepared for analysis.

5.5 Analysis: Study 1

Data analysis consisted of the following three steps, with each dataset (e.g., Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3) being subject to the same protocols. First, descriptive statistics and frequency counts were assessed to determine the demographic profile of participants. Second, reliability estimates in the form of Cronbach’s alpha and Corrected-Item-to-Total correlation statistics were calculated to ascertain whether the Team*ID items were reliably measuring the proposed latent dimensions (e.g., Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Third, CFA was undertaken to determine how well the 18 Team*ID items measured the six theorised dimensions of team identification. The use of CFA
rather than other more exploratory techniques (e.g., exploratory factor analysis) was deemed appropriate given the research used an existing scale that had been previously tested and shown initial evidence of reliability (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006). Furthermore, CFA was also deemed an appropriate statistical technique given all sample sizes exceeded 200 and each Team*ID dimension was measured using three items, as per good practice guidelines (Hair et al., 2010).

To determine model fit, the six Team*ID dimensions were structurally tested using CFA tests in AMOS. The first-order CFA models included the six dimensions as six latent constructs, measured by three observed variables each. In these models, each dimension was allowed to co-vary with all others given that a theoretical relationship conceptually exists between each facet of identification (See Figure 6). To account for inflation of the chi-square statistic introduced by large sample sizes, the CFAs were each run twice. Each CFA was first run using the total sample of respondents at each respective phase and then run using a random sub-sample of 400 respondents drawn from the relevant total sample (e.g., Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Barrett, 2007; Hair et al., 2010).
5.5.1 Data Cleaning

Before the CFA tests were conducted it was important to consider and manage any potential threats to data integrity (e.g., D. Jackson, Gillaspy Jr., & Purc-Stephenson, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Three steps were taken to ensure the datasets did not have missing data, were free from outlying cases and possessed a distribution suitable for multivariate statistical analyses. The first step involved identifying incomplete cases...
within the datasets. For a variety of reasons, researchers often encounter data that are incomplete and could potentially pose a threat to the validity and generalisability of research findings (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Missing data are a common occurrence within social sciences research and do not pose a major problem unless there are large amounts of absent data or the missing data follow a systematic pattern (Kline, 2005). Within the current research, a minimal amount of missing data was identified, scattered randomly through the datasets and thus not deemed to pose a significant problem. With respect to handling missing data, the causes of missing data guided the decision making behind how such data were treated (Holmes-Smith, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Based on the amount and type of missing data, cases were cleaned using a combination of listwise deletion and Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation. Cases that contained 20% or more missing data were removed from the datasets, consistent with the listwise deletion approach (Holmes-Smith, 2011). As listwise deletion resulted in less than 5% of the total dataset being removed, it was unlikely that such removal had a significant effect on the dataset or subsequent analyses (e.g., Holmes-Smith, 2011). Any remaining cases that contained small amounts of missing data were inspected in SPSS and deemed to be missing completely at random (MCAR) (Holmes-Smith, 2011; Kline, 2005). Thus, the decision was made to retain these cases and estimate the missing values using the FIML method. Statisticians recommend the FIML method over other missing-value treatment options given the technique produces the least bias in the replacement score (Holmes-Smith, 2011). Thus, the FIML method was employed so that cases with minimal amounts of missing data could be retained and included in the CFA analyses.
Second, the data were inspected for outliers using Mahalanobis distance. The Mahalanobis statistic compares the position of each case with the centroid of the means of all other cases on a predefined set of variables (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The set of variables assessed in this case were the items that comprised the six Team*ID dimensions. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) note that the Mahalanobis distance statistic can be misleading and should be interpreted in conjunction with other tests. Thus, scatterplots were used to identify cases that were both significantly different from the centroid and visually distant from other cases. Using these criteria, two cases were removed from the Phase 1 data, six cases were removed from Phase 2 data and three cases were removed from Phase 3 data.

Last, the data were assessed for normality via an examination of skewness and kurtosis. Skewness describes the symmetry of the distribution and position of the mean in relation to the distribution’s centre; whereas kurtosis refers to the peak or flat characteristics and properties of the distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Positive skew describes a distribution where most of the scores are positioned below the mean; whereas negative skew indicates most of the scores are above the mean (Kline, 2005). Distributions that display positive kurtosis (leptokurtic distributions) are taller and display heavy short tails; whereas negative kurtosis (platykurtic distributions) are characterised by a flat distribution with long tails (Hair et al., 2010). Although there are a number of good practice guidelines for assessing non-normal distributions, the current research utilised Kendall and Stuart’s (1958) cut-off points of ±2 for skewness and ±5 for kurtosis. Skew values from Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 data ranged from -1.47 – .47. Kurtosis values ranged from -1.01 – 3.59, suggesting the data were normally distributed. Subsequently, the decision was made to test the proposed model with Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE), a widely employed estimation method in
cases where normality is present and sample sizes are medium to large (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Hair et al., 2010).

5.5.2 Model Fit Criteria

To investigate the proposed model fit, a number of statistics were inspected and evaluated using criteria outlined in the literature (e.g., Bagozzi & Yi, 1988, 2012; Hair et al., 2010). Although there has been much debate in the literature concerning the correct procedures to employ to examine model fit, there is a general consensus that fit should be determined by a number of fit indices with heterogeneous performance characteristics (e.g., Barrett, 2007; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Each CFA evaluated the proposed model in accordance with the suggestions of Bagozzi and Yi (2012), who indicated that model fit can be determined by inspecting the chi-square statistic \( \chi^2 \) alongside four practical fit indices. These indices are the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). The RMSEA, SRMR, CFI and TLI indices test for goodness-of-fit as well as absolute, residual and incremental fit and collectively provide a parsimonious and “best practice” method of evaluating model fit (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012, p. 28). The normed chi-square statistic \( \chi^2/df \) was also evaluated, as it adjusts for model complexity, dividing the \( \chi^2 \) statistic by the model’s degrees of freedom. Table 6 summarises the decision criteria used to assess model fit and convergent and discriminant validity.
### Table 6

**Abbreviations and Criteria Used to Assess Model Fit, Convergent and Discriminant Validity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Cut-off Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model Fit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>$p &gt; .05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normed chi-square</td>
<td>$\chi^2 / df$</td>
<td>$&lt; 5.0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root Mean Square Error of Approximation</td>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>$\leq .06$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Fit Index</td>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>$\geq .95$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucker-Lewis Index</td>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>$\geq .95$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardised Root Mean Square Residual</td>
<td>SRMR</td>
<td>$\leq .08$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convergent Validity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
<td>$\alpha$</td>
<td>$\geq .70$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Item-to-Total Correlations</td>
<td>Item-Total</td>
<td>$\geq .50$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor Loadings</td>
<td>FL</td>
<td>$\geq .70$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parameter Estimates</td>
<td>$t$-value</td>
<td>$\pm 1.96$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Variance Extracted</td>
<td>AVE</td>
<td>$\geq .50$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discriminant Validity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct Correlations</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>$&lt; .90$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Variance Extracted</td>
<td>AVE</td>
<td>AVE $&gt; CC^2$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The $\chi^2$ statistic tests for goodness-of-fit by assessing the extent to which the implied variance–covariance matrix reproduces the observed variance–covariance matrix produced by the data (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). Good model fit is said to be present when the $\chi^2$ statistic is non-significant ($p > .05$), however $\chi^2$ is particularly sensitive to large sample sizes and complex models (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Barrett, 2007; Hair et al., 2010). To account for inflation introduced to the model by these factors, the $\chi^2/df$ was also inspected to determine model fit. As the sample sizes for each phase exceeded 750,
\( \chi^2 / df \) statistics of below 5.0 were deemed as representative of adequate fit. With respect to the CFAs conducted on random samples of 400 respondents, the cut-off value used was 3.0 (Hair et al., 2010).

The RMSEA and SRMR statistics measure absolute and residual measures of fit, respectively. The RMSEA estimates the average amount of misspecification within a model relative to the degrees of freedom and sample size; whereas the SRMR computes the square root of the average squared residuals (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). Hu and Bentler (1999) argue that RMSEA scores should not exceed .06 and SRMR values should not exceed .08. Elsewhere, Browne and Cudeck (1992) apply a less stringent cut-off point and suggest that RMSEA values of < .06 are desirable, yet values less than .08 represent an acceptable fit. The current research adopted Hair and colleagues’ (2010) perspective that absolute cut-offs for the RMSEA should be avoided, and that lower values indicate a better fit. However, as a guiding premise RMSEA values ≤.06 and SRMR values ≤.08 were considered to reflect acceptable model fit (e.g., Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The CFI and TLI measure incremental model fit. The CFI is a normed fit index that assesses the hypothesised baseline model with a null, or worst possible, model; whereas the TLI is a non-normed index that compares the normed \( \chi^2 \) value of the specified and null models (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Hair et al., 2010). Hair et al. (2010) specified that CFI and TLI values approaching 1.00 are characteristic of good fit, with higher values indicating better fit. Although some researchers argue that values of .90 are representative of good-fitting models (Hair et al., 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1998), the current research used Hu and Bentler’s (1999) revised suggestion that CFI and TLI values should be equal to or exceed .95.
5.5.3 Convergent Validity Criteria

Convergent validity describes the extent that selected items measuring a construct are related. Model convergence was assessed by inspecting item factor loadings, \( t \)-values and average variance extracted (AVE) values (Hair et al., 2010). The following criteria were used to assess convergent validity. First, item groups used to measure an underlying construct that possessed Cronbach’s alpha scores of .70 or higher were deemed to possess internal reliability (Hair et al., 2010). Second, convergent validity was evident when the Corrected Item-Total Correlation of any given item was \( \geq .50 \) and loaded onto the intended construct higher than any other dimension (De Vellis, 2003). Third, all standardised regression weights, or factor loadings, that reported scores of \( \geq .50 \) were deemed acceptable. Fourth, \( t \)-values measuring \( \pm 1.96 \) and signified that each model path between the latent and observed variables was significantly different from zero \( (p < .05) \) were adjudged to represent good convergent validity. Last, AVE values that were \( \geq .50 \) were deemed indicative of acceptable convergence (Hair et al., 2010).

5.5.4 Discriminant Validity Criteria

Discriminant validity refers to the extent that a latent construct is distinct from others, indicating that it measures a distinct proportion of the variable of interest that other dimensions do not (Hair et al., 2010). Discriminant validity was assessed using analyses recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). This analysis involved assessing the squared correlations and the AVE values for each dimension. Discriminant validity was achieved when the AVE of a dimension exceeded the squared correlation score of that same dimension and all others (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In light of the above-reviewed criteria, Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 CFA results are discussed in the following chapter.
6 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The results of the model fit from the first-order CFAs on Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 data are presented in Table 7. Phase 1 results revealed that the model reflected a relatively poor fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1116.35; df = 120; \chi^2/df = 9.30; p < .001; \text{RMSEA} = .07; \text{CFI} = .95; \text{TLI} = .94$ and $\text{SRMR} = .04$). Model fit using Phase 2 data improved across the chi-square, normed chi-square, CFI and TLI indices ($\chi^2 = 978.87; df = 120; \chi^2/df = 8.16; p < .001; \text{RMSEA} = .07; \text{CFI} = .96; \text{TLI} = .95$ and $\text{SRMR} = .04$). In general, the data fitted the proposed model better over time, with Phase 3 satisfying all of the model fit criteria outlined; apart from producing a statistically significant normed chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 510.29; df = 120; \chi^2/df = 4.25; p < .001; \text{RMSEA} = .06; \text{CFI} = .97; \text{TLI} = .96$ and $\text{SRMR} = .03$). Overall, the CFAs conducted using the random samples of 400 cases fit the data better, with Phase 3 data providing a good fit to the proposed model depicted in Figure 6. For a list of the model fit statistics reported in each phase for the full and random samples, see Table 7.

Table 7
Fit Indices for Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Six-Factor Team*ID Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=1628)</td>
<td>(n=400)</td>
<td>(n=1683)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>1116.35*</td>
<td>401.83*</td>
<td>978.87*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$df$</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2/df$</td>
<td>9.30*</td>
<td>3.35*</td>
<td>8.16*</td>
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* Significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Despite a general improvement in fit over time, the hypothesised model displayed issues illustrated in previous work that has utilised the Team*ID scale (Heere...
& James, 2007a). To assess problematic elements of the model, the convergent and discriminant validity statistics were examined. Cronbach’s alpha scores, corrected item-total correlation statistics, factor loadings, $t$-values and AVE statistics reported in Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 were inspected to establish where non-convergence originated and to determine how to improve model fit. Table 8 displays the Cronbach’s alpha scores and Corrected-Item-to-Total correlations. Table 9 outlines the factor loadings, $t$-values and AVE statistics observed across the three research phases. An overview of problematic elements of the model is included after Table 8 and Table 9, respectively.
Table 8

Cronbach’s Alpha Scores and Corrected-Item-to-Total Correlations Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Six-Factor Team*ID Model

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*Note. Item-Total scores are presented on the diagonal in bold. * Indicates the Item-Total score is exceeded by the item’s loading with another factor. ** Indicates Item-Total score is below the .50 threshold.
Table 9
Factor Loadings, t-values and AVE Statistics Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Six-Factor Team*ID Model

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</table>

Note. * Indicates the AVE falls below the .50 threshold.
Acceptable Cronbach’s alpha, factor loadings and t-value scores were observed across all dimensions and data points, indicating that the selected variables accurately measured the appropriate latent constructs. However, inspection of Item-Total correlations and AVE scores indicated there were problematic relationships between certain variables in Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3. The third Cognitive Awareness item (Cog3) reported an insufficient corrected item-total correlation (<.50) with the Cognitive Awareness dimension during Phase 2. Additionally, the second Cognitive Awareness item (Cog2) reported a higher relationship with the Behavioural Involvement dimension than with the Cognitive Awareness dimension in the analysis of Phase 1 and Phase 2 data. Elsewhere, the first Interconnection item (Inc1) violated convergent criteria by loading higher onto the Interdependence factor in Phase 1, whilst the second Interconnection item (Inc2) reported similar problems across all three phases.

The dimensions that did not display acceptable convergent validity also violated tests for discriminant validity (see Table 10). Phase 1 data revealed that the squared correlations between Behavioural Involvement and Cognitive Awareness and between Behavioural Involvement and Interconnection exceeded the AVE for Behavioural Involvement. Furthermore, the squared correlation between Behavioural Involvement and Cognitive Awareness also exceeded the AVE for Cognitive Awareness. Similarly, the squared correlation between Interdependence and Interconnection was above the reported AVE for both respective dimensions. These results therefore violated the criteria used to assess discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In relation to the model’s fit to Phase 2 data, the Interdependence, Interconnection, Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement dimensions remained problematic. The AVE for Cognitive Awareness fell below the recommended
acceptable level (<.50) and was also lower than the squared correlation between Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement. Once more, the squared correlation between Interdependence and Interconnection surpassed the AVE for Interconnection. Phase 3 data indicated that Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement were measuring distinct dimensions; however, the Interconnection and Interdependence items continued to violate criteria for discriminant validity. These discriminant validity issues observed over three CFAs are representative of those that have been reported in previous cross-sectional research utilising the Team*ID scale (Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011).
### Table 10

*Discriminant Validity Statistics Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Six-Factor Team*ID Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phase 1 (n=1628)</th>
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<th>Phase 2 (n=1683)</th>
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<th>Phase 3 (n=899)</th>
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</thead>
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<td>.45</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The AVE statistic is presented on the diagonal. Values below the diagonal are correlation estimates. Values above the diagonal are correlation estimates squared. * Indicates the AVE score is exceeded by the squared correlation estimates between two variables. ** Indicates the AVE falls below the .50 threshold.
6.1 CFA Model Modifications

Complementing existing cross-sectional research, the current research provides insights into the Team*ID scale’s structural validity over time. Consequently, these observations provided a strong statistical basis to drive decision making in terms of model re-specification and ensured decisions were not made due to one-off or chance findings (e.g., MacCallum, Roznowski, & Necowitz, 1992). To avoid capitalising on chance findings that may have emanated from the research context, re-specifications within the model were not made purely on statistical grounds. Instead, decisions were influenced by statistical, theoretical and contextual considerations in line with best-practice suggestions (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Based on these considerations, the Interdependence dimension was removed from the overall model. All of the other five factors were retained.

Proponents of the Team*ID scale have encouraged scholarly pursuits that can refine and improve both the dimensions and overall model fit (Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011). However, Heere, James, et al. (2011) warned that any attempts to delete individual items or dimensions should be avoided for two reasons. First, it was argued that model re-specifications via the deletion of constructs may be based on interpretations of data reflective of one-off or chance findings (e.g., MacCallum et al., 1992). Second, Heere, James, et al. (2011) suggested that removing dimensions would violate the theoretical tenets of social identity theory. Model re-specification decisions were subsequently employed that both aimed to improve the overall model fit and preserve, or better, the theoretical fit between the dimensions measured and the theory used.

Despite discriminant validity issues across Phase 1 and Phase 2, both the Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement dimensions were retained. The
improvements in convergent and discriminant validity between these dimensions within Phase 3 discouraged the deletion of these factors as results may have been due to a chance finding or the timing of the data collection points (e.g., MacCallum et al., 1992). Phase 1 and Phase 2 were conducted six months prior to the team’s first season, and after the team’s first three games, respectively. It is likely that during these early stages of the team’s existence, individuals were still learning about the team and opportunities to become behaviourally involved with the team were limited (e.g., Lock et al., 2012). Conversely, Phase 3 gathered data after individuals had an entire season to learn about and interact with the team. These situational factors explain why the Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement dimensions may not have been operating as expected until the team was active.

Issues surrounding convergent and discriminant validity between the Interconnection and Interdependence dimensions led to the deletion of the Interdependence dimension. The lack of discriminant validity between Interdependence and Interconnection in the current research over the three separate phases replicates observations made in cross-sectional research contexts (e.g., Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011). Given these previous observations and the improvement reported in the other dimensions over time (e.g., Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement) over an 18-month period, it is unlikely that the context was the cause of the lack of distinction. Thus, it is likely that the problems that exist between the Interdependence and Interconnection dimensions are not due to chance findings, but rather emanate from a lack of theoretical distinction between the dimensions. Although Heere and colleagues (Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011) believe the two dimensions are fundamentally related; their theoretical positioning is that the constructs are distinct and that the dimensions should both be retained. Thus, the
theoretical underpinnings of the dimensions were considered before a decision was made to adopt Heere and colleagues’ position or to re-specify the model.

Statistical, theoretical and contextual considerations informed the decision making behind model re-specification. From a theoretical perspective, the Team*ID scale draws upon a larger foundation than pure social identity theory. The theoretical framework that the Team*ID scale was originally developed from extended past social identity theory and encompassed a number of extra ideologies, including collective identity. Collective identity research posits that group formation is dependent on the existence of Interdependence whereby group members and the group itself share a mutually dependent fate (Ashmore et al., 2004). However, Ashmore et al. (2004) clarified that a sense of interdependence becomes salient only in instances where the group is discriminated against, and the individual is categorised as an interchangeable part of that group.

Social identity theorists argue that although group members may derive a sense of interdependence with the group, it is not a necessary condition for group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). This perspective is supported by experiments in the minimal group paradigm which revealed that a sense of group membership can be derived from situations designed to maximise the arbitrariness of group situations (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). Thus, the decision to remove Interdependence from the model and retain all other dimensions was made based on theoretical, contextual and statistical reasoning. After Interdependence was removed, three CFAs were run utilising a five-factor structure model consisting of the retained Private Evaluation, Public Evaluation, Interconnection, Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement dimensions (see Figure 7).
6.1.1 Revised Model Fit

The results of the revised model fit from the CFAs run on Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 data are presented in Table 11. The model reflected an inadequate fit to the data at Phase 1 ($\chi^2 = 789.72; df = 80; \chi^2/df = 9.98; p < .001; \text{RMSEA} = .07; \text{CFI} = .95; \text{TLI} = .93$ and SRMR = .04). The model fit better using Phase 2 data, with improvements reported across the chi-square, normed chi-square, RMSEA, CFI and TLI indices ($\chi^2 = 670.06; df = 80; \chi^2/df = 8.38; p < .001; \text{RMSEA} = .07; \text{CFI} = .96; \text{TLI} = .95$ and SRMR = .04). The model fit reported using Phase 3 data satisfied all of the employed criteria.
excluding the statistically significant normed chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 285.07; df = 80$; $\chi^2/df = 3.56; p < .001$; RMSEA = .05; CFI = .98; TLI = .97 and SRMR = .03).

Table 11
Fit Indices for Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Five-Factor Team*ID Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Phase 2 (n=1683)</th>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>.04</td>
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Note. * Significant at the $p < .001$ level ** Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

In general, the analyses conducted on the random samples of 400 reported improved fit across the three waves; although the normed chi-square statistic remained statistically significant in each phase. Alongside these improvements in model fit, the five-factor model displayed improved convergent and discriminant validity properties across the three waves, validating the decision to remove Interdependence (see Table 12 and Table 13).
Table 12

Factor Loadings, t-values and AVE Statistics Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Five-Factor Team*ID Model

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<td>.58</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * Indicates the AVE falls below the .50 threshold.
Table 13

**Discriminant Validity Statistics Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 Five-Factor Team*ID Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phase 1 (n=1628)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Phase 2 (n=1683)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Phase 3 (n=899)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUB</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.66*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.69*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEH</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The AVE statistic is presented on the diagonal. Values below the diagonal are correlation estimates. Values above the diagonal are correlation estimates squared. * Indicates the AVE score is exceeded by the squared correlation estimates between two variables. ** Indicates the AVE falls below the .50 threshold.
The improvements to model fit, convergent validity and discriminant validity as reported in Table 11, Table 12 and Table 13 suggested that the decision to remove the Interdependence dimension was justified. Furthermore, such model re-specification also aligned with theoretical support that Interdependence is not a necessary condition of group membership (Ashmore et al., 2004; Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). Consequently, the revised five-factor Team*ID model was retained and used to investigate the dimensional properties of team identification over time. To do so, a longitudinal dataset was created whereby participants who had completed all three questionnaire phases were identified and retained, consistent with the panel approach (Babbie, 2010; Menard, 2008). An overview of the method guiding this next stage of investigation is now provided.
7 QUANTITATIVE PANEL METHOD

The following chapter includes an overview of the participants, procedures and analyses used to guide the quantitative panel component of the current research. The materials are not included in the forthcoming section, as they are the same as those used in each cross-sectional phase described within the preceding chapters. Following a discussion of the method employed, the results related to Research Question 1 are included.

7.1 Participants: Quantitative Panel

The longitudinal panel consisted of 165 individuals, who completed the three questionnaires included in Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3. Demographic analysis revealed that the panel closely represented the respondents from Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 on key demographic variables. Additional comparisons with statistics provided by the Gold Coast Suns football club indicated panel participants were not atypical from the broader Gold Coast Suns’ fan population. Panel participants consisted of 107 males (65%) and 58 females (35%). Respondent ages ranged from 18–79 years, reporting an average age of 49 years. Most respondents identified as an Australian, New Zealander or Pacific Islander (76%). In terms of education and annual income demographics, respondents were most likely to have a Bachelor’s degree or higher (52%) and earn between $51,000 – $100,999 Australian dollars per annum (33%). For a list of frequency counts and percentages reported on key variables of panel participants, see Appendix E.

7.2 Procedures: Quantitative Panel

The researcher adopted a convenience sampling approach to create the longitudinal panel of interest. Individuals who had completed all three questionnaires
(Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3) formed the sample frame of interest at this stage of the research. The three individual datasets were combined by using the merge datasets by variable function in SPSS. The key variable used to identify panel members was the unique fan number participants were asked to enter in each phase. To ensure the merge was effective, all retained cases were manually inspected to check that the panel was made up of the exact same individuals over time. This process of verification included cross-referencing demographics such as age and gender from the three questionnaire waves and looking for any abnormalities within individual cases. Based on these criteria, 165 individuals were matched and retained as the panel sample used for longitudinal analyses.

The main issue within panel research is attrition, which is a cumulative reduction in panel size due to non-response or drop out (Babbie, 2010; Laurie, 2008). Attrition is inevitable in longitudinal panel research and usually occurs if a participant moves to a new region, changes his or her contact details or simply changes his or her mind about participating (Laurie, 2008). Panel attrition represents a threat to the validity of longitudinal data if individuals who drop out are atypical (Babbie, 2010). Therefore, the demographic makeup of the panel was compared with the characteristics of the individual phases to ensure participants who dropped out were not atypical and posed no threat to the validity of findings. Comparisons indicated that the individuals who formed the panel closely matched the demographic profile of participants in the three cross-sectional phases. Thus, the panel was deemed to be representative of the population of interest and panel attrition was attributed to normal factors associated with longitudinal research, rather than reasons that may threaten research validity (e.g., Babbie, 2010; Holmes-Smith, 2011).
7.3 Analysis: Quantitative Panel

Data analysis consisted of running a number of repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests to determine which of the five team identification dimensions, if any, displayed significant mean score change across the three time periods. Repeated measures ANOVA was selected, as data were gathered from the same participants at each time and the statistical test allowed for overall changes alongside changes between specific periods to be identified (Field, 2013; Hair et al., 2010; Liang & Zeger, 1986). When using such analysis techniques, researchers can investigate univariate or multivariate statistics to determine changes in dependent variables. The current research utilised a multivariate approach for the following reasons.

First, the multivariate approach was deemed appropriate given data were gathered at three specific data points and were theoretically correlated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Second, the dataset contained multiple dependent variables and consisted of an appropriate sample size. Algina and Keselman (1997) suggest that multivariate analysis provides advantages over a univariate approach when four or fewer periods are analysed and when the sample size exceeds the number of levels plus 15. The longitudinal data satisfied both of these criteria. Third, multivariate modelling does not assume sphericity and thus is not prone to shortcomings associated with cases involving non-normal data and large sample sizes (O’Brien & Kaiser, 1985). Based on the above, multivariate repeated measures ANOVA was deemed the most appropriate analysis technique to investigate the dimensional structure of the revised Team*ID model.

The analyses were guided by the recommendations of Field (2013). Each dimension consisted of three levels whereby the mean scores of each dimension were compared across Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3. The ‘repeated’ change contrast was selected given the data were measured in a meaningful order at successive points in time
(Field, 2013). Four multivariate test statistics (Roy’s largest root, Wilk’s lambda, Pillai’s trace and Hotelling’s trace) may be produced within repeated measures ANOVA analyses, with each providing benefits in specific situations (Field, 2013; Hair et al., 2010). To assess main effects, the multivariate test statistic examined in the current research was Pillai’s trace ($V$), a robust statistic that is conservative and protects against Type I error inflation (Field, 2013; Hair et al., 2010; Olson, 1979). A presentation of panel results now follows.
8 QUANTITATIVE PANEL RESULTS

The multivariate repeated measures ANOVA results for the revised five-factor Team*ID model are presented below. Results indicated that identification was relatively stable, but there was some change in respect to the structural composition of the dimensions over time. The main finding was an increase in the Cognitive Awareness dimension, which gathered an increased salience and importance within the compositional structure of identification. Furthermore, results indicated there were effects for three of the five Team*ID dimensions (Private Evaluation, Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement). Although these effects were characterised by significantly different mean score values between at least two measurement points, these dimensions remained fairly stable. The mean scores of the other two dimensions (Public Evaluation and Interconnection) did not significantly change between any measurement points. The mean scores and standard deviations for each of the five Team*ID dimensions are presented in Table 14. The overall composition and observed structure of the Team*ID dimensions in relation to one another is discussed after Table 14. Following this, each dimension’s relative change or stability is outlined.
Table 14

Means and Standard Deviations: Five-Factor Team*ID Model Phase 1, Phase 2, Phase 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Evaluation*</td>
<td>5.67^2</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>5.78^1,3</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>5.64^2</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Evaluation</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interconnection</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Awareness*</td>
<td>4.45^2,3</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>5.14^1</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>5.27^1</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beh Involvement*</td>
<td>3.75^2</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>4.03^1,3</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>3.79^2</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation. * Indicates where a main effect was present at the p < .05 level. Superscript values ^1,2,3 denote where the differences were observed at the p < .05 level.

8.1 Structural Composition of Team*ID

Overall, the structural composition of the five Team*ID dimensions remained relatively stable over the assessed period. Inspection of the mean scores and standard deviations indicated that the relative weights of the dimensions and their composition remained consistent across Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3. At each point, the Private Evaluation dimension reported the highest mean score; whereas the Interconnection dimension reported the lowest mean score. The only structural change reported was the development of the Cognitive Awareness dimension, which replaced the Public Evaluation dimension as the second-highest ranking dimension during Phase 2 and Phase 3, respectively. Collectively, these results indicate that team identification operates with stability over time; although some inter-dimensional fluctuations occurred over the time period observed. Each dimension is now reviewed.
8.1.1 Stability and Change of Team*ID Dimensions

The Private Evaluation dimension reported a main effect across the three time periods $V = .04, F(2, 163) = 3.76, p < .05$. Pairwise comparisons suggested the mean score of the dimension in Phase 2 significantly differed between both the Phase 1 and Phase 3 data collection points ($p < .05$). No significant difference was reported between the mean score of Private Evaluation at the time of Phase 1 and Phase 3 ($p > .05$). Results indicated that Private Evaluation perceptions increased significantly from Phase 1 to Phase 2 before decreasing significantly from Phase 2 to Phase 3, returning to a level similar to that observed in Phase 1. Thus, respondents reported generally stable Private Evaluations of the team during the assessed period.

The Public Evaluation dimension reported no statistically significant mean score changes when the data were assessed $V = .01, F(2, 163) = .89, p > .05$. The mean score dropped from Phase 1 to Phase 2 before reporting a slight increase at Phase 3. However, none of these changes were statistically significant. Thus, respondents reported stable Public Evaluations of the team over the period of interest.

Analysis of the Interconnection dimension also indicated that there were no significant mean score changes evident within the longitudinal data $V = .02, F(2, 163) = 1.83, p > .05$. The mean score decreased from Phase 1 to Phase 2 before reporting a slight increase at Phase 3. Based on the insignificant main effects test statistic, none of the mean scores were statistically different from any of the others. Hence, the sense of Interconnection that respondents reported was stable across the observed time frame.

The Cognitive Awareness dimension reported statistically significant main effects $V = .42, F(2, 163) = 58.98, p < .05$. Pairwise comparisons revealed the mean score of Phase 1 significantly differed between both the Phase 2 and Phase 3 data collection points ($p < .001$). No significant difference was observed between the mean
scores reported in Phase 2 and Phase 3 ($p > .05$). The overall trend indicates that Cognitive Awareness reported an increase over time. The mean scores of the dimension at the Phase 2 and Phase 3 time periods were significantly greater than those reported at Phase 1. However, results indicated that whilst Cognitive Awareness increased between the Phase 2 and Phase 3 points, this increase was not significant.

The final dimension tested was Behavioural Involvement. An overall statistically significant change in the mean score was reported over the three time periods $V = .08$, $F(2, 163) = 6.77, p < .01$. Pairwise comparisons suggested the mean score of Behavioural Involvement at Phase 2 significantly differed between the mean scores reported at Phase 1 and Phase 3 ($p < .01$). No significant difference was present between the mean scores in Phase 1 and Phase 3. These results indicated that Behavioural Involvement at Phase 2 was statistically higher than the measurements at Phase 1 and Phase 3. The non-significant relationship between the Phase 1 and Phase 3 data points indicated that Behavioural Involvement with the team increased between Phase 1 and Phase 2 before returning to the initial measurement point. Figure 8 depicts the mean score of the five dimensions across the three data collection points.
Figure 8. Estimated Marginal Means of Team*ID dimensions

8.2 Summary of Quantitative Research

CFA results indicated that the six-factor Team*ID scale possesses issues related to convergent and discriminant validity, similar to previous cross-sectional research (Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011). After modifying the model based on theoretical and statistical decision making criteria, a five-factor version of the Team*ID scale that displayed acceptable model fit and validity characteristics was supported. Using longitudinal panel data, the dimensional structure of the five Team*ID dimensions was examined.

Overall, results supported previous unidimensional research, which has illustrated that team identification operates with relatively stability over time (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Gau et al., 2010; Wann, 1996, 2006a). In relation to specific dimensions, repeated measures ANOVA results illustrated that three of the Team*ID dimensions (Private Evaluation, Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement)
reported statistically significant mean score changes over time. The other two dimensions (Public Evaluation and Interconnection) did not statistically differ between any of the assessed data points. These results provide interesting insights into the team identification construct and, in particular, its multidimensional components. In general, despite some dimensions reporting fluctuations in terms of their strength in mean score, the structural composition of the dimensions remained constant. One notable exception was highlighted with the Cognitive Awareness dimension becoming a more salient dimension of identification over the assessed period. Thus, results indicated that the cognitive processing of the team led to a reorganisation of the dimensional structure of Team*ID.

Overall, these quantitative results provided a unique examination of the Team*ID construct and the operation of identification with the target team over time, but did not elaborate on the factors and processes that influenced dimensional change. This lack of understanding justified conducting the qualitative component of the research to uncover the factors and processes that build on these quantitative data. The qualitative component of the current research is now discussed.
9 QUALITATIVE METHOD

The following section includes an overview of the participants, materials, procedures and analyses used to guide the qualitative component of the current research. The qualitative component was designed to build on the results provided by the quantitative research component. To achieve this aim, two qualitative research studies were conducted, providing both cross-sectional and longitudinal data. Given the similarity between the studies, the qualitative method section describes both studies concurrently using the following structure. First, the semi-structured interview process is described. Next, an outline of the participants, materials, procedures, analysis and results relevant to Study 2 and Study 3 is provided. The qualitative research component is then summarised and is followed by a results chapter which addresses Research Question 2a, Research Question 2b and Research Question 3.

9.1 Semi-Structured Interviews: Study 2 and Study 3

The qualitative component within the current research’s sequential explanatory research design comprised was of two rounds of interviews (Study 2 and Study 3). The first phase (Study 2) consisted of interviews with 20 Gold Coast Suns fans. The second phase (Study 3) gathered longitudinal data through follow-up interviews with eight individuals who were interviewed in Study 2. All interviews were conducted face-to-face by a single researcher and followed a semi-structured format.

Semi-structured interviews are useful when the interviewer has prior knowledge of a subject area and wishes to understand respondent experiences and the underlying processes that may explain an observed phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Semi-structured interviewing also allowed for consistency between interviews through the use of an interview guide whilst also offering enough flexibility to ask additional probing questions based on individual responses (Bryman, 2012; Denzin, 1989; Denzin &
Lincoln, 2005). The interview guide was designed to explore how participants had experienced developments in their team fandom and to explore the social–psychological health benefits that correlated with supporting the team. All interview data gathered considered the actual experiences of the respondents and positioned the research within the socially constructed world of both the interviewees and interviewer (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Rudd & Johnson, 2010). Consequently, the interview data complemented and expanded upon the quantitative results by providing insights into the occurrences that led to changes in team identification, consistent with the sequential explanatory research design (Creswell, 2009; Creswell et al., 2003). Of particular interest was assessing how changes in cognitive processing may have led to increased team identification, given the results observed within the quantitative research component.

9.1.1 Participants: Study 2 and Study 3

Study 2 consisted of 20 semi-structured interviews. One researcher conducted all of the interviews during the 2012 AFL season over a period of four weeks, which spanned from June to July. Interviewees were between 19 and 66 years old ($M = 43.0$). Fourteen males (70%) and six females (30%) were interviewed. Of the total sample, 16 interviewees were Gold Coast Suns members. Each interview lasted between 18 and 48 minutes, resulting in a total of nine hours and 21 minutes of audio data. Utilising the constant comparison method, the researcher determined after the twentieth interview no new themes, findings or conceptual thoughts were emerging and thus, data saturation had been reached (e.g., Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1977).

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10 The demographic profile of participants in the qualitative research component were largely consistent with the demographics of individuals who participated in the quantitative phases and with statistics provided by the Gold Coast Suns football club concerning their overall fan population. Thus, the sample was deemed suitable.
Study 3 built upon Study 2 by conducting additional follow-up, in-depth interviews at the conclusion of the 2012 AFL season. These interviews were conducted approximately five months after the initial interview round, enabling the researcher to investigate any possible changes that may have occurred. More importantly, the follow-up interviews enabled the researcher to probe and discover how the themes identified in Study 2 interacted to facilitate fan development. Participants were individuals from Study 2 who were willing to speak with the researcher again post season. In total, eight interviews were conducted over a period of two weeks in November and December 2012. Interviewees ranged in age between 19 and 61, reporting a mean age of 38 years. Six males (75%) and two females (25%) were interviewed. All participants were members in 2012 and had renewed or planned to sign up for membership for the 2013 season. Each interview was between 23 and 72 minutes long, with the researcher collecting a total of four hours and 23 minutes of audio data. The pseudonym, age, gender and AFL support background for interviewees from Study 2 and Study 3 is presented in Table 15.
Table 15

*Participant Pseudonyms, Demographics and Background Information Study 2 and Study 3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Favourite Team Pre-Suns</th>
<th>Favourite Team Interview 1</th>
<th>Favourite Team Interview 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Brisbane / Gold Coast</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Western Bulldogs</td>
<td>Western Bulldogs / Gold Coast</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lois*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Gold Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Geoff</td>
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<td>Paul</td>
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<td>Rich</td>
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<td>Nick*</td>
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<td>Sean</td>
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<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* * Indicates the interviewee participated in Study 2 and Study 3.
9.1.2 Materials: Study 2 and Study 3

The semi-structured interviews conducted during Study 2 and Study 3 utilised the following materials to assist with data collection. Materials included an information sheet, a digital voice recorder and a brief interview guide. The information sheet was distributed to ensure each participant was aware of the research purpose, to gather informed consent and to comply with the ethical standards of the researcher’s university. A copy of the information sheet is provided in Appendix F. The interview guide was used in a manner that provided control over the issues discussed, but allowed sufficient flexibility to include additional probes, which were used when an individual’s subjective experiences required further exploration (e.g., Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Edwards & Skinner, 2009). In line with the recommendations of Denzin (1989), the researcher used the guide in a way that ensured consistency between interviews, whilst also allowing the guide to be updated as new themes emerged from each interview. Question refinement included rewording of questions that were not easily interpretable and adding probes based on participant responses, which enabled further exploration of emergent concepts.

The interview guide was designed to uncover the factors underpinning the development of team identification broadly, and to explore reasons potentially explaining the quantitative findings. Specific questions were developed based on the quantitative findings which highlighted the importance of direct experiences and cognition on fan development. Question development was also informed by previous research examining fan development (e.g., Lock et al., 2012) and subsequently refined through discussions with leading sport scholars. Example questions included: “How has your connection with the Gold Coast Suns changed since you first became a fan?” and “What are some key moments that you can pinpoint where your liking for the team changed?” To examine and explore the social–psychological health benefits linked with
their support, respondents were asked: “What benefits do you receive from being a fan?” These questions, along with further probing questions, were used to uncover the factors important to fan development and addressed Research Questions 2a and 2b. The interview guide used in Study 2 is provided in Appendix G. This interview guide was retained for Study 3, but modified to focus on understanding the processes which explain fan development. To build on Study 1, the researcher paid particular attention to understanding how cognitive processing of team information may have resulted in internalisation of the team. Thus, Study 3 was used to address Research Question 3.

9.1.3 Procedures: Study 2 and Study 3

The procedures used in Study 2 and Study 3 followed Edwards and Skinner’s (2009) seven steps to collecting qualitative data. The first step involved speaking with potential interviewees at Gold Coast Suns games and asking if they would be willing to participate in a recorded interview discussing their experiences as a fan to date. The decision to approach fans at games was made for pragmatic reasons as the researcher held a season ticket and thus had access to a large proportion of individuals through this means. Such an approach also meant that the researcher could build rapport with potential interviewees, assisting in recruitment and longitudinal panel management.

Individuals who indicated that they were fans in some capacity were provided with more details about the research. After reading a brief information sheet, interested individuals were asked if they would like to participate. Any individual who agreed to participate was also asked if anybody that he or she knew would be suitable participants, consistent with a snowball sampling approach. Bryman (2012) notes that snowball recruitment methods can aid a theoretical sampling method by providing the researcher with an effective means to recruit suitable participants during certain research applications. Therefore, individuals who showed an interest in the research
were also asked if they knew anybody else like them who might be interested in participating.

The second and third steps involved arranging a suitable time for the interviews to take place and building rapport with interviewees. Neuman (2006) suggests having a friendly relationship with interviewees is crucial, as they will be more inclined to speak openly and it aids the researcher in viewing events from the perspective of the respondent. For this reason, all interviews were conducted at quiet, private and comfortable venues to ensure open and easily interpretable data were collected (Bryman, 2012). This approach helped to build rapport and ensured that each respondent felt comfortable to openly share his or her experiences with the researcher. This process of familiarisation began concurrently with the first and second steps and was facilitated by the researcher making contact on game day, on the telephone and via email prior to each interview. Through attending games and following the team in the media, the researcher possessed sufficient knowledge surrounding the team to facilitate an interactive and informed conversation (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Neuman, 2006).

The fourth step involved beginning each interview with a series of introductory questions designed to put the interviewee at ease prior to more in-depth questions. The introductory questions included asking each interviewee about his or her hobbies, prior experiences with sport in general and interest in the AFL competition. The fifth step involved asking detailed questions relevant to the current research for the purposes of gathering rich, meaningful data (Creswell, 2009; Edwards & Skinner, 2009). Probing questions were used to expand on the general questions contained within the interview guide and were developed and updated using the constant comparison method (Glaser, 1965). Asking a series of follow-up questions based on individual responses allowed
information important to the central research objective to emerge along with new themes not previously considered by the researcher.

The sixth step involved exchanging details with each interviewee. This process enabled the interviewees to contact the researcher for a summary of research findings and provided the interviewer with contact details to pursue future research opportunities. In accordance with ethical research protocols, interviewees were informed that they did not have to provide their contact details to the researcher and could choose to end their involvement with the research at any time. All interviewees reported a willingness to participate in future research and provided contact details. Gathering interviewee details also enabled the researcher to check the validity of data during the analysis phase by checking with members whether the research findings were being accurately interpreted (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The seventh and final step of data collection involved concluding the interviews and thanking each participant for his or her time. Prior to concluding the interviews, all respondents were offered the chance to make final concluding remarks and elaborate on any issues previously discussed. Following this, the researcher provided each interviewee with a $20 supermarket voucher to show appreciation for his or her participation. The provision of a small gift to thank each participant for his or her time ensured that appreciation was shown and is consistent with other research methods whereby gratuities may be offered (e.g., Byers & Wilcox, 1991; Zikmund, 2003).

The above seven steps were used to guide each interview and ensured that the researcher gathered data relevant to address the research objective. When determining the appropriate point to cease collecting new data, qualitative research should be guided by theoretical saturation rather than relying on reaching a predefined number of responses (Bryman, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1977). Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006)
note that it can be hard to determine when adequate saturation has been reached; however, other researchers explain the “chief virtue of theoretical sampling is that the emphasis is upon using theoretical reflection on data as the guide to whether more data are needed” (Bryman, 2012, p. 420). Considering this approach and utilising the constant comparison method, the researcher determined that after completing 20 interviews there was an absence of new information, themes and theoretical contributions emerging (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1977). Therefore, data collection pertinent to Study 2 ceased after the twentieth interview was conducted.

Interviewees who participated in Study 2 were invited to take part in a follow-up interview, which formed Study 3. Invitations to participate in Study 3 were distributed via email at the conclusion of the 2012 AFL season. Individuals who indicated they were willing and able to participate in another interview were then contacted further via email or telephone, whereby suitable interview times and venues were arranged. Twelve individuals were either unable to be contacted by the researcher or could not participate in the follow-up interview due to prior commitments (e.g., busy work schedule) or due to changes in life circumstances (e.g., moved interstate). Such attrition is unsurprising given the challenges inherent to longitudinal research, which make certain forms of dropout such as those reported in this case inevitable (Babbie, 2010; Laurie, 2008; Neuman, 2006). Consequently, a convenience sampling approach was adopted whereby only those individuals who were available within an allotted time frame were interviewed.

Within Study 3, data were collected using steps 4, 5 and 7 outlined in Study 2. Thus, each interview began with introductory questioning designed to re-establish rapport with the interviewees and facilitate an open conversation. Next, the researcher asked more detailed questions and utilised probing questions to uncover data relevant to
the current research agenda. Due to the longitudinal nature of the interviews, the researcher was able to ask questions concerning how each individual felt his or her team and social connections had developed overall, and in relation to the time that had elapsed since the interview conducted within Study 2.

### 9.1.4 Analysis: Study 2 and Study 3

Study 2 interview data were downloaded from the electronic voice recorder and onto a secure hard drive in the form of MP4 audio files. The researcher then listened to each audio file carefully and transcribed each interview verbatim, resulting in 91,688 words of data. Next, the researcher read the interview transcripts and the notes taken during the interviews, making a summary of key points relevant to each research question. To ensure the researcher was accurately interpreting participant responses, a summary of key points related to specific questions posed within the interviews was collated. This information was then provided to selected interviewees for feedback, a process known as “member checking” (Creswell, 2009. p. 191). The participants provided minor comments that helped the researcher to clarify the meaning behind certain comments and corroborate that the emergent themes were being interpreted correctly (e.g., Miles & Huberman, 1994). After verifying the results gathered with four interviewees, the researcher felt comfortable that the data were being interpreted appropriately and that thematic analysis could commence.

The completed interview transcripts were imported into NVIVO 10.0 and prepared for analysis. After confirming that each transcript was successfully imported, a three-step coding process (e.g., Creswell, 2009; Neuman, 2006) was used to identify themes relating to fan development and social–psychological health. The first step involved the researcher reading the relevant field notes and each line of the interview transcript carefully to identify where themes were emerging in the data (Miles &
Themes were identified when words, phrases or concepts were used by multiple interviewees to characterise a shared response (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher searched for themes previously established in fan development and team identification literature and also allowed new codes to emerge independently. Utilising such an analysis technique ensured that findings could be related to past research and reduced the likelihood that themes unique to this specific research context were overlooked. Consequently, this mid-range method of analysis enabled codes to be developed both inductively based on new information emerging, and deductively based on a priori theory and past research (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001).

The second step involved the researcher reading the data again and assigning coded labels based on the themes identified to specific sections of the text. Throughout the second step, codes and coding structures were modified, merged or separated into sub-codes in ways that best fit and explained the data collected (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The third step involved a final round of condensing the themes so that major themes and sub-themes were ordered in a meaningful way so that the major findings could be easily interpreted.

The analysis protocol used in Study 2 was also applied to Study 3. All interview data were downloaded in the form of MP4 audio files and transcribed verbatim, resulting in 44,736 words of data. The focus of the analysis was to explore the processes that explained fan development by expanding on the themes identified in Study 2. Again, the researcher adopted a mid-range coding method (e.g., Denis et al., 2001) that enabled new themes and previously established themes to emerge from the data collected. To provide a longitudinal narrative, data collected from each interviewee
were analysed after the researcher read the transcripts from Study 2. This allowed the researcher to consider information gathered previously and to contextualise responses.
10 QUALITATIVE RESULTS: STUDY 2

This chapter presents an overview of results derived from Study 2. Study 2 data were analysed to uncover the team-specific and individual-specific factors that influenced team identification, addressing Research Question 2a and Research Question 2b. Nine themes representing team-specific and individual-specific factors were identified within the qualitative data. These themes collectively helped to explain how and why individuals initially became involved with the team and which factors were important in developing the strength of team identification interviewees derived from their team connections. Conceptually, these nine themes represent psychological, team-related and environmental factors influential to team identification (Wann, 2006b; Wann et al., 1996). Table 16 provides a diagrammatical view of themes identified within Study 2. Each theme is discussed in further detail after Table 16.
The themes listed in Table 16 detail the factors which contributed to fan development. These themes specifically outlined how fan development was influenced by: 1) The team being locally based, which offered opportunities to develop social and community connections; 2) The team being new and presenting an exciting opportunity for fans; 3) The team participating in a sport that the individual already identified with or was involved in; 4) A perception that the team offered an attractive avenue in which to invest leisure time; 5) Positive experiences with the team and its broader organisational components; 6) Experiencing memorable team moments; 7) Feelings that the organisation included fans in decision making and made positive community connections.

Table 16

*Themes Influential to Fan Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team-Specific</td>
<td>Local Connection</td>
<td>Support Local Team Social Connections Community Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiencing Historic Moments Be a part of History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sport Priority Consume the Sport Support the Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Entertainment and Accessibility Leisure Convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational Touchpoints Physical Interactions Other Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seminal Moments Game-Day Moments Non Game-Day Moments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-Creation Fan Ownership Appreciation of Fans and the Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual-Specific</td>
<td>Reduced Personal Loneliness</td>
<td>Temporary and Enduring Connections with Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced Social Loneliness</td>
<td>Temporary and Enduring Connections with the Region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
contributions; 8) Opportunities to reduce personal loneliness; and 9) Opportunities to reduce social loneliness.

Each of the nine themes identified in Table 16 are now discussed. Direct quotes are used to clarify participant responses and to provide a narrative that contextualises the meaning and lived experiences of each respondent by using his or her own words (e.g., Rinehart, 2005). The themes were developed based on common participant responses; however, previous research has argued that identification is context specific (e.g., Jones, 1997a). Therefore, an overview of each individual’s fan biography is provided in Appendix H. This information is useful in clarifying individual participant responses and is beneficial in further understanding the meaning behind particular quotes.

10.1 Fan Development Theme 1: Local Connection

The first fan development theme listed in Table 16 was titled Local Connection. This theme depicts how team support was influenced by the team’s geographical positioning in an individual’s community. Within the first sub-theme, titled Support Local Team, interviewees explained how it was important to support the local team because the team represented the Gold Coast and so that it could be sustainable and successful. As outlined earlier, this has typically been a challenge for sport teams on the Gold Coast.

Jack explained how supporting the team, and in turn the region, was important to him because he identified with the Gold Coast region. Jack said: “I feel an obligation to support the local team. My wife was born here on the Gold Coast and I’ve lived here for 50-odd years, 58 years or something, so we will always support the local team.” Justine added that she supported the team because “we’re on the Gold Coast and we’ve got a
team, it’s our team.” These statements highlighted that an existing identification with the Gold Coast region was an important factor in developing a specific identification with the team. Building on this perspective, interviewees noted that it was important to support the local team so that there would be a team to follow in the years to come. Steven explained how his involvement with the team enabled him to “support a local team and ensure the survival of the team. [I want] to have a local AFL club on the [Gold] Coast just to see them represent the Gold Coast.” This statement articulated recognition of a mutually beneficial relationship between the team and the community and consequently a desire to ensure the team would remain operational. Ken explained the underpinnings of this importance by offering the following analogy:

“It is just like in business. You always try to support your local businesses to keep them going - so it is the same thing with sport. Of course, the Gold Coast Suns are a business at the end of the day, but if they are willing to spend all that money for us as locals, why not follow them? Why follow somebody interstate or miles away when you have it all here?

The second sub-theme within the Local Connection theme related to benefits derived from having a local team. The Social Connections sub-theme reflected a desire to enhance and create connections with other people. This sub-theme illustrated how the team interacted favourably with existing social bonds or provided opportunities to create new social bonds. A number of interviewees articulated how key socialising agents, such as friends, work colleagues and family members had played a role in first introducing them to the sport of Australian Rules football, or to the team directly. Matthew explained that his family are passionate about sport and Australian Rules in particular by saying “I’ve just grown up into it [supporting AFL], especially as they are all from Victoria.” Other interviewees (Mark, Peter, Andrew, Graham, Martin, Ken,
Sean and Vanessa) also acknowledged how links with Victoria influenced their upbringing and exposure to Australian Rules football and the AFL competition.

As well as interacting with existing social networks, interviewees reported that an affiliation with the team helped in the development of new social connections. Individuals who were involved with Australian Rules football personally or supported an AFL team prior to the Gold Coast Suns’ introduction explained how the team’s creation impacted on these existing group memberships. Mark described how the introduction of the Suns enabled AFL fans who resided on the Gold Coast to engage with one another, saying that “when you meet people they sort of just follow [an existing] team, but everyone who follows the Suns sort of has their own team... you can relate to them I guess.” Andrew also commented on this shared interest and explained how the team’s introduction had helped him to meet like-minded individuals since moving to the Gold Coast. He said:

I have come to really love the Suns because they have really helped me develop as a person actually. Like [being] up in Queensland, shaping me from a young age, I was only 19 when I moved up here so I’ve met lots of friends and I’ve done lots of fun things on the [Gold] Coast based around the Suns.

Individuals who did not previously have an AFL affiliation also described how the team interacted with their existing social networks and helped to create new personal connections. Lois explained that she began following the team to meet people and as something to do with her children. She noted that her choice to follow the team was made simply “because we’ve [recently] moved here, we’re new and we don’t know anyone. We wanted to make friends. But it was mostly to be involved in something with the kids [and to] to follow something with the kids.” Nick also noted how the team provided “something for our family to do – our kids are young and having them
growing up in an environment where they can wear the colours and it’s their team [is important].” Collectively, these examples illustrate how the team interacted with existing social networks and provided opportunities to make new interpersonal connections with other individuals.

The third sub-theme, titled Community Connections, illustrated how the team offered individuals with increased opportunities to engage with the Gold Coast community. Interviewees described how having a team in the local community made them feel an increased sense of community solidarity and belongingness. Peter described how the team enabled him to feel like a part of the broader community through the following passage:

The [Gold] Coast is such a transient place. There are people coming and going all over the place and even when you live here, a lot of the time, no one ever seems to really settle down their roots. You know, moving from Brisbane to here, I really feel like we haven’t put our roots down from a living point of view but [with the Gold Coast Suns being established] I knew I could follow something.

In summary, the Local Connection theme identified how fan development was influenced by the team’s geographic location. From this perspective, interviewees explained how supporting the local team was enabled through interactions with existing socialisation agents. Similarly, the desire to create new personal and social connections was a prominent factor within this theme. The second fan development theme listed in Table 16, Experiencing Historic Moments, is now discussed.
10.2 Fan Development Theme 2: Experiencing Historic Moments

The second fan development initiation theme, Experiencing Historic Moments, characterised a desire to be involved with the team from an early point in its lifecycle. Within this theme, respondents explained how they viewed supporting a new team as an exciting and unique opportunity. More specifically, the ability to support a team from its inception provided individuals with the opportunity to be present for future team milestones. As Steven explained:

Being a new team from the very start is probably the most exciting thing, you know? Twenty years down the track, I can say I was part of the first home game, the first home win and [that] I was there right from the start.

Echoing this sentiment, other interviewees recounted this excitement and how unique opportunities were provided by supporting a newly created team. For example, Peter explained: “Being part of something new definitely [initiated his development as a fan] because it’s obviously fresh and exciting. Just the fact that, you know, you can be there from the beginning.” Similarly, Rich outlined that he viewed the opportunity to support a new team as being “too big an opportunity to knock back. I’ve always wanted to be a member of a founding club [and] it’s probably never going to happen again.”

In summary, the Experiencing Historic Moments theme explained how the focus team’s status as a new franchise influenced fan development. From this perspective, the opportunity to engage with a new team represented an exciting chance that carried a novelty factor unlikely to be available in the future. The third fan development theme depicted in Table 16, Sport Priority, is now reviewed.
10.3 Fan Development Theme 3: Sport Priority

The third fan development theme presented in Table 16 is titled Sport Priority. This theme outlined how fan development was initiated by leveraging an existing identification with the team’s respective sport or league. Two sub-themes characterised why interviewees initially developed a team identification based on an existing connection with Australian Rules football or the AFL competition specifically. These sub-themes, titled Support the Sport and Consume the Sport, illustrated how the expansion franchise enabled respondents to simultaneously consume and support the advancement of a game with which they had an existing identification. For Sean, following the team was simply a manifestation of following the league, with the AFL serving as his main point of identification. Sean noted:

I didn’t necessarily become a Suns fan because I wanted to be. It wasn’t the Suns that I was following; it was the AFL brand that I followed. It just so happened that the Suns were the fledging club and that’s who we supported... [My motivation was to] take an interest following AFL, which the Suns are a part of.

Mark also described how he felt he could support the AFL by supporting the team. He said: “First it was more of just a financial support thing. I wanted them to do well; I didn’t want AFL to fail.” Offering a similar perspective, Andrew explained how he felt that his support for the new team would help to advance AFL and simultaneously promote the sport in a region that typically favours a competing code. He said:

[The Gold Coast Suns] represent the AFL getting bigger and I definitely do like that because I am not a big fan of Rugby League... I was born and bred in Victoria so of course I am a football [Australian Rules] fan. I’ve always been a Western Bulldogs fan and always will be but the Gold Coast Suns came into
being just when I was moving up to Queensland and I decided it would be a really good thing to get involved in a new club and help support the AFL’s expansion into Rugby League territory.

Interviewees further described how this desire to advance the sport or league manifested in instances where they would promote the team via positive word of mouth. Martin, a self-described “disciple and promoter” of the game explained “I love [Australian Rules football] so much and it has many positive benefits for society and uniting Australia, [so] I try to be a disciple of it and promoter of it and the Suns help me to do that.” Overall, the above passages describe how an existing Australian Rules football or AFL identification helped to develop an interest in the team specifically.

The second sub-theme, Consume the Sport, explained how interest in the team was borne from a desire to consume more Australian Rules football games. Interviewees described how having an elite-level team on the Gold Coast meant that they could consume a sport they loved. Danielle noted she had a “difficulty in separating the Suns from just AFL. I like watching AFL and I like watching live games.” Capturing this sentiment, Graham remarked: “AFL is a strong interest of mine and I want to follow the home team so I can go to 11 or 12 games [of Australian Rules football].” For Steven, his identification with the team was borne out of a “love of footy [Australian Rules football]. I love going to watch many games. I’ve seen about 11 or 12 games this year already and just being at a live game, the atmosphere is something that compels me to go.” The experience of attending live games as opposed to other methods of consumption was also prominent for Ken, who reported that the focus team “gives us the opportunity to go and watch an Aussie Rules game live instead of just watching it on the TV each week... being there live is fantastic.”
Overall, the Sport Priority theme explained how fan development was influenced by existing identifications with groups at the league or sport level of abstraction. This was reflected by a desire to support the sport and league, and to increase the consumption of the sport or league’s product. The fourth fan development theme, Entertainment and Accessibility, described other factors that either enabled or prohibited respondents from interacting with the team.

10.4 Fan Development Theme 4: Entertainment and Accessibility

The fourth theme was titled Entertainment and Accessibility. This theme explained how fan development was influenced by perceptions that the team offered an attractive leisure pursuit. Two sub-themes described how perceptions that the team interacted favourably with existing psychological and environmental factors resulted in fan development. The first sub-theme, titled Leisure, illustrated how the team interacted favourably with interviewees’ wants and needs by offering an attractive avenue in which to invest leisure time. For Danielle, the team enabled her to partake in an activity she deemed an enjoyable leisure pursuit. She explained that “going to the AFL is entertainment, going to watch the game is entertainment.” Extending this thought, Jack also described how he derived enjoyment from following the team and how he felt that the team provided an entertaining escape from his daily life. He said:

Look, I think you’ve got to have an interest - you’ve got to have some other interest. I’m physically unable to participate in many sports now for various reasons and I think you can do a lot worse than follow the football code and I still believe that the AFL is a preeminent football code in Australia. If you follow it you realise the skills that are involved.
The second sub-theme was titled Convenience. This sub-theme explained how perceptions that the team was accessible and provided nice amenities to fans combined to facilitate fan development. Interviewees outlined how issues such as public transport offerings, corporate membership packages, seat availability and car parking facilities were important in fostering a sense of team identification. Commenting on his initial attraction to the team, Sean noted he liked the “accessibility from where we live. It’s four train stops, get off, on a bus and within 10 minutes of getting on and off the train you’re at the stadium.” The team’s accessibility was also an important factor for Geoff, who explained how being able to easily get to games meant that he could develop his relationship with the team further. He noted:

The key thing that has impacted on us attending games this year has been the fact we got an offer for full car parking. That really made a difference to us. We are very busy people, our leisure time is very precious and spending hours getting to and from a game is just a pain in the arse... This year we had an invitation from the club to take up a parking option which we’ve taken up, and bar one, we’ve been to every home game since... It’s a two-way thing, the opportunity means we go and going amplifies the relationship, I guess.

Interviewees also compared the Convenience provided by the team in relation to what they had experienced at other AFL grounds. Peter, Jack and Danielle reported that the team not only offered access to good seats that they could “keep forever if they chose” but explained that Metricon Stadium was more accessible and of a higher standard than previous offerings. Peter explained how this impacted on his fandom and how he compared the experience of attending a Gold Coast Suns’ game to attending the home games of his previous favourite team, Brisbane. He said:
You go to the Gabba\textsuperscript{11} and you feel like you’re in a flaming prison, you know? But it’s just so lovely to go to Metricon... It’s just phenomenal, it’s revered and we’ve obviously got the number one stadium in Australia because of it and rightly so.

In summary, the Entertainment and Accessibility theme described how perceptions that the team offered an attractive avenue in which to invest leisure time influenced fan development. Within this theme, interviewees described how psychological, team-related and environmental factors combined to determine the overall attractiveness of the team as a leisure pursuit. The fifth theme identified in Table 16, titled Organisational Touchpoints, is now described.

10.5 Fan Development Theme 5: Organisational Touchpoints

The fifth fan development theme uncovered was titled Organisational Touchpoints. This theme explained how team connections were strengthened by positive experiences with the team’s management and staff. Respondents specifically described how their positive interactions with the administration and management of the club acted as catalysts for fan development. During the early stages of the team’s existence, interviewees knew little about how the club would operate or interact with fans. Interviewees explained how interpersonal interactions at club events such as family and fan days indicated to them that the club was attentive to the needs of fans. These interactions also helped individuals to learn about what the team would come to represent; despite a lack of tangible team experiences. For Mark, learning about the organisation responsible for the team was an important factor in developing his

\textsuperscript{11} The ‘Gabba’ is a stadium located in Woolloongabba, a suburb in Brisbane. The Gabba is the home ground of the Brisbane Lions and was the temporary home of the Gold Coast Suns prior to Metricon Stadium’s opening.
identification with the team. When asked about why his fandom had developed since he first became involved with the team, he said:

I think the staff, mainly. I think they exceed any other club staff... I’ve spoken about this with many Suns fans – Richmond members, Collingwood members – and they all come out and say, “You know I’ve been a Richmond member for 20 years and no one from the club has ever spoken to me.” They’ll go over to the shop and it’s just like “Hi, bye.” That’s the experience I’ve had with the Lions as well. With the Suns it’s not like that. When you ask questions you get personal responses and I think that’s their focus and that’s where they are winning members and fans in that. It’s in their focus of customer service and member service.

The services provided by staff were also an important factor to other interviewees (Matt, Peter, Andrew, Lois, Martin and Ken), who recounted having positive interactions with staff members at fan days and club events. For these individuals, when they started to interact with the club’s employees they were able to learn more about what the club represented. Andrew explained how positive experiences with staff helped him feel closer to the club through the following passage:

Walking around on game days you’ll see one of the staff members go past and it’ll be them saying “Hi, how are you?” not me going “Hi there [staff member’s name]”, or whoever is going past. It does definitely get you into the inner sanctum of the club.

The above passages highlight the importance of club staff being physically available to interact with fans. Given logistical issues and time and cost considerations, it may be different for club staff to be available outside of game days and official club
events. However, respondents commented on how the club’s use of technology had enabled them to share information and resolve any problems which arose. Interviewees outlined how channels such as the official website, email correspondence, text messaging and social media accounts were effective in this regard. For Mark, the club’s use of these channels was important in developing his bond with the team. He said:

I think the Suns are incredible at communicating with members, especially on social media. It’s up to date [and] you always hear everything there first. There’s not really much that you find out from someone else that you know, before you find out from them. [There are] SMSs about training sessions, team lists, it’s all very up to date… While other clubs have social media, they still don’t even really use it unless it’s to occasionally update something but when a fan asks a question on another footy page, you usually don’t get a response… The Suns will respond to pretty much everything asked, and if not the first time, [it’s] the second time.

In summary, the Organisational Touchpoints theme identified how a sense of identification with the team could be developed based on an open and communicative policy being adopted at the organisational level. Specifically, interviewees explained how communication with organisational personnel helped to disseminate the club’s purpose and ultimately enabled fans to feel a stronger sense of identification with the team. An overview of the sixth fan development theme, Seminal Moments, is now included.

### 10.6 Fan Development Theme 6: Seminal Moments

The sixth theme identified was titled Seminal Moments. This theme outlined how directly experiencing seminal team moments led to increased team identification.
These moments were typically associated with events directly relating to the team rather than staff. Two sub-themes, titled Game-Day Moments and Non Game-Day Moments, described how sharing in the team’s accomplishments and being present at important stages of the team’s development positively impacted fandom.

Interviewees described how being present at seminal team moments, both on and off the field, made them feel an increased affinity with the team. Whereas certain interviewees (Peter, Ken and Rich) reported passionately following the team “from day dot”; other individuals described how their fandom increased after certain team milestones. Justine explained how the team’s first ever AFL match played in Brisbane (against Carlton on April 2, 2011) was important for her as it was “uplifting” and represented a unique moment. Although the team had played competitive matches previously, these matches took place in second-tier competitions which are more difficult to follow in person or in mainstream media. For Geoff, the team’s arrival in the AFL made them a more relevant and visible social group. In regards to his fandom, Geoff stated that “being able to see them play more often has taken us up the scale.”

As well as the first game, interviewees spoke of the impact that the first game played at the team’s new home ground (Metricon Stadium) had on support. Experiencing the opening of the stadium was also a unique moment for many and one described as carrying “a sense of history” (Geoff), and one that “was just so fantastic that it won us over” (Tamara). The stadium’s opening served to build anticipation for when the team played their first game there, serving as another seminal experience which helped to build the club’s identity for some fans. As Mark explained:

The Metricon open day was a big thing for me. I’d probably say that’s the event that has changed me most when it comes to becoming a fan. Before that I didn’t care too much about winning or losing or going to the games. After that, when I
went to the open day, it was just exciting and I got excited about thinking about it and everything. When Metricon [opened], it felt like a real home game. They played the three games at the Gabba but it never really felt like Suns’ games, because I always go there for the Lions so it just felt like two away teams were playing there. I don’t think they had an identity before they went there, or an identity I connected with until they went there.

The above quote illustrates how the team moving into Metricon Stadium acted as an important team moment that helped to clarify and solidify part of the team’s identity. Instances such as this enabled the interviewees to better understand what the team represented and consequently evaluate whether or not it was congruent with their own desired image. Similarly, the team’s first home match represented a moment that to Rich was “pretty special and I think that everyone who went that night would probably say the same thing. It’s something that’s never going to happen again, not in my lifetime, anyway.” For Andrew, the first home match also served as a catalyst to his development as a fan which represented a point where his identification with the team strengthened, and the team – rather than the game of Australian Rules football – became his main point of attachment. He remarked:

From then on it was just all the Suns. I wasn’t going to plan anything but football. Now it’s started to get more “I want to go to the Suns games” not “I want to go to the football” - I want to plan around the Suns, not plan around football.

In addition to simply attending games, interviewees recounted team victories and impressive performances as Seminal Moments that solidified and continued to enhance their identification with the team. Martin explained how the team’s first ever win (against Port Adelaide, April 23, 2011) was a “big moment” important in his
development as a fan. Matt explained that this moment represented the point where his group membership became salient, explaining that the first win was the point “when I really knew that I was a fan.” Interviewees also explained how the team’s other wins (against Brisbane, May 7, 2011 and Richmond, July 16, 2011) were Seminal Moments that galvanised and strengthened their support. For Peter, the Brisbane game was especially important given that he was a Brisbane Lions fan before the Suns had entered the competition. Peter explained how he had been able to support both teams prior to this match, but now had to choose between the teams as they were directly competing with one another. Peter explained how he had mixed feelings leading into the game which were quickly alleviated once the teams begun to play. He said:

Definitely even from the first game [I supported the Suns]. I was definitely Suns, I wore my Suns gear [to the game] and that’s pretty much it, you know. So yeah, it was good for me to realise that was where I was at with my support because it might have been interesting [if I decided that I wanted the Lions to win whilst dressed in Suns’ clothing at the game].

The above passages illustrated how directly experiencing Seminal Moments helped to reaffirm Peter’s group status and influenced his development as a fan. Other Seminal Moments included effort shown by the team in losses, which highlighted that the team was showing signs of improvement. On-field player improvements demonstrated how they had developed their skills and how the team was moving forward in general. Improvements in the team such as “effort every week and an improvement in the younger players” (Rich) provided “some encouragement that they are improving” (Danielle) and signified that the team was moving in the right direction. This progress was particularly important for Ken, who commented that “the growth of the team is going to be a lot more special to watch than a few victories.” From this
perspective, improvements and performances provided interviewees with hope that the team would enjoy successes in the future.

The presence of star players, and their own individual performances, also acted as Seminal Moments. High-profile rugby league signing Karmichael Hunt provided a number of key memorable moments, including a “brilliant” (Ken) long-range goal in the team’s first home match. Instances such as this moment contributed to a positive atmosphere during games, which was noted as being important in fostering a sense of identification with the team. Generally, interviewees noted that a positive atmosphere was created from a mixture of the crowd’s involvement in the game and from non-game entertainment provided at the stadium. In terms of off-field entertainment, Peter noted:

It really is, as they try to say, the full game experience, it really is. It’s whatever you want it to be. I mean, you can simply just go there five minutes before start and watch the game and go home. They work their ring off to try and get all this extra stuff for the whole family, you know, for the children, for the socialites that want to be there for drinking and partying a little bit afterwards or before or whatever. I mean, they cater for everyone - male, female, the young couples, the singles, [and] the older people. On game day everyone is catered for a couple of hours before and even an hour or two afterwards [the on-field contest].

The second sub-theme, titled Non Game-Day Moments, outlined how moments experienced outside of game day contributed to fan development. These moments were characterised by involvement at the team level rather than a broader club or organisational level. Seminal Moments included off-field instances such as the signing of team captain Gary Ablett, which was “a big thing as he’s such a good player” (Danielle). Steven explained how Ablett’s recruitment acted as a catalyst to fan development, as it presented him with a chance to “see a player of his profile every
week at the Gold Coast, [which is] an amazing opportunity.” The acquisition of Ablett, a marketable athlete and arguably the league’s best player, likely positively altered the image of the team, which as a new entity had little in the way of tangible associations that could be used to evaluate the overall attractiveness of the team. From this perspective, learning more about the team through deriving a better understanding of its components (e.g., players) helped individuals to evaluate whether or not the group possessed, or would possess, a positive and distinct identity in the future.

In addition to game-related instances, interviewees recalled how attending events outside of game days enabled them to meet players and learn more about the sport and the team itself. Interviewees (Steven, Emma, Peter, Andrew, Lois, Graham, Justine, Rich and Nick) reported how attending training sessions provided a chance to “watch the guys train and grab autographs” (Steven). For Andrew, who attended open training sessions almost every week, the sessions represented “something that really got me into them because I was getting to go there and interact with the players when they came around to the boundary and it made me feel like I was part of the team.” For similar reasons, interactions with the players either at training sessions or in other settings (Steven, Lois, Graham, Tamara and Rich) represented Seminal Moments. Players were described as “accessible” (Steven and Rich), “approachable” (Graham and Tamara) and “humble” (Lois). Ultimately, these perceptions made Lois feel “more important and [like a] part of the team.”

Overall, the Seminal Moments theme described how direct experiences with the team both on and off the field contributed to fan development. Interviewees described how these moments legitimised the team, and in turn their own group membership. This theme also describes how the team moved from being seen as something new and
largely absent of meaning to a meaningful part of the interviewees’ lives. The seventh fan development theme listed in Table 16, Co-Creation, is now discussed.

10.7 Fan Development Theme 7: Co-Creation

The seventh fan development theme within Table 16 is Co-Creation. This theme outlined how interviewees derived an increased sense of identification from the team when there was a perception that the club valued the contributions of fans and community groups. From this perspective, the Co-Creation theme explains how including fans and other community stakeholders in decision making can positively influence fan development. Peter explained how the team had taken substantial feedback from the local population and adopted a community-focused approach in their early stages of development. Describing how the team’s involvement in the community influenced his fandom Martin said:

The Suns are involved with a variety of community aspects, which I like. They are consciously trying to build up their community relationship and [increase their] level of involvement so the community sees them. You know they want to be a part of the Gold Coast.

Peter described numerous instances where he had interacted with the club in the community and identified these initiatives as important in terms of increasing his overall sense of identification with the team. The team was active within the community even before it was granted a franchise licence and continued to maintain an active community presence during the formative stages of its development. Reflecting upon this, Peter recalled his experience at an open question and answer forum held in 2009. He said:

[The Gold Coast Suns’ CEO] was there. We met him for the first time [and he] basically introduced himself and went through a whole heap of different things.
It was just really good. It was just a really good eye-opener for how we were going, what we expected and how they thought the club was going to go. You know, we didn’t even have a name or anything, we had no jersey, we had no nothing. We had nothing! We hardly had any players (laughs)! It was just like we didn’t really know much about anything. It was just like, “Okay, here we are, this is what we believe, this is what we’re going to do [and] this is what we’re trying to achieve.” That was really exciting. That was really, really exciting.

Complementing these open-forum settings, respondents described how community input was also sought for issues such as the team’s nickname, song and colours. Ultimately, actively engaging with fans and soliciting input from fans when creating team attributes was important in fostering team identification, as this approach made interviewees feel “as though you are part of the identity” (Sean) and like “[I was] a part of what was going on with their lives” (Peter).

Interviewees noted club initiatives such as the Bricolage and the establishment of the Sunscreamers supporter group as examples of initiatives that enabled them to engage with the team and derive a sense of team identification. For Peter, the Bricolage represented an acknowledgement of his contributions to building the club from the ground up. He remarked: “I’m on there and my daughter is on there. That was fantastic. I just think that’s a wonderful, wonderful way [to show appreciation].” Andrew’s involvement with the Sunscreamers had a similar effect in that he felt he was afforded access to the team’s “inner sanctum.” As a Sunscreamer, Andrew was able to have direct input in crafting elements of the Gold Coast Suns’ identity. Andrew explained how his participation in banner making and creating team chants represented “all the

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12 The Bricolage is a team logo placed inside the stadium which is made up of a mosaic containing the photographs of inaugural members.
13 The Sunscreamers are the team’s official cheer squad and assist with creating chants, making team banners and in other areas which assist the team.
kind of real intimate football experiences that you don’t get by just buying a membership and sitting up in the 50th row.” Andrew noted how this involvement fostered a sense that the club, the team and individual players appreciated his efforts, as reflected in the following statement:

After the first win last year, I was one of the people who went to the airport to greet them... I’d only been going to the games for a month and a half [and I know that] I sound like a little schoolgirl here, but Gary Ablett, after going to so many training sessions and that recognised me and he actually came over and said, “Hi, thanks for coming out on such a cold night late, you didn’t have to do that so thank you for coming down.” So yeah, you’re definitely in the inner circle of the team really.

As outlined above, the Co-Creation theme illustrated how instances where individuals felt that they had an input into the team’s identity led to fan development. Interviewees recounted how the team soliciting feedback from fans and the community and showing appreciation served as team-related actions that positively impacted fan development. The eighth theme contained in Table 16, titled Reduced Personal Loneliness, is now discussed.

10.8 Fan Development Theme 8: Reduced Personal Loneliness

The eighth theme uncovered was titled Reduced Personal Loneliness. This theme described how the team provided individuals with chances to enhance and create interpersonal relationships. These opportunities were a realisation of the Local Connection theme and were manifested in both salient team settings (e.g., at team matches) and in non-salient team settings (e.g., at the supermarket). Additionally, such opportunities were presented both in online (e.g., using social media) and in offline
(e.g., in person) settings. For some individuals, these interactions were temporary; whereas other individuals reported developing more enduring connections which permeated into deeper parts of their broader lives. These interactions are now discussed.

In regards to temporary connections, interviewees explained how their fandom enabled them to simply converse with others. For instance, certain interviewees (Peter, Andrew, Lois, Danielle, Ken, Geoff, Paul and Vanessa) recalled how instances such as wearing Suns merchandise had led to conversations with strangers. These interactions were normally in settings outside of games in locations such as pubs and supermarkets. Typically, these interactions were reliant upon the two individuals sharing a common interest in the team. However, interviewees also recalled being asked questions about the team from individuals who had noticed their merchandise; but did not recognise the team. These interactions illustrate how an individual’s team affiliation can facilitate temporary interpersonal exchanges with fellow in-group members and with other people in general.

Other interviewees recounted how they had experienced similar exchanges in more salient group settings. Ken noted that since the team had formed he was “always bumping into [familiar] people at the footy.” Similarly, a number of interviewees explained how a common group interest (e.g., being a team fan) had enabled them to develop friendships with individuals who they had met at team games (Graham, Tamara, Justine, Jack and Vanessa). In general, these relationships were confined to game settings and did not extend outside of game day. Vanessa explained that her involvement with the team enabled her to become friendly with people she frequently saw in the stadium; however she clarified that she had “not met anybody that we’ve committed to or carried on a friendship or relationship with outside of the stadium. It’s all confined to the stadium.” Jack recalled a similar experience in that that he and his
wife “know a lot of the people around our seats but I don’t know their names. We see one another there and say “G’day” and chat... but I haven’t actually made any close friends as a consequence of the footy.”

Other individuals explained how their team affiliations had enabled them to make more enduring interpersonal connections. For Rich, his team support had enabled him to reconnect with “a lot of people I’d known previously who I’ve lost contact with over the years.” For others (Mark, Matthew, Emma, Peter, Andrew, Rich, Lois and Tamara), their team support was accompanied by the development of more in-depth friendships that permeated into deeper parts of their lives. This was particularly the case for Peter, Andrew and Lois, who cited they had built “families” consisting of other similar individuals who also identified with the team. Peter acknowledged that an enduring family-like bond was beginning to form with other supporters based on continual interactions with these individuals over time. Peter explained:

It’s starting to become the family within the family... Following the Suns is like following people in your family, you get to know them well enough that you really feel like they’re a part and parcel. You see them swimming on the beach, training and everything. You feel like you’re almost semi-mates with them...

[Last year] I didn’t really make that much of an effort to sort of get to know someone as much because you probably didn’t really know who was going to be the real deal sort of thing... But when they’re all back this year, they see me, I see them. We’ve seen each other for the whole year last year.

Providing a similar perspective, Lois explained how new friendships with individuals she had met through the Suns helped her to develop an increased affinity

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14 “G’day” is an Australian slang term which is a shortened version of “Good Day.” The word is commonly used as a casual and friendly greeting.
with the team itself. Lois recalled how she initially followed the team as a means to meet new people and how her group affiliation had helped her to achieve that and make good friends. As well as commenting on friendships she had developed at club events and matches, Lois highlighted how social media channels had played an important role in facilitating connections with other group members. She said:

A big thing was to make friends, because I didn’t know anyone [on the Gold Coast]. Through the Suns I have a “Suns family” now... I have actually established a “Suns family”... On Facebook I have 47 friends who also like the Gold Coast Suns. Quite a few, I mean, that is just some [points to photo containing her family and other fans]... We all started chatting through Facebook and then we met and we have just become good friends.

In summary, the Reduced Personal Loneliness theme identified how fan development was related to benefits to social–psychological health. Specifically, this theme described how the team provided individuals with opportunities to enhance their existing interpersonal relationships and develop new interpersonal relationships through connecting group members to others. These connections manifested in both online and offline settings and varied in terms of their strength and persistence. Reductions in Personal Loneliness were borne from interactions that ranged from discussions with strangers, opportunities to reconnect with past friends and the development of family-like relationships with other in-group members. Intuitively, the personal relationships developed through team support likely had an influence on the ninth fan development theme, Reduced Social Loneliness, now reviewed.
10.9 Fan Development Theme 9: Reduced Social Loneliness

The ninth fan development theme identified was titled Reduced Social Loneliness. This theme described how team support provided individuals with increased chances to connect with the broader community. As with the Reduced Personal Loneliness theme, this theme reflected a realisation of the Local Connection theme. Specifically, this theme illustrates how supporting sport teams can lead to increased opportunities to develop community connections. Commenting on her personal experiences, Lois explained how her team support connected her to the Gold Coast and with community groups in the region. She said:

[My team support has] made me feel like the Gold Coast is home. I’ve moved around a lot in my life and I’ve never really settled and I’ve never really felt a place has been home. With the Gold Coast Suns and living here, I’ve got involved with the school and things like that. The Gold Coast is the only place I’ve ever really called home and they’re a big part of that reason why... It does make you feel more community involved and connected.

Other interviewees also shared this sentiment, explaining how the team’s creation led to the development of a stronger affinity with the Gold Coast. For instance, Peter described how the team’s establishment “cemented” him to the region and provided him with feelings of ownership and permanency. He said:

The main thing is that basically you feel like you’re part of them. You really do. It’s probably the thing, you know. Living on the Coast not being down here for long, I suppose probably you want to really put your roots in somewhere as well. We’ve moved a few times [and] now where we are doing what we do now, we sort of feel still a little bit transient. [We] haven’t really settled anywhere as far as home life as such. But to me that was one thing that would sort of cement me
to the Gold Coast. You know, it made me feel like “Okay, I’ve got something of
ownership on the Gold Coast, and that’s the Suns.” It’s a match made in heaven
[being able to be involved] right from the beginning. It’s AFL, it’s on the Gold
Coast and I can get to everything. It’s a win-win-win-win-win the whole way
around for me.

As indicated in the above passage, Peter’s strong team identification led him to
develop an affinity with the Gold Coast and helped to make him feel more involved
with the community. For Peter, the team’s establishment changed his perceptions about
the region it represented, helping him to develop a sense of community that he had not
previously experienced. Ultimately, this sense of community made him feel:

Like I belong to something on the Gold Coast that you know is going to be for
the long haul and I think that stability of something really attracted me... That
was one thing that really, really attracted me to the Suns. I knew I could follow
something, I knew I could put my trust in something that was going to be here
for a long time and no matter what I was feeling, or no matter what was
happening around the place with the economy or whatever, you know they were
going to be there the whole time. I think that’s important for a lot of people.

Providing a similar account, Andrew noted how his involvement with the team
helped him to integrate into the Gold Coast community after relocating to the region.
Andrew recalled how his team connection enabled him to feel like a part of the Gold
Coast and how this factor had prevented him from moving back to Victoria, where he
had lived prior to the Gold Coast. Andrew commented that “there’s a few times that I’ve
been feeling like I don’t really want to do this [live on the Gold Coast], I want to go
back home” but the team had kept him from doing so. In the above instances,
individuals recounted how an involvement with the team had improved their sense of community belongingness and overall connection to the Gold Coast region.

10.10 Summary of Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to uncover the team-specific and individual-specific factors that influenced fan development. Nine fan development themes were identified. Conceptually, these themes explained how psychological, team-related and environmental factors can impact fan development. The themes indicated that fan development was influenced by: 1) The team being locally based, which offered opportunities to develop social and community connections; 2) The team being new and exciting; 3) The team participating in a sport that the individual was already involved with or attracted to; 4) The team offering an attractive avenue to invest leisure time; 5) Positive experiences with the team and the organisation as a whole; 6) Experiencing seminal team moments; 7) Feelings that the organisation appreciated and included fans and made positive community contributions; 8) Opportunities to reduce personal loneliness; and 9) Opportunities to reduce social loneliness. Study 3, discussed next, explored the processes which explained how these factors interacted to produce fan development outcomes.
11 QUALITATIVE RESULTS: STUDY 3

Results from Study 3 were used to extend results derived from Research Question 2a and Research Question 2b. Additionally, results from Study 3 were used to address Research Question 3. Overall, results supported that a cognitive process of internalisation explained how and why individuals derived an increased sense of identification with the team. Building upon Study 2 findings, interviewees recounted how interactions with club management, direct experiences with the team and instances when the club involved fans and the community led to the team taking on more personal meaning. Interviewees also provided further insights into how their connection with the team was linked with social–psychological health benefits. These data consequently built on the results from Study 2, enabling the researcher to understand how the themes uncovered fit into three broad categories.

Figure 9 depicts how the nine themes identified in Study 2 can be conceptualised as representative of fan development initiation, fan development continuation and social–psychological health themes. The four boxes on the left-hand side of Figure 9 represent fan development initiation themes. Meanwhile, the three boxes in the middle of Figure 9 represent fan development continuation themes. The fan development initiation and continuation themes are staggered in Figure 9, highlighting their interrelatedness. These themes were delineated as initiation and continuation themes based on the current research findings; however, from a conceptual perspective it seems likely that the initiation themes would facilitate continued fan development and the continuation themes would be able to initiate the fan development process in other scenarios. The two boxes on the right-hand side represent social–psychological health themes. The arrows placed between the initiation, continuation and social–psychological health themes highlight the interactions and feedback loops linking the themes together. These results support a general framework that can be used to
understand fan development. However, it is important to acknowledge that this process is complex and related to an individual’s unique wants, needs and direct experiences with the team. Highlighting the unique trajectory of each individual’s fan development, Appendix I summarises how each interviewee’s relationship with the team had changed since the last interview during Study 2. Overall, results outlined how individuals had continued to develop their identification with the team and described how team fandom had taken on more personal relevance and meaning.
The following results section describes the fan development continuation and social–psychological health themes that emerged in Study 3 data. Intuitively, the fan
development initiation themes are not discussed in this section, as respondents were longitudinal panel members who had already spoken about the factors important to their initial team connection in Study 2. The absence of these themes emerging in this interview round and the emergence of the other themes helped the researcher to distinguish between those factors important to the initiation and the continuation of fan development for this particular sample. In the subsequent section, each continuation theme is discussed broadly and is accompanied by quotes that represent personal narratives provided by each individual panel member (e.g., Rinehart, 2005). This approach allows for some commonalities to be drawn between subjects, whilst retaining the individualistic elements that characterised each individual’s unique fan development timeline.

11.1 Fan Development Continuation Theme 1: Organisational Touchpoints

Interviewees described how interactions with Organisational Touchpoints led to ongoing fan development. Face-to-face interactions with club staff and managerial personnel were identified as important dealings that continuing to develop the sense of identification which individuals derived from the team. For example, Graham described how a positive interaction with the club’s corporate sales manager made him feel closer to the team and how he was consequently considering becoming a sponsor. In comparing his relationship with the team to his connection to the team at the time of Study 2, Graham explained that his connection had:

Improved a bit, just in that we’ve had some more communication from them. The corporate sales guy came around here last Friday and met with us and talked through what’s going on and what’s happening next year with our membership. So that sort of communication makes you feel a bit more valued and a bit closer to the club... it’s also got us looking at perhaps taking on a player ambassador.
role as well, like sponsoring one of the players, which one of our friends actually
does, and so we were looking at doing that as well next year so, yes, his visit did
certainly strengthen [the extent of identification with the team] and may add on
to what we do even further.

The above passage highlights how positive interactions with organisational
personnel can lead to strengthened team identifications and how this may manifest in
terms of increased team involvement. As well as Graham, other interviewees recounted
how certain interactions with club personnel impacted upon their fan development. For
example, Ken recalled how being provided with an opportunity to tour Metricon
Stadium and have lunch with both the CEO and coach of the club through a work
function increased his affinity with the team. Reflecting on this interaction and how it
developed his connection as a fan, Ken noted:

I’ve got a little bit closer to the Suns actually, since the last time. I think I have
strengthened only because of that lunch we had with the coach and the CEO and
having a look at the club. I think it made me even closer to the actual club itself
[based on] familiarisation and I suppose to be able to talk to the coach and for
him to answer some questions. I can’t even remember what questions I asked but
on a one-to-one basis, and even [the CEO] I think I put a couple of questions to
him. To get questions to him, to get the sort of responses from people like that,
that normally you’d never meet and they would never want to talk to you
anyway. I thought that was great. And, as I say, to go around and have a look at
where the guys do their warm ups and their changing rooms that was good.

The interactions described by Ken and Graham highlighted how club staff being
physically available and interacting with fans led to fan development. In these cases,
exposure to such Organisational Touchpoints assisted Ken and Graham to learn more
about the team and the broader sport organisation. From a fan development perspective, these exchanges also helped Ken and Graham to derive increased identification from their team affiliations, based on a strengthening in the meaning and relevance attributed to the team. Although an important fan development tool, it is not possible for key stakeholders within sport organisations to interact with every fan or interested onlooker at an interpersonal level. However, the use of technology may enable a similar outcome implemented on a larger scale.

Interviewees highlighted how the team used online channels to effectively disseminate team news and interact with fans. Online channels, such as the team’s official website and social media accounts remained heavily active and were used to provide fans with innovative and up-to-date information throughout the 2012 season and in the off-season. These platforms remained places where individuals could ask the club questions and stay informed about the team’s direction. Mark explained how the team’s “innovative” use of social media was “probably the most important thing” that enabled him to stay connected with the team. Mark said:

They’re still probably the best at connecting with people. If you look at other Facebook pages, you don’t see people getting responses or any form of feedback so they’re up to speed with that and they’re still well ahead of everybody...Years back you would email the club and you’d get the automatic reply like “Please wait three days.” Nobody wants to wait three days for a response and they’re just going to get angry, so it’s extremely important [to interact with fans on social media].

For Mark, having an open line of communication through this medium enabled him to access team news and have his questions answered in a timely fashion. Similarly, Lois reported that her knowledge concerning the team was heavily reliant on
information gleaned through online channels and that for her “pretty much everything is through Facebook.” The emergence of the Organisational Touchpoints theme in both interview rounds highlighted the value of maintaining a visible physical and non-physical presence both during the season and in the off-season. Interviewees noted that it was important that the club at an organisational level was attentive to fan needs and assisted with any enquiries or problems brought to their attention by fans. By ensuring that fans were able to keep up to date on team happenings and receive answers to any questions they may have had, the team was able to disseminate and reinforce the purpose and shared values of the group.

Overall, access to Organisational Touchpoints provided interviewees with consistent information on what the team represented. From a fan development perspective, this information enabled each interviewee to better evaluate whether or not the team was congruent with his or her desired self-concept and thus explains how direct experiences with Organisational Touchpoints can influence fan development. Given that the Organisational Touchpoints theme was identified in both interview rounds, positive experiences with club personnel appear to be important factors in the establishment and continuation of team connections.

### 11.2 Fan Development Continuation Theme 2: Seminal Moments

In reflecting on the second half of the 2012 season, interviewees recalled how a number of Seminal Moments had helped them to derive an increase sense of connection with the team. Once more, interviewees recalled a range of on- and off-field moments which acted as Seminal Moments for the team and for fans of the team. In terms of off-field moments, interviewees recounted instances such as “awesome family days where the kids got fairy floss” (Lois), attending post-match recovery and training sessions
(Steven and Peter) and the 2012 Best and Fairest\textsuperscript{15} event (Tamara and Graham). Although these off-field moments acted as Seminal Moments for the interviewees, the majority of occurrences related to performances and happenings on the field.

Given that the team had yet to win a competitive match in 2012 at the time of the first interview, it was unsurprising that the team’s three late season victories featured as Seminal Moments which helped to solidify team connections. Interviewees detailed how wins during the 2012 season against Richmond (Round 16), GWS (Round 20) and Carlton (Round 22) acted as seminal team moments and how each held its own special meaning. The first win of the 2012 season (Richmond) eventuated from a last-minute goal kicked by Karmichael Hunt. Lois, who travelled to watch the match, recalled she “didn’t even hear the siren go off because everyone was just screaming. It was just such a moment, it was awesome.” Similarly, the GWS win was special, as it represented the team’s first home win (played at Metricon Stadium). For Steven, this win was “a good moment, because [it’s a historic moment as a] new team. The first win at home was good to see.” Interviewees described that there was a celebratory mood at the GWS win characterised by commemorative fireworks organised by the club (Steven, Tamara and Lois) and an atmosphere whereby “everybody was screaming, yelling, [and] running around at the first win because it was our first win” (Tamara). The highlight of the three victories was undoubtedly the unexpected win against the traditionally strong Carlton team, which followed only two weeks after the GWS match. Whereas victories over other opposition were somewhat “expected” (Tamara, Graham and Nick), the victory over Carlton was special as it was against “a big team and that’s a big scalp; it’s not just like knocking over Port Adelaide or poor old Richmond, who we’ve got twice now” (Nick).

\textsuperscript{15} The Best and Fairest refers to the club’s end of season awards night where the team’s Most Valuable Player (MVP) is announced.
Outside of victories, other on-field occurrences such as impressive performances illustrated how the team was improving in areas characterised by “small things, [such as] good goals and good breaks and runs that in seeing that you see that the Suns’ future, they’re going to be good when they can put it all together” (Graham). Steven described experiencing such moments as a contributing factor that solidified his connection and made him “excited for the years to come. [Improved performances will lead to] getting big crowds at Metricon, [and that impacts my fandom] knowing I want to be a part of it.” This statement alludes to a strengthening in identification, which culminated in a desire for Steven to enhance his position in the group.

Overall, directly experiencing team moments enabled individuals to gain increased knowledge about the team and develop an understanding of how an association with the team may reflect positively on their social identity. Thus, it is unsurprising that moments that positioned the group favourably (e.g., wins) were prominently discussed, as these instances would also reflect positively on group members. Considering these results, experiencing seminal team moments appears to be an important factor for continued fan development.

11.3 Fan Development Continuation Theme 3: Co-Creation

Interviewees described how they were involved in Co-Creation through instances where they felt a sense of ownership and recognised that the club was connecting with the community. In describing his fandom, Peter recounted how co-creational activities were vital and that “if you don’t include the fans, you don’t have any fans.” There was a sense from individuals who had been members for a long period of time that simply being involved from early on provided a sense of ownership. In a more involved sense, Ken and Peter, who themselves had been supporters of the team
since 2009, recounted how events such as fan forums and Q&A seminars run by the club enabled them to have an input into the creation of the club’s identity.

Interviewees remarked that they felt it was important to include fans and the community when making decisions that shaped the identity of the club. Despite this desire, there was a realisation that “it would be very hard to incorporate 11,000 people to that sort of thing” (Ken) and that the club “can’t listen to every Joe Bloggs in the street [and] you can’t please everyone” (Peter). However, it was important to Peter that the club involved fans where they could as in his view, each fan helped the team remain financially viable and valuably contributed to shaping the identity of the team. He said:

You do feel like you own it because you do. I own the seat in this place [Metricon Stadium]. I own $548 [value of Peter’s season ticket] worth of the Suns. Without me there they’re $548 shorter this year coming and they’re not going to be able to do as much as they would probably be able to do otherwise. That money is going to go to something like everybody else’s bucks are going to go to something. Everything is a little building block toward making the place what it is. We give our little bit and it all comes together and makes it what it is.

Early instances where the club asked for suggestions on the official team name and theme song were identified as inclusive processes which both acknowledged the importance of fans and helped to enhance their sense of team ownership. For example, before the team had adopted a name, Peter noted:

[Management] put it out there in the Bulletin newspaper to start with and it was good that they gave everyone a bit of an opportunity to have ownership of a team that doesn’t exist yet. [The branding approach was to] get out there and see what the poll says.
Similarly, Ken recalled that fans were encouraged to provide suggestions for the team’s official song. After asking fans for input, Ken recalled that the club received “500 entries of various songs”, with the selected version being subject to further fan feedback before it was finalised. Peter more vividly recalled this process and explained:

They had some sort of weird version of it at the beginning, more like a rock song. I said to a few people, “It’s something like Coldplay.”… This is the club song, you don’t sing it that way, listen to Essendon, it’s got to have a little bit of ‘oomph’ and they listened and they changed it. They upped the music a little bit more, the acoustic guitar, they racked up the trumpets and everything and they got some energy into the song. Same song, same wording exactly, but a different bunch of people singing it together - they got the instruments involved and made it a real club song. It was good from that point of view I suppose. That’s the part where you say, “Okay, my input actually did mean something.”… It’s good when you’re asked about your input for that sort of thing and you see those changes.

Interviewees also recalled more recent examples of co-creational activities, which had occurred since the time of the first interview. These included instances where the club had asked fans for feedback through surveys and the inclusion of fans in on-field photos after wins. The ability to complete surveys administered by the club was viewed as important, as they enabled fans to provide feedback to the club and have “a say on the improvements you think you can make” (Peter), which instilled a sense of ownership. On-field fan photos evoked a similar sense of ownership for Steven, who recalled how being invited to stand with the players on the field connected him more to the team and the community. Steven said: “You’re with a heap of locals and it just had a very local Gold Coast feel about it.”
Extending on this perspective, interviewees also acknowledged how the club’s initiatives and involvement with broader community groups helped to shape the identity of the club in a way that was positive and congruent with their desired self-concepts. For instance, Graham noted that he “would support [the team] anyway, whatever they were called and whatever their colours were, I would still support them as the local team”; however, that this was contingent upon the club retaining “good principles.” Further elaborating on this point, Mark described how certain community engagement initiatives that the club were involved with helped them to establish an identity that he deemed positive. He said:

The Suns have created an identity that says “We care about the community and we care about the homeless and children.” They could have just come and been completely different. I mean, every club does it but the way they go about it is more personal… I was working at Homeless Connect this year and they all turned up and they all were working really hard. A lot of clubs and companies do charity things but they just sort of turn up for an appearance but I think six of them turned up and they worked for hours and they actually were working so that was really impressive to see, that makes me feel good. It says a lot about you that you follow a team and that you can be proud of who you’re following and who you’re supporting because they do so much good and it’s something that you can point at and say, “You know what, these people are actually doing good for the Gold Coast.”

From this perspective, Co-Creation represented activities through which the club contributed to the community, as well as instances where the community and fans had an input into club-related matters. Tamara’s explained how the team’s involvement with various community groups impacted on her fan development as she herself was
involved with many of the same groups. She stated: “as far as community is concerned and the community activities that they get into, yes [it does influence her identification with the team].” In summary, the Co-Creation theme illustrated how fan development was continued when individuals and the community were included in decision making processes. Ultimately, these initiatives fostered an increased sense of ownership from fans and helped to integrate the team further into the community.

11.4 Social–Psychological Health Theme 1: Reduced Personal Loneliness

Building upon Study 2 data, interviewees explained how their team affiliations interacted with their interpersonal relationships and facilitated new friendships. These results consequently explained how fandom can lead to social–psychological health benefits. Overall, results from Study 3 highlighted that there is a relationship between team identification and social–psychological health, but the way in which the individual experiences such benefits (if at all) is dependent on his or her personal circumstances and experiences. Perhaps most interestingly, results also illustrated how social–psychological health benefits can act as both inputs and outcomes within the fan development process.

Whereas some interviewees were not motivated to use their team connections to make new friends and chose to socialise with existing friends (Steven) and family members (Nick), other individuals continued to develop deep and meaningful relationships built around the team. For example, Mark commented that his interpersonal networks generated through a common interest in the team were still active and expanding based on contacts he had made previously. Mark stated:

I’m still meeting [new] people and maintaining relationships with people that I have met through the Suns in the first year. Yeah, [I am] definitely meeting more
people through the Suns... After you’ve met 10 people or something through the Suns, you’re always introduced to more people. I’ll be at a game and someone will call out my name and I haven’t really met them then I’ll talk to them. Like they know me through someone else or saw me post when I used to post on the Facebook page and things like that.

For Mark, the team continued to provide opportunities to build on relationships he had formed with others earlier in the team’s lifecycle and create new personal links to others. Benefits in social–psychological health were reported by other interviewees such as Graham and Tamara, who at the time of the first interview had not developed any meaningful relationships around their team support. At the first interview, Graham and Tamara were content to keep socialisation with people at the football confined to the stadium. However, since the first interview, an ongoing common interest in the team enabled these existing relationships to progress to a point where deep friendships with “a dozen, good, like-minded people” (Graham) had now developed. Tamara explained:

When we spoke with you last, I’m pretty sure we said “No, we wouldn’t socialise with people outside [the game].” But we do now socialise. There’s a group of 12 of us who’ve booked a Christmas dinner that we’ll go to so, yes, that’s probably the biggest benefit out of it. We’ve met some really nice people, like-minded people... [These people] were there then [at the time of the first interview] but it’s just a stronger bond with everyone else there now.

Tamara commented that the bond she now shared with these people led to them now making group decisions on issues such as when they would arrive at a game and where they would purchase member tickets in subsequent years. A strong bond with others was also characterised by the continued development of Lois’ “Suns family”, which continued to play an important role in her team support. Lois explained how her
“Suns family”, which included her children and a number of individuals she had met through a common interest in the club, had evolved to become a central component of her everyday life. Lois explained how she had begun to develop enduring connections with these individuals and interact with them in various capacities both inside and outside of relevant team settings. Lois described how she had made 47 Facebook friends through the Suns and “about 30 of them I’ve actually met and had a drink with, gone to their house or they’ve come here or [we have met up] at the game.” Describing the depth of these connections, Lois also explained how she had developed great friendships with some of these individuals and even felt comfortable enough now to travel interstate with them to attend games.

As the interviewees increased their position within the group, there was an increased tendency to actively recruit more people into the group. Lois stated she had “lost count of how many people I’ve taken to their very first game... I always bring someone.” Mark provided a similar insight by stating he had been involved in “signing up a lot of members, probably around 30.” For the most part, the benefits of making new friends were seen as a bonus, although earlier on they were a more central influence to team support. For example, commenting on influence of his social network, Mark noted that although he continued to make new friendships through his involvement with the team, these socialisation agents became less influential on his ongoing team connection. He noted:

[In 2011] I got a three-game membership but I ended up going to seven or eight games, I think, in the first year, and that’s probably because of the people I met... When I first started supporting the Suns they weren’t even my second team. I wouldn’t have considered them my team at all, I just wanted to support it, it was very black and white and I think what changed that was probably
meeting people. So meeting those people did probably raise my liking a bit and I was going to games more because of all the people that I knew. But now it’s probably slightly different. It’s probably more like I’ve reached that level where I do like the team and I do support them now... It did increase my interest in the Suns but now I wouldn’t particularly go to the football to socialise. It was sort of a bonus but this year and next year, it probably wouldn’t influence my decision too much on going because I know these people now.

The above passage suggested that for Mark, making new friends was an important determinant early, but became less influential in influencing his development as a fan as time progressed. This was also true for other individuals (Ken, Tamara, Graham and Lois), who appreciated and valued the friendships they had made, but did not consider them crucial to maintaining an association with the team. For Ken, this perspective differed from when he first became involved with the club due to his son-in-law’s persistence. Ken commented that his relationship with the team began:

Because my son-in-law said, “Let’s go, let’s do it.” That was it. That was all I needed... Now I probably would still [attend games] regardless but having said that, if he wouldn’t have joined up with me in the beginning maybe I wouldn’t have. I’m a little bit of a shy person to be honest with you, I don’t like doing things on my own, but now that I’ve done it I think I’d stay there whether he came or not.

Overall, results provided support that there is a relationship between team identification and benefits to interpersonal social–psychological health. The above passages illustrate how an individual’s connection with a team may manifest in social–psychological health benefits. As indicated through the individual narratives, some interviewees reported that the team provided them with opportunities to develop their
existing interpersonal relationships. For others, an association with the team provided opportunities to create new interpersonal relationships with other people. Perhaps most interestingly, the above data indicate that an identification with the team led to social–psychological health benefits, and that such benefits further influenced the sense of identification derived from the individual’s team affiliation.

11.5 Social–Psychological Health Theme 2: Reduced Social Loneliness

Similar to Study 2 findings, interviewees again described how their team affiliations continued to provide social–psychological health benefits related to their feelings of social inclusion. Specifically, interviewees explained how their continued team support led to increased community belongingness and reductions in feelings of social alienation. Thus, the Reduced Social Loneliness theme broadly reflected how supporting a sport team can lead to the development of community connections and affiliations. For the most part, the strength and nature of these feelings did not develop substantially when compared with Study 2 data. Lois and Peter were notable exceptions, explaining how their feelings and connections to the Gold Coast community had become increasingly favourable since Study 2. Lois commented that as she had spent further time living on the Gold Coast, the club had taken on an increased importance to her across multiple facets of her life. Lois now espoused that:

[The Gold Coast Suns] are [the] only thing which gets us involved in this community; everything else is pretty much on our own so it’s here, there and everywhere. [The team are] the only thing that is consistent and carries on throughout the year that we’ll have forever, so I guess it’s a big deal... It’s good because that’s why we’re a part of it. I want my kids to be a part of something that’s bigger than themselves... I want the kids to be involved in the community, be aware of what’s happening around here, what’s in our community and what it
has to offer and the Suns do that by going around to these certain day cares or shopping centres. You go and check it out and you find a new spot in your own home that you didn’t know, it is spending money here and just keeping everything here and it's nice.

Commenting on how the team had made her feel more a part of the community, Lois suggested that it was a case of just “giving back with their time” and how for her and her family personally “[the Gold Coast Suns] have been awesome with the schools. I just know that at my kids’ school there have been numerous players that have turned up.” Ultimately, access to the team provided Lois with “something to do and with my kids which brings us tighter as a little family unit.” Similarly, Peter explained how his team support had formed a bridge between himself and the community and made the Gold Coast feel like home. He remarked:

I’ve taken a while to really adapt to the [Gold Coast], to feel like I’m really part of it... I haven’t had anything that’s really sort of cemented me to the Gold Coast, as such. It’s always been a matter of if, when, maybe, we’re going to leave and I’ve always had that in the back of my mind so I’ve never really wanted to sort of put my roots down. But the Suns just came at a really good time because I don’t know where the rest of my life’s going to go for the next 5-10 years... I can latch onto the Suns and I can say, “OK, that’s my permanency to the Gold Coast.” That’s my part of the Gold Coast that I know I can rely on and it’s not going to change.

In summary, the Reduced Social Loneliness theme illustrated how team identification can lead to social–psychological health benefits at a broader community level. From this perspective, developing a team identity can lead to opportunities to engage with community groups and also help to foster feelings of social and community
belongingness. Similarly to the reported benefits in interpersonal social–psychological health, results also indicate that the social benefits are likely to play a part in determining initial and continued fan development. A summary of Study 2 and Study 3 is now provided.

11.6 Summary of Qualitative Research Component

The qualitative component of this research consisted of two phases of semi-structured interviews. The interviews were designed to uncover the themes relevant to fan development. Furthermore, the interviews sought to examine the processes that explained how these factors interrelated to explain changes in team identification.

Study 2 uncovered nine themes related to fan development. These themes explained how fan development was influenced by: 1) The team being locally based, which offered opportunities to develop personal and community connections; 2) The team being new and presenting an exciting opportunity for fans; 3) The team participating in a sport that the individual was already involved in or identified with; 4) A perception that the team offered an attractive avenue to invest leisure time; 5) Positive experiences with the broader organisation as a whole; 6) Experiencing memorable team moments; 7) Feelings that the organisation included fans in decision making and made positive community contributions; 8) Opportunities to reduce personal loneliness; and 9) Opportunities to reduce social loneliness.

Study 3 built upon Study 2 by conducting follow-up interviews to better understand the processes that explain changes in team identification. Study 3 confirmed the existence of these factors and revealed that they can conceptually be placed into three categories: 1) Fan development initiation; 2) Fan development continuation; and 3) Benefits to social–psychological health. Study 3’s follow-up interviews allowed the
researcher to uncover how developing a psychological link to the team had enabled individuals to develop connections to other individuals and with the community more broadly and how these relationships interacted with one another over time. A discussion of the key findings from this research is now included.
12 DISCUSSION

This chapter builds upon the results described by discussing the findings in relation to the research questions that guided the current investigation. Consequently, the discussion chapter outlines how findings contribute to existing literature and provide new contributions to theory. Collectively, these results strengthen knowledge of the processes that operate within the PCM and provide insights into understanding team identification from a developmental perspective. Overall, these findings provide new insights into the processes explaining fan development.

The chapter is presented in the following format. First, the TIM is presented to explain the processes that guide fan development. Second, the findings related to the research question that guided the quantitative component of this research are presented and discussed. Third, findings relevant to the research questions investigated within the qualitative research component are discussed. Fourth, the theoretical contributions stemming from this research are outlined. Fifth, managerial implications are described. Sixth, the limitations within the current research are acknowledged and suggestions for future research are offered. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the research and its contribution to the field of sport management.

12.1 The Team Internalisation Model

The results of this research support the proposition that the processes underpinning fan development can be understood from a social–psychological perspective. Results from the quantitative component suggested changes in team identification stemmed from a change in cognitive processing of team and group information. Results from the qualitative component of this research supported this finding and illustrated that fan development occurs when sport teams become internalised components of the individual’s social identity. Conceptually, the
internalisation process consists of two sub-processes that determine initial and continued fan development. These processes consist of inputs interacting with an individual’s desired self-concept to produce attitudinal and social–psychological outcomes. Finally, these outcomes form a feedback loop by influencing how the individual’s antecedents are subsequently processed. Figure 10 depicts the TIM, which can be used to understand the processes that initiate and continue fan development.

The box on the left-hand side of Figure 10 contains the psychological, team-related and environmental factors that have been shown to influence the extent to which an individual may or may not derive his or her social identity from a particular sport team (e.g., Wann, 2006b; Wann et al., 1996). These antecedents act as inputs into a cognitive process whereby the individual evaluates the team to determine whether or not an association with the team is valuable to his or her social identity. This internalisation process is governed by two sub-processes, which determine the individual’s initial and subsequent ongoing development as a fan of that team.
The internalisation process and the relevant sub-processes are depicted in Figure 10 in the second stage of the model. The initiation process describes how an individual may derive identification from the team despite an absence of or limited direct team experiences. At this stage, the individual may use his or her knowledge surrounding the team to determine that becoming a fan may result in benefits in the future. Such benefits include becoming more connected with the local community, experiencing historic team moments, supporting a sport or league that they like and experiencing an enjoyable and convenient leisure pursuit.

The continuation process outlines how direct experiences with the team and broader organisational entity responsible for the team’s operation may facilitate fan development. The continuation process describes how fans further evaluate the congruence between the team and their desired social identity through interactions with organisational personnel, direct experiences with the team in game and non-game situations and in instances where fans feel a sense of ownership. The cross-over between the initiation and continuation processes highlights the interaction between these sub-processes in certain scenarios. For example, an individual who forms a connection with the team based on a desire to experience historic moments may consider this desire satisfied after directly experiencing a memorable team win or positive interaction with team management (e.g., meeting the coach). Collectively, the internalisation process determines how much knowledge an individual possesses about a team and what it represents, which then influences his or her evaluative judgement on the extent to which the team is congruent with his or her desired self-concept. This evaluation determines if, and to what extent, the team is considered a part of the individual’s social identity.
As depicted in the boxes on the right-hand side of Figure 10, the strength and favourability of the processing influences subordinate and superordinate outcomes, which explain the level to which the individual’s team support is meaningful and durable (e.g., Funk & James, 2001, 2004, 2006). Whilst conceptually similar, there is a distinction between subordinate and superordinate outcomes. This distinction can be explained by considering their position in relation to one another. Subordinate outcomes represent a lower-order category within a system of classification; whereas superordinate outcomes represent a higher-order category in that same system. An example illustrative of this relationship can be provided by considering household furniture, where a kitchen table may be considered a subordinate object that belongs to the larger classification of furniture. Thus, subordinate outcomes represent factors important to developing team identification (basic level), which in turn represents a factor important to explaining the overall psychological connection (superordinate level) that exists between a fan and his or her favourite sport team.

Subordinate outcomes include team-related outcomes, such as the attitudes an individual may hold toward a team, alongside outcomes specific to the individual, such as the benefits to his or her social–psychological health that are provided by group membership. These subordinate outcomes influence superordinate outcomes, which include the extent to which an individual derives functional, emotional and symbolic meaning from his or her team support (e.g., Funk & James, 2006). Consequently, superordinate outcomes explain how internalisation influences the overall psychological connection that exists between the individual and the team (e.g., Funk & James, 2001, 2006). As depicted in Figure 10, these subordinate and superordinate outcomes form a feedback loop by exerting influence on the antecedents an individual may encounter, determining how new information relevant to the team is processed. For this reason, the TIM is applicable to understand individuals at each stage of the PCM and why
progression to higher stages may occur. Overall, the TIM provides an improved understanding of the relationship between an individual’s level of team identification and his or her overall psychological connection with a sport team.

Following the above presentation of the TIM, the findings relative to the individual research components and research questions are now discussed. These discussions help to address the individual research questions that guided this investigation. These findings also provide support to the TIM, which was conceptualised to address the overall research purpose. An overview of the quantitative research component now follows.

12.2 Quantitative Research Component

The quantitative component of this research consisted of three online questionnaires, which collected data to determine the extent to which individuals identified with the sport team in question. Additionally, the quantitative component measured multiple dimensions of team identification and assessed the stability of each identification facet over time. Team identification served as the main construct of interest to this investigation based on a conceptualisation that fan development occurs through internalising a team into one’s self-concept.

This theoretical position was developed based on the PCM (Funk & James, 2001, 2006) and other research that conceptualises the importance of internalisation in the development of strong fan-team bonds (Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003; Lock et al., 2012). Findings indicated that team identification remained relatively stable across the assessed period; however, the Cognitive Awareness dimension became an increasingly salient dimension of identification. This finding provided an impetus to examine how the cognitive process of internalisation may explain fan development by
conducting the qualitative research. Additionally, these results formed a basis to address Research Question 1, as discussed in the following section.

### 12.3 Research Question 1 - How does the structure of team identification change over time?

Research Question 1 sought to determine the structure and stability of team identification by observing how the Team*ID dimensions operated over time. Research Question 1 was addressed by examining both cross-sectional and longitudinal data collected within Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3. The cross-sectional data supported a five-factor team identification model, which consisted of the Private Evaluation, Public Evaluation, Interconnection, Behavioural Involvement and Cognitive Awareness dimensions from Heere and James’ (2007a) scale. The Interdependence dimension traditionally included in the Team*ID scale was removed based on statistical observations and theoretical support that interdependence is not a necessary component of group membership (e.g., Ashmore et al., 2004; Tajfel et al., 1981).

Longitudinal examination of the mean scores of the five-factor Team*ID scale revealed that three of the five dimensions significantly differed between at least two of the three data collection points assessed. The mean scores of the Public Evaluation and Interconnection dimensions did not change significantly across any of the three assessed data points. Conversely, the mean scores of Private Evaluation, Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement changed significantly across two or three data points. The observed mean score changes of the Private Evaluation and Behavioural Involvement dimensions were minimal. On the other hand, the only change that altered the compositional structure of team identification was an increase in the Cognitive Awareness dimension. Therefore, results supported previous unidimensional research, which has indicated that team identification is a stable construct (Dietz-Uhler &
Murrell, 1999; Gau et al., 2010; Wann, 1996, 2006a; Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann et al., 1994; Wann & Schrader, 1996). The current research findings also build on this body of unidimensional research by showing that the construct is not immune to change (e.g., Wann, 2006b) and by highlighting how the dimensions of identification operate individually and compositionally over time. An overview of each dimension’s reported stability within the current study is now presented.

12.3.1 Private Evaluation

The Private Evaluation dimension reported significant change across Phase 1 and Phase 2 and from Phase 2 and Phase 3; however, these effects were minimal. Private Evaluation measures the degree of positive or negative thought that the individual holds toward the group (Heere & James, 2007a) and thus the changes can be understood by events surrounding each data collection point. As indicated by the high mean score at Phase 1, respondents evaluated their group membership positively, even though the team had yet to compete in the AFL competition. Early positive evaluations may be explained by a variety of psychological, team-related and environmental factors linked to the team, with psychological factors noted as being particularly important in new team contexts (Wann, 2006b).

In the present context, it is likely that a number of factors contributed to the early positive Private Evaluations observed. These include: the novelty and curiosity surrounding the new team (James et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2002; Park et al., 2008; Park et al., 2010), existing affiliations with Australian Rules football or the AFL (e.g., Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Funk et al., 2002; Funk et al., 2003; Kunkel et al., 2013; Lock et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2005) and the team being based in the respondent’s home community (e.g., R. Doyle et al., 1980; Greenwood et al., 2006; Jones, 1997a; Kolbe & James, 2000; Lewis, 2001; Lock et al., 2011). Conceptually, these occurrences
align with the initiation processes described in the TIM model and explain how identification can be derived from affiliations with new teams despite a lack of direct experience (James et al., 2002).

Although the team comprehensively lost its first three matches before Phase 2, the mean score for Private Evaluation increased significantly from Phase 1 to Phase 2. This may be explained by the qualitative research results, which revealed how increased opportunities to act as a group member and experience seminal team moments increased the group’s relevance and salience. Such opportunities to engage with the team, and with other group members, may have helped to reaffirm that an affiliation with the team was congruent with the individual’s desired self-concept (on some dimension other than success), solidifying this part of his or her social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The derivation of meaning from the team explains why the sample appeared to resist CORFing (Snyder et al., 1986) and may have enacted alternate image-maintenance strategies, such as social creativity, to retain positive perceptions of the team. The decrease in mean score from Phase 2 to Phase 3 saw Private Evaluations return to Phase 1 levels, which illustrates how identification (and the components of identification) operate with stability, despite slight variations over time (e.g., Wann, 2006b).

12.3.2 Public Evaluation

The Public Evaluation dimension was stable across the three assessed periods, with no significant differences in the mean scores at Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3. Given that Public Evaluation measures the perceived evaluation of the group by others (Heere & James, 2007a), it would be reasonable to presume that the team’s unsuccessful on-field results may have led to reduced mean scores at Phase 2 and Phase 3 (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1976; Snyder et al., 1986); yet this did not occur. This finding reveals similarities with previous research that has shown fans are able to maintain positive
perceptions of losing teams (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Fisher, 1998). Furthermore, results highlight that factors outside of the team’s on-field performance influenced how individuals perceived that others evaluated their group (e.g., Sutton et al., 1997).

The scale items used refer to broad evaluations and capture elements such as the perceived respect the team garners from others. Within the present context, the strong charity and community focus of the team (McDonald & Stavros, 2012) is likely to have resulted in the mean score of Public Evaluation remaining high despite poor on-field performances. It is possible that the sampled individuals perceived that others would evaluate the team with realistic expectations, and on a range of dimensions broader than on-field performances, including comparisons that positioned the team positively in respect to out-groups (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wann, 1996). Consequently, results reflected how Public Evaluations could remain high despite the group being generally considered undesirable on some level (e.g., Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Findings derived from the qualitative component of the research also helped to explain this observation, indicating that fans held modest expectations of team performances and evaluated the team based on their likelihood of being competitive in the future and also on the team’s integration within the community.

12.3.3 Interconnection

The Interconnection dimension, which refers to the extent that the individual feels the group is a part of his or her self (Heere & James, 2007a), also did not show any significant mean score changes across the assessed periods. Previous research has outlined the importance of the affective component of identification (Dimmock, et al., 2005; Funk & James, 2006; Lock, et al., 2012) but the current study revealed that the dimension was low in comparison to other dimensions. It is most likely that the observations within this research emanated from the team being a new entity.
Previous research has contended that new teams are largely void of tangible identities given they lack established histories or past traditions (Grant et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2011; Mahony et al., 2002). The absence of such history, tradition and the nostalgia that is built on these factors may explain why Interconnection was the lowest-ranking Team*ID dimension over the course of the quantitative research component. The measurement of Interconnection occurred at points either prior to, or shortly after, the team had commenced competitive action. It is conceivable that individuals who formed the longitudinal panel did not have enough direct experience with the team to derive a strong sense of Interconnection from their group membership (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Funk & Pastore, 2000; Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012). Thus, the affective component of team identification may take longer to develop than the relatively short 18-month period assessed during this research.

The low mean scores of the Interconnection dimension observed in the current research are somewhat inconsistent with the qualitative findings observed by Lock et al. (2012). However, in that particular research context respondents were reflecting upon a successful season where the focus team had enjoyed immediate on-field success, placing second on the league table and winning the subsequent finals series. The qualitative component of this research provided evidence that individuals were beginning to derive affective significance from their group membership at points during the team’s second season, based on an increase in direct experiences with the team. Therefore, it is conceivable that immediate on-field successes and the chances to BIRG (Cialdini et al., 1976) that accompany such events were behind the greater degree of affective significance derived from group membership observed in previous research.
12.3.4 Cognitive Awareness

The Cognitive Awareness dimension reported significant mean score changes between Phase 1 and Phase 2 and between Phase 1 and Phase 3, respectively. These changes saw the Cognitive Awareness dimension become an increasingly important dimension in terms of the overall composition of team identification over the observed period. The Cognitive Awareness dimension measures the degree of knowledge an individual has regarding a team (Heere & James, 2007a). Currently, the items used to measure the Cognitive Awareness dimension are concerned with the degree of team knowledge an individual possesses; rather than cognition of group membership as intended by original social identification theorising (Tajfel, 1972, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, this finding is unsurprising and logical given the timing of the data collection points. It is likely that individuals would have learnt more about the team based on an increase in direct experiences (Funk & Pastore, 2000) with the team after Phase 1, which represented a point where the team was new and largely void of any tangible team associations. Increased media attention, important team moments and marketing initiatives implemented by the club leading up to the 2011 season helped to disseminate news about the team and communicate a shared group image. Therefore, it is rational that the sample reported greater knowledge surrounding the team at Phase 2 and Phase 3 than at Phase 1, given the increased opportunities to learn about the team during the first and second seasons.

These quantitative observations were also supported by the qualitative data gathered during the subsequent interview rounds. Within the narratives, respondents explained how in the early stages of creation, the team was a largely amorphous group that carried little meaning apart from connotations connected to the region and the sport of Australian Rules football. As time passed, respondents recounted how the team had begun to create a unique identity by confirming the team’s nickname, mascot, colours,
jersey and song. Additionally, the finalising of the team’s playing roster, opening of the stadium and solidification of other points of attachment linked to the team helped individuals to better understand what the team represented and would come to represent in the future. Direct experiences with the team and broader sport organisation over the course of the first and second seasons enabled the respondents to learn more about the team’s identity and purpose. This increase in cognition explained why individuals begun to derive an identification with the team from multiple points of attachment broader than the team’s representative sport and region.

12.3.5 Behavioural Involvement

The Behavioural Involvement dimension captures the extent that individuals actively engaged in relevant group behaviours (Heere & James, 2007a). Results indicated significant changes across the Phase 1 and Phase 2 mean scores. The Phase 2 mean score also reported a significant difference with the mean score observed at Phase 3. Overall, these changes were small and can be explained by unique opportunities afforded to individuals around the Phase 2 data collection point. Opportunities to attend games and interact with other fans were limited at Phase 1, given that the team was not yet an active participant in the AFL competition. The Phase 2 data collection point coincided with a period when fans had been given the opportunity to attend a number of club functions and watch or attend three matches. These events represented opportunities to attend milestone team moments, including the inaugural season launch, first ever game and stadium opening.

Existing literature surrounding new sport entities indicates they are viewed as a novelty in their formative stages (James et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2002). Thus, the significantly higher mean score at Phase 2 in relation to the others may have resulted from extra significance being placed on attending such special events. Within the
qualitative component of this research, interviewees explained how their initial and continued fan development was predicated on opportunities to experience seminal team moments (e.g., first game). Thus, a desire to experience these one-off moments conceivably led to higher than normal behavioural responses, explaining the spike in Behavioural Involvement observed at Phase 2. The reduction in mean score from Phase 2 to Phase 3 may be explained by the novelty factor diminishing alongside the team’s poor on-field results, which may have resulted in CORFing behaviours being exhibited by some individuals in the sample (Snyder et al., 1986).

12.4 Summary of Quantitative Research Component

Overall, these findings provide support that team identification is multidimensional and bolster conceptual thought that the construct can be used to measure fan development. Consistent with past research, which has used unidimensional scales of identification (e.g., Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Gau et al., 2010; Wann, 1996), results indicated that team identification is a fairly consistent construct both collectively and compositionally; but not entirely immune to changes over time (e.g., Wann, 2006b). In this particular context, the mean scores of the five dimensions generally reported an upward trend over time, indicative of a strengthening in overall team identification. Compositionally, the dimensions maintained a consistent order except for the Cognitive Awareness dimension, which took on an increasingly salient role in the identification process.

These quantitative findings provided an impetus to conduct further qualitative research to understand how cognitive processing of information over time may explain fan development. This perspective aligned with conceptual research positing that fan development occurs through a process of sport team internalisation (Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003). Building on these findings, the qualitative component of
the research followed the sequential exploratory mixed methods data collection approach (Creswell, 2009; Creswell et al., 2003) and explored the specific factors and processes that led to internalisation and, ultimately, fan development. A discussion of these research findings is now included.

12.5 Qualitative Research Component

The qualitative component of this research consisted of two rounds of semi-structured interviews. The interviews gathered cross-sectional and longitudinal data, illuminating upon the factors and processes that explained how the team became an internalised and meaningful part of individuals’ self-concepts. This research was guided by conceptual (Funk & James, 2001, 2004, 2006; Kolbe & James, 2003) and empirical sport research (Lock et al., 2012), which has sought to explain attitude formation and change by adopting a social identity perspective (Tajfel, 1972, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Findings provided support that fan development may be explained by sport team internalisation and provide insights into the factors that initiate and continue the internalisation process. Consequently, these findings were used to develop the TIM model presented earlier. Findings specific to Research Question 2a are now discussed.

12.6 Research Question 2a: What are the team-specific factors that influence team identification?

Research Question 2a sought to determine the team-specific factors that were influential to team identification. Research Question 2a was addressed by examining common themes that emerged from interview data collected in Study 2. The team-specific themes uncovered were titled: Local Connection, Experiencing Historic Moments, Sport Priority, Entertainment and Accessibility, Organisational Touchpoints, Seminal Moments and Co-Creation. In relation to the TIM, these themes explained how
team-specific subordinate outcomes of internalisation influenced fan development. The themes are conceptually consistent with team identification research, which has shown how many psychological, team-related and environmental factors can act as antecedents to team identification (Wann, 2006b; Wann et al., 1996) and are aligned with research investigating attitude formation and change toward sport teams (Funk, 2008; Funk & James, 2001). An overview of the seven team-specific themes identified in the current research and how these themes relate to existing literature is now presented.

12.6.1 Local Connection

The first theme was labelled Local Connection. This theme explained how team identification was influenced by the desire to support a local or hometown team. Conceptually, this theme explained how individuals may be motivated to support a team based on interactions between the team and his or her social–situational surrounds. Thus, the Local Connection theme can be seen as an environmental determinant as well as a psychological determinant, as support for the local team enabled individuals to satisfy certain needs and wants. These needs and wants included the creation of new personal and community connections and the development of existing interpersonal relationships.

The tendency for fans to support teams that represent the local region has been well-documented in the literature (e.g., R. Doyle et al., 1980; Funk & James, 2001; Heere & James, 2007b; Heere, James, et al., 2011; Jones, 1997a, 2000; Kolbe & James, 2000; Lock et al., 2011; Wann et al., 1996). Typically, this factor is propagated by the influence of socialisation agents which determine the type of sports and teams which an individual learns to exist (Crawford, 2003; de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Funk & James, 2001, 2006; James, 2001; Melnick & Wann, 2011; Spaaij & Anderson, 2010).

Similarly, researchers have outlined the importance of sport teams in acting as social
catalysts that increase socialisation opportunities (de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Funk et al., 2009; Funk et al., 2002) and motivate individuals to attend games (Funk et al., 2003; Kahle et al., 1996; Neale & Funk, 2006). Overall, these studies highlight the role that the team’s location plays in an individual’s initial and ongoing fan development.

Within the current research, individuals recounted varying degrees to which they viewed the team acted as a social catalyst. For instance, some individuals reported how their team support aligned with existing socialisation agents; whilst others reported utilising the team as a vehicle to integrate into the community and meet new people. This finding may be explained by the core tenets of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and research showing that individuals are motivated to identify with sport teams to derive a sense of belongingness (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Hirt et al., 1992; Sutton et al., 1997; Theodorakis, Wann, Nassis, et al., 2012; Underwood et al., 2001; Wann et al., 1996). Moreover, this finding may have been more pronounced given the contextual bounds of this research that investigated a team based in a historically transient community. Supporting this perspective, interviewees also described how the team’s creation helped to develop the identity of the region and solidified their connection to the Gold Coast.

### 12.6.2 Experiencing Historic Moments

The Experiencing Historic Moments theme explained how fans became involved with the team early so that they could experience seminal team moments in the future. Respondents described how being involved with a new team from the beginning was an exciting and unique opportunity that was influential in activating an initial interest in the team. From this perspective, the team’s situational status as a new team provided a novel appeal that influenced fan development. The novelty attached to new sport teams has been identified previously as a fan development determinant in literature
surrounding new American and Japanese sport teams (James et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2002). Other research has outlined how individuals may become interested in new and novel sport options out of curiosity (Park et al., 2008; Park et al., 2010). Extending upon this work, the current research found that part of the novelty included a desire to be present at seminal team moments such as the team’s first game and first victory. This finding is interesting and extends on previous research that has found vicarious achievement to be an antecedent of team identification (e.g., Fink et al., 2002; Funk et al., 2002; Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Although fans of new teams are unable to associate themselves with past achievements, historic moments or developed traditions (Grant et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2011; Mahony et al., 2002), this finding illustrated how fans planned to extract esteem from the team’s future achievements through establishing early group memberships.

In the absence of being able to share in the team’s past successes, respondents proactively planned to share in the team’s future achievements, extending understandings of the BIRGing phenomenon (Cialdini et al., 1976) and image-maintenance strategies that fans may enact to derive a positive social identity (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Considering the relative lack of success typically attributed to new teams, it is likely that the desire to be there from the beginning was due to the chance to experience team successes in the future. Thus, it is unlikely respondents in the present study fitted the ‘fair-weather’ fan typology (Wann & Branscombe, 1990) as they were prepared to experience losses in exchange for legitimising their identity as a fan in the future (e.g., Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Gibson et al., 2002). From this perspective, it appears that directly experiencing positive (e.g., wins) and negative (e.g., losses) team moments added authenticity to the fan’s team identification. Conceptually, this legitimacy would positively augment the individual’s group position and enable him or her to experience higher levels of affect from his or her team support. This new insight
adds to past research which has highlighted how direct team experiences influence fan development (Funk & James, 2001; Funk & Pastore, 2000; Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012).

12.6.3 Sport Priority

The third theme uncovered, Sport Priority, described how an existing identification with the sport of Australian Rules football, or the AFL specifically, acted as a catalyst to fan development. Within this theme, respondents described how the team acted as a vehicle that enabled them to consume their favourite sport or league in a manner that was previously unavailable on the Gold Coast. Conceptually, this theme represented how a change in the environment surrounding an individual enabled him or her to satisfy dispositional needs and hedonic motives by augmenting his or her existing group memberships (Funk & James, 2001). As new teams typically possess little in terms of an established identity soon after their inception (Grant et al., 2011; James et al., 2002; Lock et al., 2012), it is perhaps unsurprising that initial support was borne largely from external points of attachment. However, the extent to which individuals described supporting the team as a means to support and advance the sport (Australian Rules football) and the league (AFL) was overwhelming.

Although previous research has illustrated the importance of the sport or league (e.g., Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Funk et al., 2002; Funk et al., 2003; Kahle et al., 1996; Kunkel et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2005) and other associated group identities (e.g., Heere & James, 2007b; Heere, James, et al., 2011) on bonds with established teams, the importance of these factors in the current context provides an interesting discussion point. Within the present research, certain individuals viewed their affiliation with the new team as an extension of an existing affiliation with the sport, or sport league, and found it hard to separate the two conceptually. Although the desire to support the sport
has been reported as important in other new team research, these contexts have thus far been restricted to new teams in new leagues (e.g., Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012).

The current research, which focused on a new team in an established league, extended this understanding by illustrating how supporting a team may also act as a means to advance and consume a specific league from which an individual has already derived a part of his or her social identity. This finding is in line with recent research positing that leagues and teams operate in close connection in the mind of consumers (Kunkel et al., 2013). This finding therefore provides an interesting extension of this research and other research that has examined the effect of associated group identities on identification with sport teams (Heere & James, 2007b; Heere, James, et al., 2011).

Within the present research, some individuals explained how support for the target team was influenced by their identification with the sport or league, alongside a disidentification with a rival out-group. For example, certain individuals explained how their support for the Gold Coast Suns was indicative of a broader desire to see the AFL prosper and to show support against the NRL. As the NRL possesses an established presence on the Gold Coast, these individuals may have felt an increased sense of duty to support the new team and viewed this as a means to positively alter group perceptions at the league level (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This finding is similar to existing research on reasons for identification with non-traditional or marginalised sports (e.g., Lock, 2009; Lock et al., 2011) and supports Tajfel and Turner’s (1979, 1986) assertion that group members will seek to positively alter the perceptions linked with the in-group when social identification is deemed unsatisfactory. This finding also explains how fans may increase their position in the in-group through disidentification with undesirable out-groups, as has been found in research on identification with controversial social
groups (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002; Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001) and community sport teams (Lock & Filo, 2012; Lock, Filo, Kunkel, & Skinner, in press).

12.6.4 Entertainment and Accessibility

Within the Entertainment and Accessibility theme, respondents described how supporting the team represented an attractive and accessible leisure pursuit. The finding that sport teams act as a source of entertainment is well established in the literature surrounding the motives of sport fandom and game attendance (e.g., Bodet, 2009; Fink et al., 2002; Funk, Mahony, Nakazawa, & Hirakawa, 2001; Funk et al., 2003; Kahle et al., 1996; Mahony et al., 2002; Milne & McDonald, 1999; Neale & Funk, 2006; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 1995). Similarly, the PCM (Funk & James, 2001, 2006) also posits that individuals may form initial low-level bonds with sport teams based on feelings of excitement and enjoyment, which is congruent with the current research findings. Specifically, the current research found that an individual’s identification with the team was influenced by perceptions that the team provided entertainment that was easily accessible and provided a source of pleasure.

Further discussing the team as a leisure pursuit, respondents alluded to the importance of environmental and social–situational factors on their team connection. In this instance, the team being in close geographic proximity alleviated some of the barriers that have previously been associated with the cessation of team support, lapsed membership and non-attendance (e.g., Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Hill & Green, 2000; McDonald & Stavros, 2007; Pritchard et al., 2009; Wann et al., 1996). Within the current research, respondents noted how factors such as stadium parking, access to public transport and the availability of good seats in a comfortable stadium led to fan development. Thus, whilst previous research has shown that negative perceptions toward transport options (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Pritchard et al., 2009) and
stadium facilities (Hill & Green, 2000) can hinder sport involvement; this research outlines how positive perceptions surrounding these factors can facilitate fan development. Conceptually, this finding also alludes to how environmental factors can be controlled to remove perceived barriers and facilitate improved direct experiences with the team (Funk & James, 2001; Funk & Pastore, 2000).

### 12.6.5 Organisational Touchpoints

The Organisational Touchpoints theme described how positive experiences with club staff and management helped to develop the bond between individuals and the team. Data collected within Study 2 highlighted how interactions with club personnel helped respondents to learn more about the team and subsequently develop a perception that the team was congruent with their desired self-concepts (e.g., Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As these early stages were void of team games, many of the direct experiences individuals had with the team were at a broader organisational level at events such as fan days, club events or through online media channels. By interacting with club staff, individuals were able to ask and receive answers to questions, providing them with an increased understanding of what the team would come to represent. The knowledge derived from these interactions helped individuals to evaluate the group in relation to their desired self-concepts, reducing the likelihood that they would deem the team to be an irrelevant social group (e.g., Lock & Filo, 2012).

Previous research has reported that evaluations of the services provided by staff at games impact on perceptions of the team’s overall organisational identity (Kim & Trail, 2010). The current research supports and extends the notion that interactions with club personnel are important in managing and developing fan-team bonds. This research specifically outlines how staff providing customer service (and general communication) in instances outside of game day can influence fan development. From this perspective,
communicating positive and consistent messages to individuals that outline what the team and the broader club represents appears to be a worthwhile investment. For new sport teams, investment in off-field activities that disseminate the group’s purpose may be a particularly effective fan development strategy, given the lack of history and tradition attached to newly created franchises (Grant et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2011; Mahony et al., 2002).

12.6.6 Seminal Moments

The Seminal Moments theme highlighted how direct experiences with the team in both on-field and off-field settings facilitated fan development. Experiencing seminal team moments helped to solidify the group’s positivity and enabled respondents to derive affect as group members (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Directly experiencing team moments has been identified as a catalyst for fan development and is well established in the literature (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Funk & Pastore, 2000; Lock et al., 2012). The current research extends such literature by outlining a broader set of on- and off-field moments which act as important direct experiences conducive to fan development.

In relation to specific game-day moments, interviewees identified a number of factors that have previously received scholarly attention. These moments included: the opening of the team’s stadium (e.g., Funk & James, 2006; Kerr & Emery, 2011), the presence of specific players and their achievements (Fisher, 1998; Lock et al., 2012; Neale & Funk, 2006), team victories (e.g., End et al., 2002; Fink et al., 2002; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Neale & Funk, 2006; Wann, 2006b; Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wann et al., 1996) and experiencing game atmosphere and stadium activities (Lock et al., 2011). Further illuminating the current body of literature, and specifically in relation to the new team context, respondents described how unique moments such as the team’s
first game and games against specific teams influenced fan development. This finding extends previous new team research, which has concentrated on a period prior to a team’s active participation (James et al., 2002). Respondents described how the team playing games positioned the group (and their group membership) as a more salient and relevant aspect of their social identities. From this perspective, increased cognition of group membership enabled fans to then derive evaluative and affective significance from their team identifications (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

This line of thought also explains why in certain cases the salient out-group (e.g., opposing team) played a role in the internalisation of the in-group. Respondents described how experiencing games against teams that they previously supported added meaning to their group membership. In these instances, the salience of the rival grouping was likely heightened, leading the individual to increase his or her position in the in-group and create distance from that particular out-group (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This form of individual mobility has been observed elsewhere in the sport literature, which posits that fans seek to define what is congruent with their self-concept by specifying what is not (e.g., Lock & Filo, 2012; Lock et al., in press).

As well as game-day moments, respondents also recounted how happenings that occurred outside of game day had a positive influence on fan development. By attending events such as open training sessions, fan days and events in the community, respondents reported that they were afforded increased opportunities to get to know the team and individual players. These interactions resulted in respondents feeling closer to the players and led to perceptions that as supporters they formed a valuable part of the team, increasing the sense of identification derived from the team. This finding is consistent with previous research, which has shown how direct experiences with players can positively influence the overall meaning attached to the group (Lock et al., 2012).
and how feelings of player similarity can foster feelings of identification (Fisher, 1998). The non game-day moments identified in the current research provide further insights into how attendance at ancillary events outside of game day can foster feelings of identification and facilitate fan development. Congruent with previous research, these outcomes enabled respondents to form perceptions that the team could satisfy dispositional needs, resulting in the team taking on personal meaning and relevance. Therefore, this finding provided support for the PCM (Funk & James, 2001; 2006), the FAN model (Funk & James, 2004) and the MIP (Kolbe & James, 2003), as well as confirming the conceptual propositions of the TIM proposed in the current research.

12.6.7 Co-Creation

The Co-Creation theme described how feelings of team ownership and positive community contributions facilitated fan development. Interviewees described how community development activities and being able to engage in dialogue with the club fostered a sense of ownership and consequently, made them feel closer to the team. These activities ranged in intensity from simply supporting the team from an early point (e.g., before the first AFL game) through to an awareness of the team’s involvement with charitable causes in the community. Perhaps most importantly, respondents recalled how having a direct role in the creation of tangible aspects of the team’s identity assisted in their fan development.

In regards to direct co-creational activities, respondents noted how they were offered the opportunity to help shape the development of prominent elements of the team’s identity, such as the nickname, logo and team song. Previous research has shown that perceptions toward team attributes are linked with fan loyalty (e.g., J. Doyle, Filo, et al., 2013; Funk, 2002; Gladden & Funk, 2001). By soliciting feedback from fans and gathering direct input into the creation of the team’s values, characteristics and overall
identity, the tangible attributes surrounding the team were more likely to be developed in a manner congruent with what the fans wanted (e.g., Dwyer et al., 2011). Thus, the probability that individuals evaluated the team as irrelevant or incongruent was likely minimised (e.g., Lock & Filo, 2012). Conversely, having a direct input into the team’s identity increased the likelihood that fans would evaluate the team as personally relevant and thus derive identification from an affiliation with the team. This finding extends knowledge related to the direct experiences that facilitate fan development (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Funk & Pastore, 2000) and recent research investigating reasons for non-attendance which has applied a social identity perspective (Lock & Filo, 2012) by highlighting the role of the fan in creating the group’s identity.

The Co-Creation theme highlights the need for sport teams to build understandings of what fans and the community want from the team and club as a broader organisation. For the interviewees, a perception that they were a valued part of the organisation led to feelings of ownership and increased identification. This ownership was linked to instances where management decision making considered and incorporated fan and community input. This theme indicates that sport teams that guide the creation of their identity whilst considering the wants and needs of fans may receive benefits in relation to fan development. Ultimately, the inclusive approach adopted by the team resulted in respondents deriving a sense of team ownership, feeling like valuable members of the group and developing positive and distinct perceptions of the team. These positive evaluations and the affect derived from group membership manifested with respondents increasing their position in the group (Lock et al., 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).
12.7 Research Question 2b: What are the non team-specific factors that influence team identification?

Research Question 2b was developed to determine the non team-specific factors that were influential in team identification. Two themes emerged from Study 2 data, explaining how an individual’s social–psychological determinants can influence his or her sense of identification with the team. These themes also represented how individual-specific subordinate outcomes of internalisation influenced broader fan development. Both themes related to social–psychological health benefits, which have been linked to team support in previous quantitative research (e.g., Wann, 2006a; Wann et al., 2009; Wann & Pierce, 2005; Wann, Waddill, et al., 2011; Wann et al., 2005; Wann & Weaver, 2009). The first theme explained how an individual’s team connection enabled him or her to enhance his or her existing interpersonal relationships and develop new connections with others. The second theme explained how an individual’s group membership was linked with the development of stronger ties to his or her community. These social–psychological health themes, titled Reduced Personal Loneliness and Reduced Social Loneliness, respectively, are now discussed.

12.7.1 Reduced Personal Loneliness

The first category of social–psychological health benefits observed were reductions in personal loneliness (Wann, 2006b). Respondents reported how the team’s creation helped in the development of existing interpersonal relationships, and how the team also facilitated the creation of new friendships. For some interviewees, the team served as a vehicle that afforded an extra setting to interact with familiar socialisation agents, highlighting the importance of socialisation as a motive in existing literature (e.g., Funk et al., 2009; Lock et al., 2011). Here, respondents described how the team
provided an outlet in which they could invest their leisure time in the company of friends, family and work colleagues.

For other respondents, the team acted as a social hub and mechanism to build relationships with new people, resulting in both temporary and enduring connections with others (Wann, 2006c). A shared group membership enabled individuals to feel a sense of belongingness in a variety of seemingly unimportant settings (e.g., at the supermarket) demonstrating that group memberships can hold importance in arbitrary environments (e.g., Tajfel et al., 1971; Theodorakis, Wann, Nassis, et al., 2012). Additionally, interviewees recalled how interactions with other fans in social settings and at games resulted in temporary opportunities to converse. These relationships also had the potential to develop into more meaningful, enduring connections whereby a common group membership enabled individuals to create strong friendships that were in some cases likened to family bonds. This finding extends understandings related to the direct experiences that are important to developing team fandom and outlines the social–psychological factors which influence these experiences (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Funk & Pastore, 2000). Collectively, the wide-ranging interpersonal connections described in the current research provide support that both temporary and enduring connections with others are facilitated by sport team support, confirming the theoretical position adopted by Wann (2006c).

12.7.2 Reduced Social Loneliness

The second category of social–psychological benefits identified were reductions in feelings of community isolation, or social loneliness. Within the present research, respondents described how their group membership helped them to feel like a part of the Gold Coast community. This finding aligns with and builds on existing research, which has highlighted how socialisation agents can facilitate fan development (e.g., Funk et
Researchers have found that attachments to specific towns, regions or cities are transferable into support for teams from these geographical locations (e.g., Jones, 1997a, 2000; Kolbe & James, 2000; Lock et al., 2011). Within this research, individuals reported that a sense of identification with the team also led to the development of an identification with the region, indicating how sport team affiliations can extend to social or community points of attachment (e.g., Heere & James, 2007b; Heere, James, et al., 2011). Respondents described the importance of the team in this sense and how a team affiliation helped them to feel more like a part of the community and thus, strengthened their bond with the region. This finding supports Wann’s (2006c) theoretical position and qualitatively explains how and why social–psychological health benefits may be derived from team support.

12.8 Research Question 3: What processes explain team identification formation and change?

Research Question 3 was designed to answer calls in the literature to better understand the processes that explain fan development (e.g., Funk & James, 2001, 2006; Spaaij & Anderson, 2012; Stewart et al., 2003). Findings from Study 3 built on Study 2 and outlined how the fan development themes represented initiation, continuation and social–psychological health themes. This interaction suggested that fan development is initiated based on four themes: Local Connection, Experiencing Historic Moments, Sport Priority and Entertainment and Accessibility. Three themes, titled Organisational Touchpoints, Seminal Moments and Co-Creation, explained continued fan development. Finally, two themes represented social–psychological health benefits and described how team identification is related to Reduced Personal Loneliness and Reduced Social Loneliness. Collectively, these themes described how the team and its broader organisational components became increasingly meaningful and interacted with
the desired self-concept of individuals (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Consequently, Study 3 helped to develop the TIM and determine how the themes interacted to produce subordinate and superordinate fan development outcomes.

Study 3 focused on understanding the processes that activated and continued fan development. The absence of the Local Connection, Experiencing Historic Moments, Sport Priority and Entertainment and Accessibility themes during these follow-up interviews suggested to the researcher that these factors were most important during the initiation of fan development. On the other hand, the emergence of the Organisational Touchpoints, Seminal Moments and Co-creation themes in both interview rounds suggested these themes were more important to initial and ongoing fan development. Similarly, the emergence of the social–psychological health themes in both Study 2 and Study 3 data suggested that such benefits play an ongoing role in continued fan development. An overview of the three continuation themes (team-specific) and two social–psychological health themes (individual-specific) identified in Study 3 is now provided.

12.8.1 Organisational Touchpoints

The longitudinal design of the current research enabled the researcher to identify that Organisational Touchpoints remained an important factor beyond the formative stages of fan development. Within Study 3, interviewees explained how interactions with management, both in person and online, continued to help them to understand what the club represented. Communication with Organisational Touchpoints subsequently helped to continue to build the individual’s cognitive knowledge of the group and facilitate internalisation. Building on the organisational interactions described in Study 2, interviewees recalled how instances such as stadium tours and meeting club figureheads (e.g., CEO or coach) helped to strengthen their identification with the team.
Again, individuals commented on how these interactions led to the team taking on increased meaning, which led to the strengthening of team-related attitudes. Illustrative of this enhanced meaning, one interviewee was considering augmenting his role as a fan by becoming involved as a player ambassador. From a conceptual perspective, this type of increased involvement is illustrative of both positive individual mobility (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and fandom following a career path (Crawford, 2003).

Given that Organisational Touchpoints emerged as a theme in both Study 2 and Study 3, this finding also extends the research of Lock and Filo (2012), which found that individuals who deem a sport team as incongruent or irrelevant will not form an attraction with that team. Whereas Lock and Filo’s (2012) research dealt only with the formation of identification; the present research collected data from individuals who had conceptually moved past the awareness stage and had two seasons of experiences to draw on in shaping their team connection. These findings indicate that it is important for sport teams to reinforce a consistent and positive identity throughout various conceptual stages of fan development (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Ultimately, these experiences helped to strengthen team perceptions and facilitated team internalisation by making the team more personally relevant to the individual.

### 12.8.2 Seminal Moments

Interviewees again described how Seminal Moments impacted on their fan development within Study 3. On-field events such as victories and encouraging player performances during the second half of the 2012 season were examples of Seminal Moments provided during this interview round. The team’s 2012 season began with 14 straight losses, which would have conceivably reflected poorly on the group and group members. In the absence of victories from which individuals usually derive affect (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1976), interviewees explained how individual player performances and
team improvements reflected positively on the group. By readjusting their expectations and evaluating the team on a dimension apart from success, interviewees were able to employ creative social comparisons to protect the group’s status and, in turn, their own social identities (e.g., Lalonde, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

After the unsuccessful start to the season, the team finished the season more promisingly, winning three of the remaining eight fixtures. According to social identity theory, these events would likely have positioned the team (in-group) positively in relation to opposing teams (out-groups) and thus reinforced or strengthened the individual’s group position (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Interviewees described how wins against highly rated teams (e.g., Carlton) held more significance than wins against weaker opponents (e.g., GWS). Considering social identity theory, this reasoning represents a creative social comparison, as wins against highly rated teams would reflect greater positivity and distinctiveness on the in-group than wins against teams lower on the league ladder (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Conceptually, the Seminal Moments theme represented an actualisation of respondents’ desire to Experience Historic Moments. For example, Steven explained how he initially followed the team so that he could be present at the first home win. Therefore, experiencing this occurrence helped to satisfy these hedonic motives and dispositional needs which were important in his development as a fan (e.g., Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Being present at Seminal Moments also helped in the development of social–psychological health, as group members were provided with moments which they could bond over and derive self-esteem from their group memberships. Thus, the respondent narratives provided in Study 3 helped to develop the TIM and illustrated how fan development initiation and continuation themes interact with each other and with social–psychological health benefits.
12.8.3 Co-Creation

Interviewees again described how instances where they were involved in Co-Creational processes helped to facilitate their fan development. Data from Study 2 and Study 3 outlined how interviewees derived a sense of ownership from both active and passive co-creational activities. The interviewees also explained how the team’s increased presence within the community and involvement with charitable activities helped them to derive an increased identification with the team, facilitating their fan development.

In terms of passive Co-Creation, interviewees explained how simply supporting the team from an early point in the team’s lifecycle led to the development of feelings of increased team ownership as time progressed. Considering data from Study 2 and Study 3, these feelings likely represented an actualisation of the Experiencing Historic Moments theme. Interviewees explained how their initial fan development was influenced by the desire to be there for unique team milestones. It is possible that by simply becoming involved with the team early, certain individuals may have felt like they were partially responsible for the team’s successes. This may explain why individuals derive increased affective significance from such successes in instances whereby they perceive that their membership in the group has been legitimised (e.g., Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Thus, it is plausible that certain individuals felt like they were entitled to BIRG (Cialdini et al., 1976) as they perceived that they had played a role in helping the team achieve successes like the first home win. From this perspective, individuals who have legitimated their group membership simply by becoming a fan early would be less likely to perceive themselves as ‘fair-weather’ fans (Wann & Branscombe, 1990).
Such feelings would certainly be justified for individuals who reported participating in more active Co-Creation. These activities included providing suggestions on tangible elements of the team’s identity such as the team song and offering other feedback to the organisation through surveys and information nights. It is likely that for these individuals, participating in initiatives which help shape the team’s identity resulted in a decreased likelihood that they would deem the team’s values as inconsistent or incongruent with those attached to their own desired self-concepts (Lock & Filo, 2012). The likely positive congruence that these individuals would perceive to exist between the team and their social identities would instead conceptually lead to the individual strengthening his or her team connection (Lock et al., 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The link between team identification and social–psychological health also indicates that involvement in such activities has the potential to then lead to the development of interpersonal and social connections.

Overall, the data collected in Study 2 and Study 3 outlined how individuals may develop feelings of ownership through passive and active interactions with the team, and through interactions with community groups associated with the team. Conceptual support for the TIM was provided by this data given that Co-Creation continued the fan development process as an actualisation of fan development initiation factors. Further support is provided for the Co-Creation theme’s positioning in the TIM as social–psychological benefits would be expected for individuals whom derive a sense of team ownership through these activities.

12.8.4 Social–Psychological Health

Interviewees again explained how their team connections were linked with benefits to social–psychological health. Within the data gathered for Study 2 and Study 3, respondents described how the team acted as a social catalyst that enabled personal
and social network development in two broad ways. These benefits in social–psychological health were characterised by Reduced Personal Loneliness and Reduced Social Loneliness. Conceptually, these themes describe an actualisation of the Local Connection fan development initiation theme and other direct experiences that characterise fan development continuation within the TIM. This finding provides additional insights into how individuals may develop their personal and community links through sport team affiliations. These findings also support Wann (2006a), who found through a cross-lagged panel model that team identification possessed a significant positive link with social–psychological health measured at a later date. Collectively, Study 2 and Study 3 highlighted how social–psychological health can be derived from, and lead to, fan development, extending the body of research driven by Wann and others (Wann, 2006a, 2006c; Wann, Dimmock & Grove, 2003; Wann et al., 2009; Wann & Pierce, 2005; Wann, Rogers, et al., 2011; Wann, Waddill, et al., 2011; Wann et al., 2005; Wann & Weaver, 2009).

The longitudinal qualitative data suggested that for some individuals team identification led to social–psychological health benefits; whereas others reported that social connections led to the development of a team identity. This finding provides support for suggestions of a bi-directional relationship (Wann, Waddill, et al., 2011) and thus extends existing understandings of the relationship between team identification and social–psychological health, which has traditionally conceptualised social–psychological health benefits solely as outcomes (e.g., Wann, 2006a). In contrast to this approach, results revealed that fan development themes and social–psychological health outcomes interacted with and influenced one another dynamically over time.

The longitudinal qualitative findings of this research outlined how team identification and social–psychological health outcomes developed in a co-operational
manner; however, different paths and outcomes were evident for each individual. For those that described improvements to social–psychological health in Study 3, personal outcomes included the development of deep friendships not only centred around the game, but also outside relevant team settings. Additionally, other respondents described how the team was the one constant group in their social life and how their connection to the community was enabled through the team affiliation. This finding also indicates that this relationship can operate in the reverse direction, with fan development outcomes facilitating interactions with socialisation agents, as illustrated by the feedback loop presented in the TIM.

12.9 Theoretical Contributions

The above findings provide a number of theoretical contributions to the literature. The mixed methods approach used in this research allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the fan development process, answering calls in the sport management literature (Jones, 1997b; Rudd & Johnson, 2010). The research design employed also enabled the current research to answer calls from sport management academics for more longitudinal inquiries (e.g., Hirt et al., 1992; Lock et al., 2009; Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012; Stewart et al., 2003). Overall, these methodological advancements helped this research to make four main theoretical contributions to the sport management literature.

The first contribution is related to providing additional understandings of the PCM framework and overall fan development knowledge by creating the TIM. The second contribution relates to generating an improved understanding of sport team identification and its multidimensionality. The third contribution of the research is an improved understanding of the social–psychological benefits linked with team identification and fan development. Last, the current research provides additional
insights into new team fandom, which represents an emergent area of interest within the literature. A discussion of these theoretical advancements is now provided.

**12.9.1 The PCM Framework**

The first theoretical contribution of this research was to confirm and extend understandings related to the PCM framework (Funk & James, 2001, 2006), with a focus on illuminating understandings of the processes that guide PCM progression. Although the PCM offers valuable conceptual insights into some of the processes that guide fan development, empirical research investigating such propositions remained largely untested. Thus, this research sought to capitalise on the opportunity to investigate the PCM’s propositions and add to existing fan development literature. Specifically, this research aimed to build upon current knowledge by providing further understandings of the processes explaining how and why psychological connections to sport teams may develop (e.g., de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Lock et al., 2012; Spaaij & Anderson, 2012). To address this aim, the current research capitalised on the PCM’s ability to assimilate other theoretical literature (Funk & James, 2001; Stewart et al., 2003) by integrating social identity theory into the model.

The inclusion of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) aligns with other research that has used the PCM and social identity theory in concert (e.g., Lock & Filo, 2012; Lock et al., 2012). Within the current research, a rationale was built to use social identity theory to understand the process of sport team internalisation (Funk & James, 2004; Kolbe & James, 2003) and, in turn, fan development. The longitudinal quantitative component of this research demonstrated how cognition became an increasingly salient part of team identification, suggesting cognitive processing drives fan development. This finding supports the conceptual propositions of the FAN model (Funk & James, 2004) explaining how increased
cognition of what a team represents can lead to the satisfaction of dispositional needs and hedonic motives, propagating fan development (e.g., Funk & James, 2001, 2006).

The longitudinal qualitative component expanded on the factors and processes that lead to sport teams becoming internalised and taking on functional, emotional and symbolic meaning (e.g., Funk & James, 2004, 2006; Kolbe & James, 2003). The TIM, developed from this research, provides additional insights to the PCM by describing the processes that lead to initial and continued fan development, confirming and extending previous research (e.g., de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Lock et al., 2012). This focus on the processes explaining fan development augments the PCM, which has traditionally focused on the inputs and outputs relevant to team support. The TIM also contributes to this part of the PCM by conceptually outlining the existence of subordinate and superordinate fan development outcomes. In conceptualising the PCM, Funk and James (2001, 2006) have focused on understanding the broad psychological connection individuals have with sport teams. The current research extends this perspective by indicating how team-specific and individual-specific subordinate outcomes precede, and help to explain, such superordinate outcomes. This finding positions the TIM as a useful model to understand sport fandom at any stage along the PCM continuum.

A final contribution to the PCM relates to an improved understanding of how socialisation agents may influence fan development. Socialisation agents, such as friends and family, have widely been acknowledged as important components in facilitating sport team awareness (e.g., Crawford, 2003; Funk & James, 2001; James, 2001; Melnick & Wann, 2011; Spaaij & Anderson, 2010, 2012), but less attention has been devoted to their role in continued fan development. Respondent narratives illustrated how socialisation agents acted as catalysts to fan development at more advanced stages, which extends upon previous understandings (e.g., Funk & James,
A second area of contribution related to socialisation agents was provided by uncovering the social–psychological health benefits individuals derived from their team support. The current research illustrated how an individual’s support may lead to the development of temporary and enduring connections with others and also with broader community entities (e.g., Wann, 2006c). The feedback loop present in the TIM from the outcome box to the input and processing boxes helps to explain how connections with other individuals and broader society, and the benefits derived from these connections, influences continued fan development. From this perspective, the TIM describes how benefits derived from interactions with other individuals may operate as inputs and outcomes of fan development, highlighting some of the complex social–psychological workings not previously accounted for in the PCM.

12.9.2 Team Identification

The second theoretical contribution of this research stems from the use of the multidimensional team identification scale used in the quantitative research phases. To date, identification with sport teams has been largely measured using unidimensional scales; despite psychological, management and sport scholars concurring that identification is multidimensional (e.g., Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Dimmock et al., 2005; Ellemers et al., 1999; Heere & James, 2007a; Tajfel, 1978; Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). The current research contributed this body of work by employing Heere and James’ (2007a) Team*ID scale. The current research represented the first time that the Team*ID scale had been used in the Australian sport context and the first application focused on a new sport team. Thus, this research extended the use of the Team*ID scale to a new setting, complementing existing research which has employed the scale in studies of collegiate students based in the US (Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et
al., 2011; Heere, Walker, et al., 2011) and in applications focused on fans of US indoor soccer and professional netball in New Zealand (Heere, James, et al., 2011).

Cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses provided new insights into the dimensional makeup of the Team*ID scale and the stability of team identification more broadly. The contextual bounds surrounding the current research enabled the researcher to investigate team identification from a formative point where the group members were in the early stages of development (Grant et al., 2011; James et al., 2002; Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012). Three cross-sectional CFAs revealed that discriminant validity issues existed between the Interconnection and Interdependence dimensions, a problem reported in previous cross-sectional research (e.g., Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011). Three repeated cross-sectional CFAs provided direction to continue to refine the preliminary multidimensional model in line with suggestions from the scale’s authors (Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011). Re-specification decisions were informed by theoretical and statistical reasoning to prevent capitalisation on chance findings (e.g., Heere, James, et al., 2011; MacCallum et al., 1992) and to better align with original social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The specific area of model re-specification identified in the current research was the removal of the Interdependence dimension. The removal of the Interdependence dimension in the current research is justified by social identity (e.g., Tajfel et al., 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and collective identity research (e.g., Ashmore et al., 2004), which supports that interdependence is not a necessary condition for group membership; but rather becomes salient in instances where the individual is perceived as an interchangeable part of an in-group and that in-group becomes marginalised or discriminated against (Ashmore et al., 2004).
Longitudinal analyses conducted on the revised five-factor Team*ID model provide improved understandings related to the stability of identification and how the construct operates compositionally and over time. Findings from the current research supported previous repeated cross-sectional and longitudinal research using unidimensional measures of team identification, which found that identification with university sport teams remains stable (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1999; Gau et al., 2010; Wann, 1996, 2006a). The current research findings build on this by indicating that the dimensions are somewhat susceptible to change. As detailed earlier, the Private Evaluation, Cognitive Awareness and Behavioural Involvement dimensions changed significantly across two or more of the phases, indicating they are the dimensions most susceptible to external influences in the early stages of fan development. However, of these dimensions only the Cognitive Awareness dimension reported meaningful change, as it became a more important dimension compositionally over time.

### 12.9.3 Social–Psychological Health and Sport Team Support

The third theoretical contribution stemming from this research is an improved understanding of the positive social–psychological benefits linked with sport team support. Previous research in this area had been purely quantitative and largely drawn from data gathered from US collegiate samples (Wann, 2006a; Wann, Waddill, et al., 2011; Wann et al., 2005; Wann & Weaver, 2009). The longitudinal qualitative approach utilised in the current research answered calls from researchers to use diverse data collection methods to assess the link between team identification and social–psychological health, supporting and informing results that have been provided quantitatively (e.g., Wann, 2006a; Wann, Waddill, et al., 2011; Wann et al., 2005; Wann & Weaver, 2009). Additionally, the current research was conducted in a previously unexamined research context, answering calls from the literature to increase
the generalisability of the TISPH model (e.g., Wann, 2006a, 2006c; Wann, Dimmock, & Grove, 2003; Wann et al., 2009; Wann, Rogers, et al., 2011; Wann & Weaver, 2009). Overall, results supported the TISPH and extended understandings related to the relationship between team identification and social–psychological health benefits.

Previous research investigating the link between sport team support and social–psychological health has called for qualitative research to better understand how and why sport team support may provide benefits to social–psychological well-being (Wann, Dimmock, & Grove, 2003). The longitudinal qualitative component of the present research answered this call. Additionally, preliminary evidence was provided that supported Wann, Waddill et al.’s (2011) claim that team identification and social–psychological health benefits could operate in a reciprocal manner. These findings indicated that individuals developed connections with the team in pursuit of improved interpersonal and social connections and that improved well-being led to increased team identification. As outlined in the TIM, this finding indicates how social–psychological health benefits may act as inputs to, and individual-specific subordinate outcomes of, team support. This preliminary evidence extends prior theorising that has traditionally conceptualised social–psychological health benefits as outcomes of team support only.

12.9.4 New Sport Teams

The fourth theoretical contribution of this research relates to knowledge surrounding fans of new sport teams. New teams represent a unique research context for fan development researchers, as they present the opportunity to observe fans at an early point in the team’s lifecycle (Grant et al., 2011; James et al., 2002; Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012). Previous research shows that individuals can develop strong connections with teams prior to the team competing (James et al., 2002) and has uncovered some of the factors that initiate (Greenwood et al., 2006; James et al., 2002;
Lock et al., 2011; Mahony et al., 2002) and continue (Lock et al., 2012) the fan development process. The current research confirmed and extended these existing enquiries by providing longitudinal data illustrating the factors that initiate and continue the internalisation process and fan development more broadly.

In terms of initiating internalisation, themes identified within the current research are similar to themes in existing literature focused on identification formation in US baseball (James et al., 2002), Japanese professional soccer (Mahony et al., 2002), mid-level USAFL (Greenwood et al., 2006) and Australian professional soccer (Lock et al., 2011) contexts. The Experiencing Historic Moments theme aligns with previous research that has found that new sport entities are seen as novelties (James et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2002) and attract curiosity (e.g., Park et al., 2008; Park et al., 2010). Similarly, the Local Connection and Entertainment and Accessibility themes are conceptually related to Greenwood et al.’s (2006) findings, which showed how an individual’s socialisation agents, connection to the host region and needs for social interaction and entertainment were significant predictors to his or her team identification. Elsewhere, Lock et al. (2011) found that the sport the team plays, the team’s city and entertainment on game days were important factors in the formation of team identification. These factors are conceptually similar to the Sport Priority, Local Connection, and Entertainment and Accessibility themes identified within the current research.

The current research also identified new themes, building upon previous research. Respondents detailed how being associated with the team held special significance and provided opportunities to experience moments and events unique to new team contexts. Whereas previous research has identified that new teams carry a novelty factor (James et al., 2002; Mahony et al., 2002), this research extends such a
perspective by providing a greater understanding of why the novelty might hold significance in the future. Interviewees explained how following the team from an early point would make their association more meaningful when the team achieved milestone moments and performed well. This finding has parallels with assertions that supporting losing teams through tough times legitimises the identity of the supporter (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). From this perspective, the current research also highlighted how individuals can proactively plan to enact social mobility image-maintenance strategies (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979) so that they can BIRG in the future success of the team (Cialdini et al., 1976).

In terms of continuing internalisation, the themes identified within the current research reflect and extend upon previous research findings. The Centrality theme identified by Lock et al. (2012) is conceptually similar to the Seminal Moments theme identified within the current research. However, the Seminal Moments theme captured a broader spectrum of the on-field and off-field experiences that serve as direct experiences leading to fan development (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Funk & Pastore, 2000). The Personas theme identified by Lock et al. (2012) was also extended upon by the current research. The current research outlined how fan development occurred based not only on interactions with the team, players and the coach; but also with broader organisational personnel, extending this understanding. Communication with organisational personnel through online and offline channels helped individuals to learn more about the team and develop positive team perceptions. This finding is particularly relevant because fans of new teams typically have little knowledge about what the club, team and individual players represent during early stages of a team’s existence (e.g., Grant et al., 2011; James et al., 2002; Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012).
The current research also added to existing work by uncovering the Co-Creation theme. The Co-Creation theme described how individuals were able to internalise a group membership when they felt a sense of ownership and determined that they had played a role in shaping the group’s identity. Co-creational activities included simply being asked to complete surveys through to having input into tangible attributes of the team’s brand, such as the name and logo (e.g., Gladden & Funk, 2001). In line with the social identity perspective, by allowing fans to help shape the identity of the group, the team increased the likelihood that the group would be perceived positively (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and decreased the likelihood that the team would be evaluated as an irrelevant or incongruent social grouping (Lock & Filo, 2012). Thus, Co-Creation acts as a catalyst for fan development by increasing the congruence of the meaning and values associated with the group and the individual.

Last, by answering calls to conduct longitudinal qualitative work (Lock et al., 2012), the current research was able to provide an improved understanding of how bonds with new teams develop over time. This research was able to track the same individuals over time and determine how initial identification was activated and later became internally meaningful, building upon and bridging existing research (Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012). By identifying the importance of social–psychological health as an individual-specific subordinate outcome that contributes to the personal meaning attributed to a team, this research also provided support that a broader range of social–psychological influences (e.g., interpersonal and community connections) play an influential role in the team internalisation process. The longitudinal research approach illustrated how social–psychological health benefits can operate as both a desired input to, and subordinate outcome of, fan development. This finding extends previous research (e.g., Wann, Dimmock, & Grove, 2003; Wann, Rogers, et al., 2011) and
illustrates some of the broader social–psychological reasons that explain why individuals may initially and continue to identify with new sport teams.

12.10 Managerial Implications

The results of this research provide contributions to both sport marketing professionals and stakeholders with an interest in community well-being. Three main practical contributions have emerged from the present research. The first contribution of this research relates to the improved understanding of fan development inputs, processes and outputs, which may be used to develop marketing campaigns designed to attract, retain and develop new and existing fans (e.g., James et al., 2002). The second contribution relates to the improved understanding of the social–psychological impacts of sport team support, which may be used by sport, community and governmental officials in their decision making processes. Finally, the third contribution for managers centres on an improved understanding of how to conduct research on spectator and fan bases. A discussion of these practical contributions is now provided.

12.10.1 Fan Development Strategies

The current research can be used by sport professionals to understand how fans’ connections are formed, as well as the key factors that facilitate fan development through a process of sport team internalisation. The following sections explain how marketing campaigns designed to attract and develop fans may be influenced by the current research findings. First, implications arising from the four fan development initiation themes are presented. Next, managerial implications from the three fan development continuation themes are outlined. These implications may be used to capitalise on the factors that act as catalysts of movement between the PCM stages (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Although the current research was conducted within a new
team setting, these initiatives should be considered appropriate for any sport team setting where the goal is to attract new fans and develop the connections held by existing fans.

12.10.2 Fan Development Initiation

The current research suggested that when attempting to develop relationships with new consumers, sport managers may wish to develop marketing materials that include four general aspects. These aspects relate to the four fan development initiation themes of Experiencing Historic Moments, Local Connection, Sport Priority and Entertainment and Accessibility. To capitalise on the Experiencing Historic Moments theme, sport teams should focus on promoting the associative benefits which emanate from experiencing important and unique team moments. New sport teams should heavily promote the uniqueness of attending milestone moments and offer extra incentives to individuals to get involved with the team as early as possible. From this perspective, fans who have been involved early are more likely to be considered ‘die-hard’ rather than ‘fair-weather’ fans during times of team success (e.g., Wann & Branscombe, 1991). To encourage early involvement, promotional materials such as commemorative T-shirts or flags, could be developed and sold exclusively at important team events such as the first game and at other seminal team moments.

These materials may wish to display slogans such as “I was there from the start” or “Fan from Day 1” to enhance the associative benefits of team support and to help legitimise the identity of the fan in the future. Similarly, fans that sign up for membership in the inaugural year could be offered ongoing discounts or exclusive opportunities to encourage initial and repeat patronage. Such initiatives may be effective in reducing the rate of lapsed memberships, or churn, which has the potential to significantly reduce a team’s fan base (McDonald, 2010; McDonald & Stavros, 2007).
Innovative incentives, such as the opportunity to be included in the Gold Coast Suns’ Bricolage, act as external factors that may satisfy dispositional needs and hedonic motives of individuals and move them from being simply aware of the team to a higher stage of connection (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Established sport teams may implement similar campaigns during instances where historic moments arise, such as when a team relocates or moves into a new stadium (e.g., Melbourne Storm moving from Olympic Park to AAMI Park).

In terms of promoting the Local Connection theme, sport teams should highlight the socialisation opportunities provided to supporters. The current research findings suggested that individuals viewed the team as a vehicle that helped them to develop their existing interpersonal relationships, develop new friendships and become more involved with the broader community. Thus, teams may benefit from focusing on developing their relationship with fans (e.g., business to consumer) and helping fans to develop relationships with one another (e.g., consumer to consumer). To provide opportunities for socialisation, sport teams should provide attendees with the chance to meet others both inside and outside of the stadium. Establishing and promoting official supporter venues that remain open outside of scheduled game times where individuals can gather and meet other like-minded individuals with a common interest may be effective in this regard. Hosting other events, such as fan nights or charity events, would also enable individuals to meet new people. Aligning such events with corporate partners or prominent social institutions would also enable individuals to make connections with broader community groups, an important factor identified in the current research. To complement these initiatives, sport teams should also establish online forums and social network groups and encourage fans to interact with the team and with one another using these mediums.
To promote the Sport Priority theme, teams should prominently link their marketing campaigns to the core sport product. As illustrated by previous research, individuals are largely attracted to new sport teams based on existing affinities with the sport (Lock et al., 2011). Within the current research, interviewees also reported a desire to see the specific league prosper. Therefore, marketing promotions should be developed in conjunction with the league to capitalise on the close league–team relationship that is perceived by the consumer (e.g., Kunkel et al., 2013). These promotions should focus on highlighting the team’s representativeness of the sport or league to capitalise on the existing connection a consumer may have with either entity.

To leverage the importance of the Entertainment and Accessibility theme, sport teams should focus on promoting their offerings as being exciting and make interactions with the team hassle-free. To promote the excitement associated with the team, promotions should therefore contain imagery that illustrates how supporting the team provides benefits related to performance, excitement and diversion (e.g., Funk et al., 2009). Marketing collateral depicting feats of athleticism, thrilling game outcomes and captivated spectators in the crowd may be effective in this regard. In terms of accessibility, teams should work hard to eliminate the perceived time and money constraints typically associated with team support and game attendance (e.g., Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Pritchard et al., 2009). Marketing materials should promote that tickets are value for money and highlight the cost-effectiveness of purchasing a season membership (e.g., McDonald, 2010). Allowing individuals to enter into regular payment plans and running sweepstakes for members would also reduce perceptions that supporting the team is unaffordable. Organising free or discounted travel to and from games from predetermined locations may also be effective and provide further socialisation opportunities for fans.
12.10.3 Fan Development Continuation

The current research suggested that fan development can be continued by focusing on three main elements of the fan-team relationship. These aspects relate to the three fan development continuation themes: Organisational Touchpoints, Seminal Moments and Co-Creation. Overall, this research supported that these themes contributed to explaining the key factors that lead to sport teams taking on increased personal meaning. Additionally, these themes elaborate upon the factors and processes that explain movement through the PCM hierarchy (Funk & James, 2001, 2006).

The Organisational Touchpoints theme indicated that an individual’s connection with a sport team is influenced by a range of points of attachment, including management and organisational personnel (e.g., Kwon & Armstrong, 2004; Kwon et al., 2005; Lock et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2012; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Sutton et al., 1997). These factors may be particularly important for fans of new teams given their inability to market to fans using content based on established histories, traditions and past successes (Grant et al., 2011; Lock et al., 2011; Mahony et al., 2002). Although the importance of access to Organisational Touchpoints may be more important for new teams; established teams should also focus on providing fans with increased information and personalised customer service. Within the current research, individuals explained how interactions with club management and staff through physical and online mediums helped them to gain knowledge about the team and what it represented. Established teams would also benefit by investing in online and offline communications with fans to reaffirm the positive and distinct attributes associated with the group.

In relation to physical interactions, value-add events run by staff should be encouraged. These may take the form of guided stadium tours, information kiosks set up at games and through the establishment of account managers designated to service
certain sections of the stadium. Holding regular information nights and open forums would also prove an effective strategy to disseminate information to interested individuals. In terms of online contact, sport teams may use this information to invest more time and resources into developing their social media and online presences. Social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram profiles provide an instantaneous, mobile and cost-effective way to disseminate team information and maintain an open channel of communication with fans. Although many teams now employ professional staff to manage their social media accounts, this is an area that may benefit from further investment. Teams may wish to bolster the number of full-time staff responsible for their social media presence and prioritise individually responding to comments and questions received on these platforms. Additional resources could also be devoted to providing information through more informal settings, such as running online fan forums and live chats, which would enable the team to further disseminate information and interact with fans.

To encourage further fan development, sport marketers may leverage the importance of enabling fans to be a part of Seminal Moments. Within the current research, individuals noted how a number of game-day moments and off-field direct experiences facilitated fan development. Experiencing such moments represented an actualisation of the Experiencing Historic Moments theme and describes how direct experiences can satisfy hedonic motives and dispositional needs (e.g., Funk & James, 2001; Funk & Pastore, 2000). To leverage this theme, sport marketers should schedule important off-field events so that a maximum number of fans can attend. Increasing the number of off-field events in the lead-up to the season should also be prioritised, given the importance of this theme and the lack of on-field activities occurring at these times. From this perspective, extending the number of direct experiences that a fan can have
with his or her favourite team is likely to increase the importance and centrality of the team as a part of his or her social identity (Lock et al., 2012).

Although sport marketers do not have control over on-field performances and results, attempts should be made to capitalise on these occurrences when they do eventuate. For example, teams could implement firework displays to coincide with important team moments (e.g., first win of the season) to increase the spectacle and uniqueness of such moments. Additionally, teams should consider immortalising these moments by distributing commemorative or collectable items which are only available to fans who attended and by enabling fans to bid on signed jerseys worn during these moments. For individuals who may not have been able to attend, highlights packages emphasising the importance of milestone events should be readily available online and disseminated through email shortly after they occur. These items would allow fans to again experience these moments that hold special meaning and highlight the positive aspects of the group.

Last, teams should place an increased focus on soliciting feedback from fans and giving fans opportunities to help shape the team’s identity (e.g., Dwyer et al., 2011). Within the current research, respondents explained how passive and active co-creational activities helped to foster a sense of ownership and increase team perceptions. Individuals explained how being asked to complete surveys and being consulted during the creation of tangible elements of the team’s brand helped to create the perception that they were a valued part of the team. Soliciting feedback from fans and making them a part of the identity creation process ensured that the team was perceived positively and represented a social group consistent with, or superior to, fans’ desired self-concepts (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). From this perspective, involving fans in the identity creation process would help to ensure that the team is not perceived as irrelevant or
incongruent with their desired self-concepts, which has been shown to inhibit fan development (Lock & Filo, 2012). Teams can foster this sense of ownership by recognising the contribution of fans via a number of initiatives as seen in the NRL. For example, the Cronulla Sharks have printed the names of members on their on-field jerseys since 2009 (Riccio, 2009) and the Newcastle Knights included the Twitter handles of 17 fans on the jerseys of the 17-man match-day squad during a game in 2013 (Newcastle Knights, 2013).

12.10.4 Social–Psychological Health and Team Support

The current research indicated that sport teams can help to improve the social–psychological well-being of community members by acting as a vehicle that connects individuals to other people and the community. Thus, sport team support can facilitate reductions in personal and social loneliness (e.g., Wann, 2006c). This finding therefore has implications for sport marketers, governmental decision makers and community welfare advocates.

Consortia bidding for licences in areas that do not yet host professional sport teams are provided with evidence that their introduction to a new community can provide positive contributions to the region and to residents specifically. This information may help to alleviate some of the concerns related to the high costs of hosting and supporting a professional sport franchise. Potential expansion teams (e.g., NRL bid consortia Brisbane Bombers and WA Pirates) looking to enter a professional league may use this information to approach local, state and federal government agencies for funding and support. Regions that may not be able host a professional team permanently may wish to establish formal links with existing teams that include the team regularly visiting the region or playing a select number of home games there.
For regions that already host teams, local and state bodies may capitalise on this knowledge by entering into partnership agreements to promote the team and encourage residents to attend games, meet other people and become more integrated within the community. Welfare advocacy groups may also be informed of another outlet with which they can partner to help improve the overall well-being of clients and disadvantaged community members. From this perspective, welfare organisations may design regular social programs that seek to unite individuals who are socially alienated through and around following a professional sport team.

12.10.5 Surveying Spectators and Fans

The final managerial contribution provided by this research relates to insights for managers in terms of conducting field research. The CFAs conducted within the quantitative component of the current research supported theoretical and empirical work contending that identification is comprised of multiple dimensions (e.g., Dimmock et al., 2005; Heere & James, 2007a; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). However, the repeated measures ANOVA tests run on the longitudinal panel sample highlighted that the multiple facets of identification remained relatively stable in terms of mean scores and their structural composition. This indicates that unidimensional measures of identification are likely to be as effective at capturing the degree of meaning ascribed from the team as multidimensional measures; unless the research at hand is specifically concerned with the underlying facets of identification.

Given these findings, managers may wish to implement unidimensional scales when surveying spectators and fans, rather than longer scales that capture cognitive, affective and evaluative dimensions of identification. This approach would provide benefits in terms of parsimony, reduce the time needed to complete the survey and ease the burden placed on potential respondents (e.g., Funk et al., 2009; van Selm &
Additionally, reducing the number of items needed to gather a reliable measurement of identification would also create space for other items and variables of interest to be included on the questionnaire.

12.11 Limitations and Future Research

There were limitations within the current investigation that should be acknowledged. The following section outlines four limitations associated with the current research. These limitations relate to the research design employed, the sampling and analysis procedures, the materials used and the exploratory nature of this research. Each limitation is now discussed, alongside future research suggestions designed to help build on the current investigation and reduce some of the shortcomings inherent within this research.

The first limitation concerns the sampling procedures employed. Survey participants were sourced from a subsample of the focus team’s fan population who had signed up to receive email communication. This approach meant that individuals who were not on the fan list at these times were excluded from participating. Similarly, interview participants were recruited on game days and, as such, individuals who did not or could not attend specific matches were not afforded the opportunity to participate. This form of recruitment may have introduced biases to the research by excluding fans who either cannot attend games or who prefer to consume games via alternate means (e.g., Foster & Hyatt, 2008; Kerr & Emery, 2011; Kerr & Gladden, 2008; Pritchard & Funk, 2006). Although comparisons with club data indicated the participants were representative of the broader Gold Coast Suns fan population, future research is needed to determine whether findings are applicable to a wider range of fans who display different consumption patterns.
The second limitation identified stems from the materials used in the quantitative research phases. The quantitative phase of this research utilised the Team*ID scale, which continued to present issues related to model fit and validity reported in previous research (Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011). Therefore, the selection of the scale may have influenced the results and it is possible that the dimensions measured portions of the same underlying facets of identification. The current research utilised statistical and theoretical considerations to delete the Interdependence dimension, which resolved some of these issues. Although the revised five-factor model reported improved model fit and alleviated validity concerns, future research is needed to further refine the scale (Heere & James, 2007a; Heere, James, et al., 2011). Future research of this kind should focus on refining and developing items that capture distinct cognitive, affective and evaluative components of identification, as per the theoretical tenets of original social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The Cognitive Awareness dimension in particular should be revised, as the current items utilised conceptually measure knowledge of team information; rather than cognition of group membership as social identity theory contends. Future research may also wish to compare the Team*ID scale with other multidimensional team identification scales such as the TIS (Dimmock et al., 2005) to provide an alternate examination of the stability of team identification.

The third limitation stemming from the qualitative phase relates to the exploratory nature of this research. Although the narratives suggested that participants developed stronger bonds with the team and enjoyed benefits related to their social–psychological well-being, no quantitative assessments confirmed whether this truly was the case. Future research should utilise the recently developed PCM staging procedure (Beaton et al., 2009), which has been shown to be effective for use on sport spectators (J. Doyle, Kunkel, & Funk, 2013), to better compare and contrast the reported social–
The final limitation identified stems from the contextual and environmental stimuli that may have influenced the results of this research. The Gold Coast is located in Queensland, where the AFL is not the dominant sport code. The research was focused on a new team placed into an established league and took place early in the team’s lifecycle. For these reasons, the results may not extrapolate to other research settings. Although the TIM is expected to be applicable to fans of new teams in new leagues and to new fans of established teams, these contextual considerations may have influenced the research findings. Thus, future research should attempt to confirm the validity of these findings in diverse contexts spanning different geographical settings (e.g., US, Europe and Africa), sports (e.g., rugby league, soccer and basketball) and sport levels (e.g., amateur, semi-professional and professional).

12.12 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided an improved understanding of how and why individuals develop strong bonds with sport teams. Specifically, the current research drew upon longitudinal quantitative and longitudinal qualitative data to develop the TIM, which explains how fan development occurs. The quantitative component of this research illustrated that team identification is a relatively stable construct; however, the components of identification may fluctuate over time. Quantitative results revealed that the cognitive component became a more salient aspect of identification over time and, thus, suggested that fan development may be understood psychological health of individuals at various stages of the PCM. Research of this kind will also benefit by developing measures that will enable the TIM to be empirically tested. Thus, future research is encouraged to create measures that capture the subordinate and superordinate outcomes described in the TIM and quantitatively assess the relationship between these outcomes.
as a social–psychological cognitive process. These results provided the impetus to proceed with qualitative research to determine the factors that influence identification and the processes that explain fan development.

The qualitative research component indicated that a range of psychological, team-related and environmental factors contributed to team identification. Two phases of interview data highlighted how internalisation of these factors followed a process comprised of initial and continued sub-processes. These processes resulted in team-specific and individual-specific subordinate outcomes, which explained how and why the target sport team took on internal meaning and importance. Consequently, these subordinate outcomes provided a conceptual link to understand broader superordinate outcomes, which have traditionally been used to chart fan development. Overall, these findings contribute to theoretical understandings of sport consumers and have implications for managers in charge of attracting, retaining and developing fans for both new and established sport teams.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix A: AFL Teams, Regions and Histories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Nickname</th>
<th>Debut year</th>
<th>Home state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>Crows</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Lions</td>
<td>1997*</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlton</td>
<td>Blues</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>Magpies</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essendon</td>
<td>Bombers</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremantle</td>
<td>Dockers</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>Suns</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Western Sydney</td>
<td>Giants</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>Hawks</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Demons</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Melbourne</td>
<td>Kangaroos</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Adelaide</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Tigers</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kilda</td>
<td>Saints</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Swans</td>
<td>1982**</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>Eagles</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Bulldogs</td>
<td>Bulldogs</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *The Brisbane Lions were created in 1997 through the merger of the Fitzroy Lions (1897, VIC) and the Brisbane Bears (1987, QLD). **The Sydney Swans were created when VFL foundation team South Melbourne (1897, VIC) relocated to Sydney.
### Appendix B: Respondent Demographics Study 1: Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Phase 3 (n=899)</th>
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<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Suns Membership</strong></td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Frequency</td>
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<tr>
<td>European</td>
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<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>$151,000 - $200,000</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>309</td>
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*Note.* Other describes: African, Asian, North American, South America and Middle Eastern ethnic identifications. Missing data in Appendix B is due to questions being left out at the request of the team.
Appendix C: Research Invitation for Questionnaires

Dear Gold Coast Suns Fan,

You have been invited to participate in a survey concerning your attitudes and opinions of the Gold Coast Suns football club. The survey is run by the club in conjunction with Griffith University and will help us to better understand and serve our fans and members.

Your participation is voluntary and the answers you provide will not be identifiable or influence your relationship with the club. You will also be eligible to win some great prizes if you choose to participate.

To participate in the survey, please click here
Appendix D: Information Sheet for Questionnaires

Dear Gold Coast Suns Fan,

You have been invited to complete the following questionnaire concerning your attitudes and behaviours toward the Gold Coast Suns.

This survey is in the form of a questionnaire and is part of a research project conducted through Griffith University on behalf of the Gold Coast Suns. It takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

The aim of this research is to gain a better understanding of Gold Coast fans and to help the club better serve your needs. This research will help the Suns better understand the wants and needs of our fan base. It will also help academics understand why fans identify with and develop attachment to new sport teams.

3 prizes are on offer to survey participants being:

1\textsuperscript{st} prize – 1x $500 Coles group gift voucher
2\textsuperscript{nd} prize – 1 x $300 Coles group gift voucher
3\textsuperscript{rd} prize – 1 x $200 Coles group gift voucher

You will be entered in the prize draw simply by completing this survey and providing an email address and your supporter number for contact. Your supporter number and email are required for data management and contact purposes only and will not be used to personally identify you in any other manner. Your participation may also lead to invitations to future surveys and interviews. It is entirely your choice whether you wish to participate in these forums and any other future surveys.

As we are interested in looking at how the attitudes and behaviours of our fans may develop over time, completing multiple surveys over the next 3 years will also enable you to enter future prize draws.

\textbf{Ethics Information}

- Your participation is voluntary. Your IP address will not be visible to the researchers, stored or disclosed at any stage. The anonymity of your participation is assured by our procedure, in which the questionnaires are anonymous and only the combined results will be made known.

- Data will be stored securely on a removable memory stick used for the solitary purpose of this research. As such, access to the data will only be given to the investigators identified below.

- The research has Griffith University Ethics Approval (HSL/28/10/HREC).
- Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project please contact: The Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 5585 or email research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

- If you have any questions or require further information on the research contact Dr. D. Funk (Chief Investigator) on 07 5552 9162 or Mr. J. Doyle (Student Investigator) on 07 5552 7672. If you would like to see the results from the survey please contact the research team after the 30th November 2013.

Terms and Conditions of Entry.
1. When you enter the competition, you accept these terms and conditions of entry.

2. Employees of the Gold Coast Suns and Griffith University ("the University") and their immediate families are ineligible to enter.

3. Entry into the competition is by completing this questionnaire providing a valid supporter number and email address for contact.

4. The first completed, randomly drawn entry will receive a $500 voucher. A second completed entry will also be randomly selected and receive a $300 voucher. A third voucher worth $200 will be given to the third completed, randomly drawn entry. Winners must be able to collect their vouchers from the Griffith University Gold Coast Campus or arrange for a suitable alternate delivery method.

5. The decision of the University is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

6. The prize is not transferable and cannot be redeemed for cash. The prize is not refundable.

7. The winner releases the University from any and all causes of action, losses, liability, damage, expense (including legal expenses) cost or charge suffered, sustained or in any way incurred by the winner as a result of any loss or damage to any physical property of the winner, or any injury to or death of any person arising out of, or related to or in any way connected with the University or the prize.

8. Any winner drawn for the prize who is unable to fulfil all of these terms and conditions will forfeit the prize and another winner will be drawn.

9. The winner will be notified by email by no later than December 31st 2010 at 5pm.

10. The competition opens to entries at September 30th at 10am and the competition closes at 15th December 2010 12pm. The competition is drawn at the Griffith University Gold Coast Campus on the 20th December 1pm. You do not have to be present at the draw to win.

11. The prize will be available for collection by the winner at the Griffith University Gold Coast Campus from the 2nd January 2011.

Continuing with the survey will indicate your willingness to participate and acceptance of the terms and conditions of participation. Alternatively, you are free to close your
browser window. Thank you for your time and support.

Remember to print a copy of this information sheet should you require a copy for future reference. Thank you very much for your time and support.

Senior Investigator: Professor Daniel C. Funk;
Ph: 07 5552 9162 d.funk@griffith.edu.au

Student Investigator: Mr Jason Doyle
Ph: 07 5552 7672 jason.doyle@griffith.edu.au
## Appendix E: Panel Demographics: Frequency and Percentage Counts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Statistic Source</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Mean</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Other describes African, Asian, North American, South America and Middle Eastern ethnic identifications.
Appendix F: Information Sheet for Interviews

Dear Suns Fan,

You are invited to participate in an interview lasting for approximately 40 minutes, to be conducted by researchers from Griffith University. The aim of this research is to gain a better understanding of Suns fans and to help the club better serve your needs. It will also help academics understand why fans identify with and develop attachment to new sport teams- which forms part of a PhD project. The focus interviews consist of semi-structured questions concerning your opinions, attitudes and behaviour related to the Suns.

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. The interview will be recorded and transcribed after you sign the consent form of participation. All the tapes will be destroyed after transcription. Any identifying materials will be kept in a secure location; to which only research team members have access.

A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone 07 3735 5585.

There are no risks to you arising from participating in this research. Please remember that your participation in this research is voluntary. You can withdraw at any time without any comment or penalty. Participants must also respect the privacy of other participants at all times.

An appropriate and timely result summary of this research can be obtained if you leave your email address at the end of the interview to indicate your interest in it. If you have any questions regarding this research, please feel free to contact the researchers using the contact details provided above.

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 07 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

A signed consent form will indicate your consent to participate in this research.

Thank you very much for your time and support!
By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include an in-depth, semi-structured interview that lasts around 20-40 minutes;
- I understand this interview will be audio recorded;
- I understand that only the research team will have access to this tape;
- I understand that the audio-tape will be erased following transcription;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I agree to respect the privacy of other participants at all times;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on +61 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Senior Investigator: Professor Daniel C. Funk;
Ph: 07 5552 9162
d.funk@griffith.edu.au

Student Investigator: Mr Jason Doyle
Ph: 07 5552 7672
jason.doyle@griffith.edu.au
Appendix G: Interview Guide

ID #: ___  Gender: M / F  Age: ___  Member: Y / N

Thanks for agreeing to participate in this interview, and for giving up your time to talk about your experiences of being a Suns fan.

I would like to understand how fans connect with sport teams, what factors might have led you to support the Gold Coast Suns and how your fandom has developed over time.

To make sure I can fully understand your ideas, I would like to record our interview to later transcribe and analyse. I would like to use some of this information in my PhD and for academic papers and conferences. Nothing that can identify you will be published and you can choose to stop the tape or interview at any time. Is it OK if I tape our conversation? Check tape.

Ok great, I’ve got some questions I’d like to ask you. If at any stage you have questions with what I am asking or don’t wish to answer a question please let me know. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers here, so please don’t restrict yourself in conversation.

Questions and Probes:

1. Can you tell me about yourself including your experiences with AFL prior to the Suns entering the competition?
   - What is it about the Suns that made you want to become a fan?
   - What were the top reasons you decided to become involved?
   - Suns / other team now #1? (when they play each other how do you feel?)

2. On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being hardcore, 1 being casual) how would you rate your level of support at this point in time?
   - Why would you rate yourself this way? *Examples*
   - How would you rate yourself when you first became a fan?
   - What does it mean to be a Suns fan, rather than a fan of another team – are Suns fans special?

3. Between when you first started supporting the Suns and now, what has changed?
   - Probe attitude changes (e.g., how do you feel when they win / lose?).
   - Probe behavioural changes (e.g., do you watch or attend every game? / how else do you keep up to date?) Is this different from when first became a fan?
   - Stronger or weaker connection since you first became a fan?

4. What are some key moments that you can pinpoint where your liking for the team changed?
   - Have there been any key personal experiences that you can talk about?
   - Is there anything the club has done? (do you feel appreciated as a fan?)
   - Has it been easy for you to follow the team?

5. Based on what we have spoken about, how much is being a Suns fan a part of who you are?
   - Is it important to you that people know you’re a Suns fan?
   - What benefits do you get from being a Suns fan?
i. Probe social–psychological health outcomes (loneliness, self-esteem, community connectedness). How many new friends?

ii. Does ID lead to these or do these lead to ID?

iii. Does the team provide links to other Suns fans and individuals in other groups outside Suns?

**Interview debrief:**

Thanks for talking to me today and sharing your experiences with me. I would like to follow up with you in the future (post season) and speak again, is this okay with you?

Permanent phone # _______________ & email ____________________________
# Appendix H: Fan Biography of Interview Participants Study 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Fan Biography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Passionate supporter of the team and the Gold Coast Suns organisation. Mark describes himself as a big Australian Rules football and AFL fan who wants to see the game do well in Queensland. Mark supports the Suns as his second team but still reports strong attitudinal and behavioural characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Supporter of the club who wants to support his local team. Strongly identified with the AFL brand and in turn the Suns. Although not a member, still goes to every game and possesses strong attitudes and exhibits team-supportive behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>Followed the Suns originally to be able to watch more live AFL. Has developed a strong connection with the club, although only considered them his second favourite team. Steven suggested this could change in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Supports the Suns mainly due to the influence of friends and for the entertainment aspect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Highly involved with the club from an early stage. Peter loves Australian Rules football and the AFL and noted the opportunity to be a part of a new team at a time when he was unhappy with existing team played a part in his initial support. Peter is highly identified with the team who give him a sense of ownership, stability and belongingness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Big supporter of AFL who is new to the Gold Coast. Andrew initially supported the Suns to become involved closely with an AFL team and as a vehicle to make friends and connect with his new community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lois</td>
<td>Not previously interested in sports or the AFL, but highly involved and identified with the Suns. Became a member as a way to do something with her kids and to meet people from the Gold Coast. The team gives Lois a sense of community connectedness and she feels that the club are a perfect match for her as they are both new to the Gold Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham</td>
<td>Corporate member who likes to watch live Australian Rules football in a comfortable environment. Graham is an enthusiastic supporter of the AFL who supports the Suns because they are the local team. Graham has strong attitudes and behaviours but the team is less important outside of game day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara</td>
<td>Corporate member who enjoys Australian Rules football and is interested in the AFL. Tamara believes it is important to support the local side, and thus follows the Suns. Tamara reports strong attitudes and behaviours mostly tied to following AFL and the local team rather than the Suns brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justine</td>
<td>Passionate about Australian Rules Football, the AFL and the SUNS. Justine has a long association with the game in various capacities. Feels it is important to support the local side and feels lucky to have a team so close.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Martin Supports the Gold Coast Suns as a second side, although strong in attitudes and behaviours. Martin describes himself as a ‘disciple’ of Australian Rules football and the Suns help him to spread the word of the game in Queensland.

Jack Previously affiliated with the Lions but has switched his support to the SUNS as they are now the closest team to where he lives. Jack noted it was important to support the local team to ensure they are successful. Jack is a fan of all sport, but has a particular appreciation of Australian Rules football.

Danielle Grew up on the Gold Coast and has always followed Australian Rules football and the AFL. Danielle has a preference for watching live games. For Danielle, it is sometimes hard to separate the AFL and the Suns, with the Suns offering a vehicle to consume a local product of the game she loves.

Ken Passionate supporter of things in the local community and an enthusiastic sport and AFL fan. Ken is passionate about the team and reported a strong identification with the Suns has been present from early stages of the team’s lifecycle due to the local element and that they play AFL.

Geoff Loves the game of AFL and the Suns provide an outlet to watch an exciting game he enjoys. Geoff is a keen fan but does not take his support too seriously.

Paul Lifelong AFL supporter who has been involved with Australian Rules football as a player and coach for many years. Paul follows the team as they are the local side but does not agree with the way the club has been managed or connects with local level football.

Rich Passionate about AFL and supporting the Gold Coast. Very vocal at the games and the team play a central role in his life. Rich reported that he strongly identified with the Suns when they first were formed and has been following the team closely since their formation.

Nick Follows many sports yet only had a loose previous affiliation with AFL before the Suns were formed. Nick was new to the Gold Coast around the same time as the SUNS were formed. Nick reported his support was primarily due to the team providing him with an opportunity to spend time with his family and to be active in his new community.

Sean Has been involved in Australian Rules football in various capacities all his life. Sean reported he supports AFL expansion and wants to see the game played all over Australia. Sean also likes watching live AFL and reported the Suns being a local team enabled him to attend more games.

Vanessa Follows the Suns as they are a new, local team. The Suns’ status as a new team appealed to Vanessa as she did not previously support an AFL team in any real way, although she had a slight preference for Geelong.
### Appendix I: Fan Biographies of Interview Participants Study 2 and Study 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Fan Biography Study 2</th>
<th>Fan Biography Study 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mark</strong></td>
<td>Passionate supporter of the team and the Gold Coast Suns organisation. Mark described himself as a big Australian Rules football and AFL fan who wants to see the game prosper in Queensland.</td>
<td>Mark continued to support the Gold Coast Suns as his second team. He has a large social network built around the team. Suggested that without this network he would still be a fan, but his interest would drop. Took on some casual work with the team on game days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steven</strong></td>
<td>Followed the Suns originally to be able to watch more elite-level Australian Rules football live. Has developed a strong connection with the team, although only considered them his second favourite team. Steven suggested this could change in the future.</td>
<td>Steven reported an increased identification with the team based on a successful second half of the 2012 season. Attended more Gold Coast Suns games than Brisbane Lions matches in 2012, but still considered the Suns his second team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peter</strong></td>
<td>Highly involved with the club from an early stage. Peter loves Australian Rules football and the AFL and noted the opportunity to be a part of a new team at a time when he was unhappy with existing team played a part in his initial support. Peter is highly identified with the team who give him a sense of ownership, stability and belongingness.</td>
<td>Peter remained a highly identified Gold Coast Suns fan. Reported that his connection had increased and will continue to year on year. Feels like a part of the team given that he has been a fan from early on and indicated feeling like a ‘Father’ to the team. Initially followed the team as an individual pursuit but is now reaping personal and social benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lois</strong></td>
<td>Lois was not previously interested in any sport prior to her involvement with the Suns. Lois became a member as a way to do something with her kids and to meet people from the Gold Coast. This involvement gave Lois a sense of community connectedness. Lois felt that the club are a perfect match for her as they were both new to the Gold Coast.</td>
<td>Lois reported that her identification with the team remained high. Lois reported taking less of an interest in the off-season in the team, but continued to associate with the large network of friends made through her association with the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graham</strong></td>
<td>Graham became a member to watch live Australian Rules football in a comfortable environment. Graham is an enthusiastic supporter of the AFL who supported the Suns because they were the local team. Graham is a passionate fan, but reported that the team are only a salient part of his self-concept in game day settings.</td>
<td>Graham was considering increasing his involvement with the team by taking on a player ambassador role. Pointed to a visit from a Gold Coast Suns staff member to his home which made him feel valued and closer to the club as a catalyst for his development. Graham also reported increased engagement with other Suns fans who have become friends both inside and outside of game days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tamara</strong></td>
<td>Tamara purchased her corporate membership as she enjoys Australian Rules football and the AFL. Tamara felt a sense of duty to support the local side, and thus followed the Suns. Tamara reported her identification is mostly tied to following the local AFL side rather than the Gold Coast Suns brand specifically.</td>
<td>Tamara reported feeling a similar level of identification with the team but noted her support had taken on more meaning in that the team, rather than the sport, was her main point of attachment. Since the last interview, Tamara has formed a close bond with approximately 12 other fans with whom she socialises inside and outside of game day. These people are now considered good friends by Tamara.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ken</strong></td>
<td>Passionate supporter of things in the local community and an enthusiastic sport and AFL fan. Ken reported being passionate about the team and possessed a strong identification with the Suns. Ken has been a fan from early stages of the team’s lifecycle and cited the fact that they are his local team as the main reason for his support.</td>
<td>Ken noted his fandom had increased primarily based on positive organisational interactions and presence at team events. These include lunch with the CEO and coach at a social function and a stadium tour. Both instances made Ken feel closer to the club and like a valued part of the organisation, increasing his identification with the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nick</strong></td>
<td>Nick was new to the Gold Coast around the same time as the Suns were formed and only loosely followed the AFL before the team’s creation. Nick reported his motivation to support the team was his perception that doing so would provide opportunities to spend time with his family and to be active in his new community.</td>
<td>Nick reported a stable identification yet indicated he will not be renewing his membership for 2013. The primary reason for this was family issues. Nick still intends to attend matches but did not get to fully utilise his family’s membership tickets in the previous season.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>