

We hate that school: A content analysis of rivalries and student-run Barstool Sports accounts

by

Jonathan Cody Friesen

B.S., Kansas State University, 2019

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2021

Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Jacob Groshek

Copyright

© Jonathan Friesen 2021.

Abstract

Rivalries are a unique aspect of college life. The longstanding traditions that these rivalries bring to individuals provide a sense of excitement on campus. Still, sometimes these rivalries can cross a line between competition on the field and a feud in the stands. As technology has developed and the role of social media is constantly changing, the trash-talk between fans of rival schools is becoming more public and, in some cases, more uncivil. The study examines multiple college sports rivalries and interactions on Twitter among student-run Barstool Sports accounts. Specifically, this study looks into the behavior towards rivals using eight Barstool Sports student-run accounts across four different college rivalries.

This study found six different characteristics, which can inform future studies of individual fan behavior on social media, three of which are negative, namely (1) Glory out of reflected failure. (2) Replying to the rival account. (3) Targeting the rival using stereotypes. The study found three positive instances that these accounts relied upon: (4) Using humor relatable to students at the school. (5) Creating conversations online for fans of the school. (6) Expressing pride for alumni or university.

The Social Identity Theory is used to identify the in-group behaviors of sports fans and the created out-group biases. Uses and Gratifications Theory was also used to explain the data. This study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature on negative behavior on social media in college athletics and explicate further the concept of glory out of reflected failure or *schadenfreude* between rivals. As the guidelines for social media change, this study could help provide insight on the behavior of sports fans who use these accounts like Barstool as a catalyst to fuel the hatred towards a rival.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	vi
Acknowledgments.....	vii
Chapter 1- Introduction.....	1
When Sports Rivalries Go Too Far.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Theoretical Perspective.....	5
Study Findings and Significance.....	5
Chapter 2- Review of Literature.....	7
Barstool Sports.....	7
Technology History.....	9
New Twitter Policies and the Suspension of Users.....	9
College Athletics and Student Attachment.....	10
Emotions on Social Media During Games.....	11
Level of Enjoyment During Games.....	12
Civility on Social Media.....	12
History of Rivalries.....	13
Kansas versus Kansas State.....	13
Alabama versus Auburn.....	14
Oklahoma versus Texas.....	14
Ohio State versus Michigan.....	15
Theoretical Framework.....	15
Social Identity Theory.....	15
Glory Out of Reflected Failure.....	16
Self-Esteem Strategies.....	16
Uses and Gratifications Theory.....	17
Conclusion of Literature Review.....	19
Chapter 3- Methodology.....	20
Research Questions and Hypothesis.....	21

Overview of Sample.....	23
Chapter 4- Findings.....	24
Glory Out of Reflected Failure.....	24
Replying to Tweets of the Rival School	26
Targeting Rival with Stereotypes.....	28
Humor.....	31
Conversations Among Fans.....	32
University Pride.....	34
Explicit Language.....	36
Uncivil Behavior.....	38
Glory Out of Reflected Failure.....	39
Summary.....	40
Chapter 5- Discussion.....	42
Summary of Results.....	42
Theoretical Implications	42
Limitations.....	43
Suggestions for Future Studies	44
Conclusion.....	45
Chapter 6- References.....	46
Appendix.....	51

List of Figures

Figure 4-1: Glory Out of Reflected Failure.....	25
Figure 4-2: Glory Out of Reflected Failure Outside of Sports.....	26
Figure 4-3: Rival Replying to Rival's Tweet.....	27
Figure 4-4: Rival Tagging Other Conference Opponent	28
Figure 4-5: Targeting Rival Using Pop-Culture References.....	29
Figure 4-6: Targeting Rival Using Socioeconomic Stereotypes Towards Rival Fans.....	29
Figure 4-7: Targeting Rival Stereotypes of Non-Conference Rival	30
Figure 4-8: Using References to Campus as a Form of Humor.....	31
Figure 4-9: Using Stereotypes as Self-Depicting Humor.....	32
Figure 4-10: Live-Tweeting Emotions During Rivalry Game	34
Figure 4-11: Creating Conversation with Older Followers	34
Figure 4-12: Expressing University Pride.....	35
Figure 4-13: Expressing Support for Current and Former Student-Athletes.....	36
Figure 4-14: Instance of Explicit Language Towards Rival.....	37
Figure 4-15: Using Explicit Language in Positive Instances.....	38
Figure 4-16: Uncivil Behavior Sparked by Uncivil Action in Rivalry Game.....	39
Figure 4-17: Glory Out of Reflected Failure After Rivalry Game.....	40

Acknowledgments

It all started when my roommate Avery Osen and I were having a conversation about working in sports in 2018. We spoke about the opportunities available working in sports, which sparked an entirely new chapter in my professional and academic career. I am so grateful for Avery's help through this entire journey, from answering the late-night questions about this study to heading to Kauffman Stadium for a night at the ballpark.

Thank you to Dr. Jacob Groshek for assisting me in the development of this thesis. I had the opportunity to present this idea to the AEJMC conference with the aid of Dr. Groshek, which gave me the confidence to further this research. I always appreciated your feedback and your knowledge of the vast realm of social media research.

Dr. Raluca Cozama helped me develop this idea from the very beginning, and I am incredibly grateful for helping me narrow this idea into an academic work that I am proud of. Thank you for your willingness to guide me into and through this journey of graduate school.

Thank you, Dr. Smethers, for the constant support and belief you have had in me from the second I walked into Kedzie Hall in the Fall of 2018. Your welcoming spirit made me feel at home at Kedzie.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my parents, Steve and Michele Friesen, for their constant support of whatever venture that I choose to explore. I would not be where I am today without them. Thank you to my brother, Collin Friesen, for encouraging me through this journey and showing me Kansas State University. I would not be where I am today without the unwavering support of my family, and I am beyond grateful for what they have done for me.

Chapter 1. Introduction

When Sports Rivalries Go Too Far

In the final minute of the 2019 football contest known as the "Sunflower Showdown" between in-state rivals the University of Kansas and Kansas State University, the Kansas Jayhawks scored a touchdown. It was a meaningless touchdown as the Kansas State Wildcats won the game 38-10, the eleventh straight win by Kansas State in the football rivalry. One might question the reasoning as to why the Jayhawks were so determined to score when the game was so far out of reach. In its simplest form, it all comes down to school pride, but not all games between rivals end as smoothly as this contest ended.

It was just another night of college basketball at Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence, Kansas, on the 21st of January 2020. The Kansas Jayhawks were wrapping up a dominant 81-59 victory over in-state rival the Kansas State Wildcats. This has been a consistent occurrence in the rivalry as the Wildcats had not won inside the historic arena since 2006. Many fans on each side of the rivalry knew the game was over. Several fans were already heading for the exits or turned off the television. It is a common occurrence in basketball that when a team is leading by a significant margin within the closing seconds of the game, the team will not try to make an effort to score, and that is what the Jayhawks had intended to do. A Kansas State player stole the ball and made an effort to score one last basket, but the Kansas player blocked the shot and stood over the Kansas State player. This action sparked a scuffle that bled into the handicap seating section at the end of the court. A few players attempted to throw punches, and the fight had escalated to the point that a Kansas player held a chair over his head as if he would use it as a weapon. The confrontation drew the attention of several stations, including ESPN. Suspensions from the NCAA were issued within the following days, and it was shown across many major sports

networks as the rest of the crowd walked away, shocked about what had transpired (Skretta, 2020).

Sports create rivalries across the world, and fandom is a source to aid in self-esteem (Wann & Grieve, 2005). Fan behavior can be compared to tribal behaviors (Dionísio, Leal, Moutinho, 2008). Some universities have strange student traditions that occur the week of the rivalry. Students at Ohio State University will cross out every "M" on the buildings and signs on the campus the week of the Ohio State vs. Michigan game (Mandell, 2016). College football is also seen as one of the many components for increasing enrollment as, observed in the "Flutie Effect," which has been studied mainly in the advertising field and is a method universities have used to draw interest in prospective students (Chung, 2013).

College football is one of the most-watched sports in the United States, and what makes collegiate rivalries so intriguing is the connections to each university. In a poll in 2016, it was the third most popular sport in the United States (Shannon-Missal, 2016). It was projected that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) had reported a 375-million-dollar loss from the absence of the men's basketball tournament last season, which was canceled due to the Coronavirus pandemic (Blasi, 2020).

Students, fans, and alumni alike mark their calendars for one specific game on the schedule the third Saturday in November. This week in college football has been dubbed as rivalry week by many major networks that feature some of the most historic rivalries in college sports.

There is an element of civility that can be exposed in rivalries, such as the tradition that comes with most matchups across the country. It may not be easily observed on social media platforms. However, some examples where fans have taken action include poisoning trees on the

campus of Auburn University by an Alabama fan following a loss at the hands of Auburn (Foxsports, 2015). At Kansas State University, there is a yearly issue around the popular stadium song Sandstorm by Darude as students chant F**K KU, aimed at in-state rival the University of Kansas. This chant can even be heard at sporting events when Kansas is not the opponent. The explicit chant has occasionally happened during the K-State band's famous Wabash Cannonball. The chant has occurred on national television on several occasions, which has to be addressed by the university nearly every year (Gartner, 2019).

What often slips through the cracks are the discussions online that cross a line between trash talk and uncivil behavior. Several individuals have been fired or made headlines for conduct on social media platforms, granted most of these posts include racist, uncivilly politically charged, or homophobic attributes. There have been individuals who have lost jobs because of posts that primarily attack a player's race. In 2018, a superintendent in Oklahoma resigned after criticizing Houston Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson in the comment section of an article by the Houston Chronicle posted to Facebook (Scherer, 2018). He posted, "When you need precision making, you can't count on a black quarterback." Heading into the 2018 season, only seven of the thirty-two teams listed an African American as the starting quarterback. It has been a position that still exposes a racial stereotype that dates back to 1946 (Reid & McManus, 2018).

There have been cases where fans have threatened to take violent action against rival fans and student-athletes. In 2020, a fan of the University of Michigan was sentenced to one year in jail after sending a Facebook message to Ohio State University threatening to harm students and targeting student-athletes of the football program at university during the 2018 contest between the two rivals, where the Buckeyes won 62-39 in Columbus, Ohio. The individual had explicitly

targeted members of the family of the then coach at Ohio State Urban Meyer. It was not the first time that this individual had targeted student-athletes. Just days before the threat to Ohio State University, he sent a similar message to Gonzaga University after the Bulldogs defeated Duke in basketball, another university the individual followed. The federal judge emphasized that this case is evidence of when fandom crosses a line between competition and criminal action (Welsh-Huggins, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative content analysis uses observations and secondary research through the collection of existing data of images and texts on Twitter among eight Barstool Sports accounts across four differing rivalries in Division One athletics. The purpose is to bridge a gap between and expand the research on fan behavior, civility online, and social media by exploring the student-run Barstool Sports accounts. The study explores both positive and negative themes expressed and relayed to followers of these accounts. Studies have been conducted about sports fans and the perceptions of a rival, products, and measured loyalty and engagement. There has been limited research on the use of social media and conduct towards a rival. As social media continues to develop and shift, it provides new concepts that can be explored across many interests, groups, and behaviors. This research observes the negative and positive behaviors of the Barstool accounts in the ways that these accounts portray the rival school or the representative university. Specifically, the study analyzed the concept of glory out of reflected failure with the trends of the Barstool accounts. This research applies the concept with the purpose of forming a context with the evolution of rivalries and in-group behaviors in the digital age.

Theoretical Perspective

This study connects fan behavior with social media to extrapolate the significance of the behavior into a new era of conversation on social media. Two theoretical frameworks were applied in the research of the data findings. The research used the Social Identity theory to explain why sports fans become rooted into a specific in-group, like a sports team, and the biases and perceptions created. The concept of glory out of reflective failure is an outcome of the theory and has been applied in previous research on sports fans. Uses and Gratifications Theory is also applied around how individuals consume media and the driving forces of media usage.

Study Findings and Significance

The study focused on eight Barstool Sports accounts across four separate rivalries in Division One athletics and found six trends evident in the content created and consumed by followers. The research found three negative instances and three positive instances that were pertinent in the data collection. (1) Glory out of reflected failure. (2) Replying to the rival. (3) Targeting rival schools using stereotypes. (4) Using humor to provide relatable content to students at the university. (5) Creating an online in-game conversation about athletic events. (6) Expressing university pride and support for alumni. The study found that glory out of reflected failure, or finding happiness in the failure of others, was a persistent attribute used by Barstool Sports accounts on Twitter between all four rivalries studied. These findings aim to connect the online behavior of Barstool Sports and the attributes displayed on Twitter among its followers. The concept of glory out of reflected failure has been used as a development of the Social Identity Theory, but this research attempts to apply the concept into a digital realm and apply it in the context of the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The findings suggest that similar behaviors among fans in the stands are also occurring on social media. Fans can express more uncivil behavior

when behind a screen and can target rival groups, but there are more civil, relatable, and supportive behaviors when interacting with fans of the same team. Analyzing the wide range of behaviors among the accounts shows the trends present among sports fans on social media and incivility online. The accounts were uncivil towards a rival but avoided severe threats towards individuals of a rival school. There were stereotypes of a rival expressed that displayed a negative bias towards a rival fan group, but there were no tweets that threatened any action that threatened the safety of students or alumni of a rival university.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

Barstool Sports

Barstool Sports began as a simple free newspaper in 2003 and has grown into a nationally known brand, especially among college students. As of March 2021, the primary Barstool Sports Twitter account has amassed 2.8 million followers. The most avid of the audience is often referred to as Stoolies (Dick, 2019). The company is a sports-centric medium that applies comedy, pop culture, and various topics on the internet. Satire is a common aspect of the content produced by Barstool Sports. The brand has coined many phrases such as "Saturdays are for the Boys" and "Viva La Stool," among others, based on some of the company's antics. The organization leans into its large college-aged male following and has established a network across several universities across the country. Many schools have an affiliate of Barstool Sports, which are student-operated social media pages to create content specific to college life and the sports of each represented school. These accounts have no affiliation to the university itself, which is stated in the biographies of each social media platform. Barstool has made an effort to separate itself from its competition. The unique and, at times, controversial behaviors have helped make the brand increase in popularity despite the negative criticisms and allegations (Burns, 2017). The organization was under fire after reports surfaced about the treatment of female content contributors (Moses, 2018).

Research on Barstool Sports has been a recent development. Still, there has been a small sample size of academic works published about the company, with most studies targeting the negative characteristics of Barstool's reputation and its influence among it is a prominent following of college students and young alumni. Barstool's target demographic are males ranging from 18-34 years of age (Dunn, Doyno, & McCarthy, 2018). Academic research on the company

is limited, but there are studies on the negative behaviors of the company, like promoting behaviors that create an inaccurate impression of college life (Coviello, 2019). The company has made headlines in sports with antics between Barstool and the National Football League (NFL), including the rejection of Super Bowl credentials in 2017 due to past incidents with the league. (Smith, 2017). Founder of Barstool Sports, David Portnoy, has named himself an enemy of the NFL and towards Rodger Goodell, the commissioner of the league. Portnoy, an avid fan of the New England Patriots, showed displeasure of the ruling of the "Deflategate" cheating scandal. In 2015, the league suspended New England quarterback Tom Brady for four games, fined the team \$1 million, and a surrendering future draft picks for the Patriots for deflating footballs used in the AFC conference championship game (ESPN.com, 2015). The organization created shirts with Goodell with a clown nose and participated in a small protest about the ruling at the NFL commissioner's office demanding to speak with Goodell. Portnoy, along with his constituents, was arrested and removed from the building (DeCosta-Klipa, 2015).

The self-made rivalry between the commissioner of football and "El Presidente," as Portnoy is referenced on social media, reentered the headlines in 2020. The NFL rejected a \$250,000 auction win by Portnoy to watch a Monday Night Football game with Rodger Goodell at his home due to a failed background check, which cited previous negative encounters with the NFL (Barrabi, 2020). Barstool Sports has found success in its brand, and the unique satirical style has set itself apart from its competition online.

Barstool Sports established a program for college students to participate as campus correspondents for the company. The "Viceroy Program" is the company's title for the correspondent position, and the individual is responsible for the social media accounts for the Barstool affiliate of that specific university. The goal of the position is to run the account to

focus on finding or creating content promoted by Barstool Sports. This includes posts of attractive women on campus, videos of behavior at parties, sports, and other content similar to the content posted by the company's main accounts. Barstool Sports uses this program to find individuals interested in working at the company and advertises that students can get college credit, internships, merchandise, and money to run the account (Portnoy, 2019). These accounts do not write any articles but are responsible for creating content for other Barstool followers. These accounts are essentially run by fans, so the behavior expressed on these accounts portrays similar behaviors of a fan.

Technology History

The rise of social media has increased significantly in the past few years with the advancement of technology. The younger audience has adopted it well. According to the Pew Research Center, since 2005, social media use in adults has increased from 5% to 72% as of February 2019. Adults ages 18-29 are the largest users, and 90% of the age group uses social media. Twitter is used by 22% of adults in the United States, and Facebook is used by 69% of adults (Pew Research, 2019). This study aims to connect fan behavior to the more modern realm of social media using student-run accounts affiliated with Barstool Sports.

New Twitter Policies and the Suspension of Users

According to the Twitter website, the company's essential principles are promoting health, earning trust, making it straightforward, uniting profit and purpose, and being fast, free, and fun (Twitter.com, 2021). There have been issues recently with prominent political figures abiding by the policies set out by the platform, which has resulted in permanent suspensions.

The social media platform was a centerpiece on January 6, 2021, when individuals who support then President Donald Trump stormed the United States Capitol Building while the

senate was confirming the electoral college's count in favor of Joe Biden to become the forty-sixth president of the United States of America. Individuals were egged on by tweets by Trump and the absence of tweets by the former president. Twitter was the first to suspend Donald Trump from its platform and eventually permanently suspended @realdonaldtrump from the platform citing, a violation of the Glorification of Violence policy and the interpretation of the tweets in the context of the events that transpired at the Capitol Building. (Twitter.com, 2021).

As the guidelines of social media platforms have evolved to maintain a civil network, the suspension of other prominent figures, groups, and other users is now another option for services to enable to keep the original intentions of the platform. Twitter censors possible offensive and hurtful responses to tweets and warns users about the explicit or hurtful language these responses contain (Twitter.com, 2021).

College Athletics and Student Attachment

College athletics can benefit student attachment to the university (Kim, Liu, & Shan, 2017). The authors credit college-aged students as being some of the early adopters of social media use. The study references that college football is one of the most popular sports outlets in the United States of America. The significance of college pride combined with social media can link to behavior and college life. The study examined if college students' sports fandom leads to increased social media usage and a stronger relationship between students and university.

Findings show a positive relationship between sports participation and social media involvement and a positive relationship between sports participation and college attachment. The researchers also found that social media use was a strong predictor of college attachment and suggest that it creates a stronger attachment to the school when students talk about their school's athletics online.

Sporting events can help create a bond between a student and university. Naturally, these sporting events influence a student to become emotionally invested in the performance of the school. (Campbell, Aiken, & Kent, 2004). These emotions that develop between student and university are not only centered around sports, but several studies have investigated and found college attachment with athletics.

Kim and Kim (2019) found that social media provides individuals interested in sports a place to interact with other fans more often. When examined using Social Identity Theory, the researchers discovered that the sports-focused interactions among fellow students can strengthen in-group behaviors created by fan identification and self-esteem. Social media thus was shown to provide a way to express thoughts and emotions with other fans (Kim & Kim, 2019). These findings help further the understanding of the enjoyment of sports on social media and the influence it has on a student's group identity, self-esteem, and college attachment.

Emotions on Social Media During Games

During the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, researchers Yu & Wang (2015) observed the social media use in the United States during selected World Cup games to identify the emotions of fans during the tournament on Twitter. The objective was to look at the positive and negative sentiments on Twitter during the FIFA World Cup games and focused primarily on the Twitter activity in the United States to observe the emotions during the games and similar emotions during games that did not feature the United States team. The argument is that there are identical emotions seen in the stands and the digital world of social media. The researchers identify an extensive range of emotions in sports that can be both positive and negative. This study categorized emotions on social media and targeted some of the primary emotions that sports fans feel when following a game on social media. Moreover, this study helped to bridge a gap

between fans in the stands and on social media and the emotions displayed in both specific realms of fan activity, and the thesis reported on here extends those findings.

Level of Enjoyment During Games

As technology has developed, it has changed how individuals interact with the news around them. DiMoro (2015) found that 67 percent of sports fans use social media to enhance the viewing experience and is a tool that sports teams and athletes can use to communicate with fans. Social media has changed how a sports fan watches, processes, and communicates during a sporting event (Smith, Pegoraro, & Cruikshank, 2019). Social media has become a valuable tool for fans, and that it has become a second screen for viewing a sporting event. Not only are viewers watching the event, but they also follow and add input on social media during the event, which allows the user to have more interaction with a larger audience. Levels of enjoyment can fluctuate during the game, and the researchers identify that it does not come from the outcome of a game, but it could be an element of enjoyment. The researchers found that users who posted their content and reacted or shared content recorded higher enjoyment levels than users who only reposted content. (Smith, Pegoraro, & Cruikshank, 2019). The study provided insight into how Twitter users are adopting the idea of a second screen when watching a sporting event and how it has allowed users to interact with fellow fans or rivals on a larger scale.

Civility on Social Media

Civility on social media was challenged heavily during the 2016 Presidential elections, and Witt (2018) looked into the incivility on Twitter and found a large amount of incivility on social media between both political parties. Republican candidate, Donald Trump's campaign was found to have more instances of uncivil behavior on social media. The majority of the uncivil instances found contained elements of name-calling, which largely came from Donald

Trump's name-calling, such as "Crooked Hillary," which was also used by Trump-affiliated accounts. The instances of uncivil behavior in the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton's campaign came from accusations of lying by the opposing campaign. Witt (2018) identifies that social media is now crucial for political campaigns but suggests that the incivility on social media in these campaigns could provide negative implications for the future. The increased level of disrespect between political candidates on social media provides an opening to observe if similar attributes occur on social media in a different area, such as sports rivalries.

History of Rivalries

There is a great history in the rivalries across college football. Many of the rivalries observed date back to over a century ago. All rivalries were rooted in "Power Five" conferences (Big 12, Big 10, Pac 12, SEC, ACC).

Kansas versus Kansas State

The University of Kansas and Kansas State University are in-state rivals and members of the Big 12 Conference. The series has been dubbed the Sunflower Showdown, which references the nickname of the state of Kansas is the Sunflower State. Neither team has achieved significant success, but K-State has won the Big 12 three times. The Jayhawks claim to five conference titles.

The two schools have faced off on the football field since 1902. Kansas State took the most recent showdown with a dominant 55-14 win in Manhattan. According to the Kansas State media guide, the Wildcats trail the series at 49-65-5, but Kansas claims a 66-47-5 record over K-State. The K-State media guide claims the Jayhawks forfeited a 20-18 victory in 1980.

The two teams face off to claim the Governor's Cup, which goes to the winner. As of 2020, K-State has won the matchup for 12 straight seasons. The longest winning streak for the Jayhawks was ten from 1956-1965.

Alabama versus Auburn

Alabama and Auburn are two of the most iconic schools in college football, and the rivalry was named the greatest rivalry in college football by Sports Illustrated in 2019 (Dellenger, 2019). The two are members of the West division of the Southeastern Conference (SEC). Alabama holds a 46-37-1 all-time advantage. The historic series dates back to 1893. The football matchup has been dubbed the Iron Bowl, which is traditionally played the first weekend in November. Alabama defeated Ohio State University 53-24 in the 2021 National Championship, the eighteenth all-time in Alabama football history. The Crimson Tide have also won thirty-two conference titles. Auburn claims two national titles, the most recent in 2010.

Oklahoma versus Texas

Known as the Red River Showdown, the two schools are members of the Big 12 conference and have played 116 times. It is considered the third greatest rivalry in college football (Dellenger, 2019). The first matchup between the two schools came in 1900, where the Longhorns took a 28-2 win in Texas. The Longhorns hold a 62-44-5 all-time series lead over Oklahoma. The winner of the game receives the Golden Hat. The game is played in the Cotton Bowl Stadium in Dallas, Texas. Oklahoma defeated Texas 53-45 in the fourth overtime in the 2020 edition of the rivalry. The two schools have historic football programs and are often the projected champion of the conference. Texas has won thirty conference titles and four national championships. Oklahoma has won seven national championships and fifty conference

championships. The Sooners won the Big 12 Conference Football Championship for five consecutive seasons from 2015-2020.

Ohio State versus Michigan

Listed as the second greatest rivalry in college football by Sports Illustrated (Dellenger, 2019), the matchup, known as "The Game," has been the marquee matchup of the Big Ten and College Football. The first matchup dates back to 1897 between Michigan and Ohio State was in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where the Wolverines dismantled the Buckeyes 36-0 (Welper, 2020). The matchup has been played annually since 1918, but the 2020 installment of the rivalry was canceled due to COVID-19. Michigan holds a slim 58-51-8 record over Ohio State, but the Buckeyes won eight consecutive meetings from 2012-2019. The Wolverines have won forty-two conference titles and eleven national championships. Ohio State has won thirty-nine conference titles and six national championships, the last coming in 2014. The Buckeyes were the runner-up to the Alabama Crimson Tide in the 2021 College Football National Championship.

Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory is used to explain in-group behaviors of individuals. The theory focuses on the creations of in-groups and the biases that are created out of the groups. Group identification is a significant factor for the theory. Self-esteem strategies have been studied using the theory and are used to explain group identification and group distancing to protect self-esteem. In the context of the literature focused on sports, the theory is often used to identify loyalty by sports fans and can be used in this study, and it can also be used to describe how fans of one group see fans of a different group. One of the most significant aspects of the theory is the in-group bias and the out-group competition (Tajfel, 1974).

Glory Out of Reflected Failure

The definition of schadenfreude is "the enjoyment obtained from the troubles of others" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Schadenfreude has been used to develop the concept of glory out of reflected failure. It has been used to explain why sports fans take pleasure in the failure of others. Studies have looked into the idea of glory out of reflected failure when it comes to college sports fans. A study conducted by Harvard (2014) provided a narrative on in-group biases produced out of fans feeling glory out of reflected failure towards rivals. It does not look at rivalry games alone but observes a fan's reaction when a rival team loses against a different opponent (Harvard, 2014). The study looked into in-group biases that can occur between two rival groups. When a rival team loses, the study found a sense of satisfaction that arises and, in the study, identified that a victory over a rival meant more than beating a non-rival (Harvard, 2014). It may not mean more on the team's record, but the sense of satisfaction has a greater meaning to the fans. The study provided quality insight on sports fandom behavior towards a rival and observing how fans see the rival outside of head-to-head competition.

Self-Esteem Strategies

The concept of basking in reflected glory is a self-esteem strategy rooted in the Social Identity Theory. This concept is used to explain the shift of self-esteem that ties the success of another with the individual's self-esteem (Cialdini, Borden, Thome, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976). The glory is essentially unearned by the individual, but it provides a sense of success. In the study, Cialdini et al. (1976) found that students were more likely to wear clothing representing the university or use personal pronouns such as "we" when referring to the team following a win by the university's teams. Inversely, cutting off reflected failure is used to explain the opposite emotions in an effort for the individual to withdraw from direct ties to a

team after a loss as a form to assist in the maintenance of self-esteem (Wann & Branscome, 1990). glory out of reflected failure is rooted in the Social Identity Theory and contains elements of self-esteem similar to basking in reflected glory (Harvard, 2014). The theory has been used as a factor of comparison to others as an enhancer of self-esteem (Dess, Bennett & Ferreira, 2010). Self-esteem strategies explain how an individual creates separation from the in-group to avoid damage to self-esteem (Wann & Branscome, 1990; Cialdini et al., 1976). These behaviors have been limited on sports fans using social media, and the self-esteem behaviors are also discussed in the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Fan identification is a vital aspect of self-esteem, and these feelings also create negative reactions towards a rival group.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory has been used to explore ways that media affects the people who consume it. This theory helps explain how individuals use media and find satisfaction and emphasizes what people do with media rather than what the media does to an individual (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). The theory was revitalized with the emergence of the media as the internet arrived (Rubin, 2002). Uses and Gratifications Theory is often used to explain people's usage of social media. What separated the internet apart is that communication levels go beyond the traditional forms of media. There is always some level of activity and communication between individuals and groups 24-hours a day (Kiesler, 1997). This is still true today. Ruggiero (2009) discussed the Uses and Gratifications Theory in the context of the 21st century and hypothesized that the qualities of the future of internet use could modernize the theory. Ruggiero also identified the increase of internet usage and the rise of social media platforms and suggested that the theory will be prevalent when observing these platforms based on the concepts of interactivity, hypertextuality, and interpersonal aspects that had previously

been studied using the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Social media use has increased in the last few years, and this theory has been applied to social media use in several studies.

The theory has been used to describe sports fans' interactions on Twitter, similar to the Social Identity Theory research in how individuals become fans of respective teams (Pegoraro, 2013). In the study, Pegoraro discusses the rise of social media activity and the self-esteem associated with following a team. The study identifies previous research on the subject of fan identification, fan interaction, and self-esteem. The study describes self-esteem strategies like the concept of basking in reflective glory, cutting off reflected failure, and cutting off future failure as discussed in the Social Identity Theory and relates the concepts attributes to the theory of Uses and Gratifications (Pegotaro, 2013). Personal Integrative needs express a need for credibility, stability, and personal status. Social Integrative needs express needs to connect with family, friends, and the world (Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973). This research shows similar attributes to the group identification in the social identity theory and could express self-esteem behaviors to protect or maintain those needs.

Self-esteem is a prominent property of the theory, and the purposes of the consumption of media is reflected in the various ways an individual finds satisfaction on social media. A large number of qualities discussed in the Social Identity Theory are also attributed to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, especially about sports fandom and the digital age of social media.

Conclusion of the Literature Review

The primary focus of this study is to explore the varying positive and negative interactions on Twitter by Barstool Sports accounts to help gain perspective on the trends used to aid in connecting concepts like glory out of reflected failure into studies about social media. The concept is often derived from a Social Identity Theory perspective. The research in the Social Identity Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory contain similar concepts about self-esteem and have been used to describe why sports fans follow teams. The layout and findings of emotions on Twitter by Yu & Wang (2017) aided in the creation of the research questions and codebook for categorizing the tweets collected.

RQ1a: What are the varying instances of negative tweets by the selected Barstool Sports accounts?

RQ1b: What are the varying instances of positive tweets by the selected Barstool Sports accounts?

RQ2: To what extent do the Barstool accounts use more explicit language when referencing a rival school?

RQ3: What is the level of incivility expressed towards a rival school?

H1: The content produced by Barstool Sports affiliated accounts will have common instances of glory out of reflected failure towards a rival school.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This exploratory study examines the narrative established from February - July in 2020 on Twitter using four rivalries using affiliates of Barstool Sports, The University of Kansas (@BarstoolKU), Kansas State University (@BarstoolKansasState), Auburn University (@WarDamnStool), University of Alabama (@BarstoolAlabama), University of Michigan (@BarstoolUofM), Ohio State University (@BarstoolOSU), University of Texas (@UTBarstool), University of Oklahoma (@OUBarstool). These schools were selected because it created a wide range of rivalries at the NCAA Division I level. The Kansas and Kansas State, Alabama and Auburn, and Michigan and Ohio State rivalries were selected because each rivalry had a unique confrontation that made headlines of significant news networks. The Texas and Oklahoma rivalry was selected to target a prominent rivalry that involved out-of-state opponents. Each of these rivalries has a unique trait in each sport and have extensive histories and tradition that carry on through generations of students and alumni. These emotions towards the rival selected span long enough to have developed a rooted negative bias towards the rival school, which was one of the primary purposes of the study.

The activity level online and the number of followers did vary by school, which provided a wide range of varying sample sizes for the data collection. The most active accounts were @UTBarstool, @BarstoolKU, and @OUBarstool, while the accounts with the least amount of activity were @WarDamnStool, @BarstoolOSU, and @BarstoolUofM. Despite this, results show that both the idea of incivility and schadenfreude were highly present among all schools according to the predetermined classifications, which supported the hypothesis. The tweets that contained explicit language but it was not exclusive to tweets of a rival opponent. There were instances where explicit language was used in the positive tweets about the university. The

Barstool accounts also expressed multiple positive elements of the university and promoted school pride in a civil manner.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Three research questions and a hypothesis were developed out of the literature that explored fan behavior in the context of Barstool Sports. The bases of the research questions are rooted in the findings of college attachment, Kim et al., 2017, and positive and negative emotions (Yu & Wang, 2015). The hypothesis stems from research conducted by Harvard (2014) on the concept of glory out of reflected failure between rival fans.

Measurements

Negative emotions

Question RQ1a expands on the research performed by Yu & Wang (2015) on the negative emotion during the 2014 World Cup. The concept of glory out of reflected failure was categorized as a negative trend, which is an extension of the research performed by Harvard (2014) among fans and emotions towards a rival. Preliminary observations of the Barstool accounts helped form the codebook (Appendix A) established that aided in the categorization of tweets. The examples targeted three emotions of negative behavior ranging from glory out of reflected failure, anger towards a rival, and being critical of a rival university, students, and alumni.

Positive emotions

RQ1b looks at the level of college attachment, sports, and social media usage as research performed by Kim et al. (2017) and the observation of positive emotion on social media as explored by Yu & Wang (2015). The early observations of the Barstool accounts helped guide the formation of the positive instances in the codebook found in Appendix A. Three positive

emotions were selected to aid in guiding the categorization of the tweets. Expressing excitement for the game and emotions throughout the game through live-tweeting, showing school pride for the performance on the field, and lastly, showing support for the university students or alumni, which would either reference support for its student-athletes in professional sports or expressing support for a decision or quality of the university.

Explicit language

Yu & Wang (2015) studied the negative emotion on Twitter during the 2014 World Cup games, which included fear and anger. The study did not categorize explicit language tweets specifically, so the idea helped expand the concept produced from topics related to the preliminary observation of the tweets and images.

Incivility

The research question about incivility is derived from the findings by Witt (2018) on instances of incivility in the general election and observes the tweets by the Barstool accounts from a sports perspective. The levels of incivility looked at instances of name-calling, replying to a rival after being provoked by a rival, and reacting towards a rival following the trends of the rivalry game.

Glory out of Reflected Failure

The hypothesis on schadenfreude is developed out to the research by Harvard (2014). The attribute of posting content about a rival after a loss targeted at the failure to win is the most prevalent of the examples. Targeting a rival's failure to win national championships or failure to win head-to-head matchups were also examples of glory out of reflected failure observed in the preliminary studies to create the hypothesis.

Overview of the Sample

The study selected four rivalries across the country among the "Power Five" conferences. It examines the in-state rivalries between Kansas and Kansas State, Auburn, and Alabama. The other two rivalries were made up of out-of-state conference rivalries between Ohio State and Michigan, Texas, and Oklahoma. The study collected relevant tweets from February 2020- June 2020, which contained nearly 400 tweets through the collection of existing texts and images from Twitter and observations. The study highlighted 200 tweets, 25 from each of the selected Barstool accounts studied those that were the most appropriate based on their collegiate affiliation and post pertaining to the aforementioned rivalries. The study opted to avoid the rivalry between Notre Dame and Michigan because it is not a yearly conference contest, even though the teams faced off in 2019, and the next matchup is set for 2033.

Chapter 4. Findings

This study aimed to link aspects of sports fan behavior in future studies to digital platforms such as Twitter to explore both positive and negative instances that the Barstool Sports accounts relied upon. The findings show that these Barstool accounts are heavily reliant on the idea of glory out of reflected failure of the rival universities and used the social media platform studied to express positive tweets about its own university, alumni, and athletic program. These accounts are sports-focused, so the majority of the tweets are rooted in sports conversations, but there were both positive and negative instances where the digital conversations were centralized on other characteristics of college life.

The findings point to six characteristics that were consistent with all eight of the Barstool accounts. Using the codebook created, the study found three negative and three positive trends expressed by all Barstool accounts when the data was collected. (1) Glory out of reflected failure, (2) Replying to a Rival, (3) Targeting rival using negative stereotypes. The three positive instances found saw consistent trends in (4) Humor, (5) Providing a community online for discussion, (6) University pride and support for students and alumni.

RQ1a asked the varying instances of negative themes of tweets expressed by the Barstool accounts. These themes included (1) Glory out of reflected failure, (2) Replying to rival accounts, (3) Targeting rival using stereotypes. The themes found were significant to explore the negative themes expressed by the accounts with the guidance of the codebook.

Glory out of Reflected Failure

Glory out of reflected was the most common form of negative instance in the study and occurred in 47 of the tweets collected. Not all of the tweets of glory out of reflected failure contained explicit language. However, there were several instances where the Barstool accounts

would celebrate the failure of a rival opponent. Glory out of reflected failure was an integral aspect of all of the social media accounts that the study observed. It was the most common of the negative tweets that were collected. These accounts relied heavily on this aspect.

The COVID-19 pandemic canceled all sports, and none were more affected than the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament. As a result, major networks and social media accounts posted videos of various games. In Figure 4-1, the image shows a comment by the Kansas State Barstool account that displayed an ideal example of glory out of reflected failure towards primary rival Kansas. The account relishes in the loss of rival Kansas in the 2005 NCAA Men's basketball tournament. This tweet expresses the idea of glory out of reflected failure because the user is expressing pride, although the game was played in 2005 and against a team outside of the Big 12 conference. Kansas State did not qualify for the tournament that season, yet the user takes pride in the failure.

Figure 4-1. Glory Out of Reflected Failure



Not all of these instances of glory out of reflected failure revolved around sports but drew from aspects of college life such as bars in the college town. The study found that tweets that were not related to sports. Barstool Sports holds an annual "Best Bar" competition every spring. Figure 4-2 displays a post by the Kansas State account that expressed support for another Barstool account to beat a rival in the meaningless competition. Several universities participate, and followers of the Barstool account are the participants who vote in the competition. In the 2020 edition of the event, the Kansas Barstool account was named a finalist. The Kansas State account made an effort to see a rival lose, even in an irrelevant competition, by expressing support for the Barstool account of Eastern Carolina University, who would eventually win the event.

Figure 4-2. Glory Out of Reflected Failure Outside of Sports



Replying to Tweets of the Rival School

Primarily, these Barstool accounts would post tweets to create an online conversation among followers. These did not always stay within the confines of the in-group with the nature of the public aspect of Twitter. Rival Barstool accounts would jump into the conversation to start

an argument or display instances of glory out of reflected failure. An attempt to create conversation online was a common trend among all Barstool accounts to create excitement among the followers and fellow fans. Not every conversation attempt was focused on sports, but sports was the primary topic in many cases. Rival accounts took advantage of the open invitation to respond to the public tweet. In Figure 4-3, the Barstool Oklahoma account expressed the concept of glory out of reflected failure using images of the football team dominating rival Texas in football expressing the joy of the triumphs over the Longhorns.

Figure 4-3. Rival Replying to Rival's Tweet



The Barstool accounts would often reply to other accounts. A prevalent tendency for the network of Barstool accounts, especially those in the same conference, would trash talk primarily on the week of the matchup with the opposing school. For example, the Barstool accounts would tag the Barstool account of the upcoming matchup and talk about the game before, during, and after and trash talk between themselves. Rival accounts would often reply to other Barstool

accounts, resulting in some escalated online arguments between the two rivals. Calling the rival little brother was a common trend when replying to a rival account. Figure 4-4 shows a response to a rival's post directed at the Barstool account.

Figure 4-4. Rival Tagging Other Conference Opponent



Targeting Rival with Stereotypes

The Barstool accounts targeted rival universities in various ways that ranged from stereotypes of the fans of the school to using cultural references to target the stereotypes of the university. Pop culture is one of the strengths of the Barstool brand that separates it from its competition. These accounts were all consistent in keeping up with popular trends and used them to target rivals.

The Netflix documentary *Tiger King* released in 2020, was used to describe a rival university, students, or fans in several instances. In the data collected, there were seven different occurrences where the *Tiger King* documentary was used to describe a rival. Figure 4-5 aimed to depict an individual from the documentary that was deemed an unliked character, which the

Kansas State Barstool account aims to compare in-state rival Kansas to the individual of the documentary.

Figure 4-5. Targeting Rival Using Pop-Culture References



The tweets that target a rival using stereotyping did not always refer to pop-culture trends but cut deep into the socioeconomic status of rival fans. In Figure 4-6, the Barstool account projects a stereotype of Oklahoma fans, hinting that the individuals live in mobile homes. There is a stereotype that individuals who live in mobile homes have been perceived as lower-class citizens (Kusenbach, 2009). The perception of the fans of the rival university is shown in the tweet and shows that there is a set bias towards rival fans.

Figure 4-6. Using Socioeconomic Stereotypes Towards Rival Fans



There were 11 instances where accounts were targeted rivals that are not in the conference or do not play yearly. This was prevalent in cases between the Kansas and Missouri accounts. The University of Kansas account, for example, tended to be uncivil to the University of Missouri, as shown in Figure 4-7.

Figure 4-7. Targeting Stereotypes of Non-Conference Rival



Using a similar tactic that the Kansas State account used in Figure 4-5, the Kansas account used the same cultural reference of the documentary Tiger King to depict an aspect of the University of Missouri in Figure 4-7. This could also be an attempt to place a stereotype on the fans similar to Figure 4-6. The majority of the stereotypes were rooted in popular culture, but some had crossed the line between the simple reference into levels of stereotypes rooted in a deeper meaning.

RQ1b looked at the positive themes of the content produced by the selected Barstool accounts. The themes included (4) Humor, (5) Creating an online conversation about games and college life, (6) Expressing pride for the university, and support for alumni. These themes were found to be significant to the study to help identify inverse themes of negative behavior.

Humor

The Barstool accounts expressed various types in 28 tweets collected, which was the highest among positive instances. Humor that ranged from jokes about the campus, assignments, and the performance of its athletics. In the data collected, there were several jokes about the year 2020, which brought university life to a sudden halt. These tweets are relatable to college life and, more specifically, life on the campus of the school (Figure 4-8).

Figure 4-8. Using References to Campus as a Form of Humor



Similar to RQ1a, these accounts used cultural references to express humor about the campus of the school. In Figure 4-8. the Kansas Barstool account is relating this building that would be known by students or alumni to Coronavirus. References to the pandemic were standard across all accounts. Many schools were forced to shift to virtual learning for the majority of the spring, summer, and fall semesters of 2020 due to the virus, which took students away from being on campus, a prominent aspect of college life.

There were few instances where the account would use the common stereotypes about the university as an aspect of humor. Leaning into the stereotypes was evident in the data collection, as observed in Figure 4-9.

Figure 4-9. Using Stereotypes as Self-Depicting Humor



Figure 4-9 uses self-depicting humor to talk about the stereotypes of its own university. This would be a tweet that could have easily been tweeted by a rival university based on the stereotype of Kansas State University, which began as an agricultural university.

Conversations Among Fans

Live-tweeting emotions was shared among all accounts, but not every attempt to make conversation among followers was sports-centered. There were 16 tweets designed to create a conversation among followers. A majority of the content is derived from the performance of the teams, but there were several instances where the account would attempt to create a conversation

among fans about aspects of college life. The major revenue sports like football and basketball were the most common aspects on gamedays. Some accounts posted updates of non-revenue sports like baseball and softball. More tweets were hostile towards the performance of the major revenue sports, but all tweets about the non-revenue sports explored were positive towards the student-athletes. The tweets found did use explicit language in tweets yet were positive toward the performance of the team. The University of Texas and Alabama accounts were the most active in showing support for current athletes by retweeting posts by the university athletic program as well as tweeting about the games, but this was a typical instance among all accounts.

The Barstool accounts expressed excitement and provided live reactions about games, which was consistent across all of the data. The emotions shifted thought games, and the accounts showed a biased interest throughout games, which included explicit language. Figure 4-10 displays a tweet about a block by a Kansas State player against rival Kansas, and the Barstool account expressed emotion after that moment. The Wildcats lost the game, but the emotions fluctuated during games. Tweets pertaining to football and men's basketball tended to have more negative emotions expressed towards the performance of the team. There was blame towards officials throughout games.

Figure 4-10. Live-Tweeting Emotions During a Rivalry Game



Not all conversations were sports-related. Some of the tweets targeted an older audience of followers, displayed in Figure 4-11, where the account poses a question to its audience about some memories about life in the college town. In a way to keep the older audience involved with the account, the Auburn Barstool account provided an outlet for followers to remember an aspect of college life from past generations.

Figure 4-11. Creating Conversations with Older Followers



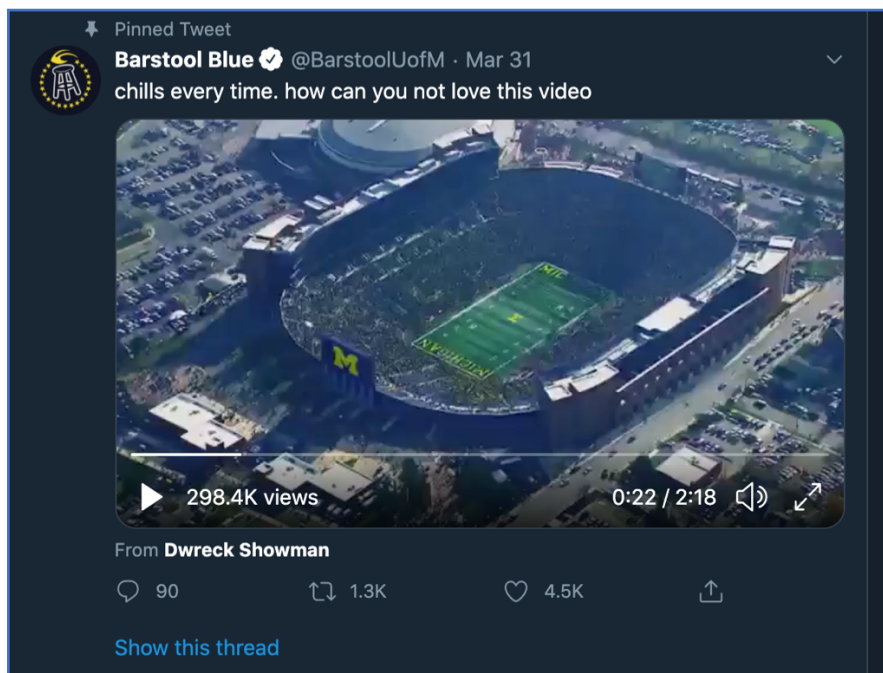
University Pride

School pride was a common theme found in 15 different tweets across the Barstool accounts. Most of the tweets did not contain explicit language but aimed solely at expressing pride for the school and alumni. There were instances where the university would post a video or

announcement of a positive moment, and the Barstool accounts took notice and applauded the school and the people of the institution.

Figure 4-12 shows the Michigan account reacting to a video that was created about the university. The video goes into more detail about the university beyond just athletics. It shows the campus in a way similar to an advertisement of the university highlighting the qualities of alumni. This video was the pinned tweet of the account at the time of collection, so it is the first tweet visible on the social media page.

Figure 4-12. Expressing University Pride



It was common for the accounts to express support for both present and past student-athletes. There were 20 instances where the account would express support in this form. If a player from a university were going to play in the Super Bowl or enter the NFL Draft, these accounts would express pride for the accomplishments of former players. In Figure 4-13, the Kansas account expressed support for former players that attempted to get drafted into the NFL. This was consistent throughout all accounts and is a common characteristic of these college

accounts because of the nature of college sports. This was a trend among all accounts, and each one showed support for student-athletes that were preparing to further their athletic careers.

Figure 4-13. Expressing Support for Current and Former Student-Athletes



Explicit Language

RQ2 aimed to answer the extent that Barstool accounts would use explicit language towards a rival. The Barstool accounts would use explicit language when referring to a rival, but also, it was a common trend to use explicit language in positive tweets, which included tweets talking about the account's favorite school.

A trend that was found was the Barstool accounts would look for casual ways to insult a rival school. In Figure 4-14, the Alabama Barstool account put an explicit word on an egg to insult a rival school in Auburn. This was significant to the research question as many of the accounts would use explicit language when talking about a rival.

Figure 4-14. Instance of Explicit Language Towards Rival



An aspect that was not expected was that explicit language was not exclusive to negative tweets. The language was used a similar amount when expressing positive emotion. The Barstool accounts showed significant support of the non-revenue sports of the university and live-tweeted updates and responses about the game but would use explicit language. A common trend of the tweets about the non-revenue sports was that the accounts were rarely negative towards the teams but was critical of the opposing school and the officials. Figure 4-15 shows the Barstool account showing excitement during the game using explicit language updates similar to the conversation among fans explored in RQ1b.

Figure 4-15. Using Explicit Language in Positive Instances



Uncivil Behavior

RQ3 asked about the level of incivility that a Barstool account would express towards a rival school and overall, while the interactions between rivals hit peaks on occasion, but these tweets never threatened anything that would violate a policy that would result in a suspension from the platform. There were moments of incivility when referencing a rival school.

The data collected showed evidence of data similar to Witt (2018), which lists characteristics such as name-calling as an uncivil quality sparked by the leader of an in-group similar to the Trump and Clinton Campaigns. There were moments where an account would be provoked as an outcome of a tweet by a rival or a situation from a game.

The most notable instance of uncivil behavior came following the brawl between Kansas and Kansas State in January of 2020. The Kansas State account, as shown in Figure 4-16, criticized fans of Kansas and referenced an incident following a game in Manhattan, Kansas, when a student sitting in the student section bumped into a Kansas player. The account criticizes the rival that a Kansas player took a chair and nearly hit someone with it.

Figure 4-16. Uncivil Behavior Sparked by Uncivil Action in the Rivalry Game



Glory Out of Reflected Failure

H1 hypothesized that the instances of glory out of reflected failure towards a rival would be evident across all Barstool accounts. The hypothesis was supported by all eight accounts across all four rivalries. The concept was evident in nearly all negative instances in the corpus and was one of the driving forces of content by the Barstool accounts.

The idea of glory out of reflected failure was amplified during weeks in which the two universities played. It was often mixed into the tweets leading up to the game, and the account of the winning school of the rivalry matchup was the aggressor of this concept. Figure 4-17 shows the victor of the rivalry matchup relishing in the win. The Texas Barstool account expresses happiness for defeating rival Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma, in the final seconds of the game. The account even tagged the opposing account, which was a common attribute of these tweets. The Barstool account also mentions the Oklahoma Barstool account as an extra measure.

Figure 4-17. Glory Out of Reflected Failure After Rivalry Game



The concept of glory out of reflected failure was the most common form of negative instance towards a rival and was used in several types of contexts ranging from gameday to cultural references. Figure 4-1 and Figure 4-2 also show evidence of the concept of glory out of reflected failure. The content of the data collected expressed several instances of glory out of reflective failure, which supported the hypothesis.

Summary

The study found significance in the concept of glory out of reflected failure and the negative and positive themes that drive the content of the Barstool accounts. Replying to rival accounts was an attribute that the rival would take advantage of, and using stereotypes in pop culture and socioeconomic status were significant. There were instances in escalated uses of explicit language, even when expressing positive emotion. Humor was a prominent aspect of the accounts, and there was an attempt to create conversation inside the Barstool thread based on

replies to tweets and the expression of pride towards alumni and the university. These findings help advance the literature on social media, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5. Discussion

The study set out to explore the various trends of rival Barstool accounts and the behavior of the accounts. Through the data collected on the Barstool affiliate of universities, the themes of positive and negative behavior can create a starting point for future research of the company in the context of social media and the prevalence of glory out of reflected failure on Twitter.

Summary of Results

The concept of glory out of reflected failure was consistent throughout all Barstool accounts studied, and characteristics of the notion were evident in the various other themes of the Barstool accounts. The trends discovered found in the study showed that there were both positive and negative instances across all Barstool Sports accounts. Negative tweets focused more on a rival, expressed stereotyping by using pop-culture references, and replying to a rival. Positive attributes were present, such as humor, creating a conversation among past and current students, and school pride. There was a heightened sense of uncivil behavior when provoked by actions on the playing field, and opinions would shape that element. The findings across all Twitter supported the hypothesis that the Barstool accounts would use a large amount of glory out of reflected failure towards a rival account under scrutiny. The concept was represented in other elements of the study, which can provide context into the concept of glory out of reflected failure and portray it in the context of the Uses and Gratifications Theory

Theoretical Implications

The concept of glory out of reflected failure has the potential to be explored in the context of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, but it is not used in many studies. The concept is rooted in the Social Identity Theory but could be applied in Uses and Gratifications Theory to explain self-esteem strategies similar in both theories. The usage of Barstool Sports accounts was

based on preliminary observations and the negative reputation that the company has received. The study used the tweets of the student-run affiliates of Barstool on campus to obtain a network that was already established to create a framework to use in the future.

The findings on incivility were slightly tamer than projected, and there was an understanding of a line between rival schools on the Barstool Sports accounts. There were instances of incivility that were similar to the name-calling attributes of the Trump campaign on social media, as discovered by Witt (2018) but there were no tweets that violated the community guidelines of Twitter in the study. These accounts might have a code of conduct provided by Barstool Sports, so an individual user could portray more uncivil behaviors on social media. These accounts are also likely protected under Barstool Sports, so the individual in control may be able to post more uncivil posts knowing that there will be fewer consequences. As research on the fan on social media develops, there could be more uncivil qualities that were evident in this study even though this study found instances of uncivil behavior. Sports rivalries could be more aggressive in the stands than on the field because of this concept of glory out of reflected failure that goes beyond one game. The feelings towards a rival go beyond the matchups on the field, so the feelings that's fans carry extend farther than the rivalry on the field.

Limitations

This study had several limitations, yet it provided valuable information for future research on sports rivalries. The study's original design included six total rivalries across ten different universities, which proved to be overly ambitious in the data collection process. The varying numbers of tweets per Barstool account proved to be a challenge for data collection, which resulted in missed tweets due to the high level of activity on some of these accounts. An unexpected challenge was the yearly best bar contest held by the Barstool organization that fell

during the data collection process and could have skewed the findings, yet tweets from this were minimal in number and relevant to the study. This created a small gap in the data collection, but there was still evidence of the negative behavior identified in the findings. This competition also fell during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which created another limitation to the study. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the cancelation of live sports in the United States of America, which created an incredible obstacle for the study, but will provide significant studies on sports fans in future studies. The uncertainty of college athletics in the 2020 athletic year affected the progress of the research, which resulted in slight changes to the study. The slow return to normality in college athletics could benefit the research on any adjustment on fan loyalty or behavior in sales, viewership, and social media interaction.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Observing the Twitter usage of the accounts above opens the door for future research into the civility of individual users in public online services. Future research could aim to observe how individual fans interact on social media during the college football season or to study if glory out of reflected failure is a common form of maintaining self-esteem among sports fans or even individuals who are a part of varying political parties. The research shows that the self-esteem strategies such as glory out of reflected failure or basking in reflected glory are elements of the Uses and Gratifications Theory. This study creates a crucial baseline for future studies in this highly pertinent area. Concepts in this study could be used to study behaviors of political organizations and the levels of incivility that develop within the group on social media. The insurrection of the Capitol Building on January 6th, 2021, and the behaviors by political figures, groups, and users on social media before, during, and after the event could be observed in a future study. The political spectrum of the United States is evident on social media, and this

research could aid in exploring the behaviors of organizations who participated in the event to gain a tangible grasp on the behavior of these groups. This research could be applied to politics to observe the level of civility towards the other political party.

Conclusion

The results show that both the idea of incivility and schadenfreude was highly present among all Barstool schools according to the predetermined classifications, which supported the hypothesis. In most instances, the tweets referencing schadenfreude also contained explicit language, but it was not exclusive to tweets of a rival opponent. There were instances where explicit language was used in the positive tweets about the university. The Barstool accounts also expressed multiple positive elements of the university and promoted school pride in a civil manner.

The idea of glory out of reflected failure and civility are elements of sports rivalries that have the potential to contribute to the greater body of literature on fan behavior on social media. There are elements found in the research of the Barstool accounts that could be repeated among individual users, which could show more incivility than these accounts. The potential for further study remains open, and it could show interesting results if fans are not allowed at sporting events when the continuation of college athletics occurs. There will always be rivalries among schools, but social media has created a platform for regular fans to target rival fans to express hatred towards or bask in the rival's failure, and this creates a way for researchers to study the changing landscape of fan behavior as social media continues to evolve.

Chapter 6. References

- Barrabi, T. (2020, May 29). Barstool's Dave Portnoy RIPS Roger Goodell, NFL for blocking auction win: 'He's a coward'. From <https://www.foxbusiness.com/sports/barstool-dave-portnoy-roger-goodell-blocked-auction-bid>
- Blasi, W. (2020, March 27). With March Madness canceled, schools will lose out on \$375 million from the NCAA. From <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/with-march-madness-canceled-schools-will-lose-out-on-375-million-from-the-ncaa-2020-03-27>
- Burns, M. J. (2017, July 18). Past, present, future: How barstool sports is swinging for the fences in digital media. From <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markjburns/2017/07/11/past-present-future-how-barstool-sports-is-swinging-for-the-fences-in-digital-media/?sh=6b6d2d2d4edb>
- Campbell Jr, R. M., Aiken, D., & Kent. A. (2004). Beyond BIRGing and CORFing: Continuing the Exploration of Fan Behavior. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 13(3).
- Chung, D. J. (2013). The dynamic advertising effect of collegiate athletics. *Marketing Science*, 32(5), 679-698.
- Cialdini, R. B., Borden, R. J., Thome, A., Walker, M. R., Freeman, S., & Sloan, L. R. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 34(3), 366.
- Coviello, J. (2019). *Barstool consequences: college students' risk perceptions when interacting with Barstool Sports' modeling of the college experience through Instagram* (Doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University).
- DeCosta-Klipa, N. (2015, May 12). Barstool sports employees arrested during sit-in at NFL Offices. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2015/05/12/barstool-sports-employees-arrested-during-sit-in-at-nfl-offices>
- Dees, W., Bennett, G., & Ferreira, M. (2010). Personality fit in NASCAR: An evaluation of driver-sponsor congruence and its impact on sponsorship effectiveness outcomes. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 19(1), 25-35.
- Deflategate timeline: After 544 days, Tom Brady gives in. (2015, September 03). Retrieved February 18, 2021, from https://www.espn.com/blog/new-england-patriots/post/_/id/4782561/timeline-of-events-for-deflategate-tom-brady
- Demographics of Social Media Users and Adoption in the United States. (2019, June 12). Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>.
- Dick, J. (2019, August 14). Barstool sports is legit. Retrieved February 22, 2021, from <https://civicscience.com/barstool-sports-is-legit/>

- DiMoro, A. (2015, July 02). The growing impact of today's sports culture. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/anthonydimoro/2015/07/02/the-growing-impact-of-social-media-on-todays-sports-culture/?sh=17a112cf31a2>
- Dionisio, P., Leal, C., & Moutinho, L. (2008). Fandom affiliation and tribal behaviour: a sports marketing application. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*. DOI: 10.1108/13522750810845531
- Dunn, T., Doyno, S., & McCarthy, K. (2018, June 15). The female CEO behind polarizing sports media giant Barstool Sports. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from <https://abcnews.go.com/Sports/female-ceo-polarizing-sports-media-giant-barstool-sports/story?id=55919642#:~:text=The%20company's%20target%20demographic%2C%20men,content%2C%20according%20to%20the%20company.&text=Dave%20Portnoy%20said%20the%20early,football%2C%20poker%20and%20gambling.%22>
- Foxsports. (2015, November 26). Five years ago, one Alabama fan took the Iron Bowl rivalry with Auburn too far. Retrieved from <https://www.foxsports.com/college-football/story/alabama-crimson-tide-auburn-tigers-iron-bowl-toomer-s-corner-harvey-updyke-112615>.
- Gartner, A. (2019, February 7). K-State students' profane chant continues against KU. Retrieved from <https://www.ksnt.com/news/k-state-students-profane-chant-continues-against-ku/>.
- Havard, C. T. (2014). Glory out of reflected failure: The examination of how rivalry affects sport fans. *Sport Management Review*, 17(3), 243-253.
- Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. Psychology Press
- Katz, E., Blumler, J., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and Gratifications Research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509-523.
- Katz, E., Hass, H., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). On the use of the mass media for important things. *American sociological review*, 164-181.
- Kiesler, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Culture of the Internet*. Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Kim, B., & Kim, Y. (2019). Growing as social beings: How social media use for college sports is associated with college students' group identity and collective self-esteem. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 97, 241-249.
- Kim, Y., Liu, Y., & Shan, Z. (2017). Beyond touchdown: College students' sports participation, social media use, college attachment, and psychological well-being. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(7), 895–903. DOI: 10.1016/j.tele.2017.03.006

- Kusenbach, M. (2009). Salvaging decency: Mobile home residents' strategies of managing the stigma of "trailer" living. *Qualitative Sociology*, 32(4) 399-428.
- Mandell, N. (2016, November 25). Why the letter 'M' is missing in Ohio ahead of OSU-Michigan game. Retrieved March 27, 2021, from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ftw/2016/11/25/the-simple-reason-why-the-letter-m-is-missing-across-the-state-of-ohio-this-weekend/94425830/>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Schadenfreude. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved March 25, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/schadenfreude>
- Moses, L. (2018, December 18). 'It's just not Fair': Barstool sports founder Dave Portnoy defends his site against accusations of toxicity and misogyny. Retrieved February 22, 2021, from <https://www.businessinsider.com/barstool-sports-dave-portnoy-responds-to-accusations-of-toxicity-and-misogyny-2018-12>
- Pegoraro, A. (2013). Sports fandom in the digital world. *The Routledge handbook of sport communication*, 248-258.
- Portnoy, D. (2017, August 23). The Barstool college viceroy program is back and we want you. Retrieved from <https://www.barstoolsports.com/blog/248949/the-barstool-college-program-is-back-and-we-want-you-2>
- Reid, J., & McManus, J. (2018, November 13). The NFL's racial divide. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from <https://theundefeated.com/features/the-nfls-racial-divide/>
- Ruggiero, T. (2000). Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21st century. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3(1), 3-37, DOI: 10.1207/S15327825MCS0301_02
- Scherer, J. (2018, September 23). Onalaska ISD superintendent resigns after quarterback comment. Retrieved February 4, 2021, from <https://www.chron.com/houston/article/Onalaska-ISD-superintendent-resigns-after-13249845.php>
- Shannon-Missal, L. (2016, January 26). Pro Football is Still America's Favorite Sport. Retrieved from <https://theharrispoll.com/new-york-n-y-this-is-a-conflicting-time-for-football-fans-on-the-one-hand-with-the-big-game-50-no-less-fast-approaching-its-a-time-of-excitement-especial/>.
- Skretta, D. (2020, January 22). Ugly brawl breaks out at the end of Kansas State-Kansas game. From <https://apnews.com/article/672f3a0f2e3f2e861624f407d104cfc4>
- Smith, M. D. (2017, January 31). NFL pulls credentials from Barstool Sports. Retrieved March 25, 2021, from <https://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2017/01/31/nfl-pulls-credentials-from-barstool-sports/>

- Smith, L. R., Pegoraro, A., & Cruikshank, S. A. (2019). Tweet, Retweet, Favorite: The Impact of Twitter Use on Enjoyment and Sports Viewing. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 63(1), 94–110. DOI: 10.1080/08838151.2019.1568805
- Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Information (International Social Science Council)*, 13(2), 65-93.
- Toma, J. D. (2003). *Football U.: Spectator sports in the life of the American university*. University of Michigan Press.
- Twitter.com (2021). Permanent suspension of @realdonaldtrump. (2021, January 8). From https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2020/suspension.html
- Twitter.com (2021). About Twitter: Our company, purpose, principles, leadership. (n.d). From <https://about.twitter.com/en/who-we-are/our-company>
- Twitter.com (2021). Twitter account notices and what they mean- suspensions and more. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/notices-on-twitter>
- Wakefield, L. T., & Bennett, G. (2018). Sports fan experience: Electronic word-of-mouth in ephemeral social media. *Sport Management Review*, 21(2), 147–159. DOI: 10.1016/j.smr.2017.06.003
- Wann, D. L., & Branscombe, N. R. (1990). Die-hard and fair-weather fans: Effects of identification on BIRGing and CORFing tendencies. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 14(2), 103-117
- Wann, D. L., & Grieve, F. G. (2005). Biased evaluations in in-group and out-group spectator behavior at sporting events: The importance of team identification and threats to social identity. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 145, 531-545.
- Welper, B. (2020, December 08). Ohio State vs. Michigan football: Series history, scores, notable games. Retrieved February 2, 2021, from <https://www.ncaa.com/news/football/article/2020-12-08/ohio-state-vs-michigan-football-series-history-scores-notable-games#:~:text=Six%20decades%20later%2C%20Michigan%20defeated,home%20in%20Columbus%2031%2D6>.
- Welsh-Huggins, A. (2020, October 27). 1-Year sentence for angry fan who made football game threat. Retrieved March 29, 2021, from <https://apnews.com/article/college-football-columbus-ohio-state-buckeyes-football-urban-meyer-michigan-00e91d2ea387342f6d26441957f332d1>
- Witt, A. D. (2018). Contentious: Candidate incivility on Twitter in the 2016 general election

Yu, Y., & Wang, X. (2015). World Cup 2014 in the Twitter World: A big data analysis of sentiments in U.S. sports fans' tweets. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 48, 392–400. DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2015.01.075

Appendix A- Codebook for Data Collection

A codebook was created using the literature review and preliminary observation collection to aid in the categorization of the tweets collected. The codebook played an integral part in assisting in the categorization of RQ1a and RQ1b, which focuses on the positive and negative instances.

Positive Tweets

Excitement: "The [name] just scored a huge touchdown!" or "We just had a great stop!"

Pride: "Another win for the [nickname], never any doubt." or "I love my [school name]! What a win for the [insert name]!"

Support for university or alumni: "I love being a part of this university" or "This former player is tearing it up in the NFL."

Negative Tweets

Anger towards rival with explicit language: "F**K [school name]" or "[insert team name] is trash. They suck!"

Happiness of rival's failure: "[Insert name] lost to [non-rival opponent], I'm so happy!" or "[Rival school] cannot do anything right, they lost to [non-rival]."

Critical of alumni or students at a rival university: "[Insert college] can't sell out a stadium!" or "Students from [insert college] are coming into town for the game. It's going to be a long day."