



Bonding Through Sports Talk

*“The exploration and analysis of the
common bond in the
Boston Sports Culture
and how it is effected through specific
communication practices”*

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Introduction

- Project conducted for Research Seminar in Spring of 2009
- Why Boston Sports?

Ethnography

- *“Ethnographic research, therefore, attempts to fully describe a variety of aspects and norms of a cultural group to enhance understanding of the people being studied.”*
- Research methods used
 - Informal Interviews
 - Participant Observation

A collage of various sports-related images serves as the background. It includes fans cheering, athletes in action, and players holding trophies. Notably, a Boston Celtics player in a white jersey with the number 34 is visible in the lower right, and another player with the number 20 is partially visible next to him. The overall theme is sports and celebration.

How it all started...

- Location & Interview Choices
 - Boston Sports Themed Restaurants
 - Key figures & friends
- Entry into the field
- Developing the interview

A background collage of various sports fans, including people wearing team jerseys, hats, and holding up phones to take pictures. The collage is composed of many small, overlapping images of fans from different sports teams, creating a sense of a large, diverse crowd.

Research Questions

- What is the definition of the “common bond” in the Boston sports culture?
- How do parasocial relationships in the culture enhance the bonding experience between members of the culture?
- What does the idea of passion overkill mean and what effects does it have on communication practices in the culture?

A collage of various sports-related images serves as the background. It includes close-ups of athletes' faces, a crowd of fans, and basketball players in action. Notably, a Boston Celtics player with the number 34 is visible in the lower right, and a player with the number 20 is in the lower center. The overall theme is sports and achievement.

Interviews and Data Analysis

- Learning things you don't expect
- Analyzing Information
 - Beginning to organize data
 - Drawing ideas and finding similar concepts

The Common Bond

- The importance of the common bond
 - Can relate to this personally and believe that many other fans can as well
- Regular Occurrence
 - Mentioned in every interview
 - Described in various forms with each interview

The Common Bond

 Excerpt from an interview with Anthony:

- *“Its got to be something that the two people both like, and that being together around it makes it even better. So I like it individually but if I’m there with my father I like it more, because I think it gives us something that we can do together. So individually I love basketball, I love football, but if I can go to a game with him, or if I can watch a game with him, I think its something we can do together and its better.”*

Positive Effects of The Common Bond

- Creates
 - When people are in unfamiliar locations, having the common interest is a starting point for conversation
- Strengthens
 - The common interest that started the relationship is what is shared

Negative Effects of The Common Bond

- Weakening relationships
 - Experiencing the culture in different ways
 - Leads to feeling of isolation
- Creates blocks in communication
 - Feeling angry or upset after a loss or bad event can block communication

Parasocial Relationship Theory

- Horton and Wohl explain two characteristics of the theory
 - “*Seeming face to face relationship*”
 - “*Met as if they were in the circle of one's peers*”
- Anthony’s parasocial relationship with Bill Simmons and Tom Brady
 - Admiration vs. Parasocial

Losing players: Breaking Up



How Jared Carrabis describes what it was like to lose a fan favorite

- *“What comes into play is how good they were, how long they were here, and how they leave. Manny was here for a long time, he was here since I was in like 7th grade, it gets to the point where all I’ve ever known is going to Fenway and seeing Manny Ramirez in left field. Was he good? He was probably one of the best players we’ve ever had ever. How did he leave? Awful. So what that’s like is, your in the best relationship of your life for seven and half years, you break up with them in the worst possible way possible and you see them with a new boyfriend the next day.”*

Losing players: Acceptance and Grievance

📢 Excerpt from an interview with Anthony:

“I think they go through stages, it’s almost like the death stages; you have your acceptance, your grievance. At first people are shocked, like I can’t believe Damon left, I can’t believe he went there, for 2 million extra a year...I can’t believe he...and then it goes like, if you were a big fan you kind of get sad....then I think it kind of turns to anger. How dare he? How could he go there? How could he do that? And then I think eventually, you accept it. I don’t you ever totally accept it cause every time he comes back he gets boo’d beyond belief.”

Relating to the Common Bond

- Everyone is reacting equally
- Sharing the unique experience of the parasocial
- Establishes a sense of comfort

Passion Overkill

- When to draw a line
 - Many people know how to prioritize, but some people experience passion overkill
- Overexposure to a Culture
 - A bartender who works across from the TD Banknorth Garden who hates Boston Sports

Shirt Identity Theory

- Ian; bartender in Boston
 - If you buy a captain's shirt then you yourself must have good leadership qualities
- Anthony's example
 - Will look for the shirt of a player who is fun and outgoing, yet prideful in their defense
- Jared's example
 - Owns close to 200 Red Sox shirts, but not one is a Kevin Youkilous shirt because he could never see himself being that player

Conclusion

- The common bond can be defined as something that people share; and in turn their experience is enhanced
- Parasocial relationships are a unique experience for members and contributes to the common bond
- Passion overkill occurs in this culture; and is a barrier to effective communication

Conclusion

Interview analysis and
future updates can be found at:

**[http://bostonsportsculture.
wordpress.com](http://bostonsportsculture.wordpress.com)**