

**BONDING AND ABANDONING: GENDER, SOCIAL INTERACTION, AND  
RELATIONSHIPS IN FANTASY SPORTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Using data on 396 fantasy sports participants, we explore how fantasy sports participation impacts players' perceptions of their relationships with others, with attention to how and why outcomes are sexed and gendered. We find male players are more likely than female players to report bonding with friends through their participation, particularly via highly-masculinized bragging and "smack talk" with others in their male-dominated leagues. Female players also discuss fantasy sports as a means of relationship building or strengthening, particularly with friends in their leagues or men in their lives; but, our analyses suggest they may trade off social connections, as women who are highly involved in other groups are less likely to use fantasy sports to connect with others. Finally, male players, more so than their female counterparts, indicate fantasy sports participation strains relationships with their partners and families, an effect seemingly attributable to their greater emotional and mental investment in fantasy sports.

## **BONDING AND ABANDONING: GENDER, SOCIAL INTERACTION, AND RELATIONSHIPS IN FANTASY SPORTS**

Fantasy sports, where individuals build virtual sports teams comprised of real athletes who accumulate points based on their performance in actual games, have exploded in popularity recently. Forty-one million people play in America and Canada alone—a threefold increase since 2005 (FSTA 2015)—yet little academic research has investigated fantasy sports. Moreover, although a rather expansive body of research on gender and sports exists, such research typically fails to explore the extent to which fantasy sports provide another arena for gender construction in the contemporary United States. Additionally, fantasy sports research focuses generally on players’ motivations, mental and financial investment, and duration and extent of involvement (e.g. number of years and leagues played). Here, we explore one set of outcomes of fantasy sports participation—specifically, the impacts on players’ relationships and interactions with others—with attention to how and why these outcomes are sex-differentiated and what they might reveal about the social construction of gender in American society.<sup>1</sup>

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Although women’s participation in sport and the resources devoted to women’s sports have increased in the United States since the passage of Title IX in 1972, “sport, as a social creation, cannot escape the gendered social order and, therefore, continues to be a site to support male hegemony and women’s disempowerment” (Farrell, Fink, and Fields 2011:191; see also Crawley, Foley, and Shehan 2008; McDonagh and Pappano 2008). Women are still

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<sup>1</sup> Two terminology notes: First, we use the terms relationship effects or outcomes as shorthand for referring to our dependent measures. We recognize, however, that the relationships we describe may be bidirectional. Second, we use the terms sex/male/female when referring to demographic distinctions, including those identified via our survey. We use the terms gender/men/women when referring to socially constructed and enacted distinctions and when authors of previous works use those terms specifically.

underrepresented in leadership positions in sports (Messner 2009), women who violate gender norms through exercise or sport are devalued (Blinde and Taub 1992; Salvatore and Marecek 2010), and female athletes and sports receive unequal media treatment (Messner and Cooky 2010). Moreover, sports—and the competition, dominance, and aggression woven into them—remain intricately connected to the social construction of masculinity (Connell 1987; Crawley, Foley, and Shehan 2008). Sports provide an arena for men to “do gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987) by displaying masculine characteristics and allowing them to bond in socially acceptable ways (Messner 2009). “In short, sport equals masculinity” and acts as requisite gender training (Crawley, Foley, and Shehan 2008:59).

Since the vast majority of sports remain sex-segregated in various ways (McDonagh and Pappano 2008), fantasy sports represent a rare sports domain where males and females compete side-by-side. Moreover, presumed physical differences in size and strength seemingly justifying single-sex sporting competitions are effectively irrelevant to fantasy sport performance. These conditions make fantasy sports particularly interesting, yet scholars have only just begun examining them and little of this work has focused on their gendered dynamics. Given that men and women with relatively similar levels of overall fanship (Kissane and Winslow 2013; Lee et al. 2013) compete together in fantasy sports and their physical athletic prowess and gendered bodies seem immaterial, one might expect similarities in their player experiences.

Conversely, cultural associations of sport with manhood may trump the potential mitigating effects of mixed-sex leagues and the irrelevance of physical aptitude. Men need not play sports to garner masculinity points. Crawley, Foley, and Shehan (2008) detail how men who haven’t achieved athletic success or currently cannot do so (e.g., due to age or injury) gain “vicarious masculinity” through athletic successes of other men (e.g., pro-athletes) and, for

some, reliving their former athletic glory. They explain that though most men don't have the bodies or physical capabilities of male elite athletes, all men gain vicarious masculinity by their existence, as maleness in general (and the male body) becomes associated with athletic prowess. Thus, the non-athletic can achieve vicarious masculinity and "bank on positive accountability to masculinity" "simply by having a male body and knowing all the pertinent sports statistics" (Crawley, Foley, and Shehan 2008:134). Given that actual athletic participation isn't necessary to gain vicarious masculinity, the benefits men accrue simply via the association between sport and masculinity may well translate into the fantasy arena.

Notably, even when men promote female spectatorship of sport, they don't see them as authorities or "equals in dialogue and participation" (Farrell, Fink, and Fields 2011:195). As such, even highly experienced and knowledgeable women report being made peripheral by men and excluded from sports conversations, reinforcing that sport is a male space (Farrell, Fink, and Fields 2011). Thus, while women/girls may watch and play real sports (or, say, fantasy sports) with men/boys, expectations are that they are less capable than their male counterparts and should be taken less seriously (Crawley, Foley, and Shehan 2008). Moreover, because of accountability to their female bodies, no matter how much they know about sports or accomplish athletically, achieving vicarious masculinity is impossible (Crawley, Foley, and Shehan 2008).

The small body of existing fantasy sports research indicates men and women vary in their rates of play, and to some extent, their reasons for playing and how they play. Numerically, fantasy sports are male-dominated. Approximately 80% of players are male (FSTA 2015) and male players average more years participating in fantasy sports, participate in more leagues annually, and spend more time weekly on fantasy sports than do female players (Ruibley and Billings 2012). Perhaps not surprisingly, men also score higher in their perceived level of fantasy

sports-related knowledge than do women (Ruihley and Billings 2012). While some research has identified gender similarities in motives for playing (e.g., playing for arousal, entertainment, escape, self-esteem, and surveillance) (Ruihley and Billings 2012), men more frequently than women report playing fantasy sports for “enjoyment,” to “pass time,” and for the potential money and prizes (Kissane and Winslow 2013; Ruihley and Billings 2012). Somewhat counter to dominant cultural constructions of femininity, Kissane and Winslow (2013) find women’s motivations for playing fantasy sports centered around a love of sports and desire to increase their sports involvement and knowledge.

Moreover, Davis and Duncan (2006) argue men use fantasy sports to establish and reinforce their masculinity in much the same way they use real sports to these ends. Specifically, drafting teams and manipulating lineups provide the feeling of being in control and in charge, allowing players “to experience the social power that predominantly White, male owners of professional sports teams possess on a daily basis” (Davis and Duncan 2006:252). It is unsurprising, then, that men speak of playing fantasy sports as attempts at fulfilling boyhood dreams of being professional team owners or general managers (GMs)—motivations women do not identify (Kissane and Winslow 2013).

Fantasy sports also provide a way for men to “exercise dominance over each other” through competition and pursuit of the win, further establishing and reinforcing their masculinity (Davis and Duncan 2006:254). In fact, men are more likely than women to report playing fantasy sports for the competitive aspect and gaining an outlet for their competitive spirit through their participation (Kissane and Winslow 2013). This emphasis on competition—and its connection to displaying masculinity—is further supported by men’s greater likelihood of reporting that fantasy sports provide an area in which they can “talk smack” and gain “bragging rights (Kissane

and Winslow 2013; Howie and Campbell 2015). Research also suggests men, more so than women, particularly value the opportunity to demonstrate their perceived superior sports knowledge to others (Kissane and Winslow 2013).

Despite the above research, scholars have given little serious attention to outcomes of fantasy sports participation for players, and fewer still have compared fantasy sports participation's influence on men's and women's relationships. On the one hand, fantasy sports may strengthen men's relationships, particularly with other men, and research suggests that men are indeed motivated to play for social reasons (Howie and Campbell 2015). Dominant constructions of masculinity are based on heterosexuality, making intimate connections among men difficult (Connell 1987; Messner 2014). Sport, being constructed as a masculine domain, can provide "a means of communication and connection" for men (Farrell, Fink, and Fields 2011:196) —a safe vehicle through which they can both demonstrate masculinity and establish close bonds with one another, even if these bonds are contingent on athletic performance and/or sports literacy (Howie and Campbell 2015; Messner 1987; 2014). Thus, fantasy sports may provide additional or, perhaps, substitute venues for male bonding and relationship-building when one cannot play real sports (due to age, ability, and/or opportunity) in a larger cultural environment in which other forms of connection between men aren't socially acceptable and facilitated. Furthermore, fantasy sports' "Old Boy's Club" environment and "masculine forms of male exchange, or banter" may facilitate bonding (Davis and Duncan 2006:260–261). Lastly, men's greater involvement in fantasy sports relative to their female counterparts may advantage them in forging relationships through fantasy sports. In fact, substantial commitment to fantasy sports may be necessary for relationship building to occur, as pursuing other interests at the

expense of fantasy undermines the enjoyment of others in the league (Howie and Campbell 2015).

Less clear is how much women might connect with others through fantasy sports. On the one hand, given their typical advantage in close ties to friends and family (Marsden 1987; McPherson et al. 2006), women may be less likely to utilize fantasy sports leagues for bonding. Moreover, since gender is embedded and institutionalized in families in ways that lead women to devote more hours to household labor and carework than men and, therefore, to have less leisure time (Bianchi 2000; Sayer 2005), they may not have the time nor energy to devote to cultivating relationships through fantasy sports. Indeed, women spend less time weekly on fantasy sports, are involved in fewer leagues, and are less likely to report engaging in fantasy sports to “pass time” than are men (Ruihley and Billings 2012). Also, as sports are constructed as a male preserve, women’s participation may be seen as deviant, disruptive, and a threat to male hegemony, resulting in strained interactions with others.

On the other hand, studies on women’s sports consumption suggest women may try to use fantasy sports to relate to men. Farrell, Fink, and Fields (2011), for example, report that men exert a large influence on women’s sport consumer decisions, socializing women into sports fandom and habits. As a result, women they studied watched and attended sporting events to spend time with men in their lives, acquiescing “to the leisure demands of their husbands, boyfriends, and sons” and using their sport spectatorship to fulfill wifely and motherly roles (Farrell, Fink, and Fields 2011:199). If fantasy sports participation operates similarly, we’d expect that women’s participation would enhance rather than strain their social relationships, albeit in a way that shores up male power by “supporting and facilitating the leisure wishes of men” (Farrell, Fink, and Fields 2011:199).



There is also potential for fantasy sports to strain relationships, and, based on prior studies, we'd expect men to experience more relational issues than women. As noted above, men invest more time in fantasy sports (Kissane and Winslow 2013; Ruihley and Billings 2012) and, to the extent that minutes spent on fantasy sports cannot be used for other endeavors, this might cause tension among family members. Research on time use in general indicates women have less free time than men and, when faced with needing to make time trade-offs, are more likely to curtail self-care (notably, sleep) (Bianchi 2000; Sayer 2005). This suggests women may be less likely than men to allow fantasy sports to take time away from their relationships with partners and families, thus limiting strain.

Beyond time expenditures, fantasy sports may pose relational problems if players become too mentally or emotionally absorbed in them, and research does suggest fantasy sports enthusiasts are heavily emotionally invested in their teams (Lee et al. 2013). Participants report becoming frustrated, stressed, or angry because of fantasy sports, and some claim their team's performance determines their mood and attitude for the day (or even longer) (Kissane and Winslow 2013; Howie and Campbell 2015). Accordingly, such players may retreat from others or take out their losses on family and friends. Given that male fans are more likely than female to report being upset by their team's losses (James and Ridinger 2002), the former may disproportionately experience the impact of emotional investments on relationship tension.

In sum, while scholars have begun investigating fantasy sports in general and gender and sex differences and similarities in fantasy sports more specifically, little research explicitly examines fantasy sports participation's impacts on individuals' relationships with others and how these dynamics may be gendered. Given the socially constructed associations between sport and heterosexual masculinity, men, who are more highly invested and involved in fantasy sports than

women, may utilize them to bond with other men. For women, fantasy sports provide a rare opportunity to play a sport side-by-side with men and offer the potential for extending and shoring up ties through social interactions and a shared interest. But, as outsiders in this masculine domain and by virtue of their relatively lower investment and involvement in fantasy sports, women may not be as likely to build or strengthen relationships through their participation. At the same time, fantasy sports participation may strain relationships with others, tensions which men may experience more acutely given their greater level of involvement and investment. Here we add to the literature on gender and sports generally and fantasy sports in particular by examining the perceived effects of fantasy sports participation on players' relationships, how these may be sex-differentiated, and the potentially gendered mechanisms explaining these relationships.

## METHODS

This study uses data obtained through an online survey, which Kissane designed to explore the experience of playing fantasy sports; characteristics and strategies of players; and players' thoughts on their involvement, the hobby, and its effects. The survey, launched in October 2012 and closed in January 2013,<sup>2</sup> contains predominantly quantitative questions, some based on previous surveys on the subject, with a handful of open-ended qualitative ones. Below, we detail the relevant sample, survey instrument and measures, and analyses.

### *The Sample*

Respondents were primarily recruited through fantasy sports-related message boards and threads, Facebook, Twitter, and a Philadelphia sports columnist's article on the study that

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<sup>2</sup> Kissane closed the survey January 31, 2013 as responses to the survey had ebbed (only 12 individuals participated in January).

included a link to the survey (Hofmann 2012). While we did not collect recruitment information, about a quarter of respondents took the survey the day the newspaper article was published, suggesting a substantial proportion of respondents learned of the survey this way. The study was marketed as seeking individuals' thoughts on and experiences with fantasy sports; therefore, not all of the respondents had played (the survey included a separate set of questions for non-players). Our analyses here focus on the 396 respondents (of 453 total respondents) who indicated that they had ever played fantasy sports. Of these individuals, 321 (81%) were male and 74 were female, with the majority having played fantasy football in the last year (91% of the males and 87% of the females).<sup>3</sup> Our sample is predominantly white (approximately 95%), employed (just under 90%), and well-educated (over three-quarters have at least a 4-year college degree). The respondents also were rather affluent, with 61% reporting having annual household incomes at or over \$100,000. Most (70%) were between 25 and 44 years old and married.

While our convenience sample may limit generalizability, it is generally in line with FSTA (2012) demographic information on fantasy sports players nationwide at the time of our data collection. The FSTA (2012) reports that the average age of players was 33, 65% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and the average player's household income was \$92,750. Our sample does slightly overrepresent female players at that time (19% versus 13% of players nationwide) and underrepresent married individuals (61% versus 73% nationally) and non-Whites (6% versus 12%). Also, a lower percentage of fantasy sports players nationwide played fantasy football than in our sample (72% versus 91%).

### *Quantitative Data and Analysis Plan*

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<sup>3</sup> No other sport was played by more than half of the sample, and there was only one significant sex difference – 49% of males and only 24% of females played baseball.

Our dependent variables are the relationship-related impacts of fantasy sports. Specifically, we utilize a scale measure of *relationship tension* derived from responses to the following statements: “Fantasy sports create tension in my relationship with my spouse or partner” and “My family complains that I spend too much time on fantasy sports.” A second dependent variable, *bonding with friends*, represents answers to the following statement: “Fantasy sports help me bond with my friends.” Our key independent variable is *sex*, included in models as a dummy variable coded 1 for male, 0 for female.

Key explanatory measures include gender ideology, fantasy-related behaviors and characteristics, family status, and social ties. Our measure of *gender ideology* reflects respondents’ adherence to cultural notions of sports as a masculine domain. We assess respondents’ temporal and financial investments in fantasy sports using four measures. *Total weekly hours spent on fantasy sports* reflects the number of weekly hours respondents devote to fantasy sports (excluding watching games), *leagues* represents the number of leagues respondents participate in annually, *money spent on fantasy sports* reflects the amount respondents spend on league dues yearly, and *years played* is respondents’ total years of fantasy sports participation. Three measures gauge respondents’ mental absorption with fantasy sports: self-reported *seriousness* about one’s fantasy sports leagues, whether thinking about *fantasy keeps the respondent awake* at night, and whether the respondent uses *fantasy as an escape* from his or her home life, work, daily routine, and/or reality in general (see Hur, Ko, and Valacich 2007; Seo and Green 2008 for precedent on our escape measure).

We are also interested in the dynamics and composition of respondents’ fantasy sports leagues. Two measures assess the competitive interactional dynamics of fantasy sports participation: whether one reports *talking smack* as a part of fantasy sports participation and

whether gaining *bragging rights* is important to the respondent. We use two measures of league composition in our analyses of bonding. For *relationship to league members*, managers in respondents' league(s) are categorized as being all or mostly friends, a combination of friends and acquaintances/strangers, or mostly acquaintances and strangers. *League all or mostly men* is a dummy variable coded 1 if the other managers in respondents' league(s) are all or mostly men, 0 otherwise.

Two measures assess the impact of one's family status on the relationship outcomes of fantasy sports participation. We utilize a dummy variable coded 1 if a respondent indicated he or she was *married or cohabiting*, 0 otherwise. Respondents are coded as having *children less than 18 in the household* if they indicated both that they have children and that there are any children younger than 18 living in their household. We utilize three measures to account for how fantasy sports participation may augment or substitute for other personal connections. *Number of close connections* represents the number of people respondents report being "very close to," while *number of close connections who play fantasy* reflects the number of respondents' close connections who play fantasy sports. The latter is our best available proxy measure of whether one plays fantasy sports with his or her family members. *Total other group memberships* represents the total number of non-fantasy sports-related groups (e.g. professional, religious, community service, political organizations) to which a respondent reports being a member (active or non-active).

Finally, in all models, we control for general sports fandom, education, and employment status. *Time spent on sports* reflects the amount of time respondents spend watching sports on television, reading magazine or newspaper articles on sports or athletes, and talking about sports with friends or family. *Sports fandom* is a scale measure of respondents' overall level of general

(non-fantasy) sports fandom (e.g. describing oneself as a “big fan” and placing importance on one’s team’s winning). *Education* is a three-category measure of the highest level of education completed by the respondent: (1) less than a Bachelor’s degree, (2) a Bachelor’s degree, or (3) a Master’s degree or higher. Lastly, *employed* is a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent is employed for wages or self-employed, 0 otherwise. Full details on the construction of all measures are available online in Appendix Table 1.

We focus on OLS regression analyses of our two sets of outcomes, referring to bivariate analyses of key measures by sex as relevant (bivariate analyses are available online in Appendix Table 2). Throughout the multivariate analyses, we are interested in how sex is related to fantasy sports-related relationship tension and bonding with friends, as well as how other aspects of respondents’ fantasy sports participation and social ties (1) impact the relationships between sex, relationship tension, and bonding and (2) themselves are related to the relationship consequences of fantasy sports participation, perhaps in sex-differentiated ways.

### *Qualitative Data and Analyses*

All individuals who answered that they had ever played fantasy sports also received the following three open-ended questions, which we explore in these analyses: “Why do you play fantasy sports?”; “What do you gain by playing fantasy sports?”; and “What are the downsides to playing fantasy sports?”<sup>4</sup>

All in all, 347 individuals responded to the question about why they played fantasy sports, 349 provided a response to what they gained by playing, and 345 provided comments on the downsides to their playing. We imported these open-ended fields from the survey into NVivo10, a qualitative data analyses software allowing for an inductive approach characteristic

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<sup>4</sup> These were asked before the close-ended questions on fantasy involvement and relationship tension and bonding.

of qualitative analyses (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). At this stage, we organized the data into small inductively-derived conceptual categories and looked for patterns across and between male and female respondents. Thus, the qualitative findings we report here emerged from the coding process itself, rather than predetermined hypotheses.

## RESULTS

### *Quantitative Analyses*

Table 1 presents OLS regression analyses of relationship tension. Model 1 indicates that males report greater relationship tension than do females. To contextualize this finding, bivariate analyses (online in Appendix Table 2) indicate that our male respondents were much more likely to say that fantasy sports “rarely” or “sometimes” create tension with their spouses or partners (nearly half of men versus less than one-quarter of women report this) and that their family “rarely” or “sometimes” complains that they spend too much time on fantasy sports (37% of men versus 14% of women). Model 2 includes measures of relationship status. Neither having close connections who play fantasy nor relationship or parental status is associated with reported levels of relationship tension, but adding these measures does reduce the magnitude of the (still significant) sex gap somewhat because our male respondents are slightly more likely to be living with a partner and substantially more likely to have children at home. Model 3 includes a measure of gender ideology and indicates that the more one espouses views associating sport and masculinity, the greater the level of fantasy-sports related relationship tension he or she reports. Although male respondents are more likely to hold these beliefs, inclusion of this measure does little to change the sex gap.

Model 4 adds measures of investments in fantasy sports. Spending more time each week on fantasy sports is associated with reporting that participation creates more tension in one’s

relationships with family members. Inclusion of this measure renders the sex gap non-significant—controlling for other measures in the model, male respondents' greater weekly time investment in fantasy sports explains their greater relationship tension. Other measures of one's level of investment, namely the number of leagues in which one participates and the longevity of one's participation, do not affect relationship tension over and above weekly time expenditures. Despite money being a frequent source of conflict in families, the amount spent on fantasy sports is not associated with relationship tension.

As presented, Model 4 includes all measures of investment simultaneously. Analyses including each investment measure separately (not shown) indicate that the number of leagues in which one participates is positively associated with relationship tension and renders the sex gap non-significant. The years one has played fantasy isn't itself significant, but inclusion of that measure renders the sex gap non-significant, while financial investment has little impact on relationship tension or the sex gap in tension. Taken together, these analyses indicate that participants' current weekly time investments drive the effect of investment on both relationship tension and the sex gap in tension—it is the time one spends, time which is arguably taken away from one's family, that produces relationship tension and male players' greater likelihood of reporting it. While there is a role for the number of leagues in which one participates and, to a lesser extent, the years of participation, their effects appear to operate through actual time expenditures.

Model 5 extends beyond time and monetary investments to explore the impact of respondents' mental and emotional absorption with fantasy sports. Being more likely to report that fantasy keeps one awake at night and that one uses fantasy as an escape are positively associated with fantasy sports' producing relationship tension. Inclusion of these measures



renders the impact of time investments non-significant. Additional analyses not shown indicate that it is really the measure of whether fantasy sports keep a respondent awake at night that trumps the impact of actual time expenditures on relationship tension; furthermore, reporting that fantasy sports keep one awake at night, when included in a model without investments, explains the sex gap in relationship tension. Holding beliefs associating sports and masculinity is no longer a significant predictor of relationship tension in Model 5. Further analyses indicate that this is driven by respondents' likelihood of reporting that they use fantasy as an escape. Those who use fantasy as an escape are more likely to see sports as men's domain, suggesting perhaps that these individuals are escaping their everyday lives into a male-dominated fantasy sports domain, thus increasing tension in their families.

The final two models of Table 1 present separate analyses for male and female respondents, with significant interactions indicated. For males, fantasy's keeping one awake at night and using fantasy as an escape emerge as significant predictors of relationship tension. For females, being kept awake by fantasy sports is significant (although using fantasy as an escape is significant for males but not females, a sex interaction is not significant in a pooled model), as is time spent on fantasy sports. The latter represents a significant difference between male and female respondents—weekly time spent on fantasy sports is a significant predictor of relationship tension for female but not male players.

Taken together, Table 1 indicates that investment in and absorption with fantasy sports shape relationship tension—and in sex-differentiated ways. Males report greater tension, but this can be explained by either their greater time investments or mental and emotional absorption. Moreover, for male respondents, the impact of time investments on relationship tension can be explained by a particular form of mental absorption—allowing fantasy sports to keep one awake

at night. For female players, while reporting that fantasy sports keep one awake at night is an important predictor of relationship tension, actual time spent remains a significant factor as well. In sum, for men, relationship tension seems to be rooted in mental absorption, while for women, both mental and temporal investments matter.

Table 2 presents OLS regression analyses of bonding with friends through fantasy sports. Model 1 indicates that males report higher levels of bonding with friends through fantasy sports than do females. More specifically, bivariate analyses (online in Appendix Table 2) indicate that nearly two-thirds of male respondents report that fantasy sports help them bond with their friends “most of the time” or “always” compared to less than half of female respondents; the modal category for men is “most of the time,” while the modal category for women is “sometimes.” To assess whether bonding is driven, particularly for males, by associations of sport with masculinity, Model 2 includes a measure of this gender ideology, which is not significant. Model 3 includes measures of league composition and social ties, to assess whether fantasy sports augment and/or substitute for other social connections. Playing in leagues comprised all or mostly of friends or a combination of friends, acquaintances, and strangers (compared to those composed mostly of acquaintances and strangers), playing in male-dominated leagues (rather than mixed-sex or female-dominated leagues), and having more close connections who play fantasy sports are all associated with higher levels of bonding with friends through fantasy sports. Model 3 thus suggests that fantasy sports augment relationships specifically because or if one plays with his/her friends. Inclusion of these measures increases the sex gap (favoring men) in bonding through fantasy because female respondents are slightly more likely to have close connections who play fantasy and to play in leagues comprised all or mostly of friends.

Model 4 includes family status measures, which are not significant predictors of bonding

through fantasy sports. Finally, Model 5 includes measures of respondents' time investments, seriousness, and competitive interactional behaviors and attitudes. Although greater investment and seriousness may increase the opportunity for relationship-building, these measures are not significant predictors of bonding through fantasy sports. Engaging in "smack talk" with others in one's league and reporting that gaining "bragging rights" is important are both positively associated with bonding with one's friends through fantasy sports. Moreover, inclusion of these measures render the sex gap in bonding through fantasy sports non-significant because male respondents are slightly more likely to engage in smack talk and value gaining bragging rights and to report greater levels of bonding with friends through fantasy sports. Inclusion of these measures also renders the impact of being in a male-dominated league insignificant. These findings suggest that engaging in competitive banter—an interactional practice typically associated with men and masculinity—is a key avenue through which sex-differentiated and gendered relationship building manifests itself in fantasy sports.

The final two models of Table 2 present analyses run separately for males and females, with significant sex interactions indicated. Male and female respondents both report increased bonding when their leagues contain friends (all or mostly or a mix of friends, acquaintances, and strangers) rather than primarily acquaintances and strangers. Talking smack increases bonding for both male and female players, while earning bragging rights is only a significant predictor of bonding for males (although in a pooled model, the sex\*bragging interaction is not significant). For men, but not women, being in a male-dominated league increases bonding through fantasy sports, as does the number of close connections who play fantasy sports (although neither of these sex interactions are significant in the pooled model). One notable significant sex interaction emerges—other group memberships decrease reports of bonding through fantasy sports for

women, while there is no significant relationship between these two measures for men.

Taken together, Table 2 indicates that males report more bonding with friends through fantasy, although there is indication that this hinges on exchanging competitive discourse during league play. Moreover, particularly for male players, fantasy sports appear to augment relationships with existing friends—male players are likely to be bonding with friends who also play fantasy sports, particularly in the same male-dominated league (in which they trash-talk and aim to earn bragging rights). For female players, there is some evidence that fantasy sports augment existing relationships, particularly with friends playing in the same league. However, there is also evidence that female, but not male, fantasy sports players may trade off social connections—involvement in other social groups decreases reports of bonding with friends through fantasy sports for female players—perhaps because they cultivate friendships in these other outlets.

### *Qualitative Results*

In the previous section, we detail what the quantitative data tell us about fantasy sports participation and relationship tensions and bonding for men versus women. Here, we explore the qualitative survey responses to flesh out these areas.

Some of our respondents, almost exclusively male players, indicated in open-ended responses that their fantasy sports involvement strained their relationships and interactions with others. At times, the problems described seemed relatively minor—like friends or family found their fantasy involvement annoying. One male respondent (R85) claimed that his fantasy sports participation “can annoy others who don't play when you watch sports with them.” Similarly, another (R224) stated, “People not in your league get annoyed by any conversation that involves trades, waiver pickups, roster moves, etc.” Another male (R135) noted, “My wife thinks it's

annoying that I check my phone for scores on Sundays.”

Many of our male respondents also acknowledged spending less time with non-fantasy players—most often, their families—as a result of fantasy sports. They noted that because fantasy sports were “time consuming,” they take “time away from my family” and “family time” (R241; R247; R371) and that fantasy sports “distracted” them from their “spouse” (R264).

Likewise, one male respondent (R384) admitted,

My wife considers herself a "Fantasy Football Widow"... she doesn't see me usually from noon until about 7:30 on Sundays during football season, as I go to a sports bar to watch all the games. I also go watch the Thursday and Monday night games in the room with our 2nd television.

Some male respondents also mentioned that fantasy took time away from more important activities and tasks, with a few noting specifically that household responsibilities like “getting chores done at home” were sacrificed. One (R448), for example, claimed “The only downsides are it occupies a lot of time. Instead of getting things done around the house, I spend all day sitting in front of my TV and computer.”

Additionally, some male players revealed that spending less time with others, particularly family members, or other aspects of the game (e.g., the monetary investment) resulted in strained relationships and complaints from loved ones. One male player (R107) claimed he had to deal with “some resentment from people who think it takes too much time.” Another (R195) simply stated, “My wife hates it. Takes a lot of time.” Another respondent (R189) wrote, “My wife dislikes it, thinks it [is] gambling, and so I have to hide it from her. That sucks.”

Less time with family and the financial investment of playing were not the only tension-inducing issues reported. Similar to what the quantitative results suggest, we see evidence in the

qualitative data that mental investment created relational problems for some players, particularly the males. Some explained mood swings and emotional outbursts accompanied their involvement in fantasy sports, and this adversely affected others. One male respondent (R17) claimed, “Sometimes I get overly emotional and have outbursts at the people I live with and the people I play with. It's a problem I have been working on.” Another (R236) wrote that the main downside to playing was the “Frustration that sometimes affects those around me. Particularly, my children.” Another male player (R271) claimed, “It can sometimes alienate my wife and distract me from my family. If a team is doing poorly, it may also cause me to generally feel worse about things.” Additionally, some, while vague on the particulars, hinted at serious ramifications of their or others’ involvement. One male respondent (R99), for instance, wrote that fantasy sports “Probably contributed to my divorce.” Another (R261, male), who no longer plays fantasy sports, claimed that fantasy sports are implicated in “Ruining marriages in some cases ... People can be beyond obsessed.”

Some men noted smack talking, the “betting” involved, and their “competitive nature” led to disagreements and hurt feelings. For example, one man (R251) claimed that with fantasy sports came the “Potential to stick your foot in your mouth and hurt someone’s feelings.” Another (R300) reported a downside to playing was “Stupid petty arguments with friends,” while another (R311) wrote, “[I] have had some serious arguments with others.”

While mainly male players discussed relationship problems related to fantasy sports, about equal proportions of male and female players reported in the open-ended fields how they were motivated to play fantasy sports for social reasons and/or explained that they reaped some social benefits from playing. Such respondents typically expressed that fantasy sports allowed them to bond and build camaraderie with others, provided reasons to interact with others, and,

consequently, helped them “stay in touch” or “connected” with friends and family. They also reported fantasy sports gave them something to talk about with others and/or the ability to converse about sports effectively. A handful indicated gaining new social ties through fantasy sports, while a few others claimed playing fantasy sports made them feel like a member of a larger sports community.

Specifically, when discussing motivations for and gains from playing fantasy sports, about equal proportions of male and female respondents referred to fantasy sports’ providing a “fun” venue for interacting with others and “another reason to socialize.” For example, one male respondent (R165) argued he played fantasy sport

as it gives me a reason to interact with friends that I might otherwise not interact with.

Most guys in my leagues (and they are predominantly male), we'll go years without talking about life, relationship, but instead we'll have several conversations about the backup infielder for the St Louis Cardinals.

A female respondent (R378) similarly explained, “I love watching football anyways so fantasy football is a fun way to interact with family and friends during the season.” Notably, a much higher proportion of men than women discussed how fantasy sports were not just a reason to interact but were a key way to “keep in touch” with others, in particular, with old friends from high school, college, and previous employment. Typical of this theme, one male player (R167) wrote that fantasy sport “keeps me connected to long time friends I otherwise may not be in touch with, at least as much.” Similarly, another (R264) reported that he gained from playing fantasy sports “continued relationships with friends further away.....some of which I wouldn't talk to anymore if not for the league.” One male player (R224) explained, “My group of friends has a strong interest in sports already, and the fantasy thing has kept us connected as we grow

older and start moving and having families.”

Many respondents alluded to or directly stated that playing also helped them “bond” with others or build “camaraderie” among a group of people. Thus, they were not just chatting with others, they were actually feeling closer to them through their fantasy sports involvement. For example, one female respondent (R54) wrote that playing fantasy sports created “Comradarie [sic] even w/ people I don't know well.” Another female player (R429) explained that her league is “very camaraderie-driven. We're all in different locations but come together on the message boards and it feels like a new group of friends.” A male respondent (R262) commented, “Fantasy sports allows people to come together and bond over a similar interest, it allows owners to trash talk, boast, belittle, trade and let men be men.”

The previous statement raises another important point—that players, particularly male ones, mentioned bonding and positive social interaction hand in hand with the enjoyment they got from competition, boasting, and trash-talking and that fantasy sports are central to bonding, connecting, and interacting with *men*. This mirrors the quantitative results, where we found a significant positive relationship between engaging in “smack talk” and bonding with one’s friends through fantasy sports. One male respondent (R271) claimed fantasy sports provide “a shared experience” with his friends and “competition which is not always present in other areas of my life. It is generally a good chance for male bonding with some of my other male friends.” Others noted that they played “to compete with others, for fun and camaraderie” (R329) and that through “talk trash with other league members ... you get to know people a little more” (R291). One male respondent (R139) explained,

One last thing that I like about fantasy football is the trash talking that goes on between all the owners. Seeing who can come up with the best insult or comeback is all part of the



fun. It's like sitting around the table at a sports bar without all the cost of going out. Some were explicit that part of the attraction of such social interaction was that women were generally excluded. A male respondent (R273) wrote he played fantasy sports, "Mainly to stay in touch with my high school buddies and for our 'draft weekend' each year when no wives are allowed." Another (R316) reported loving, "Being able to get together with my buddies a couple nights a year without the wives being there."

Even those women who discussed forging new or shoring up relationships with others through fantasy sports were typically discussing doing so with men, most often with romantic partners.<sup>5</sup> One female player (R396) explained,

I started [playing] when I moved in with my husband, knowing that he played, and figuring that if I enjoyed it, it would be a fun way to spend more time together. I ended up loving it, and the fact that my husband and I share it as an interest has added to our relationship.

This same respondent also claimed that through fantasy sports, she gained, "More closeness with my husband." Another female respondent (R446) wrote she started playing fantasy sports "To share an interest in something my Fiancé is passionate about." Another (R448) reported fantasy sport is "something that I share with my husband. Sundays are our days to bond over football!" Besides romantic partners, women discussed fantasy sports as contributing to relationships with male coworkers and other men in their lives. One (R443) commented that playing gave her, "knowledge of the sport, therefore I can contribute to conversations that others, mainly the men in my office, have every week." Another (R440) wrote her involvement in fantasy sports "Aids

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<sup>5</sup> We did not ask about sexual identity or whether those in relationships were in same-sex or heterosexual relationships, but when female respondents wrote about bonding with romantic partners through fantasy sports, they typically used language (e.g., "husband," "boyfriend") to suggest that they were referring to relationships with men.

in conversation with the men in my life.”

The above findings allude to the potential for fantasy sports involvement to contribute to one’s social capital—by increasing the number of social ties one has, extending the duration of social ties, fostering camaraderie amongst existing ties, and, perhaps, increasing the density of one’s social network. A few respondents also suggested fantasy sports involvement further serves as a form of cultural capital, helping them feel accepted and a sense of belonging. Additionally, some noted leveraging their fantasy sports participation and the knowledge gleaned from it to further their careers and for status, especially among men. A female respondent (R405) claimed that fantasy sports are “a big social lubricant in today’s fantasy-obsessed society. It’s an easy subject to discuss with other people because they probably play fantasy sports as well” and that she gained through playing “Confidence, social currency and a way to find common ground with others.” Another respondent (R89, male) argued that fantasy sports provided, “a subject matter to talk to with co-workers so I believe it is good for my career.” One respondent (R345, male) rather articulately noted,

fantasy sports provide a social group, something to talk about with other people, knowledge of something that men have high esteem for, etc. It can provide status in a male social group if you know a lot about a sport ... I definitely have felt like some people are more interested in getting to know me because I can talk a lot about basketball.

Thus, overall, for women but especially men, fantasy sports seem to provide a mechanism by which one might bond, interact, stay in touch, and gain legitimacy with men.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analyses presented here indicate fantasy sports participation may extend and shore up

social relationships but also strain them. Moreover, although fantasy sports present a rare opportunity for men and women to interact side-by-side in an athletic context, experiences are sex-differentiated and offer insights into how gender is socially constructed in contemporary American society in general and sports more specifically. On the one hand, both male and female players discussed fantasy sports as a mechanism for forging connections or maintaining ties (e.g., with individuals from whom they have been separated by distance and/or time), although this theme was more prevalent among male respondents in the quantitative data. The qualitative data suggest fantasy sports foster more than just superficial contact; respondents repeatedly mentioned generating deep bonds with fellow players. Moreover, fantasy sports appear to augment relationships with existing friends, particularly for male players who are likely to be bonding with friends in male-dominated leagues (in which they trash-talk and aim to earn bragging rights). For female players, our data suggest fantasy sports augment existing relationships too, particularly with friends playing in the same league (as seen in the quantitative data) but also with romantic partners or other family members (as seen in the qualitative data). However, the quantitative findings suggest that female, but not male, fantasy sports players may trade off social connections – female players who are heavily involved in other social groups are less likely to report bonding with friends through fantasy sports, perhaps because they cultivate friendships in these other outlets.

The gendered nature of bonding extends beyond male players' greater likelihood to report this as a reason for and result of their fantasy sports participation in three important ways. First, the comments in the qualitative fields suggest men saw fantasy sports as a way to connect specifically with other men, often explicitly at the exclusion of women. Likewise, the quantitative data provide some evidence that being in male-dominated leagues is especially

powerful for male players. This suggests that fantasy sports, much like actual sports, provide opportunities for intimacy among men in spaces defined as appropriately masculine (Messner 2009). Men thus connect with other men without compromising—and often while reinforcing—their masculinity and superiority to women, as evinced by respondents’ comments that fantasy sport “beats a book club” (a presumably feminine pursuit of lesser value) and lets “men be men.”

Second, and further supporting the highly masculinized climate of fantasy sports, this bonding is interwoven with competition. As both the quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal, men connect with other men, at least in part, through boasting and smack-talking that, like hegemonic constructions of masculinity, emphasize dominance and being “one up” on others (Connell 1987). Taken together, these two points offer a potential extension of Crawley, Foley, and Shehan’s (2008) work on vicarious masculinity—by virtue of vicarious masculinity, men share a bond with professional athletes (whose on-field performances literally become a fantasy participant’s route to success) and other men, a bond that is fueled by status and competition.

Third, when women do discuss fantasy sport as a means of building or strengthening relationships in the qualitative fields, they also typically focus on their relationships with men, often their romantic partners but sometimes male co-workers. So, while there are sex gaps in who reports fantasy sports provide a way to bond and how they do so, there is one commonality—both men and women seem to focus on building relationships with men. Fantasy sports, then, offer a mechanism by which players—men especially, but also women—are able to bond, interact, and gain legitimacy with men in their lives. Thus, as Farrell, Fink, and Fields (2011) argue, these women may actually be helping to shore up male power as they shape their leisure pursuits around men’s.

Male players, though, are also more likely than female ones to indicate that participation

in fantasy sports results in conflict with others. Some of this seems related to the sheer amount of time players devote to fantasy sports—time that could be spent with families or engaging in household activities. But the qualitative and quantitative data indicate the negative impact of fantasy sports on relationships both involves and extends beyond time expenditures—and in gendered ways. On the one hand, time expenditures can explain the sex gap in relationship tension in our quantitative models, suggesting it is time (and male players’ greater average expenditures of that) rather than sex per se that shapes relationship tension. Yet our quantitative and qualitative data analyses indicate that for male players, relationship tension seems especially related to their level of mental absorption in the sport—indicated in the quantitative data by their being kept awake at night thinking of fantasy sports or in the qualitative data by taking out fantasy sports-related frustrations on friends and family. Although female players rarely discussed relationship problems in the qualitative data, the quantitative data indicate that both mental and temporal investments are associated with increased relationship tension for the women in our sample. Time use is gendered—women devote more time to household labor and childcare and less to leisure than do men (Bianchi 2000; Sayer 2005). As such, women’s time investments in fantasy sports violate expectations for women’s time use in a way that male players’ time expenditures may not, perhaps leading to increased relationship tension for female, but not male, players. Moreover, when these findings are combined with the results on bonding and relationship building in the qualitative analyses, we see a further example of gender differentiation. Women players frequently discuss their participation in fantasy sport as strengthening their relationship with their spouse or partner, while men talk about it as something that creates strain in their marriage.

Our work has several limitations. First, we cannot precisely investigate whether a

respondent is playing with a partner or family member living in the household, which clearly may shape the impact of fantasy sports participation on one's relationships. The qualitative data suggest playing with a romantic partner, especially for female players, may be perceived as strengthening such relationships, but we cannot test this with our quantitative data. Second, we rely on participants' accounts of bonding and relationship strain—accordingly, we don't know if our respondents accurately grasp how others feel about their fantasy sports participation and how it affects their relationships. Lastly, while our sample mirrors rather well FSTA demographics of players nationwide, our survey may have attracted more hardcore fantasy sports players than a random sample would have. This may mean both the bonding and straining potential of fantasy sports that we report is overestimated.

As women increasingly flock to fantasy sports (June 2015 FSTA data suggest 34% of fantasy sports players are now women), more studies on the impact of fantasy sports on relationships are warranted. Previous work suggests as women gain power, men turn to sports to shore up masculinity and male supremacy (Messner 1987; Ring 2009). As such, one might expect that as women make up a larger percentage of fantasy sports players and make strides in public and work life, men might attempt to restrict women's entrance into their male leagues, carve out certain fantasy sports as male domain, or exclude women in other ways from intruding on male bonding. Conversely, with women's increasing presence, the relationship strains men in particular reported may lessen as, potentially, men come to play more with their romantic partners and family members.

Despite the potential for gender neutrality, much like its "real" counterpart, fantasy sports are highly sex-differentiated and represent yet another vehicle through which gender is constructed and enacted in contemporary American society. Fantasy sports offer the promise of

developing, strengthening, and deepening ties with others, although the object of that connection, for both men and women, is overwhelmingly men. Proving oneself through boasting, bragging, and otherwise emphasizing competition—integral components of the enactment of masculinity—is central to men’s relationships with other men and emblematic of their fantasy sports play. While our female players perceive fantasy sports as offering opportunities to gain connections through and, perhaps, status in this male-dominated realm, they confront multiple gendered barriers, including exclusionary tactics on the part of men (for whom bonding still involves surrounding oneself with other men), an inability to benefit from vicarious masculinity, and a larger cultural context that places different expectations and constraints on their time use. Fantasy sports participation also seemingly results in some less positive impacts on other relationships, particularly for men. While women often see fantasy sport as a vehicle for deepening their connections to their male romantic partners, men more commonly report that fantasy sports create tension in their relationships with their wives and families. The results presented here thus suggest that, in a multitude of ways, fantasy sport is a male-dominated realm in which individuals’ participation contributes to the continual creation and recreation of gender in interactions.

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Table 1. OLS regression analysis predicting relationship tension.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5		Male	Female
Male	0.308**	0.257**	0.234*	0.153	0.088			
<i>Family status</i>								
Married or cohabiting		0.151	0.147	0.118	0.106		0.065	0.285
Children <18 in household		0.085	0.091	0.087	0.069		0.095	-0.253
Number of very close connections who play fantasy		0.032	0.022	0.022	0.029		0.023	-0.039
Belief in sports as men's domain			0.124*	0.129*	0.081		0.053	0.177
<i>Investment in fantasy</i>								
Hours spent on fantasy				0.147**	0.043		0.023	0.254*†
Money spent on fantasy				0.008	0.018		0.023	-0.027
Number of leagues				0.014	0.020		0.022	-0.009
Years played				0.027	0.009		0.030	-0.097
<i>Absorption with fantasy</i>								
Fantasy keeps respondent awake at night					0.330**		0.318**	0.334*
Fantasy used to escape					0.145**		0.161**	-0.003
Seriousness about fantasy					0.042		0.053	0.050
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.044	0.054	0.066	0.103	0.289		0.275	0.209

\*\*p<.01 \*p<.05

†Denotes significant sex interaction in pooled model.

Note: all models include controls for education, employment status, time spent on sports in general, and overall sports fanship.

Table 2. OLS regression analysis predicting bonding with friends through fantasy.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Male	Female
Male	0.262*	0.242*	0.299*	0.301*	0.154		
Belief in sports as men's domain		0.104	0.035	0.030	-0.004	-0.058	0.152
<i>League Composition</i>							
Relationship to league members							
All or mostly friends			1.101**	1.097**	0.897**	0.843**	0.947*
Friends and acquaintances/strangers			0.345*	0.862**	0.702**	0.569**	1.049*
All or mostly acquaintances/strangers	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
League all or mostly men			0.345*	0.327*	0.179	0.413*	0.133
<i>Social ties</i>							
Number of very close connections			0.028	0.030	0.020	-0.014	0.168
Number of very close connections playing fantasy			0.224**	0.218**	0.207**	0.197**	0.206
Total other group memberships			-0.019	-0.013	-0.019	0.005	-0.187*†
<i>Family status</i>							
Married or cohabiting				0.072	0.108	-0.010	-0.007
Children <18 in household				-0.060	-0.078	-0.075	-0.147
<i>Fantasy-related behaviors</i>							
Hours spent on fantasy					0.034	-0.003	0.270
Number of leagues					0.018	0.026	-0.088
Years played					0.058	0.041	0.243
Seriousness about fantasy					0.064	0.102	0.092
Talking smack					0.203**	0.162**	0.302*
Gaining bragging rights important					0.132**	0.137*	0.032
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.035	0.037	0.271	0.267	0.417	0.401	0.440

\*\*p<.01 \*p<.05

†Denotes significant sex interaction in pooled model.

Note: all models include controls for education, employment status, time spent on sports in general, and overall sports fanship.

Appendix Table 1. Variable descriptions.

<b>Measure<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>Survey question(s)</b>	<b>Coding</b>
Tension in Relationships (scale; alpha = 0.78)	Fantasy sports create tension in my relationship with my spouse or partner. My family complains that I spend too much time on fantasy sports.	Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Most of the time (4), Always (5)
Bonding	Fantasy sports help me bond with my friends.	Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Most of the time (4), Always (5)
Sex	Respondent's reported sex.	1 = male, 0 = female
Gender Ideology (scale; alpha = 0.65)	Boys need sports to learn how to be real men. It is important for boys to play sports.	Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat disagree (3), Neither agree nor disagree (4), Somewhat agree (5), Agree (6), Strongly agree (7)
Total weekly hours spent on fantasy sports	Approximately, how many hours a week do you devote to fantasy sports (not including time spent watching games) DURING a typical fantasy sports season? Approximately, how many hours a week do you devote to fantasy sports (not including time spent watching games) OUTSIDE of the fantasy sports season?	Less than 1 hour (1), 1–3 hours (2), 4–6 hours (3), 7–9 hours (4), and over 10 hours (5); measure represents average of responses to these two questions.
Years played	How many years have you participated in fantasy sports?	One year or less (1), 2 – 5 years (2), 6 – 10 years (3), 11 – 15 years (4), 16 – 20 years (5), and more than 20 years (6)
Leagues	How many fantasy sports leagues do you participate in each year?	Continuous measure, top-coded at 6
Money spent on fantasy sports	Typically, how much money do you spend each year on league dues for fantasy sports?	\$0 – 30 (1), \$31 – 60 (2), \$61 – 90 (3), \$91 – 120 (4), \$121 – 150 (5), and over \$151 (6)

<sup>6</sup> When multiple questions are listed for a given measure, responses to those questions were averaged to retain the original response value ranges.

Seriousness	I'm very serious about my fantasy sports league(s).	Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly agree (5)
Fantasy keeps respondent awake	Thinking about my fantasy sports team(s) keeps me awake at night.	Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly agree (5)
Fantasy as an escape (scale <sup>7</sup> ; alpha = 0.86)	Fantasy sports allow me to escape my home life. Fantasy sports offer me a way to forget about work. Fantasy sports offer me a way to forget about reality. Fantasy sports allow me to escape my daily routine.	Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly agree (5)
Talking smack	I engage in smack talk with others in my fantasy sports league.	Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Most of the time (4), Always (5)
Bragging rights	Gaining 'bragging rights' in my fantasy sports league(s) is important to me.	Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly agree (5)
Relationship to league members	In my fantasy sports league(s), the other managers are ...	Three category measure: (1) all my friends or mostly my friends; (2) split between friends and acquaintances or strangers; or (3) mostly acquaintances or strangers or all acquaintances or strangers.
League all or mostly men	In my fantasy sports league(s), the other managers are ...	Dummy variable coded 1 for "all men" or "mostly men," 0 otherwise ("split evenly between men and women," "mostly women," "all women," or "I don't know").
Married or cohabiting	Which of the following best reflects your current relationship status?	Dummy variable coded 1 for married or "in a relationship, living together but not married," 0 otherwise (single, not in a

<sup>7</sup> See Hur, Ko, and Valacich 2007; Seo and Green 2008 for precedent.

		relationship; single, in a relationship (not living together); divorced; separated; or widowed).
Children less than 18 in the household	What is your parental status? Are there any children under 18 years of age currently living in your household?	Dummy variable coded 1 if respondent answered the first question with “have children” and the second with “yes,” 0 otherwise.
Number of close connections	How many people would you say that you are very close to—those people you discuss important matters with, regularly keep in touch with, or are there for you when you need help?	None (1), 1–5 (2), 6–10 (3), 11–15 (4), 16–20 (5), and over 20 (6).
Number of close connections who play fantasy	Approximately, how many of the people you feel very close to play fantasy sports?	1–5 (1), 6–10 (2), 11–15 (3), 16–20 (4), and over 20 (5)
Total other group memberships	In the past three years, have you been an ACTIVE MEMBER, a NON-ACTIVE MEMBER, or a NON-MEMBER in any of the following groups or organizations?	Continuous measure indicating the total number of each of the following types of groups to which the respondent reports being an active or non-active member: business or professional association, labor union, sports league, children’s sports league, religious organization, hobby group or club (non-fantasy related), community service group, political or activist group, or any other group or organization (not otherwise accounted for).
Time spent on sports (scale)	Approximately, how many hours a week do you spend watching sporting events on television? Approximately, how many hours a week do you spend reading magazine or newspaper articles on sports or athletes? Approximately, how many hours a week do you spend talking about sports with friends or family?	None (1), 1 – 3 hours (2), 4 – 6 hours (3), 7 – 9 hours (4), over 10 hours (5)

Sports fanship (scale <sup>8</sup> ; alpha = 0.88)	I am a huge fan of sports in general. I am a big fan of my favorite non-fantasy sports team. Seeing my favorite non-fantasy sports team win is important to me.	Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly agree (5)
Education	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	Three category measure: Less than a Bachelor's degree, a Bachelor's degree, or a Master's degree or higher.
Employed	What is your current employment status?	Dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent is employed for wages or self-employed, 0 otherwise (out of work and looking for work, out of work but not currently looking for work, a homemaker, a student, retired, or unable to work).

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<sup>8</sup> Seo and Green (2008).



Appendix Table 2. Means and frequencies of all measures in the analyses, by sex.

	Male	Female
<i>Relationship Impacts</i>		
Tension in relationships with spouse/partner/family (1-5)	1.62**	1.28
“Fantasy sports helps me bond with my friends.” (1-5)	3.85*	3.55
<i>Gender Ideology: Sports as men’s domain (1-7)</i>	2.21*	1.99
<i>Fantasy-Related Behaviors and Characteristics</i>		
Total weekly hours spent on fantasy sports (1-5)	2.09**	1.71
Leagues (1-6)	3.35**	2.21
Money spent on fantasy sports (1-6)	3.69**	2.40
Years played (1-6)	3.51**	2.26
Seriousness about fantasy sports (1-5)	3.83**	3.21
Fantasy keeps respondent awake at night (1-5)	1.58**	1.26
Fantasy as an escape (1-5)	2.65	2.64
Talking smack (1-5)	3.41	3.30
Bragging rights are important (1-5)	3.64	3.60
Relationship to league members		
All or mostly friends	44.86%*	60.81%
Friends and acquaintances/strangers	41.43%*	27.03%
All or mostly acquaintances/strangers	13.71%	12.16%
League all or mostly men	94.08%**	68.92%
<i>Family status</i>		
Married or cohabiting	68.2%	56.8%
Children under 18 in household	51.0%**	21.9%
<i>Social ties</i>		
Number of very close connections (1-6)	2.98	3.20
Number of very close connections playing fantasy sports (1-5)	1.11	1.27
Total other group memberships (0-8)	2.48	2.27
<i>General Fanship and Demographics</i>		
Time spent on sports in general (1-5)	2.92	2.74
Sports fanship scale (1-5)	4.47	4.41
Education		

Less than Bachelor's	24.49%	21.92%
Bachelor's	45.24%	46.58%
Master's or higher	30.27%	31.51%
Employed	88.81%	86.30%

\*\*p<.01 \*p<.05 (indicating t-tests of significance of difference between male and female respondents)

Note: Means are listed here for ease of presentation. In many cases, these are based on ordinal and/or scale measures (value ranges listed). See Appendix Table 1 for full description of response values.