

# Social Media and The Multiple In-Group Identity of English Premier League International Supporters Clubs

Student: Nicholas  
Kerver

Advisor: Dr. Haozhou  
Pu, Ph.D

Honors Thesis  
Background Research –  
Arsenal America

# Research Background

- Conducted for HSS 428
- Will be used for Honors Thesis to be completed by spring 2021
- Will use different strategies such as content analysis and interview

# Supporters Clubs In Soccer

- Often considered the most passionate fans of a club/team
- Increasingly known to build relationships with teams via social media
- “Twitter is challenging the information control of clubs by providing an equally direct line of communication between supporters and players” (Price, Farrington, and Hall, 2013).



# Social Media In Sports

- Most efficient way to quickly connect fans to a team
- Connect fans through photos and highlights, hashtags, direct interaction, etc.
- Can be a part of team digital media strategy and/or marketing strategy

# Arsenal America

- Founded in 2001, officially recognized in 2005
- 75 clubs across the country
- Host events during most Arsenal Matches
- Charity events
- Focused on socialization between members and recruiting new members thanks to shared Arsenal fan identity



Arsenal America Club Map ([arsenalamerica.com](http://arsenalamerica.com))

# Types of Fans (Pu and James, 2016)

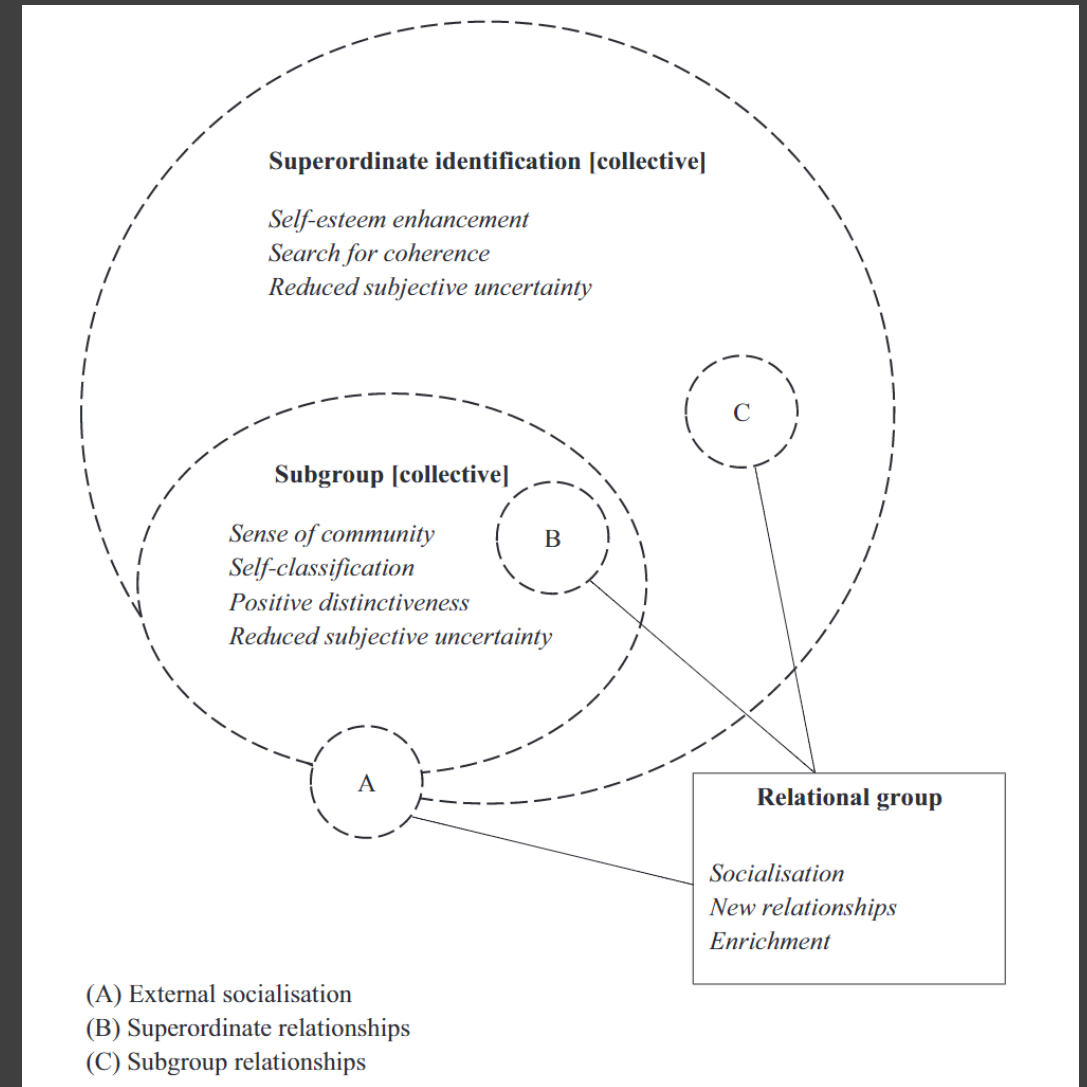
- Local Fans – Support a team within their geographical region
- Displaced Fans – Previously lived in proximity to their favorite team, but have since moved outside the region
- Distant Fans – Fans who have never been in geographic proximity to favorite team
  - Arsenal America deals with distant fans

# Social Media and The Distant Fan

- Social media allows for instant content for a team or club
- Distant fans are able to connect with their team more easily
- Creates online community for fans

# Multiple In-Group Identity

- Examines both the identity related to fans of teams and the communities which connect those fans
- Studies collective identities of subgroups
- “Subgroups provide a sense of community, opportunities to self-classify, and a source of intergroup distinctiveness, all of which reduce subjective uncertainty in relation to the superordinate identity” (Lock and Funk, 2016).



Multiple In-Group Identity (Lock and Funk, 2016)



# Top Accounts For Each Club (Followers)

## Facebook

Arsenal NYC (New York, NY) – 166,913

Boston Gooners (Boston, MA) – 2,282

Chicago Gooners (Chicago, IL) – 2,243

Arsenal Krewe (New Orleans, LA) –  
1,388

Miami Arsenal Supporters Club –  
1,106

## Twitter

Arsenal NYC (New York, NY) – 13K

Boston Gooners – 5,868

Miami Arsenal Supporters Club (Miami,  
FL) – 5,574

San Diego Gooners (San Diego, CA) –  
3,876

Queen City Gooners (Charlotte, NC) –  
3,453

# Content Analysis - Parameters

- Through looking at posts on Facebook and Twitter for top accounts, categories based on the subject of each post have been created.
- Common categories:
  - Club event information
  - Event photos and videos
  - Information regarding Arsenal players, coaches
  - Outside media articles regarding Arsenal



# Future Research – Content Analysis

- Next goal is to determine interaction with posts from top Arsenal America clubs
- Will use parameters set from categorization of posts (previous slide)
- May use social media data mining tools
- Will determine:
  - Which categories receive the most interaction from top Arsenal America clubs
  - Whether uses of certain media types will increase interaction

# Future Interviews

- To be conducted with leaders of Arsenal America clubs
- Must have sufficient followers and post frequently
- Intended to show how Multiple In-Group Identity is applied to Arsenal America clubs
  - Both events and social media content can fulfill multiple in-group identity

# Bibliography

- Lock, D. J., & Funk, D. C. (2016). The multiple in-group identity framework. *Sport Management Review*, 19(2), 85-96.
- Price, J., Farrington, N., & Hall, L. (2013). Changing the game? The impact of Twitter on relationships between football clubs, supporters and the sports media. *Soccer & Society*, 14(4), 446–461.
- Pu, H. and James, J. (2016). Presentation, *Florida State University*.