

WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING: THE EFFECT OF  
NATIONALISM BIAS ON ENJOYMENT OF  
A MEDIATED SPORTING EVENT

by

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## ABSTRACT

Disposition theory research within mediated sporting events has traditionally looked at the relationship between enjoyment and outcome. The theoretical framework hypothesizes enjoyment of media content is a function of viewers' affective dispositions toward media characters, and the resulting outcome faced by the characters. Later research attempts to explain how dispositions are formed. However, a gap currently exists in the theory concerning the effect of the different elements of the mediated content. The purpose of this study was to examine one such element of mediated content. This study used a 4 x 2 between subjects experimental design to test the effects of commentary from a United States broadcast on enjoyment. Within the experiment, commentary and outcome were manipulated for two teams of different nationalities. Results showed commentary did have an effect on enjoyment; however, commentary was a stronger predictor of enjoyment than was outcome. Additionally, it was found nationality alone did not have an effect on enjoyment, but commentary and nationality combined did have such an effect. Findings from this study have implications for disposition theory and future research on factors affecting enjoyment.

## DEDICATION

To Mom, Dad, and Kenny. This would have not been possible without your love, support, and encouragement.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

<i>a</i>	Cronbach's index of internal consistency
<i>df</i>	Degrees of freedom
<i>F</i>	Fisher's <i>F</i> ratio: A ration of two variances
<i>M</i>	Mean: the sum of a set of measurements divided by the number of measurements in the set
<i>n</i>	The sample size
<i>p</i>	Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value
<i>SD</i>	Standard Deviation: the square root of the variance of a statistical population
<i>t</i>	Statistical test used to compare the mean of a sample to a known population mean
>	Greater than
<	Less than
=	Equal to

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Sports have always been a source of entertainment for humans, both as participants and spectators. In ancient times, watching sporting events was limited to the participants and those who were able to attend the games; as noted by Bryant and Raney (2000), “when compared to the size of the audiences for televised sporting events, relatively few spectators saw these athletes play their games” (p. 156). Today, sporting events reach millions of people worldwide, and have significant cultural and financial implications.

Economically, networks and cable in the United States spend billions of dollars for the broadcasting rights to sporting events, such as FOX’s \$4.27 billion deal with the NFL for broadcast rights for seven years, and ESPN’s \$8.8 billion deal for the rights to “Monday Night Football” through 2013 (“Television Sports Rights”, 2006). These deals show how important sports are to American society, demonstrating they have become a prominent social phenomenon in contemporary society (Bryant & Raney, 2000). Additionally, Raney (2003) pointed out “from fantasy baseball leagues to office pools on the big game, from Kentucky Derby parties to Super Bowl parties, from casual observers to rabid fans, sports is more thoroughly ingrained in our social fabric than ever before” (p. 401).

Cultural implications of the importance of sports occur when considering how players and teams are portrayed, especially in an international context. In looking at planned media coverage, perhaps the biggest event is the Olympic Games, both summer and winter. The most recent Olympic Games, in Beijing, was the most-watched event in television history, with 211 million viewers in the United States tuning in over the 16 days of the games (Fitzgerald, 2008). Worldwide, Nielsen Media Research reported that more than two out of three people tuned in to

the games, bringing worldwide viewership to 4.7 billion people. (Xinhua, 2008). However, the broadcasting of the Olympic Games has faced much criticism. One focus of criticism is that a nationalistic bias appeared in the broadcasting commentary and coverage across multiple countries, which has resulted in the conclusion that the global experience was not told (Martzke, 2004). Past research has found a nationalistic bias exists in the coverage of international sporting events (Eastman & Billings, 1999; Billings & Eastman, 2002; Billings & Angelini, 2007), and the phenomenon is not limited to the United States (Larson & Rivenburgh, 1991).

The question of why sporting events are so popular and important has been continually addressed. In examining why people enjoy different types of media content, disposition-based theories have been used across different areas of media including comedy, drama, tragedy, violence, and sports. The theoretical framework hypothesizes enjoyment of media content is a function of viewers' affective dispositions towards media characters and the outcomes the characters face (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976). Bryant and Raney (2000) identified five factors for the spectators' enjoyment of sports on electronic screens:

1. Viewers' affective relationships to the players or teams involved in the contest;
  2. The favorableness of the outcome of the contest to the spectator;
  3. The amount of conflict and drama inherent in the contest or added to the sporting event by the sports casting or production team;
  4. The amount of suspense the contest has and how that suspense is resolved;
- and
5. The degree of novelty, riskiness, and effectiveness of play (p. 159).

This study focuses on what types of factors impact the enjoyment of a mediated sporting event by looking at a combination of the first four factors.

Disposition theories have been primarily applied in the areas of drama, comedy, and sports. What has been lacking in the study of disposition theories is the actual formation of dispositions, or attitudes toward the characters. Previous research has concluded and supported the idea that witnessing liked teams or players achieve victory produces the maximum amount of enjoyment while watching a sporting event, but little research has addressed how the actual attitudes toward players are formed, and if that process ultimately has an effect on enjoyment. One possibility is through positive and negative commentary; however, past research has only examined the influence of home versus away commentators, and dramatic language, and the effect those variables had on enjoyment (Bryant, Comisky, & Zillmann, 1977; Rainville & McCormick, 1977; Bryant & Raney, 2000).

Given the theoretical context, the following study is designed to extend the disposition theory of sports spectatorship to identify whether a nationalistic bias, shown through positive and negative commentary influences how much enjoyment is gained through watching a sporting contest. Previous research in disposition theory has examined enjoyment of sports based on affective dispositions towards teams and players, and past research on nationalistic biases in commentary has been limited to content analysis. A gap exists in combining the two elements to determine the effect such commentary and bias can have on enjoyment. This study will examine the specific sport of women's gymnastics; previous research has found it to be one of the marquis events in prime time broadcasts, and typically receives the most air time. Conclusions may be limited from this research, as there are no studies of similar context or comparison. However, the value of studying one event can potentially yield a greater understanding of how a nationalism bias of an event affects viewers' enjoyment.

A 4 x 2 experimental design was employed to determine how commentary impacts the enjoyment of a mediated sporting event. Chapter Two grounds both nationalism bias and disposition theory of sports spectatorship in their respective theoretical and methodological foundations. The section begins with a review of the literature explaining the concepts of nationalism and nationalistic bias in sports, an explication of disposition-based theories, and the disposition theory of sports spectatorship. Chapter Three explains the methodology of the study: experimental design. Chapter Four reviews the results of the study, and Chapter Five is reserved for an extensive discussion of the results of the experiment, as well as the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

#### *Explication of Nationalism*

The concepts of nationalism and nationality are very closely related, and follow many of the same conceptual and theoretical definitions. Past research often uses the terms interchangeably. Both have a strong focus on citizen's beliefs of their collective identity (Wallace, 2000). However, it is important to note one distinction: Nationalism focuses more on behavioral aspects. Nationality is identification; referring to oneself as "American," "Chinese," "Australian," or "Romanian" versus engaging in a behavior such as waving the corresponding flag, is the clearest distinction between the two terms (Wallace, 2000; Miller, 1997).

In the simplest definition, nationalism can be considered a person's support of his/her nation. The term nationalism has been suggested to be one of the most ambiguous concepts within political and analytical thought (Alter, 1994). The roots of nationalism find themselves in Western Europe, perhaps beginning around the time of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century (Smith, 1998; Alter, 1994). Nationalism today has been defined as both a behavior and an ideology (Kellas, 1991; Smith, 1993). More specific definitions include ideas of shared language, culture, remembrance of the past, a history, and an imagined political community, all of which can be combined together or held separately to form a shared identity that all citizens are committed to upholding (Barnard, 1965; Gellner, 1971; Anderson, 1991; Renen, 1994; Weber, 1994).

Kohn and Calhoun (2005) stated nationalism "is a product of historical, social, and intellectual conditions; its rise in the different countries varies, therefore, according to the conditions prevailing then and there...[it] carries a different meaning with different peoples at



different ages” (pp. 119-120). Though those authors date the idea of nationalism back to the Renaissance and Reformation, most other scholarship dates the idea as emerging at some point during the 1800s. What exactly nationalism stems from is also a point up for debate; it has been linked to industrialism, the printing press, capitalism, the French Revolution, and nationalistic efforts (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1994; Smith, 1998). In other words, research has yet to set forth one concrete definition or starting point for the concept of nationalism. Political scientist Karl W. Deutch (1967) defined nationalism as “a state of mind which gives ‘national’ messages, memories, and images a preferred status in social communication and a greater weight in the making of decisions” (p. 208). In other words, the nation is placed above all (Alter, 1994).

Nationalism today can be seen in many different forms. The most common forms are within social symbols, such as flags, national anthems, national representations – such as the bald eagle in the United States – and national past times and norms (Billig, 1995). Symbols serve to bind together individual members, and separate the group from rivals (Eitzen & Zinn, 2001). In different circumstances, symbols become more or less prevalent and meaningful. One example of symbols increasing in meaning and prevalence occurred right after the terrorist acts against the United States in New York City and Washington, D.C. on 9/11. No matter the origin, nationalism can be symbols or behaviors meaning something to a great number of people (Smith, 1995). In a non-war time, the symbols still remain, but are less prevalent within society.

Social symbols also exist in smaller subsets than nations; for example, college teams have symbols such as a mascot or a logo, and professional teams use symbols in order to differentiate themselves. Eitzen and Zinn (2001) noted:

Using symbols to achieve solidarity and community is common in American schools.

Students, former students, faculty members, and others who identify with the institution

adopt nicknames for its athletic teams, display the school colors, wave the school banner, wear special clothing and jewelry, and engage in ritual chants and songs. (p. 48)

This behavior is not different from nationalistic behaviors, where citizens wave the country's flag and sing the national anthem. The difference occurs on the scale in which the behavior occurs; nationalistic behavior supporting a nation encompasses the entire nation and all the citizens within, whereas individual school or team pride only affects a smaller subset of individuals.

Nationalism has been defined as both an ideology and a behavior. The behavior of nationalism is part instinct, but it is also the result of learning and the environment (Kellas, 1991). A specific situation or circumstance can raise the level of nationalism seen within a society. There are different ways this can be done, but as mentioned above, most often it is done through the display of symbols. For example, during times of war, people fly the American flag to show support for the forces that are fighting (Guenter, 1990). Symbols and means of showing support have grown from one to many. Though the flag still flies, example of other symbols include flag-inspired clothing and stickers for cars. When the United States became involved in the Persian Gulf War in the 1990's, many citizens went beyond flags, as noted by Santino (1992):

A snowman decked out in marine fatigues in Massachusetts. . . red, white, and blue ("Christmas") bulbs strung on the front wall of a house in Dallas. . . a snow-soldier driving a snow-tank in Bowling Green, Ohio. . . trees covered with miniature flags and yellow ribbons all over the United States. (p.1)

That circumstance is one of many showing how nationalistic behavior increases under the veil of war.

An important concept to consider is racism with respect to nationalism. Racism identifies different races of people and assigns a negative evaluation to people considered to be in the 'out-group' (Miles & Brown, 2003). There are different types of racism: prejudices, opinions and attitudes held by individuals or groups; behaviors designed to exclude certain races from places or circumstances; and an ideology (Wieviorka, 1995). Racism shares historical origins and characteristics with nationalism, and the two can overlap and contrast each other (Miles, 1993; Gullestad, 2002). Miles and Brown (2003) argued the overlapping characteristics cause the nation to identify itself with race because the historical, cultural, political, and other distinguishing factors of a nation are ultimately included under the idea of race. Further, they claimed racism could be considered an excess of nationalism, not only depending on the principle of nationalism to exist, but imposing influence in the idea of nationalism. Though these past findings and conclusions suggest race does relate to a person's level of nationalism, and is a concept that must be taken into account, there has been little empirical work done to determine how much one influences the other.

The most popular form of nationalist behavior comes in the form of sports, due to large numbers of people becoming highly emotional in support of their national team (Kellas, 1991; Cottam, Cottam, & Rienner, 2001). Such behaviors serve to underpin and heighten national consciousness. National consciousness is the sense of belonging to a political and social community, developed by social groups which emphasize commonalities such as language, culture, religion, and history. Though mediated by education, it can also undergo transformations (Alter, 1994). It is in the arena of sports we see another common place where national symbols come in to play, which gives way to the idea of sportive nationalism.

*Sportive Nationalism* Hoberman (1993) claimed sportive nationalism was a complex phenomenon which existed more as a result of both sport and non-sport challenges and events, such as political or social movements. The idea of sportive nationalism has been defined as a Doctrine that promotes sportive success in international competitions as an instrument of national self-assertion. The explicit content of this doctrine is the claim that triumphant athletes promote national prestige. Implicit...is also the more urgent idea that victorious athletes are indispensable symbols of national vitality who contribute to the survival of the nation through rolemodelling effects. In this sense athletes can function as symbols of national willpower and strength (Hoberman, 2004, pp. 184-185).

In this instance, sporting events become the center stage in which the idea of nationalism can play out. Sportive nationalism can be both positive and negative. It can positively promote national cohesiveness as members of a nation come together to cheer for their respective nations in an honest competition; it becomes negative when fans engage in hateful actions, such as rioting, or competitors cheat in order to ensure victory (Bairner, 2001).

A subset of research has defined sportive nationalism as a competition of nationalism-based ideals, specifically citing globalization as a type of international competition (Grider, 1998; Hambro, 2000; Wuhrmann, 2002). Though this definition of sportive nationalism is not pertinent to this research, it bears mentioning. Globalization is seen as a type of competition between nations or regions, and often sports imagery – such as boxing metaphors – are used to describe the competition (Hoberman, 2004). The survival of the nation in a global economy hinges on different factors, such as their business successes and failures, global relationships, and humanitarian efforts, all which can be seen as individual competitions within a larger competition (Hambro, 2000, Wuhrmann, 2002; Hoberman, 2004). However, sporting

competitions can also become a factor, as can be seen by the campaign of the Norwegian Prime Minister that persuaded the citizens of Norway the Olympic medals won by the Norwegian athletes in the 1994 Winter Olympics Games were synonymous with the nation's ability to compete in a global market (Hoberman, 2004). President Gerald Ford even tied sports to success, stating "It is not enough to just compete. Winning is very important...In athletics and in most other worthwhile pursuits first place is the manifestation of the desire to excel" (as cited in Nixon, 1984, p. 21). It is within this frame of a global competition that a bonding experience exists among members of a nation.

War is easily a time where members of a nation can be seen bonding together. However, Jarvie (1993) noted sporting events also create a bond, "provid[ing] a uniquely effective medium for inculcating national feelings; it provides a form of symbolic action which states the case for the nation itself" (p. 74). Kellas (1991) stated the most popular show of nationalism comes through sport, due to people becoming emotionally invested in the performance of their national team. Sporting teams and events then become used for prestige, legitimacy, compensation, and rivalry building in an acceptable manner (Illmarinen, 1982; Hargreaves, 1992; Hill, 1992; Houlihan, 1994). Kidd (1992) examined the nation of Canada and concluded the victory of their national hockey team helped elevate the nation's status in the minds of their members, which can make the 'nation' more real as a construct. Fans at international soccer matches hoist their nation's flags in the stands, or dress up in a manner which represents their nation, such as Swedish fans donning Viking helmets (Bairner, 2001). The performances of athletes as they represent a nation have both conscious and unconscious significations; consciously members of a nation can unite in celebration or defeat, and unconsciously they can indicate a nation's ability to survive, and serve as a unifying force (Hoberman, 1993). As members of a nation read about and

watch their teams, they can attach themselves to the public recognition the team garners after a success through their identification with the teams (Novak, 1976).

*Self-Categorization Theory* Considering the limited exposure people have to individuals from other cultures, sporting events have the ability to influence how different cultures are portrayed on a global level (Williams, 1994). Past sports research has used framing (Goffman, 1974) and agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) to analyze broadcasts of sporting events (Denham, Billings, & Halone, 2002; Billings, 2003). However, Billings and Tambosi (2004) proposed self-categorization theory as a means to study nationalism and a national bias when analyzing sports broadcasts. Self-categorization theory states people view themselves as both individuals and as part of a group, and group memberships are important in the development of self-identity (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). In their 2004 study of the World Cup (Men's Soccer), Billings and Tambosi used this concept to explain how commentators may use different adjectives to describe their own United States team, and viewers may make their own inferences from the commentary based on their self-identification with the United States team. On a world-wide stage like the Olympics, it can be argued Wenner and Gantz's (1989) conclusion that viewers tune in to watch the team with which they identify is correct; additionally, the intrigue increases when nations face each other. What can be concluded from these ideas is that within the realm of broadcasting and coverage of international sporting events, a bias will exist in order to enhance this sportive nationalism.

### *Nationalism Bias in Sports*

Studies which have examined a nationalism bias have been largely based in studies of sport coverage and comment valence. With regard to a nationalism bias in sports, it has been found United States sportscasts tend to favor athletes from the United States (e.g. MacAloon,

1984; Farrell, 1989; Real, 1989; Tomlinson, 1989; Larson & Rivenburgh, 1991; Real & Mechikoff, 1992; Billings & Eastman, 2002). Biases have been found to exist in international sporting broadcasts through the home nation receiving more coverage than other nations, even if the home nation is not the most dominant or the most winning. For example, Billings and Eastman (2003) found in their analysis of the U.S. coverage of the 2000 Summer Olympics that the United States received 51% of all broadcasts mentions during primetime broadcasts but won only 11% of the total medals at the games. Commentary is another way of displaying a nationalistic bias, by speaking positively and complimentarily of the athletes from the United States, and claiming athletes from other nations have success due to luck or experience. This finding is not limited to the United States broadcasts; Larsen and Rivenburgh (1991) found in their analysis of the 1988 Seoul Olympics that a home nation bias was found to exist in broadcasts of the games from the United States, Great Britain, and Australia. The conclusions for why this exists generally place the blame on the mass media seeking to obtain the highest ratings – and therefore, the most advertising dollars – by simply giving the viewing public what they ask for, and maintaining the nation-state construct as a collective consciousness (Espy, 1981; Guttman, 1984; Billings & Angelini, 2007).

Studies of nationalism have been grounded in ideas of team identification, self-categorization theory, and social identity theory. With respect to team identification, spectators perceive a connectedness to a team, and they experience the teams' success and failures as their own (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Smith & Henry, 1996; Wann, Royalty, & Roberts, 2000; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Peace, 2001).

Social identity theory concludes people tend to associate themselves with those they perceive to be successful (Snyder, Lassegard, & Ford, 1986). Research which expands upon this

idea puts forth the “BIRGing” and “CORFing” phenomenon (Snyder, Lassegard, & Ford, 1986; Kimbel & Cooper, 1992; Madrigal, 1995; Wann, et al., 1995; Cialdini et al., 1999; Mahoney, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000), where “BIRGing” means ‘basking in reflected glow’ and “CORFing” means ‘cutting off reflected failure.’ In other words, when a team a person associates themselves with wins, they will assume themselves as part of the victory, and will make statements like, ‘We sure played hard.’ Conversely, when the team suffers a defeat, the statements will sound like, “They really couldn’t keep it together out there.’ The pronoun use switches from ‘us’ to ‘them’ – in the ‘us’ use, people bask in the reflected glow, but the use of ‘they’ suggests they have distanced themselves from the team, at least for this time period.

Finally, studies of self-categorization theory find people sometimes view themselves as individuals, and other times they perceive themselves as part of a group (Turner, et al., 1987). Perceived group memberships play a role in the formation of self-identity. Due to the makeup of those broadcasters on United States networks that broadcast sporting events (mostly white, American males), self-categorization theory could create a discourse between the broadcasting group members and members of other groups, such as females or competitors from other countries (Billings & Angelini, 2007). Group identification can be found on many levels within sports beyond the broadcasters and fans; another group examined has been judges and referees. Judges may self-identify with athletes from their specific country (or home state, home conference, home school, etc.). A discourse could occur between judges and athletes they perceive to be outside of their group identification, resulting in a bias.

A nationalistic bias has also been examined in judging, specifically in the Olympic Games. Figure skating, gymnastics, and ski jumping are three sports which have received previous attention from researchers, and conclusions from different examinations over the span



of multiple years and Olympic games has shown judges score the athletes from their own countries higher than athletes from other countries (Ansorge & Scheer, 1988; Seltzer & Glass, 1991; Whissell, Lyons, Wilkinson, & Whissell, 1993; Popovic, 2000; Lock & Lock, 2003; Zitzewitz, 2006). One constant limitation of doing studies of figure skating and gymnastics is detailed and individual judging results are not released to the public (more so in gymnastics events), so speculation has to occur to draw conclusions. One study of a nationalistic bias in judging the diving events during the 2000 Olympic Games served to remove that speculation when the individual judges' scores were discovered and analyzed. Emerson, Seltzer, and Lin (2009) found evidence of a strong nationalistic bias within the judging of the events, including the possibility of the medal standings being influenced by the amount of nationalistic bias.

The Olympic Games also become a natural event in which to examine a nationalistic bias in coverage. As mentioned previously, numerous studies have found evidence of some type of nationalistic bias, whether it be through coverage time or commentary. An examination of the 1992 Winter Olympic games in Albertville, France made the specific allegation political nationalism was brought into the broadcasting of the Olympic Games, and commentary helped create national 'friends' and 'enemies' (Riggs, Eastman, & Golobic, 1993). Nationalism biases began in the Olympic Games during the 1938 Berlin games, highlighted by track star Jesse Owen's victories in the face of Hitler's blatant racism (Riggs et al., 1993; Real, 1989). The examination of the winter Olympics concluded journalistically it was expected the United States receive the bulk of the mentions, due to the nationality of the audience and broadcasters. The study also revealed United States broadcasts were successful in interweaving political nationalism into the discourse through language and valence. The United States was sixth in

total medals won, but first in both total mentions and nationalistic references, with the bulk of the nationalistic mentions being sympathetic or strong.

Parks and Robertson (1998) observed that males and females receive different treatment (within the culture of the United States) in sports broadcasting, with males being granted privilege and status not given to females. Often this differential treatment can be seen in the form of sexist language; language exists within sports media that serves to reiterate gender-specific stereotypes and expectations (Bissell & Duke, 2007). As noted above, positions of sports writers and commentators are typically held by males, and previous studies affirm language used for both male and female athletes emphasizes gender inequalities (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Halbert & Latimer, 1994). Though such studies focus on gender and sexist language, the same principles can be applied to language that showcases a strong nationalistic bias by using the principles of in-group and out-group discourse.

Self-categorization theory proposed the idea of an in-group and an out-group; people align themselves with group members they feel they share similarities with, either in behaviors, thoughts, or attitudes (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). Trust, positive regard, cooperation, and empathy are extended to members of the in-group, and serve as a basis of discrimination of the out-group (Singh, Choo, & Poh, 1998; Brewer, 1999; Levin & Sidanius, 1999). Studies of the in-group versus the out-group find there is more in-group favoritism than out-group derogation (Brewer, 1999); this can be seen in the idea of nationalism because people will first support their nation rather than go out of their way to degrade another.

In studies which examine gender and sexism, the broadcasters are typically male, and the ideology is that males are more dominant at sports. Male athletes in this instance become the in-group. Thus, language is typically complimentary towards males, focusing on their athleticism

and physicality. The females are the out-group, and language focuses on their personality, looks, and emotional states (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Halbert & Lattimer, 1994). In-group and out-group discourse can also be found in cases of ethnicity and nationalism. Again, broadcasters are typically male, white, and American, which means the in-group is comprised of athletes of similar attributes. With respect to ethnicity, language focuses on the extreme commitment and modesty of the in-group (white athletes) while members of the out-group are said to succeed due to skill and natural talent (Billings & Eastman, 2002). Similarly, nationalistic language used by commentators depicts the American athletes as being successful due to composure and courage, while non-American athlete's success is chalked up to experience (Billings & Eastman, 2003).

Research over multiple Olympic Games, both summer and winter, yields consistent findings with respect to a nationalism bias found in United States broadcasts; American athletes receive the most mentions, and the most complimentary commentary (Billings & Eastman, 2002; McDaniel & Chalip, 2003; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Weiller, Higgs & Greenleaf, 2004; Billings & Angelini, 2007). One exception to these findings was within Billings and Eastman's (2003) examination of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, UT. Their findings showed athletes from the United States did not receive the greatest amount of mentions, but the language used in describing American versus non-American athletes was different. American athletes were spoken of in a much more positive manner emphasizing their hard work and composure in competition, while the success of non-American athletes was explained as luck or experience. This conclusion about commentary is also a common finding across the previously mentioned studies. American athletes perform well – and conversely, fail – due to their concentration, commitment, and composure. Non-American athletes succeed due to experience, but their

failures were typically explained by lack of skill, strength, or athletic ability (Billings & Angelini, 2007).

The resulting broadcast commentary then focuses on providing what the viewer is looking for – favorable announcing to the home team (Billings & Tambosi, 2004). Sabo, Jansen, Tate, Duncan, and Leggett (1996) analyzed 340 hours of television coverage of seven international events, and found a nationalistic bias in the coverage of the international teams and/or players. Additionally, Sabo et al. (1995) examined a sample of seven international sporting events between 1988 and 1993, and concluded a nationalistic bias existed both in number of mentions given to athletes from the United States, and, like previous research, found an ‘us versus them’ valence in the commentary. They also suggested a nationalistic bias was enhanced through familiarity; athletes from the United States were referred to on a first name basis, mentions were made of their families, they were interviewed more often, and vignettes about them were more prevalent. This finding has been confirmed in subsequent research in both sporting ‘games,’ like the Olympics or Pan-American Games, but also in individual international sporting events, most notably World Cup Soccer, as well as sporting events not broadcasted by the United States (Myers, Blamer, Nevill, & Al-Nakeeb, 2006; Jarvie & Reid, 1999; Billings & Eastman, 2002; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Billings & Tambosi, 2004; Billings & Angelini, 2007).

Though previous scholarship focusing on a nationalistic bias in international sporting events is limited, the conclusions are fairly clear. What previous research fails to do is account for biases within individual sporting events within a larger multi-sport event. Examination of an entire event is both necessary and beneficial; however, it may be rare an individual viewer may watch an entire Olympic Games or similar event. It seems more plausible to suggest viewers

tune in to sports they are interested in, or sports which may be the ‘water cooler’ events of the games so they may be informed. Therefore, an examination of nationalistic biases in individual sports within the whole of the games also seems necessary and beneficial.

Women’s gymnastics has been examined in the context of the larger Olympic Games research. There are two main themes which have been fleshed out: one, women’s gymnastics has the popularity it does because it is a sport that is traditionally feminine (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Kane & Parks, 1990; Cramer, 1994; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Bissell & Duke, 2007), and women’s gymnastics is the sport which typically receives the most air time during Olympic broadcasts (Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Billings & Eastman, 2002; Tuggle, Huffman, & Rosengard, 2002; Billings & Angelini, 2007; Tuggle & Davis, 2009). Therefore, given its prominence within primetime broadcasts, it offers the ability to do a complete analysis on facets such as commentary, nationalism biases, and gender comparisons.

A content analysis was done on the 2008 women’s gymnastics competition to determine the level of nationalism bias in the commentary. Results were consistent with previous research; the United States team accounted for over 50% of the total coverage time, approximately 50% of the total comments, and 65% of all positive commentary, while China, the main competitor of the United States, accounted for approximately 35% of the total coverage, and earned the largest share of negative comments with 42% (Reichart-Smith, 2009).

Previous scholarship on nationalistic biases is examined through the lens of content analyses; few to no studies have been done that explicitly examine the effect of a nationalistic bias. Therefore, there is limited ability to draw conclusions from pre-existing literature on how viewers are actually affected by these biases.

### *Explication of Enjoyment*

In order to understand the disposition theory of sports spectatorship, the guiding foundations of disposition-based theories of enjoyment must be explained, as the disposition theory of sports spectatorship stems from the original concepts of the disposition theory. Disposition-based theories of enjoyment are used in media effects research to predict viewers' enjoyment of certain types of media content (Raney, 2003). The different types of media content include, but are not limited to, drama, comedy, music, and sport. Disposition-based theories of enjoyment stem from two main antecedents: the examination of pleasure and the examination of the effects of watching dramatic or tragic content.

Enjoyment and pleasure find research roots in the fields of biology, psychology, neuroscience, and communication. Within the field of communication, enjoyment is typically defined as a positive reaction to media content (see Bryant & Miron, 2002; Raney & Bryant, 2002; Miron, 2003; Raney, 2003; Tamborini, 2003). Though the early definitions of pleasure have been traced to Aristotle and Epicurus (Bryant & Miron, 2002), modern thoughts on pleasure began to be based in empirical research beginning with Campbell's (1973) use of psychology research to clarify how pleasure actually worked in the brain. The idea that one can feel pleasure stems from neurophysiology research, which examines the brain and the physiological reactions which occur in order to produce a feeling of pleasure. Miron (2006) stated "pleasure [remains] the oldest and still key function regulating human behavior" (p. 344). Pleasure is one concept which has been hard to define, and spans across a variety of activities, from food to sex. Some have claimed pleasure is simply the opposite of pain (Tiger, 2000). Researchers have been unable to define exactly what pleasure is, contemplating between the idea of it being a sensory experience or a conscious element (Parducci, 1995). Pleasure breaks down into many distinct

forms; physiological pleasure, bottom-up pleasure, intellectual pleasure, top-down pleasure, intrinsic pleasure, sensory pleasure, and positive emotions (Cabanac, Pouliot, & Everett, 1997; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Fredrickson, 2001, 2002; Bryant & Miron, 2002). Bryant and Miron (2002) theorized media content can effect sensorial stimulations and cortical activities which influence pleasure areas of the brain. The result of pleasure may be due to media content that is appreciated (van Reekum, 2000). In order to be entertained, and thus reach enjoyment, pleasure in response to a media stimulus is pivotal (Vorderer & Hartmann, 2009).

The emotion on the other side of pleasure is one of pain, or angst. Antecedents of this idea can be found in early theories about dramatic and tragic content. Plato focused on the effects of watching drama and tragedy. He believed watching such content and the resulting distress people felt would make people more apt to wallow in the self-pity of their own lives, and dramatic and tragic content was inappropriate (Zillmann, 1998). Aristotle proposed the opposing idea of catharsis, which says when people watch drama and tragedy, it would allow them to experience emotions like fear and pity, and if people were able to experience those emotions through watching other people go through them, they could remove those tensions from their own lives (Bryant & Miron, 2002). Catharsis is well known in modern thinking, but lacks empirical support (Geen & Quanty, 1977; Copeland & Slater, 1985; Zillmann, 1998; Harris & Scott, 2002). These early predecessors of the idea behind why people engage in pleasurable activity and watch dramatic content helped give rise to disposition theory (Zillmann & Cantor, 1977; Zillmann 1985, 1994).

### *Overview of Disposition-Based Theories*

Disposition theories are a type of media effects theory. Media effects theories focus on how the mass media affects how the audience thinks and behaves. Early media effects research

took the viewpoint of an all-powerful media which forced its viewpoint on a helpless public (e.g. Lippmann, 1922; Lasswell, 1927; Bruntz, 1938). That view later switched to the idea the audience was more active and in control of how they used their media and a limited effects model was proposed (e.g. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954; Hovland, 1954; Klapper, 1960; Trenemen & McQuail, 1961; DeFleur, 1970). Currently, research on media effects now focuses on a complex interaction between media and society (e.g. Bandura, 1977; Gitlin, 1980; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Van Zoonen, 1992; Perse, 2001; Bryant & Thompson, 2002).

To bridge into the disposition theory, a simple explanation of what the intended effect might possibly be is needed with respect to further examinations on disposition theory. The intended effect could be considered entertainment. The central idea of entertainment is based on diversion and immersion in a story line (McQuail, 2005). Zillmann & Bryant (1994) broadly conceptualized entertainment as the pleasure and experience of watching the experiences of others, as well as the observation of specialized skills, either by one's self or another person. One further explanation states "it engulfs any kind of game or play, athletic or not, competitive or not, whether witnessed only, taken part in, or performed alone" (Bryant & Miron, 2002, p. 550).

Disposition-based theories of enjoyment explain why we like what we like. These disposition-based theories of enjoyment can be used to predict why people will enjoy certain types of media content (Raney, 2003). The earliest formations of disposition theories were produced by Zillmann & Cantor (1977), and were furthered by Zillman (1984, 1985). To use the term 'disposition theory' may be misleading; it may be more appropriate to explain disposition theory as a collection of disposition-based approaches to different types of media content (Raney, 2003). The collection of theories spans across humor, drama, sports, and sad genres of



entertainment. Under disposition theories, each genre has a protagonist and antagonist. Viewers assign different sentiments to each based on moral considerations, and those are the moral judgments which drive enjoyment (Zillmann, 1991; Bryant & Miron, 2002). Enjoyment is a function of these affective dispositions and the outcomes the characters face (Raney, 2002). Positive dispositions inspire feelings of hope for a good outcome and a fear of a bad outcome. Negative dispositions inspire a feeling of hope for a punishment for the character we deem as bad and a fear of victory for them. Protagonists deserve good things and good fortunes, and antagonists deserve nothing but bad. Positive and negative affect is said to be shared with audience members, which means they must have some sort of involvement in the story line (Bryant & Miron, 2002).

Using those principles, Zillmann (1980) advanced the following four predictions of disposition theory: 1. Enjoyment is at the maximum when failure is witnessed for a character that is disliked, and enjoyment is at its lowest point when the disliked character achieves victory or escapes punishment. 2. When positive characters win, enjoyment increases, and when they face a negative outcome, enjoyment decreases. 3. Annoyance levels rise when people deemed positive fail, and people that are disliked succeed. 4. Annoyance levels fall when liked persons experience something positive or win, and rise when those liked characters experience defeat or are setback in some way. These four predictions occur jointly, and all four contribute to a total level of enjoyment or annoyance. It is these four predictions which apply to disposition theories across genres.

#### *Disposition Theory of Drama*

Disposition theories can be applied to situations like drama, comedy, and, most relevant to this research area of interest, sporting events. Zillmann (1988) tried to explain why we watch

drama. He believed the previous concept of witness identification with characters fails to explain the enjoyment of someone else's distress. In 1991, he theorized people watch dramatic situations as a voluntary third party; they voluntarily identify with characters to relate to, and they do this to the degree which gives them the most amount of enjoyment. The disposition theory of drama says a loss of value inflicted on characters considered to be enemies and a gain of value on characters considered to be friends is appreciated, and the gain of value on enemy characters and the loss of value on friend characters is deplored (Zillmann & Cantor, 1976).

#### *Disposition Theory of Sports Spectatorship*

The concept of enjoyment must be considered when talking about sporting events; people watch sporting events for a variety of reasons, one of which is they enjoy them. Early studies on disposition theories defined enjoyment as an emotional response to characters within a program, saying the amount of enjoyment is related to the positive or negative outcomes for a character (Zillman & Bryant, 1975). Applying this concept to sports viewing, enjoyment could be conceived as the emotional response to players on the field.

Bryant and Miron (2002) theorized disposition theories of enjoyment become the most obvious, and the dispositional mechanics of enjoyment become the most obvious, in sports spectatorship, because fans have favored and hated teams. When you see the team you love humble and humiliate a team you hate, that constitutes the ultimate in sports enjoyment. The reverse outcome can illustrate the opposite end of the spectrum of enjoyment: total defeat. When you witness two teams to which you have no loyalties, then enjoyment and excitement do not ever get a chance to materialize because you simply do not care (Hirt, Zillmann, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992). When applied to the concept of nationalism, this idea shifts so the favored team is the team which represents the nation, and the hated teams represent other countries. The

researchers also concluded enjoyment from seeing a beloved team was found to elevate fans self-esteem, and give them more confidence in their own physical, mental, and social abilities and skills. When their team loses, it deflates their level of self-esteem, and their level of confidence about themselves decreases.

Therefore, these ideas can be moved into the disposition theory of sports spectatorship. That particular branch of disposition theory applies the basic premise of disposition theory to sports content, with the basic premise being enjoyment of entertainment is largely a reflection of both viewers dispositions toward the characters and the outcomes the characters experience (Zillmann & Cantor, 1977; Zillmann, 1985, 1991, 2000). Enjoyment increases when good characters experience good outcomes, and when bad characters experience negative outcomes.

Sports and sport contests are a popular form of entertainment, and people find enjoyment in watching sporting contests of all types. Enjoyment is more about a team or player loyalty than about the display of skills by an athlete. Sapolsky (1980) concluded people do not cheer when athletic skill is being displayed; cheering for just a 100-mph pitch in a baseball game or a home run is not likely to occur. Rather, cheers occur when a favorite team or player completes the action; it was not the home run which was cheered, but the fact it was Barry Bonds hitting the home run which made it enjoyable. Performing an intricate skill on the balance beam may be appreciated, but when it is performed by a gymnast loved by fans, enjoyment occurs. Fans appreciate skills and talent much less, and may even despise them when they are exhibited by rivals or hated teams. Raney (2003) said we all have teams and players we love and hate, and that is the nature of sports fanship. We cheer for those we like, we want them to achieve victory, and we want our rivals to fail and be defeated.

Zillmann, Bryant, and Sapolsky (1989) offered the following propositions to explain the disposition theory of sports spectatorship: enjoyment derived from witnessing the success and victory of a liked party increases, and it decreases when watching a disliked party succeed. Additionally, the amount of enjoyment experienced from watching the defeat of a liked party goes down and then increases when the negative party is defeated. It can be assumed maximum enjoyment is achieved when an intensely liked athlete or team defeats and intensely disliked entity. Minimal enjoyment occurs when disliked athlete achieves victory over the revered athlete. When you watch a game where you do not care about either team, enjoyment is moderate (Zillmann & Paulus, 1993).

The broadcast commentaries help to add drama in sporting contests, and the commentary can then lend itself to the feelings of enjoyment. Bryant, Comisky, and Zillmann (1977) found sport commentators made use of dramatic statements and highlighted conflict in order to increase enjoyment levels among fans. Bryant and Raney (2000) observed today's media likes to highlight conflict as well in order to create drama and increase enjoyment. Cheska (1981) noted elements of drama – the participants, the ritual, the plot, the production, the symbolism, and the social message are all choreographed into the sports spectacular. Bryant and Raney (2000) said dramatizing sports context evidently helps bring entertainment value into sports context by converting important plays of great magnitude into high drama.

Past studies which have examined broadcast commentaries have primarily examined how language is used and its effect on enjoyment. Wenner (1989) argued examining the substance of commentary in mediated content may highlight factors of cultural significance. Interpersonal drama is built in to commentary by making derogatory statements about opponents (Bryant et al., 1977). Additionally, positive and negative commentary can be used to build reputations for

players. In a study which examined commentary and race, Rainville and McCormick (1977) concluded commentary served to build positive and negative relationships about players of certain races; positive commentary praised players and portrayed them in a positive light, while negative commentary consisted of derogatory remarks and negative comparisons. Whether it is dramatic statements, or positive/negative commentary, all studies concluded commentary does have an influence on enjoyment of a mediated sporting event.

As with the disposition theory, formations of dispositions are significantly determined by viewers by moral evaluations of the actions of characters, and like with drama, actions are significant determinants of how dispositions are formed. For example, before the 1994 winter Olympic Games, a rivalry had been brewing between figure skaters Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan. Though no particular actions had been done to a certain point, fans had assigned feelings of like and dislike to both athletes. Kerrigan was viewed as the ‘good girl’, the person from a good family with a wholesome background and all-American ways. Harding was assigned the label of the ‘bad girl’ – the girl from the wrong side of the tracks. When Kerrigan was clubbed in the knee weeks before the Olympic Games, and the blame lay at Harding’s feet, people were able to make specific moral judgments about the actions, and assign stronger feelings of like and dislike to both athletes. Kerrigan became the protagonist in the story, the good girl who was the innocent target of a malicious attack. Harding became the antagonist, due to her actions being judged as morally repugnant.

The eventual question asked is how to conceptualize what a character is: are they teams, are they specific athletes, or are they both? Literature suggests fanship and allegiance with a certain team or player governs dispositions. What can contribute to the trigger of a disposition

may be the emotional concepts identified in team identification, social identity theory, or social cognitive theory.

Though a lot of watching of sports occurs in a social situation, social facilitation of enjoyment is something research has been unable to support. Audience size has not been found to show an increase in the enjoyment of watching the game, and the reactions of the people around you do not influence your own enjoyment. However, in a social consideration, studies have shown winning and losing can have social effects on communities of people (Schwartz, Strack, Kommer, & Wagner, 1987; Schweitzer, Zillman, Weaver, & Luttrell, 1992). Winning a highly contested match against a powerful nation or rival, especially when it is an unexpected victory, can unite people, at least for a short period. A good example of this would be the unexpected victory of the American hockey team during the 1980 Winter Olympic Games. For a short period, the nation was able to unite in a feeling of pride. This is seen on a smaller scale in cities whose sports teams win championships – the days of the victory parade, the entire city becomes united in their pride over the teams' victory. Conversely, when the team suffers a defeat, the people come together and bond by consoling each other, and offering each other the encouragement of "We'll get them next time."

Three main studies support the disposition theory of sports spectatorship. In 1989, Zillmann, Bryant, and Saplosky examined the dispositions of viewers of two NFL teams: the St. Louis Cardinals and the Minnesota Vikings. Affective or negative dispositions towards either team had the most effect on people's levels of enjoyment of the outcome of the game. Viewers with no dispositions toward either team had no strong levels of enjoyment. Saplosky (1980) examined how player attributes affected dispositions towards the players and enjoyment of the outcome. In his experiment, he examined the attribute of race, and created a fake basketball

game which showed an all-white team playing an all-black team. The outcomes were manipulated, and it was found viewers of similar attribute to the teams enjoyed the game more when those similarly attributed teams won, and enjoyed the game less when the team of the opposite attribute was victorious. Finally, Zillmann, Bryant, and Saplosky (1989) examined United States viewer's enjoyment of the 1976 Olympic gold medal basketball game between the United States and Yugoslavia. They found the United States audience enjoyed the game more when the United States team scored (and eventually won), and experienced unhappiness when the Yugoslavian team scored.

The element of commentary has been found to help to add drama and excitement in to sporting events. Those commentaries can help bring about feelings of enjoyment. Sport commentators employ dramatic statements and highlight conflict in order to increase enjoyment levels (Bryant et al., 1977). Similar findings have been found to be true with regard to media today (Bryant & Raney, 2000). That dramatization of sports competitions was enhanced by converting important plays of great magnitude in to situations of high drama; additionally, commentaries which focus on gender find commentators use stronger language to describe men – words like 'powerful' and 'dominant,' and athleticism is discussed more, while women are described using words like 'pretty,' and commentary focuses more on their personal background. Owens and Bryant (1988) examined how an announcer can have an effect on the fans of teams. They manipulated the announcer of football games, using either the home team announcer or the rival teams' announcer, and found the home team enjoys the game more when the home announcer is calling it.

## Hypotheses

Research using disposition-based theories has shown viewers enjoy content based on their affective dispositions toward characters. Studies based on the disposition theory of sports spectatorship have shown people enjoy sporting events more when it is ‘their’ team achieving victory. This study attempts to expand the disposition theory of sports spectatorship by examining how commentary can affect viewers’ enjoyment of a sporting event. The viewers were exposed to a United States media broadcast of the 2008 women’s gymnastics competition from the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, manipulated on different levels. The main two variables examined were the commentary valence and the nationality of the viewer. To date, disposition theory research examines one of the concepts at a time, and does not examine how multiple concepts may work in tandem to affect enjoyment. To determine how two concepts work together, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Commentary and viewer nationality will have an effect on enjoyment.

Disposition based research focuses solely on the outcome of an event, whether it be a sporting event, a drama, or a comedy. The theory assumes that enjoyment is derived ultimately from the outcome the characters face. The following two hypotheses are proposed to examine the effect that outcome has on enjoyment when the commentary varies across conditions:

H2: Viewers from the United States will have the two highest enjoyment scores in the two conditions when the United States is the victor.

H3: Viewers from China will have the two highest enjoyment scores in the two conditions when China is the victor.



The central tenets of disposition theory state that maximum enjoyment is achieved when liked players achieve victory, and minimum levels of enjoyment are achieved when liked players suffer defeat. Therefore, the following hypotheses were advanced:

H4: Viewers from the United States will achieve the highest enjoyment scores when the commentary is positive about the United States, the commentary about the Chinese is negative, and the outcome is a United States victory.

H5: Viewers from China will have the lowest enjoyment scores when the commentary is negative about China, positive about the United States, and the outcome is a United States victory

H6: Viewers from China will achieve the highest enjoyment scores when the commentary is positive about China, negative about the United States, and the outcome is a Chinese victory.

H7: Viewers from the United States will have the lowest enjoyment scores when the commentary is negative about the United States, positive about China, and the outcome is a Chinese victory

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

The design of the experiment is a 4 x 2 between subjects experimental design. The factors that were manipulated were Olympic gymnastics coverage (coverage) and viewer nationality (nationality). Coverage was manipulated on four different levels: 1) positive United States commentary/negative Chinese commentary/Chinese win; 2) positive United States commentary, negative Chinese commentary/United States win; 3) negative United States commentary/positive Chinese commentary/Chinese win; and 4) negative United States commentary/positive Chinese commentary/United States win. A more extensive explanation of the content of the videos is provided under the stimulus heading. Nationality was manipulated on two levels: United States citizen and Chinese citizen. Following exposure to the video, the participants rated their enjoyment of the meet, and their dispositions toward each team. Prior to each video treatment, a clip of a different sport from the same Olympic Games was shown which highlights either China or the United States winning a gold medal. The prior sport clip corresponded to the eventual outcome of the gymnastics clips; for example, the group who watched video one (which had an eventual outcome of a Chinese victory) was shown a clip of the Chinese divers winning a gold medal.

#### *Sample*

The participants were 150 undergraduate and graduate students from a university in the Southeastern United States. The first group consisted of 75 United States citizens, the second group consisted of 75 Chinese citizens.

Participants were recruited in two ways. First, a convenience sample was selected from classes at all levels across the university. Secondly, a snowball sample was utilized for

participants who were sought from special interests groups based out of the university, such as “The Association for Chinese Students and Scholars.” Students from the special interest groups were asked to pass on information via email about the study to their friends. Students who agreed to participate opted for extra credit in a class within the College of Communication, or were eligible to enter into a drawing for one of two prizes of one hundred dollars. Participants were systematically assigned to one of the four experimental groups. Observed power for the sample was 1.00.

### *Procedure*

For this study, the researcher told the participants they would be watching video featuring different segments of the women’s gymnastics competition from the 2008 Beijing Olympics and they would complete a survey about their enjoyment of the video. For this study, the participants were not given any sort of background information as to the controversy which existed during the competition with regard to the Chinese team and their ages<sup>1</sup>, in order to not influence participants’ appraisal of the segments. However, the participants were given a brief questionnaire to fill out before they began watching the video which asked if they watched the Beijing Olympics, what sports they may have watched, and what their awareness is of the results for the women’s gymnastics competitions.

Participants read and signed the IRB-approved consent form, then viewed the video (approximately 11 minutes). Following exposure to the video, the participants completed a survey which tested their level of enjoyment.

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<sup>1</sup> During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the Chinese women’s gymnastics team faced accusations that gymnasts were not 16, which is the age the International Olympic Committee requires female gymnasts to either be, or need to turn, in the year of the Olympics. Documents were leaked that showed the Chinese gymnasts were as young as age 12. Though the Chinese officials successfully disputed the accusations and provided appropriate documentation verifying the ages, the remainder of the Games saw a cloud of suspicion consistently cast over the Chinese team.

### *Stimulus Material*

A total of four videos were used:

1. Video one featured positive commentary about the United States gymnasts, negative commentary about the Chinese gymnasts, and showed Chinese gymnasts winning a gold medal. The video was equally split between United States and Chinese gymnasts (i.e. 50% of the video featured clips and commentary about the United States, and the remaining 50% featured clips and commentary about the Chinese). The commentary shown with the United States gymnasts was all positive; only comments such as “She has a beautiful routine,” “She did that to perfection,” and “She is the best in the world on this event” were used. There were no neutrally valenced comments (e.g., “She has a start value of 17,” “She just completed a full turn”). The commentary shown with the Chinese gymnasts was negatively valenced; only comments such as “She isn’t focused at all,” “She missed that combination and it hurt her overall score,” and “She does not look good on this event tonight” were used. Again, there were no comments with a neutral valence. The final clips of this video showed the Chinese gymnasts celebrating a victory with a gold medal. No individual clips were shown of the United States gymnasts receiving a silver or bronze medal, unless the shot was of the three gymnasts who won medals and it could not be avoided.

2. Video two featured positive commentary about the United States gymnasts, and negative commentary about the Chinese gymnasts. The video was exactly the same content as video number one, with one exception; the final clips of the video showed the United States gymnasts celebrating a victory with a gold medal. No individual clips were shown of the Chinese gymnasts receiving a silver or bronze medal, unless the shot was of the three medalists and could not be avoided.

3. Video three featured negative commentary about the United States, positive commentary about the Chinese, and showed the Chinese gymnasts winning a gold medal. The video was equally split between United States and Chinese gymnasts (i.e. 50% of the video featured clips and commentary about the United States, and the remaining 50% featured clips and commentary about the Chinese). The commentary shown with the United States gymnasts was all negative; only comments such as “She isn’t focused at all,” “She missed that combination and it hurt her overall score,” and “She does not look good on this event tonight” were used. There were no neutrally valenced comments (e.g., “She has a start value of 17,” “She just completed a full turn”). The commentary shown with the Chinese gymnasts was positively valenced; only comments such as “She has a beautiful routine,” “She did that to perfection,” and “She is the best in the world on this event” were used. Again, there were no comments with a neutral valence. The final clips of this video showed the Chinese gymnasts celebrating a victory with a gold medal. No individual clips were shown of the United States gymnasts receiving a silver or bronze medal, unless the shot was of the three medalists and it could not be avoided.

4. Video four featured negative commentary about the United States, positive commentary about the Chinese, and showed a United States gymnast winning a gold medal. The content of the video was identical to the video described in video number three, with one exception; the final clips of the video showed the United States gymnasts celebrating a victory with a gold medal. No individual clips were shown of the Chinese gymnasts receiving a silver or bronze medal, unless the shot was of the three medalists and could not be avoided.

Neutral commentary was not included in any of the video clips. The focus of this study was on how positive and negatively valenced comments affected viewer’s enjoyment, thus the researcher found it prudent to be explicitly clear in the video clips that the commentary was

either positive or negative. This was done to remove any potential confusion of the viewer as to the tone of the comments.

Since previous research has shown games which have more suspense are more enjoyable to viewers, the clips edited together highlighted the closeness of the scores, and the slim margins of victory which occurred (Bryant, Rockwell, & Owens, 1994; Gan, Tuggle, Mitrook, Coussement, & Zillmann, 1997). Though the outcomes of the four different videos were different, the main elements of the videos remained as similar as possible. For example, the two videos which highlighted positive commentary about the United States team and negative commentary about the Chinese team showed the same clips; the difference was in whom the participants saw receiving the gold medal. The same tactic was used with the two videos which highlighted negative commentary about the United States teams. This was done in an attempt to minimize the potential production of different results that could come from watching different video clips than another group.

### *Independent Measures*

The first independent variable was broadcast commentary, as manipulated on four levels: 1) positive commentary about the United States, negative commentary about China, and a Chinese victory; 2) positive commentary about the United States, negative commentary about China, and a United States victory; 3) negative commentary about the United States, positive commentary about China, and a Chinese victory; and 4) negative commentary about the United States, positive commentary about China, and a United States victory. United States was defined as any female gymnast representing the United States in competition (team alternates in the stands did not count), and China was any female gymnast representing China in competition (alternates did not count). Positive commentary was defined as any comment which praised the

United States gymnasts in any way, and negative commentary was defined as any comment which highlighted a mistake, pointed out something done wrong, or negated a performance.

The second independent variable was nationality, which was manipulated on two levels: United States and China. In order to account for participants of different nationalities potentially influencing the responses of participants of the other nationality, participants watched the video clips in an individually segmented cubicle. They could not see what was on the screen of their neighbor.

### *Dependent Measures*

The dependent measures in this experiment were the enjoyment of the competition and level of nationalism. Enjoyment of the meet and enjoyment of commentary were measured using a nine-item measure consisting of ten-point, Likert-type items adapted from prior research (Raney & Depalma, 2006). Each item had different wording depending on the question. For example, “How enjoyable was the commentating in the gymnastics clips you just saw?” had Likert-type items ranging from “Not enjoyable at all” to “Extremely enjoyable,” while a question which asked “How much did you like hearing the commentary?” ranged from “Not at all” to “Extremely.” An enjoyment variable was created using the following items: “How much did you enjoy the clip?”, “How much did you enjoy the commentary?”, “How good did the clip make you feel?”, “How fair did you think the commentary was?”, and “How good did the commentary make you feel?”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .97, indicating an excellent level of reliability.

Nationalism was measured using a twelve-item measure, consisting of four-point, Likert type items adapted from prior research (Phinney 1992; McDaniel & Chalip, 2002). Responses ranged from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”. A nationalism scale was created using the

following items: “I have a clear sense of my nationality”, “I am happy with my national group”, “I feel a strong sense of belonging to my national group”, “I have a lot of pride in my national group”, and “I feel a strong sense of attachment to my national group”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .92, indicating an excellent level of reliability.



## CHAPTER IV

### Experiment Results

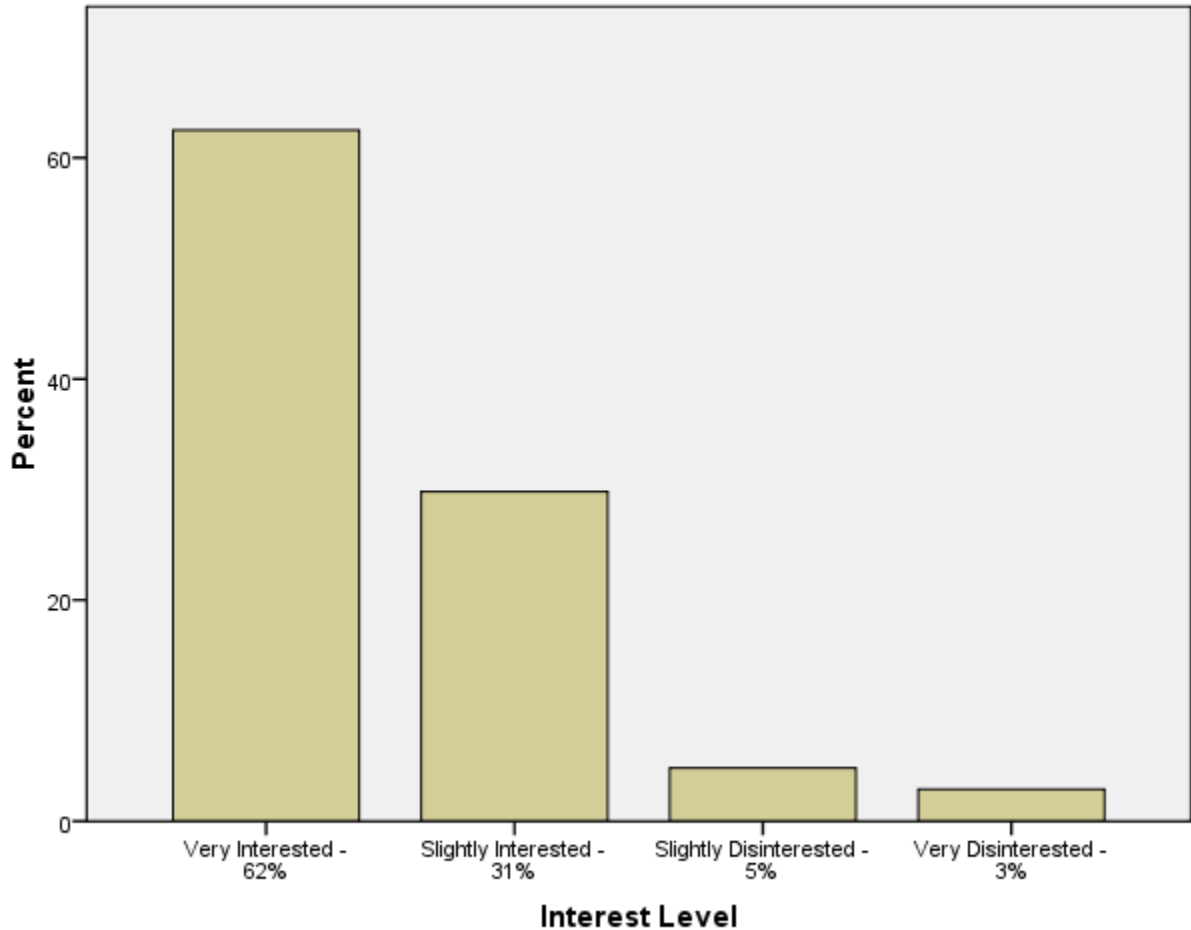
This chapter presents the results of the 4 x 2 between subjects experimental design employed to test the effects of nationality and commentary on the enjoyment of a mediated sporting event. The experiment consisted of two different nationality groups watching one of four treatments of the women's gymnastics competition from the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four treatment conditions. The following results are broken down into descriptives, mean group comparisons, and the results of the factorial ANOVA.

#### *Descriptives*

A total of 150 participants were recruited for the experiment. Due to incomplete or inaccurate responses, 46 participants' answers were removed from the sample. The final sample yielded 104 respondents. The sample was equally split between respondent's nationality, with 52 respondents identifying themselves as United States citizens, and 52 identifying themselves as Chinese citizens. Of the entire sample, 65% were reported as female, 35% reported as male. With respect to age, 40% reported themselves to be 18 years old, 20% reported themselves as 19, 16% reported themselves to be 20, 11% reported themselves to be 21, 11% reported themselves to be 22, and 1% reported themselves as 23 years of age or older.

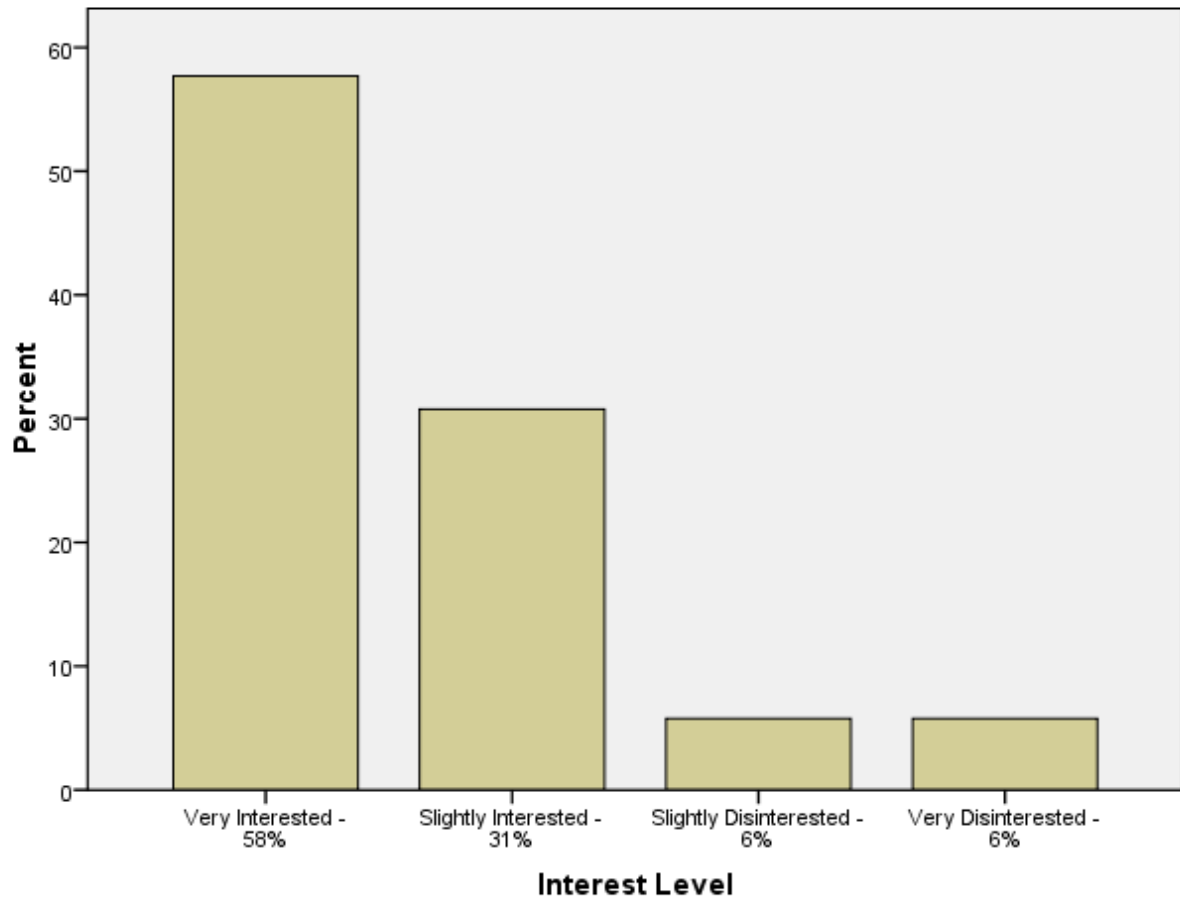
Questions about interest in sports in general, watching sports on television, interest in the Olympic Games, interest in watching the Olympic Games, and if participants watched the Olympic Games were also asked. Within the sample, 65% of participants reported being interested in sports in general, 60% reported an interest in watching sports on television, 55%

reported an interest in watching the Olympic Games, and 89% reported actually watching the Olympic Games. Full breakdowns of the interest levels can be found in Figures 1 – 3.



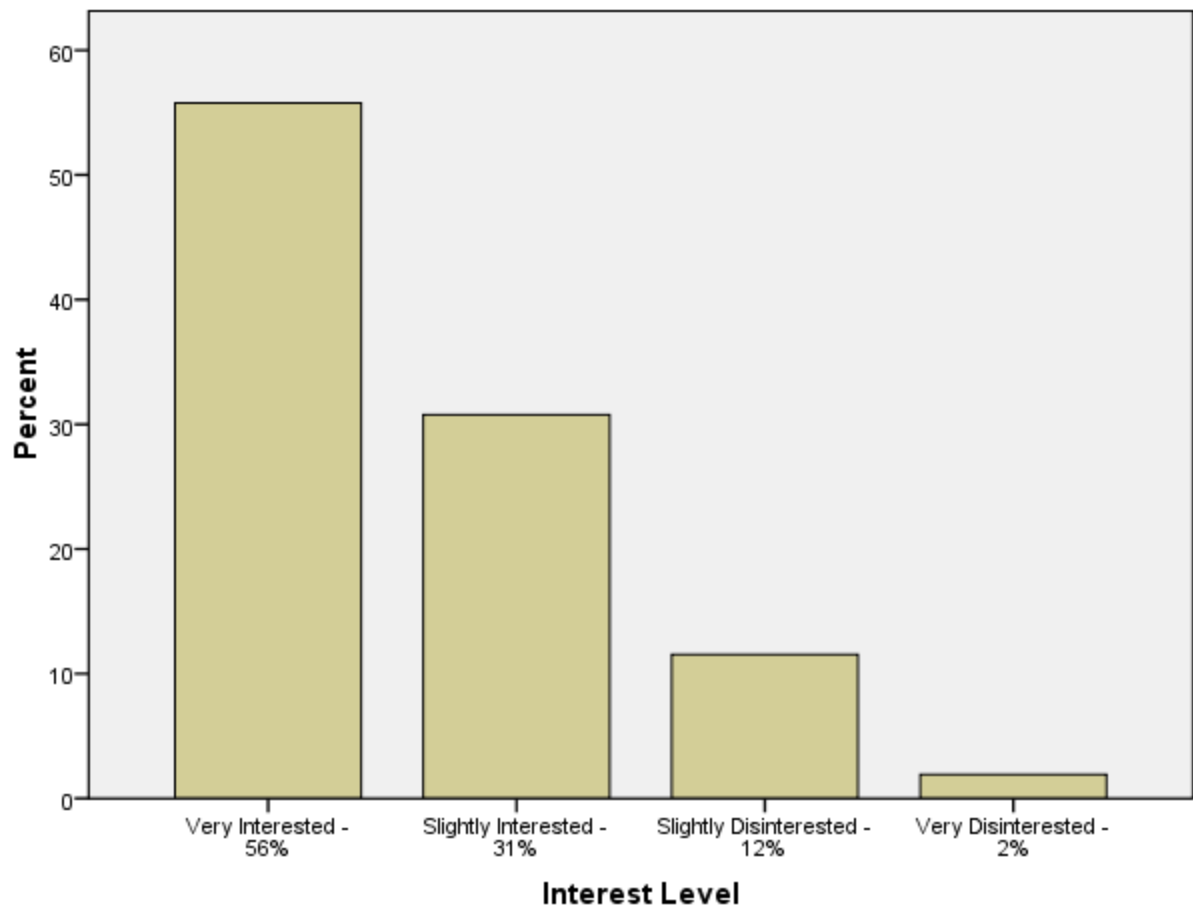
**Figure 1. General Interest In Sports**

Figure 1 illustrates the interest level for the entire sample. Within the sample, 70% of the United States participants and 56% of the Chinese participants reported being very interested in sports in general. With respect to disinterest, none of the Chinese participants reported being very disinterested in sports in general, but 6% of the United States participants did. This variable was examined to determine the general level of interest in sports by participants.



**Figure 2. Interest in Watching Sports on Television**

Figure 2 includes the entire sample. With respect to the differences between respondents from different nations, 62% of United States respondents reported being very interested in watching sports on television, and 10% reported being very disinterested. Within the Chinese respondents, 54% reported being very interested, while 2% reported being very disinterested. This variable was examined to determine the general level of interest in sports television programming.



**Figure 3. Interest in Watching the Olympic Games**

Figure 3 includes the entire sample, and was examined to ascertain participant’s general level of interest in the Olympic Games. No distinction was made between Summer and Winter Olympics. Of the United States respondents, 58% reported being very interested in watching, and 2% reported being very disinterested. For the Chinese respondents, 54% reported being very interested, and 2% reported being very disinterested.

With respect to actually watching the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, 90% of respondents reported watching the Olympic Games; 80% of respondents from both nationalities responded in the affirmative. What broadcast the participants watched the Olympics on was also a variable of interest; 82% reported watching the United States (NBC Network) broadcast, 2%

reported watching a Chinese network feed, 9% reporting watching the Beijing Olympic Broadcast (the “BOB”), and 7% reported watching the broadcast on another network.

With respect to watching the women’s gymnastics competition, 80% of respondents from both nations reported they watched the competition but over 60% of respondents did not have a knowledge or memory of the specific event outcomes. A full breakdown of the knowledge of event outcomes is included in Table 1.

Table 1

Knowledge of Specific Event Outcomes Prior to Watching the Stimulus

Event	Knew Outcome – U.S.	Knew Outcome - China
Team Competition	33%	46%
All-Around Competition	31%	35%
Vault	14%	23%
Uneven Parallel Bars	10%	27%
Balance Beam	12%	25%
Floor Exercise	17%	31%

*n = 104*

The responses contained within Table 1 were asked of participants directly prior to their watching the treatment condition to which they had been randomly assigned. More Chinese participants were knowledgeable about the team outcome (46% as compared to 33% of the United States participants), and more Chinese participants (35%) reported knowing the All-Around competition outcome, as compared to the United States participants (30%). In all of the

other event categories, both nationalities reported 25% or less of the participants knowing the outcomes.

Chi-Square tests were run to determine if there were significant differences between the two groups knowledge of the outcomes of the events. No significant relationships were found for knowledge of the team outcome ( $\chi^2(1) = 1.97, p > .05$ ), all-around outcome ( $\chi^2(1) = .175, p > .05$ ), the vault competition ( $\chi^2(1) = 1.61, p > .05$ ), the beam outcome ( $\chi^2(1) = 3.16, p > .05$ ), or the floor outcome ( $\chi^2(1) = 2.58, p > .05$ ). However, a significant interaction was found for the bar outcome ( $\chi^2(1) = .22, p < .05$ ), with the Chinese participants being more likely to know the outcome of that specific event competition.

#### *Factorial ANOVA*

H1 predicted commentary and national identity would be a predictor of enjoyment. A 4 (commentary) x 2 (nationality) between-subjects factorial ANOVA was calculated comparing the enjoyment scores for subjects who watched one of four treatment conditions which manipulated commentary and outcome, and who were from either the United States or China. A factorial ANOVA was used due to the ability to analyze the effects of more than one independent variable, as well as the effects of the interactions of the variables. The factorial ANOVA indicated significant differences between the treatment groups across the dependent variable of enjoyment ( $F(7, 96) = 6.73, p < .05$ ). Post-hoc Tukey tests further indicated statistically significant differences in enjoyment means across all groups

Viewers who watched positive commentary were found to have higher mean enjoyment scores than viewers who watched negative commentary. Participants from the United States in treatment condition one reported a high level of enjoyment ( $M = 9.31, SD = .86$ ), while participants from the United States reported a low level of enjoyment in treatment condition

three ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ). The main effect of nationality was not found to be significant ( $F(1, 96) = 1.02$ ,  $p > .05$ ). This suggests nationality does not have an effect on enjoyment. However, a significant interaction effect between commentary and nationality was found ( $F(3, 96) = 218.83$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Viewers had higher mean enjoyment scores when the commentary was positive about the corresponding nationality, suggesting enjoyment is affected by positive or negative commentary about a particular nationality. Thus, there is no effect based on nationalism alone; commentary needs to be taken into account in order to show an effect on enjoyment. Figure 4 shows the interaction effect between nationality and commentary.

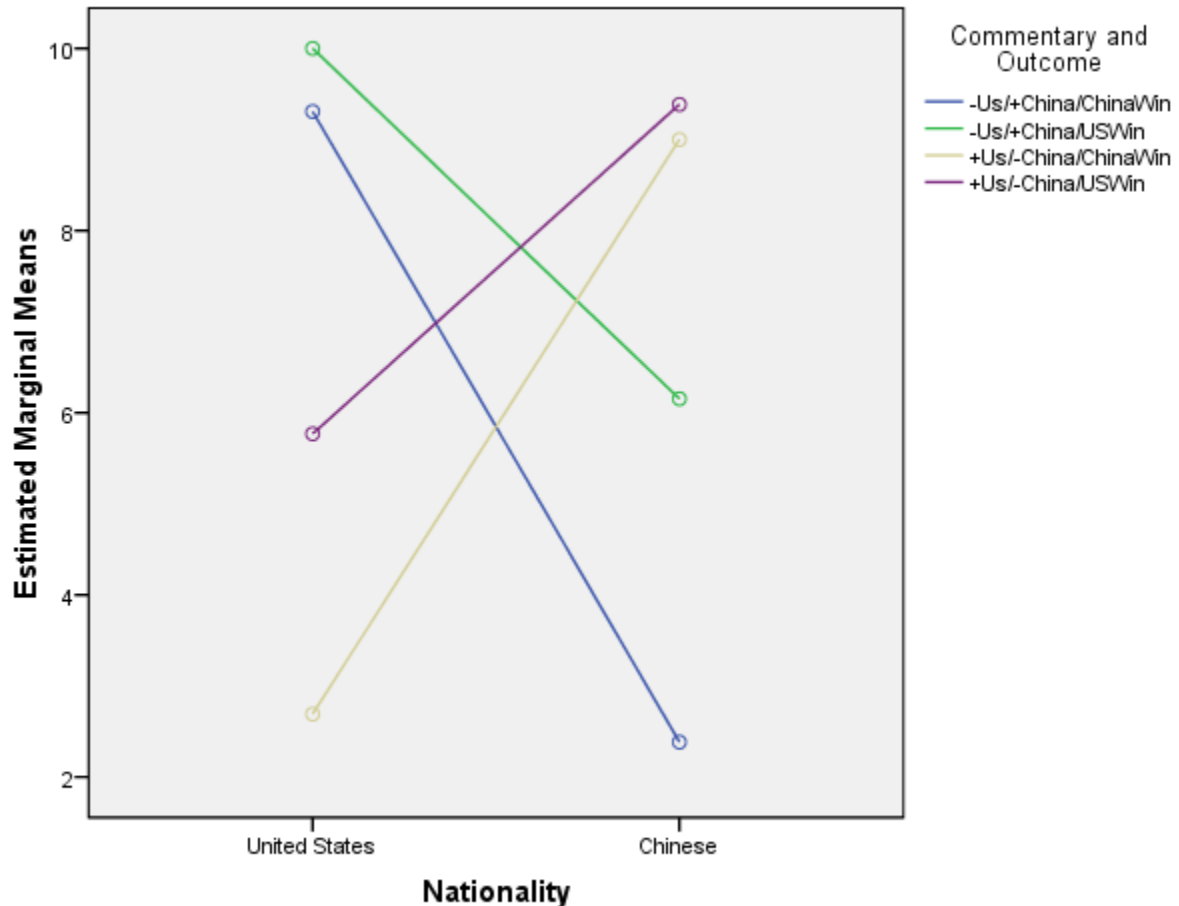


Figure 4: Estimated Marginal Means of Enjoyment of Clips

### *Means Comparisons*

H2 stated viewers from the United State will have the two highest enjoyment scores in the two conditions when the United States is the victor. Previous disposition theory research concluded a positive outcome is what drove enjoyment. A 2-tailed independent t-test was used to assess whether the means of the United States participants and Chinese participants were statistically different from each other. Levene's Test of Equality of Variances was run on all *t*-tests, and equal variances were assumed. The independent samples t-test calculated the mean scores of United States participants with the mean scores of Chinese participants for the dependent variable of enjoyment of the outcome when the United States won the competition. No significant difference was found ( $t(50) = .185, p > .05$ ). The mean of United States participants was not significantly different from Chinese participants when the United States team was the victor in the competition. Thus, the hypothesis is not supported.

H3 stated viewers from China will have the two highest enjoyment scores in the conditions when China is the victor. A 2-tailed independent t-test was used to assess whether the means of the United States participants and Chinese participants were statistically different from each other. The independent samples t-test calculated the mean scores of United States participants with the mean scores of Chinese participants for the dependent variable of enjoyment of the outcome of the competition. No significant difference was found ( $t(50) = -.89, p > .05$ ). The mean of United States participants was not significantly different from Chinese participants when the Chinese team was the victor in the competition. Thus, the hypothesis is not supported. Table 2 shows the differences in mean scores for each of the treatment conditions.



Table 2

## Overall Mean Enjoyment Scores by Treatment Condition and Nationality

Treatment Condition	<u>U.S. Citizen</u>	<u>Chinese Citizen</u>
	<i>n</i> = 52	<i>n</i> = 52
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Treatment 1	9.31(.85)	3.38( 1.32)
Treatment 2	10(0)	2.38( 1.12)
Treatment 3	2.69(1.03)	9.00( .91)
Treatment 4	5.77(1.78)	9.38( .77)
<i>n</i> = 104		

\* Enjoyment was measured on a 10-point Likert Scale item questionnaire, with 10 being “Extremely Enjoyable”, 5 being “Moderately Enjoyable”, and 1 being “Not at all Enjoyable. Thus, a low score would be considered between 1 and 3, and a high score would be considered between 8 and 10. Scores from 1 – 3 could be indicative of non-enjoyment, scores from 4 - 7 could be considered moderate enjoyment, and scores ranging from 8 -10 could indicate extreme levels of enjoyment.

Hypotheses 4 – 7 proposed maximum enjoyment levels would be achieved when the positive commentary and outcome matched the viewer’s nationality, and low levels of enjoyment would occur when the negative commentary and outcome was opposite the viewer’s nationality. Enjoyment was measured using a 10-point Likert Scale item questionnaire, with 10 being “Extremely [Enjoyable/Good/Fair]” and 1 being “Not at all [Enjoyable/Good/Fair]”. The questions were analyzed using a means comparison and independent *t* tests. Tables 3 – 6 show a full breakdown of the means comparison by nationality of each treatment condition.

Table 3

Independent *t* tests by Nationality on Levels of Enjoyment for Treatment 1 (Positive United States Commentary, Negative Chinese Commentary, and Chinese Victory).

<u>Dependent Variable*</u>	<u>U.S. Citizen</u>	<u>Chinese Citizen</u>	
	<i>n</i> = 13	<i>n</i> = 13	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i> ( <i>df</i> ) = <i>t</i> , <i>p</i> < .001
Enjoyment	42.08(3.33)	11.38( 2.50)	<i>t</i> (24) = 26.58, <i>p</i> > .05
	<i>n</i> = 26		

\* An enjoyment variable was created using the following items: “How much did you enjoy the clip?”, “How much did you enjoy the commentary?”, “How good did the clip make you feel?”, “How fair did you think the commentary was?”, and “How good did the commentary make you feel?”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .97

Table 4

Independent *t* tests by Nationality on Levels of Enjoyment for Treatment 2 (Positive United States Commentary, Negative Chinese Commentary, and United States Victory).

<u>Dependent Variable*</u>	<u>U.S. Citizen</u>	<u>Chinese Citizen</u>	
	<i>n</i> = 13	<i>n</i> = 13	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i> ( <i>df</i> ) = <i>t</i> , <i>p</i> < .05
Enjoyment	44.85(3.41)	32.54( 9.54)	<i>t</i> (24) = 7.58, <i>p</i> < .05
	<i>n</i> = 26		

\* An enjoyment variable was created using the following items: “How much did you enjoy the clip?”, “How much did you enjoy the commentary?”, “How good did the clip make you feel?”, “How fair did you think the commentary was?”, and “How good did the commentary make you feel?”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .97

H4 predicted viewers from the United States would achieve maximum enjoyment levels when the commentary is positive about the United States, the commentary about the Chinese is negative, and the outcome is a United States victory. A 2-tailed independent t-test was used to

assess whether the means of the United States participants and Chinese participants were statistically different from each other. The independent t-test was used because the two sample sizes were equal, the two distributions were assumed to have the same variance, and the analysis is an appropriate measure to compare the means of two groups. The results of the independent t-test showed significant differences in the means of both groups for each dependent variable. Overall enjoyment for the United States participants was found to be at the maximum enjoyment level for all treatment groups ( $M = 10$ ,  $SD = 0$ ), meaning all participants rated the clip to be extremely enjoyable. For this score, all participants received maximum enjoyment. Conversely, the Chinese participants reported a low level of enjoyment ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ). United States participants reported low levels of being upset or bothered by the commentary, and extremely high levels of enjoyment of the actual commentary, and a good feeling about the commentary. Chinese participants recorded the lowest levels of enjoyment when questioned about how fair the commentary was ( $M = 1.85$ ,  $SD = .89$ ), but the commentary did not upset them greatly ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 2.51$ ). This hypothesis supports the basic tenets of disposition theory by confirming United States participants had maximum levels of enjoyment when commentary and outcome was positive with respect to the United States team.

H5 predicted viewers from China would have low levels of enjoyment when the commentary is negative about China, positive about the United States, and the outcome is a United States victory. A 2-tailed independent t-test was used to assess whether the means of the United States participants and Chinese participants were statistically different from each other. Again, the independent t-test was used because the two sample sizes were equal, the two distributions were assumed to have the same variance, and the analysis is an appropriate measure to compare the means of two groups. The results of the independent t-test showed significant

differences in the means of both groups for each dependent variable. Overall enjoyment for the Chinese participants was found to be at the lowest enjoyment level for all treatment groups ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), meaning the Chinese participants rated the clip to be almost not at all enjoyable. Though enjoyment levels were reported to be low for the variables of enjoyment of the commentary, feeling good about the clip, and feeling good about the commentary were low ( $M = < 3.00$ ), Chinese participants had mid-range scores when asked about being upset by the commentary ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 2.51$ ) and being bothered by the commentary ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 2.38$ ). Thus, this hypothesis was supported.

Table 5

Independent  $t$  tests by Nationality on Levels of Enjoyment for Treatment 3 (Negative United States Commentary, Positive Chinese Commentary, and Chinese Victory).

Dependent Variable*	<u>U.S. Citizen</u>	<u>Chinese Citizen</u>	
	$n = 13$	$n = 13$	
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$	$t(df) = t, p < .05$
Enjoyment of Overall Clip	$10.00(1.68)$	$38.69( 5.27)$	$t(24) = -18.71, p < .05$
	$n = 26$		

\* An enjoyment variable was created using the following items: “How much did you enjoy the clip?”, “How much did you enjoy the commentary?”, “How good did the clip make you feel?”, “How fair did you think the commentary was?”, and “How good did the commentary make you feel?”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .97.

H6 predicted viewers from the United States would have low levels of enjoyment when the commentary is negative about the United States, positive about China, and the outcome is a Chinese victory. A 2-tailed independent t-test was used to assess whether the means of the United States participants and Chinese participants were statistically different from each other. The results of the independent t-test showed significant differences in the means of both groups for each dependent variable. Participants from the United States recorded the lowest level of

enjoyment of all treatment groups ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ), showing they enjoyed the overall clip the least of all four treatment conditions. Also notable is their enjoyment levels with respect to commentary and fairness of comments were extremely low ( $M = < 2.00$ ). They reported high levels of being both upset and bothered by the commentary ( $M = > 8.00$ ). Thus, H6 was supported.

H7 predicted viewers from China would achieve maximum enjoyment levels when the commentary is positive about China, negative about the United States, and the outcome is a Chinese victory. A 2-tailed independent t-test was used to assess whether the means of the United States participants and Chinese participants were statistically different from each other. The results of the independent t-test showed significant differences in the means of both groups for each dependent variable. Participants from China reported the highest overall enjoyment scores for the clip ( $M = 9.00$ ,  $SD = .91$ ), and the commentary in this treatment was least upsetting ( $M = 1.77$ ,  $SD = .83$ ). Though their enjoyment levels were reported as being the greatest within this condition, the means levels are lower than what the United States participants reported when their nation was portrayed positively and in a victorious outcome. Therefore, H7 was supported.

Table 6

Independent *t* tests by Nationality on Levels of Enjoyment for Treatment 4 (Negative United States Commentary, Positive Chinese Commentary, and United States Victory).

Dependent Variable*	<u>U.S. Citizen</u>	<u>Chinese Citizen</u>	
	<i>n</i> = 13	<i>n</i> = 13	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i> ( <i>df</i> ) = <i>t</i> , <i>p</i> < .05
Enjoyment of Overall Clip	18.46(2.67)	41.85( .77)	<i>t</i> (24) = 3.72, <i>p</i> > .05
	<i>n</i> = 26		

\* An enjoyment variable was created using the following items: “How much did you enjoy the clip?”, “How much did you enjoy the commentary?”, “How good did the clip make you feel?”, “How fair did you think the commentary was?”, and “How good did the commentary make you feel?”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .97

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

The purpose of this dissertation was to extend the disposition theory of sports spectatorship by identifying different factors within a broadcast that may influence enjoyment of a mediated sporting event. Current research in the field of mass communication seeks to determine what forms affectations with characters; thus, this study framed nations as the ‘character’ and utilized participants of similar nationalities to the character as an attempt to examine people who had already formed strong affectations. A combination of affective relationships, outcome, conflict and suspense were examined as factors with potential to influence enjoyment. More specifically, this study examined the role nationality and commentary valence plays in the influencing of enjoyment of a mediated sporting event. The findings have implications both for disposition-based theories of enjoyment, and also on mediated events in general. This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the results, and a discussion of the implications of the findings for disposition based theories, as well as broader implications for biased commentary. Finally, directions for future research are suggested.

#### *Discussion of Results*

It is important to note two important points that must be considered when considering the results of this study. First, the sport of gymnastics is very subjective. Unlike baseball, where the winner is determined by which team scores the most runs, or football, where the winner is determined by who scores the most points, winners in the sport of gymnastics in the Olympics are judged by individuals from different nationalities. This means that scores are subject to the individual interpretations of each judge, and the judges can impose their own biases on different athletes within their scoring. Though there is a head judge that ultimately serves to enforce the

scoring rules and regulations, the score is most often left up to the collective group of judges. In an effort to combat biased judging, there are typically an odd number of judges – in the Olympic Games seven judges serve on each event – and the highest and lowest scores are thrown out, with the remaining scores averaged for the final score. All of this serves to have a very subjective system of determining the winner.

The second point to consider is the cultural differences with respect to the sport of gymnastics. In the United States, gymnastics is just one sport of many that young girls can choose to play at a young age. Often the choice to continue on in gymnastics is left up to the individual girl and/or the individual girl's family. People within the United States view gymnastics as a 'cool' and 'interesting' sport, and during the Olympic Games, it has been slotted in primetime broadcasts on United States television since the 1970's. United States gymnasts typically do not receive much mainstream attention for their accomplishments on the international stage, with only a few girls being the exception. Within the United States, Mary Lou Retton remains the most famous name in the sport of gymnastics; though many gymnasts won gold medals in subsequent Olympic Games, their names are not typically remembered.

The Chinese citizens have a very different attitude about gymnastics in China. At a very young age – typically around age two – young girls are taken to gyms all over China and put through a series of rigorous physical tests. The coaches make a determination of which girls are most likely to be successful at the sport of gymnastics, and those girls are taken from their families and sent to live at special training schools. They grow up in these schools, and see their families only two times a year. The family has no say in if their daughters stay home or go, and it is considered to bring great honor to the family if a daughter is chosen to go to the school. The gymnasts who make the national team and compete at the international level obtain celebrity



status within their country, and their families are ultimately compensated monetarily by the government for their daughters' successes.

Obviously the mindset about gymnastics differs greatly between the two cultures. In one, the sport is a choice, often with few benefits beyond the personal. In the other, the sport brings a great honor, not only to the gymnast, but to the family as well, with great personal cost to the family. It is important to keep these cultural differences in mind when looking at the results, as the viewpoints of the different cultures may have an impact on the results.

Commentary and nationality served as the two independent measures in this study, and were examined both separately and together. H1 predicted the two variables would be a predictor of enjoyment. The factorial ANOVA found commentary was a predictor of enjoyment, meaning the positive or negative commentary was a factor which influenced how much participants enjoyed the overall clip. However, nationality was found to have no effect on enjoyment, so in this examination, the nationality of the participants did not matter with respect to their enjoyment of the overall clip. When commentary and nationality were examined together, however, a significant effect was found. Enjoyment was at its greatest in the two conditions where commentary was positive about the participant's corresponding nationality. The results suggest commentary is the driving influence in enjoyment, which sets forth implications for disposition theory research with respect to affectations toward characters or teams.

Disposition based theories focus on the outcome as a predictor of enjoyment. What was found in H2 and H3 was that content may also be a predictor of enjoyment. The two highest enjoyment scores for each nationality occurred when the commentary was positive about their nation. Positive commentary and a positive outcome for the corresponding nation achieved the

highest enjoyment scores, but positive commentary and a negative outcome received the next highest enjoyment scores, with a difference of less than one point. Under the tenets of disposition theory, the two highest enjoyment scores should have occurred when the outcome was positively correlated with the nationality. As the results show, this particular tenet of the theory was not supported in this instance. It could be concluded the message content has more of an effect on enjoyment than the outcome of the contest. This finding has implications for disposition theory and social identity theory, as well as mediated content in general, which will be discussed later.

The final four hypotheses offer support to the basic tenets of disposition theory. Maximum levels of enjoyment were achieved when the commentary and outcome were positively related to the participant's nationality, and the lowest levels of enjoyment occurred when commentary and outcome were negatively related to the participant's nationality. This finding is concurrent with previous studies conclusion of disposition theory which examine enjoyment (Zillmann & Cantor, 1977; Zillman, 1984, 1985) as well as previous studies which examined commentary and concluded commentary lends itself to enjoyment (Bryant et al., 1977; Rainville & McCormick, 1977; Bryant & Raney, 2000).

Within each hypothesis and treatment examined, mean scores of the dependent variables by nationality were mostly consistent with the predictions of disposition theory. The mean enjoyment scores across the final four hypotheses fell within expected ranges; the highest scores occurred when commentary and outcome were both positively correlated to the nationality of the participant, and the lowest scores occurred when commentary and outcome were negatively correlated to the nationality of the participant.

When examining the specific scores across all four hypotheses, several points are apparent. When commentary and outcome were both positive for the United States team, the mean scores fell on the high end of the moderate range when examining whether they thought the commentary was fair. This finding is surprising, due to the expectation that positive commentary would be viewed as something extremely favorable. One possible explanation could be participants from the United States felt a level of sympathy toward the portrayal of the Chinese gymnasts, and the solely negative commentary. Since the participants both watched the event and listened to the commentary, their assessment of how well a particular gymnast did could be different than the assessment of the commentators; a United States participant could have thought a beam routine performed by the Chinese looked really good, despite the negative commentary paired with it. As mentioned previously, gymnastics is a subjective sport, and that subjective nature could be in play here.

In the condition where commentary and outcome were positive to the United States team, and the Chinese team was portrayed in a negative light though the negatively valenced comments, another interesting finding occurred. Within the analyzed variables, the Chinese participants reported enjoying the entire clip more than they enjoyed the commentary, though both scores fell into the range of minimal enjoyment. One interesting observation about this group's scores is their lowest scores occurred when asked if they thought commentary was fair, and if they were upset by the commentary. The scores for the Chinese participants for these variables indicated they felt the commentary was not fair, and did not make them feel good. However, when asked how upset they were by the commentary, their score fell directly in the middle of the scale, indicating they were neither upset nor happy about the commentary. This seems to be a contradiction; if a person feels commentary is not fair, and does not make them

feel good, it would seem to be a logical conclusion to report being very upset by the commentary. Perhaps the Chinese participants took in to consideration the positive commentary about the United States team when answering the particular question, or considered the unfairness to be the positive/negative only commentary about the teams, with no neutral commentary.

When examining the treatment condition where commentary and outcome were both positive toward the Chinese team, the Chinese participants reported scores of maximum enjoyment about the overall clip, and low scores of feeling upset or bothered by the commentary. Those findings are expected; however, when looking at whether they thought the commentary was fair, if they enjoyed the commentary, and if the commentary made them feel good, their scores fell only into the moderate range of enjoyment. Despite the positive portrayal of their home team through the commentary, their feelings about the commentary were not indicative of high levels of enjoyment. Again, this group of participants may have been influenced by the commentary being only positive or only negative, with no neutral comments mixed in. Additionally, these participants may not have agreed with assessment of the commentators; if the commentators deemed a routine excellent, the participants may have viewed it as average, or not deserving of compliments. Finally, the Chinese participants may have also been influenced by the nationality of the broadcasters; they watched a United States broadcast with United States commentators. Their analysis of the commentary may have had as much to do with their enjoyment of the nationality of the commentators as it did the performance of the Chinese team.

Previous disposition theory research has focused on the outcome of a storyline or event, and ties that outcome into enjoyment. Recent research into disposition theory has begun to examine how affectations and moral judgment of characters or teams are formed, and how those

formations affect enjoyment. Though commentary was found to help add drama and excitement into sporting events, and commentaries could help bring about feelings of enjoyment (Bryant et al., 1977; Owens & Bryant, 1988; Bryant & Raney, 2000), commentary and portrayal has been an overlooked facet of disposition research. Previous research has focused on who is announcing the game, and analyzing the corresponding commentary to important plays.

### *Implications for Disposition Theories*

Five factors have been previously identified which influence spectator's enjoyment of sports on electronic screens: viewer's affective relationships to players or teams, the favorableness of the outcome, the amount of conflict and drama added by the production team, the amount of suspense in the contest and the resolution of the suspense, and the degree of novelty or risk in the game (Bryant & Raney, 2000). The purpose of this research was to examine the favorableness of the outcome, the amount of conflict and drama, and the amount of suspense. Participants and teams were selected on the assumption that affective relationships were already formed, and novelty and risk were not analyzed factors.

The main tenets of disposition theories held true in this particular research experiment. Maximum enjoyment levels were reached when the outcome and portrayal of a team was positively correlated to the responding nationality. Minimum levels of enjoyment were recorded when the outcome and portrayal of a team was negative. Therefore, favorableness of the outcome was predictable, as participants from the United States reported maximum enjoyment levels when the United States team won, and Chinese participants reported maximum enjoyment levels when the Chinese team was victorious. This supports previous research which has examined affinity toward a particular team, and the feelings of enjoyment which occur with the team's success or failure.

The factors of conflict, drama, and suspense were examined here through the use of commentary, and the resulting portrayal of the teams. Disposition theory has previously concluded that enjoyment levels peak when there is conflict, drama, or suspense involved in the sporting event, and maximum enjoyment occurs when the favored team overcomes the conflict by securing a victory. In this particular experiment, commentary and subsequent team portrayal was manipulated so there appeared to be a stark contrast in the attitudes of the commentators; in each treatment, one team was referred to in all positive or complimentary comments while the other team received all negative or condescending comments. Additionally, outcome was manipulated so in one of those conditions the favorable team was victorious, but in the second condition the favored team suffered a defeat. If disposition theory held true, the two treatments which would have received the highest levels of enjoyment would have been the two conditions where the favored team was the victor. For example, the United States participants should have reported the highest levels of enjoyment when the commentary was positive about the United States team, and the United States team was victorious. The second highest levels of enjoyment should have been recorded when the United States team was talked about in negative terms, but ended up victorious. In this condition, there would have been a clear observed conflict between the two teams through the commentary, but the victory of the United States would have signified the United States overcoming the conflict and securing a victory. Disposition theory states such a condition would achieve a maximum enjoyment level in the participants. Instead, this experiment saw a different result.

Rather than the second highest levels of enjoyment being recorded when the favored team was talked about in negative terms but ended up victorious, the second highest levels of enjoyment for both nationality groups occurred when the favored team was talked about in a

positive light, but was not victorious in the outcome. The highest levels of enjoyment could then be correlated to commentary and portrayal of the team, and not outcome.

Though these two hypotheses were not supported, the findings are interesting in they may provide support for the need to analyze an additional element to draw conclusions within disposition theory. Disposition theory primarily focuses on affectations and outcomes. Commentary was found to have an influence on enjoyment of the overall clip. Moreover, nationality was not found to have an influence on enjoyment. Disposition theory focuses on the favored team and the outcome they face as the benchmark for enjoyment; if the outcome is not favorable, then enjoyment should not be high. The results outlined in H5 and H6 are inconsistent with disposition literature.

This inconsistency implies deeper analysis is needed into the portrayals of characters or teams, as previous assumptions may not be true in all situations. Disposition research analyzed the characters from the perspective of good and bad; enjoyment increases when good characters experience good outcomes, and when bad characters experience negative outcomes. Good and bad characters are determined by the affective dispositions felt toward each, and enjoyment is a function of the affective dispositions and the outcomes faced. The results in this study are a departure from the idea that outcome is what drives enjoyment; instead, high levels of enjoyment may be dependent on how the good characters are portrayed, and not as dependent on the outcome they face.

With respect to how affectations are formed and how they affect enjoyment, this study also points to implications for disposition research. This study used teams which were correlated to national identity, as nationalism literature provides support that citizens naturally have positive affectations toward their own nation's team. Therefore, in using these teams it is

assumed affectations are already formed. However, since nationality alone did not play a role in the enjoyment of the clip, it may be counterproductive to make assumptions with respect to disposition theory based solely on affectation; rather, affectation may need to be combined with another factor, such as commentary or portrayal, in order to have a significant effect on enjoyment.

#### *Implications for Team Identification and Nationalism*

Past nationalism research has been content analysis only; as mentioned previously, a gap existed in connecting how a nationalistic bias affected audiences. Nationalism biases have been proven to exist in international sporting events; a nationalism bias was evident in the women's gymnastics competition from the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Nationalism biases have been suggested to exist through ideas of team identification, self-categorization theory, and social identity theory; all theories suggest sports spectators identify with a particular team, and place much stock in the failure or success of the team. When a nationalism bias exists within the broadcast of a sporting event, such as more positive commentary or more air time than a competitor, it can be concluded broadcasters are playing to the dispositions of their audience. Simply, if it is a United States audience, then the focus of the broadcast should be on the promotion and celebration of victory. If all facets of disposition theory were to hold true, then broadcasts should show primarily the winning outcomes of national teams, because viewers would experience the most enjoyment.

However, when transferring the concepts of disposition theory to the disposition theory of sports spectatorship, enjoyment could be conceived as the emotional response to players on the field. With respect to nationalism bias, how emotional response is defined may be the key in connecting nationalism bias to disposition theory. If emotional response is based solely on



outcome, then the tenets of disposition theory would be expected to hold. If emotional response is based primarily on the portrayal of the national team, then the subsequent enjoyment levels would be tied more into the portrayal than the outcome, and a disposition theory would face challenges. This is what was seen in this research, which leads to the question of how emotional response is defined. Depending on the definition, the effect of a nationalism bias on enjoyment would either support or challenge disposition theory.

The theories which focus on team identification would also see implications. Team identification, self-categorization theory, and social identity theory all tie in feelings of the fan to the outcome of the sporting event, and the success or victory of the team. This research suggests the portrayal of the team may have significantly more to do with team feelings than the actual outcome. In other words, winning may not be everything; instead, how the team is portrayed may be a more significant factor in how people identify with certain teams, and the resulting feelings they experience based on the team. If a team is consistently portrayed in a negative manner, it would be a logical conclusion to assume a team would have less of a fan base than a team consistently portrayed in a positive manner, and has positive qualities associated with it.

#### *Implications for Mediated Events*

If winning is not everything, then there are far reaching implications for broadcasts, from sporting events to national broadcasts. Perhaps publics are not so fascinated with the winning mentality; rather, they would rather see a positive media portrayal. In other words, it may be fine if a United States team does not win every event in the Olympics, so long as the commentators focus on the positive attributes of the team or player. Highlighting a hard work ethic, or what was done well in the competition may be more important than the outcome. Perhaps the mentality of “They didn’t lose a gold medal, they won a silver (or bronze) medal” has more

credence than broadcasters are willing to give credit to. In the instance of a non-sporting event, such as a world conflict, audiences would be happier with a positive portrayal of the party in question, even if the party was not necessarily victorious.

This has dangerous implications as well. If this mentality is correct, then a careful definition of nationalistic bias is needed. Whether it be coverage time or commentary valence, the risk is run with still showing the public a biased view of the country's domination within the world sphere.

### *Study Limitations*

As with all studies, this dissertation faces limitations. The first limitation is with the sampling method utilized for the selection of participants. The available subject pool, selected from undergraduate courses at several major universities in the United States, did not allow for randomly chosen participants for the study. This study utilized both a convenience and snowball sample in order to obtain the required number of participants. All participants were chosen from communication-related undergraduate classes and do not represent larger populations. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the population at large. However, the results do provide a beginning point for future research.

The second limitation concerns the stimulus material used for the experiments. Due to the available editing tools, the quality of the video was not top quality. Specifically, though the videos did use actual routines and comments made during the 2008 women's gymnastics competition from the Beijing Games, the originally commentary was muted, and the researcher added commentary of her choice under the routines. Thus, the sound quality was choppy at times, and some of the negative commentary which focused on one skill was longer than the actual skill, resulting in negative commentary occurring during a part of a routine that was not

necessarily bad. Participant's enjoyment of the video could have been different if the video used the actual broadcast, with no edits or researcher directed scene changes.

The third limitation comes from the broadcast used. The stimulus videos were created from the NBC network prime time broadcast of the women's gymnastics event. The broadcast was United States based, as were the commentators. Participant's enjoyment of the video could have been different if a neutral broadcast and commentary was used, such as the "BOB" or the commentary from a national broadcast other than the United States or China. Additionally, there may be a difference between watching a live event versus a taped event of any kind, because the risk is run that participants may already be knowledgeable with respect to the outcome.

The fourth limitation is in the assumption of a positive affectation of the team representing the participant's nationality. With over half of the participants reporting being a fan of the sport of gymnastics, their fan allegiance may not necessarily lie with their home nation. If the participants had stronger affectations for the Russian or Romanian teams, for example, then their enjoyment scores could have been affected.

The final limitation is concerned with the commentary used. The commentary was either positive or negative; there was no neutral commentary mixed in. This is a very black and white portrayal of a team; perhaps enjoyment levels would not have been so low in the negative comment conditions if there had been neutral commentary to provide a buffer. Negative commentary was removed from this particular study in order to provide a very clear commentary valence to participants. Commentary would either be all positive or all negative; by including neutrally valenced commentary, the door would have been open to individual interpretation as to what a particular comment meant. Using commentary that used words such as "perfect" or "sloppy" removed the chance for subjective interpretation by individual participants.

### *Directions for Future Research*

It was noted earlier the teams for this research were selected based on the assumptions of nationalism literature; that is, citizens of one nation would have the strongest affectations for teams from their own nation. Though national ties are certainly strong, they may also be naturally occurring. Fans of sports teams within a country may have more self-selection abilities of the teams they love, particularly if they live in a region which offers choices of sporting teams, such as New York, or a state which offers multiple college teams to follow, such as Alabama or Texas. If a fan self-selects a particular team, then their affectations toward a particular team may be at a different level. One future study could repeat this experiment with either professional or college teams, and examine the manipulation of the commentary, the portrayal of the teams, and the subsequent feelings of enjoyment of fans.

The most promising direction of future research may come in the factors beside the game that may influence enjoyment. Sports are not watched in a vacuum, yet when researchers test enjoyment of a sporting event, they show one instance or one game to participants. Future research needs to take into account the factors which surround the actual sporting event; the media coverage, the social influence, and the level of fandom. Longitudinal studies of the time period leading up to an event, the media consumed, and the social aspects need to be examined.

### *Conclusions*

The purpose of this study was to extend the disposition theory of sports spectatorship by identifying new factors which may influence enjoyment of a mediated sporting event, as well as bridge an existing gap between nationalism literature, disposition literature, and how the two may work in tandem to affect enjoyment. Specifically, the study examined the influence of nationally biased commentary on participants from the United States and China, and the resulting

enjoyment they felt after watching the clips of the competition. This study was able to show the effects of a nationalistic bias on enjoyment, and provide evidence for the need to expand the studies of disposition theory with respect to factors influencing enjoyment.

The experiment found media portrayals may play a greater role in enjoyment than outcome of the event. Additionally, the experiment found affectation for a particular team alone does not play a role in enjoyment. In this instance, the affectation had to be combined with the media portrayal in order to show a significant effect on enjoyment.

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Appendix A: Pre-video Questionnaire

For each question, please check the response that is most appropriate

1. How interested are you in the following activities?

a. Sports in general

Very interested  Slightly interested  Slightly disinterested  Very disinterested

b. Watching sports on TV

Very interested  Slightly interested  Slightly disinterested  Very disinterested

c. The Olympic Games

Very interested  Slightly interested  Slightly disinterested  Very disinterested

d. Watching the Olympic Games on TV

Very interested  Slightly interested  Slightly disinterested  Very disinterested

2. Did you attend the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, China?  Yes  No

3. Did you watch any of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games on television?  Yes  No

4. Which broadcast did you watch?

The USA Broadcast (the NBC network channels)

The Chinese Broadcast

The broadcast of a different country

The Beijing Olympic Broadcast

5. Which three (3) events did you watch the most? Please list:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Did you watch any of the women's gymnastics competition?  Yes  No

7. Do you know the outcomes of the different women's gymnastics competitions?

a. Team  Yes  No

b. All-Around  Yes  No

c. Vault  Yes  No

d. Bars  Yes  No

e. Beam  Yes  No

f. Floor  Yes  No

8. Do you consider yourself a fan of the sport of gymnastics?  Yes  No

9. What nation(s) are you a citizen of? Please write in:

9a. If you have dual citizenship, what is the primary nation with which you identify?

Appendix B: Post-video Questionnaire

1. In general, how exciting were the gymnastics clips you saw?

Not at all exciting      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Extremely exciting

2. How good did the gymnastics clips make you feel?

Not at all good      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Extremely good

3. How enjoyable was the commentating in the gymnastics clips you just saw?

Not at all enjoyable    0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Extremely enjoyable

4. How good did the commentary during the clips make you feel?

Not at all good      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Extremely good

5. How much did you like watching the gymnastics clips?

Not at all      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Extremely

6. How much did you like hearing the commentary during the gymnastics clips?

Not at all      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Extremely

7. How much would you like to see the entire competition of the gymnastics clips you just saw?

Not at all      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Extremely

8. How upset are you after listening to the commentary of the gymnastics clips?

Not at all upset      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Extremely upset

9. How much did you enjoy the gymnastics clips you just saw?

Not at all enjoy      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Extremely enjoy

For the following questions, nationality refers to the country in which your primary citizenship is listed. Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

1- I have spent time trying to find out more about my nationality group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.

(4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

2- I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own nationality group. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

3- I have a clear sense of my national background and what it means for me. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

4- I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my national group membership. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

5- I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

6- I have a strong sense of belonging to my own national group. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

7- I understand pretty well what my national group membership means to me. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

8- I have a lot of pride in my national group. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

9- I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

10- I feel a strong attachment towards my own national group. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

11- I feel good about my cultural or national background. (4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

12- My nationality (your citizenship) is

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