KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE PATTERNS IN
ESPN'S FASTBREAK COMMUNITY

A Dissertation in
Instructional Systems

by

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Fantasy sports gained an increased popularity over the last decade, especially with the advent of Internet, which shifted it from being a “niche hobby” to a “popular vicarious experience for sports fans worldwide.” Surveys of fantasy sports players suggest that they commit their time and energy to these games to make and maintain friendships, have fun, compete with others and enhance their existing passion for sports. Players generally act as team owners/general managers and build their own fantasy teams from a pool of professional athletes prior to actual sports contests. While making their selections, players often exchange knowledge, discussing their choices on online message boards with other players. Gathering around a shared interest, engaging in knowledge exchange as well as other fan activities, and embedded in fan culture establishing socioemotional relationships and friendships, players become members of an online fan community. Using the context of ESPN’s *FastBreak* fantasy basketball, the current study aims to explore the patterns of knowledge exchange utilized by players in line-up selections as they appear in an everyday context such as fantasy basketball. In a holistic and naturalistic single case study, which employed purposeful (or purposive) sampling, two years of discussion data between the 2006 and 2008 basketball seasons from ESPN’s FastBreak discussion boards were collected and analyzed. For data analysis, open coding approach was utilized, and data analysis resulted in the discovery of 75 tags for five main themes, 70 categories and subcategories, which revealed different characteristics and patterns of knowledge exchange within the FastBreak community. The findings revealed that knowledge exchange patterns do not constitute a bounded set. Moreover, the study showed that knowledge exchange might be intentional or serendipitous, but it is always mutual and reciprocal. Finally, it was found that knowledge exchange does not take place in social vacuum, but is embedded in the social context and the online fan community culture that surrounds FastBreak.
**Keywords:** Online communities, fantasy sports, fandom, fan communities, fan culture, knowledge exchange, fantasy basketball, ESPN’s FastBreak.
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To my daughter,

who light up my life in darkest times
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Since its introduction to the masses in the early 1990s, while the Internet has grown into an important form of media, it also transformed everyday culture into a “digital culture” (Gere, 2008) which can be summarized as the whole of the social, political, economic, legal and cultural aspects of living in a society that is increasingly dependent on digital media and forms of communication (Baym, 1998a, p.63; Wellman and Gulia, 1999, p.182; Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2000, p.5-7; Castells, 2001, p.118; Wellman et al., 2003, p.2). It has created a “new media revolution -the shift of all culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication” (Manovich, 2001, p.19). The inhabitants of this world of the Internet have come to be known as “digital citizens” or “netizens,” (Hauben & Hauben, 1996), an identity, which transcends their nationality, ethnicity, or religion. It changed “the way young people learn, play, socialize, and participate in civic life.” (Mizuko et al., 2008, ¶1).

This transformation has been further transubstantiated in unpredictable ways with the advancement of Web 2.0 and 3.0 applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, Digg, LinkedIn, Diigo, etc. These applications enabled user contribution to websites and user control on the content of these websites, which, in turn, enabled the increased interaction and participation of users (Jenkins, 2006) and created network effects (O’Reilly, 2005). Altogether, these applications are referred to as ‘social media’ signaling the beginning of a new and distinct period within the Information Age. Along with these new forms of media, which made collaboration possible and increasingly free from any temporal and spatial constraints (Queralt, 1996, p.227), communities formed by the netizens with shared interests and practices began to flourish exponentially.
Although the literature on online communities intensifies in 1990s, Hauben and Hauben (1996) suggested that such online communities were already present as early as the 1980s via Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), Usenet or text-based multi-user dungeons (MUDs) (e.g. Trubshaw & Bartle’s MUD1, 1978). Wellman (2001) also argued that “complex social networks have always existed, but recent technological developments have afforded their emergence as a dominant form of social organization” (p.11). Additionally, Agre (2002) suggested that these technological developments and the use of Internet along with other computerized applications acted as accelerators and amplifiers for such communities. Whether they have been ever-present or newly emerged, these communities offer collaborative opportunities in continuous and new ways that nurture collaboration and knowledge exchange among members of the community (Davidson & Goldberg, 2009).

Online fan communities are one of the earliest forms of such communities, which came to existence as Usenet newsgroups consist of fans as members who are gathered around a shared interest. The fans are engaged in knowledge exchange as well as other activities such as productions of mesh-up, fanzines, and fan culture establishing socioemotional relationships and friendships (Baym, 2000; Jenkins, 1992; 2006; Jenson, 1992), (Baym, 2000, p.22), which, in turn, contributes to creation of an online community (Jones, 1995, p.2). Fantasy sports fan communities are one of these online fan communities, which gained an increased popularity over the last decade, especially, with the advent of Internet. There are approximately 31.1 million Americans from different age, sex, socio-economic groups and educational backgrounds, who play fantasy sports (FSTA, 2008). In these games, players generally act as team owners/general managers and build their own fantasy teams from a pool of professional athletes prior to actual sports contests. Even though there are different rules that apply to different fantasy leagues, the players of all of these games commonly use the statistics generated by individual athletes to gain the highest number of points for their fantasy teams. In other words, real athletic performances provide data for fantasy teams. Surveys of fantasy sports players suggest that they commit their time and energy to these games to make and maintain
friendships, have fun, compete with others and enhance their existing passion for sports. In addition to these social functions, these games have elements of challenge, curiosity, and fantasy common to many games (Malone, 1981). However, the more important features of online fantasy sports gaming experience common to all players are the elements of collaboration and competition as players work with and against each other to select winning combinations of athletes. While making their selections, players often need to decide which athletes to include in their teams. So, they exchange knowledge occasionally, discussing their choices on online message boards with other players, putting forth their choices with their reasons or with evidence, while bonding with other players.

My research interest lies exactly in these patterns of knowledge exchange, through which the players of an online fantasy sports community communicate their selections of ideal teams using online message boards. More specifically, using the context of a fantasy sports game, namely ESPN’s FastBreak, I will explore the patterns of knowledge exchange utilized by players in line-up selections as they appear in an everyday context such as fantasy basketball.

With this research interest in mind, this introductory chapter aims to lay the foundation of the study by providing a detailed description of the context of the current study, the purpose of the study along with the research questions guiding the study and, lastly, definition of the terms that will be used throughout the study.

The Context: ESPN’s FastBreak

ESPN’s FastBreak is a free, online fantasy basketball game that falls into the “salary cap (or stock market)” category of fantasy sports games, where players select athletes to assemble a full daily or weekly line-up while working with limited assets, namely a fixed amount of salary capital, which is quantified in FastBreak (FB) points. Before proceeding, I would like to state the distinction between the two terms used throughout the study, ‘player’ and ‘athlete.’ Hereafter, ‘player’ will be used to
refer to the gamers, who are playing the fantasy basketball game, whereas the latter is used to refer to
the professional basketball players in the National Basketball Association (NBA) league.

In *FastBreak*, all active athletes in the NBA are assigned talent values based on their
performance indicators, such as the points they scored, the number of their assists, rebounds, etc.
There is a mathematical equation that maps all these different attributes to a single FB score (see
Figure 1-1).

\[
\text{Athlete Score} = (PTS + REB + AST + STL + BLK) - ((FGA - FGM) + (FTA - FTM) + TO)
\]

where: \(PTS\) = points scored, \(REB\) = total rebounds, \(AST\) = assists, \(STL\) = stolen balls, \(BLK\)
= blocked shots, \(FGA\) = field goals attempted, \(FGM\) = field goals made, \(FTA\) = free throws
attempted, \(FTM\) = free throws made, \(TO\) = turnovers

*Figure 1-1:* The formula ESPN’s *FastBreak* fantasy basketball game uses to calculate each athlete’s
talent points.

Considering FB points, players choose athletes for five positions for the upcoming day’s or
week’s game(s), such as Small Forward (SF), Point Guard (PG), Shooting Guard (SG), Power (Point)
Forward (PF), Center (C), as well as a Coach (Cch), while trying not to exceed 100 FB points
limitation (see Figure 1-2). If they create a line-up that exceeds this value, their team roster is not
activated for the following day or week, which means that they will not be able to score any points.
This 100 FB points limitation has two important consequences. Firstly, it forces players to compare athletes with regard to their performances and play dynamics in the actual game and make a reasoned decision about the ones to be included. For instance, a typical decision involves choosing between two athletes in order to afford a superstar. In this way, players try to maximize their scores for a given night or week. What is more, players occasionally make these decisions with the help of other players within their community. In other words, FastBreak is tied to a discussion forum where players engage in knowledge exchange with their peers about their team line-ups. So, the second important consequence of 100 FB points limitation is that players often consult with their peers using the discussion board, in order to take their opinions while making decisions for their line-ups, such as deciding between two athletes for a position along with their reasons why to select him or not.

Another reason that reflects the inherent challenge, drama and tension that triggers knowledge exchange on the discussion boards is the lack of possibility for cheating. Contrary to majority of other online games, there are no cheat codes or God mode in FastBreak, since the variables in the equation to calculate the FB points are directly dependent to the actual points scored by professional athletes in the real basketball match and, thus, cannot be rigged. This results in ‘competitive collaboration,’ which reflects players’ need for each other’s opinion about the line-ups, despite their ongoing competition for the best scores to win the game.
FastBreak can be played either as an individual or in groups, where the latter is more common than the former. For group play, one can either create a group and recruit players for that group or join an existing group. The recruitment happens at the very beginning of the season as well as the end of the season. Building reputation or adding on to their existing reputation throughout the season, group owners post open invitations at the end of the season for everyone who would like to join, while also advertising their best scores, percentiles and rankings for the past seasons.

Lack of the kind of limitation that ‘maximum 100 FB points rule’ brings would hurt the game play, since all players would take full advantage of choosing the best athletes for every position and obtain the highest score. Indeed, this problem was typically observed in the first weeks of the seasons, since the talent points (salaries) of athletes as well as players’ scores from the previous seasons were reset at the very beginning of each FastBreak segment. However, during the second FastBreak segment, which corresponds to the second half of the 2006-2007 season, a similar problem persisted for a longer time and it was reflected on the board postings even during the following segment. The problem stemmed from the attribution of very low talent points for the best athletes that could be chosen for a designated position and was the target of criticisms for a long time. This is also an example of the fact that the discussion board is used as a social space where players discuss various issues, such as health insurance, plans for special days like Valentine’s Day, anniversaries, or Christmas, or lawsuits against athletes, along with the issues relevant to the game play.

Moreover, being a free, web-based fantasy basketball game, ESPN’s Fastbreak attracts novice players, where they can learn from more experienced players in collaboration. In this context, the online message board offers an environment that nurtures social interactions, which are certainly “genuine, open debate of complex, unanswered questions” (Steinkuehler & Duncan, 2008, p.541), through which knowledge exchange occurs.
Definition of Terms

An online community is an online social network of people who gather around a shared interest; engage in certain activities and social interactions and mediated by communication technologies; and are governed by policies such as tacit assumptions, rituals and rules (Preece, 2000; Preece and Maloney-Krichmar, 2003). Over time, members may develop social bonding and friendships, a sense of belonging to the community, especially in smaller subgroups that emerge within a larger collective (Ellonen, Kosonen & Henttonen, 2007). Although the term ‘virtual community’ is found to be used interchangeably with the term ‘online community’ (e.g., Rheingold, 1993; 2000; Wellman et al., 1996), the latter is adopted for use in the current study.

Asynchronous Text-Based Online Communication (ATOC) is a type of computer-mediated communication (CMC), which is text-based and asynchronous, such as message boards, discussion forums or listservs. Of particular interest, message boards allow users to post messages under a certain topic for others to read and comment on, which are typically organized in a variety of different topic-based categories (Preece, 2000).

Knowledge exchange refers to a two-way relation between at least two nodes capable of knowing, in which one communicates knowledge either consciously or not, whereas the other receives the communicated knowledge via the ability to perceive knowledge expressions and make sense of them, which involves interpretation (Hendriks, 1999). The way in which codified information is interpreted, which produces knowledge, is further dependent upon both the social context and the individuals’ background and experiences (Tsoukas, 1994).

Purpose of the Study

The current study aims to explore patterns of knowledge exchange, which emerge as a natural part of gameplay in the natural everyday context of ESPN’s FastBreak by examination of
players’ discussions on online message boards, thereby making a contribution to the knowledge base in learning sciences in an attempt to shed light onto this territory, if not map it to some extent. More precisely, using the asynchronous text-based online discussions among the members of ESPN’s FastBreak community during their selections of ideal teams, I search for the answers to the following research questions:

1. What are patterns of knowledge exchange within the FastBreak community?

2. What are the implications of these patterns for online competitive fandom communities?
Chapter 2

ANATOMY OF A FASTBREAK DISCUSSION THREAD

ESPN’s FastBreak discussion boards, where players communicate with their fellow competitors, possess discussion threads on a variety of issues from line-up discussions to an athlete’s bad performance in the real basketball game, and even to personal problems irrelevant to the game. Yet, the flow of a typical discussion thread in the FastBreak (FB) discussion board often appears as follows:
A GREAT LOOK FOR THURSDAY — the title of the discussion thread

Meldin

HERE'S MY TAKE ON THURSDAY

PG  BARON DAVIS  HE'S A BEAST
SG  T-MAC  CLEVELAND AIN'T GOT A SG
SF  LBJ  HE'S LEBRON, THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT
PF  UDONIS HASLEM  PHILLY AIN'T GOT A DEFENSE
C  SAMUEL DALEMBERT  HE'S A GREAT BARGAIN AT CENTER

COACH  GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS  THEY'VE BEEN RED HOT LATELY, AND THEY'RE PLAYING A HORRIBLE TEAM IN THE BULLS

LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

Mathar: i got baron, dwyane, lebron, joakim noah and yao, with miami coach of course with my luck they all get the flu together and give me a dnp x 5

Ixil

i got baron, dwyane, lebron, joakim noah and yao, with miami coach of course with my luck they all get the flu together and give me a dnp x 5

Joe Smith is back starting for the Bulls. Noah is back coming off the bench. Baron, Tmac, LBJ, J. Smith, Yao, Phi
Ryodan  **Status Alert:** Haslem (ankle) will not travel with the Heat to play Detroit and Philadelphia, the Miami Herald reports. (Feb 5)

Drophar **Status Alert:** Haslem (ankle) will not travel with the Heat to play Detroit and Philadelphia, the Miami Herald reports. (Feb 5)

Drophar  **PG Baron Davis**, GS CHI SG **Tracy McGrady**, HOU CLE SF **LeBron James**, CLE @HOU PF **Joe Smith**, CHI @GS C **Yao Ming** [DTD], HOU CLE Coach **Golden State Warriors CHI**

Meldin  I SWITCHED HASLEM WITH JOE SMITH, AND SWITCHED DALEMBERT WITH YAO

I THINK IT WAS A GOOD MOVE, THAT I DIDN'T NOTICE WHEN I FIRST MADE UP MY LU

Temil  baron, ellis, lbj, noah, yao, sixers

Agnar  B Davis
       D Wade
       LeBron
       D Gooden
       A Biedrins
       Miami Heat

Zerin  watch for webber

Lelani  gooden is out wth a strained groin

Elthin

  *watch for webber*

  stop giving away my secrets....

Sanata  The Baroness, Monta, King James, Joe; Zee.;-P
The thread is initiated by Meldin’s message concerning his line-up decisions for the game on Thursday. He briefly states his selections for the different positions in the line-up and his reasons for these decisions. He uses the abbreviations Point Guard (PG), Shooting Guard (SG), Small Forward (SF), Power (Point) Forward (PF), and Center (C) to refer to specific athlete positions in the line-up. He also uses nicknames for athletes, e.g. T-Mac and LBJ, which stands for Tracy McGrady and LeBron James, respectively. Both these abbreviations and athlete nicknames compose what will be called as FastBreak Slang (FB Slang), which is the common characteristic of messages in the discussion board. Melvin ends his message by asking other players’ to participate with their opinions and advice on his selections, using “Let me know what you think” as both as a conversation starter and as an indication of his welcoming stance toward different ideas.

Mathar replies to Meldin’s message by posting his plain line-up without giving any reasons for his decisions and humorously refers to his unluckiness in previous days due to a reason he could not anticipated: flu. Quoting Mathar’s message to specify his message’s addressee (i.e. Mathar), Ixil gives his reasons for selecting Joe Smith instead of Joakim Noah by pointing to their playtime in the real basketball game. Smith is one of the starters in the real basketball game, whereas Noah will be “coming off the bench” at an unspecified time during the game, which might affect their FB points. He does not state openly but implies to the athlete position, namely power (point) forward (PF), by directly giving athlete’s names in the line-ups. Both Ryodan and Drophar are alarmed with one of the athletes in Meldin’s line-up and, almost simultaneously, send a message that concerns brief information about the designated athlete’s injury taken from ESPN website. Drophar also posts his line-up, which is directly copied and pasted from the selection webpage, which is also typical for the FastBreak discussion threads. Considering Ryodan and Drophar’s warnings and others’ line-ups as well as Ixil’s remarks about Smith; Meldin writes back that he not only switched his injured athlete with Smith, but also made a change in Center position in his line-up. He further expresses his surprise and indirectly thanks others for their warnings and messages by stating that he did not notice
the issues brought up to his attention at the time of his line-up decision, which might also be a security measure for his reputation within the player community.

Both Temil and Agnar post their own plain line-ups to the discussion thread, which is then followed by Zerin’s word of warning on an athlete, Chris Webber. However, Zerin does not explain the reason behind his warning openly. It might be because of athlete’s great performance despite his limited playtime in the games or health problems after his knee surgery. It might even be related to his team “Golden State Warriors” at that date, which frequently came up in others’ line-ups.

Similar to Ryodan and Drophar’s brief warning about an athlete’s injury in Meldin’s line-up, Lelani posts one line of information about an athlete’s injury in Agnar’s line-up, which is followed by Elthin’s message. Like Ixil, Elthin also quotes Zerin’s message to specify his post’s addressee and humorously warns Ixil to stop giving away his secrets. He adds ellipsis (three dots) to the end of the message that might imply “or else.” The thread ends with Sanata’s message that includes his plain line-up, followed by an emoticon (as a part of Net Slang) to show his playfulness.

The players use a cryptic language heavily occupied by FB Slang, which requires both basketball knowledge and FB knowledge to decipher, understand and analyze it. Besides the use of FB Slang combining sports terminology such as DNP referring to athletes that “did not play,” with nicknames for athletes, such as LBJ or King James referring to LeBron James and abbreviations such as D for “defense of a team,” they also use Net Slang (in this example, the use of emoticon ;-) to denote various emotions or adjust the tone of their messages. Another interesting aspect in this discussion thread is the distinctive writing styles, such as Meldin’s. Even though capitalization is generally used for emphasis in the discussions, Meldin always write his messages in capital letters. Use of humor, punctuation such as ellipses to adjust the tone of the message, and quotes from other’s posts to address the intended recipient for the message are also instances of distinctive writing style in players’ interactions.
In summary, this anatomical examination of the designated discussion thread reveals that there are many dimensions to the discussions.
Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Online Communities

The concept of “community” as “locality-based community” (Queralt, 1996, p. 223) was no longer sufficient to explain and explore the above mentioned phenomenon (Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2005). This concept of “community” was established upon physical proximity, where communities were defined as close-knit groups of co-located people, where belongingness to such a group was determined considering factors such as birth and physical location. Community members were sharing common ties and they were engaged in face-to-face interactions in their daily routines, which resulted in social relationships confined to a limited and stable set of individuals (Gergen, 1997; Jones, 1997).

Thus, to define the community, instead of using physical proximity and boundaries as the basis, researchers shifted their focus to the strength and nature of the relationships between individuals and collectives that are able to transcend time and space and what they do together (Brown and Duguid, 2001; Castells, 2001; Hamman, 1999; Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 1998; Jones, 1997; Wellman, 1997; 1999; Wellman & Gulia, 1999a). In other words, the focus of researchers was on “the people who come together for a particular purpose, and who are guided by policies (including norms and rules) and supported by software” (Preece, & Maloney-Krishmar, 2005, ¶3). Some researchers referred to these communities as “virtual communities” (see Jones, 1997; Wellman & Gulia, 1999a, Rheingold, 1993), whereas others coined the term “online community” (see Hiltz, 1985; Baym, 1993; 1995; Kollok & Smith, 1996; Kollok, 1999). Some researchers further investigated what community means in the virtual world and distinguished between different
communities such as learning communities, knowledge-building communities, communities of inquiry and communities of practice (Brown & Campione, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1994; Wenger, 1998), while others worked on ways to build community among online learners (see Dede, 1990; 1996; Dillenbourg, Schneider & Synteta, 2002; Paloff & Pratt, 1999; Romiszowski & Mason, 2004; Wellman et al., 2003).

Despite these different labels used for communities, the common ground of these different definitions and ingredients found by these researchers were similar, such as the shared interest of individuals which initiates social interaction as well as knowledge exchange and further creates intense feelings of camaraderie, empathy and support among members in online spaces through genuine norms and rules of the community. For instance, Rheingold (1993, p.5) has defined the term online communities as “ […] social aggregations that emerge from the Net [Internet] when enough people carry on those public discussion long enough with sufficient human feeling, to form web of personal relationships in cyberspace.”

Even though this definition put a considerable emphasis on the importance of sustained socio-emotional communication, it also raised the question of how much “human feeling” will be “sufficient?” (Wilbur, 1997, p.7; Watson, 1997, p.104-105). Despite this vagueness, both Wilbur (1997) and Watson (1997) agreed that such communication is the key to understand both the community and the ways it creates, recreates, and maintains community, without which “a community dissolves” (Watson, 1997, p.104). It is also important for various activities carried on within the community, which are referred to as “communicative practices” (Baym, 2000, p.22), such as “sharing knowledge” across distances, which, in turn, contributes to the creation of an online community (Jones, 1995, p.2).

On the other hand, Preece (2000, p. 10) compiled a broader definition by stating that an online community consists of people engaged in social interactions mediated by a computer system,
who have a shared purpose that provides a reason for the existence of the community, which is governed by policies such as tacit assumptions, rituals and rules.

**Characteristics of Online Communities:**


i. Members have a shared goal, interest, need, or activity that provides the primary reason for belonging to the community.

ii. Members engage in repeated, active participation and there are often intense interactions, strong emotional ties and shared activities occurring between participants.

iii. Members have access to shared resources and there are policies for determining access to those resources.

iv. Reciprocity of information, support and services between members is important.

v. There is a shared context of social conventions, language, and protocols.

Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2003, p.597) further add that the following characteristics, though not as essential, might have significant impact on online interactions:

i. evidence of people having different roles;

ii. people’s reputations;

iii. awareness of membership boundaries and group identity;

iv. initiation criteria for joining the community;

v. history and existence over a period of time;

vi. notable events or rituals, shared physical environments; and
vii. voluntary membership.

The first item in the above characterization of online communities is that people who log on to such online communities often gather around a shared common interest (Rheingold, 1993, p.27; Jones, 1997, p.17; Porter, 1997, p.xii; Watson, 1997, p.104; Wellman and Gulia, 1999, p.185; Norris, 2004, p.35, 37). Porter (1997, p.xii) claims that such gathering is no different than those who meet in social places, such as bars, coffee machines or water coolers at work, both of which consist of people who come to talk about and listen to topics of their shared interests.

It is this shared interest that starts the social interaction and knowledge exchange as well as the formation of emotional ties among the members of an online community, which constitutes the second characteristic of an online community. For instance, in her ethnographic study of an online community called “r.a.t.s.,” which stands for a Usenet newsgroup of soap opera fans called “rec.arts.tv.soaps,” Baym (1995, p.147) found that their mutual interest not only draws fans together, but also triggers online conversations and discussions. She further categorizes these conversations and discussions as “collaborative interpretation and distribution of information” and “sharing perspectives on socioemotional issues,” which might lead to sharing perspectives on other socioemotional issues beyond the fandom context. In fact, she discovered the pervasive nature of the context of offline and online interactions, and the extension of online interactions into offline, by stating: “Online groups are woven into the fabric of offline life rather than set in opposition to it. The evidence includes the pervasiveness of offline contexts in online interaction and the movement of online relationship offline” (Baym, 1998a, p.63).

The interactions among community members take place through communication technologies, at least to a certain degree. They are mostly mediated by computer-mediated communication (CMC) which could be defined as either synchronous or asynchronous communication between two individuals or collectives, relying on computer-mediated
communication channels on both sides (Fischer & Manstead, 2004). Early CMC researchers often compared CMC to face-to-face interaction and highlighted the lack of social cues such as body language in CMC, which creates less friendly, impersonal relationship (Hiltz et al., 1989, p.227; Sproull and Kiesler, 1986). Based on “social presence theory,” which hypothesizes that each communication medium has different degrees of social presence, CMC is claimed to have “low social presence” that limits the transfer of facial expressions and nonverbal cues. Moreover, it is also claimed that CMC might mediate uninhibited behavior of hostile messages or ‘flaming’ (Sproull and Kiesler, 1986, p.1508; Hiltz et al., 1989, p.227). Later studies, however, revealed the major role of social context in determination of the effects of CMC rather than assuming computer as the sole influence on communication outcomes (Rheingold, 1993, p.2; Baym, 1995, p.139). Moreover, in line with the fifth item in Preece et al.’s (2003) definition, Walther (1992, p.80; 1994, p.465) stated the thinning effect of such concerns on CMC of online communities, as members begin to “adopt the social information process, such as the use of language and textual behaviors to send out social information.”

As mentioned previously, CMC encompasses a wide palette of different technologies ranging from email systems, discussion boards and group support systems to instant messaging, chat as well as the newly emerged web 2.0 and 3.0 applications such as Facebook, Digg, Diigo, blogs, wikis, etc. which enables not only consumption but also participation and production of new kinds of content, knowledge and media that are more accessible (Jenkins, 2006). Yet, this study will present an account of asynchronous text-based online communication (ATOC), as it is the medium of communication for the chosen context of the study, ESPN’s FastBreak.
Asynchronous Text-Based Online Communication (ATOC)

Asynchronous text-based online communication (ATOC) cultivates knowledge exchange in three aspects, by providing:

i. a medium for producing and structuring social interactions and social relations through exchange in the designated pseudo-language, combining characteristics of written and spoken forms of communication that mediates thinking and reflection,

ii. a space for social networking to occur where joint intellectual endeavor toward shared understanding and negotiation of meaning takes place, and a common identity and culture is acquired that also paves the way for the birth and growth of “reflective discourse communities” (Romiszowski & Mason, 2004),

iii. a means to access this space.

Starting with the medium aspect of ATOC for knowledge exchange, all three aspects will be examined in detail under the following subheadings.

Asynchronous Text-Based Online Communication (ATOC) as Medium: The Characteristics

ESPN’s FastBreak offers an online message board for players to communicate, to discuss their choices or (simply) trashtalk. It is different from any face-to-face environment in terms of communication features, such as language use or emerging group dynamics, which might affect the social discourse (Dabbagh & Bannan-Ritland, 2005; Kim, Anderson, Nguyen-Jahiel, Archodidou, 2007; Romiszowski & Mason, 2004). There is an extensive body of research on asynchronous text-based computer mediated communication that explored and studied these distinct features in various forms of computer mediated communication (CMC), such as discussion forums, bulletin boards, e-mail exchanges (Marttunen & Laurinen, 2001; Ocker & Yaverbaum, 1999; Sumner & Hostetler, 2002; Uhler & Bishop-Clark, 2001; Zhao & Rop, 2001).
Asynchronous text-based online communication (ATOC) produces a different kind of highly interactive communication by combining the permanent nature of written communication with the dynamism and speed of spoken communication, which provides very distinctive features such as:

i. more flexible and potentially richer discourse,

ii. more precise presentation of arguments, claims and information

iii. better concentration on the topic being discussed,

iv. increased participation in the discussion,

v. non-sequential discussion with multiple threads of conversation on several topics simultaneously.

There is a debate whether ATOC is akin to speech or to written form, or whether it is a different form of communication (Kaye, 1991; Yates, 1994). The latter will be considered to define ATOC in this study, i.e. it will be considered as a pseudo-language that is not subsumed by either category but stands in the middle. In such online environments, similar to the one ESPN’s FastBreak offers, discussants have to use written language to communicate their thoughts, ideas and feelings without the presence of paralinguistic aspects such as intonation, stress, and pitch, which can be used for emphasis and contrast in verbal communication. However, to cope with this problem, discussants are observed to write in capital letters for emphasis (Murphy & Collins, 1998; Werry, 1996) or use certain abbreviations and emoticons to convey their feelings (Walther & D’Addario, 2001). The latter is also useful to cope with the absence of the non-verbal cues, such as gestures, facial expressions and body language that are “readily appreciated in face-to-face discussions” (Kim, et al., 2007, p.338). Moreover, the lack of non-verbal cues may also reinforce community members to be more explicit in expressing their ideas and thoughts to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. As opposed to face-to-face communication, ATOC also enables discussants to reread and revise messages before posting them on the message board, which gives them opportunity
to make more careful word choices and to work out their thoughts in detail. Along with this opportunity, knowing that their messages might be further reused by others in future discussions might also produce more precision in presentation of their postings and potentially richer discourse (Kim, et al., 2007; Yates, 1996).

ATOC provides more flexibility, since it enables discussants to post and respond to messages at their own convenience (Berge, 1997; Collins, 2000). Moreover, it also allows more comfortable and open communication as opposed to possible feelings of embarrassment or anxiety to speak in front of an audience or an authority figure in face-to-face environments (Kim, et al., 2007; Warschauer, 1996; Zhao, 1998) or influence from factors like age, gender, ethnicity, popularity or physical appearances. Being independent from factors such as gender, ethnicity, popularity or physical appearances might also bring about better concentration on the issue being discussed (Jonassen & Kwon, 2001; Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer, Turbee, and Roberts, 1996). What is more, absence of this discomfort and influence also increases participation, since it provides an opportunity for the otherwise marginalized discussants in face-to-face environments due to speech disorders, shyness, or due to simply verbose or overbearing opponents in discussions (Weasenforth, Biesenbach-Lucas, & Meloni, 2002). Yet, there is also the possibility that this open communication might degenerate into hostile, sarcastic exchanges i.e. flaming or trashtalking due to the absence of social constraints normally present in face-to-face discussions, which in turn creates conflicts between members of the online community and disturb the knowledge exchange atmosphere and social relationships among them (Light, Nesbitt, Light, & Burns, 2000, Kim, et al. 2007). However, on the one hand, it is argued that flaming in ATOC is context-dependent and relatively uncommon behavior (Baym, 1995), since friendliness was found to be very valuable among members of the “r.a.t.s.” group, as well as its importance of influence on their interactions with each other (Baym, 1998; 2000).
On the other hand, it is argued that ‘trashtalking’, is also found to be effective for forming such “friendliness,” more specifically, camaraderie among fantasy sports players, acting as buttress for male bonding and eventually leading to “friendly competitiveness” within the community (Davis and Duncan, 2006; p.254).

Furthermore, although the intensity and frequency of participation is argued to be important for effective learning and active, creative, “noisy learner” is deemed to be successful in online environments (Graham & Scarborough, 1999; Palloff & Pratt, 1999), Romiszowski and Mason (2004) question the value of “lurking.” They turn the tables by asking what if lurkers are actively engaged in reading, which oftentimes initiates thought and even reflection, rather than just being passive recipients.

ATOC provides longer periods of time for discussion as opposed to face-to-face discussions that have to be completed within a limited time (Kim, et al. 2007). This adds to the flexibility that provides discussants with time to refer to various resources and to reflect on their responses, which also leads to a richer discourse (Jonassen & Kwon, 2001; Steinkuehler & Duncan, 2008, p.541). Jonassen and Kwon (2001) further demonstrated that the patterns of reasoning were more complex and the decisions were perceived to be better than those in face-to-face settings due to deep and reflective thinking provided by flexibility. In his comparative study, Warschauer (1996) further showed that electronic discussion was significantly more complex than face-to-face discussions, both lexically and syntactically. This might be because of having sufficient time and various resources for community members to think through their messages and build their arguments with valid reasons and supporting evidence.

ATOC also brings about non-sequential, non-linear discussion with multiple threads of conversation on several topics simultaneously. It might cause confusion on the part of the discussant, since the current postings might not follow the previous ones thematically. However,
Greenfield and Subrahmanyam (2003) showed that they could avoid confusion by identifying the intended addressee or using a distinctive writing style.

**Asynchronous Text-Based Online Communication (ATOC) Providing Space and Access**

As mentioned above, with the appearance of Internet based applications and amplification of online interactions among individuals, researchers’ interest turned into issues related to online groups, cohorts, networks and communities, which produced a multifaceted literature on the term “community.” Yet, others defined “affinity spaces” to avoid different connotations that accompany “community” (Gee, 2004; 2007), since most of the definitions of communities are based on “formal learning communities, which are largely defined and structured by others rather than the actual community members” (Romiszowski & Mason, 2004, p. 408). In this sense it is quite different from such communities, such as ESPN’s FastBreak community, which are built by self-selected people coming together around a shared interest for entertainment purposes (Romiszowski & Mason, 2004, p. 408).

In a nutshell, affinity spaces are places where people interact around a common passion (Gee & Hayes, 2010). More specifically, it is defined as a “place, or set of places where people can affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals, not shared race, class, culture, ethnicity, or gender” (Gee, 2004, p.73; Gee, 2007, p.196). In these spaces, people converse about a common set of endeavors and engage in social practices in strong commitment to accomplish these endeavors (Gee, 2004). They exchange contextual knowledge and experiences through action and talk with others (Gee, 2004, p. 39; Nardi, Ly, Harris, 2007, p. 3), which might offer participants an opportunity “to learn more deeply, and more equitably… in areas they choose and for which they are motivated” (Gee & Hayes, 2010, ¶2).
Unlike “communities of practice,” affinity spaces do not segregate novices or newbies from experts or masters. On the contrary, affinity spaces "resource and mentor learners, old and new, beginners and masters alike," (Gee & Hayes, 2010, ¶19) enabling and encouraging them to build or assume an identity, gain porous leadership statuses based on reputation as well as to create and use knowledge in various ways. They can establish their own vocabularies and modes of discourse, which is learned in apprenticeships of the social practices of their communities (Gee, 2004) and through which the culture specific to a community is acquired (Wertsch, 1991). Beyond the vocabulary and grammar, this is important since they also acquire a structure of social meanings and relationships (Resnick, 1991) that are fundamental for future social interactions, which also provides access to the community as well.

Considering these characteristics, ESPN’s FastBreak community bears more similar attributes to such affinity spaces, even it is referred to as ‘community.’ This word is an intentional choice on my part to be able to remember my search for “knowledge exchange” via social interaction that takes place in “online fandom communities.”

Fandom, Fan Communities, Competitive Fandomness and more…

As stated previously, this study examines the knowledge exchange patterns in the online fan community of the players of ESPN’s FastBreak, which is an online fantasy basketball game. Therefore this section aims to elucidate on the concepts of fans, fandom, fan culture and what Halverson and Halverson called “competitive fandomness.” Even though there are various theoretical lenses to look at the issue under investigation, special attention will be given to communities of sports fan and fandom in online settings.
Different Faces of Fandom

Fiske (1992, p.30) states that being a “fan” is a “common feature of popular culture in industrial societies,” yet it “is loosely defined, with many self-identifying as fans of a program or a star” (Gantz, Wilson, Lee & Fingerhut, 2008, p.65). Nevertheless, fandom is often described as the social and cultural environment of fans (Harris, 1998a, p.4), where they engage in interaction, discussion, sharing, production and re-production of artifacts related to their common interests and objects of fandom.

Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington (2007, p.2) group studies on fandom in three “waves.”

The first wave of fan studies presented the attempted shift in the perception of fans as “passive audiences” of media to “active participants” to it. Many researchers attempted to turn the perception of fan into a positive one from what critics and journalists illustrated as deviant, deficient, obsessive, lonely, violent and irrational people that are out of control (Jenkins, 1992; Jenson, 1992). These researchers painted a different picture, where fans create their own meaning and interpretation of the texts and find pleasure within them (Jenkins, 1992; 2006; 2008), which was, in turn, applauded as the formation of subcultural resistance to the dominant culture created by mass media contrary to their “so-called” derogatory status and practice, in which they are considered as disempowered and vulnerable stereotypes who are directly affected by media messages (Jenkins, 1992, p.208; Harris, 1998b, p.42; Jenson, 1992; Darling-Wolf, 2004; Pullen, 2004). Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington (2007, p.2) proclaimed this celebratory phase as “fandom is beautiful,” or ‘fandom is cool’ phase.

They further state that the second phase is initiated as a response to the arrival and proliferation of new media with the advent of the Internet, which produced new forms of fan culture in the 1990s along with the exponential growth of online fan communities. Utilizing a more sociological approach, often inspired by Bourdieu’s theories of social stratification based on aesthetic taste, these fan studies differentiated fan communities into segmented taste hierarchies as well as
foregrounding the construction of fan identities through their insertion to these communities (Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, 2007, p.6). In this phase, fandom appeared more positively, where “fans are not seen as a counterforce to existing social hierarchies and structures, but, on the contrary, as agents of maintaining social and cultural systems of classifications and thus hierarchies” (Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, 2007, p.6). Researchers argued that status and class were being used to differentiate fandom from other audience practices referred to as “high culture” (Jenson, 1992, p.20), which creates a cultural hierarchy. Fiske (1992, p.30) noted that fandom is “[…] associated with the cultural tastes of subordinated formations of the people, particularly with those disempowered by any combination of gender, age, class and race that does not have much institutional support,” where “high culture” gets more promotion and formal acceptance within the community as well as high institutional support from museums, art galleries, etc (Fiske, 1992, p.31).

Furthermore, Jenson (1992, p.19) mentioned a similar distinction based on the “object of desire” and “modes of enactment.” She argued that if the object of desire is relatively inexpensive, popular with the lower or middle classes, widely available, and the mode of enactment is the obsession with the object of desire, then it is called “fandom;” whereas if it is expensive or rare and the mode of enactment is in the form of rational evaluations that are displayed in more prudent ways, then it is called “preferences,” “interests” or “expertise” (Jenson, 1992, p.20).

Nonetheless fandom is argued to be “a matter of taste,” which should not be judged by such strict criteria (Fiske, 1992, p.30; Jenson, 1992, p.23; Harris, 1998b, p.51). Fans display interests, affections, and attachment towards particular programs, genres, or figures (Jenson, 1992, p.9-10; Jenkins, 1992, p.209). Jenson (1992, p.23) further argued that in general, people have “different personal preferences” that develop into interests, in which they may invest different quantities of time and money with respect to the personal value they assign to these interests, which is welcomed by culture industries themselves nourishing fan communities in a highly competitive market.
The third phase of fan studies emerged with the “investigation of fandom as part of the fabric of our everyday lives” in which fan studies “aim to capture fundamental insights into modern life” (Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, 2007, p.6). They further claim that “most people are fans of something” (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007, p.1), and everyone in this practice is a participatory player in the production and circulation of digital culture, thus dramatically expanding the range of fan activity (Jenkins, 2007). Jenkins (1992, p.214; 2006) further identified fans as “[…] consumers who also produce, readers who also write, spectators who also participate.” Fans are perceived as special media audience who interpret and respond to the media texts “more aggressively and sustainedly” than other audiences (Pullen, 2004, p.80) and thus have more active role than other types of audiences (Jenkins, 1992; Harris, 1998a; 1998b, p.41). Pullen argued (2000, p.53) that fans are “not fringe extremists with unhealthy and unrealistic interests in a particular media text, but savvy consumers who are unable to use popular culture to fulfill their desires and needs, often explicitly rearticulating that culture in unique and empowering ways.”

Jenkins (1992, p.209-213) suggested a model of fandom that is four-fold. Firstly, “fans adopt a distinctive mode of reception,” in which they not only continually engage in the media text, but also produce meaning and interpretations out of such media text. Secondly, “fandom constitutes a particular interpretive community,” in which members share their interpretation of text and seek feedback from other members as well as active participation to the media text via contacting producers to debate their preferences, which also constitutes evidence to the convergence of media and emergence of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006). Thirdly, “fandom constitutes a particular Art world,” in which fans create their own distinctive artifacts utilizing raw materials from the media text, such as “The Daily Prophet,” (www.dprophet.com) created by Harry Potter fans (by contribution of 400 children all over the world), which is a web-based “school newspaper” for the fictional Hogwarts (Jenkins, 2006, p.171). Fourthly, “fandom constitutes an alternative community,” which is, similar to Gee’s affiliation spaces (Gee, 2004, p.34, Gee & Hayes, 2010, ¶2), defined as a community of shared
common interest regardless of personal differences, such as race, gender, educational level, profession, etc., where members can participate in various ways according to their skills and interests. They depend on peer-to-peer teaching with each participant constantly motivated to acquire new knowledge or refine his/her existing skills and they are allowed to feel like an expert while tapping others’ expertise (Jenkins, 2006, p.177).

**Online fandom**

As mentioned above, with the proliferation of online communities enabled by new media and communication technologies, studies investigating online fan communities also multiplied (e.g., Baym, 1995; 1997; 1998a; 1998b; 2000; MacDonald, 1998; Clerc, 2000; Pullen, 2000; 2004; Darling-Wolf, 2004, Jenkins, 2006). These new technologies provided researchers with electronically recorded discussions of online fan communities, making it possible for researcher to observe fans’ interactions in natural settings over extended time periods and, thus, to further examine fan culture (Baym, 1998b, MacDonald, 1998). On the fans’ side, these new technologies also enabled them with increasing availability of access to the communities and fan activities by lifting any temporal and spatial restrictions on interactions, which also enhanced fandom (Baym, 1998b, Pullen, 2000; 2004). Moreover, Pullen (2000; 2004) stated that online fandom is a complex phenomenon, since different fans enact their interests differently, which results in different fan activities, such as producing different assumptions about the meaning of a show, celebrities or movies. Additionally, online fandom is shown to broaden and facilitate socialization among fans (MacDonald, 1998; Baym, 2000; Clerc, 2000; Darling-Wolf, 2004). The reason for this facilitation is that while previously fan activities and relationships were limited to small groups of long-term committed fandom who create a limited number of letterzines or newsletters (Pullen, 2004; Jenkins, 2006), online fandom extends these activities, relationships and interactions to a larger population by providing open access and
discussion platforms via newsgroups, mailing lists, mails, and fansites (Clerc, 2000; Jenkins 2006; 2007). In other words, in terms of content, the practices of both offline and online fandom are not very different, as they often engage in extensive discussions about their common interests (Clerc, 2000, p.216; Pullen, 2000, p.54). However, as Pullen (2000) articulated “[…] web-based community becomes the distribution and production of fan-created texts and the sense of community talking about a favored television program can impart, even to viewers separated by thousands of miles” (p.54), and they benefit from immediate reactions they get from others about their interpretations.

Despite the content-wise similarity of fan activities, Baym (1998b) has found that there is more to the fans’ online discussions. She found that these discussions provide the basis for a community, which often exceed the discussions about relevant media text and extend into fans’ own lives. This provides evidence of how the object of fandom might serve as a departure point for discussions about emotional ties, relationships and selves, and thus the potential of online fan community to expand individuals’ social networks.

Moreover, as a group gathered online, these online fan communities are enabled to raise their voices besides sharing feelings and exchanging knowledge online, which leads to the experience of feeling the sense of power (Rheingold, 1993). As mentioned above in the first wave of fan studies, offline fans empowered themselves by engaging in unique practices in their consumption of popular culture, resisting or challenging dominant ideologies from media producers by making choices of their media messages, creating their own meanings and interpretations of the text which resulted in active involvement in the media texts by giving feedback to the producers and even shaping them, especially with the collective power of the community as a whole that is fuelled by the proliferation of online fan communities (Harris, 1998b, Jenkins, 2006). Online fan communities provide the fans with the opportunity to strengthen and extend their power beyond individuals by collectively gathering their separate ‘say-so’s to a univocal utterance (Baym, 1997; Watson, 1997). These univocal utterances found their listeners in media industries (Baym, 1998b; Watson, 1997; Pullen, 2004), but
only “as long as their activities [did] not divert from principles of capitalist exchange and recognize[d] industries’ legal ownership of the object of fandom” (Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, 2007, p.4).

Fantasy sports constitute an example for such fan activity, which is fed back to the culture industry, since, with the proliferation of Internet, it shifted into becoming a “popular vicarious experience for sports fans worldwide” from being a “niche hobby conducted by calculating box scores from newspapers.” This attracted the attention of larger corporations such as ESPN, CBS, Sportsline and Yahoo!, which integrated this long-existent fan activity in their services and provided fantasy sports games for almost every sport branch, which will be described in more detail later in the chapter. In the case of ESPN, for instance, Jenkins (2006b) argues that “such activities give an incentive for viewers to tune into ESPN for up-to-the-minute statistics” (p. 143)

Indeed, the problem with legal ownership and copyright issues in this era of narrowcasting instead of broadcasting has been widely examined by Jenkins (2006), where he explains how fans use this newly acquired power to intervene in and shape commercially produced content via electronic platforms, which leads to rich “knowledge communities” who share their “collective intelligence” to challenge media industries and produce alternative cultural contents (Jenkins 2006, p.18). Such exercises of power will not be examined in this study, since it is beyond the scope of the study. However, the concept of “collective intelligence” is a relevant one that sheds light on the social production of knowledge and ‘knowledge exchange patterns’ that will be scrutinized in the following sub-section.

**Collective Intelligence of Online Fan Communities:**

Collective intelligence refers to the unified knowledge and expertise of a self-selected community of members working together as a whole towards the solution of a problem, which is beyond the expertise of the individuals alone, where “nobody knows everything, everyone knows
something” or some piece of all knowledge that “resides in humanity” (Levy, 1997, p.20) and what any given member knows is accessible to any other member upon request on an ad hoc basis (Jenkins, 2006, p.53). Levy (1997) argues that collective intelligence provides the context for the actualization of democratization and changing of power structures that stem from the ability of diverse groups of people who gather online to join forces, pool knowledge, work through problems collaboratively, debate interpretations and meaning, and refine their understanding of the world. In such a context, knowledge becomes valuable as it is shared, and the strength and power of the collective resides in the diversity of skills and information that individuals can bring to it (Levy, 1997; Jenkins 2006; 2007). However, Jenkins (2006) suggested that there are ethical and intellectual issues, such as copyright and intellectual property issues waiting to be resolved in order to inhabit and realize such “knowledge culture” that Levy describes.

Building on Levy’s (1997) work, Jenkins (2006, 2006b) illustrates how such collectives may readily be at work in online fandom and how it already may have permeated the fan culture. For instance, children who are playing with Pokémon enter a world that is too complicated for any child to understand by him or herself. Jenkins (2006, p.128) further explains:

There are several hundred different Pokémon, each with multiple evolutionary forms and a complex set of rivalries and attachments. There is no one text where one can go to get the information about these various species; rather, the child assembles what they know about the Pokémon from various media with the result that each child knows something his or her friends do not and thus has a chance to share this expertise with others.

Similarly, in her study about community of soap fans, Baym (1998, p.116) states that fans inform each other, pool and share “knowledge of the show’s history, in part, because the genre demands it,” since “any soap has broadcast more material than any single fan can remember,” which makes it impossible for one single fan to know everything necessary to fully appreciate the series. As another example, Jenkins (2006) presents a detailed examination of the case of Survivor Spoilers,
namely, fans of the *Survivor* show, who are trying to figure out the outcomes or “the secrets” of the show together before it aired, in an attempt to determine the winner well before the season finale, which is referred to as “spoiling” (Jenkins, 2006, p.25). More specifically, Jenkins (2006) constructs his case upon the spoiler community’s reaction to the controversy and conflict inflicted by one unusual poster, who is claimed to be a “lurker” in the community until his unusual post to the discussion list about information he stumbled upon accidentally during his vacation.

Jenkins (2006, 2006b) presents the spoiler community as an example of the newly emerging communities on the Net, which “are defined through voluntary, temporary and tactical affiliations, reaffirmed through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments.” He further asserts that these communities “are held together through the mutual production and reciprocal exchange of knowledge,” which serves as sites for “collective discussion, negotiation and development” and, in turn, gives birth to collective intelligence (p.27). Thus, rather than possession of knowledge, which is static in nature; it is this dynamic, participatory, and iterative social processes of knowledge acquisition and reaffirmation of ties that adhere such collective intelligence together (p.54). This ongoing social interaction is claimed to intensify the pleasure of fans’ experience (Jenkins, 2006; Baym, 1995; 1999; Clerc, 2000), since fans are motivated not only by the simple pleasure of knowing but also by “epistemaphilia,” the pleasure of exchanging knowledge (Baym, 1999, p.127). Jenkins (2006) further asserts that it shifted the way fans watched the series, since it created an *uber-game* of finding “what will happen, when it will happen and how and why it happens” in the show, which is further spoiled by one fan, creating a *game-uber-game*, in which they try to figure out the same questions, this time, for the designated fan’s act of *spoiling the Spoiler community*.

Adopting Levy’s (1997) perspective, Jenkins (2006, p.27) also discriminates between “shared knowledge” which is “believed to be true and held in common by the entire group” and “collective intelligence” that encompasses the “sum total of the information,” which is no longer shared knowledge, since it is impossible for it to be “gathered into a single creature” and “mastered by a
single member or even the group of people” that resides in the members of the community and is accessible through the response to a specific question (p.27). He demonstrates how members of the spoiler community dedicate many hours of time and research in order to create elaborate models, systems, and hypotheses together that fit the available chunks of information posted by other members (shared knowledge), while editing, reviewing, and challenging the facts and the statements in the messages. He further asserts that, when the inevitable dissolution of the community is set in motion due to “an inevitable decline in interest” and inability to meet its members’ emotional and intellectual needs, members may move in many directions carrying along these skills to new spaces, which also results in the spreading of such skills and their application to new tasks (Jenkins, 2006, p.57).

Jenkins (2006) further displays the characteristics of collective intelligence by comparing and contrasting it to Walsh’s “expert paradigm” (2003, as cited in Jenkins, 2006). In contrast to the “bounded body of knowledge”, which an individual is required to master in order to qualify as an expert, he puts forth the type of knowledge acquisition in collective intelligence, which takes place through the thriving questions that “are open ended and profoundly interdisciplinary, meaning they might “slip and slide across borders and draw of the combined knowledge of more diverse community” (Jenkins, 2006, p.52).

Secondly, collective intelligence “assumes that each person has something to contribute to, even if they will only be called upon on an ad hoc basis,” contrary to the discrimination between experts and non-experts based on their knowledge, which creates an “interior,” where people know things and an “exterior,” where they don’t (Jenkins, 2006, p.53). This is in line with the characteristic of fan community as an affiliation space, where “beginners and masters” sustain their existence side by side (Gee, 2004; Gee & Hayes, 2010, ¶19). Gee (2004) further claims that they can gain porous leadership statuses based on reputation, as well as on their use and creation of knowledge. Indeed, this formation was similar to the emergence of the “brain trusts” group within the Spoiler
community (Jenkins, 2006, p.38). However, Jenkins (2006) interprets it as a sign for “the return of the hierarchy to the knowledge culture,” in an attempt to create “an elite group” that constructs itself as a group of experts who demand to be trusted at face value.

Thirdly, the strength and the weakness of a collective intelligence is that there are no established rules, as in traditional disciplines, about how to access and process information; it is “disorderly, undisciplined, and unruly.” The access to knowledge is on an ad hoc basis through asking a specific question. As for the process and procedures “for what you do with knowledge, each participant applies their own rules, works the data through their own processes, some of which will be more convincing than others, but none of which are wrong at face value.” Moreover, “debates about rules” are also the “part of the process” (Jenkins, 2006, p.53).

Fourthly, participants in collective intelligence have varying expertise that is not based on a hierarchical system in which knowledge “comes from real-life experience, rather than formal education,” which is “more highly valued” contrary to the experts who are credentialized “through some kind of ritual that designates them as having mastered a particular domain, often having to do with formal education or certification.” Moreover, while such formal certification does not exist or mean anything in collective intelligence, participants “often feel the need to demonstrate or document how they know what they know based on their experiences” (Jenkins, 2006, p.53-54), which makes their individual expertise more broadly available (Baym, 1998, p.127).

**Sports Fans and Sports Fandom**

Similar to the previously mentioned portrait of fans as drawn by critics and journalists, sports fans are also often stigmatized on the grounds of “hooliganism, riotous victory celebrations and passiveness or laziness as couch potatoes” (Gantz, Wilson, Lee & Fingerhut, 2008, p.65). However, sports fandom is repainted as an active, participatory audience benefiting from it as a
means of escape, self-fulfillment, and social integration (Gantz & Wenner, 1995). Moreover, Gantz, Wilson, Lee and Fingerhut (2008) defined four personality traits that play a role in the development of sports fandom, which are competitiveness, sensation-seeking, risk-taking and the need for group affiliation.

Sport fandom offers an opportunity to satisfy the competitive needs for achievement and self-esteem by “enabling individuals to vicariously experience competition and overcome obstacles (Gantz, Wilson, Lee & Fingerhut, 2008, p.68). Since fans identify themselves with their teams, it offers self-fulfillment, where they consider themselves to be successful when their teams win. What is more, competitiveness also heightens fans’ interest in sports (Mowen, 2004). Sports fandom offers entertainment as a form of leisure, while it offers fans an escape from work or other tedious tasks of everyday life, giving them an excuse to yell at something, which might be very well constrained in other areas of their lives (End, 2001). This is in line with the sensation they experience due to the inherent drama, tension and risk involved in sports, since “the outcomes are unknown and much is riding on those outcomes (i.e. salaries and careers of players and team officials, pride and status of individuals and cities, personal finances among those who wager)” (Gantz, Wilson, Lee and Fingerhut, 2008, p.68). Indeed, Barnett (1995, p.167) states that sports offer an “ideal combination of the dramatic and the unexpected.” Moreover, similar to the fan experience of other genres, Gantz and Wenner (1995) found that fandom enhances the viewing experience and pleasure. However, in comparison to the exposure experience among fans of different genres, such as sports, reality programs, dramas, etc., Gantz, Wang and Paul (2006) concluded that sports fans were more involved, more active, more strongly motivated and more likely to extend the viewing experience before, during and after the games with various activities, such as watching recaps, commentary programs, etc.

Risk-taking also adds to the sensation of fans, since it is accepted as the price for the reward of the experience itself. Sports fandom offers a socially acceptable way of creating and experiencing
such risk and sensation. It also provides social integration with others, since it enhances camaraderie and social bonding with other sports fans, as well as providing a common base for “water cooler “talks. It is also in line with the need for group affiliation (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003), in which fans acquire an identity by being a part of a collective that provide them with a sense of belonging and solidarity (Jacobson, 2003). This also overlaps with the results of fantasy sports surveys, in which sports fans suggest that they commit their time and energy to these games to make and maintain friendships, have fun, compete with others and enhance their existing passion for sports.

In the following section, the history and development of fantasy sports, fantasy sports communities and competitive fandomness will be explained.

Fantasy Sports: A Broad Collection of Games from Football to Bass-Fishing

Fantasy sports refer to “the industry of skill-based games driven by the on-field achievements of pro and collegiate athletics” (Harmon, 2005, p.11). It is an industry of a serious magnitude of approximately $7.4 billion of market share within the pie of entertainment industry. When compared to Hollywood and game industry shares, $9.87 (Plunkett research, 2009) and $13 billion (Plunkett research, 2008) respectively, the enormity of this phenomenon can be better understood. Googling the term “fantasy sports” produces 54.9 million search results, whereas the same search yields 764 million results on Yahoo!, of which an approximate 97 million is only for “Yahoo! Fantasy Sports.” Although these numbers are astounding, the latter is not surprising, since the very reason for the existence of Yahoo! was the fantasy sports, or, more specifically, fantasy basketball itself. Yahoo! was created by two Stanford University graduate students Jerry Yang and David Filo in January 1994, which was originally named as "Jerry’s Guide to the World Wide Web," as a hierarchically organized directory of other websites to reach information about basketball
statistics and resources to be able to play more effectively, get higher scores and evidently win the
game, even putting their dissertations at risk.

Despite its seemingly recent popularity, the roots of fantasy sports can be traced back to
1960s (Schwarz, 2004, p.175; Harmon, 2005, p.16). It is claimed that it is even possible to follow the
trails of the underlying idea of picking athletes and competing against other players based on selected
athletes’ year-to-date statistics back to the post World War II period (Wikipedia). In 1960, William
Gamson, who was a sociology professor at Harvard University, initiated a “Baseball Seminar,” where
he and his colleagues were forming rosters that were cumulating points based on statistics of an
athlete’s performance, such as wins, batting averages, earned run averages (ERA) and runs batted in
(RBI). Later in 1962, when he started working at the University of Michigan, Gamson continued to
play with some of the professors including Robert (Bob) Sklar, who was offering an American
Studies seminar, by which one of his students, Daniel Okrent, learned of the game. Around the same
time, three football fans including a partner of the American Football League’s Oakland Raiders, a
public relations employee and a journalist were working on a similar fantasy football game, primarily
designed for gambling over the athletes’ performances, which would initiate the first fantasy football
league in 1963 (Harmon, 2005; Harris & Kadlec, n.d.). However, the heyday of fantasy sports was
yet to come. In 1979-80, Daniel Okrent, who later would be credited with creating “the classic
rotisserie scoring system” (Harmon, 2005, p.16), enhanced the idea by adding simple rules, and
created a game called “Rotisserie League Baseball” inspired by a New York City restaurant that he
was dining in with his friends (Colston, 1999; Tozzi, 1999). The enhancement was drafting a team
from active Major League Baseball athletes and using statistics from the ongoing season to make
predictions about an athlete’s performance similar to that of a bona fide baseball team owner/manager
and accumulate points for the ongoing season rather than using statistics from past seasons in which
outcomes were already known. Until the remarkable growth of the Internet, fantasy sports fans were
a few thousand American men along with a mere handful of women, who gathered at each other’s
houses at the start of their favorite sports season to create their line-ups by studying their athletes’ performance statistics for hours and conducting point calculations by hand via the only research and analysis sources available, which were a few televised contests and local newspapers (Flood, 2004; Harmon, 2005). With the increase in the number of sports magazines that advertised fantasy games at the back cover and the publication of injury reports in the local newspapers, fantasy sports started to become more popular in the early 1990s (Harmon, 2005). However, full thrust was achieved in mid-to-late 1990s via the creation of websites for specialized fantasy sports gaming hubs, which transformed the means of news and information flow, allowed online team selection and automatic calculations of collected points, while offering a new platform for fantasy sports players to meet and discuss their favorite line-ups, athletes, latest news, trades, etc. via message boards (Boyle & Haynes, 2002; Flood, 2004; Harmon, 2005). It also attracted the attention of larger corporations such as ESPN, CBS, Sportsline and Yahoo! which contributed to the rapid growth of the fantasy sports industry that produced the current generation of fantasy sports games for almost every sport branch, along with its derivatives for television shows and politics (such as fantasy soap leagues and fantasy congress game).

Although the structures and the components of each fantasy sports game are different, generally, fantasy sports players act as owners or general managers by building their own fantasy teams from a pool of specific sports league athletes such as NBA (National Basketball Association), MLB (Major League Baseball), NFL (National Football League), etc. prior to season or actual sports contest. They follow these athletes’ performance statistics and collect points in line with the actual performances of the athletes they selected. While making these selections, just like genuine team owners or managers do on a daily basis; players have to take into consideration athletes’ playing time in the game, health or injuries and expected performances as well. Usually, there is a limitation on the assets available to the players, such as budget, which is measured in mock-up monetary units or points. This limitation forces players to make critical decisions, such as selecting an athlete over
another for a certain playing position to be able to afford a superstar. Otherwise, everyone would easily be the winner by assigning the best athletes for each playing position when building their own teams.

Fantasy sports can be grouped into two main categories (see Figure 3-1). The first category is the hard-core fantasy sports that includes fantasy football, fantasy baseball, fantasy basketball, fantasy racing, fantasy golf, even fantasy bass fishing, etc. This first category might be further split into three subcategories, which are ranked from the lowest to the highest with respect to the amount of time committed on a weekly basis (Harmon, 2005, p.13):

i. Pick’em fantasy games that require making selections for games and events from a smaller set of options, such as guessing the winning team and the score of the game, along with one’s confidence over the result.

ii. Salary cap (or stock market) fantasy games that require selecting athletes to assemble a full line-up while working with limited assets, namely a fixed salary cap, which is quantified in made-up units rather than real money.

iii. Full fantasy (rotisserie) games that require drafting a team from a pool of athletes and making line-up adjustments through trades, free agency and waiver to be able to move forward to the play-offs and eventually to the title.

The second category is the fantasy sports simulation games, which basically run a simulation that draws data from a database, which holds all relevant statistical data, such as the final scores of the past games, personal performances of athletes within the designated games, etc. that enables even cross-comparisons of different games or athletes in different time periods within the history of the designated sports. These games could also be seen as a compromise to the age-old debates about team or athlete comparisons, which often take place in sports broadcasts or publications that seek an answer to “what if” questions. Hence, they are also referred to as “what-if-sports”
These types of games generally fall under three different categories ranked from the lowest to the highest with respect to the extent of responsibility that a player takes, along with the amount of time committed:

i. Sim match-ups offer an opportunity for selecting two opponent teams or athletes from any time period that give the results immediately. For instance, it is possible to find the answers to the questions of who would beat whom, if Wilt Chamberlain would play against Shaquille (Shaq) O’Neal, if Kobe Bryant would play against Michael “Magic” Johnson, or if Boston Celtics from 1985-86 season would play against Chicago Bulls from 1995-96 season.

ii. Simleagues offer an opportunity for building one’s own dream team by selecting athletes independent of season or time period to compete against other players in the league during a full-season that simulates usually two games per day. This is similar to salary cap games yet without seasonal boundaries.

iii. Dynasty games offer the full package of managing and coaching a team. The players have to find, recruit and coach athletes; develop game plans; manage playing time and athletes’ statistics; and to play against other teams in the conference tournaments and national championship; and they have to do all these on a limited budget, while competing with hundreds of other coaches. (FOX Sports website).
Fantasy Sports Communities and Competitive Fandom

The scholarly literature on fantasy sports is not very extensive. The literature review revealed that studies about fantasy sports fall into roughly two categories, namely, the culture and the possible educational uses of fantasy sports. What is common for these studies is the use of online message boards that players use to discuss their line-ups and engage in “trashtalking.”

Most of the studies that examine the fantasy sports culture generally consider the cultural processes that take place within the online leagues from a race-and-gender perspective rather than as a whole per se. For instance, taking a pro-feminist approach in their study, Davis and Duncan (2006) examine the reinforcement of hegemonic masculine ideologies within fantasy sports leagues. They claim that fantasy sports leagues might be thought as “Old Boy’s Club,” where men meet, bond and reinforce their masculinity (p. 261). They further state that fantasy sports leagues give players an opportunity to strengthen their dominance by control over the selection of athletes, demonstration of sports knowledge via their high scores and righteousness of their decisions to empower their
legitimacy in the competition within the community. While offered as an evidence for the fortification of masculinity and dominance during the competition on one hand, ‘trashtalking’, which refers to the messages that includes disparaging comments and ridiculing insults, is also found to be effective for forming camaraderie among fantasy sports players, acting as buttress for male bonding and eventually leading to “friendly competitiveness” within the community (p.254). This last finding is in line with the study in which Halverson and Halverson (2008, p.286) propose “the concept of competitive fandom to describe the learning, play and engagement of fantasy sports.” It offers an extensive framework that brings together research studies about the existing game subcultures, design and communities. Different from the above mentioned descriptive studies that employ one theoretical lens to describe the fantasy sports phenomenon from one certain aspect, Halverson and Halverson (2008) put together different perspectives to create a genuine framework for examining the designated phenomenon from various aspects. They present fantasy baseball game play as representative of a convergent game type that they call competitive fandom. Competitive fandom describes participation in fantasy sports play by combining perspective from fan culture studies (Black, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Lemke, 2004) and gaming communities (e.g., Gee, 2003; Squire, 2006; Steinkuehler, 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; Steinkuehler & Williams, 2009). Halverson and Halverson (2008, p.301-302) state that a fantasy sports game is rooted in convergence of three activities in three planes, which are:

i. Primary activity around which fandom is organized, such as MLB, NBA, NFL.

ii. Fan activity that ranges from watching games, collecting artifacts, etc.

iii. Fantasy activity which “repurposes the primary activity content” with fan activity to create a game-based environment, i.e. fantasy sports game, with its own unique set of player created rules.
Thus, Halverson and Halverson (2008, p.291) claim that “fan culture becomes competitive fandom when content knowledge is repurposed for use in a game context that has core game features, including a defined rule set and quantifiable outcomes.” They examine “how participants become players, how they acquire expertise, and even why they play in the first place” utilizing competitive fandomness framework to illustrate “this personal learning process and locate how individual players, not all of them expert, fall in different places within the framework” (p.291). Even though they paint a colorful picture of participation in fantasy sports, examining various strategies and self-perception of fans having different levels of expertise as well as individual reasoning and knowledge, Halverson and Halverson (2008) do not talk about how this strategic knowledge is shared within the fan community or, more precisely, patterns of knowledge exchange within a fantasy sports community, which constitutes the focus of the current study.

Due to their growing popularity, it is not surprising that fantasy sports have already been considered for or actually used in formal instructional settings to teach various concepts. Some researchers (Billings, 2005; Brown, 2005; Gillentine & Schulz, 2001) have proposed that fantasy sports can be introduced into the training of students in sports marketing and communications courses, where they are taught how to create marketing plans, promotional materials, up-to-date information on franchises, etc., to provide students with opportunities to practice these skills with simulated teams and strengthen their application of marketing theories and concepts. Flockhart (2005) published a series of books developing a curriculum around fantasy sports to enhance mathematics learning, which was implemented successfully in K-12 schools. In his approach, students learn basic mathematical concepts and work on problem sets to practice them by calculating fantasy points for a specific athlete, scores for their fantasy sports teams and by creating graphical representation of these calculations. In both these cases, fantasy sports provide a space where students can practice abstract concepts that they learn by applying them on concrete examples. However, the current study does not focus on instructional uses of fantasy sports games. Rather, it
aims to find out the knowledge exchange patterns within the ESPN’s FastBreak community, by which knowledge is acquired and used by fantasy sports players without the structure provided by such formal curriculum and instruction.
Chapter 4

METHOD

The current chapter presents the design of the study. At the beginning, the research problem and the research questions, which constitute the framework of the method, are presented. Then the overall design of the study, justification for the design and the sampling strategies are elaborated on. After comprehensive explanations of the participants’ profiles and of the case, which constitutes the main focus of the study, data collection procedures, data analysis approaches, and quality of the study are expounded.

Research Problem and Research Questions

The current study aims to understand how knowledge exchange takes place in an online fantasy basketball fan community, namely ESPN’s FastBreak. More precisely, I will try to find out the patterns of knowledge exchange that emerge as a natural part of gameplay in the natural everyday context of ESPN’s FastBreak by examination of players’ discussions on online message boards. Thus, I ask the following research questions:

1. What are patterns of knowledge exchange within the FastBreak community?

2. What are the implications of these patterns for online competitive fandom communities?
Overall Design of the Study and the Justification for the Design

The current study utilizes the ethnographic approach, since the aim of the study is to examine the knowledge exchange patterns as they emerge in the natural setting of an online fantasy basketball fan community. Ethnography embodies a more humanistic model of social research, namely, naturalism (Brewer, 2000), which proposes to study the social world in its “natural setting,” rather than in “artificial” ones (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.8). Moreover, ethnographic approach is a useful tool to recognize and understand “broader cultural representations,” which, in turn, offers valuable insights about the complex phenomenon under investigation (Machin, 2002, p.10). This is another important aspect for the study, since the knowledge exchange in such communities is often embedded in rich socio-cultural context, which is “competitive fan culture” as a part of the fabric of everyday lives.

Moreover, the current study is an example of a holistic single case outlined by Yin (1994; 2009). A case study is the best way to achieve an in-depth understanding of a designated process. It provides thick and holistic description of a real-life situated phenomenon under investigation, beyond enhancing the critical and intellectual dimensions of human thought (Merriam, 1998; Shimahara, 1990; Edson, 1990). It can be used to discover or to gain new and fresh perspectives on meanings people have constructed in relation to context of the studied phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Sherman & Webb, 1990; Shimahara, 1990). In line with his orientation and main interest in ethnography, Geertz’s (2000) emphasis on *thick description* and *meaning* is valid for other qualitative research methods such as case studies. His emphasis on *meaning* as the essential principle of lived experience gives rise to “symbols/symbolic systems,” which he refers to as *webs of significance*. Similar to Vygotsky’s (1981) emphasis on sign and language systems, he states that all human action is webbed with significance that can be understood only by grasping the specific *local interpretations* employed by the natives themselves.
Apart from offering elaborate details of the studied phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), in a case study, there may also be a possibility of emergence of previously unknown relationships and variables (Stake, 1995). Hence, this research method is an effective means to explore and explain the phenomenon in focus here, for the purposes of adding onto the field’s knowledge base, affecting, and perhaps even improving the practice.

It is a naturalistic case study, since the case of interest was not specifically designed according to any theory. It is post facto in nature, because the data analysis is conducted after the data was collected. The subsequent selection criteria for methodology identification are the characteristics of the research questions the study poses, researcher’s scarce control over the investigated phenomenon and the phenomenon’s ignored or undervalued as well as contemporary and popular structure as outlined by Yin (1994, 2009). The research questions that shape the study are “what” questions, which fall within the holistic case study as Yin (1994) defines it. Moreover, as a researcher, my interest lies within processes of knowledge exchange rather than outcomes, search for emergent patterns of knowledge exchange rather than specific variables and conformation of such variables (Merriam, 1998).

As for the boundaries and delimitations of the case, Yin (2009, p.18) emphasizes that the case should be a contemporary phenomenon that would be investigated within the real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin & Davis, 2007), both of which are related to the phenomenon under investigation in this study. The case under investigation here displays these characteristics also because, as the brief literature review revealed, knowledge exchange takes place via social interaction and is deeply situated in the rich socio-cultural context, which, in this case, is fantasy basketball fandom.
Sampling Strategies and Participants

Merriam (1998, p.66) stated that “in case studies … sample selection occurs first at the case level, followed by sample selection within the case.” For this study, two years of discussion data between the 2006 and 2008 basketball seasons from ESPN’s FastBreak discussion boards were collected. Regarding the magnitude of the data sets and the complex and labor intensive open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1980; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), one month of the postings from each season was extracted from the messages by using purposeful (or purposive) sampling (Merriam, 1998).

Purposeful (or purposive) sampling enables the exploration of information-rich cases for the purpose of gaining in-depth information about the central issues under investigation (Patton, 1990; Creswell, 1998). Based on Patton’s (1990) and Kuzel’s (1992) works, Miles and Huberman (1994) specify 16 types of purposeful (or purposive) sampling. According to their typology of sampling strategies, the sampling strategy used in this study falls under the category of “combination or mixed” type of sampling, which combines “intensity,” “criterion,” “theory based,” and “maximum variation.”

The “criteria” used in the selection were the density, quality and the amount of the participation in terms of knowledge exchange, where density refers to the degree of the nestedness of the threads and quality refers to the degree of the relevance of messages. When the interaction patterns in data were examined, it was seen that the first weeks of the messages at the beginning of the season were more related with recruiting new players; whereas the messages towards the end of the season were mostly farewells to other players, which includes less knowledge exchange due to the limited number of games and scarcity of choices to be made. Thus, firstly, messages posted one week prior to the All-Star games were selected, where the knowledge exchange intensifies, which is then extended to the month of February, regarding these criteria and participation patterns. This selection qualifies as the “intensity” type of purposeful (or purposive) sampling, since it holds the above-mentioned information-rich instances for possible knowledge exchange patterns.
Moreover, messages related with health issues, special days, or comments on lawsuits against athletes, etc. were omitted from the data, since they were out of the scope of the current study. This selection also falls under “theory based” type of purposeful (or purposive) sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) or what is called “theoretical sampling” in grounded theory (Creswell, 1998), since the selected messages were the ones that would most probably provide the most valuable insight and contribution about the emergent knowledge exchange patterns.

Finally, the players discussing their game strategies had already formed an ideal group for the “maximum variation” type of purposeful (or purposive) sampling, since they were coming from the population of a total of anonymous 31.1 million players who played an online fantasy sports game at least once (FSTA, 2008). Twenty two percent of the adult males of 18 to 49 years of age in America play fantasy sports games. Approximately, nine out of every ten players play the game online. Although the majority of the players were American, as an exception for the selected case of interest, there were also postings from European countries such as Spain and Turkey showing that it was not only a national phenomenon. However, these postings were filtered out, not because of their international character, but because they were naturally left out during the above-mentioned criterion-based purposive sampling process.

Data Collection

*FastBreak* discussion board consists of a listing of various threads, displayed in multiple pages on the web (Figure 4-1). The data were collected from this message board via a Web robot written in Perl scripting language. The robot scraped data from different threads on ESPN’s *FastBreak* discussion board, by starting from the first thread, following the URL tied to the player messages and recursively extracting message content from the main HTML source code, along with the relevant information such as message URL, subject, author, post date and time of the message (see
Figure 4-2). All of the information is rewritten to a text file in XML format, which is then parsed and inserted to a MySQL database by the same web robot to be kept for further analysis. The data from the 2006-2008 play seasons were extracted from the database and exported as a text file in CSV format, which was then opened with Microsoft® Excel spreadsheet program for analysis.

![Table](image)

**Figure 4.1:** An example of the list of threads in the FastBreak discussion board.
Figure 4.2: The view of the list of messages contained within the first thread in the FastBreak discussion board shown in Figure 4.1.
Before starting the data analysis, data were cleaned by the elimination of orphan threads, which have no replies from other players and of solitary threads, which only have postings from the same author replying his/her own message(s). Moreover, messages that were irrelevant to the game play, which had various topics from seasonal greetings to the nice yet expensive meal eaten on Valentine’s Day, to personal issues, such as health problems, etc. were also omitted. Besides, the messages that included recruitment invitations for the upcoming *FastBreak* season, namely for the second half of the NBA season, or some other fantasy sports games were eliminated, as well as the messages containing only the current score and rankings. Finally, the messages that included only the names of athletes and their statistics due to direct copy and paste from the selection page of *FastBreak* were also marked and excluded from the data set, which were included later during the data analysis to protect the wholesomeness and meaningfulness of the discussions as well as the situated nature of the data. Eventually, a total of 2806 messages with 1881 from the 2006-2007 season and 949 from the 2007-2008 season were obtained. The following Table 4-1 shows the percentages of the singleton messages as well as the percentage of the analyzed messages within the data set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NBA Season</th>
<th>Total # of messages</th>
<th># of analyzed messages</th>
<th># of singletons</th>
<th>% of singletons</th>
<th>% of analyzed messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>29.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2830</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>16.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the clean-up, the words containing repeated characters are not modified to mark their genuine use within the discussion, since in online discussions the lack of prosodic features used for emphasis and the emotional tone of a face-to-face oral discussion is often compensated by capitalization of the words or by repetitions of some letters in the words. However, this characteristic of writing style often inflates the data set. For instance, even though the following excerpt finishes in three lines, it occupies four lines within the text.
I laughed to most think Gasol with Kobe makes them title contenders. What people forget is Kobe has no clue what team ball means nor will he ever. Back to back pathetic games by the so-called greatest player in the game and a loss to the Hawks.
LMAOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

Although online messages were drawn from a publicly available discussion board, the analysis of such online interactions is a sensitive ethical issue in terms of discussants’ protection (Mann & Stewart, 2000; Rutter & Smith, 2005). Moreover, even though the discussants, namely ESPN’s FastBreak fans, were using nicknames instead of their real names; to be able to keep the anonymity of participants, I further replaced these nicknames with made-up elf names generated by an online elf name generator (http://online-generator.com/name-generator/elf-name-generator.php). However, as I moved further in the data, I came across other specific information in the message bodies referring to the location, nationality, ethnicity of certain players, as well as certain groups of players. In such circumstances, when possible, I changed those clues with elements from Elvish realm that bears resemblance to the original information, since I replaced the nicknames of the players with Elf names. If such substitution was not possible, and as long as it did not disturb the flow of conversations in the messages, I simply replaced such information with placeholders, such as using [someplace] for a specific location or omitted that specific information from the postings.

**Data Analysis**

Once the clean-up of data set and substitution of nicknames with Elf names were finished, I started the data analysis by identifying the smallest meaningful chunk of data, namely, a unit of analysis that could be examined, summarized, and compared to other similar units (Babbie, 2009). Considering the focus of the study, which is to find out the knowledge exchange patterns in ESPN’s FastBreak community, the most useful units of analysis are individual messages in each discussion.
thread (Babbie, 2009). Studying individual messages allowed the examination of recurrent patterns of talk that served knowledge exchange, which emerged in the messages.

I started data analysis using open coding, which revolves around reading and comparing data units to be able to identify, name and assemble similar units into categories as the emergent descriptions of phenomenon found in the text (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The data were manually edited using Excel and Numbers following the steps explained below:

Once the data were transferred to an Excel file, I arranged the data by discussion threads, putting all the messages posted to a discussion thread together. Then, I rearranged the data by date to be able to better comprehend the flow of the discussions. Once these arrangements were done, I read all the messages twice to be able to internalize the data, which enabled me to view the bigger picture of the knowledge exchange that takes place in the discussions.

As the next step, I tried to identify and tag categories and subcategories relevant to knowledge exchange by comparing and contrasting players’ messages (see Figure 4-3). The recurrent rows in Figure 4-3 are due to the instances of different categories contained in different parts of the message content.

![Figure 4-3: An excerpt from the coded data set](image)

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![Figure 4-3: An excerpt from the coded data set](image)
Each category and subcategory were labeled regarding the focus of the study and entered in a new Excel sheet as they emerged in the course of the analysis. For instance, mathematical reasoning which often surfaced in players’ messages, was used as a means for knowledge exchange. Moreover, such mathematical reasoning might be either on an athlete’s performance ratings or on players’ own performance ratings. So, the subcategory defined as “performance ratings of an athlete” that falls under the category of “mathematical reasoning,” within “the knowledge exchange usage” theme is coded as 2.1.2, which refers to the second subcategory that falls under the first category in the second theme (see Figure 4-4). As for the frequency of each theme, category and subcategory, all the categories were grouped using Numbers application and then percentages were calculated in Excel. The compiled codebook obtained at the end of this inductive process, which includes a total of 75 tags for 5 main themes, 70 categories and subcategories, can be found in the Appendix given at the end of the dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Knowledge exchange using</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>25.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Mathematical Reasoning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1. Athletes (performance ratings of an athlete)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2. Players (performance ratings of a player)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Statistics (analysis)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1. Athletes (performance ratings of an athlete)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2. Teams</td>
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<td>0.53</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Analogies (~1.2. ~5.1.1.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1. From other sports branch</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. Bandwagon appeal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5. Resourcing (how and where to find relevant information)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1. Basic information (game features to check certain statistics, athlete’s longer game time, injury, etc.) (//3.2.5)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2. athlete's observed performance in the game (tiredness, etc.)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4-4:* An excerpt from the codebook obtained at the end of the data analysis.
The signs “~” and “//” in Figure 4-4 indicate the relation and parallelism between the categories and subcategories, respectively. For instance, the third category of the second theme, namely using analogies as a means for knowledge exchange is both related to the second category under the first theme, which is the mutuality and reciprocity of knowledge exchange among different communities and to the first subcategory under the first category that falls under the fifth theme, which is multiple fandom. Similarly “basic information,” which is the first subcategory under the “resourcing” category as a means for knowledge exchange is parallel to the fifth subcategory under the second category of the first theme, which is fact finding about injuries.

Once the coding was complete, I finished the data analysis by re-checking the codes and roughly grouping the messages by emergent categories. For the presentation of the results, the original messages were used in their raw and unedited forms that contained various misspellings, typos, syntactic errors, and missing or incorrect punctuation. The reasons behind keeping these idiosyncrasies in the presentation of the results are the roles they might be playing in the knowledge exchange, the deliberate use of such characteristics to avoid being filtered out due to restricted language use on the discussion boards by ESPN, and the possible importance they might have in an online discussion lacking the prosodic features and the emotional tone of a face-to-face oral discussion. Moreover, the quotations from the messages which are presented in the results chapter were also labeled with three pieces of information: the name of the poster, the title of the discussion thread it is taken from and the row number of the message in the Excel sheet containing the coded data, respectively. For instance the label of “[Mitar, lineup for tomorrow, 68],” at the end of a quotation shows that the quotation is taken from Mitar’s message posted in the discussion thread titled “lineup for tomorrow,” which was listed on row 68 in the Excel sheet that contained the coded data. Whenever the player’s name was given in the text, only the last two pieces of information were presented in the label, i.e. [lineup for tomorrow, 68].
Explication of Researcher’s Assumptions and Preconceptions

Yin (2009) emphasizes the importance of researcher’s training and experience to conduct a high-quality case study “because of the continuous interaction between the theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected” (p. 67). He further states that there is no such test to distinguish probable good case study researchers. Yet, he highlights the primeness of researchers’ honesty in assessing their own capabilities and presents the following list of required skills (Yin, 2009, p. 68):

i. A good case study investigator should be able to ask good questions—and interpret the answers.

ii. An investigator should be a good “listener” and not be trapped by his or her own ideologies or preconceptions.

iii. An investigator should be adaptive and flexible, so that newly encountered situations can be seen as opportunities, not threats.

iv. An investigator must have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, whether this is a theoretical or policy orientation, even if in the exploratory mode. Such a grasp reduces the relevant events and information to be sought to manageable proportions.

v. A person should be unbiased by preconceived notions, including those derived from theory. Thus, a person should be sensitive and responsive to contradictory evidence.

Accordingly, along with my background, assumptions and preconceptions about the case, the fulfillment of these skills is explicated as openly as possible. Starting as a novice practitioner in the field, I had the chance to build necessary skills for ‘becoming’ a good qualitative researcher. I took both theoretical and applied qualitative research classes, where I found the opportunity to practice various qualitative research methods, besides case study. Despite my limited experience of conducting qualitative research, my background in undergraduate mathematics major helped me
throughout the study in various ways. However, this baggage also forced me to search for rigorous guidelines both for research and findings, which at times was a threat for a researcher’s flexibility. Therefore, these issues should be kept in mind when reading the findings and conclusions.

Being a novice practitioner also decreases the likelihood of “introducing bias into the research” (Yin, 2009, p.71). However, it might not be possible to completely strip oneself from one’s own interpretation of the world around to make sense of it. To reduce the possibility of bias, I tried to be self-critical in order to pin down possible biases I might possess. The discovered biases were deliberately kept at sight throughout the study, in order not to forget them. I believe that being aware of them kept me alert throughout the study to avoid any biases. This awareness also reminded me to keep an open and inquiring mind to the possibilities, an issue which is closely related with asking good questions. I became aware of the importance of having an open and inquiring mind not only during the data collection as Yin (2009) suggested, but also throughout the whole course of the study. This enabled me to be able to keep an eye on emergent evidence, whether it is supporting or contradictory, and to be able to anticipate possible changes or additions to the study rather than trying to find ‘true’ answers that would fit with critical positions already taken. For these possible changes and additions might have eventually aggregated to a whole about how or why the phenomenon under investigation is/exists/works, as it does from the designated theoretical lens. This attitude also requires being adaptive and flexible enough to grasp such occurrences as opportunities rather than threats to refine the study. The emergence of the codebook for knowledge exchange patterns during the data analysis can be shown as an example of the implementation of this attitude.

Being a good “listener,” is as important as asking good questions. Besides my above-mentioned attributes, playing the FastBreak game for two consecutive seasons enabled me to get immersed into the FastBreak context as well as into the community, which contributed to my becoming a good listener who sees and reads between the lines in the data set more clearly to discern what might be going on
The play experience familiarized me with the *FastBreak* jargon used by players on the discussion boards, which might appear ciphered to outsiders due to its sports related terminology (Bernhard & Eade, 2005; Hiltner & Walker, 1996), and more specifically, *FastBreak* related characteristics such as frequent use of athletes’ nicknames, for example ‘KB’ for Kobe Bryant or ‘AI’ for Allen Iverson, and game related abbreviations, such as ‘OTs’ for overtime games or ‘doubles’ for two games in one night. Another gain for me from this play experience was the improvement in understanding of the rules, mechanics and dynamics of the game, as well as of the range of collaborative reasoning instances. This provided me with a *firm grasp of the issues being studied*, which helped me to make inferences from the convergent patterns in tandem with the support from the literature.

**Quality of the Research**

Qualitative research studies are often criticized on the grounds that generalization of the conducted research is out of question, let alone the numerous problems of validity and reliability woven into its fabric. This debate is beyond the scope of this study. However, the issues within the current study, which correspond to the issues of generalization, validity and reliability in a quantitative research, will be explicated in this section as the elements contributing to the quality of the study.

Merriam (1998) states that ensuring the quality of a qualitative research is closely related with the ethics of study. She further exemplifies this statement by pointing to the danger of selecting appropriate data from among the available mass to fit and support already determined results that are settled by the researcher even before the study is put in motion. In the present study, the explication of the researcher’s biases and the principle of keeping them within sight in order to stay alert throughout the study was an attempt to avoid this danger. This also contributes to the
meaningfulness of the study for the reader and reveals the case of interest, as it is, not a skewed image of it. On the other hand, Bassey (1999) coined the term *trustworthiness* as a substitute for validity and reliability, and Yin (2009) defined four criteria, namely construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability to measure the quality of case research design.

Construct validity is defined as “establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied” (Yin, 1994, p.33; 2009, p.40). He further recommends three tactics for the fulfillment of this criterion, which are the use of multiple sources of evidence, the creation of a case study database, and the maintenance of a chain of evidence. For the current study, the only data available to the researcher was the threads on the discussion boards. However, general player statistics from various sources (such as FSTA and other fantasy sports websites) and publicly accessible player profiles (which are used anonymously in the study) were utilized to provide convergence, which might have led to triangulation of data sources (*data triangulation*). Moreover, throughout the course of the study, all collected and produced documents were kept to be able to create a case study database. These documents were brief notes on the case including statistics, brief annotations of relevant articles; case study documents, including researcher’s notes for herself about data collection and analysis procedures, evolving book of codes, emergent issues relevant to data analysis that needed further attention, etc.; both collected and created tabular materials; and brief narratives of initial answers to research questions, and of researcher’s assumptions and biases. Finally, the steps taken throughout the course of the study are explained in great detail to provide the reader with rich illustrations and descriptions of the case from the initial research problem and questions to ultimate conclusions.

Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match with the reality (Merriam, 1998). Yin (1994) suggests pattern-matching, explanation building and time-series analysis to improve internal validity. For the current study, pattern-matching was conducted throughout the coding of data by comparing the patterns which emerged from the messages with other instances of
such patterns by checking for the presence of alternative patterns. I also checked for rival explanations, which can be defined as the explanations of certain patterns that might exclude the presence of others (Yin, 2009, p. 139). In contrast to finding mutually exclusive patterns, the analysis revealed combinatory uses of certain patterns.

Additionally, Merriam (1998) recommends triangulation, member checks, peer examination and clarification of researcher’s biases to ensure internal validity. Data triangulation has been explained previously. Since member checking is required when there is an additional process in the articulation of the raw data, such as transcription of interviews, which includes another party like the transcribers or the researcher herself, it is not considered to be an immediate concern for the current study. Nevertheless, the presence of messages that were edited by the players after they had been submitted to the discussion board should be noted, as this might be interpreted as a form of member checking. For peer examination, I asked another PhD student with an instructional systems background and experience of conducting a few qualitative research studies, for a review on the emerging findings. Finally, my assumptions and biases as a researcher have also been presented under a separate subheading in this chapter.

Statistical generalization is not a concern for the current study, when researcher’s wish to comprehensively understand the phenomenon under investigation, and not to find out what is generalizable or ‘true’ for the majority, is taken into consideration. Moreover, the single case design of the study makes generalization of the findings harder than multicase or cross-case studies (Yin, 2009; Merriam, 1998), due to the high specificity and situativity of the obtained information, which also rules out the issue of replication. Thus, being aware of the possible danger of overgeneralization, the data from the study is used to produce analytically valid and useful information within the context of the designated particular case of ESPN’s FastBreak or alike, but not universal contexts. In its essence, qualitative research entails “interpretations by the researcher or participants from particular standpoints and against the background of accumulated meanings” (Greene, 1990, p.175).
Leading to subjectivity, these interpretations have also been feared to result in researcher bias in relation to lack of rigor in the data collection and analysis procedures. However, the rich and thick descriptions of the processes in the study and the case itself are provided to the readers for them to be able to determine to what degree their case is close to the current study (Merriam, 1998). These detailed inscriptions also help to warrant the reliability of the study along with the case study database created throughout the course of the study, which would ensure that an auditor could repeat the processes and expectantly arrive at the same results if s/he were in my shoes conducting the same case (not replicating results by another case study) (Yin, 2009, p. 45). Moreover, to keep the authenticity intact, the data is presented as it is in the results section, without any editing.
Chapter 5

RESULTS

The current chapter presents the findings regarding the research questions stated in the first and third chapters, namely the knowledge exchange patterns in ESPN’s FastBreak community. The findings of the data analysis will be reported under five main subheadings, which are as follows:

1. Mutuality and reciprocality of knowledge exchange
2. Starters that initiate knowledge exchange
3. Means used for knowledge exchange
4. Kinds of exchanged knowledge
5. The characteristics of the sociocultural settings in which knowledge exchange takes place.

The first subheading describes the mutuality and reciprocality of knowledge exchange not only within the FastBreak community but also between other fantasy sports communities and FastBreak community. The second subheading explains that the knowledge exchange is initiated on an ad hoc basis by open-ended questions. The third subheading provides evidence for the different means community members utilize while exchanging knowledge, such as mathematical reasoning, statistics use and analogies to other sports branches. The fourth subheading will elucidate different kinds of exchanged knowledge such as strategic knowledge related to the game play, or basic information and knowledge on game rules and mechanics. Lastly, the last subheading reveals that knowledge exchange does not occur in social vacuum and provides an elaborate illustration of the sociocultural settings in which knowledge exchange occurs, including multiple fandomship of members, community code of conduct, camaraderie, competition and FB language.
These themes, categories and subcategories emerged from the data set during the data analysis, and were generated based on the data and tagged considering the relevant literature. The full list of the generated themes, categories and subcategories along with their intensity within the data set can be found in the Appendix given at the end of the dissertation. The reason behind this arrangement is to scrutinize the phenomena more easily and comprehensively. In reality, the collected data showed a multifaceted structure and interrelational nature, making a comprehensive coverage essential. Therefore, both aspects of the data will be dealt with in the relevant parts of the study.

Mutuality and Reciprocal visits of Knowledge Exchange

The data analysis showed that players exchange knowledge mutually and reciprocally. Indeed, there were only 105 singleton messages out of the total of the 2830 messages in the initial data set that remained unreplied by another FastBreak player (3.71% of the total messages). This rate was down to 10 messages out of the purposive sampling of the 479 messages, which constitutes only 2.08% of the analyzed data set. The following table shows the number and percentages of these messages (Table 5-1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial data set from February 2007 and February 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBA Season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analyzed Data Set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-1. The number and intensity of singleton messages within the initial and analyzed data sets
Knowledge exchange in ESPN’s FastBreak is mutual and reciprocal not only within the community, but also between FastBreak community and other fantasy sports communities, such as Yahoo’s fantasy basketball or ESPN’s Fantasy Baseball, Football, Nascar, etc (see Table 5-2).

Table 5-2. Categories and subcategories from the first theme and their intensity within the data set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mutuality &amp; Reciprocity</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>96.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Among members of the community</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>97.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Among communities</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For instance, in the following thread titled “trade help” one FB player asks for others’ help and opinions about a trade he will conduct in Yahoo’s Fantasy Basketball Game, where three players chip in advising him otherwise.

Leith
i get kg and boone and give up howard and calderon.
on one side its kg on the other i am giving up too much (conisdering kg is injured) any suggestions?
[URL omitted]

Elthin
In the immortal words of GrandMaster Flash “Don, Don, Don’t Do it!”

Touck
Don’t do it! Calderon is very valuable, and KG could be out a while. After looking at your league, I do have a suggestion though. Drop Antonio Daniels and pick up Anthony Carter. He has been on fire lately. I have him in 2 leagues and he’s helping me a lot. He also averages more 3s, assists, steals, and blocks than Daniels, and about the same in the other stats.

Knight_Nilex
Reject the trade.
KG; Howard, but Calderon; Boone
Knight_Nilex’s Revengers
PTS: 11411 PCT: 100.0 RK: 22 [trade help, 82-85]

Elthin sends a humorous message as a reply to Leith’s post, while Knight_Nilex posts a brief message that includes his group’s name and his ranking, which constitutes his signature statement for his posts. Both Leith’s and Knight_Nilex’s messages carry two of the characteristics of the sociocultural setting, namely, humor and ranking signaling his expertise and reputation, in which knowledge exchange takes place and which will be examined in detail under the “characteristics of the sociocultural settings” in the following parts of the chapter.
Lastly, Touck gives him additional suggestions for his league besides answering his question, where he refers to the four important statistics, namely, three-pointers, assists, steals and blocks, all of which play an important role in the calculation of an athlete’s FB points as well as referring to his positive experience in other leagues where he preferred the designated athlete. Using athlete’s statistics that constitute variables in the equation used for FB point calculation for a certain athlete constitutes one of the means they utilize in the knowledge exchange, which again will be examined under the subheading “means used for knowledge exchange.” Finally, this thread also provides evidence for the ad hoc basis of knowledge exchange that is initiated by Leith’s open-ended question and brings us to the second theme that emerged from the data set.

**Starters that initiate knowledge exchange**

The data analysis revealed that majority of the knowledge exchange is initiated by open-ended questions on an ad hoc basis (see Table 5-3), whether it is about basic information of an athlete’s injury or a rule in the game, or about others’ opinions on athlete selection for a position in the line-up, player’s daily performance, athlete’s performance in the game, or a sensational trade of an athlete and so on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Knowledge exchange starts with</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1. Open-ended questions</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>89.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1. Request for basic info</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2. Request for others’ opinions</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>80.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. Plain line-up</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example for the open-ended question requesting basic information might be Shillen’s message, which is as follows:
am new to the fastbreak fantasy game i was wondering how does the five points work when u win with the game with the coach/player....your supposed to get five points right?
My coach (chicago bulls) won but the 5 pts were not awarded to me. If ne body knows what the deal is please let me know. [Coaches, 574]

In reply, he receives five messages that include the basic information that the points are not added until the following day, the explanation of how “five points work” via an analogy to the pointing system for the defense in fantasy football, and the strategic knowledge of trading coach to afford a better athlete.

As an example of requesting other’s opinions, Okthar asks the open-ended question of “What is everyone doing for tomorrow's center? I need to go cheap, but not quite sure who to go with. Mutombo is sore, and needs some rest, so he's not an option. Maybe Nazr Mohammed, against Boston?” [Cheap center for tuesday?, 23]. He receives three different replies offering him choices based on athletes’ performance in the real game and his possible “soreness” as a result, and the strategic knowledge of trading “Shooting Guard (SG)” and “Coach (Cch) position to afford a better Center (C). Indeed, the examination of the data set showed that choosing an athlete for the center position came up frequently in the 2006-2007 NBA season.

Even though the majority of knowledge exchange is initiated by open-ended questions requesting information or opinions of other players, sometimes posting plain line-ups might also initiate discussion:

PG Steve Nash, PHO DAL SG Thabo Sefolosha, CHI MIA SF Andres Nocioni, CHI MIA PF Shawn Marion, MIA @CHI C Amare Stoudemire, PHO DAL Coach Chicago Bulls MIA [LU 4 Thursday, 463]
Tibers’ above post received seven messages from other players that include others’ plain line-ups as well as one post that reveals another strategic knowledge, namely, “avoiding two (three) athletes from the same team” while deciding the line-up.

Previous examples revealed that sometimes the player who initiates the discussion might get more than what he asked for, making it possible to tap into others’ knowledge and experiences, which deserves a closer look. Moreover, it also reveals that every FastBreak player has something to offer to the community regardless of his experience in the game as well as different means to convey that knowledge, which will be examined in the following part of the chapter.

**Means used for knowledge exchange**

The data analysis revealed that players use different means to exchange knowledge such as using analogies as mentioned above. Table 5-4 summarizes emerging categories along with their frequency and intensity in the messages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Knowledge exchange using</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>25.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Mathematical Reasoning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1. Athletes (performance ratings of an athlete)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2. Players (performance ratings of a player)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Statistics</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.2. Teams</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3. Players (performance ratings of a player)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Analogies (~1.2. ~5.1.1.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1. From other sports branch</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. Bandwagon appeal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5. Resourcing (how and where to find relevant information)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(~/5.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1. Basic information (game features to check certain statistics, athlete’s longer game time, injury, etc.) (~3.2.5)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2. Athlete’s observed performance in the game (tiredness, etc.)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though it seldom appears in FB message boards, the following messages reveal that players use mathematical reasoning and statistical analysis rather than just posting numbers and statistics to the message boards. For instance, Sidathe asks others’ opinions about assigning an athlete to the SG (Shooting Guard) position, considering his past performance ratings by presenting his statistics, namely points ($PTS$), rebounds ($REB$), assists ($AST$), which are the main variables in the equation that is used to calculate FB points of a designated athlete (see Figure 1-1 in Chapter 1:

\[
\text{Athlete Score} = (PTS + REB + AST + STL + BLK) - (\text{FGA} - \text{FGM}) + (\text{FTA} - \text{FTM}) + \text{TO})
\]

anyone taking Kobe against the team he scored 81 on? he played them earlier this season and got 31pts. 11reb. 7 ast. I know D-Wade is the man and the best SG pick nearly every night but Kobe can actually have a 40+ game Anyone gambling on him? [Kobe Anyone?, 94-99]

As for the mathematical reasoning and statistics use, in the following thread titled “Points Per Night”, Okthar asks others’ average points by giving written instructions on how to calculate it. He further presents his average followed by the exact averages of the first and fiftieth player in the leaderboard. Then, he compares all these averages to analyze and reflect on his performance. Based on his analysis, he predicts that a player whose average is 120 or more per night can make it to the leaderboard, which is “something to look forward to.” Zerin replies to his message stating that he can find the same statistics in FB webpage and gives the instructions for it. Vilan also posts his average points per night and points out to the five points difference between the first and the fifth player in the leaderboard.

Okthar
Alright, if my math is correct, last night was the 98th game of the season in which we could set a lineup. So, take your total points, divide by 98, and that's your points per night average.
My average: 111
Leaderboard #1 average: 121
Leaderboard # 50 average: 116.34
Pretty interesting, to look at the numbers. I’m only 5 points per night off of the LB. Something to look forward to next half: average 120 or more a night, and you should be on the LB for sure. [making argument explicit]

Zerin
112 over here but you can always go to archive at the end of each week and there it would tell you all averages [information giving]

Cordale
114.68

Okthar
112 over here but you can always go to archive at the end of each week and there it would tell you all averages
I like doing things the hard way.

Vilan
117 here, interesting that only 5 pt. avg. between 1st and 50th. [Points Per Night, 88-92]

In his message, Okthar is using average, which is a descriptive statistic, to make the comparison and concludes that he lacks only five points per night to be listed in the leaderboard. Even though Vilan replies to his message by pointing at the five-point difference between the first and the fiftieth, there is no clear indication as to why he does that. It might be to imply that a five-point difference might place a player at the tail-end in the distribution of players depending on the standard deviation, which might add a more inferential edge to it, or just to point out that it is approximately the same average difference for the other posters who replied to the thread.

The quotation from the following thread titled “Lebron worth 24.8??,” more openly exposes the mathematical reasoning and statistical analyses that players conduct on various subjects such as analyzing an athlete’s FB performance or a player’s own performance. For instance, in his following message, Julthor predicts LeBron James’s salary increase within ten weeks:

Lebron should have been reset to 21 or 22 million, at this rate if he goes up .4 of a million per week at 10 weeks his value will be over 28 million. For everyone that thinks thats fair just remember Gridiron challenge caps salaries at 8 million. Shouldn't Lebron's salary be capped? [Lebron worth 24.8??, 716]

Julthor uses number series to conduct his prediction. Based on LeBron James’s previous salary values, he calculates that his salary “goes up .4 of a million per week,” which is an example for arithmetic progression in a number series, where a constant number is added to or subtracted from
each term to form the next one. Then he calculates his salary at the tenth week based on its increase rate per week, asserting “at this rate if he goes up .4 of a million per week at 10 weeks his value will be over 28 million.” This is similar to Greste’s message in the thread titled “tough start,” where thinking his scores as the terms in a number series and given that “the pattern holds,” he predicts his score for the fourth night based on his scores in the first three nights, in a humorous way:

I have a crazier first three days: 99, 113 and 170. On the plus side, if the pattern holds I’m going to score in the four hundreds tonight. That’s a 127 average, and a ranking of 2880. [tough start, 314]

What is more, Julthor also asks “Shouldn’t Lebron’s salary be capped?” to get others’ agreement on his statement, rather than simply offering his interpretation while, at the same time, backing it up by giving the example of “Gridion challenge.” Both of these moves constitute examples for the “bandwagon appeal” and “analogy use,” respectively, which will be further explained later in this part.

Mythik replies to Julthor’s message and claims that LeBron James is worth it by backing up his statement with ‘the bandwagon appeal’ that “everyone in the top 100 takes him every game” and with the loss it will cause in one’s score otherwise by presenting LeBron James’s average points per game:

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1 The message reveals that he is using arithmetic progression in a number series, where a constant number is added to or subtracted from each term to form the next one. More precisely, if the first term of the number series is \(a_n\), and the constant number added or subtracted is \(d\), then the second term, \(a_2\), is obtained by adding or subtracting \(d\), i.e. \(a_2 = a_1 \pm d\). Using the same rule, the third term will be \(a_3 = a_2 \pm d = (a_1 \pm d) \pm d = a_1 \pm 2d\), the fourth term will be \(a_4 = a_3 \pm d = (a_1 \pm 2d) \pm d = a_1 \pm 3d\),…, and the \(n\)th term will be \(a_n = a_1 \pm (n-1)d\). If we apply this formula to the designated example to calculate LeBron James’s salary, substituting \(a_1\) with Lebron James’s initial salary value at that time which is 24.8 millions and \(d\) with the increase rate of .4 of a million, his salary for the tenth week becomes \(a_{10} = a_1 + (10-1)(.4) = 24.8 + 3.6 = 28.4 \approx 28\) millions. This is what he states in his message “over 28 millions,” without explicitly explaining the above mentioned formal mathematical calculations. He simply presents the result, which implies the use of such implicit formulization and calculation.
he is worth it and nearly everyone in the top 100 takes him every game he is averaging 35 per game for the last many games and we know that if he sux 1 nite it will not matter since nearly everyone has him he is so far superior to the next best SF that it is comical on average u will lose about 40 points a week at SF if u dont take him at no other position is there such a difference between the top guy and the 2nd guy at every other position if everyone is going I can argue for taking any 1 of 5 guys on a given nite; at SF I can't defend taking anyone over Bron, ever no other SF is even in the same zip code as he is will take every game rest of season if I can [Lebron worth 24.8??, 720].

In reply to Mythik’s message, Julthor presents his own average score per night for one week along with the comparison of FB points that LeBron James and another athlete playing in the same position, namely, Amare Stoudemire, added to his score during that year:

I have 415 points for the week so far.. 85 monday, 103 tuesday, 111 wed and 116 thurs. I've taken Lebron 25 times this [y]ear and he's averaging 30.4 fast break points. I've taken Amare 15 times and he's averaging 29.9 fast break points. Check your actives to see how well each player does for you. [Lebron worth 24.8??, 742].

Julthor’s above message also provides an example for “resourcing” others, since at the end of his message he shares the knowledge about where others can find the statistics he presented in his message, and, indeed, receives a reply from Casdon, who posted a message showing “how well” LeBron James did for him, along with how many times he chose that athlete.

As mentioned before, the knowledge exchange is mutual and reciprocal, not only among members of the FB community but also among FB community and other fantasy sports communities, which provides players with knowledge and experiences from other fantasy sports games. Players sometimes use such knowledge to establish analogies between the two fantasy sports games to answer a question during knowledge exchange within the FB community. For instance, in the discussion thread titled “Coaches,” Naphazw posts the following message in reply to the question of a new player about how FB pointing system works for the coach position in the line-ups:
As far as I can tell the 5 points for a win get totaled in the following day. I know with live scoring it should be instant but it doesn't. Fantasy football with the same cap scenario does that as well with a defense the totals are not always there for the defense until the following day. If your team wins then just add 5 to your total for your own peace of mind, it will be there the following day. [Coaches, 576]

In his message, Naphazw gives Shillen a brief information that coach points are not added until the following day, adding “as far as I can tell” to acknowledge that he is not completely sure. From his experience, he further comforts Shillen writing that one expects for it to happen instantly, but this is not the case. Then, he uses an analogy from fantasy football which has “the same cap scenario” to back up his statement. He explicates that there is a similar problem with the Defense position in fantasy football line-ups, where he also connects two fantasy sports games and shares the common problem he noticed. He further comforts Shillen and advices adding five points to his displayed total score “for his own peace of mind.”

Another category that emerged from data analysis, as it is mentioned in Julthor’s and Mythik’s messages, was the use of others’ agreement to back up one’s statement about a selection of an athlete, which is tagged as “bandwagon appeal.” As Julthor’s and Mythik’s messages revealed, FastBreak players utilize bandwagon appeal in different ways. For instance, Julthor uses it to get others to agree with him, by adding the open-ended question “Shouldn't Lebron's salary be capped?” at the end, rather than just posting his point of view. On the other hand, Mythik uses it to back up his statement that “[LeBron James] is worth it and nearly everyone in the top 100 takes him every game… and we know that if he sux 1 nite it will not matter since nearly everyone has him.” Indeed, bandwagon appeal is a persuasive strategy in which players attempt to convince others that everyone else on the board believes or does the same. This is in line with Jibar’s following message in another thread, where he adds Kevin Garnett (KG) to his line up, since “everyones gonna have kg so hes a must” [tough to pick..., 263].
The last category which emerged from the data analysis that falls under this theme is “resourcing” as it is briefly mentioned in one of Julthor’s above messages, where he writes “…Check your actives to see how well each player does for you.” [Lebron worth 24.8??, 742] sharing where others can find the statistics he presented in his message. This is similar to Sildo’s following message that presents a detailed explanation of the solution to the problem with rosters, where players were unable to do any selections for the upcoming games right after the All-Stars break. He further seeks confirmation from Abithi, who is the administrator of the board that functions as a bridge between players and executives of ESPN’s FastBreak fantasy sports game, which will be explained in the last part of this chapter.

the complaints about the rosters are easy to explain. when you go to your team page you will notice the lineup is locked. you are currently looking at last weeks roster...the week of the 11th. click on week of the 19th and you shouls now see the edit buttons to the left of the player's names. set your lineups and save. the reason, i believe this is happening, is due to the roster locking time will be at 7pm est today. this was due to the allstar break. at 7pm tonight, the system should revert to normal for the remainder of the season. Abithi, does that sound about right? [Weekly players, 632]

However, resourcing does not only contain such procedural knowledge about “how to do” something. The close examination of the threads revealed that “resourcing” might concern various issues varying from “injury information” to “forbidden word.” For instance, in the following excerpt from “Tuesday lineups” thread, where players are discussing their selections for the line-ups, Mitar posts the following message to warn his friend Voltain about a new development, which is the injury news about Josh Howard, who is one of Voltain’s picks.

Mitar: Hey Volt, howard was injured today just read this on rotoworld
Josh Howard was carried off the court Monday against Atlanta with six minutes left in the game with a right ankle injury and his return is doubtful.
Howard could miss some time with this injury. He came down hard on Joe Johnson's foot and was taken to the locker room right away. The All-Star originally injured the ankle Thursday before aggravating it tonight. We'll fill you on his status once he gets evaluated - consider him questionable for Tuesday night.
In his message, Mitar makes up the nickname “Volt” as a token of their friendship and addresses him that way when writing his message. Moreover, instead of posting plain injury information, he also provides the source of the information i.e “rotoworld (www.rotoworld.com).” In return, Voltain also addresses his friend “Mit,” and thanks him for sharing this information in his “solid and helpful post” and emphasizes its importance for many people in his group within FB community.

As for the last example for “resourcing,” the following message sent by Zerin informs others about a “forbidden word for ESPN” referring to the list of words that is used to filter out messages before they appear on the board as well as to ban a player from the message board. Not to get filtered out or banned, he intentionally misspells the word feedback as “feedba.ck”, which is a common writing tactic among FB players:

…I like your [Okthar’s] feedba.ck, your thoughts about sleepers and your risky lineups… [btw] FeedBa.ck is a forbidden word for ESPN..watch out!
[Zerin, …, 125]

As the quotations from the discussion threads presented up till now displayed, FB players’ discussions might include more than just selecting athletes for their line ups, which will be examined in detail in the following section of the chapter.

**Kinds of exchanged knowledge**

The data analysis revealed that players exchange knowledge on a variety of topics from line-up selections to player performances, to athlete trades among teams, even to cross-references among other fantasy sports games, “forbidden words” and private life related issues, which not only provides evidence for game-related basic information and strategic knowledge exchange, but also for
the sociocultural dimension of the FastBreak community. Table 5-5 summarizes emerging categories relevant to the former, whereas the latter will be left for examination in the next section of the chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Knowledge Exchange</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>54.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. About game dynamics</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>26.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1. Trading the coach position to afford a better athlete for a position in the line-up</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2. Trading positions within the line-up to afford better athlete for a position in the line-up (e.g. trading PG to afford better SG, SG for C, etc.)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3. Assigning an athlete (playing against a weak defense) to SG position (SG vs. D)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4. Assigning an SG-SF pair, composed of athletes playing against each other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.5. Locking a coach or an athlete in a position, before salaries rise (during back-to-back games of a designated athlete or team, meaning having two consequent games)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.6. Avoiding two/three athletes from the same team in the line-ups</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.7. Avoiding dnps</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.8. Setting up a line-up every night</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.9. Effects of game mechanics on game play</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.9. Effects of real game on game play (athlete's longer play time, back-to-back games, All-Star games, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Fact finding about basic game rules or mechanics</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>28.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1. How FB pointing system works for the coach position in the line-ups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2. Every position in the line-up needs to be filled</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.1. Selecting a coach among the ones, whose team will not be playing a game at that designated night</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3. The “cancellation effect,” which is referred to the athlete match-ups who are equivalent considering the FB points they produce.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4. How to lock a position</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.5. About basic information concerning athlete injuries, dnps, gtds, etc.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.6. Performance ratings of an athlete</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.7. Performance ratings of players</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. Luck vs. Experience and skills at playing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The examination of the discussion threads revealed that players discuss trading different positions within their line-ups to be able to afford a better athlete in another position. The reason behind it might be the nature of FastBreak, which is established on the challenge of resource allocation as a general manager/team owner with limited salary capital, as put forth by Casdon:

Welcome to the salary cap world. Statistically he warrants the price. As a GM, you have to decide how best to spend your money. If you take LBJ, you will have to sacrifice elsewhere. I take that into account whenever I set my lineup. Sometimes, I can save by taking Manu [SG] (and still getting plenty of points) and I can afford LBJ, other times I need the money at other positions and have to sacrifice. I've taken him less 18 times (approximately 1/3) of his games and have done well without him as well as with him. That is the challenge of the game, getting the best players/matchups for your money. [Lebron worth 24.8??, 741]

Casdon’s message also constitutes an example for trading a specific position to be able to afford a better athlete in another position in line-ups. For instance, in “Cheap center for tuesday?” thread, Okthar openly states that to be able to afford Eddy Curry, who is playing at the Center (C) position he went low on SG (Shooting Guard) and Coach positions by writing “I went low at SG (Roy), and I took the Celtics [coach], so I could afford him.”

However, among these trade-offs, the most populated one is “trading the coach position to afford a better athlete for another position in the line-up,” as Riandur puts forth by stating that he goes “low on team then pg to get more value at the other positions” [buy low to score more, 801]. Moreover, it generally appears in the discussion threads initiated by new players. For instance, Schillen’s previously mentioned message where actually he asked about “how FB pointing system works for the coach position in the line-ups,” receives five replies, which not only provide him with that basic information, but also informed him of such trade-off for the coach position in the line-ups, while changing the direction of the discussion. The following message by Naphazw, explicates such knowledge along with the criteria he uses to decide the coach for his line up, followed by Sanata’s message which states the reason behind it:
Naphazw  Besides I would never pick a rough team like Chicago. Unless it keeps me from
getting a real good positional player. Usually I would pick against a team that is either
struggling, has a bad record, or sucks either on the road or at home and they are
playing a good team. With Phoenix and I think it is Dallas on Thurs I took Phoenix. I
figure the other two crap teams aren’t worth wasting it on so pick a team I like with a
chance. Of course Dallas and Phoenix both are great so it could go either way, small
risk really. It would be sweet if they did 5 for 1 win and then 10 for 2 in a row and so
on and so on. People then would keep a hot team, would make it more worthy for a
team too....

Sanata  The coaching position is nearly meaningless, with only five points for a win.
Most of us just boot the position, because the potential reward is so much
larger for picking a player with a 2 or 3 point higher salary. Why else would the
T-Wolves be the team picked the most? ;-D [Coaches, 574-579]

Once new players find out about this strategy, they ask further questions to be able to
understand how it works within the game. For instance, in another discussion thread nine days after
his first question, Shillen asks “In the fastbreak game does the coach spot have to be filled or can you
leave it empty and use the extra money for players?” This is similar to Puthor’s question in the
following thread titled “Do you have to take a team?,” which reveals how to do it as well as the time
frame within the season it is used the most:

Puthor  Do you have to take a team that you think will win, or can you use that for more
money?
Samot  Yes. Of course the team doesn’t have to be playing that night.
Puthor  So I can take the celtics who do not play tomorrow, and put Eddie Curry in my
lineup?
Vilan  Yes, it is done alot. GL
Puthor  I want as much money as possible to use. If I can take the celtics who aren’t playing
tomorrow why not take them and have extra cash for a better player?
Onathe yes you can and sometimes its worth it. many people did it towards the mid-end of
the last half because players got so expensive.
[Do you have to take a team?, 317-323]

In reply to Puthor’s message, Samot explains that he needs to put in a coach, whose team
will not be playing that night.” This is in line with Ryodan’s message to Shillen that he “must put a
coach in. He [coach] doesn’t have to be playing a game that night,” which is also related to the basic
rule of the game that “every position in the line-up needs to be filled” that emerges as a subcategory under the “fact finding about basic game rules and mechanics” category. Furthermore, as Onathe and Sanata implied, it emerges as a common practice among players.

Similar to Sanata’s above message, the following thread titled “When picking coaches you go with highest or lowest,” reveals the effect of this strategy on a players’ scores:

... 
Nbaro to me coaches are only worth 5 pts, 1st haf my coach was locked in at 2.0 and it served me well i think i need the heat for the 2nd half seeing they will drop to about 2.0

Lelani go low ur only getting 5 points if they win anyways might as well use the extra points to get more than 5 points from a high salary player

Ada I almost always go with the last four coaches on the list. There have been many nights where I took the TWolves and they weren't even playing. Usually you can get a player (for me, usually a better PF) that will score more than 5 fantasy points with the extra 2.5 salary cap points you gain by taking the poor teams.

[When picking coaches you go with highest or lowest, 625-631]

Nbaro’s message also touches another important strategic knowledge “locking a coach or an athlete in a position,” which is demonstrated more clearly in the following discussion thread “ElvishHeru’s pot of gold 2-27:”

Elf1234 Locked PG Chris Paul, NO
Locked SG Salim Stoudamire [DTD], ATL
Locked SF LeBron James, CLE
Locked PF Amare Stoudemire, PHO
Locked C Dwight Howard, ORL
Locked Coach Memphis Grizzlies

suilad Chamon That lineup is not possible, you would be .7 over
Shahor is possible. if you had locked STAT, Dwight, LBJ before the rise
[ElvishHeru’s pot of gold 2-27, 790-795]

Although Elf1234 posts his plain line up with the label “Locked” in front of each position, Chamon opposes him by stating such line-up is not possible since it would exceed the 100 point-limit by 0.7 points. Shahor further explains that it is possible, if the athletes are locked into the positions, before their salaries rise. However, he does not explicate “how to do it.” The procedural information
about “how to lock a position” comes up in Zutar’s following message from the thread called “Picks before Values Change.” He asserts that once a player picks an athlete or a coach for a position in his line-up, he gets to keep the old values of that athlete or coach until he changes them next time:

If you make your picks now for Tuesday will you keep the same values or will the values change up/down. Just wondering because on a normal week you can lock in the lower values after the change if you picked a player for Sunday you keep the old value until you change the player [Picks before Values Change, 806]

Data analysis revealed that the second most populated subcategories were “assigning an athlete (playing against a weak defense) to SG position (SG vs. D)” and “assigning an SG-SF pair, composed of athletes playing against each other.” For instance, Mitar’s message in the thread titled “oh what to do at sg,” exemplifies “SG vs. weak D” strategy, where he states “I got my boy KMART right now...when in doubt go with the higher average and poorest D. That = Washington” [oh what to do at sg, 128]. Mitar’s message reveals his argument about assigning an athlete to SG (Shooting Guard) position, i.e. choosing an athlete with higher average who plays against the weakest defense [D], in his case KMART, which is a nickname for Kenyon Martin, who would be playing vs. Washington Wizards’ weak defense (D) at that time.

Besides “SG vs. weak D” strategy, Laracal’s following message uncovers another sub category, namely, “avoiding two/three athletes from the same team in the line-ups.”

Having trouble with tomorrow’s lineup. I’m set on Nash, AI, and Brand. Not sure if I wanna take Melo or Deng for tomorrow. Magic’s defense isn't that bad. Warriors defense is terrible and Deng had a huge game against them last time….I’m taking two Nuggets either way, don't know if it should be AI and Melo or AI and Camby. No way I’m taking three Nuggets though. Maybe if it was against a terrible defense. [stuck for tomorrow, 340]
This is similar to Tildor’s message in another thread where he states that he has the same line up with the previous poster “if only to keep [him] from having 3 players from the Mia/Chi game” [LU 4 Thursday, 471]. Players try to avoid two (or more) athletes from the same team unless it is impossible due to limited number of games, since, as Onathe put it, they “don’t want two guys playin against the same team” [Wade is Done, 287], which lowers’ players’ scores instead of boosting them, for instance, contrary to the following subcategory.

Jibar’s message in the “Kobe or TMac?” thread that he is “going with kobe on this one just because he and lbj will be shooting it out all night. gonna take them both. kobe vs lbj = big points” sums up “assigning an SG-SF pair, composed of athletes playing against each other” subcategory quite neatly. Similar to the “Kobe Bryant- LeBron James match-up” in Jibar’s message, Okthar states that he included both Dwayne Wade and LeBron James in his line up arguing that when Dwayne Wade (SG (Shooting Guard) in Miami Heat team) is playing against LeBron James as SF (Small Forward) in Cleveland Cavaliers team, they both score amazing points against each other: “Wade is money for me. He’s also money when he plays the Cavs, because him and LBJ think that they need to have a points-scoring contest. I’m taking both of those two tomorrow.” [Kobe Anyone?, 98].

These match-ups between players are actually important and surface up in the discussions frequently. However, such match-ups might not always be productive in terms of FB points. There are also instances that the two athletes playing for the same position in line-ups might cancel each other out in terms of FB points, as Todal writes “Seems like KG and Dirk tend to cancel each other out. I’m leaning to Amare” [Tuesday lineups, 333].

Todal argues that Kevin Garnett (PF in Boston Celtics) and Dirk Nowitzki (PF in Dallas Mavericks) “tend to cancel each out.” He further explicates what he meant by it in another discussion thread titled “ KG or Dirk,” where he states “Looking at the matchup this year, they tend to cancel each other out. I agree Dirk will need to step up with Josh down, but I’m thinkin' to avoid the cancellation effect and go Amare” [KG or Dirk, 339]. This is also in line with Okthar’s message in
the same thread that they are equivalent regarding the FB points they produced within the season, which is also likely for the upcoming game. A closer look to the discussion threads revealed that players also use expression such as “flip a coin” in or “toss-up” in the discussions to refer to “cancellation effect.” For instance, in reply to a message asking others’ opinion about whom to choose between two low salary athletes, both of whom play in the center position; Oxpar replies with “flip a coin” and further explicates that they both have favorable match-ups. It is similar to Weshin’s post “Flip a coin, I dont think you can go wrong with either one … the question is, who will score more??? I am going with Dirk, but that is just because it was tails!” in the thread titled “Dirk OR Marion and why.”

Another common problem, which hit almost every player’s line-up and lowered their scores dramatically, especially during 2006-2007 NBA Season, is the problem of “DNP’s,” abbreviated from “Did Not Play.” It refers to the athletes in players’ line-ups, who would not play in the designated night’s game due to sickness, unexpected injuries, etc. that the players could not have anticipated as Elf1234’s below message reveals:

Holy Moses, the injuries keep coming, it will be game time decision on the players below
Agent 0 shoulder
C Bulter back
Amare Shin
Marion dislocated pinky finger and tight bruise
ElvishHeru has two of the four today, lol........suilad [Possible DNP, 345]

Even though Elf1234 uses a humorous tone in his message while providing others with basic information on DNPs, Greste’s reply to his message also shows the effect of this problem on gameplay and players’ pleasure, as he states “Amare here. Better dang play. I'm tired of all this.” Indeed, “avoiding DNPs” seems to be especially important at certain times within the duration of FB segment, as Jibar’s below message reveals:
In his message, Jibar emphasizes the importance of compiling a line up that leaves no room for “luck” or imprecision and that will bring certain amount of points rather than taking a chance or risk to score more. He states that he “can't take a chance on a dnp on the first night of the second half its really important to get off to a good start,” which is agreed upon by Laracal who states that he is right and he also “can't risk a DNP on the first night.”

In line with Jibar’s above message and in relevance with the problem of DNPs, another subcategory emerged within these discussions: “luck vs. experience and skill at playing.” For instance, in his reply to a previous post in the “Possible DNP” thread, Grese agrees with a previous poster that FB is no longer about who is better at playing and that it is becoming “95% a game of luck avoiding dnp,” by stating that experience and skills at playing can carry a player to the top 1000 and “everything after that is luck” whether it is avoiding DNPs or otherwise. This is also in line with Shahor’s following message to the player who initiates the thread titled “I WENT FROM NO. 1 TO NO. 3... [in a matter of minutes],” to share his fall in the rankings. Shahor comforts him and states “the luck” factor by writing “well that happens. i was no 3 couple of weeks ago, no i am no 9. you always need some "luck" in order to stay above. knowing, following is not enough.” In line with this discussion on luck vs. experience, Weshin states:

... As long as you set one [line up] and get a little luck, you'll do pretty well. I do think there are certain people who are really good at this game. If they are up near the top every year, they are doing something right. I mean there are people who are in the top 25 every year.
It's kind of like poker...you win the world series once, but suck every other year, it was probably just a lucky year (Moneymaker). A guy like Raymer does pretty well every year, as well as some of the other pros. ... [Fresh new start, 544]
In his message Weshin argues the luck factor, but he also emphasizes the importance of experience as well, since there are certain players who are consistently in the top 25 every year, which means “they are doing something right.” He also mentions the importance of setting a line-up every day, which is one the subcategories presented in Table 5-5. Leani’s following message reveals why it is important:

Like I said, this is the best I’ve done by far [referring to his top 100 rank], but then again, it is the first time that I’ve actually set a lineup every night, which is the key. You miss a night or two and you are going to have a tough time getting back into it. [Amazing, 483]

As Leani mentioned, missing a night or two because of forgetting to set up a line up could damage a player’s ranking severely. However, this might be stemming from a “glitch” in the system rather than from players’ absent mindedness. For instance, Similar to Leani, Migorn warns others to keep an eye on their line-up everyday, based on his following experience in the weekly game:

Last year I turned in my weekly line-up for the 2nd half as usual on the Monday following, but at some time the Admin. cleared it all and then makes you select again, like at the start of the season. I had zero points for the first week of the 2nd half last year, that was great. So keep an eye on it every day folks.

Even though Migorn’s example is a far-reaching one, players often complain about “glitches” in the system, which falls under the “effects of game mechanics on game play” subcategory, such as early lock down before the usual lock time of the game, or technical problems such as non-functional “save” button to save athletes at certain positions in the line-ups, as expressed by Helmon and Boran, respectively:
[The usual lock down time for the game is] Supposed to be 3 AM EST, but last few
days my roster has been locked by 2 AM EST [Lock times, 690]

… there has been several flaws such as save button not working few other things
that left some unable to do lineups (not me) which affects ranks [Abithi, 431].

Aside from such technical problems, these effects are also related to the rules governing the
game, such as the “low athlete salaries,” which damaged the main challenge as well as the competitive
edge of the game as stated by Fronar: “2nd segment last year was a joke. values stayed too low. i
know everybody has equal chances regardless of salaries, but 5 all-stars everyday was boring” [Abithi,
433].

Such issues often lead players to state alternatives, such as “adjusting athlete’s salaries
regarding the first segment of the game,” “accumulating points for the coach position to increase its
value” or “having a guy on the bench” to compensate for an athlete’s absence (DNP, injury, etc.),
respectively:

The first half had 105 days and the 2nd half only 58 days. I think you did a great job
with the values this half, Abithi. I wish you could go back 58 days from the end of
first half, which would be December 17th and reset values that are similiar to then.
Actually most of us Fast Break veterans probably wish that the values wouldn't be
reset at all but that might be asking too much. For the first time in 3 years, the first
half was fun even though I was terrible. Thank you, bohlec! Here’s hoping the
values will be high enough to make the 2nd half fun. Values at beginning
October 30th Paul 19.4 Kobe 20.0 Lebron 20.0 KG 19.9 Dwight Howard 18.9
Week of Dec 17th, 58 days from end of first half: Paul 20.7 Kobe 21.4 Lebron 21.7
KG 21.6 Dwight 21.1
[Uhmar, Abithi, 426]

It would be sweet if they did 5 [FB points] for 1 win and then 10 [FB points] for 2
in a row and so on and so on. People then would keep a hot team, would make it
more worthy for a team too.... [Naphazw, Coaches, 578]
…Then i picked marion in week 15 and he missed 3 games due to a death in his family and that really dropped me from 1st place in my league and about 600 places overall. its too bad when a guy gets hurt or misses a game they dont let you have a guy on the bench. O well good luck next round
[Riandur, fresh new start baby, 554]

Furthermore, some of the messages displayed that players often exchange knowledge and change their line-ups based on their observations from the real game as Zerin mentioned “I think am gonna have to do more research as it sounds like DNP's are on the way! Will wait after tonight games and see how it goes. [Comments For Tuesday Please, 51].

Such instances of messages are tagged as “effects of real game on game play” throughout the data analysis, which includes the effects of an athlete’s observed performance, tiredness and injury as well as effects of back-to-back games, All-Stars weekend, etc. on players’ line ups. For instance, in the following messages, players mention their observations about an athlete’s injury from the real game:

He [Dwayne Wade (SG (Shooting Guard) in Miami Heat team] just hurt his shoulder. He was screaming in pain and I think i’m gonna change my pick foe tomorrow. He had to be taken off in a wheelchair [Zestia, Wade is Done, 284]

Got worried about Bryant's dislocated pinkie on his shooting hand. Didn't do him any favors last night. So I went Mo Williams, KMart, Turk, TD and Howard [Todal, Awesome Lineup for Wed., 365]

Similarly, the observed “tiredness” of an athlete and its effect on line up selections is articulated in the following messages:

What is everyone doing for tomorrow's center? I need to go cheap, but not quite sure who to go with. Mutombo is sore, and needs some rest, so he's not an option. Maybe Nazr Mohammed, against Boston? [Okthar, Cheap center for tuesday?, 23]
… [SG] Nash (I know he’s tired and hopefully Blazers make it a game and force him in)… [Eritai, lineup for tomorrow, 45]

Lastly, Greste’s message reveals that players consider the probable effect of All-Stars weekend on athlete’s performance while selecting their line-ups, since he writes “I’m worried he might have his mind on all-star weekend by then…” [Kobe or TMac?, 187].

As the last two subcategories are examined under the second subheading, they will not be further examined in this section. In the following section, as its heading implies, the social and cultural dimensions of knowledge exchange will be examined.

The characteristics of the sociocultural context in which knowledge exchange takes place

Throughout the data analysis, I came across discussions on a variety of topics from line-up selections to player performances, to cross-references among other fantasy sports games to competitive camaraderie and even to private life related issues, all of which are evidences for the rich social context and the community culture in which knowledge exchange occurs. Even though the characteristics of these social context and community culture in which knowledge exchange occurs will be examined in this section of the chapter, in reality it is impossible to separate one from the other, as such characteristics eventually find their way back to some of the quotations presented so far. Nevertheless, Table 5-6 summarizes categories and subcategories that fall under this theme, which emerged throughout the data analysis.
Table 5-6. Categories, subcategories from the fifth theme and their intensity within the data set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Knowledge exchange takes place in FastBreak’s socio-cultural context.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1. Fandom</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1. Multiple Fandom</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1.1. Football Ritual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2. Liking an athlete</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2. Code of Conduct (humility, conflict resolution, freedom of speech, no bragging, ragging, bashing, personal idea markers, etc.)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3. Camaraderie</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>36.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1. Support</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.29</td>
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<td>5.3.2. Encouragement</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3.4. Empathy</td>
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<td>0.80</td>
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<td>5.3.5. Humor</td>
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<td>5.4. Competitiveness</td>
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<td>20.59</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4.1. Competitiveness</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.2. Agression (insult, fortification of dominance, etc.)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3. Sockpuppets/Ghostwriting~5.5. ~5.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.87</td>
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<td>5.4.4. Sarcasm</td>
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<td>3.48</td>
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<td>5.5. Language</td>
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<td>5.5.3. Emoticon</td>
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<td>5.5.4. Capitalization</td>
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<td>5.5.5. Punctuation</td>
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<td>5.6. Escapism</td>
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<td>5.7. Play for FUN's sake</td>
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<td>5.9. Dissolution of Community</td>
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<td>5.9.1. Lurking</td>
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<td>1.07</td>
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<td>5.10 Expertise</td>
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<td>9.63</td>
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Fandom emerges as the most important characteristic of the FastBreak context, since it is the common interest that holds together the players, who are both sports and fantasy games fans sharing this common interest, which constitutes FastBreak “community.” Messages in various discussion threads revealed the fact that FastBreak players are not only basketball fans, but also fans
of other branches of sports such as football, baseball, golf, etc., who also play other fantasy sports games. For instance, messages in the following thread titled with a group name in Best Ball Challenge (BBC), which is ESPN’s fantasy golf game, provides evidence that FB players are enrolled in more than one fantasy sports game varying from football to bass-fishing:

Zestia  Ok [Okthar], Oxpar, Wesh [Weshin], and Greste, Hey guys just was wonderin why none of u aren’t in the Best Ball challenge. It's a free game and even I don't know much about golf but it'll really help out your points in [ESPN’s Uber Challenge, in which the objective is to accumulate the most points in as many games as possible from the available ESPN Fantasy Games]. Anyways just wanted to let you know that we have a group called: "[omitted]" and hopefully u guys can join. GL in all fantasy games!

…

Zestia  …Stockcar challenge and 2 fishing games became available and the group name is: "[omitted]" These are both free and hopefully everyone can play and get the points. GL in all fantasy games!

Greste  I picked a golfer for Pebble beach that didn't even play in the tournament, and darn it if I can't figure out where to find that information in advance, so this doesn't happen again.

…

Weshin  I am a total nerd now....I just signed up for a bass fishing game!!!! That is about as dumb as setting up a soccer team, as I totally just pick some names and have no clue what I am doing!!! LOL

Greste  I set up a racing team and not only do I know nothing about NASCAR, I intend to keep it that way. But I draw the line at bass fishing. [177-185]

Since FB players play other fantasy sports games and follow other sports branches, certain events appear as rituals within FB community, such as the start of BBC (ESPN’s Baseball Challenge) fantasy game, or the championship game of the National Football League “Super Bowl,” or the start of the ESPN’s Fantasy Baseball game, etc. One example is the following dialogue between Oxpar and Voltain:

Oxpar  seattle at wash.,probably the 2 worst defenses in the nba. so, do i lift my ban on agent zero or stick with nash against denver, although arenas and butler are having a tougher time w/o jamison. interesting choices for mon. can go low at pf with collison’ again against the [Washington] wizards) and go high with j o against run and gun gs [golden state warriors] or stoudemire/moore at pf and c. all I know is, I better figure it out before i get drunk for the super bowl.

Voltain  Agent zero 9/29 against kobe, he will be ready against seattle but like you said better get the lineup in cause im poppin the top soon [first look monday ???, 7-8]
These rituals further provide social bonding among the players, as the dialogue about the previous night’s football game between Zerin and Okthar reveals, where Zerin states “…You said last night was rough: Is that because you are a Bears fan? I’m sorry if you are. They just don't have a good quarterback, which is all that they are missing. Hopefully they can get someone, either through trade or draft.” [lineup for tomorrow, 41].

Besides fandom of other sports branches, the analyses of the discussion threads revealed that fandom of certain athletes also contributes to the social climate of FB community, as well as influencing knowledge exchange and line up selections, such as including or excluding an athlete from a line up because of liking an athlete as stated by Mitar “I like [first line up], mostly because it has EB”[lineup for tomorrow, 68] or dislike as stated by Okthar “…I don't like T-Mac [in my line-up], but that's just a personal thing. I don't want to be burned by him…” [Comments For Tuesday Please, 61].

As for the effects of fandom of certain athletes on the social interaction and climate of FB community, an example might be Boran’s message, where he writes “YET ANOTHER PATHETIC GAME FROM THE SO CALLED GREATEST PLAYER IN THE GAME. WTG KOBE THE NBA~S BIGGEST OVER RATED PLAYER LOL” [YET ANOTHER PATHETIC, 385]. It creates a lot of controversy among both Kobe Bryant fans and other FB players. The discussion thread turns into insulting and ridiculing in varying degrees on various levels, such as hitting out directly at the personal level, as in Lanar’s message where he calls Boran a “SELFISH OVERRATED MONEY GRUBING PLAYER” or Boran’s reply to him hitting back at another level, using his fandom for Kobe Bryant while advising “control over the anger” and so on. This is also an example for “aggression” subcategory listed in Table 5-6. Indeed, Mythik’s following message reveals how common messages like Boran’s above quoted message are:

Glad I checked back after a week of not looking at this board things never change
1st thing I see is a thread saying that a guy sux because he didnt get many FBs while playing with a dislocated finger and the guy they are talking about is 1 of the 20
greatest players in history
Funny board [Glad I checked back, 413]

Moreover, multiple fandom provides players with means for knowledge exchange such as use of analogies as appeared in Naphazw’s or Julthor’s previously quoted messages, as well as means for accessing to groups in other fantasy games due to their high rankings and percentiles in FB. For instance, Aslan invites Elf1234 to another fantasy sports game, after he congratulates him for making it to the FB leaderboard, by writing “Good job on making the leaderboard. Arena Football League Pickem is up. you are more than welcome to join my group. group name is [omitted]. password to the group is [omitted].”

As Aslan’s message revealed, players’ performance and rankings are important in terms of “access to community or a particular group,” even though ESPN’s FastBreak game is a free web-based game where access to the FB community is open to everyone who wants to play the game via the message boards. It is also important for one’s reputation within the community, as Weshin stated, “I still think getting a high raking means something. No, you win the same thing, but it’s a bit of a pride factor.” [fresh new start baby, 548], which is related to another subcategory presented in Table 5-6: “expertise.”

Unlike other online communities, such as communities of practice, beginners and more experienced players are not segregated in the FB community; they sustain their existence side by side as Ryodan’s message indicates:

I don't consider myself one of the best. There are a lot of really good players out there. At one time you could find nearly all of them on here. Thanks a lot, Elf. I still try to find the best players and learn from them. A few are on this board but most are missing.
BBC, the best game of all, will be up soon and that’s when you really miss the experienced players on this board.
[Ryodan, Lock times, 703]
Moreover, expertise does not come with formal education or some sort of certification within the FB community. On the contrary, it is based on one’s experience and performance in the gameplay, which reflects to his scores and, thereby, to rankings and percentiles in the leaderboard, which are updated daily. Having a place on the “leaderboard” brings a player rightful reputation in the community, as Weshin states “…I do think there are certain people who are really good at this game. If they are up near the top every year, they are doing something right. I mean there are people who are in the top 25 every year…” [Fresh new start, 544]. Weshin’s message displays another important aspect of expertise, which is the way it is stated within the FB community. Rather than bragging about oneself, a player is often referred to as a “good player” along with praises by others.

The following quotations from the discussion threads provide examples:

Wesh [Weshin] .. you are a fine fantasy player I hope you'll be here with all of us playing posting in the following games ( I know you're great at BBC)
[Tothale, Amazing, 492]

Great Job in the 1st segment Wesh!! When i frequent this board now, it's usually just you, Sidathe (his stuff is just funny) and a few others i bother to click on to read......Good Luck this segment!! [Wider, Amazing, 511]

Nice lineup and very good score. Word up!
[Zerin, Comments For Tuesday Please, 77]

Ok [Okthar] your first half was not bad..actually it's decent..I like your feedback, your thoughts about sleepers and your risky lineups
[Leani, confused?, 123]

In line with this, players are often observed to be referring to their inexperience rather than to their expertise during knowledge exchanges by using expressions such as “rookies like myself,” “…, but I am not very good at this game,” etc. For instance, after replying to a question in the thread
titled “buy low to score more,” Riandur continues that “this may not be the best way to play this
game,” since “Beings as [himself] are nowhere close to being on the leaderboard.” Moreover, it also
indicates the humility of a player, which is highly valued in the FB community.

Nevertheless, players often use their rankings to add to their reputation and show their
competitiveness, which is another category that emerged from the data analysis. The competitive
type of gameplay often leads to aggression, as mentioned in Boran’s above message. Such
aggression might easily turn into insulting of the player at various levels, such as personal, group or
using player’s fandom (as mentioned at the beginning of the section). The following quotations show
varying degrees of insult that come up in the discussions:

;-(........ Yet another Pathetic post from the Boran…WAY TO GO YOU SELFISH
OVERRATED MONEY GRUBING PLAYER… Bang on a new door [Lanar,
YET ANOTHER PATHETIC GAME, 390]

I’ll bet you can’t make the top 300, but a monkey could make the 95% as long as
they set up a lineup every night and are not complete morons [Leani, fresh new
start, 524]

…Boran smokes crack and is obviously high when he makes some of his
comments!!” [Weshin, Glad I checked back, 415]

Oh oh.....looks like we have a smart ash who must be a bit jealous of his inferior FB
game abilities. I just give some guys some props and there always has be be some
gem who has to be smart about it. I was going to switch groups so I would be in
one that i had a chance to win, but instead just set a goal to be in the top 10 of the
[group name omitted] group. Sorry that your group sux. [Weshin, Amazing, 478]

Maybe you should concentrate on how to put a good team together and how to
keep players in your league from quitting the game. [Ryodan, Lock times, 696]
lol be real a faker fan [referring to Lakers team] calling me a bandwagoner LOL ive been a cavs fan since early 70’s when they was bad when they was good UNLIKE FAKER FANS [Boran, YET ANOTHER PATHETIC GAME, 405]

Sometimes aggression is also used by new players, who do not yet have any reputation, to show their pretentious competitiveness, as in Kilden’s following message “I WILL DOMINATE/POWN EVERYBODY!!,” Kilden is criticized by others such as Oktar, who sarcastically replied “Can't wait to get "POWNED". You haven't even played the game, and yet you are going to do better than everyone else. Funny.” [confused?, 105]. As Oktar's message reveals, besides the extreme measures of insults, aggression might also be reflected in a more mild form of “sarcasm,” just like Samot’s message in the same thread: “Let me guess, he just started tonight and he is just off the leaderboard.” The following quotations are also examples for sarcasm:

Mr Hawaii not able to play bbc? I just may lose sleep...
Still thinking...
It is unanimous Me myself and I am glad you will not make it. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may of caused :) HAHAHA!!!! [Idon, Lock times, 711]

always the same 2 people complaining........cheating.....lock times......conspiracy theories......thats not fair........throw the scores out........how sad it must be for you to be alive and be FORCED to deal with this on a day-to-day basis......oh wait....you're not forced to.......(subtle hint)........[wider, ESPN: Second half score not reset ,655]

Well, you see, there hasn't been anything new on Comedy Central lately, so I need my comedy from someone!
I just love all the whining and complaining [in the specific discussion thread for technical problems], and back and forth. It's awesome [Oktar, ESPN: Second half score not reset, 662]

LOL...he sounds like the guy who shows up every night with the best LU ever ;) [Zerin, confused?,107]
The last example above includes a reference to another player who is known for being a self-opinionated “guy who shows up every night with the best LU [lineup] ever.” It becomes a ‘running joke in the FB community,’ so that players with similar characteristics quickly got labeled with it or with its derivative, such as “brother, cousin, third cousin, twin” of the designated player by others.

Moreover, in reply to Zerin’s message, without giving any names, Okthar also implies that Kildan and the above mentioned self-opinionated player might be the same player, who is revealed by Samot who writes “Let me guess Fargon’s [the player, implied in Zerin’ and Okthar’s messages] cousin? LOL.” Okthar shows his agreement with Samot by writing “twice removed....who knows!,” which might be offered as further evidence for use of multiple nicknames by the same player within the community. Such instances tagged as “sockpuppets/ghostwriting,” which is more explicitly stated in Zerin’s later message, where he writes “You could always have another ID [username] for MB [FB Message Board].” In his reply to Zerin, Okthar actually confirms it by writing “I know that both me and Aslan created new IDs. I had already had 2 others that were similar in name, but they were also banned [from the message board] within a few days of me using them.” Ryodan’s message in another thread provides further evidence, in which he accepts that he also has another ID, stating that “I was doing the infamous Elvish trick” referring to ElvishHeru and Elf1234 identities. Moreover, certain writing characteristics unique to certain players also help others to recognize those players, even when they are using a different ID(s). For instance, recognizing the similarity in the writing style of two different IDs, Acele posts a reply to Cyton in “lakers gone wild” thread stating, “Your typing skills are eerily reminiscent of another frequent poster here. Hmmm...”

Creating multiple identities or “sockpuppets” is closely related to the danger of getting banned for not following the general rules for ESPN’s FastBreak message board listed in the website, which is asserted as the reason for leaving the community which paves the way for the ‘dissolution’ of FastBreak community:
… I think it [getting banned] started in late September. I never figured out why I was banned, but if you were around during that time, everyone started to get banned, for no particular reason. There was me, and Aslan, and Narisa, and Mythik, and Akia. A lot of big names on this board got banned, nobody knew why, and most people left because of it. I think most of us still read the board, but we weren't able to do anything. … [Okthar, confused?, 142].

The last part of Okthar's message as well as Zerin's following message in reply to Okthar indicates that players still use the message board while deciding their line-ups, even if they do not actively participate in the ongoing discussions, which is tagged as “lurking” in Table 5-6:

I wasn't on around that time. But when I came back I heard there was some kind of issues going on and I knew some names were banned. That was then one reason of staying away from the board but would sometimes come in and view some posts and leave but now it's fun with you and Mitar around.

Despite all the competition among the players and aggression in their messages, the last part of Zerin's above message displays another important category listed in Table 5-6, which contributes to the fabric of FB community: camaraderie. In fact, players' competition with each other and the tug of war to prove one's superiority over the others by aggression and insults act as a buttress reinforcing camaraderie among the players. It is more openly stated in Mythik's following message in the discussion thread titled “Glad I checked back after a week,” where he asserts that “me and Bor [Boran] are and have always been cool with each other” despite their disagreements.

Furthermore, Okthar's message in the above mentioned thread titled “confused?,” where he states that he is glad to be a part of this community and help other players as well as “making fun of some other players,” which might provide evidence for the effect of trashtalking on forming camaraderie and strengthening the bonds among fantasy players that leads to friendly and collaborative competitiveness. Further evidence for such “friendly competitiveness” appears in
Weshin’s following message that “…someone on this board liked me and thought I would be fun to compete with” [Amazing, 494], as he talks about how he got into a particular group.

Besides the camaraderie on the FB message board, Idon’s message displays that players extend their friendship with each other into real life. He replies to another player’s message by stating his admiration for him, as well as reflecting on his own performance, as follows:

You did great thats what matters, wtg :) 
I missed 2 days 1 for pc issue other cause of another issue. I never think I say this, but I am not able to try this next year bball game. I did okie for missin 2 days. When I get back to full strenght, lol look out folks... I will try and come back atcha! Enjoy, be safe all. I come to know many from all boards. I know the many hate me most likely...I was a competitor no doubt, least ya all have to agree with that...
Good Luck

[Idon’s real name is omitted] [First Look Thursday, Be My Valentine, 449]

The thread continues with previous player’s concerned message asking “But why will you not be able to do this next year? :|,” that reveals winster51’s health problems which receives others’ empathy and blessings, as revealed in Knight_Nilex’s message in the same thread, “Yikes, sorry to hear that... Hope you get better. Yeah, I saw that movie ‘Sicko’ But you know, the FB could always work as a nice distraction from things... If not, there's always Canada.. Free health care! ;-P.”

Knight_Nilex’s message constitutes an example to the three categories presented in Table 5-6. The first one, tagged as “escapism,” is that as a form of leisure FB offers entertainment, which provides players with a distraction or escape from work or other tedious tasks of everyday life. Moreover, as Weshin’s message revealed, players also play FastBreak to keep themselves more interested in basketball along with the friendship, since he states “I play for fun and to keep me more involved. It's fun and I enjoy a lot of the guys on these boards....gotta love Sidathe [another FB player], he is one laid back dude....” [Amazing, 512].

Despite all the competition, messages such as Mythik’s and Laracal’s messages given below show that, in the end, players play FastBreak for fun’s sake:
…TOP [a player group in FastBreak] ha[s] a bunch of funny guys that like to play and have fun at FB we realize that this is not a matter of life and death even though most of us play to win…[Mythik, Amazing, 509]

Have been playing fantasy sports since about 2001, haven't really gotten into it much until the past couple years. Really getting into Fast Break Challenge, didn't realize how fun it could be…[Laracal, ElvishHeru to his group knights, 259].

The second subcategory exemplified in Knight_Nilex’s message is “empathy” as stated in “Yeah, I saw that movie 'Sicko' “and the third one is use of “humor” in the message stated in “there's always Canada.. Free health care! ;-P.” Indeed, besides friendliness, support, empathy, encouragement and use of humor in the messages are found to be effective to reinforce camaraderie.

Empathy appears in the messages, when a player posts how bad his score was for a certain night or how he regrets his line-up decisions. Others within the community often comfort the player sharing similar experiences of their own and provide further encouragement and support. For instance, Agon shares the experience of his fall from first to third ranking in the thread titled “I WENT FROM NO. 1 TO NO. 3...,” where he writes:

[I went from no.1 to no.3] in a matter of minutes...oh well, it happens. I won't be here tomorrow night so just wanted to say, good luck everybody! I'll catch you guys on the other side... [referring to Baseball Challenge] ;-D...it's been fun my friends!
Later
P.S. By the way, I have a whoppin’ 74...Barbosa and Curry have been death for me tonite.;-)

He receives seven replies showing others’ empathy, support and encouragement as revealed in the following messages:
well that happens. i was no 3 couple of weeks ago, no i am no 9. you always need some "luck" in order to stay above. knowing, following is not enough [Shahor, 215]

You still have a chance buddy, ElvishHeru believe almost everyone will take Kobe, LBJ, Dirk tomorrow, all it take is one or two of those guys screw up like Agent 0 today, you will see the LB [leaderboard] tumble like a tidal wave, good luck to u. suilad [Elf1234, 212]

Well since your post, you gained a few more points Ag. I see the top 3 had Boston for the win But I wouldn't count yourself out just yet. Personally...I'm pulling for ya' Good Luck And by the way, you are a class act. [Tothale, 199]

Besides support and encouragement, Tothale also praises and applauds Agon for his “class act,” referring to his humble and dignified stand against such a loss, which is more openly stated in Efar’s following message in the same thread:

now there's a class act. I've seen plenty of crybabies in my years playing ESPN fantasy games, and man, you sure ain't one of them. You coulda moaned and whined about you misfortune, but none of that. Way to go dude, and much luck in the second half [202].

Both Tothale’s and Efar’s messages constitute an example to “code of conduct” for social interactions within FB community, which is one of the important categories which emerged from the data set. A closer look to the messages showed that humility is a highly valued virtue within the community. Players often show their humility in reply to another player’s praise with expressions such as “Thanks… I’m very average at these games,” “I don't consider myself one of the best. There are a lot of really good players out there,” etc.

Besides humility, standing up for one’s decisions is also another important virtue as stated by Okthar’s following message in reply to “the best line up” posted by a new player:
Then you better post your lineup tomorrow night. We are gonna see how great it really is. Don't be like your cousin Fargon [the player who became a running joke in FB because of his “best line up ever” messages], who says that and, when it doesn't happen, disappears for a few days. Don't let it happen. You better be on here tomorrow night. [confused?, 135]

As mentioned before, in another message in the same discussion thread, Okthar complains that “ever since everyone started to get banned, all these new people came in, and half of them talk trash just because they can.” Even though ‘freedom of speech’ as appears in Boran’s following message, “…ya all are entitled to your opinions just like im entitled to mine…” is one of the characteristics of the social interaction that takes place within the community, Okthar asserts that it should not be the reason to “trashtalk.” He further asserts that such trashtalking damages the integrity of the community and “it would be nice if we could get some of this cleaned up, because there are some really decent posters on here” pointing to certain norms for social interaction within the FB community. He also adds that despite the existence of “really decent posters on” the board, it is not only related with the newcomers, who do not know the norms and community code for social interaction, since there are also old players like the one mentioned above “who think they have the best lineup every night.” Vildar’s and Fronar’s following message touches the same issues, revealing that “bragging or ragging” is not welcomed in the community:

Wesh [Weshin] just said it was a tough group. He never made an issue about 'which group is better.' That was your doing. Stop putting word into other people's mouths. [Vildar, Amazing, 504]

Wesh [Weshin] was very gracious with his post/comment. he wasn't bragging, or ragging on anyone. just proud to be part of a great group guys like Boran are just jealous, spiteful, and as stated previously , just plain old confrontational most of the time anymore it seems. what a shame, cuz just 2 years ago, we all got along pretty well here [Fronar, Amazing, 504]
As for the last subcategory tagged as “language,” the analysis of the messages showed that players articulate their opinions and exchange knowledge via a newly created language by mixing Net jargon with *FastBreak* jargon (FB jargon), which compensates for the lack of social cues on the messages and to express the tenor and temper of their statements. The following table displays the components of distinctive writing styles observed in the FB message board, which constitutes the FB language.
Table 5-7. The components of distinctive writing styles observed in the FastBreak discussions followed by examples from the discussion threads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinctive writing style</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quoting another player's message to specify the intended addressee</td>
<td>[stupid question…]… but, um… the games start again when?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the beginning of the message body as title for the thread</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Jargon</td>
<td>LOL, GL, LMAO, IMO, IMHO, WTG, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball terminology</td>
<td>PG, SG, SF, PF, C referring to specific athlete positions, DNP, GTD, triple double, ball hog, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB Jargon</td>
<td>Referring an athlete with his team's name, nicknames, abbreviations, such as LBJ or King James for LeBron James, D for defense of a team, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of emoticons to express tenor and temper of statements</td>
<td>;-D :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold fontface</td>
<td>For emphasis, e.g. “WOW….. a week late and you are at 89%...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>For emphasis or as a personal signature in messages (e.g. Meldin's messages in the discussion threads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>To adjust the tenor and temper of the messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated letters</td>
<td>For emphasis and to adjust the tenor and temper of the messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional misspelling</td>
<td>Not to get filtered out or banned, e.g. feedback,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal opinion markers</td>
<td>To me, personally, as far as I can tell…, for me, in my opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using of certain expressions and writing characteristics as personal signature</td>
<td>Suilad, ElvishHeru group knights, referring to oneself in third person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making up new FB terms using sports terminology</td>
<td>MAWHNPs (May as well have not played) inspired by DNP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, these distinctive characteristics are of great importance, since the written messages are the only means used for communication and social interaction, by which the structure of social meanings and relationships that are fundamental for future social interactions as well as the community culture including norms and code of social interactions are conveyed. For instance, the following discussion thread titled Agon [name of one of the players] constitutes an example for how lack of an emoticon might change the tenor of the message, which might lead to misunderstanding among players:
Agon Sarathe
Thank you, but what are you trying to do to me my friend, jinx me? I got nothing...yet...buddy. I'm only a handful of points ahead of the 3rd place guy and one bad day (which I'm sure is coming before deadline) from me and a good day from him and I'd be back in 3rd place just like that.
I will say this though, it's been pretty fun regardless of where I end up at.
Thanks for the message. Have a good one.
Take care

[Agon's real name is omitted]

Sarathe
i saw your 140 with the o'neal DNP. figured you can do no wrong. just keep doing what your doing and it'll all be good.good luck. i'll keep my piehole shut now till the end.

Agon swimmer~
No need to keep "the pie hole" shut my friend.
I thought you knew me by now? I don't believe in jinxes, if it's supposed to happen, it will. If not, then I'll never play this game again.;-D
I was joking, sorry for not putting the ;-D;-) icons at the end of my message to signify such humor.;-)
HAVE A GOOD ONE
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Previously presented themes, categories and subcategories which emerged from the data analysis implied the following findings about the patterns of the knowledge exchange within FastBreak community.

1. Knowledge exchange is mutual and reciprocal.

The results showed that the knowledge exchange occurs mutually and reciprocally within the FastBreak community. Every FastBreak player has something to offer to the community regardless of his experience in the game, whether it is an update on an athlete’s injury, or a strategy to maximize one’s FB score for an upcoming game such as assigning SG-SF pairs, trading the coach position to afford a better athlete, etc. This is in line with the assumption of collaborative intelligence that knowledge resides in the members of the community and that “each person has something to contribute to” (Levy, 1997; Jenkins, 2006), where “beginners and masters” alike resource and mentor others (Gee, 2004).

Moreover the findings showed that knowledge exchange is not only mutual and reciprocal among the members of the community, but also between different communities of the same interest, such as fantasy football, fantasy baseball fantasy NASCAR fan communities, as well as rotisserie league on Yahoo!, which brings about various implications for such fan communities and members of these communities. For instance, it enables individuals with the opportunity to use analogies from other fantasy sports games throughout the knowledge exchange, as well as spreading skills gained within one community to another. In contrast to Jenkins (2006) who suggests that spread of skills
and application of such skills to new tasks in new communities happen only when a community dissolves, the findings showed that such spreading is already in motion among fan communities whose members are also members of other fan communities, and are transferring and utilizing such skills and competences during knowledge exchange using analogies, establishing relations between or among the game dynamics and mechanics of these different fantasy sports games.

2. **Knowledge exchange might be intentional or serendipitous.**

The findings showed that knowledge exchange is initiated by open-ended questions asked by a community member with the intention of accessing other’s knowledge whether it is about the selection for a position in the line-up for the approaching basketball game, a player’s daily performance, or an athlete’s performance in the game, and so on. This is in line with Jenkins’ (2006) statement that “what any given member knows is accessible to any other member upon request on an ad hoc basis” (p.53), which makes knowledge exchange intentional. However, it might also be serendipitous due to the nature of shared knowledge, which might include information that changes the direction of the discussion, which, in turn, triggers further knowledge exchange relevant to this new piece of information.

3. **Once it is shared, collective intelligence that resides in the members of the community is transformed into “shared knowledge” of the community.**

Adopting Levy’s (1997) perspective, Jenkins (2006, p.27) draws a distinction between “shared knowledge” and “collective intelligence” that encompass the “sum total of the information” that resides in the members of the community and is accessible through the response to a specific question (p.27). He further states that shared knowledge is “believed to be true and held in common
by the entire group,” whereas “collective intelligence” is impossible to be “gathered into a single creature” and “mastered by a single member or even the group of people”.

However, the findings revealed that collective intelligence turns into shared knowledge bit by bit, as new players acquire such knowledge through the knowledge exchange in the discussion threads, while tapping into expertise of more experienced players. Nevertheless, this transformation is not finite, since there are always new players joining the Fastbreak community, which restarts this cycle.

4. **Knowledge exchange patterns do not constitute a bounded set, which constitutes both the strength and the weakness of collective intelligence.**

In comparison to traditional disciplines, knowledge exchange within FastBreak community is “disorderly, undisciplined, and unruly,” which constitutes both the strength and the weakness of a collective intelligence (Jenkins, 2006, p.53).

The way how knowledge is exchanged depends on the participants, each of whom applies their own heuristics, process the statistics, FB points, etc. in their own way; presenting statements, all of which are open to debate, some of which are “some more convincing than others, but none of which are wrong at face value” (Jenkins, 2006, p.53). This is partly because of the changing dynamics of the FastBreak game, which are often related to the real world connection of the fantasy sports, trade-offs of athletes, free agents, number of games, etc. as well as the inherent, drama, tension and risk involved, since “the outcomes are unknown and much depends on those outcomes (such as unanticipated DNPs, injuries, etc. on athlete salaries, FB scores, etc). Moreover, as mentioned before, it is partly because of new players joining the community, who further bring their own ways to process information and exchange knowledge, which might produce different patterns at different times.
5. Knowledge exchange does not take place in social vacuum.

Knowledge exchange occurs via socio-emotional interaction embedded in fan culture, following certain norms, and a community code. This socio-emotional interaction is mediated by a new kind of language, which combines Net jargon with FB jargon to convey both tenor and temper of the statements throughout the knowledge exchange. It is also important since culture, including norms and code of social interactions within the community, is acquired through language (Wertsch, 1991), along with the structure of social meanings and relationships (Resnick, 1991) that are fundamental for future social interactions, while weaving minds together to produce collective intelligence (Levy, 1997).

Moreover, knowledge exchange takes place in FastBreak’s “friendly competition” context, where competitiveness and friendliness, aggression and support, insult and praise, discouragement and encouragement, empathy and apathy, and, humility and ostentation go hand in hand and despite all the tug of war, online relationships and friendships extend to the offline world.
REFERENCES


Harris, B. & Kadlec, E. (n.d.), “A Nod and a Wink to the Founders of Fantasy Football,”
http://fspnet.com/wink.pdf


### APPENDIX

The List of Themes, Categories and Subcategories Which Emerged From the Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Mutuality&amp;Reciprocality</td>
<td>2725/374</td>
<td>96.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.Among members of the community</td>
<td>2801/450</td>
<td>97.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.Among communities</td>
<td>29/29</td>
<td>6.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Knowledge exchange starts with</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.open-ended questions</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>89.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1.request for basic info</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.request for others' opinions</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>80.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. plain line-up</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.Knowledge exchange using</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>25.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.Mathematical Reasoning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1. Athletes (performance ratings of an athlete)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2.Players (performance ratings of a player)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.Statistics (analysis)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1.Athletes (performance ratings of an athlete)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2.Teams</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3.Players (performance ratings of a player)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Analogies (~1.2. ~5.1.1.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1. From other sports branch</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. Bandwagon appeal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.Resourcing (how and where to find relevant information)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1.Basic information (game features to check certain statistics, athlete's longer game time, injury, etc.) //3.2.5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2.athlete's observed performance in the game (tiredness, etc.)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Knowledge Exchange</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>54.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. About game dynamics</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>26.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1.Trading the coach position to afford a better athlete for a position in the line-up</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2.Trading positions within the line-up to afford better athlete for a position in the line-up (e.g trading PG to afford better SG, SG for C, etc.)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3.Assigning an athlete (playing against a weak defense) to SG position (SG vs. D)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.4.Assigning an SG-SF pair, composed of athletes playing against each other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.5.Locking a coach or an athlete in a position, before salaries rise (during back-to-back games of a designated athlete or team, meaning having two consequent games)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.6.Avoiding two/three athletes from the same team in the line-ups</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1.7. Avoiding dnps 11 2.94
3.1.8. setting up a line-up every night 8 2.14
3.1.9. effects of game mechanics on game play 10 2.67
3.1.9. effects of real game on game play (athlete's longer play time, back-to-back games, All-Star games, etc.) 3 0.80
3.2. Fact finding about basic game rules or mechanics 106 28.34
3.2.1. How FB pointing system works for the coach position in the line-ups // 2.2.2.
3.2.2. Every position in the line-up needs to be filled 5 1.34
3.2.2.1. Selecting a coach among the ones, whose team will not be playing a game at that designated night 3 0.80
3.2.3. The “cancellation effect,” which is referred to the athlete match-ups who are equivalent considering the FB points they produce. // 2.2.1.
3.2.4. How to lock a position // 3.1.5 3 0.80
3.2.5. About basic information concerning athlete injuries, dnps, gtds, etc. // 3.1.7 33 8.82
3.2.6. Performance ratings of an athlete 3 0.80
3.2.7. Performance ratings of players 30 8.02
3.3. Luck vs. Experience and skills at playing // 3.1.7 ~ 2.1.2., ~ 2.2.3 21 5.61

5. Knowledge exchange takes place in FastBreak's socio-cultural context.
5.1. Fandom 49 13.10
5.1.1. Multiple Fandom 27 7.22
5.1.1.1. Football Rituel 3 0.80
5.1.2. Liking an athlete 19 5.08
5.2. Code of Conduct (humility, conflict resolution, freedom of speech, no bragging, ragging, bashing, personal idea markers, etc.) 18 4.81
5.3. Camaraderie 136 36.36
5.3.3. Friendliness 66 17.65
5.3.1. Support 31 8.29
5.3.2. Encouragement 7 1.87
5.3.4. Empathy 3 0.80
5.3.5. Humor 29 7.75
5.4. Competitiveness 77 20.59
5.4.1. Competitiveness 22 5.88
5.4.2. Agression (insult, fortification of dominance, etc.) 19 5.08
5.4.3. Sockpuppets/Ghostwriting ~ 5.5. ~ 5.9 7 1.87
5.4.4. Sarcasm 13 3.48
5.4.4.1. Becoming a running joke in community 16 4.28
5.5. Language
5.5.1. FB Jargon 208 55.61
5.5.2. Net Jargon 23 6.15
5.5.3. Emoticon 29 7.75
5.5.4. Capitalization 16 4.28
5.5.5. Punctuation 96 25.67
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.5.6. Bold fontface</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6. Escapism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7. Play for FUN's sake</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9. Dissolution of Community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9.1. Lurking</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10. Expertise</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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