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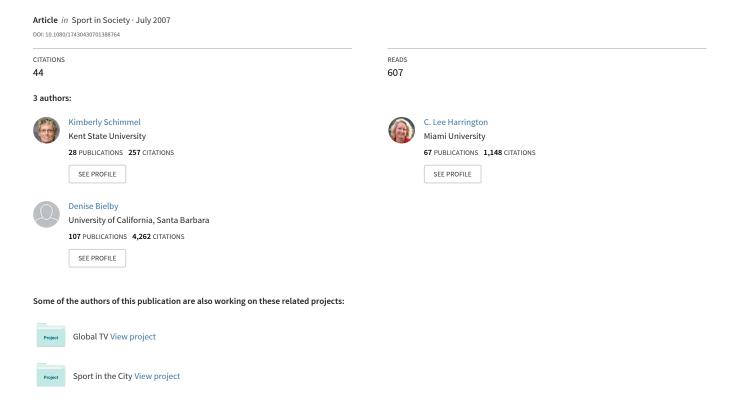
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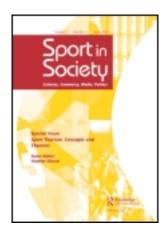
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# Keep Your Fans to Yourself: The Disjuncture between Sport Studies' and Pop Culture Studies' Perspectives on Fandom

Kimberly S. Schimmel, C. Lee Harrington & Denise D. Bielby

This essay explores different understandings of fans and fandom between sport studies and pop culture studies through presentation of survey data originally collected for a study on global fandom/global fan studies. Email surveys from 65 fan scholars around the world reveal important distinctions between sport scholars and pop culture scholars in terms of their basic understandings of fans and fandom, the role of self-reflexivity in fan research, and the location of sport and other pop culture scholarship in the academy. Analysis points to a disjuncture between sport and pop culture fan studies that ultimately limits the ability to fully understand the range of fan experiences and fandoms.

### Introduction

This essay explores the academic spaces in which fan studies take place and the extent to which scholars cross borders of genre and discipline when they investigate fandoms. More specifically, we are interested in the apparent disjuncture between scholarship on sport fans and scholarship on fans of other pop cultural forms such as film, entertainment television, and music. Sport fan studies and what we call pop culture fan studies [1] have developed on different trajectories and (to some extent) in different areas of the academy. With few exceptions, those literatures rarely seem to engage one another beyond a superficial level. Are sport fans somehow different from

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fans of other pop cultural forms and therefore must occupy an independent space both conceptually and in the scholarly literature? Or are the disciplinary homes and academic backgrounds of sport studies scholars somehow different from scholars of fans of other pop cultural forms such that their work follows different paths?

Our focus on these questions stems from data collected for a study on global fandom and global fan studies by Harrington and Bielby, the second and third authors of this paper. [2] The study was based on email surveys with 65 fan studies scholars from 20 different countries. The sample includes scholars from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds who adopt a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of fans and fandoms. Data hinted at meaningful differences between sport and pop culture fan studies, and we identify some of those differences here.

### Sport Fan Studies vs. Pop Culture Fan Studies

We agree that sport 'has never fitted entirely comfortably into the classification of "popular culture", [3] making direct comparisons between sport and film, or sport and music, conceptually challenging. Sport might be considered a distinct cultural form due in part to its unique industrial history, [4] its reproduction of hegemonic forms of masculinity, [5] the obvious centrality of competition and uncertainty of outcome (who will win/lose?) [6] to the meanings that sport constructs at both macro [7] and micro levels, [8] the importance that 'live' or in-person consumption has to the production of sport as a commodity, [9] the particular role of sport in processes of globalization [10] and because, to many people, sport seems 'real' in comparison to entertainment television, Bollywood film productions, or songs on an iPod playlist. However, while there may be important analytic distinctions between these cultural forms, more analytically comparable perhaps are the fandoms they generate. Our interest, therefore, is in how scholars think about and research sport fans compared to fans of other forms of popular culture (for example, film, music, television, etc.).

Sport studies has an over 30-year long tradition of empirical analysis focusing on sport spectators and supporters. Sociologists of sport, for example, have considered sport fans with reference to subcultures of violence, cultural politics, resistance and popular empowerment, demographic composition and the construction of 'taste communities', forms of gender or national identity, and media representation. [11] Much of this research has focused on football (soccer) supporters in the UK and has been dominated by studies of fan deviance, beginning with a focus on English soccer 'hooliganism' and extending to accounts of sport spectator violence as a global phenomenon. [12] More recently, scholars have called for an analytic shift from 'exceptional fans' [13] to the more ordinary and everyday social practices of sport fan culture.

Psychologists of sport, meanwhile, have focused on the micro-level traits, behaviours, motivations and characteristics of sport fans. [14] For example, the Sport Fan Motivation Scale proposed by Wann [15] captures the eight most common sport fan motives: group affiliation, family, aesthetic, self-esteem, economic, eustress (that is, stimulation and excitement, or positive stress), escape, and entertainment needs. In the mid-1990s sport psychologists, too, began calling for studies of 'normal' (non-deviant) sport fans, [16] though few have taken up this challenge. Finally, sport media scholars have begun building a body of literature dealing with issues related to the consumption of sport stars in globalized celebrity culture. [17] Of course, sport fan research goes beyond these disciplines to include scholars in cultural studies, history, sport management, communication, and physical education (among others). But as Sandvoss [18] notes, the body of research in sport studies tends to focus more on the text and its production rather than the audience (fans) or, as Giulianotti [19] has stated, on 'the actual patterns of sociability' within sport fan gatherings.

Research on pop culture fans has a longer history than does sport fan research, with early inquiries focusing on theatre audiences, readers of sentimental novels and music listeners, among others. Followers of radio dramas received critical attention beginning in the late 1920s, [20] one of the first studies of film audiences was published in the late 1930s, [21] and the potential influence of comic strips on their readers was a subject of histrionic national attention in the US by the late 1940s and early 1950s. [22] The emergence of new mass media forms throughout the twentieth century, particularly television and the Web, generated successive waves of research on audiences and fan communities. Compared to sport fan scholars, pop culture fan scholars were uniquely preoccupied in early decades with the question of fans' ability to distinguish between 'reality' and the fictional worlds consumed through film, television, comics or sci-fi novels. [23] This early research contributed to the ongoing marginalization of pop culture fans through construction of a public image of fans as out-of-touch loners, losers or lunatics.

The current era of pop culture fan research dates back to the ethnographic audience reception studies of the 1980s and can be categorized into three different generations. [24] First generation research on 'active audiences', which grew out of the seminal work of Stuart Hall and his colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, conceptualized the consumption of popular culture as a power struggle between the cultural tastes of marginalized peoples and the dominant ideologies of media producers. This body of research set the stage for Henry Jenkins' [25] path-breaking study of television fans, followed by a number of other studies that aimed to redeem formerly pathologized fan practices and identities as meaningful and creative. The second generation of pop culture fan studies was generated in part by the rapid emergence of new technologies and the reconceptualization of pop culture fans as a specialized consumer market followed closely (indeed, concurrently) by a third generation of fan studies that focuses on the normalization of media consumption in everyday life, and the meaning of fan identities and practices in processes of cultural and economic globalization. [26]

Our reading of the literature suggests that, until recently, there has been very limited dialogue between sport fan studies and pop culture fan studies (as evidenced, for example, through patterns of citation). Clearly, the literatures explore similar themes, including the stigmatization of fans, taxonomies or typologies of fandom, hierarchies

of fan knowledge, the pleasures of fandom, the marginalization of fan studies in the academy, the commodification of fan preferences, and so on. In addition, common methodologies are utilized in research on both types of fan communities (for example, surveys, interviews, ethnographic approaches, textual analysis, etc.), although heavily quantitative approaches are more typical of contemporary sport fan studies (especially sport fan psychology) while more qualitative approaches seem to have greater presence in pop culture fan studies. In general, this speaks to broad differences regarding where these fan literatures are housed within the academy. Cultural studies, marked by interdisciplinarity and methodological eclecticism, is widely considered the home of pop culture fan studies (though this is debatable), whereas sport fan studies are more closely associated with social scientific and business/management oriented areas of the academy, though certainly cultural studies and other interdisciplinary scholars also engage extensively in sport fan research.

Despite ongoing calls for scholars to examine the parallels between fans of different texts/genres, [27] these two literatures have developed on separate trajectories and occupy quite different spaces in the scholarly field. David Rowe's 1995 book on rock music and sport represents an early attempt to bridge the conceptual divide, in which he discusses the convergence and divergence of various forms of popular culture. More recently, Cornel Sandvoss [28] engages both sport and pop culture fan scholarship in his discussion of football, television and globalization; Garry Crawford [29] draws on both literatures in his exploration of the location of sport fans in wider consumer culture and, as noted above, the increasing 'celebrification' of sport personalities in the context of rapid cultural globalization helps bring these literatures closer together. [30]

Of most interest to our own purposes here are scholars' recent attempts to conduct direct comparative analyses of sport fans and pop culture fans. For example, Walter Gantz and his colleagues compare TV sport fans to fans of other TV genres. [31] Analyzing more than 350 questionnaires from undergraduate students, [32] they conclude that sport fans 'are strikingly different from all other types of fans in their pre-viewing and post-viewing behaviours'. [33] In particular, they find self-identified sport fans to be much more purposive and content oriented in their viewing practices. Similarly, Ian Jones and Lesley Lawrence [34] compare fans attending football games to fans attending Star Trek conventions in terms of their level of identification with the object of fandom. Relying on Wann and Branscombe's [35] Sport Spectator Identification Scale to analyze 531 questionnaires (the scale was modified for Star Trek fans), Jones and Lawrence found Star Trek fans to score higher in personal identity (that is, 'I am a fan') than football fans, but lower in social identity (that is, the relationships that are formed as a fan), though both groups of fans were highly identified overall. Both studies point to a fruitful new area of research on comparative (cross-genre) fandom; a parallel intellectual project is a more global theorization of fans and fandoms that transcends genre. [36]

We contribute to this line of inquiry by offering an initial investigation of three topics: (a) how sport and pop culture fan scholars conceptualize fans and fandom; (b) how sport and pop culture fan scholars approach the research process; and

(c) how sport and pop culture fan scholars engage one another's research. As such, we contribute to an ongoing meta-level discourse about cross-(sub)disciplinary dialogue within the academy. Where and with whom are fan scholars exchanging ideas, and how has that shaped different trajectories of knowledge production? [37] Sport studies scholars, for example, have discussed both the place of sport sociology within sociology, the boundaries and common ground between the sociology of sport and the psychology of sport, and the place of fan studies within sport studies. [38] Our analysis points to the potential value of greater cross-fertilization between sport and pop culture fan studies. We return to this issue in the Conclusion.

### **Project Design**

Our interest in this subject stemmed from surprising (to us, at least) differences between the way scholars responded to questions asked by Harrington and Bielby in a study of global fandom/global fan studies. [39] In that study, we conducted email surveys with 65 faculty and graduate students who study fans and fandom along with several fan fiction writers. Our project was situated within four overlapping debates in media studies, including debates over cultural globalization, rapidly changing meanings of the media 'audience', methodology and self-reflexivity in the research process. While debates on these topics are obviously unfolding in many areas of the academy, we emphasize that the survey was designed to engage the debates as they are currently developing in media scholarship, as that is the collaborative research background of Harrington and Bielby. As the project progressed we began to notice interesting differences between sport fan scholars and pop culture fan scholars in their responses to the questions, and asked Schimmel, a sociologist of sport, to join the project. We include this background information to explain, in part, the content areas of the original survey and thus of the discussion below. If the idea for the initial study had been generated from both media and sport literatures – more specifically, if the survey had been explicitly designed initially to compare pop culture and sport fan scholars and scholarship with one another – the survey would have no doubt been constructed differently.

The survey consisted of 27 open-ended questions that probed participants' understanding of, and engagement with, the four debates noted above and their perspectives on a range of fan-related questions (such as the distinction between fans and non-fans). We also collected basic demographic and biographical information to better understand the development of fan studies in various parts of the academy and in various geographic locales. Our methodology involved modified snowball sampling. We initiated some invitations to participate in the study and participants were asked to recommend others. With our permission, an announcement about the study was also forwarded to several professional listservs. We followed through on all of the recommendations (we did not screen out any potential participants), so the overall sample represents scholars who we think do fan studies and scholars who our participants think do fan studies. We tried to attract the most globally diverse sample

of fan scholars possible, given language restrictions (the survey was available in English and Spanish only). We emailed 104 surveys to potential participants and received 65 completed responses (63 per cent return rate). Respondents were assured confidentiality in formal invitations to participate as well as in a prefacing statement on the survey itself. All completed surveys were issued a code number; a list connecting the respondent to his/her code number was kept in a secure location that was separate from where the data was analyzed, and could only be accessed by the authors.

Our participants included 30 males and 35 females representing 20 different countries, [40] 36 different disciplines of training, and a wide variety of methodological approaches ranging from textual analysis to ethnography, and from experimental design to psychoanalysis. In the first manuscript from this study, which examined the potential for global fandom/global fan studies, [41] we analyzed the data on the basis of participants' broad disciplinary [42] and geographic (cultural) locations, not on whether they studied sport vs. other aspects of pop culture fandom. Here, we are explicitly interested in the sport vs. pop culture fans relationship.

### Participant Sample

Forty-seven pop culture fan scholars comprised 72 per cent of our overall sample (n = 65); sport fan scholars comprised the remaining 28 per cent (n = 18). The overall sample was fairly gender-balanced with 46 per cent male and 54 per cent female participants. Those familiar with the sport and pop culture fan literatures will not be surprised that the majority of sport fan scholars in our sample are male (89 per cent) while the majority of pop culture fan scholars are female (70 per cent). As noted, 36 different academic disciplines were represented in the overall sample with sport fan scholars located in eight of those disciplines. Six members of our sport subsample (33 per cent) earned terminal degrees in various psychology-related subdisciplines, four (22 per cent) earned sport management doctorates, and the remaining sport fan scholars have terminal degrees in history, sociology, communications, physical education, African Studies/African history, and movement science/kinesiology. We consider all of our respondents to be 'fan scholars' on the basis of their consent to participate in the study. We categorized participants as 'pop culture fan' or 'sport fan' scholars on the basis of their own self-identification as such, on the basis of their terminal degree (for example, PhD in Sport Management)

Table 1 Project Design

All Fan Scholars	Sport Fan Scholars
100% (n = 65)	28% (n = 18)
46% male	89% male
36 academic disciplines	8 academic disciplines
Variety of methods	Variety of methods

and occupational history, and/or on the basis of how they responded to open-ended survey questions (by, for example, repeatedly referring to music listeners or sport fans to illustrate their responses). We acknowledge that participants might not refer to these categories to describe themselves (Table 1).

Below we focus on the first two topics of our investigation: fan scholars' basic understandings of fans and fandom and of self-reflexivity in the research process, with particular interest in how sport and pop culture fan scholars differ from one another in their responses. We then turn to our third topic, the location of sport and pop culture fan studies/scholars in the academy, as this helps inform the different trajectories by which sport and pop culture fan scholarship have developed.

### **Findings**

Sport Fan Scholars vs. Pop Culture Fan Scholars

A central focus in both pop culture fan studies and sport fan studies has been the fundamental question of what constitutes fandom, or what distinguishes a fan from a 'regular' consumer. Scholars in both research fields have reached the general conclusion that fandom lies on a continuum with other types of consumption practices – it's a matter of degree, one might say, rather than kind. [43] However, degree of 'what' remains an area of debate among our participants. One of our survey questions asked scholars which of the following dimensions is/are most appropriate for understanding fans: intellectual, emotional, behavioural or ideological. Readers may wonder about our choice of terminology here; as described above, the survey was designed to elicit scholars' perspectives on debates unfolding in media studies and pop culture fan literature and these terms are reflective of those debates (Table 2).

In the overall sample, 32 per cent of participants feel that all dimensions are equally important, 18 per cent identify the emotional dimension as most important, and 17 per cent emphasize a mixture of dimensions (with most specifying the emotional and behavioural dimensions). Compared to the overall sample, a similar percentage (28 per cent) of sport fan scholars believe all four dimensions are important, but more than half (56 per cent) emphasize the *emotional* and/or *behavioural* dimensions of fandom. Several quotes from sport fan scholars capture this emphasis:

Emotional. Fandom entails a psychological connection which is associated with emotions. Fandom is associated with behaviours, too, but they are often manifestations of emotions. (Sport Participant #5)

Table 2 Understanding Fans and Fandom

All Fan Scholars	Sport Fan Scholars
1 / 1	28% all dimensions equally important 56% emphasize emotional and/or behavioural dimensions

Probably behavioural. I consider internal processes like emotion, intellect, and ideology to be predictors of overt behaviour. (Sport Participant #37)

I'm not interested in the ideological component and don't think it's critical that a fan be extremely knowledgeable, though many are. I think the most important dimension is the investment fans make – this is seen emotionally as well as behaviourally. (Sport Participant #62)

In part, we suspect this emphasis stems from the strong presence of psychological approaches to the study of sport fans, whereas contemporary pop culture fan studies is not strongly associated with the discipline of psychology at present (though much of the mid-twentieth century research was conducted by psychologists or psychiatrists). To recall, our sport sample included scholars who are located in eight different disciplines, and we find that all six of our participants whose terminal degree is in psychology study sport (not pop culture) fandom. We wondered, therefore, if there might be a disjuncture between how sport fan scholars and pop culture fan scholars differentiate between the basic concepts 'consumer' vs. 'fan' (Table 3).

As with the larger sample, the sub-sample of sport fan scholars view fans and consumers as existing on the same continuum. But sport scholars' emphasis on the emotional and behavioural dimensions of fandom was even more pronounced in their comparisons of 'fans' with 'consumers'. In our larger sample, the two most mentioned differences between consumers and fans were degrees of investment and active engagement, with 38 per cent of the respondents distinguishing fans from consumers by their degree of emotional, psychological and/or behavioural 'investment' in the texts, and 20 per cent of the respondents making a distinction between them by levels of 'active' engagement. In contrast, in the sport sub-sample, 72 per cent (13 of 18) emphasized investment over active engagement, whereas 22 per cent (4 of 18) believed active engagement was more relevant. We also note that with the exception of one sport fan scholar (who answered 'N/A'), all respondents from this sub-sample mentioned either a level of emotional or psychological investment or commitment, or a level of active engagement as the characteristic that distinguishes fans from consumers. Sport fan scholars mentioned no other characteristics as being important.

Table 3 'Fans' vs. 'Consumers'

All Fan Scholars	Sport Fan Scholars
38% distinguished fans by degree of <i>investment</i> 20% distinguished fans by level of <i>active engagement</i> Mentioned other factors as well	72% distinguished fans by degree of <i>investment</i> 22% distinguished fans by level of <i>active engagement</i> Mentioned <i>no other</i> factors (one participant did not
(e.g., ideological)	respond)

### Self-reflexivity in Research

The second issue we address is self-reflexivity – that is, fan scholars' authorial or fannish presence in their own research. Academia in general privileges the critical distance of the academic 'expert' vis-à-vis his or her 'object' of study, but there are obviously different and evolving traditions throughout the academy. While reflexivity is not a new concept, [44] the past 20 years have been marked by particularly lively debate over its meaning and impact on academic research, most notably within anthropology due to its long ethnographic tradition, but also in sociology, communication studies and elsewhere (Table 4).

Expectations within pop culture fan studies have gradually shifted from an authorial absence marked by depersonalized prose and a lack of acknowledgement that one cares about the topic or people under study to a growing expectation that pop culture fan scholars 'confess' their personal pleasures in data collection and publication (see below). [45] Scholars have different levels of comfort with this expectation, of course, and differ on their perception of its necessity. We asked participants whether they themselves are fans of what they study (for example, Hills' concept of scholar-fans) [46] and if so, whether they acknowledge that in data collection and/or publication. Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of our overall sample are indeed fans of what they study, though less than half (44 per cent) self-identify as fans in data collection and only 42 per cent in published articles. When we compared sport fan scholars to pop culture fan scholars, however, we found that sport fan scholars are much more likely to be fans of what they study than pop culture fan scholars (77 per cent vs. 57 per cent). As one sport fan scholar noted, 'What better justification to go to a ball game than in vivo data collection?' (Sport Participant #3). However, sport fan scholars are much less likely to acknowledge that fact during the data collection process (22 per cent vs. 53 per cent for pop culture fan scholars) and/or in published articles (22 per cent vs. 51 per cent for pop culture fan scholars). Representative quotes from pop culture fan scholars regarding self-reflexivity in data collection include the following statements:

Absolutely. I fact, I write myself into the results of my research. I think readers need to know where I'm coming from. (Pop Culture Participant #8)

I don't do statistical research though I do often solicit quotes to add flavor to my work. In those cases, I do make it clear who I am and where my fannish interests lie ... It's not surprising that fans are more likely to be forthcoming when they know

Table 4 Self-Reflexivity in Research

Pop Culture Fan Scholars	Sport Fan Scholars
57% are fans of what they study 53% self-identify in data collection 51% self-identify in publication	77% are fans of what they study 22% self-identify in data collection 22% self-identify in publication

the interest is serious and respectful, rather than simply an opportunity to mock a subculture. (Pop Culture Participant #48)

Scholars who see themselves as members of the community that they research HAVE GOT to disclose their membership. If they don't, they have omitted a crucial piece of information that is essential to understanding their methodology, identifying their assumptions, and evaluating their work. (Pop Culture Participant #6)

In contrast, consider these representative responses from sport fan scholars:

No. Why is it needed? My interest or disinterest may shape the research question but it doesn't drive follow-ups or data analyses. (Sport Participant #62)

I ... do not acknowledge that I am a sport fan in published articles. Of course, much of our publishing occurs in journals dedicated to examining aspects of sport and exercise. Most of the people who do research in these areas are also fans of the sport they research. It is almost as if you had to acknowledge that you breathe. (Sport Participant #3)

In the type of research I conduct, objectivity is key, as it is to the scientific method. I see no need to share such personal information with participants. (Sport Participant #40)

In part, these different expectations reflect contrasts between scholars who adhere strictly to the tenets of logical positivism, adopt quantitative approaches, and aim for scientific precision, compared to those for whom the research process entails an ongoing dialogue with participants, adopt qualitative approaches, and recognize greater subjectivity (and thus greater relativity) in data analysis. We do not mean to pigeonhole entire academic perspectives as one or the other - movement science or mass communications as the former and anthropology or cultural studies as the latter, for example. However, it seems clear that the broad disciplinary backgrounds of our sport fan scholars compared to our pop culture fan scholars, particularly the overrepresentation of psychology and business/management perspectives among the sport fan sub-sample and the over-representation of cultural studies and various other postmodernist perspectives among the pop culture fan sub-sample, help shape these different expectations regarding self-reflexivity.

Another possible explanation for these different expectations may speak to the historical development of pop culture fan studies versus sport fan studies. As Henry Jenkins, the leading scholar in pop culture fan studies, explains:

I think we need to consider different generations of scholars within fandom and moments within which those scholars are working ... There is a body of work [in the late 1980s] derived in part from sociological methods ... [It] was important for these writers to be outside what they were writing about, to be free of any direct implication in their subject matter ... [T]heir prose is very depersonalized, there's often no acknowledgement of any affection they feel for the objects of study ... I see myself and others writing [in the early 1990s] ... as a second generation that comes to a discourse already formulated ... We [were] trying to find a way to alter [pop culture fan scholarship] based on insider knowledge of what it is to be a fan. [47]

Jenkins goes on to describe the need for this second generation of scholars to both reveal and defend their own fan identities in their academic work:

[There was] a lot of resistance because the first generation [were] the readers responding to our manuscripts, the editors deciding whether they get published or not, the faculty deciding whether they get hired. So you end up struggling to negotiate between what you want to say and what it's possible to say at a particular point in time.

Today, pop culture fan scholars generally take for granted the opportunity (or indeed, obligation) to claim their own fan identities in data collection and scholarly literature, with little or no defensiveness required. While we can point to no concrete evidence that the historical development of sport fan studies (and/or the generational relationship among sport fan scholars) has produced a comparable expectation for *non*-self-reflexivity in sport fan scholarship, the ongoing marginalization of fan studies within sport studies may indicate a continued discomfort with 'outing' oneself in one's work.

Finally, differences in self-reflexivity may speak to the object of fandom itself: sport vs. other forms of popular culture. Unlike pop culture fans who were historically marginalized as deviant consumers, sport fans have usually been viewed as part of the cultural mainstream. As we noted earlier, this stems in part from the 'reality' generally granted sport events as opposed to the assumed 'fictionality' of most pop culture forms. It also may stem from the widespread social belief that sport embodies many elements of dominant value systems, including masculinity, meritocracy and patriotism. [48] As in other contexts, being accepted as mainstream is not usually notable and is often taken for granted.

### Scholarship and Publication

Our third topic focuses on the academic spaces in which research is produced and disseminated. In their study of global fandom/global fan studies, Harrington and Bielby were interested in where and with whom fan scholars are exchanging ideas and how that has shaped different trajectories of knowledge production. [49] Survey items elicited participants' perceptions of the most influential scholars in fan studies and their perceptions of the publication outlets most receptive to fan studies research. We wanted to know if there is 'a' fan studies literature recognized globally, or if (for example) Australian fan studies, South Korean fan studies, and Brazilian fan studies point to different foundational texts and scholars, thus indicating fragmented knowledge production. We were able to identify three tiers of scholars whose work was claimed as 'most influential' by participants in our study. Henry Jenkins, author of the groundbreaking book on television fans, *Textual Poachers* (1992), was the sole occupier of the first tier ('most influential'). The second tier included (in alphabetical

order) Camille Bacon-Smith, John Fiske, Matt Hills, Janice Radway and Daniel Wann. The third tier included (in alphabetical order) Nicholas Abercrombie/Brian Longhurst, Ien Ang, Will Brooker, Lawrence Grossberg, C. Lee Harrington/Denise D. Bielby, Constance Penley and Jackie Stacey (Table 5). [50]

John Fiske was the only scholar picked by both sport and pop culture fan participants in our study, perhaps due to the fact that he's written about both fan groups, perhaps due to his prominence within cultural studies more broadly. None of the sport fan scholars mentioned Henry Jenkins, though his stature is widely recognized among pop culture scholars and even though he has published sport fan research. [51] Interestingly, despite the fact that the sport fan scholars mentioned 23 different authors whose work was 'most influential' to them, only sport psychologist Daniel Wann was mentioned more than once. We suspect this is reflective of the fact that six members of our sport sample (33 per cent) not only have training in, but are also located in, a psychology-related sub-discipline.

We also asked participants which publication outlets seem most receptive to research on fans. In response to this open-ended survey item, the overall sample identified Journal of Sport Behavior, book publishers Routledge and Sage, and Television & New Media as most receptive. [52] Of the 18 journals specified by the sport fans scholars, 14 are sport studies sub-disciplinary journals. [53] We found it interesting that the Journal of Sport Behavior was mentioned most frequently (seven of 18 in our sport sample mentioned it) even though the Journal of Sport Behavior has only published six articles related to sport fans or spectators in the last decade (as of this writing). Conversely, only one respondent mentioned the Journal of Sport and Social Issues, which since 1995 has published 16 articles on sport fans. Likewise, only one respondent mentioned the Sociology of Sport Journal, which since 1995 has published six articles on sport fans. Finally, only one respondent mentioned

**Table 5** Scholarship and Publication: Sport Fan Scholars

Scholars 'most influential'	Journals 'most receptive'
Mentioned 23 authors	Journal of Sport Behavior mentioned most (n = 7), but in last decade has published only 6 articles on sport fans
only Dan Wann was mentioned by more than one Sport Fan Scholar (n = 4)	Journal of Sport and Social Issues mentioned 1 time, but in last decade has published 16 articles on sport fans
only John Fiske was mentioned by both Pop Culture and Sport Fan Scholars	International Review for the Sociology of Sport mentioned 1 time, but in last decade has published 13 articles on sport fans

the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, which is the oldest journal in the sub-discipline of the sociology of sport and since 1995 has published 13 articles on sport fans. [54]

These data suggest that the 'spaces' occupied by sport fan studies and pop culture fan studies are more fragmented than we originally suspected. The boundaries seem to run not only between genre and discipline but extend through sub-disciplines as well. Our preliminary reading suggests that sport fan sociologists and sport fan psychologists cite each other's work only rarely, which is important in understanding the historical trajectory(ies) of fan studies. Recently, Ingham, Blissmer and Davidson advanced a social psychological analysis of athletes' lives and argued that 'there is no need for boundary maintenance activities that distill knowledge into discrete sport sociological and sport psychological packages'. [55] Analyses of fans might similarly benefit from going beyond (sub)disciplinary boundaries.

### Conclusion

This essay contributes to an ongoing meta-level discourse about dialogue within the academy. In the context of global media studies, the conceptual foundation of the original project on global fandom/global fan studies, Rajagopal [56] charges Western scholars who study media reception with assuming aspects of capitalist modernity (such as liberal citizenship) that exist only contradictorily or unevenly in developing nations. Similarly, in reference to the emergent notion of 'elusive audiences' in Western reception studies, Juluri writes, 'the task of engaging with audiencehood as a condition in the context of globalization and emerging globalisms is one that must challenge the assumptions and constraints imposed on scholarship of non-Western audience studies by the logics of the Western academy'. [57] Finally, the salience of the concepts of leisure time and 'pleasure' to the development of Western fan studies is not necessarily shared in other parts of the world. [58]

While the project on global fandom/global fan studies pointed to the need for greater dialogue among fan scholars located in diverse cultural (geographic) contexts, the present study focuses on cross-(sub)disciplinary dialogue. In the introduction to their 2002 book on re-imagining the sociological study of sport, Maguire and Young remind us of the 'double jeopardy' faced by sport sociologists – that is, the continued marginality of sport studies within sociology and the marginality of sociology within sport studies. [59] One of the dangers of such marginalization is the tendency for scholars to treat one another as adversaries or competitors, talking past each other rather than with each other. [60] At risk is the greater generation of knowledge made possible by the cross-fertilization of ideas. For example, Schimmel [61] points to a 'curious and troubling disjuncture' between sport studies and urban studies, arguing that a fully informed research tradition on urban development requires reciprocal bridge-building with colleagues located elsewhere in the academy. Drawing on the example of the growth machine thesis, a highly influential framework conceptualizing the patterns and rationale of urban change, Schimmel points

to the myriad ways sport sociologists have extended the thesis that remain unacknowledged within urban sociology.

In the mid-1990s only about 4 per cent of all sport sociology and psychology focused on fans. [62] While that percentage has increased over the past decade, [63] fan research remains marginalized in sport studies despite the rapid mainstreaming of fan consumption in the structure of everyday life. [64] More importantly for the purposes of the present essay, research on sport fans remains isolated from research on other types of fans. Only recently have sport scholars begun to cite the growing body of literature on fans and fandoms of other genres, and while pop culture scholars acknowledge the importance of studying sport fans and sport texts, they seem largely unaware of the ways in which sport studies itself has conceptualized that significance. In 1995 Gantz and Wenner called on scholars to 'investigate the differences and similarities of fans across programming genres'. [65] More recently Sandvoss writes, "To meaningfully theorize fandom as a practice across various genres ... we need to reduce individual fan cultures in scale and move from "rich descriptions" ... to the common themes, motivations and implications of the interaction between fans and their object of fandom.' [66]

In the context of global media studies, Kraidy and Murphy argue that a 'lack of cultural translation is a deadly blow to research. [67] Drawing on exploratory data, our investigation points to the translations that (fail to) occur between fan scholars with different generalized topic(s) of inquiry (sport vs. pop culture) and across different academic disciplines and sub-disciplines. Sport fan scholars and pop culture fan scholars gain significantly through greater cross-fertilization of ideas and knowledge - from talking with, rather than past, each other. For example, sport fan scholars might find the recent psychoanalytic approaches within pop culture fan studies helpful in offering innovative analyses of the roots of fan pleasures [68] that might extend the motivation scales common in sport fan psychology and transcend the 'manic denial of the internal world' common within mainstream sociology. [69] Our reading of Hills' work reminds us of Ingham, Blissmer and Davidson's call that 'sociology needs psychoanalysis' and that 'psychoanalysis needs sociological imagination'. [70]

We can easily identify other areas of fan studies that might similarly benefit from greater cross-fertilization. For example, Abercrombie and Longhurst's [71] taxonomy of fandom, arguably the most frequently cited within pop culture fan studies, might be informed by the psychology-based sport fan typologies discussed by Wann and his colleagues [72] or the sociologically-based sport fan typology suggested by Richard Giulianotti, [73] and vice versa. As a more extended example, consider the issue of fan violence, which is a much more prevalent focus of research in sport fan studies than pop culture fan studies. In sport fan studies violence is conceptually associated with crowd rowdiness or hooliganism at team sports events, while in pop culture fan studies it is typically assumed to take the form of celebrity stalking by a delusional, loner fan. This is not to suggest that collective violence is absent from the world of pop culture fans or that stalkers are absent from the world of sport. While the stalker image is currently dominant, the history of pop culture fandom records numerous instances of chaotic crowd behaviour, ranging from the 'savagery or animalism' of nineteenth-century music lovers [74] to the 1979 stampede at a Who rock music concert in Cincinnati, Ohio in which 11 people died, to the 2006 game show stampede killing 74 people in the Philippines. Similarly, the stalker image haunts the world of sport fans as well, the 1993 stabbing of tennis player Monica Seles being just one example. More important than the amount or type of violence prevalent in different fan communities (which remains an empirical question) is the fact that pop culture fan violence is significantly under-theorized in comparison to sport fan violence. Pop culture fan scholars might learn from sport fan scholars in this regard.

Writing in a very different context, Ericksen and Steffen [75] argue that the conceptual assumptions driving human sexuality research over the past century (such as the assumption that sexuality is innate) helped create the sexuality that the research subsequently revealed. In recent years scholars have begun to compare sport and pop culture *fans* to one another. What might a more systematic comparison of sport and pop culture fan *scholars* reveal – more importantly, what might our taken-for-granted assumptions reveal? Cornel Sandvoss argues that if 'fandom functions as a mirror, we must not forget that what we see will ultimately depend on our angle of vision'. [76] How are those angles shaped by scholarly disjunctures within the academy, and what does that mean for our knowledge of fans and fandoms?

### **Notes**

- [1] By 'pop culture fan studies' we include studies of fans of all other pop cultural forms beside sport: television, music, film, advertising, animation, music videos, etc. Any sport-related interaction with the above (such as fans of televised Super Bowl ads or fans of sport celebrities) we would categorize under 'sport fan studies'. We acknowledge that this broad definition might be controversial within some areas of the academy, and indeed, by some of our survey participants.
- [2] Harrington and Bielby, 'Global Fandom/Global Fan Studies'.
- [3] Rowe, 'No Gain, No Game? Media and Sport', 347.
- [4] For example, see Schimmel, 'Take Me Out to the Ballgame: The Transformation of Production-Consumption Relations in Professional Team Sport', for an overview of cartelization, monopoly and monopsony practices in the US professional team sports industry.
- [5] Sabo and Panepinto, 'Football Ritual and the Social Construction of Masculinity'.
- [6] The sport text is unique in regard to the element of uncertainty. Fans cannot predict the outcome of the sporting event beforehand, unlike pop culture fans' ability to access movie or concert reviews. This uncertainty or unpredictability historically sets sport apart from other cultural forms, though new media genres such as some reality TV shows, for example also invest heavily in uncertainty (with greater or lesser success) as a basis for viewer pleasures.
- [7] Bairner, Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization; Brown, Fanatics! Power, Identity and Fandom in Football.
- [8] Cialdini et al., 'Basking in Reflected Glory: Three (Football) Field Studies'; Wann et al., Sport Fans.
- [9] Hughson and Free, 'Paul Willis, Cultural Commodities, and Collective Sport Fandom'.

- [10] Giulianotti and Robertson, 'Glocalization, Globalization and Migration: The Case of Scottish Football Supporters in North America'; Maguire, Global Sport; Sandvoss, A Game of Two Halves.
- [11] Giulianotti, 'The Sociability of Sport: Scotland Football Supporters as Interpreted through the Sociology of Georg Simmel'.
- [12] Dunning et al., Fighting Fans; Giulianotti, Bonny and Hepworth, Football, Violence and Social Identity; Taylor, 'Football Sad: A Speculative Sociology of Football Hooliganism'; Young, 'Standard Deviations: An Update on North American Sports Crowd Disorder'.
- [13] Horne, Sport in Consumer Culture; see also Crawford, Consuming Sport, and Giulianotti, Bonny and Hepworth, Football, Violence and Social Identity.
- [14] Raney, 'Why We Watch and Enjoy Mediated Sports'; Wann et al., Sports Fans.
- [15] Wann, 'Preliminary Validation of the Sport Fan Motivation Scale'.
- [16] Wann and Hamlet, 'Author and Subject Gender in Sport Research'.
- [17] Chung, 'Sport Star vs. Rock Star in Globalizing Popular Culture'; Lines, 'The Sport Star in the Media'; Melnick and Jackson, 'Globalization American-Style and Reference Idol Selection: The Importance of Athlete Celebrity Others among New Zealand Youth'.
- [18] Sandvoss, Fans: The Mirror of Consumption.
- Giulianotti, 'The Sociability of Sport: Scotland Football Supporters as Interpreted through the Sociology of Georg Simmel', 289.
- [20] Allen, Speaking of Soap Operas.
- [21] Thorp, America at the Movies.
- [22] For example, see Wertham, Seduction of the Innocent: The Influence of Comic Books on Today's Youth.
- [23] Horton and Wohl, 'Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction'; ibid.
- [24] The following is a severely truncated version of a discussion made in Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, 'Why Study Fans?'. We note that other scholars have described the generational history of pop culture fan studies differently than we do here; see, for example, Jenkins, 'Intensities Interviews Henry Jenkins'.
- [25] Jenkins, Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture.
- [26] Perhaps because of its (relatively) shorter history and sub-disciplinary specialization, sport fan studies is not as identifiably organized by generations as is pop culture fan studies. However, for a lengthy discussion of the generations of scholars/scholarship and unity/disunity of intellectual traditions within North American sociology of sport, see Ingham and Donnelly, 'A Sociology of North American Sociology of Sport'.
- [27] For example, see Gantz and Wenner, 'Fanship and the Television Sport Viewing Experience'; Sandvoss, Fans.
- [28] Sandvoss, A Game of Two Halves.
- [29] Crawford, Consuming Sport.
- [30] Chung, 'Sport Star vs. Rock Star in Globalizing Popular Culture'; Lines, 'The Sport Star in the Media'; Melnick and Jackson, 'Globalization American-Style and Reference Idol Selection'; Sandvoss, Bernstein and Real, Bodies of Discourse: Sports Stars, Mass Media and the Global Public.
- [31] Here, Gantz and his colleagues follow through on earlier research that documented sport fans' active TV viewing and called on scholars to compare fans across different TV programming genres; see Gantz and Wenner, 'Fanship and the Television Sports Viewing Experience'.
- [32] The questionnaire was designed to focus on four elements of the TV viewing experience: what people do before their show comes on, their motives for watching, the things they do and feel while watching, and the behaviours and feelings they experience after viewing; see Gantz et al., 'Sports Vs. All Comers: Comparing TV Sport Fans with Fans of Other Programming Genres'.
- [33] Ibid., 20.

- [34] Jones and Lawrence, 'Identity and Gender in Sport and Media Fandom: An Exploratory Comparison of Fans Attending Football Matches and Star Trek Conventions'.
- [35] Wann and Branscombe, 'Sports Fans'.
- [36] Sandvoss, Fans.
- [37] Murphy and Kraidy, 'Towards an Ethnographic Approach to Global Media Studies', 11.
- [38] See Ingham, Blissmer and Davidson, 'The Expendable Prolympic Self: Going Beyond the Boundaries of the Sociology and Psychology of Sport'; Ingham and Donnelly, 'A Sociology of North American Sociology of Sport'; Maguire, 'Triple-Jeopardy: A Career in the Sociology of Sport in Britain', Maguire and Young, 'Back to the Future: Thinking Sociologically about Sport'; Wann and Hamlet, 'Author and Subject Gender in Sport Research'.
- [39] Harrington and Bielby, 'Global Fandom/Global Fan Studies'.
- [40] North America is over-represented, comprising 49 per cent of the sample (n = 32). Other countries represented include Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, England, Finland, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, South Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Puerto Rico, Russia, South Africa, Taiwan and Turkey. English is the primary language of publication for these scholars, though Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Korean, German, Finnish and Dutch are also represented.
- [41] Harrington and Bielby, 'Global Fandom/Global Fan Studies'.
- [42] For purposes of analysis in the larger study, disciplinary location was broken down into five general categories: social sciences, humanities, interdisciplinary fields, business management and 'other'. For purposes of discussion here, we are interested in more specific disciplinary and sub-disciplinary locations: sociology, psychology, English literature, movement science, and so on.
- [43] See Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*; Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs: A Taxonomy of Spectator Identities in Football'.
- [44] Cooley, 'The Last Roots of Social Knowledge'.
- [45] See Hills, Fan Cultures.
- [46] Ibid.
- [47] Jenkins, 'Intensities Interviews with Henry Jenkins'.
- [48] See also, Eastman and Land, 'The Best of Both Worlds: Sports Fans Find Good Seats at the Bar'.
- [49] Harrington and Bielby paraphrase from Murphy and Kraidy, 'Towards an Ethnographic Approach to Global Media Studies', 11.
- [50] Please note that the survey items soliciting this information were open-ended. The tiers represent the most frequently identified publications, persons and publication outlets by the overall sample.
- [51] Jenkins, "Never Trust a Snake!" WWF Wrestling as Masculine Melodrama'.
- [52] Harrington and Bielby, 'Global Fandom/Global Fan Studies'.
- [53] The 18 journals identified by sport fan scholars are: Sociology of Sport Journal, International Sports Journal, Journal of Communication, Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, Communication Research, Journal of Sport and Social Issues, International Review for the Sociology of Sport, Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, Journal of Sport Behavior, Group Dynamics, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, Sport Marketing Quarterly, Internal Journal of Sport Marketing and Sponsorship, Journal of Sport Behavior, Journal of Sport Management, International Journal of Sport Management, European Sport Management Quarterly, Sport Management Review. Please note that not all participants specified journal titles; instead, some provided answers such as 'cultural studies journals', 'sport psychology journals' or 'interdisciplinary journals'.
- [54] To give several more examples, the journal Sport Marketing Quarterly has published 31 articles on fans since 2000 but was mentioned by only four of our participants, the Journal of Sport Management has published nine articles on fans since 2003 and was mentioned by three

- participants, and the International Journal of Sport Management has published four articles on fans since 2001 and was mentioned by two participants.
- [55] Ingham, Blissmer and Davidson, 'The Expendable Prolympic Self', 259.
- [56] Rajagopal, 'Mediating Modernity: Theorizing Reception in a Non-Western Society'.
- [57] Juluri, Becoming a Global Audience, 219.
- [58] Meehan, 'Leisure or Labor? Fan Ethnography and Political Economy'.
- [59] Maguire and Young, 'Back to the Future', 6. See also Bourdieu, In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology.
- [60] Maguire and Young, 'Back to the Future', 7.
- [61] Schimmel, 'The Political Economy of Place: Urban and Sport Studies Perspectives'.
- [62] Wann and Hamlet, 'Author and Subject Gender in Sport Research'.
- [63] See Crawford, Consuming Sport.
- Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, 'Why Study Fans?'
- Gantz et al., 'Sports v. All Comers: Comparing TV Sport Fans with Fans of Other Programming Genres', 6.
- [66] Sandvoss, Fans, 4.
- [67] Kraidy and Murphy, 'Media Ethnography: Local, Global or Translocal', 303.
- [68] Hills, The Pleasures of Horror.
- [69] Craib, Psychoanalysis and Social Theory, 196.
- [70] See also Ingham and Beamish, 'Didn't Cyclops Lose His Vision? An Exercise in Sociological Optometry', 259, for a similar discussion concerning the fusion of Williams and Freud and the future directions of the sociology of sport.
- [71] Abercrombie and Longhurst, Audiences.
- [72] Wann et al., Sports Fans.
- [73] Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs'.
- [74] Cavicchi, 'Loving Music'.
- [75] Ericksen and Steffen, 'Kiss and Tell: Surveying Sex Research in the Twentieth Century'.
- [76] Sandvoss, Fans, 10.

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