

Sports Versus All Comers: Comparing TV Sports Fans With Fans of Other Programming Genres

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Using self-administered questionnaires, this study assessed ways in which the viewing experience for sports fans is similar to—and different from—the viewing experience for fans of other popular programming genres. Compared to fans of other genres, televised sports fans were likely to engage in a variety of pregame planning and information search activities. Their viewing was more likely to be purposive and content oriented. Sports fans were emotionally involved and cared about the outcomes. They also were more likely to check media sources for follow-up information. Fans of other genres were not as active or invested in their favorite programming genre.

Sports has been a programming staple on broadcast and cable television for decades. It regularly attracts the faithful and, with major events, draws audiences that other genres of programming rarely approach. Year in and year out, the Super Bowl garners the largest U.S. audience of the year, far outpacing any other single program. The Olympics and the World Cup draw unrivaled numbers of viewers across the globe, several billion over the course of the Olympics and perhaps as much as a billion for a single World Cup match (Bryant & Raney, 2000; Real, 1998). Because of its ubiquity on the television dial, the scope of the audience it attracts, and the apparent zeal with which many viewers watch sports, televised sports viewers and fans have been the subject of considerable scholarly inquiry.

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With less frequent public recognition and scholarly scrutiny, other genres of programming attract and cultivate sizable audiences and, as with sports, a sizable number of fans. For example, prior to its final original episode in 2003, the television situation comedy *Friends* regularly drew viewers “still dying to know who [Rachel] ends up with—Ross or Joey?” when a decade had passed “after [the character] stumbled into the Central Perk coffeehouse after running away from her own wedding” (Peysner, 2003, p. 46). To be sure, there are other parallels as well. For example, stars of wildly popular shows such as *Friends* receive salaries that rival the biggest sports stars.

Fans represent an important segment of television audiences that programmers cultivate across genres, from sports to soap operas, situation comedies and dramas to adult-oriented animated programs, and from reality shows to afternoon and evening talkfests. At a minimum, fans represent a steady base of viewers that programmers and sales personnel collectively describe and package to advertisers and ad agencies. At times, fans are openly promoted and celebrated. For this, all one has to see is ESPN’s self-congratulatory 25th anniversary campaign titled “The Season of the Fan” (Janoff, 2004), with on-air promotions “celebrating 25 years in sports with a salute to the fans.”

Although scholars have examined fans for sports, soap operas, and reality programs separately, they have not looked for commonalities in fanship across programming genres. Do fans prepare for their programs in similar ways? Are they motivated by similar or disparate sets of motivations? Do they view and respond in similar ways, or is viewing and response unique to each type of program? In short, scholars have not examined the extent to which the fanship experience cuts across genres. This study was designed to make that comparison.

Fanship

The term *fan* is routinely linked with those who follow sports. For example, the first meaning for the term provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1996) states that a fan is “a keen and regular spectator of a (professional) sport, originally of baseball.” Yet, the term, derived from *fanatic*, can and has been applied to those with a particular interest in performers, personalities, and programs, as well as athletes and sports teams. Along with athletes, celebrities have long had fan clubs and fan magazines and have been the recipients of fan mail.

At a minimum, fanship points to an active and interested audience. In all likelihood, fanship represents an array of thought processes, affective attachments, and behaviors that separate fans from nonfans, including nonfans who watch the same programming. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) noted that fans are “those people who become particularly attached to certain programmes or stars within the context of a relatively heavy media use” (p. 138). Others have linked fanship with knowledge about the players, teams, and game or characters and plot in a program; active, participatory, viewing; concern about outcomes; and emotional responsiveness to the

action and activity as it unfolds (e.g., Gantz, 1981; Gantz, Wenner, Carrico, & Knorr, 1995; McPherson, 1975; Smith, Patterson, Williams, & Hogg, 1981). Because fans tend to be heavy viewers, they have more experience and knowledge than nonfans with the format and content of their favorite programs. In addition, because they are at least somewhat attached to the programs or stars, they may process information conveyed on these programs differently than nonfans. Indeed, recent studies (e.g., Hillman, Cuthbert, Bradley, & Lang, 2004; Hillman et al., 2000; Potter, Sparks, Cummins, & Lee, 2004) document that the level of fan identification has an impact on the level of self-reported and physiological emotional reaction one has to images of sports and sports-related news items.

Studies have documented the benefits and pitfalls associated with fanship. Fanship is said to empower fans and generate passion and energy in them (Grossberg, 1992). An early and often-cited review of sports fan research identified three benefits of being a sports fan—escape, self-fulfillment, and social integration (Smith et al., 1981). Although their classic study was not limited to fans, Cialdini et al. (1976) documented the image-enhancing effects of having one's school win on the playing field. For a fan, the joy of watching one's team win may rival that felt by the players. On the flip side, for the fan, the anxiety and pain associated with pending games and undesired outcomes may be as great as those experienced by the players themselves. Fans experience an increase in cognitive and somatic anxiety as an important competition approaches; the effect is heightened among highly identified fans (Wann, Schrader, & Adamson, 1998). Deeply committed fans also are less able to separate themselves from their teams when their teams lose (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Although people frequently call themselves a fan of—or not a fan of—a program or genre of programming, fanship is likely to exist on a continuum, providing room for the hard-core fans that the media sometimes showcase and academics occasionally study (cf. Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Placement on this continuum, however, is likely to incorporate an individual's knowledge of, interest in, and exposure to the programming under consideration. Gantz and Wenner (1995), for example, defined sports fans based on self-reported knowledge levels, interest, and patterns of exposure to sports. Sports fans were those with considerably higher scores on perceived knowledge, interest, and viewership than their counterparts. The same should apply to other forms of entertainment programming.

Fanship for Sports

A wealth of studies have examined sports fanship. Gantz and his colleagues conducted a series of surveys to investigate the motives and behaviors associated with TV sports fans (Gantz, 1981, 1985; Gantz & Wenner, 1991, 1995; Gantz et al., 1995). In his earliest investigation, Gantz (1981) found that, although some viewing motives (such as to thrill in victory) seemed unique to certain sports programs, most motives for viewing sports cut across sports. He also found that fans often prepared for the tele-

vised game beforehand and were emotionally aroused and quite active while viewing, often yelling in pleasure or displeasure as the events transpired. Gantz and Wenner (1995) found that fanship made a difference in the audience's viewing experience of televised sports. Fans were more likely to prepare for a game by following reports about it beforehand, were more strongly motivated to watch for the intrinsic pleasures associated with watching, to be emotionally involved and overtly expressive while viewing, and, for better or worse, to have the game linger on after the final whistle was blown.

Hocking (1982) and Eastman and Land (1997) examined how people watch sports, whether they watch alone, in groups, or at the stadium. Location mattered. Those who gathered at sports bars to watch sports sought the social interaction and sense of community those settings provided. In addition to letting them participate in comfortable rituals (and drinking), shared viewership at bars legitimized their fanship and established them as real, serious fans.

Wann (1995) proposed and validated a scale tapping fan motivations. Consisting of eight motivation sets, the scale addressed fan eustress (i.e., positive arousal), self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, group affiliation, and family needs. A follow-up study found that fans who preferred sports in which individuals compete alone reported higher levels of aesthetic motivation, whereas those with a preference for team sports had higher scores on the eustress and self-esteem subscales (Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999). Lines (2000) suggested a motivation framework composed of personal, social, and emotional dimensions. Sloan (1989) found that the affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses of sports fans were similar to those of athletes.

At least with sports viewing, gender makes a difference. Differences between the genders here may start at an early age. Young children have different motives for watching mediated sports. For girls, mediated sports gave them access to a male-dominated world, let them talk about sports with others if they wished, and look at men's bodies without being questioned about it. For boys, mediated sports provided a common ground and sense of male identity (Lines, 1999, 2000).

Most studies examining gender differences in sports viewing have focused on adults. Gantz and Wenner (1991) found that, compared to women, more men responded like fans, even controlling initial levels of interest in sports. Men were more strongly motivated to watch televised sports and indeed spent more time watching those programs. Gantz and Wenner suggested that social norms, expectations, and responsibility might contribute to the gender differences they found. Gantz and Wenner (1995) followed up with a study of male and female sports fans. In this comparison, gender did not affect motivations, pre-viewing behaviors, or post-viewing behaviors.

Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, and Jacquemotte (2000) assessed fanship among college students and found that about three quarters of the sample categorized themselves as sports fans. Women were as likely as men to consider themselves as sports fans, but they identified themselves less strongly with the concept than men did. For men, being a sports fan is an important part of their identity. For women, being a sports fan

meant “attending, watching, and cheering at sporting events, preferably in the company of family and friends” (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000, p. 227). James and Ridinger (2002) found that men offered significantly higher ratings as fans than those offered by women. Men also offered higher ratings for most of the sport consumption motives. Interestingly, there were two motives that women and men rated equally high: for the action of sports and the opportunity to escape from one’s daily routine. Finally, rather than use gender as a marker, Wann and Waddill (2003) examined differences based on self-reported gender orientation (i.e., masculinity and femininity). Masculinity was the most powerful predictor of sports-viewing motivations, but for family-oriented motivations, femininity was the most important predictor.

Fanship for Other Genres of Programming

Two decades ago, when Gantz (1981) explored the motives for watching televised sports, he found that viewers watched sports more actively than other entertainment programming. However, no additional research was conducted to investigate how various programming genres were similar or different in terms of viewer motivations and behaviors. Studies have been conducted about soap opera fans and, more recently, about fans for reality programs.

Harrington and Bielby (1995) recruited adults from soap opera fan clubs and found several underlying traits and behavioral patterns. Almost all of the fans they recruited were female and White. Most watched a good number of soap operas (i.e., they were fans of the genre, not just a specific show), preferred to watch alone, and talked with others about the programs. Most also subscribed to fan magazines and kept up with the shows by following plot summaries provided by those vehicles. Bielby, Harrington, and Bielby (1999) investigated fan activities at three sites: fan clubs, daytime magazines, and electronic bulletin boards. Magazines gave fans ownership of visible criticism. Similarly, electronic bulletin boards provided a sense of legitimacy to fans’ reactions and critiques of story lines and provided a collective sense of identity. They represented an important outlet for those who had made a significant cognitive and affective investment in the ongoing story lines of their favorite soap operas. In examining the Internet community of fans for the soap opera, *All My Children*, Baym (2000) offered a more detailed account of online activities among soap opera fans. A soap fan herself, Baym participated and observed interactions among fans between 1990 and 1993 and then in 1998. Conversations among fans focused on interpreting story lines and discussing character motivations and actions. Fans also actively tried to interact with producers and script writers to make the stories develop along the lines they preferred.

In the last few years, reality shows have been widely promoted and enthusiastically embraced by a large number of viewers (Friedman, 2002). Nabi, Biely, Morgan, and Stitt (2002) tried to find out the appeal of reality-based TV programming and assessed the premise, held in the popular press, that viewers watched to satisfy voyeuristic

instincts. That did not appear to be the case. Instead, viewers, especially those who watched on a regular basis, attended because these shows were perceived as relatively unique (e.g., unscripted, real people). Nabi et al. also found the gratifications obtained by viewers differed on the basis of the frequency with which they watched these programs. For example, regular viewers wanted to be entertained, whereas periodic viewers were more likely to use reality TV to alleviate boredom. In essence, regular viewers seemed to be a more active audience than their counterparts. Jones (2003) identified eight reasons for watching reality shows. These included gaining insight into people's behavior, to be entertained, because the shows were real and live, to predict the outcomes, and because people enjoyed being nosy.

Grossberg (1992) argued that "sensibility" differentiated fans from general viewers. Fans turned to and responded to programs with more affect than others who watched the same content. Foster (2004) found that fans of the program *Survivor* engaged in fantasy pools where they guessed the outcome of the show and competed with others, earning points based on the number of correct guesses they made. Through the online activity, *Survivor* fans battled each other, much as the participants did on-screen. From that perspective, Foster argued that *Survivor*—and perhaps other programs in the genre—appeared distinct from other fan cultures.

Research Question

After documenting that TV sports fans were active, involved, and invested consumers of televised sports, Gantz and Wenner (1995) called on scholars to investigate the differences and similarities of fans across programming genres. At that time, Gantz and Wenner suggested that the viewing experiences for soap opera or prime-time drama fans might have much in common with the experience for sports fans:

Soap opera fans, for example, diligently follow their favorites, read accounts of ongoing storylines, and talk with each other about recent episodes. Similarly, devotees of weekly series may set aside time in order to watch each week's episodes, get together with others to watch, talk while watching, respond emotionally to the unfolding drama, and eagerly anticipate each new episode. (pp. 71–72)

Yet, because soap operas were taped and fully scripted, viewers who cared might not celebrate as much or experience as much anguish as sports fans do after the significant victories or defeats.

When Gantz and Wenner (1995) called for that comparison, sports was the only regularly scheduled genre of live, unscripted, purely entertainment programming offered on television. Now, of course, reality programs come close to fitting the bill as well. All involve real people whose lives are affected by the programs. Viewers are told these shows are unscripted. Some are televised live. With the rise of reality programs as well as the continued popularity of other genres of programs that draw loyal

audiences, it is reasonable to assess commonalities in the viewing experience across programming genres. This study, then, is driven by the following question:

RQ: In what ways are the pre-viewing behaviors, motivations for viewing, concomitant viewing behaviors, and post-viewing behaviors for sports fans similar to—and different from—those experiences for fans of other popular genres of programming?

Method

The study was conducted using a student sample, consistent with a number of studies examining sports fans as well as studies describing the motivations for viewing other genres of programming such as soap operas and reality programs. College students, like older and less educated adults, watch a lot of television, have definite programming preferences, and are fans of a variety of programming genres. The nature of their viewing experience is not likely to vary from that of others in the population. In addition, the study was designed to examine within-group differences in fanship. Differences among college students are likely to be similar to those that might exist among other groups of viewers.

Self-administered questionnaires were given to students in six sections of two introductory media classes at a large public university in the Midwest. The largely close-ended questionnaire was extensively pretested. Many of the items were derived from those used elsewhere (Gantz, 1981, 1985; Gantz & Wenner, 1991, 1995; Gantz et al., 1995) in studies examining the pre-viewing activities, motives, concurrent activities, and post-viewing activities of televised sports fans. Items in the current instrument addressing sports-viewing-related activities as well as items designed to investigate motives for viewing other programming genres were generated by students in two upper level telecommunication courses at the same university in 2003 and 2004. Their task consisted of answering open-ended questions assessing viewership for soap operas, reality programs, situation comedies, daytime talk shows, nighttime talk/comedy shows, adult-oriented animation programs, and prime-time dramas. Items derived from their responses were modified to fit with a close-ended questionnaire and integrated with items assessing sports-viewing activities. This questionnaire was then pretested with students from another upper level telecommunications course. As part of a class learning experience, these students also asked friends and family members to fill out the questionnaire (total pretest $N = 215$). Finally, the questionnaire was modified to its final form in order to address issues raised by this final set of pretest respondents.

Respondents

A total of 383 students completed the current instrument. None of these had participated in any of the pretesting stages. All volunteered. One of the study's authors was

present in each class to administer the questionnaire. Men and women were almost equally represented (51.7% male, 46.2% female, and 2.1% did not report gender). Ages ranged from 18 to 57 years; on average, they were 20 years old ($SD = 3.3$). About one in five (17.7%) were freshmen, 44.9% were sophomores, 29.1% were juniors, and 8.3% were seniors. Just over one in four (26%) lived in a university dormitory; others lived in an apartment/condo, a sorority/fraternity, a house, or with parents (34.9%, 20.1%, 18.2%, and 0.8%, respectively).

Respondent Instructions

In order to measure fandom, the questionnaire began by assessing how much respondents enjoyed watching each of eight genres of programming: sports, situation comedies, reality programs, dramas, nighttime talk/comedy programs, daytime talk shows, adult-oriented animated series, and soap operas. Current and popular examples were provided for each genre. Scales ranging from 0 to 10 were employed here, as they were for much of the questionnaire. With enjoyment, 0 meant respondents did not enjoy the genre at all, and 10 meant they enjoyed watching that type of show a great deal. Students were then asked to estimate the number of hours each week during the school year they spent watching each of those programming genres. They also were asked to indicate the number of hours they spent each day watching sports news on television as well as following sports news on the Web. These items were included to better differentiate sports fans from those who simply reported a high degree of enjoyment with televised sports. Otherwise, as found elsewhere (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000), a majority of these respondents would have identified themselves as sports fans.

After filling out the enjoyment and exposure items, respondents were told that, for the rest of the questionnaire, they were to focus on sports and the type of show other than sports they scored highest among the enjoyment items. If they had a tie, they were told to pick one of the tied types of shows. In all cases, respondents wrote down the genre they selected. They also listed their favorite show within that genre as well as their favorite sport. (Collectively, respondents listed dozens of specific shows and well over a dozen different sports.) All respondents then addressed each of the items on the questionnaire as the items related to watching sports and as the items related to their (other) favorite type of show. Each item was listed once. There were two blanks next to each item: one for sports and the other for their (other) favorite type of show. Respondents placed their scores for each genre in the blanks corresponding to each item.

Sports fans were defined by the researchers based on responses to the questions that measured respondent enjoyment of sports programming, the amount of time they spent following sports news on TV, and the amount of time they followed sports news on the Web. Borrowing from Gantz and Wenner (1995), sports fans were defined as those respondents who, in addition to simply expressing a high degree of enjoyment

from watching televised sports, also reported more actively seeking out supplemental, sports-related information, both on television and via the Internet. In this study, sports fans were those who scored at least an 8 on the enjoyment item, watched at least an hour a day of sports news on television, and spent at least an hour daily following sports news on the Web.

Respondents were defined as fans of one of the other programming genres if they did not qualify as a sports fan and if they scored an 8 or higher on the enjoyment item for the genre they had written down as their favorite. Respondents who did not give an enjoyment score of at least 8 for their favorite genre ($n = 25$) were not included in the analyses.

Most of the questionnaire focused on four elements of the viewing experience: what people did before their show came on, their motives for watching, the things they did and felt while watching, and the behaviors and feelings they experienced after viewing. Across areas, respondents used a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 meant the item did not apply to them at all and 10 meant it applied a great deal to them. Respondents answered each item first as it related to sports and then as it related to their favorite type of show.

Measures

Pre-Viewing Behaviors. Pre-viewing behaviors were as follows: "read a magazine or newspaper article about the show (game) beforehand"; "read something on the Web about it"; "plan your schedule so you'll be able to watch"; "think about what might happen on the show (game)"; "plan to get together with friends to watch"; "plan to go to a bar or restaurant to watch"; "participate in online chat groups about the show (game)"; "talk with your friends (on the phone, face-to-face, online) about it"; "make sure you are wearing something/holding something lucky or that you have worn/held before when watching the show (game)"; "bet (for money) on the likely outcome"; and "bet (not for money) on the likely outcome."

Motivations. Motivations were as follows: "because there's nothing else on"; "to relieve stress and escape from pressures of the day"; "to have something to talk about with your friends"; "because you don't want to miss a thing on the show or game"; "because you care about the characters, players, teams, or people"; "it's something to do with a romantic partner"; "it relates to your life"; "to see who does well/who wins"; "to put aside responsibilities, including studying, for a while"; "because the shows/games are popular"; "to feel connected with the characters, players, or teams"; "to make fun of the characters, players, or teams"; "to spark your imagination"; "because others are watching"; "to be in the know"; "to follow your bets"; "because the characters, players, or teams are attractive"; "because you like the unpredictability of the shows/games"; "to observe fashion"; "it's an excuse to party"; "to add some excitement to your life"; "it's a chance to have an alcoholic

drink"; "to feel better about yourself"; "to keep track of fantasy leagues"; "to learn life lessons"; "to be part of a group that's watching"; "it's a good excuse to get together with friends"; "to follow a specific player, character, or team"; and "to kill time."

Concomitant Behaviors. Concomitant behaviors were as follows: "talk with others about the show or game"; "talk with others about other things"; "tell people to be quiet so you can hear everything"; "have an alcoholic drink"; "get drunk/hammered"; "bet on what might happen"; "yell out at the characters, players, teams, or action"; "feel anxious"; "yell/argue/fight"; "have a snack or a meal"; "hope (or pray) for an outcome you want"; "study or read"; "feel excited"; "feel happy when your favorite character, player, or team does well"; "feel sad or depressed when your favorite character, player, or team does poorly"; and "feel mad when your favorite character, player, or team does poorly."

Post-Viewing Behaviors. Post-viewing behaviors were as follows: "read about the characters, players, shows, teams, or games in the newspaper"; "watch more about it on TV"; "check the Web to read more about it"; "participate in chat groups about it"; "hang out with your friends after watching"; "write to the actors, players, or teams"; "talk with your friends about it"; "stay in a good mood for a while if your favorite character, player, or team did well"; "stay in a bad mood for a while if your favorite character, player, or team did poorly"; "don't do anything related to the show or game once it's over, you don't think about it until the next show or game"; and "drink more."

Based on their responses to the three items measuring sports fandom, 107 respondents were identified as sports fans. Not surprisingly, most (86%) were men. Data from these respondents on their favorite type of program (other than sports) were excluded from the analyses. Of those respondents who did not meet the definition for sports fans, a total of 94 met the criteria set forth for situation comedy fans (i.e., listed it as their favorite genre and gave it an enjoyment score of 8 or higher). Forty-nine respondents met the criteria for fans of adult-oriented animation programs, 45 for drama fans, 30 for fans of reality programs, and 21 for fans of nighttime talk/comedy programs. Fans clearly enjoy watching their favorite genre. On the 0 to 10 enjoyment scale used, fans for each genre averaged from 9.4 to 9.7 (see Table 1). The remaining programming genres assessed (daytime talk shows and soap operas) received scant support. Respondents who picked these genres as their favorites or who did not list a favorite genre ($n = 12$) were excluded from the analyses.

For the analyses, programming genres were dummy coded. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted separately for the pre-viewing behaviors, motivations, concomitant behaviors, and post-viewing behaviors mentioned previously using the genre of fans as a factor, with gender controlled. The MANOVA results showed a significant effect of the genre of fans on pre-viewing behaviors,

Table 1
Fans' Gender, Enjoyment of, and Time Spent on Different TV Genres

Genres	Gender ^a				Fans' Self-Reported Enjoyment ^b		Fans' Self-Reported Time ^c	
	Male		Female		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%				
Sport	92	86.0	15	14.0	9.6	0.7	13.2	13.7
Situation comedy	17	18.1	75	79.7	9.5	0.7	4.9	3.9
Reality show	3	10.0	25	83.3	9.4	0.7	3.9	2.2
Drama	10	22.2	35	77.7	9.5	0.8	4.5	3.2
Adult animation	40	81.6	8	16.3	9.7	0.6	4.3	2.9
Night talk show	15	71.4	6	28.6	9.4	0.7	4.1	2.4

^aTwo situation comedy fans, two reality show fans, and one adult-oriented animation fan did not report gender. Percentages here were based on the numbers of valid cases. ^bOn an 11-point scale, where 0 meant the respondent did not enjoy the genre at all, and 10 meant the respondent enjoyed the genre a great deal. ^cHours per week.

Hotelling's $F(55, 1552) = 2.90, p < .001$; viewing motivations, Hotelling's $F(145, 1462) = 1.48, p < .001$; concomitant behaviors, Hotelling's $F(80, 1522) = 1.31, p < .05$; and post-viewing behaviors, Hotelling's $F(55, 1532) = 2.58, p < .001$. The controlled factor of gender also had a significant effect on those four sets of dependent variables, Hotelling's $F(11, 312) = 3.85, p < .001$; Hotelling's $F(29, 294) = 2.65, p < .001$; Hotelling's $F(16, 306) = 2.39, p < .005$; and Hotelling's $F(11, 308) = 2.13, p < .05$, respectively. Pairwise post hoc comparisons (Bonferroni tests) were conducted for each item.

Results

Pre-Viewing Behaviors

Fans of televised sports were likely to engage in a variety of pregame planning and information search activities. They were most likely to think about what might happen in the game, talk with friends about it, and plan their schedules in advance in order to watch the game. These three items received a mean response above 7 on the 0 to 10 scale used (see Table 2). Sports fans were also likely to plan to get together with friends to watch and to read something about the game on the Web, in a magazine, or in a newspaper article. Each of these items received a mean score of at least 5.

Reality programming fans were most likely to plan to get together to watch the shows, plan their schedules, and think about the shows. Those were the only items with mean scores of at least 5. Fans of prime-time dramas were most likely to plan to

Table 2
Summary of Estimated Marginal Means for Pre-Viewing Behaviors of Fans

Behaviors	Sport (<i>n</i> = 103)		Situation Comedy (<i>n</i> = 90)		Reality (<i>n</i> = 28)		Drama (<i>n</i> = 45)		Animation (<i>n</i> = 47)		Night Talk Show (<i>n</i> = 21)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Think about*	8.0 _{abcd}	0.5	4.8 _a	0.5	5.0	1.0	4.9 _b	0.6	3.4 _c	0.7	4.9 _d	0.8
Talk with friends*	7.5 _{abcd}	0.5	5.1 _a	0.4	4.8	1.0	4.7 _b	0.6	3.1 _c	0.7	4.5 _d	0.8
Plan schedule*	7.4 _{abcd}	0.4	3.5 _a	0.4	5.3	0.9	4.1 _b	0.6	3.0 _c	0.6	4.2 _d	0.7
Read on Web*	6.9 _{abcde}	0.4	2.6 _a	0.4	2.2 _b	0.9	3.7 _{cf}	0.5	1.3 _{df}	0.6	3.2 _e	0.7
Plan get together*	6.5 _a	0.5	4.9	0.5	5.7	1.0	5.1	0.6	2.9 _a	0.7	4.9	0.8
Read*	5.9 _{abcde}	0.4	2.0 _a	0.4	1.4 _b	0.8	3.0 _c	0.5	1.1 _d	0.6	1.5 _e	0.7
Plan to go to a bar*	4.8 _{ab}	0.5	2.7 _a	0.5	4.2	1.0	3.1	0.6	1.4 _b	0.7	3.3	0.8
Wear*	3.6 _{ab}	0.5	1.4 _a	0.4	2.5	1.0	1.8	0.6	0.8 _b	0.7	1.4	0.8
Bet (not for money)	3.3	0.5	2.4	0.5	3.0	1.0	2.4	0.6	1.1	0.7	2.6	0.8
Bet (for money)	2.1	0.4	1.4	0.4	1.1	0.8	2.7	0.5	0.9	0.6	2.1	0.7
Chat online	0.7	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4

Note: Subscripts following group means indicate significant ($p < .05$) Bonferroni comparisons between groups.

*Significant ($p < .05$) main effect on item, controlling for gender.

get together with friends to watch the shows, scoring a mean slightly above 5 for this item. Those favoring situation comedies were most likely to talk with their friends about the shows, with a mean of this item slightly above 5. Fans of nighttime talk/comedy shows were most likely to think about what might happen on the shows and plan to get together with friends to watch the shows, with means just under 5. The strongest pre-viewing behavior for adult-oriented animation fans was thinking about what might happen on the shows, with the mean scale response just above 3. Mean scores here barely reached 5 for situation comedy fans and were below 5 for adult-oriented animation fans.

Compared to fans of the other genres assessed, sports fans were clearly more active as they prepared to watch their favorite program. Differences among fan groups were significant for 8 of the 11 pre-viewing activities assessed. In each case of significant differences between means, the item applied most to sports fans. Compared to fans of situation comedies, reality programs, dramas, nighttime talk/comedy programs, and adult-oriented animated series, sports fans were more likely to read a magazine, newspaper, or Web site account beforehand. The only preprogram activities that did not record differences between sports fans and any other group of fans were betting on likely outcomes (either for money or other things) and participating in online chat groups about the program. Across fan groups, participating in online chat groups received low scores.

Reality show, situation comedy, and drama fans were most similar to sports fans in their pre-viewing behaviors. Fans in each group were likely to think about what might happen during upcoming programs. Although members of all four fan groups also tended to talk with friends regarding upcoming programming, sports fans reported being significantly more likely to do so than situation comedy and drama fans.

Motivations

Sports fans offered at least modest agreement (i.e., mean score of at least 5) with 13 of the 29 viewing motivations assessed (see Table 3). Leading the way here were six motivations that had mean responses above 7, including three that averaged at least 8. These fans turned to televised sports to see who does well/wins; because they care about the players and teams; because they like the unpredictability of the game; so they could follow their favorite player or team; to put aside responsibilities, including studying, for a while; and because they did not want to miss a thing in the game. Other than putting aside responsibilities and enjoying the unpredictability, these motivations signal an emotional commitment to a player or team. Sports fans tune in to watch because they care about the outcomes. For sports fans, viewing is more often purposive and content oriented rather than a last-ditch alternative when there is nothing else to do or nothing else on television.

To see who wins or does well was an important motivation for fans of situation comedies, reality programs, dramas, and adult-oriented animation shows. Here, situ-

Table 3
Summary of Estimated Marginal Means for Motives of Fans

Motives	Sport (<i>n</i> = 103)		Situation Comedy (<i>n</i> = 90)		Reality (<i>n</i> = 28)		Drama (<i>n</i> = 45)		Animation (<i>n</i> = 48)		Nigh Talk Show (<i>n</i> = 20)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
See who does well/wins*	8.6 _{abcd}	0.5	6.2 _a	0.4	7.3	1.0	6.1 _b	0.6	5.5 _c	0.6	4.9 _d	0.8
Care about*	8.3 _{abcd}	0.5	4.5 _a	0.5	5.6	1.0	5.2 _b	0.6	3.3 _c	0.7	4.2 _d	0.8
Follow a character*	8.1 _{abcd}	0.5	4.9 _a	0.5	6.3	1.1	4.5 _b	0.7	3.8 _c	0.7	4.8 _d	0.9
Like the unpredictability*	7.5 _{abcd}	0.5	3.9 _a	0.5	5.8	1.1	4.3 _b	0.6	3.6 _c	0.7	3.7 _d	0.8
Put aside responsibilities*	7.4 _{ab}	0.5	4.8 _a	0.5	7.0	1.1	6.3	0.6	3.6 _b	0.7	6.4	0.9
Not miss anything*	7.3 _{abcd}	0.5	3.1 _a	0.4	5.5	1.0	4.0 _b	0.6	2.5 _c	0.6	3.9 _d	0.8
Relieve stress*	6.1 _{abcd}	0.4	2.6 _a	0.4	3.9	0.9	3.3 _b	0.5	2.2 _c	0.6	2.7 _d	0.7
Feel connected*	6.0 _{abc}	0.5	2.5 _a	0.5	4.4	1.1	3.5	0.6	1.6 _b	0.7	2.1 _c	0.9
To be in the know*	5.6 _a	0.5	3.7	0.5	3.3	1.1	4.1	0.6	2.6 _a	0.7	3.6	0.8
Add excitement*	5.6 _{abcd}	0.5	2.9 _a	0.5	4.6	1.0	2.6 _b	0.6	2.4 _c	0.7	2.6 _d	0.8
To get together	5.4	0.5	4.8	0.5	4.2	1.1	4.7	0.7	3.3	0.7	4.0	0.9
Something to talk about*	5.1 _{ab}	0.5	3.1 _a	0.4	4.2	1.0	3.9	0.6	1.5 _b	0.6	3.0	0.8

It is popular*	5.1 _a	0.5	4.0	0.5	5.6	1.0	4.0	0.6	1.8 _a	0.7	2.4	0.9
Relate to your life*	3.9	0.5	2.1	0.5	3.5	1.0	2.7	0.6	1.6	0.6	2.1	0.8
Attractive characters*	3.8 _a	0.4	2.1	0.4	2.1	0.9	1.9	0.5	1.0 _a	0.6	1.5	0.7
To kill time	3.7	0.5	4.1	0.5	2.9	1.1	4.2	0.6	3.4	0.7	4.1	0.9
Keep track: fantasy*	3.5 _{abcd}	0.4	0.7 _a	0.4	1.0	0.9	0.8 _b	0.5	0.6 _c	0.6	0.8 _d	0.7
An excuse to party	3.4	0.5	2.8	0.5	2.0	1.1	3.0	0.6	2.2	0.7	2.5	0.9
Others are watching	3.4	0.5	3.8	0.5	3.3	1.1	3.6	0.6	2.2	0.7	3.6	0.8
Make fun	3.2	0.5	2.3	0.4	1.9	1.0	2.9	0.6	2.5	0.6	3.0	0.8
Chance to have a drink	3.1	0.7	3.1	0.7	2.7	1.6	2.1	0.9	1.7	1.0	2.3	1.2
Follow your bets*	2.8	0.4	1.2	0.4	0.4	0.9	2.3	0.5	0.8	0.6	1.8	0.7
To be part of a group	2.7	0.5	3.3	0.4	2.2	1.0	2.7	0.6	1.8	0.6	2.1	0.8
Spark your imagination	2.4	0.4	1.8	0.4	1.3	0.8	1.3	0.5	1.1	0.5	1.3	0.6
Nothing else on TV	2.4	0.5	3.7	0.5	2.6	1.0	3.2	0.6	2.6	0.7	2.9	0.8
Feel better*	2.1 _a	0.3	1.1	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.4 _a	0.5	0.5	0.6
Do with a partner	1.5	0.4	1.6	0.4	2.7	0.9	1.9	0.5	0.5	0.6	2.5	0.7
Learn life lessons	1.3	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.5
To observe fashion	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.4

Note: Subscripts following group means indicate significant ($p < .05$) Bonferroni comparisons between groups.

*Significant ($p < .05$) main effect on item, controlling for gender.

ation comedy fans, reality programming fans, and drama fans were closest to sports fans. Reality program fans offered at least modest agreement with five other motivations: to not miss anything on the show; to put aside responsibilities, including studying, for a while; for the unpredictability of the program; to follow specific characters; and because they care about the characters. Beyond watching to see who did well, prime-time drama fans watched because they care about the characters; to put aside responsibilities for awhile; and to follow characters. Those who liked nighttime talk shows were interested in putting aside their responsibilities for awhile. No additional motivation received a mean of at least 5 for this genre.

For 15 of the 29 motivation items assessed, sports fans offered significantly different responses than those provided by at least one of the other groups of fans. Even with the item to see who wins or does well—which generated the highest score across most groups—sports fans offered significantly higher scores than those who preferred situation comedies, dramas, adult-oriented animation shows, and nighttime talk/comedy shows. Reality program fans were most closely aligned with sports fans, with no viewing motivation receiving significantly different mean scale responses between fans of these two genres. Sports fans more frequently differed with each of the other programming genres. In each case, the sports fan was more motivated.

Concomitant Behaviors

Across programming genres, respondents offered modest to strong support for a good number of the affective responses and concomitant behaviors assessed (see Table 4). Sports fans offered at least modest support ($M > 5$) for 11 of the 16 behaviors assessed. Leading the list here, with a mean score close to 9, was feeling happy when their favorite character, player, or team did well. That item also was the highest rated for fans of four of the remaining five genres (the lone exception being nighttime talk/comedy shows), although scores were not quite as high. Sports fans were also likely to strongly endorse (i.e., mean scores no lower than 7) feeling excited, feeling sad or depressed when their favorite player or team did poorly, feeling mad when their favorite player or team did poorly, yelling at a player/character, hoping or praying for a positive outcome, and talking about the show/game. Three of the remaining four highly scored items for sports fans signified active viewing and keen interest in the action on the screen. Sports fans were likely to feel anxious, argue or fight, and tell people to be quiet. The fourth item was having a snack or meal. That motivation received mean scores of at least 5 among reality, prime-time drama, situation comedy, and nighttime talk/comedy show fans as well.

With this set of items, both reality program and prime-time drama fans came closest to sports fans. In addition to feeling happy when their favorites did well, reality and drama fans were likely to feel excited and talk about the show. Although mean scores for both groups were never as high as those of sports fans, they also were not signifi-

Table 4
Summary of Estimated Marginal Means for Concomitant Responses of Fans

Behaviors	Sport (n = 105)		Situation Comedy (n = 88)		Reality (n = 28)		Drama (n = 45)		Animation (n = 48)		Night Talk Show (n = 19)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Happy when does well*	8.7 _{abc}	0.5	6.4 _a	0.5	7.1	1.1	7.7	0.6	5.7 _b	0.7	5.3 _c	0.9
Excited*	7.8 _{ab}	0.5	5.3 _a	0.5	6.1	1.0	6.1	0.6	4.3 _b	0.7	5.2	0.8
Sad when does poorly*	7.5 _{abc}	0.5	4.2 _a	0.5	4.2	1.2	5.9	0.7	3.5 _b	0.7	3.6 _c	0.9
Mad when does poorly*	7.3 _{abc}	0.5	4.1 _a	0.5	4.3	1.1	5.3	0.7	2.7 _b	0.7	3.2 _c	0.9
Yell out at the character*	7.3 _{ab}	0.5	4.5 _a	0.5	4.4	1.1	5.5	0.7	3.2 _b	0.7	4.6	0.9
Hope/pray*	7.2 _{abc}	0.5	4.4 _a	0.5	6.2	1.1	4.5 _b	0.7	2.8 _c	0.7	4.1	0.9
Talk about show/game*	7.1 _a	0.5	6.2	0.5	6.2	1.1	6.3	0.6	4.0 _a	0.7	5.6	0.9
Anxious*	6.8 _a	0.5	5.0	0.5	4.2	1.1	4.9	0.7	3.4 _a	0.7	4.3	0.9
Have a snack/meal*	6.4 _a	0.5	5.6 _b	0.5	5.0	1.0	5.8 _c	0.6	3.1 _{abc}	0.6	5.5	0.8
Argue/fight*	5.3 _{ab}	0.5	2.4 _a	0.5	2.7	1.0	3.0	0.6	1.5 _b	0.7	2.7	0.8
Tell people to be quiet*	5.0 _{ab}	0.5	2.5 _a	0.5	3.0	1.0	3.2	0.6	1.4 _b	0.7	3.0	0.8
Talk about other things	4.3	0.5	5.0	0.5	3.6	1.1	5.2	0.7	3.7	0.7	4.8	0.9
Have an alcoholic drink	4.1	0.5	2.9	0.5	2.0	1.1	3.9	0.7	3.5	0.7	3.4	0.9
Bet on outcome*	3.4 _a	0.4	2.4	0.4	1.5	0.9	2.6	0.5	1.1 _a	0.6	2.0	0.7
Get drunk/hammered	2.1	0.5	2.0	0.4	1.0	1.0	2.5	0.6	1.9	0.6	1.4	0.8
Study/read	2.0	0.4	2.2	0.4	1.1	0.9	1.4	0.5	1.7	0.6	2.4	0.7

Note: Subscripts following group means indicate significant ($p < .05$) Bonferroni comparisons between groups.

*Significant ($p < .05$) main effect on item, controlling for gender.

cantly lower than those offered by sports fans, with the exception that sports fans were more likely to hope/pray for a desired outcome than prime-time drama fans.

Situation comedy fans were also similar to sports, reality, and drama fans in their reports of talking about the show while viewing. However, there were significant differences between situation comedy fans and sports fans on half of the items measured. Situation comedy fans appeared to be less emotionally involved, although this may be a function of the items measured and the generally upbeat nature of situation comedy fare. Those who enjoyed nighttime talk/comedy programs felt excited while watching and also talked with others about the shows. Save for feeling happy, adult-oriented animation fans had no mean scores above 5. Perhaps they were content to simply watch and laugh.

Statistically significant differences between sports fans and at least one other fan group emerged for 12 of the 16 items assessed. These differences occurred most frequently, and generally were greatest, between sports fans and fans of adult-oriented animation programs (12 items). Sports fans were more actively involved in viewing. They appeared more focused on viewing and were more likely to feel—and display—a wide range of emotions. Three differences were reported for sports and nighttime talk/comedy show fans. For the most part, differences again centered on emotional responses.

Post-Viewing Responses

Even after the game or program ended, sports fans seemed more actively involved with their favorite program (see Table 5). Mean scores for sports fans topped 6 for 6 of the 11 items measured. Sports fans were most likely to say they would watch more about the game on TV. They also were likely to stay in a good mood for a while when their favorite player or team did well; read about the players, teams, or games in the newspaper as well as on the Web; talk with friends about the game; and stay in a bad mood for a while if their favorite player or team did poorly. The only post-viewing item that scored above 5 that had nothing to do with the game was hanging out with friends after watching.

No other fan group reported they would be likely to watch more about their show on TV as their highest rated post-viewing response. This is possibly due to the lack of programming options devoted to program analysis in genres other than sports. Hanging out was the most common post-viewing response, receiving the highest means for fans of drama, nighttime talk/comedy, and adult animation. However, for the latter two fan groups, no post-viewing item received a mean score of 5. Situation comedy fans were more likely to say they would hang out or talk with friends. For them, staying in a good mood placed third. Staying in a good mood was the highest rated post-viewing response for reality programming fans.

Sports fans scored significantly higher than fans of at least one other program genre on six of these items. Six differences were found between sports and adult-oriented animation fans. Indeed, scores for these two fan groups often represent the end points

Table 5
Summary of Estimated Marginal Means for Post-Viewing Responses of Fans

Behaviors	Sport (<i>n</i> = 104)		Situation Comedy (<i>n</i> = 88)		Reality (<i>n</i> = 28)		Drama (<i>n</i> = 42)		Animation (<i>n</i> = 47)		Night Talk Show (<i>n</i> = 21)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Watch more about it on TV*	8.5 _{abcde}	0.5	3.9 _a	0.4	4.6 _b	1.0	5.2 _c	0.6	2.9 _d	0.7	3.7 _e	0.8
Good mood if did well*	8.0 _{abc}	0.5	5.4 _a	0.5	6.4	1.1	6.2	0.7	3.7 _b	0.8	4.6 _c	0.9
Read about it*	7.9 _{abcde}	0.5	3.5 _a	0.5	3.1 _b	1.0	5.3 _{cf}	0.6	2.4 _{df}	0.7	4.7 _e	0.8
Talk with friends*	7.5 _{ab}	0.5	5.5 _a	0.5	6.3	1.0	5.8	0.6	3.7 _b	0.7	4.7	0.8
Read about it on Web*	7.2 _{abcde}	0.5	1.8 _a	0.4	2.6 _b	1.0	3.4 _c	0.6	1.7 _d	0.7	3.1 _e	0.8
Bad mood if did poorly*	6.1 _{abc}	0.5	3.0 _a	0.5	3.6	1.1	3.5 _b	0.6	1.4 _c	0.7	3.3	0.8
Hang out	5.9	0.9	5.5	0.9	4.3	2.0	6.6	1.1	4.4	1.3	4.9	1.5
Do nothing about it	2.3	0.5	3.4	0.5	2.0	1.0	4.4	0.6	3.9	0.7	3.3	0.8
Drink more	2.2	0.5	1.9	0.5	0.6	1.0	2.7	0.6	1.9	0.7	2.6	0.8
Chat about it online	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.5
Write to the actors/players	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.2	1.0	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.8	0.4

Note: Subscripts following group means indicate significant ($p < .05$) Bonferroni comparisons between groups.

*Significant ($p < .05$) main effect on item, controlling for gender.

on a continuum of mean scores for each item. Six differences were also recorded with situation comedy fans, four with prime-time drama and nighttime talk/comedy fans, and three with reality show fans. Differences in this section reflect a mix of affective involvement as well as, perhaps, easy access to follow-up information. Sports fans again appeared more emotionally involved. They stayed in a good or bad mood more often than their counterparts. Sports fans also were apparently able to tap into content not available to other groups. They capitalized on readily available, at times seemingly ubiquitous, reports and stories about the games on television sportscasts, the newspaper, and Web sites.

Discussion

Nearly a decade ago, Gantz and Wenner (1995) called on social scientists to investigate the ways in which fans of televised sports were similar and different from fans of other television genres. This study analyzes the pre-viewing behaviors, viewing motivations, concomitant, and post-viewing behaviors of sports fans and fans of situation comedies, reality shows, prime-time dramas, nighttime talk/comedy shows, and adult-oriented animation programs to determine whether there were similarities and differences across types of fans.

The short answer to Gantz and Wenner's (1995) charge is that sports fans, to a dramatic extent, appear to stand apart from fans of other types of television programming. Compared to fans of other programming genres, sports fans were more likely to participate in activities typically associated with fanship. Almost all of the significant differences found were between sports fans and other types of fan groups. One difference appeared across fans of other types of programming. Although this could be a factor of small sample sizes in nonsports fan cells, these findings suggest that, save for sports, other types of fan groups are essentially the same.

Sports fans are strikingly different from all other types of fans in their pre-viewing and post-viewing behaviors. Sports fans seemed to stretch out rituals associated with viewing sports as long as possible. They begin early, thinking about an upcoming game, searching for information about it on the Web and in print, talking about it with their friends, and planning their schedules so as not to miss any of the action. Even after the game ends, the game continues to play an important role in the sports fan's media diet. Sports fans watch news and recap programs and read about the outcome on the Web and in print. Unlike any other type of fan, sports fans relive the game again and again. Although survey data preclude establishing causal linkages, it is interesting to consider whether the seemingly endless replay of sports events factors into why sports fans' moods are so affected by the outcome of televised sports.

Perhaps the desire to extend the sports-viewing experience stems from the fact that sports fans, more than fans of other programming genres, identify with the competing athletes as well as identify with other fans. Serious fans of particular teams, players, or sports in general often consider their fanship as a significant part of their personal

identity. Fans have a vested interest in seeing that their team does well. When one's favorite team does well, victory serves to validate the mental investment (and often financial investment, if one considers purchasing team-related merchandise) fans make in the team. Validation here is positive and is likely to be linked with enhanced self-esteem. Reliving games elongates these positive thoughts and feelings. Talking about games with other fans allows fans to feel part of a cohesive group with common interests. This sense of inclusion also seems likely to result in positive thoughts and emotions. A desire to cling to these positive experiences seems likely to draw fans towards coverage of sports both before and after the actual competition.

It could be argued that sports fans appear more active than fans of other programming genres simply because sports content is so readily available. On the surface, this seems reasonable as sports generates a lot of press. Yet, other programming genres are well represented beyond the confines of their allotted slots on television. Today's cable and satellite television landscape features networks devoted to a plethora of programming genres. Countless magazines cover television programming. Most newspapers offer daily or weekly entertainment sections. Finally, there are Web sites for virtually every television program currently in production, some operated by networks or program suppliers and others by fans. There is, then, an abundance of program-related content for fans of virtually any programming genre. Again, the results suggest that sports fans are more likely than other fans to stretch the viewing experience beyond the program itself.

It also could be argued that the findings are a function of a sports-centric bias in the measures used to assess the audience experience with their favorite programming genre. A good number of items used did come from previous studies of sports viewing. Yet, only a few were sports-centric (e.g., the motivation "to keep track of fantasy leagues"). Other items from the sports studies were slightly recast to apply equally well to each programming genre (e.g., the motivation "because you care about the characters, players, teams, or people"). Still other items used in the study (e.g., "to observe fashion" and "it's something to do with a romantic partner") were far more likely to apply to other genres than to sports. Pretests confirmed the applicability of the items that were ultimately used—sometimes even to our own surprise. For instance, several pretest respondents reported betting on the outcome of reality shows for money or other prizes. (Las Vegas casinos accept bets on reality show outcomes.) Others reported using the dialogue in situation comedies to direct various drinking games with friends (e.g., alcohol would be consumed every time a particular character would say a particular phrase or perform a particular behavior). Finally, the researchers deliberately excluded items likely to apply only to those few who were extreme, hard-core fans (e.g., writing episodes for programs, creating program-related artifacts, traveling from city to city to follow a team or to attend fan conventions). Those fans exist for each programming genre but fall at the very end of the fanship continuum. Because this study sought to compare individuals who met a relatively low threshold for inclusion in particular fan groups, no reason was seen to focus particular attention on behaviors likely to be exhibited only by indi-

viduals who would be considered in the highest levels of fandom for sports or any other genre of programming.

It is worth commenting on the clear gender difference in preference for sports and reality shows. Fans of the former, as could be expected, were mostly men. What may have been surprising, however, was how heavily female-skewed the fan base was for reality programming. Although gender differences were statistically controlled, it is interesting to speculate whether reality programming may become a vehicle for fan identity among women that is analogous to sports programming for men. There are, at least thematically, very striking commonalities between the two genres. Sports and reality programming deal with human competition for which the outcomes have a substantial impact on individuals who viewers come to know and perhaps even care for. However, there are also subtle differences between the genres that may make the reality genre more appealing to women. First, the contests in reality shows showcase a substantial interpersonal dimension. Although sports contests feature rivals and rivalries, outcomes are dependent on athletic performance. It may be that women are more entertained or interested in observing the group and/or interpersonal dynamics prevalent in reality programming than the more physical conflict typically found with sports. This possibility deserves further study. Second, reality programming is constrained by the clock. Viewers know that, no matter what happens in the competition, an outcome will be determined at the close of that evening's episode some 30 or 60 minutes later. This may be quite appealing to female viewers who are not as interested in highly suspenseful television fare as are male viewers. Experimental research aimed at investigating these and other potential explanations for the findings seem warranted.

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