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FANSHIP SCALE DEVELOPMENT

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction 1

Chapter 2 – Literature Review 7

Fandom 7

Fandom or Fanship … or Something Else 11

Fandom Spectrum 13

The Four Continua of Fanship 16

Fan Affective/Emotional Ties 17

Fan Knowledge 21

Fan Community 25

Fan Engagement 27

Active Fanship and the Continua 29

Current Scales 30

Parasocial Relationships Scales 30

Audience-Persona Interaction Scale 34

Experience of Parasocial Interaction 35

Chapter 3 – Scale Development Method 38

Validity Evidence 41

Test Content Validity Evidence 43

Response Process Validity Evidence 45

Internal Structure Validity Evidence 47

Relations to Other Variables Validation Evidence 48

Convergent and discriminant validity evidence 48

Predictive and concurrent validity evidence 49

Reliability 50

Methodological Approach 52

Validation Evidence 52

Reliability 55

Chapter 4 – Method and Results 56

Expert Review 56
Results 57

Study 1 62
Results 63

Study 2 68
Results 69

Study 3 75
Parasocial Relationship 76

Experience of Parasocial Interaction Scale 77

Audience-Persona Interaction Scale 78

Scale Cut Points 79

Results 80

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusion 85

Recap of Scale Development: Expert Review and Studies 1-2 85

Factors of the Fanship Scale 89

Fanship Scale Comparison 94
About the Fanship Scale 95

Future Research 99

Limitations 102

Conclusion 107

References 110

Appendix A 118

Appendix B 119

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1 - Rank of Expert Reviewers ……. 57

Table 2 - Expert Review CVI Levels……. 60

Table 3 - EFA Results – Study 1 ……..……. 66

Table 4 - CFA Results – Study 2 ……... 72

Figure 1 – CFA Model ……... 74

Table 5 - Scale Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics …….. 81

Table 6 - Factor Correlation Matrix …….……. 83

Table 7 - Factor Correlations ……..…..……. 88

Table 8 - Final Fanship Scale ……..……. 89

ABSTRACT

Fanship is known as the connection an individual has with a fan object (e.g., celebrity, film, sports team, etc). Through this connection, individuals are able to build relationships, create social change, enact attitude/behavioral change, and much more. Researchers have started to explore the concept of fanship; the majority of studies focus on fanship in a critical or interpretive approach. While these types of research are important and needed for the field of literature, studies have not explored the aspects in a post-positivist style approach. This is the main rationale for the current dissertation.

The focus of this dissertation is to create a scale to measure fanship. The first goal of this dissertation was to understand the construct of fanship. While literature has explored the concepts of fanship and fandom, these theoretically similar yet different terms have become conflated. This dissertation attempts to define each concept in its own clear entity. From that point, the dissertation uses scale development to create measurement items that point to the construct of fanship. These items are then run through validation processes (e.g., convergent validation evidence) and collected data to run statistical tests (e.g., confirmatory factor analysis) to result in a fanship scale.

Through the three study processes, a total of 913 participants participated within this dissertation. The dissertation was open to all types of fan objects, and throughout all the participants, the results obtained a wide range of fan objects (e.g., Taylor Swift, University of Texas Longhorns, Marvel). The result of this dissertation is an 18-items fanship scale that has five dimensions: 1) fan emotional/affective ties, 2) fan knowledge, 3) fan community, 4) fan engagement, and 5) fan conversation. The final and fifth dimension is one that is a result of the study's findings to expand the field of fan studies research. Furthermore, this scale moves the

research from a transferable, interpretive, critical standpoint to more of a predictive and generalizability viewpoint.

Both critical and interpretive fan studies research is crucial to the literature, but so is moving fan studies into more post-positivist ideas. By expanding the fan studies research to the post-positive paradigm, research can start to understand fan studies in a new viewpoint. This fanship scale can be used to assist future research in the method of prediction of fanship influence, as well as understanding more of the workings of fanship, such as how types of fans (e.g., sports fans compared to film fans) display their fanship.

This current dissertation has a large focus on fanship itself. However, while being a scale development, a significant amount of this dissertation speaks to methodological approaches and validation evidence used to help make the fanship scale a valid and reliable scale. The results of this dissertation add to the field in many ways, from not only creating a scale itself, along with the results found within the scale development itself (e.g., discussing a new and fifth continuum), but also to taking steps in expanding fan studies into a new light.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In 1992, Henry Jenkins published *Textual Poachers.* This text was one of the first and earliest works within fan studies. Jenkins connected fanship to concepts of politics, capitalism, genre, and much more. This text analyzed how a fandom, such as *Star Trek*, can create change in capitalistic forms. For example, *Star Trek* fans started to encourage and ask for merchandise to purchase at comic conventions (i.e., comic cons). This encouraged concepts of capitalist from fans toward *Star Trek*. Jenkins took fan objects adored by many (e.g., *Star Wars)*, and analyzed how these popular cultural items were used within a group to enact some form of change.

The majority of the population are a fan of something (Booth, 2018). While some might have an issue finding an answer to what they are a fan of, they themselves still display aspects of fanship. Geraghty (2012) describes what is called "invisible fandom," in which someone is "unaware, or at least unwilling to recognize, the fact that the media pervades our lives so much that we all act as fans now" (p. 170). Fanship can be as simple as following aspects of a sports team, continuing watching a television serious, or even enjoying a product. While not just liking a product or knowing details of a sports team does not deem someone a fan. A fan is really one who labels themselves as a fan. However, as this dissertation argues, there are different aspects of fanship that can be displayed. Furthermore, while someone might not hold the self-proclaimed label of a fan, they might display aspects of fanship itself.

People might not claim the label of a fan; however, as scholarly research details, it is important to recognize the place of fanship and fandoms within the world. Furthermore, fandom has become more mainstream and visible to the general public, as well as claiming a significant place in the media environment. Fanship has lead to a large number of attitude and behavior changes.

Some changes could be through items connected to health communication, such as celebrities discussing COVID-19 (Lookadoo et al., 2021). As scholars have found, in both inside and outside health communication, popular culture can impact individuals in different ways. Stout et al. (2004) found that representation within popular culture (e.g., television shows) influenced the negative representation individuals had around topics of mental illnesses. Along similar lines, Lookadoo and Wong (2020) studied how the film *Silver Lings Playbook* could be used to discuss and impact identification with the film's characters could assist with support of those who have mental illness and reduce negative stereotypes around mental illness topics seen within the show. When thinking in terms of sexual violence, research has display a correlation of the representation of sexual media (e.g., television and music) consumed and sexual activity (Ybarra et al., 2014). Other scholars have discussed how the representation of sex, both the benefits and drawbacks, through media assist in sexual health. Falconer (2020) has found having more understanding and conversations about healthy sex through media like television can assist with the high rates of sexual violence and STI rates.

While research like this connects to items of popular culture and representation, both connect to items of fanship. As this dissertation argues, representation could connect to an item of fan identity. Similarly, when seeing items the representation leading to further conversations about what is being seen/heard in the media could be connected to fan community. While some might not classify themselves has a "fan," this dissertation argues that fanship is on a continua. As detailed in a later section, early works, such as Jenkins (1992), studied fanship in a dichotomous way in terms of a fan or not a fan; however, has research developed, fan studies started to understand fandom as a more involved process than yes or no. The interaction and

connection to a fan object (e.g., television show or celebrity) can lead to individual behavior and attitude change, but also social change.

As Jenkins' work developed, there became a focus on how fandoms can create *social* change. For example, Jenkins (2014) explores how fans use *Harry Potter* to facilitate social activism. Using the idea of the *Harry Potter* houses and the House Cup, Potter fans created a friendly fan competition, in which Potter fans rallied together to get voters against a proposition in the state of Maine. The Potter fans supported their own Potter house (e.g., Ravenclaw) and the house that contacted more individuals about the issues of the state proposition won the House Cup. Jenkins, along with other scholars, have started to explore these types of fandom influences. Other scholars like, Seles (2010), who studied how fans used a social media campaign to get fans to buy Subway sandwiches in an attempt to save the show *Chuck*. Another example is Bennett (2012), who details other examples of social change based on a fandom, such as how *The Vampire Diaries* was used to create environmental changes through signing petitions and raising funds for change. Most recently, Hinck (2019) introduced a concept known as fan-based citizenship (FBC), which explores the influence of fanship on political and civic issues.

The influence of popular culture on politics is something that can be seen throughout the world. Similarly, popular culture items, like film, tend to reflect aspects of the current world around us, and individuals can use these items to help them make sense of culture, political and social issues/topics. Given that fanship and fandom can be used to understand societal matters, Hinck (2015) finds it concerning that there is a disconnect with fan studies research with other communication disciplines, such as politics, even though there is a clear connection displayed throughout research.

Widening the scope is also important because as society changes, so do our ideals around topics, such as civics. Zuckerman (2013) discusses how our identities, both social and civic, are becoming less bound to social institutions, such as religion, and becoming more fluid with different civic attachment points throughout one's identity.

Scholars like Jenkins and Hinck (2015) argue that one developing civic attachment point is through an individual's fanship. As Hinck (2015) discusses, *Harry Potter* displays a large amount of social and political issues, such as the empowerment of young people. For this specific example, *Harry Potter* is a story of a young wizard who needs to take on an ultimate evil. Harry does this alongside his fellow young peers. People who are fans of *Harry Potter* might identify with a character from the book and film series for multiple reasons, one in which might connect to their civic identity and perhaps the notion that young people can tackle large societal obstacles. By connecting their fan identity with their civic identity, individuals might then create civic and political change. This type of parallel is one type of relationship that can be seen with fanship and politics, and Jenkins and Shresthova (2012) calls for further research between the two fields. However, fanship is not only connected to political topics, but can also assist in creating social change through other scholarly pathways, such as health topics reviewed earlier in this section.

It is important to remember that fanship is not a dichotomous topic, but instead fanship is on a continua. This dissertation argues that due to different factors and categories of fanship, there are different types of fans, as well as different levels of fanship itself. Not every fan is the same, and fanship is practiced differently by each individual (Booth, 2017). Just because someone claims the identity of a fan does not connect them to the attitude, behavioral, or social change that is seen through other fans. Today, a fandom can be world wide, and there could be

different type of subgroups within that fandom itself, and throughout the fandom, each fan is going to interpret and interact with the fan object differently.

Paul Booth (2015) explained how fandoms evolved and became 'mainstream': In the 1970s and 1980s, being a fan of something like *Star Wars* was seen as 'geek culture;' however, in the current climate, publicly being a fan has become normalized. Currently, going to movie premieres for the new Marvel film, claiming to have seen every episode of *FRIENDS* multiple times, analyzing Taylor Swift's music videos for every possible easter egg, and much more have branched out of 'geek culture.' Fandom becoming a mainstream concept is key when exploring fanship. While fanship has a clear connection to one's identity, fandom being mainstream has expanded the possibilities of the fanship and social change as fans may be more willing to openly enact their fandom in new ways, such as civic change.

As the idea of being a fan has shifted, so have fan studies. Much of fan studies work has employed interpretive methods, including ethnographic, interview, and rhetorical approaches. Fandom studies have explored topics that look at how the fandom community is organized (Hill, 2002), how individuals connect to a fan object (Groene & Hettinger, 2016), and the role media plays within fandom (Booth, 2015). Fan studies is still considered a relatively new field of scholarly research, often exploratory in nature, and it is still developing and changing with each study. This line of research has been key to developing the area, however few scholars have shifted from interpretive and exploratory studies into more predictive research. For example, Hinck's (2019) book, describes how various fandoms, such as LEGO or *Harry Potter*, are used to create civic and/or political change. Hinck's work, though incredibly insightful, followed the previous fan studies trajectory of exploring fandoms via qualitative methods. To enable a greater understanding of fandoms on a broader scale, I wish to enable quantitative scholarship via the

creation of a fanship scale, which will enable scholars to answer fandom questions that are more post-positivist in nature.

Scholars can use the fanship scale to explain additional aspects of fan communication. Other scholars have studied these increasingly digital groups via qualitative means, such as Hinck (2019), but the creation of a fanship scale would enable better triangulation and enable predictive research, as well as could be administered to large groups within fandoms to capture these fandoms potentially better. This fanship scale could be used in making predictions on fandoms within topics, such as civic and political issues (on a fan community level) or the likelihood of attitude/behavior change (on a individual fan level), in which will assist in evaluating fan messages, ideologies, etc., and how that specific message/idea might lead to a type of social or individual change. By creating a scale and facilitating the shift toward post-positivist research, more members of fandoms, along with their experiences could be included in research by using a more quantitative form of measurement, such as the fanship scale.

Through this dissertation, I first provide definitions and contexts for key concepts, such as fandom and fanship, which details the four continua of fanship, as described in Hinck (2019). I then detail current scales that are used within related research, along with discussing how those scales are not appropriate to use when seeking to measure fanship. Next, I detail validation practices, along with why and why not I use each validation evidence. From this point, I layout each study from expert review to study 1-3, including the methodological approach and results. The section of the paper discusses the results and how they are important to the field of fan studies research. I conclude with details on how the fanship scale can be used in future research, along with limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Fanship has been described as a deep connection an individual has with a fan object. A fan object is simply described as items, typically based in popular culture, that individuals love, such as television show (e.g., *FRIENDS),* films (e.g. *Captain America and the Winter Solder),* literature (e.g., *Harry Potter*), music (e.g., Taylor Swift's Lover album), celebrities (e.g., Emma Stone), and much more. These fan objects allow us to explore the world, as well as ourselves, through new avenues. Through some fan connections, the fan object is representing who they are or who they want to be. Other fans use the fan object to make connection through the fan community. While the examples previously stated are common, there is a countless methods of connection between fans and fan objects. Furthermore, fanship is not a specific mold or does not list a criteria of what one needs to do to become a fan. Fans might cultivate knowledge of their fan object, whereas others seek the emotional connection they feel toward the fan object.

Through this next chapter, I start by detailing aspect of fanship, as well as fandom, and how the two are distinct. To assist with this understanding, I explain how fanship is fluid, and how there are four different axis or continuum that each fan might display: 1) fan affective/emotional ties, 2) fan knowledge, 3) fan community, and 4) fan engagement. I concluded by looking at other scales that are similar to the fanship scale that I am creating. Within these sections, I attempt to explain why these scales are strong scales within their construct; however, they are not scales that should be used to measure fanship.

Fandom

Fandom is identified as a community of individuals connected through a fan-based object, and each individual has a connection to the fan-based object. This connection can be seen as a part of one's identity or one interacting with the object (Busse, 2009). Fandom "refers to

loosely interlinked interpretive communities … spanning a wide range of demographics in terms of age, sexuality, economic status, and national, cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds, formed around various popular culture texts" (Pande, 2018, p. 2), and therefore fandoms' composition can be heterogenous despite a common love of a fan object. Dean (2017) states that fandom "is an increasingly common mode of socio-cultural practice and pop culture consumption" (p. 3), which is why studies have explored a wide range of fan objects: comics (Burke, 2013), celebrities (Garthwaite & Moore, 2013), sports teams (Theodoropoulou, 2007), television shows (Booth, 2016). Many of these fandom studies attempt to understand the specific fandom and how the fandom culture is organized or functions. Within this next section, I briefly discuss the history of fan studies, as well as properties that are connected to fandom itself.

Fan studies first appeared within the academic literature in the 1990s; however, some scholars (e.g., Coppa, 2014) highlight both academic and non-academic works that can be seen as fan studies research prior to 1990, such as Ang (1985), who discussed the fandom and fans of the show *Dallas*. In terms of academic research, fan studies research has occurred in three waves.

The first wave of fan studies occurred in the 1990s and is known as the 'fandom is beautiful' era. Gray et al. (2007) denoted this wave as 'fandom is beautiful' because many of the studies cast fandom in utopian terms, where fandoms seemed very harmonious. This is a view that some scholars, such as Coppa (2014), have argued against. In the first wave, works like Jenkins (1992) and Fiske (1992), focused on works that were narrow in focus, based on the style of studies. These early ethnographic works looked at specific fan and fan object relationship. Though this is narrow in focus, the deep and rich data that came from these first types of studies gave a platform for future fan studies scholarship. Beyond this tension, the first wave of fan studies research "stress[ed] the subversive and productive aspects of fandom" (Dean, 2017, p. 3).

Jenkins (1992; 2013) discuss how comic fans went against *Batman* (1989), specifically the director Tim Burton, on the casting of Michael Keaton was incorrect for the role of Batman, and the fans attempted to change the outcome of the casting. Jenkins' (1992) work anchored the first wave and emphasized how fans could deconstruct and rework aspects of the fan object in new forms and subversive ways. For example, *Star Trek* fans advocated for merchandise at comic conventions, which eventually became a norm and expectation of such events.

Methodologically, the first wave of fan studies centered around ethnographic research – one in which the fans were viewed as a collective. Scholars like Fiske (1992) looked at fandom as "cultural tastes of subordinated formations of the people" (p. 30). Fandom within this era had a focus on how fan communities – fandoms – "worked together to help democratize the meaning-making in popular culture discourse" (Linden & Linden, 2017, p. 37). Studies, through ethnographic style methods, looked at how fan culture created change and new understanding through public discussion and communication with each other and the people around the fan object. Additionally, binary terms like fan/non-fan were prominent, with more fluid terminology developing in later waves (Gray et al., 2007).

For the second wave, studies shifted from looking at fan communities as collectives to analyzing individual fanship and subcultures of fandom. Research within this era takes on a more cultural studies tradition, and fandom is no longer conceived of in binary terms; rather, scholars conceptualize a spectrum of fanship as well as the hierarchical nature of fandoms. Part of this hierarchy of fandom is due to those who find themselves not in the mainstream. As Booth (2015) discusses, fandom has become mainstream, in a sense that it is cool to be a fan and anyone can be a fan. However, some fans argue that the mainstream fans are not truly fans, but only fans because the fan object has gained popularity and they want to be part of this popularity. This

distinction helps create aspects of a hierarchy and perceptions of who is a “truer” fan. Further, as fandom is normalized, it also becomes commodified, which places fans at the center of marketing and capital gains (McCourt & Burkart, 2007). Fans are encouraged to purchase and engage with industries and companies based around fan objects; however, fans need to recognize the company's ownership of the fan object. Meaning fans should not attempt to take ownership of the fan objects or divert from the capitalist exchange (Gray et al., 2007)—fandom is a one way flow, with fan objects created by professionals for public consumption. Within the second wave, there becomes a shift toward looking at subcultures of fan communities, yet there is still the focus on the audience, which was present in the first way. These studies still analyzed audience members, but scholars explored how fan communities started to invoke less homogenous methods of interactions and communication.

The third wave of fan studies research transitions from an empirical look at fan audiences to a conceptual one. Within the first two waves, studies focused on a micro level analysis, but in the latest wave, studies shift to analyzing items within the macro level of fandom. Fan studies in the third wave “help us to understand and meet challenges far beyond the realm of popular culture because they tell us something about the way in which we relate to those around us” (Gray et al., 2007, p. 10). Earlier works of fan studies analyzed the fandoms themselves, like a fandom ecosystem; whereas the third wave expanded outward to how fan communities interacted with other parts of society and culture. This wave started to look at how fandoms not only impact the individuals within the fandom but how fandom could affect outside life and create social change, such as through concepts seen within fanship. Furthermore, the third wave started to see a shift in how society sees and responds to fandom. As previously detailed, Booth (2015) described how fandom has become mainstream, in which being a fan of something is more

common. For the third wave of fan studies, this is important, especially to fanship and social change, since mainstream fandom is larger and more common than it has been in the past. This can lead to a larger body of individuals joining others to create change that is beyond the individual level.

Fandom or Fanship … or Something Else

Before continuing, it is important to make the distention between fandom, a fan, and fanship. Across the three waves, fan study scholars have analyzed and defined a fan and fandom in different ways. The definitions are fluid because each fan study adjusts for the purpose of the specific study; "boundaries are constantly renegotiated, and the meaning of concepts and ideals are redefined" (Linden & Linden, 2017, p. 17).

Like fandom, the definition of fan has been used in many ways. As Cochran (2008) discusses, fan comes from the Latin word 'fanaticus,' which means insane or mad. 'Fanaticus' has translated into 'fanatic,' which centers around the concept of belonging to a temple or devotee; however, fanatic evolved into the idea of excessive enthusiasm (Jenkins, 2013)—creating negative connotations of being a fan at times. Such definitions of fan lack this obsessive element. For example, Faggetta (2012) describes a fan as someone who likes a product in social media, and similarly, Zwann (2014) describes fans as individuals within media culture. Linden and Linden (2017) discuss how a fan has "much knowledge of, or a deeper connection with, the object of their attention" (p. 16). However, others have retained this fanatic quality. For example, this level of excess described by Jenkins (2013) can be seen in Hill's (2002) definition: "A fan is somebody who is obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV program, band, someone who can produce reams of information on their object of fandom and can quote their

favored lines or lyrics, chapter and verse" (p. ix). Hill's definition of fanship is the one used within this scholarship.

Fanship is an individual fan's connection to the fan object. Hinck (2019) describes fanship as a "deep connection to a fan object" (p. 9), and a fan object refers to a popular culture artifact (e.g., film or celebrity). Differing from fanship, fandom is a group of people (Coppa, 2014). The group is made of individuals whom all have their own fanship with the fan object.

Throughout fan studies literature, there is a conflation between the ideas of fanship and fandom, and the two terms have often been used interchangeably. One example includes when Jenkins (1992) discusses how the fans of the 1978 TV show *Dallas* would watch "the program in their own homes with little or no acknowledgment that others shared the enthusiasm for the series" (p. 22-23) These individuals watched regularly but lacked a community. In comparison, Trekkers (*Star Trek* fans), participated "in a larger social and cultural community" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 23). Jenkins discusses fans of *Dallas* and Trekkers as members of separate fandoms; however, *Dallas* fans have a fanship with *Dallas* but they lack a sense of community, impeding them from forming a fandom. Further, someone can be a Trekker, but if scholars are not speaking of the fan community the Trekker belongs to, then the scholarly discussion is on fanship, not fandom.

Other fan studies literature has also used the term fandom when discussing fanship. Sandvoss (2005) describes fandom as an emotionally involved consumption of a popular text. In this way, fandom can occur as a solo act. Dean (2017) uses Sandvoss' concept of fandom but discusses how a fan has a sense of oneself as a member of the community when later discussing fandom. Additionally, Dean (2017) discusses how throughout fan studies literature, scholars use fan object and fan community interchangeably. Even throughout Dean's (2017) article, that in

part discussed the interchanging issue of fan object and fan community, he himself conflates the idea of fanship and fandom as if they are the same. What was meant to clarify ends up adding to the confusion. Another example includes Williams and Bennett (2021) who describe fandom as a communal act, but within the paper keep referring to fandom as an action done between an individual (i.e., a fan) and a fan object. Within their article, there is little discussion of the community itself, but instead on how individual fans respond to a fan object. While researching, it is important for scholars to understand if they are looking at the individual or the collective to determine whether they need to investigate fanship or fandom. It is also important for this to be detailed and explained throughout fan studies research due to the muddying of fanship and fandom. In later works Jenkins, along with Tulloch (1994), discusses the importance of fan communities for a fandom and helps to clarify the terms.

Given this confusion, it is imperative to assert how I will use terms and define them in this dissertation. Fanship (i.e., being a fan) can occur individually, but to discuss a fandom, there needs to be a community. Just because someone is a fan, does not mean they are a part of the community of fans, known as a fandom. I define a fandom as a collective of individuals centered around a fan object. These individuals that make up the fandom will be referred to as fans. Thus, if a person has a close connection with a fan object (e.g., *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or Taylor Swift), they are considered a fan. When a fan reaches out to other fans, to be part of a collective, they are considered a part of a fandom.

Fandom Spectrum

Fandoms are not monoliths and there are different styles and types of individual fans. Within this section, I detail how previous scholars classified a ‘fan.’ As described within this section, an individual’s fanship should not be viewed as greater than another; however, when it

comes to terms of measurement, there might be fans that have higher aspects of fanship. As Hinck (2019) found, when it comes to fanship, there should not be an idea of a greater fan. By saying aspect, I am not saying that there is a 'true fan' or an 'elite fan,' but instead saying that an individual displays attitudes and behaviors that places them within the fandom spectrum. If this is the case, those who are higher on the fanship spectrum, could potentially have a higher likelihood of attitude, behavioral, or social change.

Gray et al. (2007) discuss how early research in the first wave 'overlooked' the larger fandom by only focusing on subsets of a fandom, and the second and third waves act, in part, as correctives to the first wave. However, scholars like Coppa (2014) have pushed back on this critique, stating, "It seems unfair to say that early fandom scholars overlooked the broad spectrum of regular fans" (Coppa, 2014, p. 74), and that it is unfitting to think the first wave fixated upon "the smallest subset of fan groups" (Gray et al., 2007, p. 8). Within the following section, I discuss how different researchers named and identified fans within their research.

Early on research looked at individuals in more dichotomous ways. In his early works, Jenkins (1992) (and Tulloch and Jenkins, 1994) discussed individuals in a binary form of 'fan' or 'follower': Fan is an active participant within the fandom, and a follower is an individual who watches the show religiously, and discusses the show, but does not engage in fan activities and communities. More importantly, a follower does not identify or claim the fanship. According to Jenkins (1992), a fan is attracted to other similar artifacts beyond the single text (e.g., the next *Star Trek* film or related artifacts); whereas a follower is focused on the specific fan object.

Attempting to distinguish the concepts of fanship, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) use the term 'fan' in discussing individuals like 'cultists' or 'enthusiasts,' terms meant to signal fans along a spectrum who are especially devoted to the fan object. Cultist "are closer to what

much of the recent literature has called a fan. There are very explicit attachments to stars or to particular programs" (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Scholars have noted issues with using fans as cultists and/or enthusiasts (e.g., Hill, 2002; Coppa, 2014). Hill (2002) discusses the issues of aliening a fan, or enthusiast of a fan object, with a negative term like a cultist. Cultist is associated with a group of followers from a social organization, of what is described as a 'cult;' however, Hill (2002) explains how some fandoms are devoted to an extreme that it seems cult-*like*. Thus, giving the idea of a fan, and then the next level of devoted fans of 'cult-like' fan to help keep fan terminology separate from what is known as a cultist and the negative connotations of this term.

Brooker and Brooker (1996) used the labels 'fan' or 'admirer.' Like Tulloch and Jenkins (1994), this binary distinction is self-identified by individuals. However, "admirers might not all be fans … and not all fans will be cult fans" (Brooker & Brooker, 1996, p. 141). Brookers and Brooker (1996) attempt to create a non-binary distention, showing that, like Tulloch and Jenkins (1994), fans are self-identified. Even though that is the case, there are 'admirers' (or 'followers') who watch the fan object more than other 'admirers,' the same that a 'fan' might self-identify as a fan, yet there is another 'fan' who is a cult-like fan (i.e., a 'bigger fan'). A fan in Jenkins' terms is more cult-like, and an admirer is not. Similarly, these labels are self-acquired. Thus, there is a blur between the label of who is a 'fan' and who is an 'admirer,' with no set definition outside of the individual self-identifying. Other scholars have also used terms like elite fan (McLaughlin, 1996), 'devoted fans' (Hill, 2022), and 'casual fans' (Linden & Linden, 2017).

Fan studies literature has not specifically created levels of fanship, but as studies describe the fans within their study, we can see a type of leveling being developed. The 'bigger' fans are seen as elites, more devoted, and cult-like; whereas, on the lower end, we see followers,

admirers, and casual fans. In the middle is what Linden and Linden (2017) describe the balanced fan: “the ideal fan for a brand (including TV shows) is a *balanced* person, and not a fanatic who cares ‘too much’ … or ‘too little’” (p. 18). It is important to remember that when creating levels of fanship and explaining the spectrum of fans, this discussion is about an individual’s fanship, not the fan community (fandom). Each individual fan might create a stratification and hierarchy within the fandom, and when it comes to measuring aspects of fanship, everyone has their own concept of what that hierarchy is, along with where they fit on the spectrum. Therefore, while some may agree on what constitutes an elite fan versus a casual fan, stratification is idiosyncratic and does not feature set parameters—there is no “set of minimum criteria that fans must meet in order to count as ‘real fans’” (Hinck, 2019, p. 10). Conceptually, the field has moved to viewing fandom as on a spectrum, and fans can express their fanship and identify in a variety of ways. As displayed within this section, fanship is not a yes or no type of finding, in which case, we cannot scale fanship through dichotomous lens. While there is no set criteria an individual needs to fulfill to be a fan, an individual can display their fanship in different ways. These different methods can be seen within scholarship and broken down into four continua of fanship.

The Four Continua of Fanship

While fan studies is still a newer area of scholarship, scholars have researched a wide range of fans and fandoms. By having this wider scholarship within the subdiscipline, it has been found that both fandom and fanship is not a perfect mold that fits across individuals or communities. Before creating a scale for fanship, we first need to understand the different paths individuals pursue as they build fanship, which can lead to possible social change. If the fanship scale only focused on one type of fanship, the scale will not successfully be able to measure multiple aspects of fanship.

Each individual fan has their own method(s) of being a fan and previous research has displayed multiple pathways of fanship. Hill (2002) discusses how we cannot reduce someone's fanship or fan attachment to one explanation. Other scholars have provided characteristics of a fan or fan experience, such as Hinck (2019) who provided four continua of the characteristics of a fan's experience:

> First, fans experience an emotional/affective tie to their object of fandom…second, fans cultivate a specialization of knowledge regarding their object of fandom…third, fans participate in a community of fans…fourth, fans engage in a range of activities that result in material productivity. (p. 9)

When attempting to better understand fan studies research, these four continua of fanship provide valuable reference points. It is important to note that these continua are not isolated and many of them connect and cross with other continua. I highlight each continuum and their connections in the section below.

Fan Affective/Emotional Ties

The first continuum is fan affective ties, which strongly details aspects of fan identity. Fan identity can be seen as how people connect to a fan object and/or how they claim the fan object to be a part of their identity. Fan studies research explains how fan identification is self-acquired. Early works (e.g., Jenkins, 1992) found fan identity as binary (fan or follower), and later works (e.g., Jenkins, 2018) describe fandom as individuals who share an identity, through a group of people who have a common connection to the fan object (e.g., fandom). There are typically aspects of the fan object (or within the fandom) that each individual fan makes a connection with, what Hinck (2019) describes as 'affective ties.' Once fans feel a connection with the fan object, they express that love and excitement. This expression can be watching

every episode multiple times or it could be showing support to your team by tailgating prior to every game while wearing all kinds of swag.

People might see themselves within the fan object, such as seeing themselves represented by a character on the television show. When looking at Collins and Stern's (2015) research of the show *Community*, they stated that "these fans feel that *Community* is a smart show, and that they are smart people, and they have to tolerate and put up with anyone else who does not enjoy the show" (p. 120). *Community* is a show that is based on a study group from a community college, in which the show itself pays homage to film and television storylines by displaying many tropes and cliches from well-known media (e.g., *Star Wars* or *Law and Order*). For fans of *Community*, they might identify with the playful nature of some of the characters or they might identify with the demographics or lifestyle of other characters. Additionally, they might identify with the intellect of the show and the writing of the show itself. Similarly, fans of *Harry Potter* have escaped to the magical world for multiple reasons. One being that they may identify with being the outsider or the weirdo in their current culture, and Harry Potter gave them a connection to other outsiders and provided an environment in which being different is often celebrated (Groene & Hettinger, 2016).

For many people being a fan is part of their overall identity. For example, someone might identify via demographics (e.g., race or sexual identity) or social labels (e.g. job title or being a parent), and in the same way, they might claim to be a fan of their fan object (Harrington & Bielby, 2018). When fanship becomes an extension of one's identity, they might introduce themselves or display to others around them that they are a fan of said fan object, which then communicates to others about the individual's likes, attitudes, and belonging within social groups. However, "to claim the identity of a 'fan' remains, in some sense, to claim an improper

identity and cultural identity based on one's commitment to something as seemingly unimportant and trivial as a film or tv" (Hill, 2002, p. xii). However, as Hill later discusses, the claim of fanship is important to each individual fan who claims it, and thus a worthy point of study for scholarship.

Technology has also enabled one's fanship and fandom interactions to grown, enabling fan identity to become more central to individuals. As social media became more common, individuals were able to start connecting with other fans despite geographic location. While interviewing a fandom expert, she described growing up and being a fan of a Japanese fan object; however, she had to celebrate this fanship on her own. She explained that now she is not having to be alone in her fanship because with social media and technology, she is able to connect to other fans across the globe. With the growth of technology and the rise of social media, claiming to be a fan of something started to seem less trivial, in part due to fandom becoming a mainstream topic (Booth, 2015). A fan in the 1980s might celebrate their fanship alone, not only due to the lack of social media, but also due to being a fan of something like comic books was seen as geek culture. However, in today's current social climate, fan culture has moved from geeky to popular. Wearing a Captain America shirt is welcomed by the larger society, which displays a membership to a fandom.

When understanding fan identity, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory can help explain aspects of fanship. Social identity refers to a sense of who an individual is through their group membership.. Social identity theory focuses on how individuals identify as a member of different social groups and derive value from their memberships. Tajfel and Turner (1979) describe a three-part process of social identity theory. First is social categorization, which includes sorting people, including oneself, into different categories, such as by economical class

or profession. Individuals categorize to help understand and make sense of people (including themselves) and their world. By placing people in these categories, it tells us something about who they are (e.g., they might collect Marvel comics and go to watch the films). The second part is social identification, which leads to adopting the identity of the social category. Someone who is classified as a Marvel fan, might then adopt the social identity of a Marvel fan. Finally, there is social comparison, which can be described as an "us versus them" mentality, in which individuals attempt to display how their social groups are favorable, creating an in-group bias against the outgroup, i.e., members of other categories. Such in-group bias helps individuals protect and elevate their membership of a social group. For example, Marvel fans will highlight the positive aspects of their fandom and denigrate DC fandom as a form of in-group bias.

Although many people are a fan of something, it does not mean that they claim the identity of fanship. Someone may watch all the Dallas Cowboy football games, but not claim to be a fan. According to Jenkins and Tulloch (1994), this would be a follower – someone who does not claim the social identification of a fan, yet still is connected in viewership with the fan object. "Being a fan is not merely about activity, it involves parallel processes of activity and identity" (Harrington & Bielby, 1995, p. 86). Self-identification is necessary for fanship, as well as being part of a fandom. To have the identity of a fan, one must recognize their fanship to the fan object. Further, an individual can be a fan and not part of a fandom. In the same sense as Jenkins and Tulloch (1994) concept of a 'follower' or a 'fan,' one might consider themselves to be a fan, but not have any contact with other fans or with a larger fan community. Harrington and Bielby (2018) discuss being a fan in private or by themselves. Fan identity is when someone is making a type of affective connection to the fan object itself and thus does not require connection to a fandom.

When thinking of fanship, understanding an individual's connection and identification with the fan object is key. Similar to works like Jenkins (1992), the fanship scale will understand fan identity as self-acquired; however, it will not include a similar binary distention and will instead offer more of a range of identification. Questions for the fanship scale focus on how an individual finds themselves connected to a fan object, likert scale type questions to enable capturing a range. Examples of a question will be "I am a fan of [FBO]" or "I would be happy to know others see me a fan of [FBO]." FBO being fan based objects.

Fan Knowledge

The second continuum is fan knowledge. Even though the discussion differs across scholarship about types or amounts of knowledge, the common thread is that a fan has some type of knowledge about the fan object. This knowledge can range from a Taylor Swift fan knowing her first radio song, a Marvel fan knowing details from both comic books and films, or a Dallas Cowboys football fan knowing the stats of the current season. Fan knowledge can be expressed in many different forms, which leads to the difficulty of scholars attempting to define fan knowledge.

Fan knowledge can be broken into two different areas of explanation, both of which often come back to fans defending their fan identity. The first area is a fan speaking to a non-fan. McLaughlin's (1996) discussion centers around the concept of an 'elite fan,' saying elite fans need "to come to the defense of their obsessions [fan object] and so have to articulate their values, their sense of why [fan object(s)] are important enough for obsessive attention" (p. 24). When attempting to defend the time and energy they put into the fan object, fans must communicate details and information about the fan object and fandom that displays the importance of the fan object. Examples would be someone having to explain why they have

purchased so much *Harry Potter* memorabilia or the reasons they supported the Free Britney (Spears) movement. The use of fan knowledge assists in explaining to others the importance of their fanship and gives them a reason for their purchases or their time invested. A fan needs to obtain specific and specialized knowledge that an 'outsider' or a 'non-fan' does not know, in order to justify to the 'non-fan' their fan identity. This knowledge is used differently with a 'non-fan' than a fellow fan because a fellow fan does not need justification for their mutual obsession.

Which leads to the second form of fan knowledge: how it is used inside the fandom. Within the fandom, fans might create a form of hierarchy, and to achieve a higher status, fans may determine that an individual needs to have higher knowledge of the fan object. A 'true,' 'expert,' 'good,' or 'elite' fan may possess a large amount of information on the chosen topic (Hill, 2002; Linden & Linden, 2017), and this may be used to distinguish a true fan from a more casual fan. Some fans who attempt to flex their fanship will do so through knowledge. They can flex their knowledge in multiple ways, such as knowing trivia about when a song was first released or which TV episode contained specific events or quotes. Fans might also take quizzes, through places like *Buzzfeed*, which may be enticingly titled, "Only a true [fan object] fan will know all of these answers," and then post their high scores on social media to display their knowledge of the fan object. Booth (2015) discusses how fans might also showcase their knowledge by list-making. Fans can create a list, such as the best Kelly Clarkson songs or the most popular guest stars within *The Office.* Fans might share their list, which may spur other fans to provide their opinions and engage in civil, or not so civil, discussion about the list's contents and ordering.

Additionally, if fans attempt to move up in the hierarchy, other fans might attempt to question their knowledge and whether they are "worthy" of ascension. In Hubbard's et al. (in

review) work, they discuss the concept of fan shaming, which occurs when one fan denigrates another fan's connection to the fan object. One method of challenging a fan's status would be questioning the fan's knowledge. Hubbard et al. explored Marvel fandom and found that many participants prioritized comics knowledge and may dismiss those who are not deemed literate enough in comics. For example, if someone only watched Marvel films and bases their knowledge within the cinematic universe, others might argue with the individual and say they are not a 'true fan.'

This cultivation of what kind of knowledge or how much knowledge is necessary, as previously stated, is not set in stone and different fans and fandoms will have different interpretations. As a scholar attempting to measure aspects of fan knowledge, it is important to remember that each fandom is different, as well as each fan is different. Therefore scholarly measurements of fan knowledge cannot ask fans about specific details of the fandom like a quiz, but rather need to attempt to measure a self-assessment of a fan's depth of knowledge and dedication to learn about items within or related to the fan object. While having factual questions within the scale could assist in measuring fan knowledge, the fanship scale itself is being created to measure across multiple fandoms. Having factual questions for one fan object in the scale would not benefit the larger scale itself. There are some broader questions that could be added (e.g., the year a musical artist debuted); however, the question transference from one fan object to another would still be unsuitable (e.g., a baseball fan). Additionally, questions like these may be subjective. Asking what was a music artist's first hit might be different based on the individual's perspective (e.g., the first one to hit the Billboard chart, the first to get X number of streams, etc.). Thus, broader questions would not work. Similarly, it would be difficult to go

from Taylor Swift to something like Marvel as these fan objects produce different styles of knowledge.

In parallel, the scale items need to consider time, or lack of time, an individual has with the fan object. For example, Kelly Clarkson originally became well-known as musician and later found additional success as a talk show host. An individual might consider themselves a fan of Kelly Clarkson, and what pulled the fan into being a fan of Clarkson might be her talk show. This fan might know a lot of details about Clarkson's show but is not able to fill in the lyrics to all of her songs. Comparably, a new fan may decide to move beyond Clarkson's show and learn all the lyrics to Clarkson's songs as a way to further their knowledge and fanship. Fan knowledge is specific to the fan themselves, and each individual fan might consider themselves knowledgeable in a way that fits with their orientation to the fan object, while others may view their knowledge as incomplete. Another example would be Marvel fandom. An individual might know tiny details from the films, yet lack additional knowledge based on the comics. Within the fandom, fans might consider this a lesser fan, which leads to fan shaming; however, this individual may still consider themselves a big fan of Marvel and very knowledgeable (Hubbard et al., in review).

For both examples above (Clarkson and Marvel), the fan with specific knowledge still has the chance to use their fandom to create social change. For the fanship scale, fan knowledge is about the self-identification of knowledge levels. Therefore, knowledge is more so about perception and whether and to what extent an individual perceives themselves as knowledgeable about the fan object. Measurements based on generalized knowledge perceptions will enable the fanship scale to assess knowledge in a transferable way across fandoms.

Fan Community

The third continuum is fan community. The fan within a community shares common interests with other fans (Jenkins, 1992), and the common interest centers around the fan object. Kim and Kim (2016) lay out three criteria found in the literature to describe a fan community: 1) fan connection and growth with other fans, 2) fans trust in other members, and 3) fans generate content with the fandom.

The first is the aspect of fans connecting and growing with each other grounded in their common interests. Fans associate with other fans based on the fan object. The association might be through joining an online fandom discussion or attending events, like movie premieres, with other fans. By creating personal connections and engaging in discussion about the fan object, the connection to the fandom grows deeper, so does the frequency of interacting with the fan community (Kim and Kim, 2016). As fans foster deeper relationships with the fan object, as well as other members of the fan group, the individual's connection toward the fan community is strengthened.

Once fans build a relationship and rapport with fellow fans, it leads to the development of the second aspect of trust. This aspect focuses on how fans trust other members within the fan community and trust information shared within the fan community. When fans post details about topics, an individual is more likely to trust the information coming from the fan community Kim & Kim, 2016). This aspect is important because some of the information posted might not be about the fan object, or only loosely related, and instead it could be information on civic or political topics. For example, members of the Harry Potter Alliance, a fandom group based around *Harry Potter*, might see a post on 'Wizards for Obama,' which was a type of campaign to get Harry Potter fans to vote for Obama (Hinck, 2019). Even though Obama did not have a

connection to Harry Potter, individuals might seek out more information about Obama or develop more favorable opinions of Obama based on their love for Harry Potter, and the trust within the fan community.

The final aspect from Kim and Kim (2016) is that fan community members generate content within their fan community. The content that is generated might be videos of analysis, memes of the fan object, or random posts that start conversations. As Fiske (1992) states fans circulate and produce text among themselves, what he calls textual productivity. He notes that fans do not create their text for money, yet for community development. However, as noted by Hill (2013), the idea for text development from fans discussed in Fiske (1992) is bounded by 'fans' and not the 'casual audience.' Hill (2013) further describes how community content generation has changed in the web 2.0 era, which is also supported by Booth (2010), who describes how fandom moved into the digital and mainstream era, shifting from a static online community toward a dynamic interaction between fans, in which user-generated content is an everyday practice. This to say, Fiske's (1992) concept of fan productivity still occurs; however, today it occurs more frequently and is open to all types/levels of fans. By engaging in these three aspects, a fan community is created and expanded as the fans within the community discuss and connect with each other, which can go beyond only fan object connections and relations.

An ample amount of research has focused on the hierarchy of these fan communities. As described above, hierarchy can be formed from multiple aspects, such as fan knowledge. Additionally, hierarchy can be developed using time of fanship. For example, older fans who were part of the fandom when it was less 'cool' or 'mainstream' may consider themselves to be truer fans than 'newcomer' fans (Hadas, 2009). In many fandoms, older fans are not as welcoming to newcomers (Berger & Heath, 2008). Within the fan community, fans who have

been there longer consider themselves to be pioneers within the fandom, and they are the reason the fandom is the way it is today (Austin, 2021), which often leads them to have more dogmatic ideals of how one should appropriately enact fanship and membership of a fandom (Hadas, 2009). This can lead to what was discussed earlier as fan shaming (Hubbard et al, in review), and create a toxic type of community.

Fans who consider themselves bigger fans than others can engage in toxic fan practices, such as shaming or doxxing, which can create a toxic environment (Proctor & Kies, 2018). However, not all fans and fandoms have the toxic idea of older fans being better than newer ones. Within the interviews for fan shaming (Hubbard et al, in review), many fans found older fans to become a type of guide for the newer fans. The older fan would provide resources and make connections to the newer fan. By doing this, the older fan makes a welcoming environment for new fans. Such a welcoming environment may be necessary to help facilitate fanship. If a fan community is toxic, newer fans might leave that specific fan community, and thus not contribute to content generation, community growth, or fandom-based enactments of civic change. When fans feel a sense of welcome and belonging, they will stay within the group, which will assist in the growth of the fan community and its potential to enact collective change.

Fan Engagement

The final continuum is fan engagement. Fan engagement focuses on how “fans engage in a range of activities that result in material productivity” (Hinck, 2019, p. 10). Fan engagement can be purchasing merchandise or writing fan fiction. Each are forms that the fan engages in, which results in productivity. Productivity might be increasing the collection of memorabilia or expanding a storyline through fan fiction writing.

There is no one set method of engagement, though ‘loyal fans’ are seen as engaging in multiple ways (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Scholars have researched how fans can be engaged in online communities (Bennett, 2014), commenting on the fan object’s social media accounts (Lookadoo et al., 2021), or through fandom websites. This type of fan engagement connects to Fiske’s (1992) concept of textural productivity, which displays how fans create and circulate text among themselves. There are systems put in place and created by fans to assist in displaying to other fans the material productivity that has been accomplished. For example, there are websites specifically designed for fans to create and share their fan fiction, while being able to view others (e.g., Archives of Our Own).

Fan engagement can be seen as either transformative or affirmational (Rust et al., 2009). When fans engage in transformative productivity, they are altering the fan object toward an outcome that fits into the fan’s own ideas. Thinking in terms of fan fiction, an individual fan might not enjoy the outcome of a film, thus, they create a new outcome that best fits their own desires. Alternately, fans might engage in affirmational productivity, which is when fans interpret details within the fan object and maintain the shared meaning of the fan object. Going along with fan fiction, a fan might write about details not mentioned in the film, such as if a character went away for a substantial time, fan fiction creators may attempt to fill in the gaps that were not described within the film narrative. The overarching storyline of the film remains unchanged in this type of productivity.

As Yoshida et al. (2014) discussed, a large amount of fandom research is about attitudes; however when discussing engagement, the focus centers around behavior, which can be seen in the examples above. Research that has understood fandom as a behavior engagement aspect has viewed fandom to be a transactional consumer behavior, such as fan engagement is a trade-off

between the cost and benefits of interacting (Rust et al., 2004). A lot of this thinking is transactional with a form of currency with the fan object. For example, purchasing a ticket to a sports event or buying a comic by a specific artist. Currency is also not solely based on an economical lens, but it could also be social type of currency. When creating fan fiction, that individual fan does not always earn money for their creation, but instead they engage in a transaction with other fans who are reading the fan fiction, which fosters and facilitates community. Fan engagement centers around economic and social type of resources and the exchange of types of currency/funds (both social funds and physical money funds), and how fans are supporting the fan object through this set up.

Active Fanship and the Continua

If someone has read every comic book about Spiderman, fan knowledge might increase compared to an individual who has only been able to read a handful of comics. If a fan checks the stats of Rob Gronkowski after each game, fan knowledge might be larger than a fan who watches the Patriots play when they have time. If a person writes fan fiction using the *Harry Potter* universe and includes their own personal stories and thoughts, fan identity could increase compared to a fan who has watched the films. And if a person attends every comic con and posts/comments on the online fandom group each day, fan community levels might be higher compared to someone who is not active in conventions or online groups. All of these individuals can be classified as fans if they identify as a fan, and one fan is not inherently a 'bigger' fan than another. However, we may consider some fans more active than other fans based on these examples. The question then becomes whether one's level of activity is related to each of the continua. For example, are more active fans more engaged with the fan community or more likely to identify as fans? And do these connections in any way affect one's fanship levels? To

assess these potential connections, this study will measure how active a fan is via measurements related to frequency or volume of engagement.

Current Scales

There are other scales that measure aspects of fanship, and I will utilize these other aspects in the development of my scale. As I discuss below, these scales do not adequately measure fanship on their own, necessitating the development of an original scale. The scales covered in the following section include parasocial scales and entertainment identification.

Parasocial Relationships Scales

The next scale worth exploring in relation to fanship is that of parasocial concepts. As stated above, parasocial concepts are often used in celebrity studies to help examine the relationship individuals have with a celebrity, which could lead to different outcomes, such as social influence or emotional affect. Similarly, fanship displays similar items, like identification with a fandom and emotional ties toward the fandom and/or fan object. Within this next section, I discuss parasocial concepts, their prior usage, and how some aspects of the parasocial scales are helpful to measuring fanship.

Parasocial interactions (PSI) and parasocial relationships (PSR) have been a large topic of discussion since the mid-1950s. The concepts of PSI and PSR have been widely researched, as well as widely debated. Parasocial interaction was first proposed by Horton and Wohl (1956), who were interested in the interpersonal relationships individuals formed with a person on television, as well as how media effects (e.g., camera angels) affected symbolic interactions between the media and the audience. Horton and Wohl (1956) describe the idea of a ‘persona,’ who is seen as an indigenous figure within the media, such as the actor, character, or person in an ongoing television show (e.g., an anchor of television news). Furthermore, while the ‘audience’

in mass media is often characterized as a large number of people, in PSI the audience is the individual, i.e., the person in their living room watching the persona on television.

When thinking about interpersonal relationships, there is a type of give and take from both the sender (persona) and receiver (audience). Horton and Wohl (1956) argue that even though this relationship is one-sided, there is an 'illusion of intimacy.' When watching television, the audience starts to form a relationship with the persona. The persona is unaware of the relationship formed with the specific audience but is aware of the larger audience's existence. For example, the news anchor knows that people are watching them report the news, but the anchor is unaware of each specific audience member. Even though the persona is unaware of the specific audience, they still give off specific cues that help build this relationship, such as eye contact with the camera and saying phrases like "see you tomorrow," which mimic actual interpersonal conversations (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The audience comes to believe that they (as an individual) know the persona in an intimate way, one in which others do not. They believe that they understand the persona's motives, attitudes, thoughts, etc. This overarching concept is called PSI.

Even though Horton and Wohl (1956) describe the concept of parasocial in a relationship form, it is important to know that there is a distinction between PSI and PSR. Horton and Wohl's (1956) research really focused on PSI, less so PSR. The research displayed PSI in a specific form: during the viewing experience. When an audience turns on the television to watch the news, the interaction begins; though, once the news finishes, the interaction is over. Later research with Horton and Strauss (1957) starts to explore the ideas of a long-term response to a persona. This is when the audience starts to have a more prolonged response due to watching the

persona day after day. Again, the concept is still not classified as a relationship; it is also limited to the daily interaction of the viewing period.

Later research starts to explore the concept of PSI. The Rubin et al. (1985) study is one of the most cited pieces throughout parasocial literature because it created the PSI scale, which will be used in the current study. Theoretically, Rubin et al (1985) propose PSI can be a long-time involvement with the persona. Rubin et al. (1985) describe social learning expectations, which suggests that as audience interaction increases, the audience is more likely to achieve a deeper state of intimacy with the persona. Additionally, the researchers connected PSI to the concept of media dependency, in which we are living in a culture that is dependent on media and that individuals need media throughout their lives. Audience dependency on media is crucial when looking at media effects because if individuals did not depend on media (e.g., news, television shows) to give them entertainment or information, media effects would be more limited. Research on media dependency shows that when individuals create a type of PSI with the media persona, media influence is strengthened (Rubin et al, 1985).

Rubin and Perse's (1987) study looked at parasocial related to soap opera characters, which looks at PSI with fictitious personas. Rubin and Perse (1987) explore the theory of uses and gratification more in-depth. As uses and gratification states, audiences shape their own media experiences (Katz et al., 1973). Additionally, people seek out specific media to give them the gratification they are needing. Similarly to seeking media/news that gives them information they are seeking, individuals seek shows/media that they have a parasocial connection. For PSI concepts, the audience is active, seeking out specific shows that will have characters and storylines that will fulfill specific gratification needs. If an audience member has a connection

with a persona within the show, they will seek out this PSI for gratification over a show that they do not have a persona connection.

In addition, Rubin and Perse (1987) find that there are three forms of involvement. First is affective involvement. This is where a friendship is formed. A large amount of this involvement is based on frequent and consistent connection and viewership, which connects to Horton and Wohl's (1986) original idea. The second form is cognitive involvement, which focuses on messages. People think more about messages that are more important to them, which may aid in getting individuals to think about things during and after viewing, which is key since Horton and Wohl (1956) found that PSI is only during the viewing experience. The final involvement is behavioral involvement, which is speaking to others about the persona and/or message, which again, moves beyond Horton and Wohl's (1956) more episodic PSI.

Even though the series of Rubin, Rubin, and Perse (1980s) articles have expanded the field of parasocial, they (along with other researchers) have added confusion within PSI and PSR. PSI is a mediated form of social interaction that is a one-sided, or asymmetrical interaction (Schramm, 2008), bound by the viewing process (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Dibble, et al, 2016) and the interpersonal relationship between persona and user only takes place during the media exposure (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). On the other hand, PSR is a long-term style relationship that extends beyond media exposure (Dibble, 2016), and is a relationship, which includes cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). PSI is restricted to media exposure, but PSR endures beyond a single exposure sequence. Rubin et al. (1985) created a PSI scale, which borrowed from other scales, but current research has argued that this PSI scale is not measuring PSI, but instead PSR (Dibble et al., 2016).

Audience-Persona Interaction Scale

The next scale that will be discussed is the Audience Persona Interaction (API) scale. Auter and Palmgreen (2000) created the API scale to address issues they found with the parasocial scale Rubin et al. (1985) created. The big issue that Auter and Palmgreen (2000) find with the PSR scale is that is a single dimension scale; whereas, PSR is not a single dimension concept. The API scale is complied of four dimensions to assist in better understanding the connection and audience as with a persona.

The first dimension is identification with favorite character. This factor seeked to measure aspects connected to how one might identify with a persona on television. Questions within this factor focused around the concepts of qualities and attitudes the persona might share with the audience member, and look at the affective connection that can occur when interacting with a persona. Speaking in terms of fanship, this is similar to fan identity, where there is the affective ties (Hinck, 2019) an individual has to a fan object.

Interest in favorite character is the next factor in the API scale. This dimension attempted to understand aspects of how one would try to become involved in a persona. How would the audience would try to learn more about the persona, such as trying to understand what the persona was doing or attempt to guess the persona's next steps.

The next factor in the API scale is group identification. These angle of questions attempted to understand how the persona interacted with its friends and family, compared to how the audience interacts with friends and family. Meaning, if the television character has a close relationship with his/her/their parents, does the audience have (or which to have) the same type of relationship(s). In terms of fanship, this is connected to fan community. While the fan object might bring the community together based on the common interest of the fan object, some

fandoms circle around the connection they have with certain songs, character, etc of the fan object, that they then share with other community member, in which gives them a connection beyond enjoying the fan object.

The final dimension that is details in the API scale is problem solving abilities of the persona. These questions asked how they agree with the method(s) the persona solves problems, as well as the hopefulness the audience members would like to solve problems in a similar manner as the persona.

The API scale has a lot of similarities of fanship, it is still attempting to measure aspects of PSR. Fanship and PSR have overlapping context, but they are not the same thing. The API scale assist in understanding PSR in a multidimensional construct, which then can help understand fanship in a multidimensional way as well.

Experience of Parasocial Interaction

Rubin et al (1985) created a scale to assist in measuring parasocial concepts, more specifically PSR. As stated in the PSR section above, Rubin et al.'s (1985) scale is stated to measure PSI, but instead is measuring items in more a relationship context. To assist in fixing this error, Hartmann and Goldhoorn (2011) attempted to create a scale to measure PSI itself. The Experience of Parasocial Interaction (EPSI) scale focuses on the interaction in a parasocial concept. As detailed in the above, PSI only last from the start of the interaction with the persona to the end of the interaction. The experience of a PSI is "a felt reciprocity with a TV performer that comprises a sense of mutual awareness, attention, and adjustment" (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011, p. 1107). When thinking of a television persona, this interaction is only the duration of the television show, more specifically, the duration of the persona on the screen.

Speaking toward interaction, there are cues given by the persona, such as eye contact, that will then effect triggers that provides the audience with a sense of connection. The sense of connection in terms of PSI ends when the persona is off the screen. If the connection continues, this leads into concepts of PSR. As Dibble et al. (2016) argues, the EPSI scale best measures PSI than Rubin et al.'s (1985) parasocial scale does; however, Rubin et al.'s (1985) scale measures aspects of PSR.

When thinking in terms of fanship, the idea is more related to a more long-term connection. However, this dissertation argues that fanship is on a continua, and that someone might have lower levels of fanship, in which is only based on the interaction itself. For these reasons, it is important to test the fanship scale with concepts of PSI by using the EPSI scale.

While in the process of selecting which scales to use for validation evidence, there are many scales that analyze the idea of parasocial concepts. I included the original PSR scale (Rubin et al., 1985), as it has been used in a large amount of parasocial research, and this original work has displayed continual reliability and validity evidence. Even though the scale is used in a large number of studies, there is error within the PSR scale, as detailed above. Due to this, many scholars have attempted to address this issue by creating (or adjusting) a new parasocial scale. One being the EPSI scale under discussion. Other parasocial scales have been developed and it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to review them all, but it is important to note why some of them were excluded. One example is the PSI-Processing scale (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Like the EPSI scale, the goal of the PSI-Processing scale is to assist in measuring aspects of PSI (unlike the 1985 scale that measures PSR). When deciding between which PSI type scale to use for the dissertation, I relied on Dibble et al.'s (2016) analysis, which found that the ESPI scale was a better measure for PSI than other scales (e.g., 1985 PSR or PSI-Processing). Dibble et al.

(2016) also discussed how other scales (e.g., the PSI-Processing scale) had strong validation reliability in some tests; however, in other findings, the test were not consistent with previous findings. For this reason, the EPSI scale is used over other PSI type scales as it is a more reliable scale.

For this current research, PSR concepts are useful; however, they differ when it comes to fanship, and more specifically. With PSR, the focus centers on the relationship between an individual and a persona. This can be seen in some aspects of fanship, such as when an individual is a fan of a television character or a celebrity, in which they start to form a type of relationship. However, fanship has other components, such as fan community. With a fan community, the relationship is not solely with the fan object as there is the additional layer of a relationship with other individuals within the community itself, which can influence an individual to create social change. Within the creation of the fanship scale, there are relevant aspects of the PSR, API, and EPSI scales that assist in measuring fanship itself; however, if scholars only use PSR scale to measure fanship, there are aspects of fanship, such as sense of community, that are not being measuring. Therefore PSR on its own cannot stand in for fanship.

Chapter 3 – Scale Development Method

For this current dissertation, I develop a scale for fanship that seeks to broadly measure their fanship. To do this, I will followed the processes outlined by DeVellis (2017). The first step is to define the construct. As previously stated, the construct is fanship. Items within this scale focus on fanship, as outlined in previous sections.

The second step is to generate a pool of items that seek to measure the construct (DeVellis, 2017). This dissertation took a deductive approach in item creation. With the deductive method, I explored the current field of literature, record relevant items, then combined items into a fanship scale. Within this step, I also looked at other scales that measure similar concepts (e.g., parasocial scale). Oosterveld et al. (2019) refer to using other similar scales when creating a new scale as the internal method. The key concept I used is that of homogeneity - how items are similar to each other - which is a significant aspect of the internal method since homogeneity of strong items displays how the items are relevant for the construct itself. I pulled aspects from the internal method (Oosterveld et al., 2019), but my research was still guided by a deductive approach that looks at items and then combines them. By using other scales, I started to generate a large item pool to find out which items and factors best measure fanship. Additionally, within step two, DeVellis (2017) outlines methods of item generation, such as question redundancy to assist in convergent validity within the scale creation. Within my scale development, I included question redundancy, as well as negative worded statements as these aid in representing lower levels, or absence, of the construct measure; whereas, positive worded represents the presence of the construct. After reverse coding the negative worded items, the scale should see similarities in the responses, and avoid issues like agreement bias, which is when the participant has a tendency to agree with the items (DeVellis, 2017).

Once I have a sufficiently comprehensive item pool, I moved onto step three, which is picking a measurement format (DeVellis, 2017). For fanship, I have selected a Likert style format. Other options include Guttman scale or semantic differences. Guttman scale measures how strongly/highly/accepting an individual is by asking binary-type questions and assumes that the individual will get to a certain point and stop. For example, on a five-item scale the individual says yes until question 4 when they say no, yielding a score of 3. This scale does not work for fanship because it places value on one aspect of fanship (e.g., fan knowledge) more than other aspects (e.g., fan engagement). In this case, if someone does not own a fan object shirt, they would select no, which would lower their score. However, they may be very active within the community, which may get lost in a binary assessment. The next step is conducting expert review. I provided experts within this specific area of study with my draft scale (to see original draft, see Appendix A). Experts for review are those who are published scholars on topics around fanship. In this step, the experts helped adjust the wording, ordering of the survey, assess any blindspots, etc. Oosterveld et al. (2019) discuss this as the rational method. By having experts become the judges of the scale, I could better assess if the scale is measuring what I want it to measure, or at least the face value of it, which helps establish face validity.

Step five focuses on the inclusion of validation items (DeVellis, 2017). This step is an extension of step four, and specifically with step five items and questions are added to the scale to assist in detecting respondent flaws. Response flaws include social desirability, which is when the respondent its attempting to present themselves in a positive light, or response bias. DeVellis (2017) gives examples of scales that will assist in detecting these issues, such as the social desirability scale (Haghighat, 2007), which I included in my scale development. This step also includes building in redundancy of questions as a form of convergent validity.

Step six is to administer the scale to a sample of individuals (DeVellis, 2017). Thus, I sent out my scale to be pilot tested. It is also important within this step to think of who will be the participants taking the survey. As Hinck (2019) described, fanship is not based on one fandom, and fanship leading to social change is not based on one fandom. Thus, I will attempt to measure multiple fandoms. To accomplish this, the scale will be general about the attitudes and behaviors participants feel toward the fan object. This means questions include statements like "I have a vast amount of knowledge on [fan object][1]" as compared to factual questions about the fan object. Furthermore, fandoms are considered heterogenous, meaning "with values and assumptions that fragment along axes of class, age, gender, race and sexuality" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 54). There are more details about this step in the Method section.

The seventh step of DeVillis (2017) is to evaluate the items. I looked at how the items are related (convergent and discriminate validity), as well as how the items are loading into factors. The first round of data analysis used exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Then, after step eight, I collected more data to run a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). By running both EFA and CFA, I will be seeking reliable alpha levels, which DeVillis (2017) suggests are 0.7 alpha or higher.

Step eight of DeVillis (2017) is to optimize the length of the scale. This was when I looked at the reliability again but focus on the scale length. I strategically drop items that are loading poorly, following DeVillis's guidance on how the cutoff point for poorly loading items differs for the size of the scale. For a larger scale (10 or more items), like fanship, alpha level for each item should load to at least .6. Similarly, items were dropped if they are too highly correlated with another item(s). Unless the correlated items have one positively worded and the other negatively worded, one should avoid including items that are highly correlated, which

[1] Items with [fan object] will change to the specific fan object typed by the participant at the start of the survey.

suggests that the items are measuring the same aspect of the construct (DeVillis, 2017). At this point, I will have the final and complete scale.

Validity Evidence

Within this next section, I will discuss aspects of validity. I will discuss what validity is, the different forms of evidence, and what type of validation evidence test/measures I will use for my scale creation. Validity is "an overall evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions on the basis of test scores or other needs of assessment" (Messkick, 1995, p. 13). Furthermore, validation needs evidence and theory that "support the interpretation of test scores for proposed uses of test" (Messick, 1995, p. 13). When testing a new measure, validation evidence is "the most fundamental consideration," which "provides a sound scientific basis" for the new measure (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014, p. 11). Simply put, validity is checking how accurate the measure is of representing a construct accuracy; however, there is more to validity than the truth and accuracy. Barnes (2015) describes validity as "the content of an assessment should measure the construct(s) it was created to assess" (p. 9). Knowing clear definition of the contract that has scale items built around is important.

The idea of validation within any study needs to start with the idea of the proposed measure, along with the rationale of the proposed use of the scale. The idea needs to have a clear definition of the construct itself. As stated throughout this dissertation, the overall construct of this scale is fanship. The measure of fanship can then be used to see the type of fan, along with what areas of fanship, are most prominent within individuals. To best understand if this current scale is measuring the construct of fanship, validation evidence will be provided.

Validation evidence is needed to justify the use of the measure; however, since social science measures can be different, so can evidence for validity. Some researchers have assigned a broader idea of validation evidence, including four components: 1) concurrent validity, 2) predictive validity, 3) constant validity, and 4) construct validity (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Similarly, Messick (1995) breaks down validity into six different components: 1) consequential, 2) substantive, 3) content, 4) structural, 5) external, and 6) generalizability. Messick (1995) explains how each validation evidence can and should be analyzed individually; however, it is important to look at each aspect of validation in relation to one another. Further, scales can measure validity in multiple ways (DeVellis, 2017), such as internal validity, which assists in drawing conclusions about the causal relationships of the scale items. Alternately, there is external validity, which displays how the measures' results can be generalized to other populations (DeVillis, 2017). Another type of validity is conclusion validity, which asks if the results are displaying results that can allow research to draw reasonable conclusions based on analysis (DeVillis, 2017).

These different forms of evidence for validity can be used to help construct an argument for the intended understanding of the measure, along with the relevance of the items and creation of the specific score. These different forms of evidence assist in displaying a conceptual framework that evaluates the interpretation and theoretical idea of the scale itself. As research has developed, so has the evidence of validation. According to American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) (2014), there are four types of measures that display evidence based on: 1) test content, 2) response processes, 3) internal structure, 4) relations to other variables. The four listed here are ones that present the most comprehensive and

streamlined set of evidence. Within the next sections, I will detail these forms of validation evidence and discuss why or why not I will attempt to secure this type of evidence within the creation of the fanship scale.

Test Content Validity Evidence

The first form of evidence is test content, which is "the relationship between the content of a test and the construct it is intended to measure" (AERA et al., 2014, p. 14). This type of validation evidence analyzes the items within the scale itself to make sure wording, format, etc. seem to measure the construct. For this dissertation, the construct is fanship. Other research might refer to face or content validity when discussing evidence established on test content, due to both approaches focusing on how the scale is reflective of the construct (DeVillis, 2017; Oosterveld et al., 2019).

There are multiple approaches to evidence rooted in test content, such as systematic observations or empirical evidence; however, this dissertation focuses on evidence for test content that is theoretically sound. Observations are important, but due to fanship being so large, it would be difficult to observe enough evidence to find this type of evidence. Knowing that fanship is larger, the theoretical research of fanship has display a range of understanding and observation data, in which has been scholarly published. Having the works of other scholars assist in theoretical evidence that assist in the creation of the fanship scale. According to Oosterveld et al. (2019), this type of validity falls under what they call the rational method. Rational "refers to the supposed rationality of the considerations of experts" (p. 2503). To best find evidence to support this form of validation, the scale developer will seek a panel of experts to analyze the scale items to assess on the face level if the items are measuring what they intend to measure. An expert could be a scholar within the field related to the scale item literature. For

this current study, an expert would be classified as an individual who has conducted research and published scholarly work within fan studies literature.

With expert review, the scale items can be created and adjusted based on fan studies experts' judgment (Oosterveld et al., 2019). This expert review process can be through qualitative methods like interviews with experts to assist in finding codes and concepts that are relevant to scale items creation or it could be through quantitative terms of evaluation in which the experts judge the relevance of each item and provide a score. For this study, I will pursue a quantitative approach and have experts rate the relevance of each item to measure fanship. Once given the evaluation from the expert judges, the scale item's scores will be analyzed and assessed. For specific steps on expert review, see the methods section. Scores that are lower than a 3 will be looked at to see if that items is needed based on theoretical evidence or is needed for items, such as reverse coded. Some items might be asking similar measures as another item, and not needed for the scale, based on expert review. If these items are low, it might be due to other reason, such as oddly worded, in which the item will be adjusted. After looking at each item that scored under a 3, the item might be removed due to not being relevant or adjusted.

It is important to note that everything within the scale is at a level of understanding from items to construct definitions. Scholars give feedback on the items and construct and dimension definitions. The feedback on the definition is needed because if the definition of the construct is not theoretically accurate, than the items that are related to the construct might not be correct.

When using test content to find validation evidence, scale developers need to understand the concerns that go along with this type of evidence. One main concern is the idea of construct-irrelevant, which is how different subgroups interpret the scale differently, which could lead to underrepresentation of one subgroup, which may result in giving a disadvantage (or advantages)

to subgroups. As Devellis (2017) states, the vocabulary needs to be at a sixth-grade level. The initial item construction had a focus on using simple, clear language, and simple sentence syntax to get to the 6th grade level. By having a diverse panel review the scale items, individuals can pinpoint possible sources of difficulty that need to be adjusted.

For this current dissertation, I use test content validation evidence to assist within my fanship scale creation. The goal of this type of evidence is to 1) make sure my definitions around fanship are theoretically sound from the literature and targeted toward the construct of fanship itself, 2) to make sure each scale item is relevant to the fanship construct, along with the dimensions of fanship, and 3) that the scale is legible and understandable by a diverse audience.

Response Process Validity Evidence

The next area of validity evidence focuses on how the test is given and data is collected. This type of evidence looks at "the fit between the construct and the detailed nature of the performance or response actually engaged in by test takers" (AERA et al., 2014, p. 15). This type of evidence is based on the analysis of individual responses.

One method to find this type of evidence is to question individuals from various groups who would take the measure itself, and then analyze and compare the individual responses, noting whether there are any significant discrepancies between groups (AERA et al., 2014). The comparison of responses will display common issues/errors, as well as if provide evidence of the fit between a construct definition used and the nature of response/performance of the participants. This type of evidence also includes the monitoring of the development of the processed responses. Monitoring is covers the different methods individuals distribute the survey (e.g., for a class assignment, by going door to door, etc). For the fanship scale, the purpose of this scale is for individuals to take the test at their own pace through a survey template (e.g.,

online system, paper, etc). This type of evidence can assist in understanding and interpreting the outcomes of individual measures across subcultures, and then making adjustments if need be. This could be that if measuring for a sports fan, the wording might be slightly adjusted compared to a movie fan.

Another method that can assist in finding this type of validation evidence is to ask individuals to rate and score the measure. These individuals are known as judges who are known as judges of the score (AERA, 2017). Judges are ones who are giving the scale (e.g., other social scientist like myself) and/or those who are processing and interpreting the response results. By asking individuals to act as judges, the survey designer is making sure that if the add specific requirements on survey distribution, individuals who might use the scale are able to follow and apply appropriate criteria (e.g, ask this question, and if they say yes, go to a specific grouping of questions, but if they say no, go to another group of questions). This type of evidence might look at how judges are recording the data, alongside with understanding the construct. Meaning, if the measure is given to a set of students, a judge could be the teacher who might give the measure. This type of method will look at the different types of ways a teacher might collect the measure, such as reading the questions to a class as a whole, assigning it for homework, etc.

Due to the nature of the fanship scale, this type of evidence will not be employed. This current evidence might look at the different approaches a participant can take to provide an answer. This approach is not applicable to the fanship scale as it is not looking for a “correct” answer like a math test or a knowledge scale, but instead the attitudes and beliefs participants have of a fan object.

Internal Structure Validity Evidence

The next section of validation evidence is based on the internal structure of the scale. "Analyses of the internal structure of a test can indicate the degree to which the relationships among test items and test components conform to the construct" (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014, p. 16). Some measures have a single dimension; however, other measures, such as this fanship scale, have multiple dimensions. Aspects of each dimension might be homogenous, but also be distinct from the other dimensions. If a measure has multiple dimensions, this test can examine the interrelationships between the dimensions.

Some measures are designed to function differently based on the subgroup of participants, which would need additional validation evidence processes (AERA et al., 2014). However, for the current study, it is theoretically proposed that different types of fan groups, along with the potentially diverse populations within the groups, should result in similar outcomes. As stated in previous literature, there are a variety of fanships (e.g., music, sports), which might result in higher aspects of fanship continua (e.g., knowledge), yet the overall results should be similar. One fanship might find the knowledge continuum to be more important than the community continuum, but the measure results will still display levels of fanship. The scale will still measure aspects of fanship, even though one fandom might find "knowledge" to be more 'important' than another continua. Having a high level of knowledge, yet a low level of engagement, can still result in high fanship scores. The fanship scale is a multiple dimension scale; however, the scale is not designed to be different based on fanship group (e.g., music or sports), thus this type of validation evidence is not needed as much as other types of validation evidence. Based on Hinck's (2019) findings of the four continua, each subgroup does not have

systematically different fanship type, which means there should not be a need for this type of adjustment and validation evidence for this specific fanship scale.

Relations to Other Variables Validation Evidence

The final aspect of validation evidence centers on the relationship to other variables. This type of validation evidence explores how the scale might be related (or unrelated) to other variables that might be seen as external. “External variables may include measures of some criteria that the test is expected to predict, as well as relationships to other test hypothesized to measure the same construct, and test measuring related or different constructs” (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014, p. 16). This could include aspects of other measures, such as the PSR scale, which measures variables similar to fanship variables. There are different types of this form of validation evidence, which I explore in the next sections.

Convergent and discriminant validity evidence. The first type of validation evidence that is based on relationship to other variables is convergent and discriminant validation evidence. Both of these types of validation evidence focus on the relationships between the current measure and other scales that measure similar (or opposite) constructs. For convergent validity evidence, the idea is comparing the scale that is being created to another similar scale to then test the correlation of the two scales (DeVellis, 2017). It is important to note that while a correlation is sought after, we are not wanting the scales to correlate perfectly, since the new scale is measuring a new concept the similar scale is unable to measure. For this current dissertation, I am attempting to create a fanship scale. Within the previous literature, I detailed the concepts of PSR, as well as how PSR are not the same as fanship, yet they possess similar theoretical aspects. As detailed within the scale development section, the PSR scale (Rubin et al., 1985) is used to assist in the creation of the fanship scale. For convergent validity evidence, the

fanship and PSR scales will be measured to determine whether and how strong the correlation between the two scales is. For more details, see the method and results section.

Opposing convergent validity evidence is the concept of discriminant validity evidence. This seeks to find the absence of a correlation between scales (DeVellis, 2017). This type of evidence will look at measures that are not theoretically related, and hypothetically, there should not be a correlation between the items. When thinking of fanship, concepts like PSR are theoretically related; however, other concepts, such as communication apprehension, are not related. Meaning, there should be an absence of correlation between fanship and communication apprehension. Due to there not being a scale that measures aspects opposite of fanship or a scale that claims to measure fanship, yet does not, I will not be using discriminant validity evidence.

Predictive and concurrent validity evidence. The next type of evidence that is based around the relationship with other variables is both predictive and concurrent validation evidence. These types of evidence center on "how accurately do the test scores predict the criterion performance" (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014, p. 17). Both of these types of evidence look at the degree of accuracy of the scores based on some attribute that is operationally distinct, and can measure the hypothesized predictor within the construct and criteria set by the researchers and literature.

Predictive validation evidence is how the relationship of scores that are collected at two different moments, and is sometimes referred to as criterion-related (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). For example, when applying to grad school, applicants may be asked to take the GRE, which *should* predict the success one might have in gaining a graduate degree. Concurrent validity evidence is similar to predictive validity evidence by looking at the agreement and relationship of two measures (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Concurrent validation evidence looks at measures at the

same point in time. For example, a scale that looks at work performance, that can be compared to another measure of data at the same point in time, like office morale.

I will not use predictive or concurrent evidences in this dissertation because the fanship scale is not meant to look at relationships of fanship and other outside influences. The fanship scale is to have an individual fan self-asses their level of fanship with the four sub constructs, which will can assist social science in better understanding fanship in a quantitative sense. The purpose of this scale is to measure aspects of fanship, not in a way that will be linked to something else, such as civic engagement. However, both forms of evidence could be included in future research if scholars are attempting to use fanship to measure or predict other outcomes, such as political engagement.

Reliability

When discussing validity, one must also discuss the concept of reliability. Like all studies, reliability is important because it is making sure that the scale created is measuring is accurate and consistent. The concept of 'reliability' has been used in two different ways throughout literature (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014): 1) analyzing the consistency of a measure across replication, and 2) looking at the correlation of results of two similar forms of the measure to look at the effect one has on the other.

The first form of reliability detailed above is known as the classical form, and centers around "reliability coefficients, defined in terms of the correlation between scores derived from replications of the testing procedure on a sample of test takers" (AECA et al., 2014, p. 37). There are three types of categories that reliability coefficients can be broken into. 1) Alternate form coefficients, which is how the coefficient is created and adjusted from the developers in new forms based on independent testing sessions. This form of data might use different types of

procedures to analyze the data across alternative forms. 2) The test and retest coefficients, when the coefficient data are collected by the developer using the same form, but different and separate occasions. 3) internal consistency coefficients, in which the relationship and interactions of the scores are derived from the subset of items, based on data that is from a single form and occasion (AECA et al., 2017). This current dissertation will use the classical form of reliability with the test and retest example. This current study is running multiple studies to obtain that the scale is consistent and accurate.

When understanding reliability, the second point above, the more traditional path, focuses on the idea of consistency. With the traditional path, reliability "is defined in terms of consistency over replications of the testing procedure" (AECA et al., 2014, p. 35). I will employ this traditional approach in this dissertation, by finding McDonald's Omega. See methods section for more details. The traditional path of reliability also focuses on the idea of precision (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014); however, collecting data through social science, researchers need to remember that different samples of data, even by the same participants, are rarely identical. When comparing one data set to another, other assumptions occur, such as, each participant might rate the same item differently, which could be do to effects and outside influences. The idea of reliability and precision depends on how the data varies across replication. Although social science research, like social scales, have these assumptions, by running reliability test, like McDonald's Omega, the idea of error is being measured with the results itself to know if the results are by chance or consistently accurate.

When looking into types of studies, such as scale development, reliability is important because researchers need to know the measure being used is consist and accurate. When understanding if a scale is reliable, researchers look to see if the scale results are representing

concrete aspects of the construct. By running test, such as Person's Alpha or McDonald's Omega, research can measure the scale and items based on factor loading estimation to random error. Unless the construct and variables change, the scale's results should be consistent. "Scale reliability is the proportion of variance attributable to the true score of the latent variable" (DeVellis, 2017, p. 39), which means that the scale should represent the variable that is being measure, while attempting to reflect less on other outside factors. To see detail on how I plan to measure reliability, see method section.

Methodological Approach

For the dissertation, I use a three-part study. Within this section, I will detail each study, along with the steps to take based on scholarship. For each study, I collected data through Prolific. Participants all were 18 years or older but no other qualifications are needed. In Prolific, I requested the survey distributed to a diverse group of individuals worldwide. To get a range of fanship, participants need to range from a 'true' fan to someone who does not classify as a fan at all, therefore participants do not need to identify as a fan of a specific fan object to participate. Additionally, within the call, I am not seeking a certain level of fandom or in a certain fandom to qualify. Participants were paid $12 per hour, which is the current Prolific average rate. This rate was prorated, so studies that took 30 minutes paid $6, and other studies that took 15 minutes paid $3. Data was collected through the online survey platform, Qualtrics. Participants were given the Qualtrics link, directing them to the survey. For details on each study's procedure and participant details, see Chapter 4.

Validation Evidence

When planning to discuss measuring validation evidence, there are multiple aspects that are utilized. The first aspect will help assist with evidence on test content. This type of evidence

used fanship experts, which is broken into two areas: prior to the scale development and prior to the first round of data collection. While creating the scale, I used scholarly research to assist in creating the construct and scale items, and I conducted interviews with fanship experts. I interviewed fanship experts (*N*=6) on the idea of fanship constructs, which involved me discussing the construct bounds, as well as what aspects of fanship are needed to assist in measuring the construct itself. These interviews assist in item development and looking at how fanship is a multidimensional construct.

Conducing the interviews occurred simultaneously along with reviewing the literature. Both of these assisted in developing the first draft of the scale itself, in which I got expert reviewer to assist in finding validation evidence. Some of the experts overlap with the experts that I interviewed. For details on the expert review process that occurred, see Chapter 4.

When preparing for expert review, there are six steps that was taken (Yusoff, 2019). First the scale developer creates a content validation form, which is a document that will give the expert reviewers a clear expectation and understanding of their role. This document also allowed the experts to rate the scale items. The second step was to seek out a panel of experts. The recommendation from Yusoff (2019) is to have between five and eight expert reviewers. I sent the scale to eight reviewers, with five responses. Step three was to have the experts rate each scale item for its relevance (I used a 1-4 Likert scale, with 1 indicating not relevant and 4 indicating very relevant). The fourth step was to review the feedback on the definitions of the domain being measured (e.g., fanship, and the four continua of fanship). Step five was then to review the quantitative scores of the scale items from step three. Which lead to the final step of calculating the content validation index (CVI), which typically will vary depending on number of

respondence, but is based on the CVI table provided in Yusoff's study (2019, p. 51). My response was 5 expert reviewers.

In addition to collecting quantitative data to assist in finding CVI levels, I added open-ended questions for expert feedback to provide some qualitative data. This opportunity for feedback allowed the experts to discuss the definitions and bounds I used for the fanship construct and dimensions, and it allows the experts to give feedback on specific items and areas of the scale they find to be weak or strong. For details on specific expert review procedures, see Chapter 4.

After adjusting my scale based on expert review, I sent out my scale to a diverse panel to gain feedback on the scale, which includes the scale design, wording, flow, etc. This diverse panel are not expert reviewers, but instead people who represent the population that the scale is focused on. The population for fanship is the general population, since research as discussed how most everyone is a fan of something. The goal for this section was to get individual feedback to make sure they understand the questions and the flow of the scale works.

The other validation evidence I sought out was convergent evidence. As stated above, convergent validity looks at the relationship between the current measure and other similar measures (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014). Within the scale development, I collected data using the fanship scale, along with other scales, such as PSR scale (as detailed above in Chapter 2, as well as in data collection details in Chapter 4). I ran correlations (r) between my measure and the other similar measures, with Pearson's r as the statistical test. A strong correlation will be one that is above .5 (Najer Catalan, 2019).

Reliability

As stated in previous sections, reliability assesses whether the measure is consistent. To measure reliability, there are multiple options of test, with the most common and popular being Cronbach's alpha (α) (Hayes & Coutts, 2020). Alpha is a good measure to find the random error that exists in scores; however, to assist with factor loading estimation and error variance, this study used McDonald's omega (ω) (Hayes & Coutts, 2020). Alpha looks at the correlation between a value's 'true score' (along with random error) and observed score, whereas omega "generates the factor loadings as well as the error variances" and looks at the ratio of the factor variance to the total variance (Hayes & Coutts, 2020, p. 11). Omega tends to rely on better assumptions as compared to alpha, and research has displayed that McDonald Omega is preferred over Cronbach's Alpha when it comes to measuring reliability (Hayes & Coutts, 2020; Najer Catalan, 2019). When measuring for reliability, the scale's reliability was interpreted based on specific results; however, the goal was to have a $\omega > .7$, (Najer Catalan, 2019). This ensured that the scale is one that is consistent and accurately measuring the construct and dimensions of fanship. The following chapter details aspects of each studies method, results, along with the results of validation evidence and reliability.

Chapter 4 – Method and Results

This dissertation enacted a four part validation study, all in which built onto on another. Prior to any data collection, I sought out expert reviewers to analyze the fanship scale. After feedback on expert review, the scale was slightly adjusted, before data collection on study 1. The results of study 1 was ran through statistical test, such as reliability test, and an exploratory factor analysis. Once the scale was adjusted based on the factor analyze, data was collected for study 2. The data from study 2 was then tested with a confirmatory factor analysis. At this point, we resulted in a valid and reliable fanship scale. One in which was used in study 3 to collect data, along with other similar scales. The data was used to find additional validation evidence for the fanship scale. This next section details out each step's process, participants details, and results.

Expert Review

Prior to study 1, I conducted an expert review to assist in finding validation evidence. An expert is someone who has worked and published scholarly research related to fanship and/or fandom. Each expert I reached out to currently works in academia and is teaching and researching current fanship concepts. Many of these scholars have both older research, which has significantly added to the field of fan studies and become foundational to the subdiscipline, and current publications that reflect contemporary perspectives on fan studies. I contacted eight fandom scholars to assist in the expert review, and five experts took the survey (N=5). Table 1 displays expert level. Two of the experts who took this survey were also used in the expert interviewing process. Prior to the scale ranking, experts read that each item is based on fan based object (FBO), which could be a television show, celebrity, sports, team, etc. Each expert was given the definition of fanship, which is stated above by Hills (2002), and the four dimensions, which are Hinck's (2019) four fanship continua. All five experts were asked open-ended

questions about the constructs and the items themselves. In addition, each expert was asked to rate each item per continua. This was based on a 1 to 4 relevancy scale, where 1 indicates the item is not relevant and 4 indicates the item is highly relevant. Their qualitative and quantitative feedback was used to adjust the fanship scale.

Table 1 - Rank of Expert Reviewers

Expert 1	Professor of Communication
Expert 2	Professor of Communication and Media
Expert 3	Professor of Fandom Studies
Expert 4	Associate Professor of Communication
Expert 5	PhD Candidate – Communication Studies

Results

Each expert was asked to provide feedback on the items and the definitions. The reviewers offered significant feedback on the quotes of fanship construct and dimensions. Some experts suggested that the fanship definition with the single quote was too narrow and suggested adding extra details to support and explain the definition. For example, one expert said, "presenting the quote on its own is problematic." The definition is not displayed to the participants, but instead was provided to the experts to validate whether my constructs are correct. In accordance with expert review, when defining fanship, the quote is not used alone. I also am not showing participants of study 1-3 the quote itself. The purpose of including the definitions of the construct was to assist in the validation that the construct is speaking toward what I am stating I am measuring, specifically fanship.

Similarly, another expert had issues with the word "obsessed" in the definition. The definition that was shown to experts was from Hills (2002): "A fan is somebody who is obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV program, band, someone who can produce reams of information on their object of fandom and can quote their favored lines or lyrics, chapter and

verse" (p. iv). The experts detailed that the word "obsessed" is typically associated with a male fan. Within the literature review section of the dissertation, I attempted to go beyond the word "obsessed" and explain how obsession is one manifestation of being a fan, but fanship can operate on a continuum and include, for example, simply a connection someone has to the fan object. This could be through casual creation of items of fan cosplay, fan art, etc. and thus does not necessitate obsession. However, for the definition of the construct, the definition provided by Hills (2003) is no longer going to be the working construct definition. Based on the feedback from the expert review, the new working definition of fanship is an individual's physical and/or emotional connection with a fan object. After adjusting the fanship construct, I reanalyzed the dimensions and the items to make sure that the items were still relevant to this updated definition.

For the dimensions, Hincks (2019) provides four continua that are acting as dimension for the scale: 1) emotional tie, 2) knowledge, 3) community, and 4) engagement. The expert review feedback was positive for the dimensions and required no change. One expert found issue with the engagement definition, which was "fans engage in a range of activities that result in material product" (Hinck, 2019, p. 10). The reviewer questioned that "engagement must necessarily result in a material product." The expert reviewer detailed how they believed in the importance of the material product but questioned whether material products were the only important manifestation of engagement. When asked for feedback on the items, reviewers noted that there were already items that were being asked that they see as connected to engagement that are outside the definitional quote given, i.e., engagement with other outcomes then material product. Incorporating this feedback, I moved from the definitional quotes Hinck (2019) provided to my own working definitions of the dimension, resulting in the following: Fan

engagement is how an individual can participate with fan objects in a range of different activities.

This new working definition of the dimension ‘fan engagement’ joins the other three working definitions provided by Hinck (2019, p. 9): 1) fan emotional tie: “the close connection fans often feel toward their object of fandom,” 2) fan knowledge: “fans cultivate a specialization of knowledge regarding their object of fandom,” and 3) fan community: “fans participate in a community of fans.”

For the items within each dimension, the experts found that each item would fit under one or two areas well, but not all four, which was the hope, since each item was created with each factor in mind. Other experts found that the items “look[ed] great” and saw clear connection from the item to the factors toward fanship. In turn, items were not adjusted based on expert review feedback.

In addition to the open-ended questions, the experts were asked to rank the relevance of each item. Once the expert review process was completed, I ran statistical tests to measure the content validity index (CVI) levels of each item per continuum (Yusoff, 2019). The expert review scale included 32 items in the scale. Results of the CVI test are in Table 2. Due to each expert rating each item based on relevancy per continuum, I posited that many of the items would only be relevant in one continuum. According to Yusoff (2019), the CVI for each item agreement needs to be .8 or higher for five experts. As seen in Table 2, the bolded items resulted in .8 or above CVI levels, and most items had high CVI levels within one or two continua. Item 3 was found to have low CVI levels for each continuum and was removed from the scale itself for the next steps. After expert review, the scale resulted in 31 items for study 1 for analysis.

	Table 2 Expert Review CVI Levels	Relevancy (scale of 0-1)			
		Fan emotional	Fan knowledge	Fan community	Fan engagement
A1	I am a fan of [FBO]	**1**	0	0.2	0.6
A2	I would be happy to know others see me as a fan of [FBO]	0.2	0.2	**0.8**	0.6
A3	I am not a fan of [FBO]	0.6	0	0.6	0.4
A4	I would feel upset if others said I was a fan of [FBO]	**0.8**	0	**0.8**	0.4
A5	I care about what happens to [FBO]	**1**	0.4	0.2	0.6
A6	I enjoy following [FBO]	0.4	**0.8**	**0.8**	**0.8**
A7	I do not follow [FBO]	0.4	0.4	0.4	**0.8**
A8	I have a vast amount of knowledge on [FBO]	0.4	**1**	0.2	**0.8**
A9	I enjoy doing research to learn more about [FBO]	0.4	**1**	0.2	0.8
A10	I find that I have more knowledge than others around me when it comes to [FBO]	0.4	**1**	**0.8**	**0.8**
A11	I find my knowledge of [FBO] to be minimal if absent.	0	**0.8**	0.2	0.6
A12	I do not do additional research about [FBO]	0	**0.8**	0	0.8
A13	When I think of a fan of [FBO], my knowledge would be lesser than that fan.	0.4	**0.8**	0.6	0.4
A14	I would watch/read/listen to other aspects of the [FBO] (e.g., spin-off show, podcast)	0.6	0.6	**0.8**	**1**
A15	I enjoy being a part of [FBO] fandom community.	0.6	0.2	**1**	**1**
A16	I enjoy discussing [FBO] with others	0.6	0.6	**1**	**1**
A17	I dislike discussing [FBO] with others	**0.8**	0.4	**0.8**	0.6

		Fan emotional	Fan knowledge	Fan community	Fan engagement
A18	When someone else brings up [FBO], I get excited	**1**	0.2	**0.8**	0.4
A19	I feel included in the [FBO] community.	0.6	0.2	**1**	**1**
A20	I can relate to others within the [FBO] community.	**0.8**	0.2	**1**	**0.8**
A21	I cannot relate to others within the [FBO] community.	0.6	0	**0.8**	0.6
A22	I own a lot of merchandise related to [FBO], e.g., shirts, art.	**1**	0.6	0.4	0.6
A23	I have a large amount of collectables for [FBO], e.g., first-run issue of a comic.	**1**	0.6	0.2	**1**
A24	I enjoy displaying my [FBO] purchases for others to see	**1**	0.6	0.6	**1**
A25	Discussed [FBO] with a friend or family member	**0.8**	0.2	0.6	**0.8**
A26	Discussed [FBO] with a stranger.	0.6	0.4	**1**	**1**
A27	Discussed [FBO] with an acquaintance or co-worked.	0.6	0.4	**1**	**1**
A28	Discussed [FBO] with a fellow fan of [FBO].	0.6	0.4	**1**	**1**
A29	Discussed [FBO] on social media	0.6	0.4	**1**	**1**
A30	Worn a clothing item around [FBO]	**0.8**	0	0.4	**0.8**
A31	Sought out additional information on [FBO]	0.4	**0.8**	0	**0.8**
A32	Watched/read/listened to a product about [FBO] (e.g., book, TV show, podcast)	0.6	**1**	0.4	**0.8**

Note. Bolded items have a 0.8 or higher in agreement between experts based on CVI analysis.
[FBO] means fan based object.

Study 1

The survey was sent out through a data collection system named Prolific to gather data for study 1. Respondents were recruited and contacted through the Prolific system to answer questions about their fandom. After agreeing to the study, participants self-disclosed one of their favorite fan objects. Respondents listed a wide range of responses, such as Star Trek, Eminem, and Harry Potter, to name a few. Fan objects that were listed would be classified under different types of fan object from sports, music, film, etc.

Once the participant self-disclosed the fan object, the survey system piped that response into the survey items, so the participants were answering questions about their fan object. For example, if the scale item asked, "I am a fan of [FBO]," [FBO] was replaced by their self-disclosed response, like "I am a fan of Star Trek."

Participants answered the 31 items of the fanship scale and the questions were randomly displayed within the survey system to assist with ordering effects. Further, participants answered items for a social desirability scale to measure if the participants would answer truthfully or in a social desirability manner, as detailed in (Haghighat, 2007). An example item for this scale is, "Would you ever lie to people." If participants where only giving answers that are labeled as "socially desired," they were removed from the study. To measure this, Haghighat (2007) details that if someone answers two or more social desirable questions in a socially desirable way, the individual would be excluded based on their high tendency for answers to be socially desirable. Every participant who passed attention checks, had less than two socially desirable responses on the scale and were included in the study.

There were initially 311 responses, and eight of those responses were removed due to incomplete data, failed social desirability scale and/or failed attention verification questions

(*N*=303). For a complete response participants were granted $12 per hour. Race/ethnicity for participants was: white *n*=191, Latina/o/x *n*=39, Black *n*=32, Asian *n*=9, American Indian *n*=1, and 18 participants self-disclosed by selecting two of the race options: white and Latina/o/x *n*=17 or white and Black *n*=1. Other participants selected to self-describe (*n*=8), writing responses like "mixed race." Three participants requested not to disclose (*n*=3). For gender, a majority of participants identified as men (*n*=163), followed by women (*n*=127), and then non-binary (*n*=8). One (*n*=1) participant self-described as "genderqueer," and four (*n*=4) selected not to disclose. For sexual orientation, the majority of the participants identified as straight (*n*=230), followed by lesbian (*n*=12), pansexual (*n*=6), queer (*n*=5), gay (*n*=4), asexual (*n*=4), and six (*n*=6) did not self-disclose. Participants lived in a variety of countries like Poland, Mexico, United Kingdom, Chile, and the United States are a few examples. The age of the participants ranged from 19-72, with a mean of 28, *SD*=10.04.

Results

The idea of the fanship scale is that there would be four factors based on the four continua. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) resulted in five factors, which were compared to a parallel analysis. A parallel analysis is a method that compares the current dataset with a similar dataset of random numbers of the same effect size to determine and check the number of factors. The results of the parallel analysis revealed five factors. After finding five factors, the EFA was run again with five factors being extracted, as shown in Table 3. The factor analysis used an oblique rotation, since the factors closely interact and have "dependability" of each other, meaning they theoretically correlate (DeVellis, 2017). By using oblique rotation, the EFA factor rotation allows the items and the factors to correlate with each other within the statistical measure. For the EFA, the KMO was .880, and Barlett's test was significant ($p<.005$) (Brown,

2015). To assist in measuring reliability, I ran McDonald's Omega. The omega level needed to be higher than .7 to display good reliability, and my scale produced good reliability with ω=.897 (Najer Catalan, 2019).

After analyzing the EFA results, the four continua represented four factors, with the fifth factor being fan conversation. The new factor of fan conversation centers around the idea of interaction and discussion of the fan object. This interaction could be with friends, family members or a stranger, all who might or might not share the same level of enjoyment of the fan object. These questions were originally designed to fall under the fan community factor, but after additional thought, discussion with fans can be inside or outside the fan community. The frequency of interactions and behavior that fans display in conversations is a way for them to showcase to others their joy, connection with and understanding of the fan object. The five factors from the EFA were: 1) Fan emotional/affective tie, 2) fan knowledge, 3) fan community, 4) fan engagement, and 5) fan conversation. The factor loading cut-off was .5, as .5 is more restrictive and takes a more conservative approach (Kachigan, 1986; Russel, 2002; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987). As displayed in Table 3, seven factors did not have strong factor loading, B2, B3, B16, B17, B28, B30, and B31.

Additionally, for each of the items with low factor loadings, I went back to the expert feedback when considering whether to retain or eliminate the item. There are some items, such as B31, where expert reviewers found the item relevant but suggested in the open-ended feedback that the item was not as strong as the others. All seven factors were removed for study 2 due to low factor loading. Additionally, factor B14 had a cross-loading between fan emotional/affective tie and fan community. B14 states "I enjoy being a part of [FBO] fandom community." Due to both factors loading closely, the item will remain as a cross loading item,

which can assist in understanding each factor. Looking at the item itself, there are connections to fan community, since it is asking about fan community. However, being a part of a group or community is one way that individuals can display their fan identity, which is deeply connected with fan emotional tie.

At this point, the scale included 24 items for study 2. The results for the EFA, as detailed in Table 3 are: factor 1 – fan emotional tie: B1, B4, B5, B6, B13, B14*; factor 2 – fan knowledge: B7, B8, B9, B10, B11, B12; factor 3 – fan community: B14*, B15, B18, B19, B20; factor 4 – fan engagement: B21, B22, B23, B29; and factor 5 – fan conversation: B24, B25, B26, B27.

Table 3 EFA Results – Study 1		Fan emotional	Fan knowledge	Fan community	Fan engagement	Fan Conversation
B1	I am a fan of [FBO]	.633				
B2	I would be happy to know others see me as a fan of [FBO]		.440			
B3	I would feel upset if others said I was a fan of [FBO]		.421			
B4	I care about what happens to [FBO]	.545				
B5	I enjoy following [FBO]	.713				
B6	I do not follow [FBO]	.530				
B7	I have a vast amount of knowledge on [FBO]		.521			
B8	I enjoy doing research to learn more about [FBO]		.625			
B9	I find that I have more knowledge than others around me when it comes to [FBO]		.559			
B10	I find my knowledge of [FBO] to be minimal if absent.		.560			
B11	I do not do additional research about [FBO]		.616			
B12	When I think of a fan of [FBO], my knowledge would be lesser than that fan.		.562			
B13	I would watch/read/listen to other aspects of the [FBO] (e.g., spin-off show, podcast)	.550				
B14	I enjoy being a part of [FBO] fandom community.	.502		.508		
B15	I enjoy discussing [FBO] with others			.526		
B16	I dislike discussing [FBO] with others		.465			

		Fan emotional	Fan knowledge	Fan community	Fan engagement	Fan Conversation
B17	When someone else brings up [FBO], I get excited		.475			
B18	I feel included in the [FBO] community.			.648		
B19	I can relate to others within the [FBO] community.			.628		
B20	I cannot relate to others within the [FBO] community.			.561		
B21	I own a lot of merchandise related to [FBO], e.g., shirts, art.				.820	
B22	I have a large amount of collectables for [FBO], e.g., first-run issue of a comic.				.776	
B23	I enjoy displaying my [FBO] purchases for others to see				.694	
B24	Discussed [FBO] with a friend or family member					.500
B25	Discussed [FBO] with a stranger.					.584
B26	Discussed [FBO] with an acquaintance or co-worked.					.547
B27	Discussed [FBO] with a fellow fan of [FBO].					.786
B28	Discussed [FBO] on social media					.319
B29	Worn a clothing item around [FBO]				.607	
B30	Sought out additional information on [FBO]		.304			
B31	Watched/read/listened to a product about [FBO] (e.g., book, TV show, podcast)	.498				

Note. Grayed-out items have lower than a 0.5 factor loading based on the EFA.

Study 2

Similar to study 1, data for study 2 was collected on Prolific. Participants were recruited, and data was collected through the Prolific system, asking participants to respond to questions about their fanship. Participants agreed to take the survey and then self-disclosed one of their favorite fan objects. Similar to study 1, this study had a wide range of responses, such as The Office, Harry Styles, and the Buffalo Bills, for a few examples. Once the fan object was self-disclosed, the survey system piped the response into the survey items. See study 1 method for details. Participants answered a 24-item scale on fanship. The scale items were displayed randomly to avoid ordering effects.

Through Prolific, 312 participants took part in the survey; however, eight participants were removed due to failed attention checks or incomplete data (*N*=304). Participants earned $12 per hour for a complete response. Race/ethnicity for participants was: white *n*=213, Black *n*=24, Latina/o/x *n*=20, Asian *n=19*, American Indian *n*=1, and 26 participants self-disclosed by selecting two of the race options: white and Latina/o/x *n*=14, white and Black *n*=4, white and American Indian *n*=4, white and Asian *n*=4, or Black and Latina/o/x *n*=1. For gender, a majority of participants identified as women (*n*=170), followed by men (*n*=127), and then non-binary (*n*=13). For sexual orientation, the majority of the participants identified as straight (*n*=205), followed by bisexual (*n*=49), pansexual (*n*=9), queer (*n*=7), lesbian (*n*=8), gay (*n*=7), asexual (*n*=6), and four did not self-disclose (*n*=4). Two (*n*=2) choose to self-describe as “akiosexual” and “heterosexual but sometimes questioning.” Participants lived in a variety of countries, including China, Mexico, and the United States are a few examples. The age of the participants ranged from 18-73, with a mean of 34, *SD*=11.01.

Results

The data was run through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using the system R with lavaan. The scale started out with 24 items, spread across five factors, as discussed in study 1. With the five factors and 24 items, the CFA displayed decent goodness of fit levels; comparative fit index (CFI) .854, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) .833, root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) .075, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) .064. Each goal should be as follows: CFI > .95, TLI >.90, RMSEM < .05, and SRMR < .05 (Brown, 2015). Scales need at least two of these tests to display goodness of fit. Due to the goodness of fit not being where it should be, I analyzed the latent variable of each item (Brown, 2015). As displayed in Table 4, C12 (with Fan Emotional factor), C8, and C16 all displayed low factor loading. Each item was removed to rerun the CFA to retest goodness of fit. It is important to note that C12 was run under both fan emotional and fan community factors, as per the EFA results of study 1. C12 was only removed from the fan emotional factor and stayed under the fan community factor due to the factor loading being .139 in fan emotional and higher than .7 in fan community. Table 4 displays all the factor loadings, and the factors grayed out are the ones that were removed based on low factor loading.

After this removal process, I reran the CFA. The levels for goodness of fit improved for some measures but still did not meet the standard for CFI and TLI: CFI .890, TLI .873, RMSEA .069, and SRMR .059. Analyzing the latent variables for each item, C4 and C7 were removed due to low factor loading.

For round three of the CFA test, the goodness of fit test improved, but not reach goal levels: CFI .909, TLI .892, RMSEA .067, and SRMR .057. Similar to previous rounds, I

analyzed the latent variables of each variable. C10 and C11 both displayed lower levels of factor loading and were removed from the test. The CFA was run again.

Round four was the final CFA test. The goodness of fit levels improved, where two of the tests displayed strong goodness of fit (TLI and SRMR) and two displayed good levels of goodness of fit (CFI and RMSEA): CFI 0.919, TLI .901, RMSEA 0.059, and SRMR 0.047. The majority of items had latent variables load above .70, which displays a strong fit. There were a few items that dropped below the .7 level; however, were close to .7 and sat above .6. As detailed in Hair et al (2006), loading needs to be above .5, but ideally above .7. Similarly, Comrey and Lee (1992) suggest loading above 0.55 displays good loading, but above .71 displays excellent loading. The CFA factor loading can be seen in Table 4, and Figure 1 shows the CFA model.

Similar to study 1, I reached out to another expert to ask about their thoughts on the items under question. The expert agreed that these items on paper seem to measure fanship; however, they found that in comparison to the other items, the items in question seemed to be weaker. However, when looking at the last round of data, as stated above, there are a few items that fell under the .7 mark (e.g., item C15). When reaching out to the expert, I explained that statistically these items are not as strong, yet I felt they should still be included, as they are close to the statistical results as detailed in the previous paragraph. More importantly, I felt these items were pointing to the construct of fanship, which is a type of validation evidence (test content evidence). Because the researcher found these items to be theoretically sound, they were kept.

The final result of the fanship scale is five factors with a total of 18 items. Factor 1 is fan emotion, which includes C1, C2, and C3. Factor 2 is fan knowledge, which includes C5, C6, and C9. Factor 3 is fan community, which includes C12, C13, C14, and C15. Factor 4 is fan

engagement, which includes C17, C18, C19, and C24. Factor 5 is fan conversation, which includes C20, C21, C22, and C23.

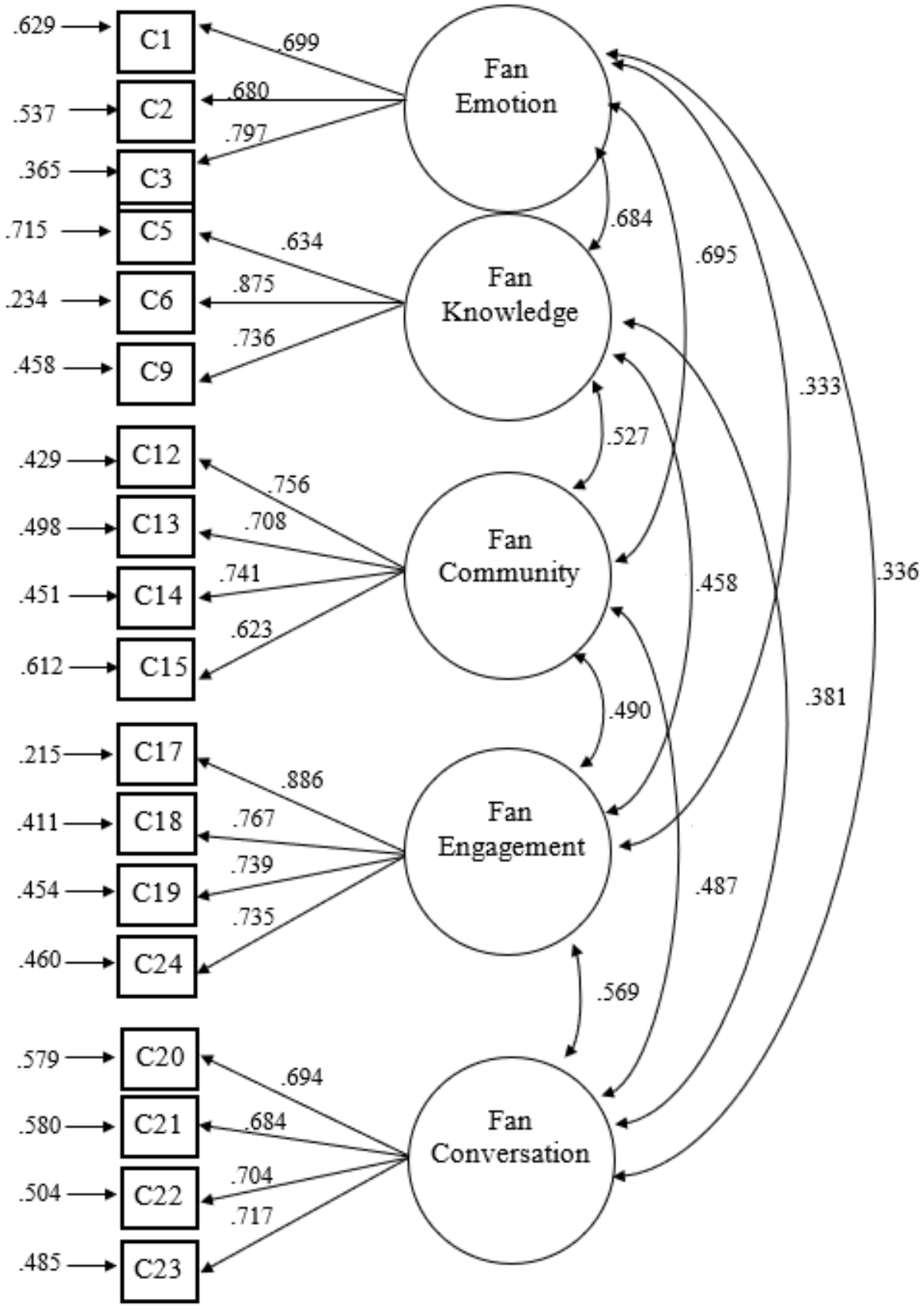
Finally, to assure reliability, I tested McDonald's Omega for the fanship scale with the 18 items detailed above. Recall levels need to be above .7 to indicate strong reliability. The result for the full scale achieved strong reliability (ω=.880). I also tested McDonald's Omega levels for each of the factors and they each showed strong reliability as well: fan emotion (ω=.757); fan knowledge (ω=.784), fan community (ω=.809), fan engagement (ω=.855), fan conversation (ω=.787).

Table 4 CFA Results – Study 2		Fan emotional	Fan knowledge	Fan community	Fan engagement	Fan Conversation
C1	I am a fan of [FBO]	.699				
C2	I care about what happens to [FBO]	.680				
C3	I enjoy following [FBO]	.797				
C4	I do not follow [FBO]	.515**				
C5	I have a vast amount of knowledge on [FBO]		.634			
C6	I enjoy doing research to learn more about [FBO]		.875			
C7	I find that I have more knowledge than others around me when it comes to [FBO]		.395**			
C8	I find my knowledge of [FBO] to be minimal if absent.		.365*			
C9	I do not do additional research about [FBO]		.736			
C10	When I think of a fan of [FBO], my knowledge would be lesser than that fan.		.491***			
C11	I would watch/read/listen to other aspects of the [FBO] (e.g., spin-off show, podcast)	.595***				
C12	I enjoy being a part of [FBO] fandom community.	.139*		.756		
C13	I enjoy discussing [FBO] with others			.708		
C14	I feel included in the [FBO] community.			.741		
C15	I can relate to others within the [FBO] community.			.623		
C16	I cannot relate to others within the [FBO] community.			.500*		

C17	I own a lot of merchandise related to [FBO], e.g., shirts, art.	.886	
C18	I have a large amount of collectables for [FBO], e.g., first-run issue of a comic.	.767	
C19	I enjoy displaying my [FBO] purchases for others to see	.739	
C20	Discussed [FBO] with a friend or family member		.694
C21	Discussed [FBO] with a stranger.		.684
C22	Discussed [FBO] with an acquaintance or co-worked.		.704
C23	Discussed [FBO] with a fellow fan of [FBO].		.717
C24	Worn a clothing item around [FBO]	.735	

Note. Grayed-out items have lower than a 0.6 factor loading based on the CFA.
*removed round 1; **removed round 2; ***removed round 3

Figure 1 – CFA Model



Study 3

As study 1 and study 2 assisted in validation evidence, the purpose of study 3 was to assist with convergent validation evidence. As with study 1 and 2, data for study 3 was collected through Prolific. Prolific participants agreed to take the survey and each individual self-described a fanship. Their answers were then piped into the scale questions. There was a wide range of responses for different types of fanship, such as Lady Gaga, *One Piece,* Dungeons and Dragons, Bluey, and Football Manager.

Through Prolific, 319 participants took part in the survey; however, 13 participants were removed due to failed attention checks or incomplete data (N=306). Participants earned $12 per hour for a complete response. Race/ethnicity for participants was: white n=184, Latina/o/x n=62, Black n=32, Latina/o/x n=20, Asian n=14, American Indian n=1, and 12 participants self-disclosed by selecting two of the race options: white and Latina/o/x n=9 or white and Sami (self-disclosed) n=2. For gender, a majority of participants identified as men (n=160), followed by women (n=137), and then non-binary (n=9). For sexual orientation, the majority of the participants identified as straight (n=221), followed by gay (n=47), bisexual (n=11), lesbian (n=8), pansexual (n=6), queer (n=4), asexual (n=4), and four did not self-disclose (n=4). One (n=1) chose to self-describe as “demisexual.” Participants lived in a variety of countries, including Canada, Hungry, Portugal, and the United States are a few examples. The age of the participants ranged from 20-73, with a mean of 28, SD=8.36.

To assist in convergent validation, participants were asked questions from the 18 item fanship scale (ω=.866) that was created and validated through study 1 and 2, along with other similar scales, including the parasocial relationship scale (Rubin, 1985), experience of parasocial interaction scale (Hartmann and Goldhoorn, 2011), and the audience-persona interaction scale

(Auter & Palmgreen, 2000). These scales were randomly presented to the participants to avoid ordering effects.

Parasocial Relationship

The second scale in study 3 was the parasocial relationship (PSR) scale (Rubin et al., 1985). Rubin et al. (1985) describe this scale as a way to measure parasocial interactions (PSI); however, scholars such as Dibble et al. (2016) argue this parasocial scale actually measures PSR, not PSI. Because fanship can include affective ties to mediated entity, it has some overlap with PSR, as PSR and fanship are both ongoing connections between the audience and the persona or fan object. The PSR scale (Rubin et al., 1985) is a 20-item scale using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) Likert-type scale with items like "I like to compare my ideas with what [FBO] thinks" and "if there was a story about [FBO] in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it." A complete list of items for Rubin et al.'s scale is in Appendix B.

As there are multiple scales that assist in measuring both PSI and PSR concepts, Rubin et al. (1985) is the original, and well known, scale that is commonly used. For this reason, the scale was used to assist with convergent validation process. Similar, the two following scales are used to assist with convergent validity. The first scale is the Experience of Parasocial Interaction scale (Hartmann and Goldhoorn, 2011), which was designed to address issues that the original scale by Rubin et al (1985) was not testing PSI, but instead PSR. Through scholarly research (e.g., Dibble et al., 2016), it was found that this scale assisted in measuring PSI than Rubin et al's scale. As within fanship, there are connections to PSI, which is detailed bellow. However, for the reason that this scale is found to be a strong successful scale with PSI, in comparison to the original scale, the Experience of Parasocial Interaction scale is used. And the final scale that is detailed is the Audience-Persona scale (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000). Similar to other scales, the Audience-

Persona scale attempted to address issues within the PSR scale from Rubin et. al (1985). This scale is a scholarly scale that focuses on parasocial as a multidimensional construct, which is similar to the fanship scale discussed in this dissertation. For the multidimensional scale reasoning, the Audience-Persona scale is included. The next sections detail the two scale that touch on parasocial concepts, that were used to assist with convergent validation evidence of the fanship scale.

Experience of Parasocial Interaction Scale

The next scale in study 3 was the Experience of Parasocial Interaction (EPSI) Scale (Hartmann and Goldhoorn, 2011). Unlike the PSR scale above, the purpose of this scale is to measure the interaction (PSI), not the relationship (PSR) between the participant and the persona. Dibble et al. (2016) found that Hartmann and Goldhoorn's (2011) ESPI scale measures PSI better than the Rubin et al. (1985) scale because the EPSI scale measures aspects between the persona and the viewer through a single viewing experience, whereas Rubin et al.'s (1985) scale measures short and/or long-term liking of the persona. While PSR is more closely related to fanship than PSI due to the ongoing nature noted above, the ESPI scale should have some correlation because it still captures a parasocial experience and the connection between an audience and a persona, similar to one's fanship connection to a fan object. In turn, there will most likely be some convergent validation evidence with ESPI. The ESPI is a six-item scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This original scale is created for PSI, which is the interaction from the start of a video, television show, film, or some form of mediated video content to the end of a video—therefore the affective tie is limited to when individuals are viewing the mediated content. To gauge ESPI, the participants were asked to think about an interaction with the fan object to answer the six questions. The original wording

was slightly adjusted to fit this study. For example, the original item "while watching the video clip of, [name] was aware of me," was adjusted to the following item in this study: "while thinking of the time with the [FBO], the [FBO] was aware of me."

Audience-Persona Interaction Scale

The final scale in study 3 was the audience-persona interaction (API) scale (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000). The API scale was developed to address some shortcomings researchers found with the PSR scale (Rubin et al., 1985). For example, the PSR scale is unidimensional and Auter and Palmgreen (2000) argue that PSR is a multidimensional concept, yielding four factors to assist with measurement: 1) identify, 2) interest, 3) group, and 4) problem. The API scale is a 22-item scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale addresses interactions between the audience and a television persona. Aspects of this scale work well with some fanships (e.g., television) compared to others (e.g., sports), mainly because this scale was created to look at the relationship an audience cultivates with the show and/or characters within the show. With a fan object, such as a television character, the parasocial relationship could be due to the connection the audience has with the persona. The audience is connecting to the persona by repeatedly being exposed to aspects of the characters' lives and learning the attitudes and beliefs of these characters. In other types of fan objects, such as football, the audience is not exposed to this same level of consistent persona development. This is not to say that audiences do not create PSR with individual players. However, the relationships sports fans create are often based on media consumption outside of the game, such as interviews and social media accounts, and could be built on the connection to the team as a whole, which could be based on game winnings, geography, or similar items. The overall concept of the API scale is to find PSR between a television persona and the audience, not fanship. However, some

aspects of this scale helped inspire the fanship scale, which should display convergent validation, especially if we break the scale down by certain factors.

While the overall scale is not specific to fanship items, two factors are similar to those within fanship. The first API factor of "identification," which is how one identifies with the show or character, connects to the fanship factor of fan emotional/affective ties, which is how one connects to the fan object and how they claim the fan object to be a part of their identity. Both factors ask questions about the connection between the participant's identity and the fan object. Questions within this factor ask items such as "[FBO] reminds me of myself." To see the full list of scale items, see Appendix B.

The other factor from API that overlaps with fanship is "group," which connects to the fanship scale's "community" factor. Both factors include items that speak toward the connection the participant has to other individuals. The API scale asks about the feelings of connection the participant has to the group within the television show, whereas the fanship scale seeks to measure the connection the participant has to others within the fandom. For example, API scale's items for the "group" factor include "I'd enjoy interacting with [FBO] and my friends at the same time."

Scale Cut Points

Convergent validity evidence test to find if two constructs, which are theatrically related, are statistically related. Through the convergent validation evidence process, correlation tests are ran to find the validation evidence between the fanship scale and the scales listed above. There are no cutoff points to define strong validation; scholars can have informed assumptions on which scales will be strongly correlated (DeVellis, 2017). Because each scale has similar aspects

with the fanship scale, I expect a correlation between each, but as the similarity between these other scales and fanship increases, I expect a stronger correlation.

The PSR scale measures an ongoing relationship between the audience and the persona. Similarly, the fanship scale measures an ongoing connection. None of the other scales are designed to measure an ongoing connection; therefore the PSR scale should display a strong correlation. I expect PSR and fanship to have the highest correlation of the set.

The EPSI and API scales measure the interaction of a fixed viewing experience, which should result in a smaller correlation. I hypothesize that PSR (Rubin et al., 1985) should display a stronger correlation than the EPSI and API scales.

That said, the API scale is mainly being used for convergent validation evidence because of the similarity between its factors and some of the fanship factors. The API scale factor of identification should have a strong correlation with the fanship factor of emotional ties, and the API scale factor of group should have a strong correlation with the fanship factor of community.

Results

Study 3 sought to find convergent validity evidence between the fanship scale and other similar scales. A correlation was run on each of the four scales above to measure the convergent validation evidence. As shown in Table 5, the PSR scale was the only one to display close to a strong correlation to fanship (r=.677, p<.001). Small correlation is below .29, medium is between .3 to .69, and large correlation is .7 or above (Morgan et al., 2016). Therefore the results show a medium correlation between the two scales. As detailed with PSR, the fan-persona relationship occurs before, after, and during the interaction with the persona (or fan object). For original PSR concepts, this is related to the relationship one builds with a television persona, but for fanship, it displays a type of ongoing relationship (e.g., connection) a participant has with the

fan object. These scales are not the same, but aspects of the scales ask about the connection the participants have with the fan object/persona, which helps explain the significant correlation.

Table 5
Scale Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics

	Fanship	PSR	EPSI	API
Fanship	1			
PSR	**.677***	1		
EPSI	.338*	.376*	1	
API	.473*	**.710***	.327*	1
M	67.04	57.75	11.39	78.93
SD	10.752	8.82	5.78	15.46
ω	.866	.862	.929	.911

Note. Bolded items display a strong correlation (Pearson).
*p<.001(sig. 2-tailed)

Focusing on the relationship between the fanship scale created in this study and the PSR scale (Rubin et al., 1985), the correlation shows a close relationship. Theoretically, the concept of parasocial is related to fanship. Fanship examines the relationship between a fan object and an individual. Similarly, PSR examines the relationship between the persona and the audience. While theoretically (and statistically) these concepts are similar, the PSR scale is a one-dimensional scale that focuses on the emotional connection an audience member has to a persona. This is only one aspect of the fanship scale, fan emotional/affective ties. If researchers only use PSR to measure aspects of fanship, they are not measuring the other fanship dimensions. This is why it is important to use the fanship scale when measuring aspects of fanship, as it more comprehensively measures fanship beyond the PSR scale.

As for the other scales, there is not a strong correlation with the fanship scale. Speaking toward the EPSI scale, this scale is designed to look at the PSI, which is limited to the interaction itself, such as when the character is on the TV only. This is unlike fanship, in which there is an ongoing connection between the person and the fan object. Even while the person is not directly

exposed to the fan object, they still have some ties to the fan object, which can display aspects of their fanship. Thus, the correlation between fanship and EPSI is present but it a medium correlation (r=.338, p<.001).

Finally, there is a correlation between the fanship scale and the API scale, which is a medium correlation (r=.473, p<.001). The API scale strongly focuses on the audience's parasocial concepts and a television character, and two of the factors overlap with fanship: identify and group. In order to find the correlation between the most similar factors in both the API scale and the fanship scale, a second correlation test was run, as presented on Table 6. The correlations that are of interest include the relationship between fan emotional tie (fanship) and identify (API), and community (fanship) and group (API). Both sets of correlations exhibited

Table 6
Factor Correlation Matrix

	Fan Emotion	Fan Knowledge	Fan Community	Fan Engagement	Fan Conversation	API Identify	API Interest	API Group	API Problem
Fan Emotion	1								
Fan Knowledge	.458*	1							
Fan Community	.405*	.417*	1						
Fan Engagement	.247*	.344*	.295*	1					
Fan Conversation	.378*	.403*	.451*	**.829***	1				
API Identify	**.730***	.169	.305*	.292*	.371*	1			
API Interest	.592*	.365*	.473*	.284*	.383*	.555*	1		
API Group	.201*	.154	**.786***	.346*	.397*	.624*	.437*	1	
API Problem	.325*	.127	.321*	.212*	.284*	.549*	.481*	.588*	1

Note. Bolded items display a strong correlation (Pearson).
*p<.001(sig. 2-tailed)

strong relationships: fan emotion x API ID (r=.730, p<.001), and fan community X API Group (r=.786, p<.001). The overall scale is not strongly correlated, but the factors that are most similar to fanship factors display strong correlations, which provides supportive convergent validation evidence for the fanship scale.

The focus of study 3 was to assist in finding convergent validation evidence. While it was hypothesized that there would be a strong correlation between the fanship scale and the PSR scale, there was instead a medium (close to strong) correlation, which still displays convergent validation evidence. Similarly, there was evidence found for convergent validity when looking at similar factors from the fanship scale and the API scale. These results support the convergent validity evidence of the fanship scale itself.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation was to create a scale to measure fanship. Earlier studies categorized fanship as a dichotomous variable (i.e., Jenkins, 1992). However, as research extended (i.e., Hills, 2002), including Jenkins's (2013) own work, fanship has been conceived as not an all-or-nothing idea. Rather, fans might be a "die-hard fan," "aca-fan," or "true fan," or they could follow a fan object in less "obsessed" ways. For example, fans can watch a movie and enjoy it but not buy any affiliated products or do additional research. A fan could enjoy listening to an artist's music on Spotify but not seek out the artist in other spaces. A fan could be someone who watches every game of a football team and has a favorite player but has never attended a game in their life. Someone can also experience their fanship by themselves, or they can join a fandom—a community formed around the fan object—that connects them to the fandom, as well as contributes to the fan's perception of their identity. Ultimately, there are different types of fans, and as long as an individual has a connection to the fan object on any level, they could label themselves as a fan. The purpose of this research was to measure the varying aspects of fanship, try to encompass this wide breath of potential identities, which can help scholars better understand fanship in a quantifiable way.

Recap of Scale Development: Expert Review and Studies 1-2

Through this dissertation, a theoretical scale was developed based on fan studies research. This validation study was broken into four parts, starting with expert review, then into study 1, study 2, and study 3. The scale started off as a 32-item scale and went through the expert review process to assist with validation evidence. Through expert review, the item "I am not a fan of [FBO]" was removed from the scale. This item was originally part of the scale as a reversed-

coded and negatively-worded item. Through expert review, this item had low relevancy scores and was removed from the scale, which resulted in a new 31-item scale.

Moving to study 1, the 31-item scale was tested with exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Through the EFA, the scale moved down to a 24-item scale due to instances of low factor loading. Examples of items that had low factor loading included: “I would be happy to know if others see me as a fan of [fan-based object (FBO)]” and “I sought out additional information of [FBO].” Initially, the fanship scale was conceived of comprising four factors based primarily on Hinck’s (2019) four continua: fan emotional/affective ties, fan community, fan knowledge, and fan engagement. However, through the EFA, the cut point yielded five factors. I provide more details on the addition of the fifth factor below. There was also one item that had a cross loading: “I enjoy being a part of [FBO] fandom community.” While the creation of this item was intended for fan community, it cross loaded with the factor of fan emotional tie. Theoretically, emotional ties have a deep connection with fan identity (Hinck, 2019). As we know from social identity theory, identities can be represented by our association with different groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, it makes theoretical sense that this item would cross load between community and emotional tie given these identity-based factors. I investigated this item further in the next study.

In study 2, the 24-item scale was then used to collect data on and run a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Through analyzing the goodness-of-fit and validation process, the scale trimmed down to an 18-point scale. A few examples of items that were removed include: “I do not follow [FBO]” and “I cannot relate to others within the [FBO] community.” Both of these examples, as well as other items that were removed, are negatively-worded questions. The 18-item scale still included items that investigated the same concept, but the items were positively

worded. After the items are reverse coded, the negative-worded items should match closely to the positively-worded items. For example, “I am not a fan of FBO” and “I am a fan of FBO.” There should be a strong correlation between the positive and negatively worded items, which measure similar concepts. However, in my dataset, there was a weak correlation (r=.383, p<.05), One might wonder if this is then a case of response set or inattention, which negatively-worded items are supposed to help combat. However, it is important to keep in mind that only individuals who passed the attention checks were retained for the final datasets. Therefore inattention should not be causing negatively-worded items to drop.

Another potential rationale is that when thinking of negatively-worded items, the wording of these items typically seeks to represent low scoring levels, as well as the absence of the item (DeVellis, 2017). For example, “I am not a fan of FBO” asked the absence of the fanship. For this fanship scale development, participants self-disclosed their favorite fanship. If one of the main goals of a negatively-worded item is to find the absence of something (DeVellis, 2017), there would presumably not be an absence of an individual’s favorite fanships. Research has shown that the wording of negatively-worded items tends to be perceived as less clear and straightforward as compared to positively-worded items (Irions, 2017). It is possible that the combination of asking someone to self-identify their favorite fan object and then confronting them with statements about the absence of their fanship toward that same object may have been perceived as confusing or less clear as compared to the positively-worded counterparts. Ultimately, the retained positively-worded items still cover the conceptual ground necessary for the scale, but with so few retained negatively-worded items, it may be imperative that future scholars include other attention checks in their questionnaires in addition to the fanship scale to ensure any poor results are not due to inattention.

As for the item that displayed a cross-loading during the EFA, I ran the item under both factors in the CFA. The results displayed that the factors themselves are deeply connected to each other. The two factors of fan emotional ties and fan community have a medium correlation with each other, which is stronger than the correlation between any of the other factors (see Table 7 for factor correlation matrix). As detailed in previous chapters, a fan's identity, which is part of emotional ties, is also tied to one's social groups based on social identity theory, which may be why there is a stronger relationship between emotional ties and community. Based on study 3, the item no longer cross-loaded, as the CFA showed that the item statistically belongs under the fan community factor. Through both study 1 and 2, as items were removed, expert review was consulted to assist with validation evidence of the fanship scale.

Table 7
Factor Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Fan Emotional	1				
2. Fan Community	.620	1			
3. Fan Knowledge	.458	.417	1		
4. Fan Engagement	.247	.295	.344	1	
5. Fan Conversation	.356	.498	.345	.440	1

Note. Data based on Study 3. All correlations significant, $p<.01$.

Through multiple rounds of data collection, the scale was narrowed down to an 18-item scale with five factors, as displayed in Table 4 and Figure 1 in Chapter 4. Each of the five factors was found to have high Omega levels, which displays statistical reliability. For a final list of items, see Table 8, but for a summary of the full original items list and when removed items were removed, see Appendix A.

Table 8

Final Fanship Scale

	Fan Factor
I am a fan of [FBO].	emotional
I care about what happens to [FBO].	emotional
I enjoy following [FBO].	emotional
I have a vast amount of knowledge on [FBO].	knowledge
I enjoy doing research to learn more about [FBO].	knowledge
I do not do additional research about [FBO].	knowledge
I enjoy being a part of [FBO] fandom community.	community
I enjoy discussing [FBO] with others.	community
I feel included in the [FBO] community.	community
I can relate to others within the [FBO] community.	community
I own a lot of merchandise related to [FBO], e.g., shirts, art.	engagement
I have a large amount of collectables for [FBO], e.g., first-run issue of a comic.	engagement
I enjoy displaying my [FBO] purchases for others to see.	engagement
Worn a clothing item around [FBO].	engagement
Discussed [FBO] with a friend or family member	conversation
Discussed [FBO] with a stranger.	conversation
Discussed [FBO] with an acquaintance or co-worker.	conversation
Discussed [FBO] with a fellow fan of [FBO].	conversation

Factors of the Fanship Scale

Fanship for this study is defined as an individual's physical and/or emotional connection with a fan object. An individual can display this connection in many ways; for example, by appearing at a movie premiere, game, or concert, wearing a shirt of the fan object, posting about it on their social media, and connecting with fellow fans, to name a few. To capture this variance, the fanship scale includes five factors, which is one more than Hinck (2019) discussed when describing fanship.

The first factor is fan emotional ties, which is how a fan connects with the fan object through both emotional and affective ways. Emotional and affective ties focus on how a fan feels about a fan object. When a fan says they felt more committed to Adele after listing to her recent album in which she opens up about her divorce through the songs or how every episode of *Grey's Anatomy* makes this laugh and cry, the fan is expressing their emotional connection with the fan object. This factor can also relate to aspects of a fan's identity, where an individual will claim to be a fan of one (or more) fan object(s). By claiming to be a fan of a specific fan object, individuals are displaying to others what types of groups, attitudes, beliefs, etc. they view as part of who they are and how they identify. For example, if someone claims the identity of a *Parks and Recreation* fan or they say they never miss an episode of *Parks and Recreation*, this might display to others that the individual enjoys this type of comedy and political satire.

Emotional connection can dive deeper than stating you are a fan of something, as fans might emotionally connect to the fan object, or aspects of the fan object, by seeing themselves represented through the fan object itself. This could be through aspects of demographics or social labels they claim or possess. When thinking of the musical artist Lizzo, she openly discusses body positively and breaking stereotypical beauty standards, and fans who fall outside society's restrictive norms can identify with this message (Woodstock, 2021). When celebrities and other fan objects, discuss topics like body image or other physical and psychological characteristics, fans can relate the representation of the fan object to their fan identity. Another example can include fans of *Harry Potter* connecting to the idea of being the outsider, and can see themselves as one of the outsiders who can save the day, as well as celebrating being the "weirdo" (Groene & Hettinger, 2016). Through these emotional representations, fans foster aspects of their identity.

Furthermore, aspects of identity are also being created within the social groups that form larger connections around the fan object. As detailed within the third factor of fan community, through these aspects of connection, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) can be used to understand fan identity. An individual can claim their larger identity to include aspects of their fan identity through their fan group membership.

Although many people display their fanship to others, this factor does not depend on being public. For example, if someone's guilty pleasure is watching *The Bachelor,* they might not be public about this fanship. Even if they keep it private, they can still exhibit high emotional ties with the fan object, and care what happens to the fan object. If the show gets canceled, the fan might be saddened that the show is over, but excited to hear a new spin off is coming soon. As a fan makes connections to a fan object, they start to have emotional connections that keep them going back to the fan object. Through these affective ties, a person can help explain who they are as a fan, and more broadly, who they are as an individual.

The second factor with the fanship scale is fan knowledge. This factor covers the collection of facts and detail an individual might have on a fan object. Those who are fans of a fan object might find that they have specialized knowledge that a nonfan will not hold, such as Marvel fans trying to display details about deep catalogue superheroes they learned about through their extensive comic book consumption or Taylor Swift fans may show they know the lyrics word for word to her newest album within 24 hours of its release. Items within this factor also include the likelihood of fans doing additional research to extend their knowledge of a fan object and knowledge comparative statements., such as asking questions that compare a participant's knowledge to the knowledge of what they think a fan should have. For example, "when I think of a fan of [FBO], my knowledge would be lesser than that fan." It is important to

remember that these types of questions are based on the participant's viewpoints of that fan object's fans.

Knowledge of a fan object will range and different fans will value different knowledge, as well as different fandoms might value different types of knowledge. This could be a football player's game statistics across their entire career, every easter egg in a movie franchise, or thorough characteristics and details buried within a beloved novel. By having knowledge of the fan object, as well as displaying their fan knowledge, fans exhibit their fanship to other fans and nonfans. This factor could be an outward display of the fan knowledge towards others or it could be kept private, such as a fan taking quizzes to explore how their fan trivia (knowledge) lines up with what they believe a fan of that fan object should know.

The third factor is fan community. The fan community is commonly known as a fandom. A fandom is a group that is created and centered around a common fan object. Items within this factor measure the attitudes a fan has to the larger fan community. Someone who is in a fan community might enjoy discussing aspects of the fan object, such as fan theories, critiques, and what they enjoy about the fan object.

As mentioned above in the fan emotional ties section, one aspect of fan community connects back to fan identity. Through social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), one can help describe and understand their identity based on the social groups they belong to, such as a fan community. By claiming to be a fan, they are adopting that identity, which displays to others information about the individual. When someone claims to be a Dallas Cowboy fan, other Cowboy fans will see them as part of the community (or question their fanship to the object), and non Dallas Cowboy fans will understand a little more of the individual based on their belonging to the fan community. Furthermore, this could create an us-versus-them mentality. Both for those

who claim to “die-hard” or “bandwagon” fans, and those who are fans of a rival team, such as the Kanas City Chiefs. Both examples explain aspects of how community engagement can affect fan identity.

The fourth factor is fan engagement. Engagement includes a range of interactions a fan has with the fan object. Fan engagement centers on the product behaviors a fan has towards a fan object, such as wearing a product of the fan object. This kind of engagement aligns with Hinck’s (2019) conceptualization of fan engagement as activities that focus on material productivity. This also closely relates to Fiske’s (1992) idea of textural productivity: how fans create and circulate text and items amongst themselves, such as fan fiction writing. Based on expert review, there were reviewers who questioned Hinck’s engagement definition because it solely focused on material productivity, and There are some aspects of ‘engagement’ that do not yield material productivity. For example, attending a movie premiere is a form of engagement or fan-object based behavior. While the original item creation for this factor included items on engagement in a non-material productivity way (e.g., “watch/read/listen to a product about [FBO]”, these items were found to have weak factor loading through the EFA/CFA or loaded better with other factors, such as fan community. Thus, for the factor of fan engagement, this factor follows the details of Hinck’s (2019) fan engagement continua.

The fifth and final factor is fan conversation. This factor is not an individual factor in Hinck’s (2019) work; rather, she groups this factor under fan community and fan engagement. Fan conversation centers around the idea of interaction and discussion based on the fan object. This factor is about the conversations and interactions outside the relationship between the fan and fan object. These interactions can include discussions with a friend or family member, with the discussion is centered on the fan object.

This factor is a new finding based on this dissertation. Like each factor, there is a connection between conversation and other factors. However, fan conversation stands on its own based on statistical tests and theoretical understanding. Fan conversation could fit under aspects of fan community, but within fan community, conversation is between community members only. The fan conversation factor highlights that fans do not only talk to other fans, but they like to express their identity and their love for the fan object to others around them. The people around them could be a fellow fan, but the person around them could be someone who has never heard of the fan object. Based on the fan's connection to the fan object, they may like to share what they know and how they feel about the fan object, such as to tell others about who they are as a person or to attempt to get others involved within the fan object and fan community, to name a few reasons. By uncovering this new, distinct factor, this dissertation both extends fan studies and enables the fanship scale to be more comprehensive, increasing its validity evidence.

Fanship Scale Comparison

Through study 3, convergent validity was assessed. While there is no scale that measures fanship directly, the parasocial relationship (PSR) scale, and other similar scales, measure aspects that are closely related to fanship. Specifically, they all deal with a type of relationship and/or connection with a type of mediate persona. The ongoing relationship aspect of PSR is more closely associated with fanship than the interaction version of parasocial. PSI is limited to only the interaction of the viewing experience, whereas PSR is associated with before, after, and during the interaction itself. For fanship, the measure is not limited to the sole interaction participants have with the fan object, thus, there should be a higher correlation with PSR concepts than PSI. The analysis in study 3 supported this prediction. For this dissertation, the

fanship scale had a higher correlation with Rubin et al.'s (1985) scale, used to measure PSR, than compared to Hartmann and Goldhoorn's (2011) EPSI scale, used to measure PSI.

As for the API scale (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000), this scale was created to form a multi-dimensional scale to look at the PSI between the persona and the audience. While this scale has a clear connection to parasocial concepts, some of the factors within the API scale more clearly overlap with the fanship scale. While the scale overall has a low correlation with the fanship scale (see Table 5 in Chapter 4), two of the factors—identify and group—display high correlations with the related fanship factors (see Table 6 in Chapter 4). This assists with the convergent validation evidence for the fanship scale because it demonstrates how the two factors, fan emotional ties and fan community, have a defined and significant relationship with the factors in the API scale. While the *scales* are theoretically different, the *factors* are theoretically similar, thus a strong correlation displays a significant relationship between the theoretically related factors.

About the Fanship Scale

The fanship scale was created to assist in measuring fanship. While other scales (e.g., PSR) measure aspects similar to fanship, to use one of these scales to measure fanship threatens the validity of that research. The fanship scale seeks to measure fanship from the "obsessed" fan to the nonfollower. As first described within the expert review section, the term "obsessed" tends to think of one type of fan, such as those discussed and identified in Yodovich's (2016) work on *Twilight* fans who are often pejoratively labeled as "obsessive," "crazed," and even "rabid." However, fanship is not siloed in such obsession and the fanship scale extends beyond this one type of fanship to include the person who does not classify themselves as a "fan" but is what Jenkins (1992) would describe as a follower. The follower is someone who is aware of the fan

object and has had interactions with the fan object, yet may not deem themselves a "fan." The fanship scale also can be used to understand the nonfan who might not be aware of the fan object. Theoretically, assuming that the nonfan's results are close to the bottom of the spectrum, the nonfan is still listed on the spectrum itself. However, this is not to say the ones who are "obsesed" are the only ones who are at the top of the spectrum. Due to the multi-dimensional aspect of the scale, obsessed fans are not automatically the highest scoring because they could be high in affective ties, but low in community, which might be based on if they are more public or personal with their fan object. The scale itself will capture variance among different fans and fan objects, and this depends on the fandom and the individual fan.

When attempting to measure fanship, each factor is considered equally. Different fandoms, as well as different fans, might find one factor to be more important than another factor. For example, a certain type of Marvel fan might find that the factor of fan knowledge, especially comics book knowledge, to be more important than fan emotional ties (Hubbard et al., in progress). The fanship scale does not measure the granularity of comics versus movie knowledge as that would yield a highly specific and less generally usable scale, but it does reveal potentially which factors of fanship may be valued differently for fans of different objects. Similarly, when looking at another fandom, Taylor Swift fans might deem it highly important to be emotionally invested with Swift, while some might claim that they were in the top 2% of Spotify listeners, thus claiming they are a bigger fan, which could be a form of emotional ties as it relates to how they identify themselves. Each camp may deem their factor as more important to their fanship, and each fandom may create different hierarchies (Hills, 2002) and rules of stratification (Hubbard et al., in progress). The fanship scale enables researchers to assess these

different values. Thus, high scores across the board are not needed to show evidence of high fanship. Rather, high scores on the dimension that the fan values may be more meaningful.

In that vein, it is vital to remember that the scale is based on self-description. One fan might find that they have a large amount of knowledge toward their fan object; however, when comparing it to another fan, their knowledge might be considered minimal. When a participant is asked to compare their knowledge to other fans, in their viewpoint, they might find they are more knowledge than other fans. Again, it is self-disclosed and not a percentage comparison like a test in a class. While some scales like political knowledge may be able to score correct political knowledge associated with a certain country, a single fanship scale cannot assess knowledge in such a way and still be generalizable across fan objects. Fanship is about the connection a fan has with the fan object. If that fan finds that they have great knowledge of the fan object, they will scale themselves high in the fan knowledge factor. This scale is not comparing details from one fan to another to get at the measure, but the self-perceived levels the individual fan identifies within themselves for a specific fan object.

Having a multidimensional fanship scale enables fluidity for each researcher and the fanship under investigation. A scholar might find that their targeted fandom deems one factor more important than another factor. Thus, the researcher measures with that factor in mind, searching for a statistical understanding of that explicit factor. This is similar to how the validation evidence step of the fanship scale used two factors of the API scale to assist in the validation process. Ultimately, researchers can use the scale as both a factor-based measure and a holistic measure of fanship, enabling broader applicability for scholarship.

Furthermore, the fanship scale should work across different fan objects. Within the data collection, over 900 participants, throughout three studies, self-described one of their favorite

fanships. The objects people listed were wide-ranging. Participants listed film (e.g. *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*), fantasy television (e.g., *Psych* and *Doctor Who*), games (Dungeons and Dragons and Fortnite), comics (e.g., Marvel and DC), music (e.g., BTS and Lady Gaga), celebrities (e.g., Austin Butler and Taylor Swift), anime (e.g., *One Piece* and Pokémon), fiction/literature (e.g., Harry Potter and Steven King), and sports (e.g., San Francisco *49ners* and Texas A & M Aggies). Many of these cross over into multiple different types of fan objects. For example, Marvel is comprised of comics, TV, and film, Taylor Swift can be listed as music and celebrity, and Harry Potter can be listed as film and literature, to name a few. Due to the wide representation of types of fan objects listed above, the sample represents a large population of potential fan objects. Furthermore, as I noted above, the scale was designed with generalizability in mind, such as keeping fan knowledge items open enough to assess knowledge across fan objects.

One goal of the fanship scale is generalizability across different fan objects (e.g., film, comics, sports, music, etc.), and there were different types of fan objects used within the data of study 1, 2, and 3. While the study was open to all types of demographics, the major population from the Prolific sample were participants who identified white, cis, straight individuals. This is similar to myself and the experts who reviewed the scale, as are many of the experts and top researchers in fan studies (which speaks more toward issues of the research field). I detail these issues more in my limitations section. However, I wanted to note that when thinking of generalizability, this study does an excellent job on different fan objects but falls short participant diversity. This could lead to questions of generalizability through race, sexual orientation, and other demographics. This can and should be explored and expanded through future studies.

While future studies should explore the use of the fanship scale within different types of fan objects, the results of the fanship scale for studies 1, 2, and 3 suggest broad applicability. Although each type of fan object, fan, and fandom might find one dimension to be more essential than another, researchers can use this scale to assist in better understanding the different levels and factors that are included in the multidimensional construct of fanship.

Future Research

The scale should be tested through multiple fan object types to grasp what type of fanships the scale works best with. A fan object type could include sports, music, film, etc. Previous research (e.g., Hinck, 2019) has displayed that fanship is transferable across fanship type. In Hinck's (2019) book, she focuses on fan-based citizenship; however, through this interpretive work, we can see how the fanship continua is transferable from sports (e.g., University of Nebraska Husker Football) to film/literature (e.g., Harry Potter), to children's toys (e.g., LEGO). Each of these are different fan object types, and the fanship scale was constructed to be generalizable across the different fan object types. It is possible, however, the scale might have stronger validity with one type of fanship when compared to others. For example, this scale might best measure the fanship of film or literature type fanship over music fanship. If this is the case, the fanship scale then needs to be adjusted and tweaked for each fan object type. By testing this scale through different fanships, future research can assist with the validity and reliability of the scale.

Another potential venue for future research is to use the fanship scale in predictive approaches. Specifically, how does measuring fanship assist in predicting an outcome? If someone has high levels of fanship, what is the likelihood they would purchase a product (e.g.,

endorsed by a celebrity or as seen in a television show), change their attitudes towards health habits (e.g., smoking, eating healthy), or create political/civic change (e.g., go vote)?

Fan studies has already explored aspects referenced above, such as Seah (2018) with celebrity endorsements on political campaigns, Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta (2010) discussing popular culture used for marketing tactics, or Jenkins (2013) finding aspects of fandoms creating civic change. All this work, while deeply valuable to fan studies, is interpretive. By employing the fanship scale, fan scholars can answer more post-positive questions and engage in hypothesis testing. A large amount of fan studies research is in the interpretivist style of work, and this scale is not seeking to replace the much-needed interpretive work, but rather to add to the study of fanship and fandom through a new approach of data collection and scholarly research.

Additionally, research can explore aspects of fan-based citizenship (FBC). Hinck (2019) describes FBC as "public engagement that emerges from a commitment to a fan object" (p. 6), in which individuals use their fandom to make civic and/or political changes. In addition to fans being loyal in a supportive way to a fan object, fans might also use their connection to the fan object to take action outside of the fan object and in ways that do not directly benefit the fan object. Star Wars fans have multiple groups (e.g., 501st Legion) dedicated to raising funds for charity, visiting children in hospitals dressed as a Storm Trooper, etc.

Another example Hinck (2019) discusses is the fan object Harry Potter and the 2008 U.S. presidential candidate Barack Obama. Fans of the Harry Potter world, specifically known as the Harry Potter Alliance fandom, created "Wizards for Obama." There was no official endorsement from J.K. Rowling, the creator of the Wizarding World, yet a few fans took it upon themselves to show their support for Obama's presidential campaign through Harry Potter. When looking at

Wizards for Obama, there was a specific goal of electing Obama; however, this goal expanded in subsequent elections to have "Wizards with Her" to support Hillary Clinton's presidential nomination in 2016. Hinck (2019) discusses that "citizens may easily choose Harry Potter over the Democratic Party to guide their civic action on voting in the presidential election" (p. 22). This could be due to many reasons, such as individuals having a higher emotional connection with the fan object of *Harry Potter*, or characters within *Harry Potter*, than the political candidate or a political party's established institution. Based on the connection they have with the fan object, and the connection they are seeing with the political candidate, they might mobilize voters or vote for the political candidate. It is also possible that these fandoms could create a gateway effect, in which those who are less attentive to politics start to seek out more information on candidates or elections after seeing Wizards for Obama promotions in their fandom (Jenkins, 2014). When thinking of FBC, scholars could use the fanship scale to measure an individual's fanship and determine whether their score predicts greater likelihood to create civic change via measures for civic engagement, civic competency, or political participation. As traditional politics in the US and abroad become more polarized, volatile, and focused on negative partisanship, many citizens may experience alienation from or apathy toward the political process or civic affairs. It is possible that tapping into fanship as a gateway effect could help (re)engage these citizens in their civic processes.

Future research could also use fanship as a predictor for other variables. Other researchers could explore aspects of celebrity endorsements (e.g., product endorsements/placement or lifestyle changes) or public health campaigns (e.g., fan object urges individuals to stop vaping) to name a few. By being able to understand the predictive nature of fanship, researchers can then understand how items of fan messages, fan community

belongingness, and fan identity can then result in specific outcomes with collections to Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1980) or Entertainment Educational (Moyer-Guse, 2008) to name a few. The fanship scale can then shed new light on how we understand new aspects of social influence. As this scale is applied to different fan objects and fan object types, as well as exercised for different uses, the fanship scale can aid in generalizability, reliability, and validity.

Another path that the fanship scale could explore is that of convergent and discriminant validation evidence. As displayed in Study 3, the fanship scale has a close correlation with the PSR scale (Rubin et al., 1985), which displays how fanship and parasocial concepts are theoretically and statistically related. Future studies can use other parasocial scales (e.g., the PSI-Processing scale) to explore how these scales are related, which can assist in possible adjustments and better validation evidence for the fanship scale.

The final future research topic I would like to discuss is breaking the fanship scale data down more. I would like to break the fan objects into nominal type data (e.g., sports, music, film, etc.), then compare how each fan object type might find one dimension to be higher or more significant than other dimensions. For example, when displaying your fanship, does sports fanship rely more on fan knowledge than fan emotional/affective ties; whereas, music fanship might not rely on fan knowledge as much as fan community. This is one example of how the data can be broken down by fan object to assist in understanding fanship more.

Limitations

As with any research, this dissertation has limitations. As with any method design, there are always pros and cons. I constructed the studies to focus on a participant's self-selected fan object. I selected this approach to assist with scale recreation and to gain the most efficient and

streamline data for the scale creation. This design enabled participants to insert any object they were a fan of, and most likely prompted participants to score higher on many of the positively-worded items because they were tapping into a favored object. The fanship scale included items that were on a Likert scale from one to five, and had five factors, including: 1) fan emotional ties (*M=4.51, SD*=0.51), 2) fan knowledge (*M*=3.93, *SD*=0.73), 3) fan community (*M*=4.02, *SD*=0.65), 4) fan engagement (*M*=2.62, *SD*=1.06), and 5) fan conversation (*M*=3.79, *SD*=0.99). Alternately, I could have selected one fan object for all participants to refer to when answering their items (e.g., Marvel or Taylor Swift), which could have resulted in individuals ranging from those who did not know of the fan object to those who would classify themselves in the top tier of that fandom. This method design would have resulted in a new aspect of data that the current dissertation is lacking, i.e., potentially a greater variety of fanship levels. When participants focus on one fan object, there should be an array of fanship from those who do not know the fan object to those who are deeply connected.

Alternatively, if I selected only one fan object for all of the participants, I would have run the risk of the majority of the fans being unfamiliar with the specific fan object, which could have resulted in a cluster of scores of ones (one being the lowest score for the items) or neutral responses. This would have strongly impacted the statistical test and results by skewing the data to those who are not connected to the fan object. If there was a large cluster of fans on one side of items, it could result in an abnormal distribution, one that is slanted to the lower end. Furthermore, selecting just one fan object would have potentially limited the external validity and generalizability of the scale. My current data speaks to a larger pool of fan objects and fan object types, which yields a more generalizable scale.

Another alternative would have been to select a large grouping of fan objects and fan object types. For example, instead of only giving them the option to respond to one fan object (e.g., Marvel or Taylor Swift), I would give multiple options (i.e., 7-10) with different types of fan objects (e.g., Harry Potter, BTS, Dallas Cowboys, etc.). Participants could rank the fan objects from favorite to least favorite. Then I could have the survey system randomly and evenly distribute the questions so that some participants might answer questions based on their top pick, while others might respond to questions about the fan object in the middle or bottom of their list. With this approach, I would be able to have potentially a large range of fans, from followers or nonfans to the "obsessed." To be able to have a strong representation of each fan object listed, I would need a significant number of participants for each fan object listed. While this type of method would have gathered a wide range of data, it was less feasible given my available funds and the ethical desire to pay participants a fair wage. That being said, my current data still speaks to a generalizable amount of fan objects, and leaves room for the fanship scale to be explored throughout social science research for additional checks on validity and reliability.

Another limitation concerns culture. This dissertation gathered data worldwide and a majority of the participants were outside the United States. While the current scale has representation of participants from countries and cultures around the world, each culture might view fanship differently. Jenkins (2013) has noted that fanship is "heterogeneous with values and assumptions that fragment along axes of class, age, gender, race, and sexuality" (p. 54). One axis that needs to be considered is culture. There are potentially cultural aspects of fanship that the current fanship scale is overlooking. For example, BTS fanship might manifest differently in South Korea than it does in the USA, based on cultural reasoning. The current data of the scale

has a vast global sample, which means a potentially more diverse sample; however, it also might be obscuring cultural differences.

One way to address this limitation could be comparing results in different countries and noting any differences. To do so, I would need a healthy number of participants from individual countries for statistical comparison. However, after reviewing the dataset, there are not enough participants from a single country to run statistical tests. To better address this potential limitation, future studies could purposely explore the fanship scale in different cultures and countries, and assess whether the scale is generalizable across this axis.

The final limitation I would like to discuss is the representation of minorities within the studies. While the samples included participants from the LGBTQ+ community and a variety of races and/or ethnicities, the majority of the sample self-disclosed as a cis and/or white individual. When thinking specifically on demographic details, this connects to fanship in many ways, such as fan identity. It is important to understand matters of representation and how one might have a deeper connection to the fan object based on being represented as a Black individual or someone who identifies as part of the LBGTQ+ community. For example, *Brooklynn 99* is a television show that features different minorities (e.g., a gay black man). In the middle of one season, Rosa Diaz, who is played by Stephanie Beatriz, came out as bisexual. While this show already features other members of the LBGTQ+ community, Stephanie Beatriz was excited that the bisexual character was being played by herself, who also claims the identity of bisexual. Similarly-identifying fans may have seen this new form of representation and it may have created new forms of connections with the character and the fan object. It is possible that because most of the samples were cisgender white individuals, who are heavily featured in fan objects present in the dataset and media in general, that these individuals downplay the role of demographic

identification with fan objects. In other words, if you are a cisgender white fan of fan objects heavily featuring cisgender white individuals, the role of representation in fanship may not be paramount to you or not as critical as it could be to someone to identifies with marginalized groups. This led me to wonder if my heavily cisgender white dataset was skewing the scale construction such that some items were removed that may not have been in other samples.

Analyzing the original 32 items, I attempted to find if there were questions that could have addressed aspects of minority communities and representation. However, going back to the original 32 items, I do not find items that address this. That said, I need to recognize my own positionality in this process. As the creator of the scale, and as a white/cis individual, I may have gaps in my ability to see these aspects in this process. Similarly, the expert reviewers for this study appear as white individuals, who identify or present as cis, and are in heterosexual relationships, though self-identified sexual orientation is unknown for most. When seeking out expert scholars, I reached out to experts who are not white; however, they did not respond. This being said, the majority of fan scholars I reached out to are white individuals. While much of the field of research on fan studies is about white fans by white scholars, and my studies contribute to those trends, I do hope the field expands to more diverse scholars and scholarship.

There is a growing body of fan studies focused on exploring LGBTQ+ and racial/ethnic minority fans (e.g., Guo et. al, 2020; Wasserbauer & Dhoest, 2016). As fanship studies continue to grow, my goal is for this scale to be utilized to explore fanship across a variety of fans, which means further testing is needed of the scale. Based on the current study's limitations, further testing of the fanship scale can analyze how the scale fits with different types of fan objects, as well as how the scale is seen in different cultural groups and minorities.

Conclusion

Fanship is woven throughout many individuals' lives. There are different types of fanships, and different individuals handle fanships in their own way. It is important for scholars to recognize the need of fan studies research, as fanship can help explain one's overall identity, help cultivate a community of like minds, or influence audiences and create attitudinal or behavioral changes.

The purpose of this dissertation was to create a fanship scale and address a gap in the fan studies literature. As detailed throughout this dissertation, fan studies is a newer field of scholarly research, and the majority of the fan studies research is based on the exploratory and interpretive paradigm. These studies started exploring aspects of fan community and fan identity to understand the interaction between fan objects and the audience. As this nascent field has grown, scholars started understanding different aspects and perspectives of fanship. This expansion helped set up a platform for my research to assist in fan studies exploring interpretivism *and* postpositive paradigms. As fan studies research moves forward, the fanship scale can assist in understanding fanship via a new, quantifiable lens.

With research that focuses on postpositive questions of fanship, we can expand fan studies. Many research studies about fan studies focus on one fan object, which can yield transferable knowledge. To build on this valuable research, the fanship scale can assist in understanding aspects of generalizability of fanship. By doing this expansion, future research can start to build on and develop items that are interwoven between styles and paradigms to give a better understanding of fanship, all while understanding the growth and changing world of popular culture.

Furthermore, this dissertation adds to the field by exploring fanship as a multidimensional construct. Like many constructs, fanship has different layers and aspects that are built into the overarching idea of one's connection to a fan object. Understanding that fanship is not unidimensional or one size fits all is key to understanding fanship as a whole, and this dissertation supports this type of understanding. It is important to restate that fanship is on a fluid continuum, including followers, casual fans, the obsessed, and however else fans choose to self-identify. Therefore, the fanship scale is attempting to assist in understanding the multidimensional scale of fanship across a range of fan types.

Another contribution of this dissertation is the discovery of a fifth factor: fan conversation. The dimension of fan conversation centers on the concepts of interaction and discussions around the fan object, all of which are outside the relationship between the fan and the fan object. When in conversation, people choose what parts of themselves they will disclose and keep secret. By communicating about one's fanship, the individual is detailing to those around them their connection and attitude towards a fan object, which in turn details characteristics of the fan's overall identity, both inside and outside the fan object. According to the communication theory of identity, "identity is expressed or enacted through communication" (Hecht & Choi, 2012, p. 139). Therefore, this newly identified factor helps show the key role communication, in particular interpersonal communication, plays in a fan's identity and fanship in general.

The fanship scale should be used and tested in future research to understand fanship from a different perspective, but to also test how the scale itself is used within different fandoms, cultures, and demographic groups. By adding this study to the field of research, fan studies can start to use different styles and methods of approach to understand the influence and impact of

fanship itself, and by working together, research can build on each other to find new and exciting understandings of popular culture.

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Appendix A

Original 32-Item Fanship Scale

Summary of Fanship Scale Deduction Process	Removal point
I am a fan of [FBO]	
I would be happy to know others see me as a fan of [FBO]	Study 1 (EFA)
I am not a fan of [FBO]	Expert Review
I would feel upset if others said I was a fan of [FBO]	Study 1 (EFA)
I care about what happens to [FBO]	
I enjoy following [FBO]	
I do not follow [FBO]	Study 2 (CFA)
I have a vast amount of knowledge on [FBO]	
I enjoy doing research to learn more about [FBO]	
I find that I have more knowledge than others around me when it comes to [FBO]	Study 2 (CFA)
I find my knowledge of [FBO] to be minimal if absent.	Study 2 (CFA)
I do not do additional research about [FBO]	
When I think of a fan of [FBO], my knowledge would be lesser than that fan.	Study 2 (CFA)
I would watch/read/listen to other aspects of the [FBO] (e.g., spin-off show, podcast)	Study 2 (CFA)
I enjoy being a part of [FBO] fandom community.	Study 2 (CFA)*
I enjoy discussing [FBO] with others	
I dislike discussing [FBO] with others	Study 1 (EFA)
When someone else brings up [FBO], I get excited	Study 1 (EFA)
I feel included in the [FBO] community.	
I can relate to others within the [FBO] community.	
I cannot relate to others within the [FBO] community.	Study 2 (CFA)
I own a lot of merchandise related to [FBO], e.g., shirts, art.	
I have a large amount of collectables for [FBO], e.g., first-run issue of a comic.	
I enjoy displaying my [FBO] purchases for others to see	
Discussed [FBO] with a friend or family member	
Discussed [FBO] with a stranger.	
Discussed [FBO] with an acquaintance or co-worked.	
Discussed [FBO] with a fellow fan of [FBO].	
Discussed [FBO] on social media	Study 1 (EFA)
Worn a clothing item around [FBO]	
Sought out additional information on [FBO]	Study 1 (EFA)
Watched/read/listened to a product about [FBO] (e.g., book, TV show, podcast)	Study 1(EFA)

Note: items in bold means they are still in the final fanship scale.

*item was cross loading, and at this point, the item is no longer crossloading

Appendix B

Outside Scales Used in Study 3

Scales were asked on a 1-5 Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Scales wording was slightly adjusted to fit the current study of fanship.

Parasocial Relationship Scale (Rubin et al., 1985)

While thinking about [FBO], I understood what [FBO] is like.
While thinking about [FBO], I felt as if I were part of a group.
I like to compare my ideas with what [FBO] thinks.
[FBO] makes me feel comfortable, as if I was with a friend.
I see [FBO] as natural and down-to-earth.
I like hearing [FBO] in my home.
[FBO] keeps me company.
I look forward to interacting with [FBO].
If [FBO] would be appearing in a video clip, I would watch that clip.
I sometimes make remarks to [FBO]while watching, reading, or listening.
If there was a story about [FBO]in something like a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.
I would miss [FBO]when it is gone.
I would like to meet people involved in [FBO]in person.
I think of [FBO]like a friend.
I find aspects of [FBO]to be attractive.

Note: [FBO] means fan-based object, which could be a TV show, celebrity, sports team, etc.

Experience of Parasocial interaction Scale (Hartmann &Goldhoorn, 2011)

I know that [FBO]is aware of me.
I know that [FBO]knew I was there.
[FBO]knows I am aware of them.
I know that [FBO]knew I pay attention to them.
[FBO]knows I react to them.
[FBO]reacted to what I said or did.

Note: [FBO] means fan-based object, which could be a TV show, celebrity, sports team, etc.

Audience-Persona Interaction (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000)

API Item	API Factor
[FBO]reminds me of myself.	Identification
I have the same qualities as [FBO].	Identification
I have the same problems as [FBO].	Identification
I can imagine myself as [FBO].	Identification
I can identify with [FBO].	Identification
I would like to meet the people involved with [FBO].	Interest
I would watch/list/read the people involved with [FBO]in another type of program.	Interest
I enjoy trying to predict what [FBO]will do.	Interest
I hope [FBO]achieved their goals.	Interest
I care about what happens to [FBO].	Interest
I like hearing the voice of [FBO].	Interest
[FBO]'sinteractions are similar to mine with friends.	Group
[FBO]'sinteractions are similar to mine with family.	Group
My friends are like [FBO].	Group
I'd enjoy interacting with [FBO]and my friends at the same time.	Group
While watching/listening/reading [FBO], I felt included in a larger group.	Group
I can relate to [FBO]'sattitude.	Group
I wish I could handle problems as well as [FBO].	Problem
I like the way [FBO]handles problems.	Problem
I would like to be more like [FBO].	Problem
I usually agree with [FBO].	Problem

Note: [FBO] means fan-based object, which could be a TV show, celebrity, sports team, etc.