

reaffirm the centrality and interdependence of the relationship, usually lead to more positive outcomes, whereas others, such as denial or disorientation, usually lead to more negative outcomes.

Although dialectical tensions are assumed to affect all family communication, the specific dialectics experienced by each family are unique, and their effects depend to a large extent on the meaning given to them by family members. As a result, research employing dialectical theory most frequently relies on qualitative research methods.

Affective Exchange Theory

One example of a family communication theory addressing a relatively narrow phenomenon in family communication while simultaneously being grounded in and testing a metatheoretical framework is affective exchange theory (AET). AET is different from most other theories of family communication, which typically investigate how humans communicate without explicitly considering the roots of human communication, because it explicitly makes and tests the assumption that human communication is shaped by evolutionary processes. By arguing that humans' ability to experience and express affection was selected for because it created significant benefits in terms of survival and reproduction, AET connects to the large and powerful explanatory framework of human behavior that evolutionary theory provides.

Tying AET to the theory of evolution also led to very specific and unique hypotheses about family communication. For example, evolutionary theory would suggest that parental affection functions to enable one's offspring to survive and propagate. Consequently, fathers should be more affectionate with children that do propagate the father's genes—biological as opposed to stepchildren and heterosexual as opposed to bisexual or homosexual sons, for example. Both predictions were supported.

In addition, AET has been investigated mainly in the context of father–son relationships. Not only did this provide important information on an underresearched family relationship, but also demonstrated the importance of affection in nonromantic interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, by looking at how father–son communication changes in subsequent generations, research using the AET framework was also able to demonstrate

the concurrent influence of evolutionary forces and cultural forces, thereby further demonstrating that genes and culture both play important roles in the behavior of families.

Ascan F. Koerner

See also Communibiology; Critical Theory; Epistemology; Family and Marital Schemas and Types; Relational Communication Theory; Relational Dialectics; Scientific Approach; Social Construction of Reality; System Theory

Further Readings

- Baxter, L. A. (2006). Relational dialectics theory: Multivocal dialogues of family communication. In D. O. Braithwaite & L. A. Baxter (Eds.), *Engaging theories in family communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 130–145). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Baxter, L.A., & Braithwaite, D. O. (2006). Introduction: Metatheroy and theory in family communication research. In D. O. Braithwaite & L. A. Baxter (Eds.), *Engaging theories in family communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 1–15). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Floyd, K. (2001). Human affection exchange I: Reproductive probability as a predictor of men's affection with their sons. *Journal of Men's Studies*, 10, 39–50.
- Koerner, A. F., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (2004). Communication in intact families. In A. Vangelisti (Ed.), *Handbook of family communication* (pp. 177–195). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Olson, D. H., Sprenkle, D. H., & Russell, C. S. (1979). Circumplex model of marital and family systems: Cohesion and adaptability dimensions, family types, and clinical applications. *Family Process*, 18, 3–28.

FANS, FANDOM, AND FAN STUDIES

The word *fan* has been in constant use since the 19th century, and the term *fandom* dates from the turn of the 20th century. Fan and fandom initially denoted sports-club fans and soon after, the quickly growing fanbase of science fiction. Organized fan communities existed before these groups, however; readers of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, for example, corresponded with his fictional creation and mourned Sherlock

Holmes's death. In all cases, fan implies some or all the following: a fascination, interest, and emotional investment in a particular subject; (often communal) engagement with a particular leisure activity; and an emphasis on amateur endeavors.

Fan studies is situated mainly in two areas: the social sciences and film and media studies. Psychology and sociology study the group behavior of fans as well as the passionate engagement with and possession of objects that appear uninteresting or ridiculous to others. Sports, music, and film fans are likely subjects, and the culture at large tends to accept them more readily—sports fandom, possibly because of its masculine connotations of physical exertion and competition; music and film fandom, mostly as passing teenage behavior. In fact, the more extreme edges of fandom such as football hooligans or punks tend to be seen as exceptions rather than fannish representatives. Film and media studies focuses mostly on the relation between media texts and their audiences, looking toward fans as often exemplary readers-viewers. The following will restrict itself to research and debates within fan studies that focus on television, film, and new media, with its adjacent focus on science fiction, comics, gaming, and related fields.

In media fandom, adult fans—especially of less respected and marginal cultural objects such as science fiction or television shows—often are regarded with suspicion and reproached for wasting their energies. Whereas dressing up may be acceptable for children, cosplay (i.e., costuming in media characters) is not; whereas playacting is fine on the playground and theatre stage, larping (i.e., live action role-playing games) is pathologized; whereas making up stories about one's favorite characters is a beloved tradition shared in many bedtime rituals, fan fiction is regarded less positively. Yet these examples suggest that fan behavior is an extension of behavior considered acceptable in general culture. In fact, much recent fan-studies discourse has begun to look at fannish behavior rather than fannish identity, thus suggesting that everyone may be a fan of sorts.

Especially in media studies, where the media convergence of industry and audiences encourages fannish modes of engagement, the gap is narrowing between fully immersed fans exchanging stories, analyses, and interpretations among themselves

and casual viewers hitting up the bulletin board of a favorite show to discuss it after an episode airs. Media fans thus are at the center of a media convergence of text and context, producer and consumer, appropriation and ownership; they showcase ideal investment in a media product and its trans-media branding and the marketing strategies of their communities.

Media convergence also affects industry discourses around viewers and fans. Although the borders between professionals and fans always have been permeable, the past decade has celebrated the rise of the auteur fan boy in such show runners as Joss Whedon (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel: The Series*), Russell T. Davies (*Dr. Who*), and Ron Moore (*Battlestar Galactica*) as well as an increasing interest in fan-generated and fan-created content, such as fan-created advertisements or even episode writing contests. Fans are ever present in the contemporary media landscape, and fandom is growing both more mainstream and more difficult to define as a result. In a climate in which fannish behavior is becoming more normalized and more marketable, fan research has become a subdiscipline that interrogates the very definitions of fan, fandom, and fan studies.

History

U.S. science fiction fandom initially organized in the 1920s around Hugo Gernsback's "pulp" magazines, which published science fiction stories on cheap paper. These publications actively invited commentary from readers, which they then printed in dedicated letters sections. This focus from the text to commentary and readers and the inclusion of mailing addresses allowed fans to communicate with one another unmediated. As fans communicated with one another, they began to form clubs and organize conventions that offered ways not only to meet with one another, but also to connect with professionals. Many famous science fiction editors and writers, such as Isaac Asimov, James Blish, and Frederik Pohl, started out as members of fandom. Demographics were overwhelmingly White and male, both among professional science fiction writers and their fans.

The late 1960s saw a substantial split that would become important for fan studies, media studies, and audience research. With the rise of *Star Trek*

and televisual science fiction in general, some fans—mostly women—began creating their own fanzines that focused less on criticism and scientific debates and more on creative responses. This rise of media fandom shifted fan focus away from plot and action and foregrounded characters and character interaction, often creatively expanding the fictional universes or interpolating missing scenes and backgrounds. However, what would become known as fan fiction had existed at least since readers wrote sequels to Jane Austen and *Sherlock Holmes* novels—if not since ancient retellings of Homer or John Lydgate's self-insertion into the *Canterbury Tales*. Nevertheless, media fandom was new in its organization and community focus.

Logistically, media fandom created a strong, self-aware community by using the infrastructure of science fiction fandom: conventions, APAs (Amateur Press Association, the compilation and distribution of amateur writing to all its contributing members), and fanzines (amateur publication, sold at cost to interested parties). Whereas conventions allowed fans to meet, create personal connections, and initiate new members, APAs and fanzines allowed fans to stay in contact and disseminated creative interpretations via fan fiction and fan art, often criticizing or expanding the stories provided by the media industry and illustrating their beloved characters and stories.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, media fandom was a small but solid community situated around various fannish sources. The Internet and rise of digital technologies afforded fans the ability to connect and communicate more easily. Fandom began to grow exponentially, its demographics shifting to include more and younger television viewers. From local bulletin boards in the 1980s through Usenet newsgroups and diverse mailing lists and archives in the 1990s to social networking sites like LiveJournal.com, fandoms have shifted, expanded, and changed to accommodate ever-changing technologies at the same time as they manipulate these interfaces to fit their demands. Meanwhile, as visual and audiovisual editing programs become more affordable and easier to use, more fans create more varied fannish artifacts. Fan works today range from poems, short stories, and multivolume novels to drawings, comics, photo manipulations, and fan vids, cartoons, and multimedia installations.

Fannish behavior is becoming more mainstream as new technologies make it easier to access media, engage with others, and create one's own content. In turn, the media industry has recognized the marketing potential of both transmedia products and user-generated content as forms of viral marketing. Meanwhile, fandoms as diverse as gaming, comics, anime, music, literature, celebrity, and sports find increasing contacts and influence one another with such fan creations as real-people fiction, which connects celebrity and fan fiction cultures or fantasy baseball, ultimately bringing narrative elements into sports fandom. The image of the extreme fan as subcultural identity is thus giving way to fannish engagement as marketable and transferable behavior that crosses interests and objects. Media fandom has grown in 40 years from a handful of women sharing their fan works to an online phenomenon that has projected fans into the limelight of media research as ideal viewers of media, early adapters and adopters of technological interfaces, and exemplary creators of user-generated content.

Research

Research into fans and fandom comes from a number of disciplines, most particularly sociology, psychology, and anthropology on the one hand, and English, communication, and media studies on the other. Whereas the former tend to look at the psychology of individuals as well as group dynamics, often with a focus on the more visible and acceptable sports fandoms, the latter tend to connect media texts to fannish communities, often working within postmodern theoretical frameworks that read culture as a text in its own right. As Kimberly Schimmel, C. Lee Harrington, and Denise Bielby note, fan studies divides theoretically along the lines of fannish objects, with more psychological interpretations of sports fans and fandoms on one side, and more cultural studies approaches to celebrity and media fans and fandoms on the other.

Most of current media fan studies can be traced to an increased research focus on audiences as well as an interest among cultural studies' scholars in subcultural communities, starting in the 1970s. The Birmingham School may be the single most influential theoretical framework for fan studies. Stuart Hall's viewer paradigm is an influential

example of audience studies and reader response: He distinguished between different modes of viewing strategies in which viewers are not necessarily passive and easily manipulated, but instead can choose to agree or reject the dominant message of the text, to incorporate or resist the media text's ideology. Similarly emphasizing active engagement with cultural texts, Dick Hebdidge's work on resistant subcultures also became a desirable paradigm. As a result, fan studies of the 1980s and 1990s emphasized both the outsider status of fans and their subversive status.

The most central and influential studies connected these two interests by looking at the subcultural communities of female media fans of *Star Trek* (and other TV shows) who constituted an active audience that critiqued, interpreted, and often altered the source text of the shows of which they were fans: Henry Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* and Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women* both closely studied these particular communities and argued for their creative and often resistant readings, thus positing fans as an exemplary audience. Rather than being passive consumers, these television viewers engaged critically and creatively; this allowed fan scholars to present a model of audience engagement that complicated earlier notions of media as simplistic ideological tools and exemplified the more complex and politically more desirable subversive viewers. Moreover, given that these studies focused primarily on creative fandom responses such as fan fiction, fan art, filk, and fan vids and that these communities were largely female, creative fan responses were often read with and against a feminist paradigm, celebrating the critical feminist take on an often misogynist media culture.

This emphasis on resistance and subversion was challenged by the next generation of scholars. Understanding fannishness as a natural aspect of human engagement, these scholars rejected the central ethos of fans as resistant and subversive viewers that had dominated the field of fan studies in the 1980s and 1990s. Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst opposed the incorporation-resistance paradigm with a spectacle-performance paradigm. Rather than viewing fan behavior through the lens of a political or social agenda that read fan activities as subversive and thus worthy of studying, this approach to fan studies focused on engagements with media as an everyday part of

audiences' lives. In turn, Matt Hills' *Fan Cultures* and Cornel Sandvoss's *Fans* focus on the psychology of fans and fan groups and the ways fannish objects get constituted in the fans' imagination. Both studies focus on fans as individuals who might be fannish at different times and to different degrees about various things.

Considerable range characterizes contemporary fan studies: Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* focuses on the various intersections between industry and viewers-fans; Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse's *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* gathers a group of academics who are all active fans to discuss specific texts and issues in the particularly active and self-aware subset of fans usually defined as media fans. Jonathan Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington's *Fandom* stretches the definitions of fandom to study international, high culture, and antifans—issues otherwise ignored. Together they address the variety of issues that face the role of fans and the focus of fan studies in the changing environment of online engagement, industry awareness, and an ever-growing and more activist fan community.

Debates

Possibly the most central debate in fan studies at present is the relationship between fandom and audiences at large. Fannish behavior is becoming ever-more mainstream as the media industry purposefully tries to court audiences by offering transmedia entertainment, such as online games, background character information, or Webisodes, and community-building spaces, such as bulletin boards or chat rooms. After all, fans are the most loyal viewers, willing to buy tie-in products, and thus are ideal candidates for viral marketing campaigns. Jenkins's *Convergence Culture* describes how ever-more involved and active audiences are changing media culture as well as how the media industry can make use of these behavioral shifts in useful and economically successful ways.

One result of this convergence culture is a need to redefine the concept of what constitutes a fan and how we define fandom. One way to characterize the current definitional debates is around distinctions made between fannish identity and fannish behavior. For some, being a fan is defined by behavior only, whereas for others an entire

ethos is attached to the term. The question is whether members of fandom are a subculture in their own right or whether they are simply consumers displaying certain actions and behaviors. On the one hand, fan studies scholars identify fans as a particular group of people; on the other, they create a spectrum of behavior in which fans are merely on an extreme end of a fandom continuum. Fans thus are either described as simply a more extreme version of viewers (thus being able to create fans) or regarded as engaging media with different intensity and investment that resembles particular forms of identity politics.

Sandvoss's *Fans*, for example, puts forth singular and personalized understanding of fans, where being a fan is primarily constituted by the individual's emotional relationship to a particular text, group, or idea. In fact, his study can easily encompass sports as well as media fans since he is most interested in the affective investment of the individual rather than the communities they create. Meanwhile, other scholars want to focus more on the real communities that get created around fannish objects, many of whom are more invested in one another and the friendships and things they have created than the affect in the fannish object. Members of fan-fiction communities, for example, often identify as media fans rather than as fans of a particular show, thus showing their higher identification with the community of other readers and writers than with other fans of a show.

Such an emphasis on community also challenges another aspect of convergence culture, namely the complicated role of fan as consumer. Traditionally, one of the central tenets of fandom has been its anticapitalist character: Often termed a gift culture of paying it forward, large sections of fandom rely on volunteer labor and a proud amateurism. As media industry begins to realize the potential of free producers, they have begun exploiting fans who happily provide free content to commercial Web sites without any reimbursement. Current debates among fans and fan academics revolve around fannish attempts to create completely alternate fannish infrastructures that honor the fannish gift economy as well as efforts to adequately reward fannish labor. In all cases, however, fans have to contend with a media industry that celebrates user-generated content as free and viral marketing yet retains the right to sue

unauthorized fan productions for copyright or trademark infringements.

Other areas of debate include the question of range, both in terms of object and range of subjects. Often models developed by looking at Western fans and behaviors do not easily apply to non-Western fandoms and fans. Other current directions in research include antifans, which describes viewers who show similarly intensely negative investments in a text. Finally, the focus on popular culture has limited fan studies to look at particular fans only, often ignoring fans of high-brow subjects, such as opera, literature, or philosophy. Looking at behavior rather than objects of interest offers insight into the way fan studies has focused too narrowly on television and other popular media. Instead it might be more fruitful to look at similarities: fannish modes of behavior occur in many different venues, from history buffs and philatelists to bird watchers and knitters.

Fans have been a central force of popular culture for more than a century, often mocked or derided in turn, but more recently viewed by the industry as loyal consumers and by academia as exemplars of media engagement. The Internet has brought more and more viewers to engage with programs across multiple platforms and to become emotionally invested in different forms of entertainment. That investment and engagement results in water-cooler conversations and visits to shows' Web sites; it propels viewers to write up their thoughts in blogs and discuss their ideas on bulletin boards; it inspires people to create fiction and art and videos; it moves them to play the characters in role-playing games and to make costumes and dress up as their favorite one. And while much of this user-generated creative content is encouraged and supported by the industry, fans often move beyond expected responses, both in form and content. Fans themselves may like the validation of what they call the powers that be, but many like their independence even more. Fannish creations may not all be subversive or transformative by nature. However, fandom's affective engagement with the media text, the fan communities constituted in the process, and the very acts of creation and sharing, may together constitute a creative culture that resists media convergence models, one fan work at a time.

Kristina Busse

See also Audience Theories; Cultural Studies; Gender and Media; Media and Mass Communication Theories; New Media Theory

Further Readings

- Bacon-Smith, C. (1992). *Enterprising women: Television fandom and the creation of popular myth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bacon-Smith, C. (2000). *Science fiction culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Baym, N. K. (2000). *Tune in, log on: Soaps, fandom, and online community*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gray, J., Sandvoss, C., & Harrington, C. L. (Eds.). (2007). *Fandom: Identities and communities in a mediated world*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hellekson, K., & Busse, K. (Eds.). (2006). *Fan fiction and fan communities in the age of the Internet*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Hills, M. (2002). *Fan cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Jenkins, H. (1992). *Textual poachers: Television fans and participatory culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Sanders J. L. (Eds.). (1994). *Science fiction fandom*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Sandvoss, C. (2005). *Fans: The mirror of consumption*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Schimmel, K. S., Harrington, C. L., & Bielby, D. D. (2007). Keep your fans to yourself: The disjunctive between sport studies and pop culture studies' perspectives on fandom. *Sport in Society*, 10, 580–600.
- Verba, J. M. (1996). *Boldly writing: A Trekker fan and zine history, 1967–1987* (2nd ed.). Minnetonka, MN: FTL.

FEEDBACK

See Cybernetics

FEMINIST COMMUNICATION THEORIES

Feminist communication theories place women and their experiences at the center of the study of

communication and production of theory. Feminist communication theories offer explanations and speculations about the communicative strategies used to oppress women as well as those used by women to overcome that oppression. The range of feminist theories that address communication is broad, and this body of scholarship could be organized in many different ways. Covered below are the theories related to language and gender, access to the public sphere and voice within that sphere, the ways feminist communication theorists theorize about feminism and theory, and theories of masculinity and identity.

Language and Gender

Early feminist communication theories attempted to address the connections between gender, sex, and styles of communication. Such scholars as Dale Spender, Julia Penelope Wolf, Cheri Kramarae (formerly Kramer), Robin Lakoff, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray, among others, began to theorize about the ways gender constrained and influenced women's and men's communication styles and practices. These theorists argued that language is man-made—that it has been controlled by men for centuries and reflects a bias toward masculine styles of communication as well as masculine ideologies. Feminist theorists suggested that societal expectations of how women and men should behave have a powerful impact on the ways a person communicates. According to these scholars, women are prone, for example, to use more tentative language and to ask more questions in a conversation while men are prone to use more forceful language and to interrupt more. Women, too, according to Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Irigaray, must rewrite and reclaim language so that it reflects a woman-centered ideology rather than one grounded in male perspectives and politics.

Marsha Houston and Kramarae followed these earlier theories with work that suggested that not only did a person's sex or gender influence their communication styles, but also did a person's ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Most recently, scholars such as Amy Richards and Jennifer Bumgardner suggest that feminist theorizing works to explore and explain the reasons that specific labels, such as *feminist* or *bitch*, are interpreted differently by different genders and age groups.