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The Cultural Economy of Fandom

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Fandom is a common feature of popular culture in industrial societies. It selects from the repertoire of mass-produced and mass-distributed entertainment certain performers, narratives or genres and takes them into the culture of a self-selected fraction of the people. They are then reworked into an intensely pleasurable, intensely signifying popular culture that is both similar to, yet significantly different from, the culture of more 'normal' popular audiences. Fandom is typically associated with cultural forms that the dominant value system denigrates – pop music, romance novels, comics, Hollywood mass-appeal stars (sport, probably because of its appeal to masculinity, is an exception). It is thus associated with the cultural tastes of subordinated formations of the people, particularly with those disempowered by any combination of gender, age, class and race.

All popular audiences engage in varying degrees of semiotic productivity, producing meanings and pleasures that pertain to their social situation out of the products of the culture industries. But fans often turn this semiotic productivity into some form of textual production that can circulate among – and thus help to define – the fan community. Fans create a fan culture with its own systems of production and distribution that forms what I shall call a 'shadow cultural economy' that lies outside that of the cultural industries yet shares features with them which more normal popular culture lacks.

In this essay I wish to use and develop Bourdieu's metaphor of

describing culture as an economy in which people invest and accumulate capital. The cultural system works like the economic system to distribute its resources unequally and thus to distinguish between the privileged and the deprived. This cultural system promotes and privileges certain cultural tastes and competences, particularly through the educational system, but also through other institutions such as art galleries, concert halls, museums, and state subsidies to the arts, which taken together constitute a 'high' culture (ranging from the traditional to the avant-garde). This culture is socially and institutionally legitimated, and I shall refer to it as official culture, in distinction from popular culture which receives no social legitimation or institutional support. Official culture, like money, distinguishes between those who possess it, and those who do not. 'Investing' in education, in acquiring certain cultural tastes and competences, will produce a social 'return' in terms of better job prospects, of enhanced social prestige and thus of a higher socio-economic position. Cultural capital thus works hand in hand with economic capital to produce social privilege and distinction.

Bourdieu (1984) has analyzed in detail how accurately cultural tastes can be mapped onto economic status within the social space. He models our society first as a two-dimensional map in which the vertical, or north–south, axis records the amount of capital (economic *and* cultural) possessed, and the horizontal, or east–west, records the type of capital (economic *or* cultural). Those on the west, or left, are higher in cultural capital than economic capital (e.g. academics, artists, etc.), whereas those on the east or right possess more economic than cultural (business people, manufacturers). In the top center of the map reside those rich in both forms of capital – the professions such as architects, doctors, lawyers and so on, the educated, 'tasteful' capitalists! The south, or bottom, of the diagram is occupied by those deprived of both, whom Bourdieu calls 'the proletariat.'

Both forms of capital are complicated further by whether they have been inherited or acquired. The difference between old and new money is a crucial distinction for the 'northerners' though ludicrous to the poor; similarly the distinction between acquired and inherited cultural capital

becomes more important as we move northwards in the social space. Briefly, acquired cultural capital is that produced by the educational system and consists of the knowledge and critical appreciation of a particular set of texts, 'the canon,' in literature, art, music and now, increasingly, film. Inherited cultural capital is manifest in lifestyle rather than in textual preference – in fashion, furnishings, manners, in choice of restaurant or club, in sport or vacation preferences.

This is a productive model, but it has two main weaknesses. The first is its emphasis on economics and class as the major (if not the only) dimension of social discrimination. We need to add to Bourdieu's model gender, race and age as axes of discrimination, and thus to read his account of how culture works to underwrite class differences as symptomatic of its function in other axes of social difference. In this essay I wish to focus on class, gender and age as axes of subordination. I regret being unable to devote the attention to race which it deserves, but I have not found studies of non-white fandom. Most of the studies so far undertaken highlight class, gender and age as the key axes of discrimination.

Bourdieu's other weakness, for my particular purposes, is his failure to accord the culture of the subordinate the same sophisticated analysis as that of the dominant. He subdivides dominant culture into a number of competing categories, each characteristic of socially distinguished groups within the bourgeoisie. But he leaves proletarian culture and the proletariat as an undistinguished homogeneity. This leads him seriously to underestimate the creativity of popular culture and its role in distinguishing between different social formations within the subordinated. He does not allow that there are forms of popular cultural capital produced outside and often against official cultural capital.

These two weaknesses can be compensated for, and should not blind us to the value of his work. A concept of his which I find particularly useful is that of the *habitus*. The habitus includes the notion of a habitat, the habitants and the processes of inhabiting it, and the habituated ways of thinking that go with it. It encompasses our position within the social space, the ways of living that go with it and what Bourdieu calls the associated 'dispositions' of mind, cultural tastes and ways of thinking

and feeling. The habitus refuses the traditional distinction between the social and the individual, and it reformulates the relationship between domination and subjectivity.

One final point to make about Bourdieu's model is that the idea of a map includes that of movement. Social space is that through which both class or social groups and individuals move through time. Acquiring or losing capital of either sort changes one's position on the map and thus one's habitus. In this essay I shall base my argument upon Bourdieu's model, modified to take account of gender and age as axes of subordination, and extended to include forms of 'popular cultural capital' produced by subordinate social formations (Fiske 1989a), which can serve, in the subordinate, similar functions to those of official cultural capital in the dominant context. Fans, in particular, are active producers and users of such cultural capital and, at the level of fan organization, begin to reproduce equivalents of the formal institutions of official culture. By the conclusion of this essay I hope to have shown that fan culture is a form of popular culture that echoes many of the institutions of official culture, although in popular form and under popular control. It may be thought of as a sort of 'moonlighting' in the cultural rather than the economic sphere, a form of cultural labor to fill the gaps left by legitimate culture. Fandom offers ways of filling cultural lack and provides the social prestige and self-esteem that go with cultural capital. As with economic capital, lack cannot be measured by objective means alone, for lack arises when the amount of capital possessed falls short of that which is desired or felt to be merited. Thus a low achiever at school will lack official cultural capital and the social, and therefore self-esteem that it brings. Some may well become fans, often of a musician or sports star, and through fan knowledge and appreciation, acquire an unofficial cultural capital that is a major source of self-esteem among the peer group. While fandom may be typical of the socially and culturally deprived, it is not confined to them. Many young fans are successful at school and are steadily accumulating official cultural capital, but wish still to differentiate themselves, along the axis of age at least, from the social values and cultural tastes (or habitus) of those who currently possess the cultural and economic capital they are still working to acquire.

Such social distinction, defined by age rather than class or gender, is often expressed by their fandom and by accumulation of unofficial or popular cultural capital whose politics lie in its opposition to the official, dominant one.

Such popular cultural capital, unlike official cultural capital, is not typically convertible into economic capital, though, as will be argued below, there are exceptions. Acquiring it will not enhance one's career, nor will it produce upward class mobility as its investment payoffs. Its dividends lie in the pleasures and esteem of one's peers in a community of taste rather than those of one's social betters. Fans, then, are a good example of Bourdieu's 'autodidacts' – the self-taught who often use their self-acquired knowledge and taste to compensate for the perceived gap between their actual (or official) cultural capital, as expressed in educational qualifications and the socio-economic rewards they bring, and what they feel are their true desserts.

Fandom, then, is a peculiar mix of cultural determinations. On the one hand it is an intensification of popular culture which is formed outside and often against official culture, on the other it expropriates and reworks certain values and characteristics of that official culture to which it is opposed.

I propose to discuss the main characteristics of fandom under three headings: Discrimination and Distinction, Productivity and Participation, and Capital Accumulation. These are characteristics of fandom in general rather than of any one fan or group of fans in particular. No one fan or fan community will exhibit all of them equally, but will differ considerably among themselves in emphasis.

Discrimination and Distinction

Fans discriminate fiercely: the boundaries between what falls within their fandom and what does not are sharply drawn. And this discrimination in the cultural sphere is mapped into distinctions in the social – the boundaries

between the community of fans and the rest of the world are just as strongly marked and patrolled. Both sides of the boundary invest in the difference; mundane viewers often wish to avoid what they see as the taint of fandom – 'I'm not really a fan, of course, but . . .' On the other side of the line, fans may argue about what characteristics allow someone to cross it and become a true fan, but they are clearly agreed on the existence of the line. Textual and social discrimination are part and parcel of the same cultural activity.

Fan discrimination has affinities to both the socially relevant discrimination of popular culture and the aesthetic discrimination of the dominant (Fiske 1989a). Bourdieu argues that one of the key differences between the culture of the subordinate and that of the dominant is that subordinate culture is functional, it must be *for* something. D'Acci's (1988) study of 'Cagney & Lacey' fans shows how they used the show and its stars to enhance their self-esteem which in turn enabled them to perform more powerfully in their social world. Fans reported that the show gave them the confidence to stand up for themselves better in a variety of social situations – a school girl said that her fandom had made her realize that she could perform as well as boys at school, and an adult woman attributed her decision to risk starting her own business directly to the self-confidence she generated from watching the show. Elsewhere (Fiske 1989b), I have shown how some teenage girl fans of Madonna make use of the self-empowerment their fandom gives them to take control of the meanings of their own sexuality, and to walk more assertively through the streets. Similarly, Radway (1984) tells of the woman romance fan whose reading enables her better to assert her own rights within the structure of a patriarchal marriage. This 'popular' discrimination involves the selection of texts or stars that offer fans opportunities to make meanings of their social identities and social experiences that are self-interested and functional. Those may at times be translated into empowered social behavior, as discussed above, but at other times may remain at the level of a compensatory fantasy that actually precludes any social action.

Other forms of fan discrimination approach the aesthetic discrimination of official culture. Kiste's (1989) study of comic book fans shows how acutely they can discriminate between various artists and storyliners, and

how important it is to be able to rank them in a hierarchy – particularly to 'canonize' some and exclude others. Tulloch and Alvarado (1983) recount how some 'Dr Who' fans canonize the early series and specifically exclude the more widely popular later series in which Tom Baker played the lead. Their criteria were essentially ones of authenticity and as such were not dissimilar to those of the literary scholars who try to uncover what Shakespeare really wrote in preference to that which has been widely performed. Authenticity, particularly when validated as the production of an artistic individual (writer, painter, performer), is *a* criterion of discrimination normally used to accumulate official cultural capital but which is readily appropriated by fans in their moonlighting cultural economy.

Many of the fans studied by Kiste and by Tulloch and Alvarado were aware that their object of fandom was devalued by the criteria of official culture and went to great pains to argue against this misevaluation. They frequently used official cultural criteria such as 'complexity' or 'subtlety' to argue that their preferred texts were as 'good' as the canonized ones, and constantly evoked legitimate culture – novels, plays, art films – as points of comparison.

In the comparatively few studies of fans available to us, it is possible to trace social factors within the modes of discrimination. They show a slight but regular tendency for the more official or aesthetic criteria to be used by older, male fans rather than by younger, female ones. If further studies reveal this tendency to be structural (as I suspect it is), the explanation may well lie in differential relationships to the structures of power. Those who are subordinated (by gender, age or class) are more likely to have developed a habitus typical of proletarian culture (that is, one without economic or cultural capital): the less a fan suffers from these structures of domination and subordination, the more likely he or she is to have developed a habitus that accords in some respects with that developed by the official culture, and which will therefore incline to use official criteria on its unofficial texts. It would not be surprising in such a case to find that older fans, male fans, and more highly educated fans tend to use official criteria, whereas younger, female and the less educated ones tend towards

popular criteria. Cultural tastes and practices are produced by social rather than by individual differences, and so textual discrimination and social distinction are part of the same cultural process within and between fans just as much as between fans and other popular audiences.

Productivity and Participation

Popular culture is produced by the people out of the products of the cultural industries: it must be understood, therefore, in terms of productivity, not of reception. Fans are particularly productive, and I wish to categorize their productions into three areas, while recognizing that any example of fan productivity may well span all categories and refuse any clear distinctions among them. Categories are produced by the analyst for analytical purposes and do not exist in the world being analyzed but they do have analytical value. The ones I propose to use may be called semiotic productivity, enunciative productivity, and textual productivity. All such productivity occurs at the interface between the industrially-produced cultural commodity (narrative, music, star, etc.) and the everyday life of the fan.

Semiotic productivity is characteristic of popular culture as a whole rather than of fan culture specifically. It consists of the making of meanings of social identity and of social experience from the semiotic resources of the cultural commodity. The Madonna fans who made their own meanings of their sexuality rather than patriarchal ones (Fiske 1989b) or the romance fans who legitimated their own feminine values against patriarchal ones (Radway 1984) were engaging in semiotic productivity. Recent ethnographies of audiences have produced numerous examples of this form of productivity, and we need not spend any longer on it here. (See, for example, Cho and Cho 1990, Dawson 1990, Jones 1990, Leal 1990, Lipsitz 1989).

Semiotic productivity, then, is essentially interior; when the meanings made are spoken and are shared within a face-to-face or oral culture they take a public form that may be called *enunciative productivity*. An

enunciation is the use of a semiotic system (typically, but not exclusively, verbal language) which is specific to its speaker and its social and temporal context. Fan talk is the generation and circulation of certain meanings of the object of fandom within a local community. The talk of women soap-opera fans has been widely studied (see for example, Brown 1987, Hobson 1989 and 1990, Seiter *et al.* 1989) to show how the meanings and evaluations of characters and their behaviour in the soap opera are related more or less directly to the everyday lives of the fans. Indeed, much of the pleasure of fandom lies in the fan talk that it produces, and many fans report that their choice of their object of fandom was determined at least as much by the oral community they wished to join as by any of its inherent characteristics. If colleagues at work or at school are constantly talking about a particular program, band, team or performer, many people become drawn into fandom as a means of joining that particular social group. This is not to suggest that the acquired taste is in any way unauthentic, but rather to point again to the close interrelations between textual and social preferences.

But, important though talk is, it is not the only means of enunciation available. The styling of hair or make-up, the choice of clothes or accessories are ways of constructing a social identity and therefore of asserting one's membership of a particular fan community. The Madonna fans who, on MTV, claimed that dressing like Madonna made people take more notice of them as they walked down the street were not only constructing for themselves more empowered identities than those normally available to young adolescent girls but were putting those meanings into social circulation. Similarly British soccer fans, many of whom are socially and economically disempowered males, can, when wearing their colors and when in their own community of fans, exhibit empowered behavior that may, at times, become violent and lethal but which more typically confines itself to assertiveness. Such assertiveness is often socially offensive and deliberately challenges more normal social values and the discipline they exert; in this, girl Madonna fans and boy soccer fans are identical and both call forth considerable adult disapproval. Indeed, such disapproval is an integral part of this sort of fan pleasure, for its arousal is part of the intention, albeit unstated and possibly unadmitted, of the enunciation.

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Enunciation can occur only within immediate social relationships – it exists only for its moment of speaking, and the popular cultural capital it generates is thus limited to a restricted circulation, a very localized economy. But within such a local or fan community the pay-offs from the investment are continuous and immediate.

There is, however, another category of fan productivity that approximates much more closely the artistic productions validated by the official culture, that of *textual productivity*. Fans produce and circulate among themselves texts which are often crafted with production values as high as any in the official culture. The key differences between the two are economic rather than ones of competence, for fans do not write or produce their texts for money; indeed, their productivity typically costs them money. Economics, too, limits the equipment to which fans have access for the production of their texts, which may therefore often lack the technical smoothness of professionally-produced ones. There is also a difference in circulation; because fan texts are not produced for profit, they do not need to be mass-marketed, so unlike official culture, fan culture makes no attempt to circulate its texts outside its own community. They are 'narrowcast,' not broadcast, texts.

A rare exception to this was provided by MTV. In association with Madonna they ran a competition for fans to produce their own videos for her song 'True Blue' and devoted 24 hours to playing a selection of those that poured in, almost swamping the studio. While one might argue that one would have to be the most fervent fan imaginable to endure 24 hours of the same song, nonetheless the means of distribution made the videos available to a wider audience than that of Madonna fans alone.

More typical are the 'Star Trek' fans Jenkins 1989, Penley 1990) who write full-length novels filling in the syntagmatic gaps in the original narrative, and circulate these novels, and other writings, among themselves through an extensive distribution network. So, too, Bacon-Smith (1988) has shown the productivity of other TV science fiction fans who produce their own music videos by editing shots from their favorite episodes onto the soundtrack of a popular song. While these fan-artists gain considerable prestige within the fan community, with few exceptions they earn no money

for their labor. Indeed, as Henry Jenkins has pointed out to me in correspondence, there is a strong distrust of making a profit in fandom, and those who attempt to do so are typically classed as hucksters rather than fans. The one major exception appears to be fan-artists whose paintings and sketches may occasionally sell for hundreds of dollars at fan auctions. Such figures are, of course, well below those of the dominant art world; but they do indicate a difference between more mundane popular cultural capital, which is never convertible to economic capital, and fan cultural capital which, under certain conditions, may be.

Fan productivity is not limited to the production of new texts: it also participates in the construction of the original text and thus turns the commercial narrative or performance into popular culture. Fans are very participatory. Sports crowds wearing their teams' colors or rock audiences dressing and behaving like the bands become part of the performance. This melding of the team or performer and the fan into a productive community minimizes differences between artist and audience and turns the text into an event, not an art object. This is, again, consistent with Bourdieu's characterization of the subordinate habitus as opposed to the dominant one. The subordinate, or proletarian habitus refuses to distance the text and artist from the audience as it refuses to distance it from everyday life. The reverence, even adoration, fans feel for their object of fandom sits surprisingly easily with the contradictory feeling that they also 'possess' that object, it is *their* popular cultural capital. So Hobson's (1982) fans felt that 'Crossroads' was *their* show, and its leading character, Meg, belonged to them rather than to the producers.

Fan magazines often play up to and encourage this sense of possession, the idea that stars are constructed by their fans and owe their stardom entirely to them. Fandom typically lacks the deference to the artist and text that characterizes the bourgeois habitus: so soap opera fans often feel that they could write better storylines than the scriptwriters and know the characters better (Fiske 1987) and sports fans are frequently at odds with the owner's policies for their teams. The industry takes seriously letters from fans who try to participate in and thus influence the production of the text (Tulloch and Moran 1986) or its distribution (D'Acci 1989).

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When this industrial text meets its fans, their participation reunites and reworks it, so that its moment of reception becomes the moment of production in fan culture. Sports fans who cheer their team on are not just encouraging them to greater effort but are participating in that effort and the reward, if any, that it brings. Cheerleaders symbolically link the fans' cheering to the spectacle on the field of play and 'the wave' in US sports grounds (like the more individualized instances of streaking in European ones) evidences fans' desires to participate in the spectacle on display of which their teams' performance is only a part. The official barriers that separate fans from the field of play – police and security guards, fences, walls, and in extreme cases, moats and barbed wire – are evidences not only of the fans' desire to participate (however disruptively) but also of the dominant culture's need to maintain the disciplinary distance between text and reader: a function that in the academic arena is performed by the critic who polices the meanings of a text and its relationship to its readers in a way that differs from the disciplinary apparatus on sports grounds only by being intellectual rather than physical.

More traditional texts, such as films, can also be participated in communally and publicly by their fans. This makes public and visible the widespread but more private involvement of, for instance, soap opera fans in 'sharing' the lives of their favorite characters by writing and rewriting their narratives in talk and imagination. Cult films such as *The Blues Brothers* or *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* have regular fan screenings (typically at midnight on weekends) that are carnivals of fan participation. Not only do fans take part in and *with* the original industrial text (by dressing like its characters, joining in favourite lines of dialogue, throwing rice during wedding scenes or shooting water pistols in thunderstorms) but they exceed and rework it by inserting fan-written lines of dialogue that change the meaning of the original. When, for instance the straight-faced narrator in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* describes the storm clouds as 'heavy, black and pendulous,' the pause before his line is filled by the audience shouting 'describe your testicles' (Hoberman and Rosenbaum 1981). As Heffernan (1989) argues, such rewriting can, for a

particular fan group, change much of the film's heterosexual cliches into more subversive homoerotic meanings.

Fan texts, then, have to be 'producerly' (Fiske 1987, 1989a), in that they have to be open, to contain gaps, irresolutions, contradictions, which both allow and invite fan productivity. They are insufficient texts that are inadequate to their cultural function of circulating meanings and pleasure until they are worked upon and activated by their fans, who by such activity produce their own popular cultural capital.

Capital Accumulation

There is a complex, often contradictory relationship of similarities and differences between fan and official cultural capital: at times fans wish to distance themselves from the official culture, at other times, to align themselves with it. Fan cultural capital, like the official, lies in the appreciation and knowledge of texts, performers and events, yet the fan's objects of fandom are, by definition, excluded from official cultural capital and its convertibility, via education and career opportunity, into economic capital. In this section I wish to trace some of the more significant of these similarities and differences.

In fandom as in the official culture, the accumulation of knowledge is fundamental to the accumulation of cultural capital. The cultural industries have, of course, recognized this and produce an enormous range of material designed to give the fan access to information about the object of fandom. These vary from the statistics that fill the sports pages of our newspapers to gossipy speculations about the private lives of stars. This commercially produced and distributed information is supported, and sometimes subverted, by that produced by and circulated among the fans themselves. The gay community, for instance, circulates the knowledge of which apparently straight stars are actually gay, and thus knew, long before the general public, for instance, that Rock Hudson was gay and Marilyn Monroe was bisexual. Such fan knowledge helps to distinguish a particular

fan community (those who possess it) from others (those who do not): like the official culture, its work is finally one of social distinction. It also serves to distinguish within the fan community. The experts – those who have accumulated the most knowledge – gain prestige within the group and act as opinion leaders. Knowledge, like money, is always a source of power.

But fan cultural knowledge differs from official cultural knowledge in that it is used to enhance the fan's power over, and participation in, the original, industrial text. The *Rocky Horror* fans who know every line of dialogue in the film use that knowledge to participate in and even rewrite the text in a way that is quite different from the way the Shakespeare buff, for instance, might use his or her intimate knowledge of the text. This dominant habitus would enable the buff not to participate in the performance, but to discriminate critically between it and other performances or between it and the 'ideal' performance in the buff's own mind. Textual knowledge is used for discrimination in the dominant habitus but for participation in the popular.

In the same way, the dominant habitus uses information about the artist to enhance or enrich the appreciation of the work, whereas in the popular habitus such knowledge increases the power of the fan to 'see through' to the production processes normally hidden by the text and thus inaccessible to the non-fan ('he had to be sent to South America on business because they couldn't agree on the terms to renew his contract'). This knowledge diminishes the distance between text and everyday life ('I know that she's not just "acting" here, she "really" knows what it's like to have a marriage collapse around her'), or between star and fan ('If he can come from a black depressed neighbourhood and win a gold medal and a fortune so can I'). The popular habitus makes such knowledge functional and potentially empowering in the everyday life of the fan.

The accumulation of both popular and official cultural capital is signaled materially by collections of objects – artworks, books, records, memorabilia, ephemera. Fans, like buffs, are often avid collectors, and the cultural collection is a point where cultural and economic capital come together.

The 'northerners' in Bourdieu's social space – those high in both

economic and cultural capital – will often conflate the aesthetic and economic value of, for instance, a collection of paintings, of first editions or of antique furniture, so that the role of the insurance assessor becomes indistinguishable from that of the critic. The 'north-westerners,' however, who have greater cultural than economic capital are more likely to collect cheaper lithographs or prints rather than original paintings, and to have a library of 'ordinary' books rather than first editions, because such collections allow them to invest culturally rather than economically.

Collecting is also important in fan culture, but it tends to be inclusive rather than exclusive: the emphasis is not so much upon acquiring a few good (and thus expensive) objects as upon accumulating as many as possible. The individual objects are therefore often cheap, devalued by the official culture, and mass-produced. The distinctiveness lies in the extent of the collection rather than in their uniqueness or authenticity as cultural objects. There are, of course, exceptions to this: fans with high economic capital will often use it, in a non-aesthetic parallel of the official cultural capitalist, to accumulate unique and authentic objects – a guitar, an autographed piece of sporting equipment, an article of clothing 'genuinely' worn by the star, or an object once possessed by him or her.

But even the everyday fans, with their collections of cheap, mass-produced fan objects, will often ape official culture in describing their collections in terms of their economic as well as their cultural capital. So Kiste's (1989) comic book fans were eager to comment upon both the economic values of their collections, and their investment potential: how much they expected them to increase, or how much the value of a particular issue had increased over the price they paid for it. Particularly valuable issues were, in another shadowing of the official cultural economy, the first issues of comics or story lines – the popular equivalent of first editions whose scarcity and age become markers of authenticity, originality, and rarity, which give them a high cultural capital which is, in its turn, readily convertible into high economic capital. The conventions at which comic fans gather are as much market places for buying and selling 'collectibles' as they are cultural fora for the exchange and circulation of knowledge and the building of a cultural community.

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Capitalist societies are built upon accumulation and investment, and this is as true of their cultural as well as financial economies. The shadow economy of fan culture in many ways parallels the workings of the official culture, but it adapts them to the habitus of the subordinate. A habitus involves not only the cultural dimension of taste, discrimination, and attitude towards the cultural objects or events, but also the social dimension of economics (and education) upon which those tastes are mapped: a habitus is thus both a mental disposition and a 'geographical' disposition in the social space. So the differences between fan collections and art collections are socio-economic. Fan collections tend to be of cheap, mass-produced objects, and stress quantity and all-inclusiveness over quality or exclusivity. Some fans, whose economic status allows them to discriminate between the authentic and the mass-produced, the original and the reproduction, approximate much more closely to the official cultural capitalist, and their collections can be more readily turned into economic capital.

While fan and official culture are similar in at least some respects in their material versions of accumulated cultural capital and its convertibility to the economic, they differ widely in the convertibility of their non-material capital. The knowledge and discrimination that comprise official cultural capital are institutionalized in the educational system, and thus can be readily converted into career opportunities and earning power. In Bourdieu's map of the social space education plays a key role, for it is related both to class on the vertical axis and to cultural and economic capital on the horizontal. It is the exclusion of popular or fan cultural capital from the educational system that excludes it from the official and disconnects it from the economic. This, of course, makes it an appropriate culture for those in subordinated formations of the people who feel themselves to be unfairly excluded from the socio-economic or status enhancing rewards that the official culture can offer because of its direct interconnections, via the educational system, with the social order.

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Fans and Commercial (Popular) Culture

Fans make their culture out of the commercial commodities (texts, stars, performances) of the cultural industries. Fandom thus has dual relationships to what is often, if wrongly, called mass culture, and by way of conclusion I would like to raise some of the central issues within them.

First there is the relationship of fandom to popular culture generally, of the fan to the more 'normal' audience member. Elsewhere (Fiske 1989a) I have argued that fandom is a heightened form of popular culture in industrial societies and that the fan is an 'excessive reader' who differs from the 'ordinary' one in degree rather than kind. The romantic and pornographic novels written by 'Star Trek' fans to fill the gaps in the original text would therefore be understood as elaborated and public versions of the interior, semiotic productions of more normal viewers, many of whom might imagine for themselves similar 'extra-textual' relationships among the crew of the *SS Enterprise.* So, too, we would understand the videos produced by Madonna fans as textualizations of the interior fantasies of others who either lacked access to video equipment or the desire (or talent) to turn their fantasies into texts. The commonly recurring features of these fan videos can then be understood as typical of semiotic, and thus invisible, productivity that is characteristic of popular culture generally. And a textual analysis of the videos does indeed reveal features that accord well with ethnographic investigations into the way that people make popular culture out of mass-cultural products, and that support theorizations of this process. The videos consistently exhibited the characteristics of relevance (Madonna's words, music, movements and appearance were inserted meaningfully into the everyday lives and surroundings of the fans), empowerment (Madonna was shown giving her fans power over boys, parents, teachers and even politicians), and participation (the fans 'became' Madonna in a way that denied any distance between performer and audience; they participated in constructing and circulating the 'meanings of Madonnaness' in their own culture).

Fan culture is also related to the commercial interests of the culture industries. For the industries fans are an additional market that not only

buys 'spin-off' products, often in huge quantities, but also provides valuable free feedback on market trends and preferences. There are thus contradictory functions performed by cultural commodities which on the one hand serve the economic interests of the industry and on the other the cultural interests of the fans. There is a constant struggle between fans and the industry, in which the industry attempts to incorporate the tastes of the fans, and the fans to 'excorporate' the products of the industry.

Official culture likes to see its texts (or commodities) as the creations of special individuals or artists: such a reverence for the artist and, therefore, the text necessarily places its readers in a subordinate relationship to them. Popular culture, however, is well aware that its commodities are industrially produced and thus do not have the status of a uniquely crafted art-object. They are thus open to the productive reworking, rewriting, completing and to participation in the way that a completed art-object is not. It is not surprising then that the dominant habitus, with its taste for official culture, denigrates and misunderstands both the production and reception of popular culture. It fails to realize that many industrially produced texts have producerly characteristics that stimulate popular productivity in a way that official art-works cannot. It fails to realize, too, that such popular productivity works better on industrial texts with their contradictions, inadequacies and superficialities, because it is these very qualities that make the text open and provocative rather than completed and satisfying. Because the industrial text is not an art-object to be preserved, its ephemerality is not an issue; indeed its disposability and constant, anxious search for that which is new, stimulating and yet acceptable to the people are among its most valuable characteristics.

It may be ironic or regrettable that the economic imperative has brought capitalist industries closer to the culture of the people than the purer motives of those within official culture. But it should not surprise us. Official cultural capital, like economic capital, is systematically denied to the people and their lack then functions to distinguish them from those that possess it. In capitalist societies popular culture is necessarily produced from the products of capitalism, for that is all the people have to work with. The relationship of popular culture to the culture industries is

therefore complex and fascinating, sometimes conflictive, sometimes complicitous or co-operative, but the people are never at the mercy of the industries – they choose to make some of their commodities into popular culture, but reject many more than they adopt. Fans are among the most discriminating and selective of all formations of the people and the cultural capital they produce is the most highly developed and visible of all.

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