

**SPECTRUMS OF INVESTMENT  
IN *DOCTOR WHO* FANDOM**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Drawing upon a significant weight of empirical data, collected in the field, this thesis proposes a set of four spectrums of investment engaged in by cult media fans: the spectrum of financial investment; the spectrum of what is here termed 'participatory investment'; the spectrum of investment in the idea of textual authenticity; and the spectrum of multiple investments. The spectrum model allows the individual members of the research sample to be located within specific regions of each spectrum and correlations to be drawn between the distinct spectrums, in order for any patterns which emerge to be examined. The thesis also reviews a number of relevant theoretical concerns such as fan studies, ethnography and social psychology.

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## INTRODUCTION

### *'Plotting spectrums'*

If you were to plot a spectrum for viewers of T.V. programmes at the far end of the spectrum would be a fan – the other end being total dislike. A fan is someone who's [sic]<sup>1</sup> enjoyment is so great that they desire more interaction with the programme than simply viewing when it is on T.V. Indicitive [sic] behaviour might then be visiting websites, buying merchandise, writing fiction, a desire to learn about it's [sic] making, a desire to meet like minded people.

(2.1, 110<sup>2</sup>)

If you were to plot a spectrum of taste for a particular TV programme it is more than likely that, as 110 posits, one of the extreme positions on the spectrum would be fandom. And, as 110 goes on to state, fans are often characterized as being driven by a desire to interact with a TV programme (or any other fan-object) on a level which takes them *beyond* watching television. Fans buy merchandise, form on-line and social networks and communities, write fiction, create artwork, acquire and utilize subcultural knowledge. All these activities can be seen as

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<sup>1</sup> All spelling, language and grammatical mistakes have been reproduced exactly from the questionnaire responses in the extracts quoted throughout this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> A brief explanation of the coding for extracts from questionnaire responses. The three digit number is the 'case reference' assigned to each questionnaire and corresponding respondent. The decimalized number in bold is the number of the question to which the responses was given (see appendix a)

playing a key role in identifying and defining fans, for both academics and the fans themselves. And all these activities represent forms of *investment*.

Fans invest. We know this already. Successive academic studies of fans and the subcultures and communities which develop around them (Jenkins, 1992a; Bacon-Smith, 1992; Harris, 1998) have revealed the often deep and sustained investment fans make in a particular beloved text or object. Fans are often understood as making much deeper and more complex investments in TV programmes than other viewers<sup>3</sup>. They have long been considered to represent 'high investors'. But within a particular fan following or subculture different investment positions are available and tend to be assigned 'high' and 'low' values. These investment positions cover the range of activities listed in the preceding paragraph and a great many more besides. Fan investment can take many forms in many different 'markets' (to continue the economic metaphor at work here). And yet the differences between these distinct investments remain somewhat underemphasized. High and low values are often attached to investors in fairly general terms – as though there is only one 'market' in which to invest, and a simple sliding scale of investment running from low to high (see, for instance,

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<sup>3</sup> 'Other' viewers. I want to take a moment to qualify my use of this term. How do we define those viewers who are not fans? It is too easy to fall into the potential trap of using terms such as 'casual viewer' or 'normal audience', which might imply passive and active roles or correct and incorrect activities for viewer and fan respectively. I have thought long and hard about how to refer to viewers who are not fans. Later sections of this introduction deal with some specific issues of definition and opposition. I have chosen to use the term 'other viewers' at this point in the thesis, as I feel this carries less specific connotations than some of the others mentioned above (though I am fully aware that it is not 'trouble-free'). When engaged in analysis of the responses, other terms which have been drawn from the accounts of the sample may be deployed.

Barker and Brooks, 1998a, p.225, though they write here about film audiences in general rather than fans). As I have already observed, fans invest in a number of different and distinct ways. And each of these modes of investment has its own series of strategies and positions which the fans may occupy. Each can facilitate high and low investors, and also a wide range of indices between these two extremes.

In the extract above, 110 places the figure of the fan at one extreme of a *spectrum*. It is a construction which seems to lend itself equally well to the central focus of this thesis, that of fan investment. In order to best investigate and understand fan investment, I propose to concentrate on four distinct modes of investment: financial investment; what I will term 'participatory' investment; investment in the idea of 'authenticity'; and investment in multiple fan objects. As will become apparent, each of these four modes of investment directly addresses particular concerns and inquiries from my central empirical research project. The empirical research was conducted by means of a questionnaire inquiring along both qualitative and quantitative lines. The sample was composed of fifty respondents who 'self-selected' for research, the majority answering an appeal submitted to the letters page in the official *Doctor Who* Magazine. Drawing on the data from this sample and in particular what it reveals about fan investment, I will propose four *spectrums of investment* on which the respondents to my questionnaire may be located and, hopefully, compared. These spectrums, indeed the central idea of investment, have arisen out of the specific contexts of my research project and from the data which has emerged from the responses of my



subjects. They did not pre-exist the research project. And at the risk of mythologizing my 'adventures' as a cultural researcher, I feel it is important that the development of the central device of my argument (the spectrums) needs to be described in a chronological manner in order to best illustrate the contexts and mechanics of its formulation. What follows in this introduction is, at least in part, almost a narrative account of my research project, from its origins to the present. This 'narrative' is combined with an exploration of the wider theoretical and methodological fields in which my research is situated, such as fan-studies and ethnography. As such, the introduction integrates the two threads, switching between them where specific issues are relevant to the account.

Whilst the pre-history of my research likely stretches back into my own teenage *Doctor Who* fandom, the central empirical study emerged directly from the conclusions drawn from my MPhil thesis. The MPhil examined the legitimization of fan-writing within the *Doctor Who* franchise during the 1990s, when the series was off-air and fans began to gain access to officially sanctioned forms of textual production (novels and later audio plays). The thesis had as its centrepiece a development of Henry Jenkins' figure of the fan as 'textual poacher' – in this case, the fan as 'textual game-keeper'<sup>4</sup> (Duckworth, 2000, unpublished). However, much went unexplored and untested empirically and I concluded my argument with a number of issues for further study, to which I returned at the outset of the current research. My PhD was thus initially intended to be a direct continuation of the research initiated in the MPhil – an empirical investigation of the figure of the

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<sup>4</sup> Matt Hills (2002, pp. 36-41) also uses this term to describe a similar situation.

'textual gamekeeper' in the *Doctor Who* fan subculture, and of the relationships both between fans (or fan-consumers) and gamekeepers (or fan-producers) and between fans and their subcultural communities. Having decided upon that objective, I then set about breaking the associate issues down into a series of simpler questions, which would form the hypotheses which any empirical project would, by definition, need to test.

Central to the main argument of the MPhil thesis had been the assumption that fans (in this specific case *Doctor Who* fans) were motivated in many of their activities by a deep commitment to the development of 'subcultural canons' and the policing of the programme's diegetic history, or continuity. The evidential basis for this assumption was largely drawn from analysis of documents and discourses, in particular the debates which took place through the letters page and critical articles in the official *Doctor Who* Magazine during the 1990s<sup>5</sup>. I went on to suggest specific reasons for this commitment, and also inferred that such commitment might be what motivates fans to produce, leading to the legitimized 'infiltration' of official *Doctor Who* production by 'textual gamekeeper' fans. An empirical test of these assumptions seemed the most logical place to begin defining the questions for my research project, particularly as the conclusions drawn in the MPhil were likely to have been influenced by my own fan-assumptions (a point covered in more detail later in this chapter).

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<sup>5</sup> This analysis also took in the 'controversial' cult media fanzine DWB (which was highly critical of the direction in which *Doctor Who* was taken by its production team in the 1980s), and several books of fan criticism, such as Cornell (ed. 1997) and Gillatt (1998).

The question of why fans produce gave rise to a host of related issues. It seemed that a broader inquiry into what fans do and the reasons they give for doing it would be a likely extrapolation of the issues for further study raised by the conclusion of the MPhil. This in turn led to an investigation of the definition and identification of fans and fandom, how fans define themselves, their pleasures and even those they perceive as being 'external' to the fan identity. Issues of community, effort, participation, investment and perceptions of the authenticity of fan-produced texts were all addressed to some degree by the MPhil thesis, and were all areas which I considered to have a great deal of potential for further study. Perhaps the most significant of these was the question of why fans become fans of particular fan-objects; indeed, how these objects are able to become fan-objects. What specific pleasures might *Doctor Who* offer to fans? Is it even likely that there are specific qualities in an object, or text, or tradition which allow it to become 'fan-friendly'? The question 'Why *Doctor Who*?' was subsequently to become the central focus of my research for quite some time. It seemed likely, at the time, that it could prove to be the key to unlocking the mysteries of what motivates fandom, what *causes* it. All the other questions which I outlined seemed to be linked to this central 'mystery' in some way or other.

At this very early stage I had already decided that my project was to take the form of empirical research, most likely questionnaires or surveys. The MPhil thesis had drawn primarily on two 'types' of sources – the work of previous academics studying fan cultures and the discourses of the fan subculture as contained in the pages of fanzines and the official *Doctor Who* magazine. Thus I



felt it vital that the next stage in this ongoing research should take an empirical route; that I actually went out and asked 'the fans in the street' (for want of a better term) for their opinions and experiences. With this decided, and with the tentative raft of questions listed above compiled, I felt the next course of action should be a further review of the relevant literature on fan studies, in order to better locate and define my research, its purposes and terms, and to develop and focus the initial questions for research detailed above. Whilst the central issue to be explored was (initially) intended to be an investigation into the taste judgements of fans and what motivates them to select a particular object, I also examined a number of associated issues, concerning both the conceptualization of the figure of the fan and also the practical and methodological aspects of researching fan communities.

It had been apparent to me for some time that a number of the previous studies of media fandom had largely been conducted within more or less organized and hierarchical networks, communities and fan clubs. For example, John Tulloch's fan audience group in *Science Fiction Audiences* (Tulloch and Jenkins, 1995) was drawn from the membership of the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society (the DWAS) and an Australian *Doctor Who* fan club, and largely comprised what he himself terms 'executive fans' (1995, p.149). Cheryl Harris (1998) worked closely with members of the group 'Viewers for Quality Television', an institutionally-based community whose activities are largely comprised of critical writing and activism and centred on a 'collective' notion of quality TV (p.46). Andrea MacDonald (1998) studied the interactions and hierarchies of fans of the

US science fiction series *Quantum Leap* on the internet server USENET in the early 1990s. And in *Interacting with Babylon 5* (2001), Kurt Lancaster examined the role-playing and collectible card gaming of online fans of the science fiction TV series *Babylon 5*.

Both Henry Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* (1992a) and Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women* (1992) provided ethnographic accounts of media fan communities, paying very particular attention to (what I would term) 'productive' fans who write, sing and create artworks which extend the primary text in some way. It is clear that both of these accounts feature subject groups who have been selected precisely because of their active status and committed participation in fan social communities. This is entirely understandable. Such active, productive and very often highly articulate fans are a gift to the researcher; indeed they almost *demand* to be studied. And yet previous investigation and indeed my own experiences as a fan indicate that the degrees of participation and production described by Jenkins and Bacon-Smith are only likely to be true of a limited number of those who would define themselves as fans. Jenkins, however, seems almost to suggest that, at the very least, being a fan imbues an individual with the *potential* to write, a latent talent which needs to be 'discovered, nurtured, and promoted' (1992a, p.280).

Here Jenkins risks slipping into a mythologizing narrative, whereby fandom confers what might as well be 'super powers' on individuals merely by association. This idea surfaces again in Green, Jenkins & Jenkins' essay 'Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking: Selections from *The Terra Nostra Underground* and

*Strange Bedfellows*' (1998), an account of the authors' conversations with a 'slash' media fan fiction writing groups. However, here it is suggested that the idea of 'the potential to write' has come from the fans themselves ('the fan community tends to assume that everyone can write and that some people have not done so (yet)' [1998, p.12]) and yet this does not stop the specific case in question being applied in much more general terms (noting that around fifty percent of the group being studied have written fan fiction, the authors contend that this figure is 'not, we think, too far above that in media fandom as a whole' [*ibid*]). If such a 'potential to write' really exists, then surely it is available to all TV audiences? Or is it to be understood that fans are, by their very nature, more creative and talented than other viewers?

Matt Hills notes that Jenkins 'splits fans and non-fans into very different types of subjectivity, creating a *moral dualism*, by which [Hills means] a view of the cultural world which constructs and focuses on two clear sets of "good" and "bad" phenomena' (2002, p.8) <sup>6</sup>. The specific example Hills gives revolves around Jenkins' attempt to 'do away with the fan-as-obsessed-weirdo stereotype' (p.9), which is motivated by his (self-confessed [Jenkins, 1996, p.264]) desire to counter the 'predominantly negative' (*ibid*) attitude towards fandom within academia. However the moral dualism Hills identifies in Jenkins' account clearly operates on a number of planes, not least that which I outlined above (the 'good', writerly, fan vs. the implied 'bad', readerly, non-fan). It almost appears that in the rush to

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<sup>6</sup> Hills' use of the term 'non-fan' is troubling, as it represents a moral dualism of its own (that 'non-fans' are somehow 'lacking' some quality or power which 'fandom' confers on fans). This was another term I dismissed (see note 2).



reclaim fans from the labels of 'cultural dupes, social misfits, and mindless consumers' (Jenkins, 1992a, back cover blurb), fan and viewer have been pushed too far apart<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, the idea of the fan-as-producer, prominent in Jenkins' account, might have been overstated. 'What', asks Matt Hills, 'of fans who may not be producers, or who may not be interested in writing their own fan fiction or filk songs? Surely we cannot assume that all fans are busily producing away?' (2002, p.30).

Both Jenkins and Bacon-Smith describe the creative, 'poaching' (Jenkins, 1992a) activities of the fans they have studied in terms which, I would argue, edge towards a conceptualization of the fan as a subcultural activist. The possibility of fandom as a specific location for consumer activism has been explicitly depicted in studies of both media fans (for example, Harris, 1998, and to some extent, through his account of *Beauty and the Beast* fandom, Jenkins, 1992a) and 'retail coupon and product refund' fans who exchange information about consumer coupon and refund tactics (Classen, 1998). In the essay 'A Sociology of Television Fandom', Cheryl Harris discusses her empirical study of the fan group 'Viewers for Quality Television' (VQT), which is based not around a specific programme or genre but instead around a 'collectively defined' notion of 'quality TV' (1998, p.47), and the 'pressure' and 'challenge' to the TV industry which this group attempts. 'The promise of being able to assert one's cultural preferences within the framework of a national culture industry' is, Harris argues, what groups such as VQT offer their members, before going on to ponder whether this is the same thing which 'all fan

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<sup>7</sup> Though Jenkins does stress eventually, on the final page of the conclusion, that we cannot 'afford to ignore the connection that places fan culture on a continuum with other media consumption' (1992a, p.287).

groups' offer (1998, p.48). Steven Classen examines 'coupon queens' and 'refund fans' who use coupons and refund offers to make savings and even profits (1998, p. 72), forming networks of 'social cooperation' (p.84) which 'step outside of the normative consumer models' (p.85). Classen acknowledges that the primary pleasure of these coupon fans is economic, but suggests that couponing also offers 'resistant pleasures' which move against 'dominant patriarchy' and capitalism (*ibid*). However, both of these examples are open to question in terms of their identification as fan groups. VQT would seem to have as much in common with pressure groups as fandom (indeed, Harris draws distinct parallels between fan groups and pressure groups and suggests, as quoted above, that both groups might offer very similar things to their members), and the activities of the 'refund fans' examined by Classen seem based largely in consumer tactics and economically-defined pleasures.

Such notions of cultural resistance have currency throughout a significant amount of the academic writing on fans (Hills, 2002, pp. 27-45). For example, Camille Bacon-Smith writes of fan-authors stealing 'characters, settings, plots off the home and movie screens' to use in their writing activities, and that this represents a fully conscious 'act of rebellion' (1992, p.4). These female fan-writers, she claims, 'do not create for financial reward, but to express their souls and to know their messages are understood by kindred souls in the community' (*ibid*). Henry Jenkins, having argued elsewhere that fans define their relationship with the text in pleasurable rather than political terms (in Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995, p.178),

nevertheless describes fan poaching activities in language which evokes a politically/culturally subversive agenda ('The nature of fan creation challenges the media industry's claims to hold copyrights on popular narratives [...] [1992a, p.279]). Bacon-Smith's account is concerned very specifically with a particular group of female fan-writers. Jenkins, whilst focusing on one group ('amorphous but still identifiable' [1992a, p.1]) which he says calls itself "media fandom"<sup>8</sup> (*ibid*), outlines a series of five 'levels of activity' (p.277) encompassed by his conception of fandom, a conception which is arguably applied in general, rather than specific, terms. These five levels work to reinforce the idea that fan-activity is explicitly and deliberately resistant or subversive<sup>9</sup>. For example, Jenkins postulates that fandom 'originates, at least in part, as a response to the relative powerlessness of the consumer in relation to powerful institutions of cultural production and circulation' (*ibid*). Once again the question arises, what of the fans who might not be interested in challenging the 'powerful institutions of cultural production and circulation'? Surely we cannot assume all fans are busily engaging in activism of one sort or another?

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<sup>8</sup> 'I focus on only one of these fan cultures here - an amorphous but still identifiable grouping of enthusiasts of film and television which calls itself "media fandom". This group embraces not a single text or even a single genre but many texts [...] and at the same time, it constructs boundaries that generally exclude other types of texts [...]' (1992a, p.1). However, for significant portions of the account, Jenkins draws his examples from specifically identified single-orientation fandoms (i.e. 'Star Wars fans' [p.32], 'a *Twin Peaks* fan' [p.72], etc). It remains unclear exactly *whose* the conception of "media fandom" is - Jenkins, or his subjects. The term surfaces again in Green, Jenkins & Jenkins (1998, p. 12).

<sup>9</sup> This might in part reflect how 'specific academic agendas have tended to dictate the conceptual shape of fandom within cultural studies' (Hills, 2002, p.8). Hills notes Jenkins' interest in 'political intervention' (p.186) and also 'the academic's institutional and political use of fandom, where fans are represented as miniature academics [...]' (p.10).



My aim here is not to attempt to construct a conceptualization of 'the fan' which stands in wholesale opposition to the 'active/productive/resistant' conception from the accounts of Jenkins, Bacon-Smith and others. Whilst the image of the fan 'busily producing away' has been somewhat overstated, I do not wish to start arguing that most fans do not actually 'do' anything. However this project is specifically intended to try to study some fans who are *not* highly visible in terms of their activity, their production and their membership of organized societies and fan-hierarchies. Matt Hills has asked 'how can we theorize the cultural activities of fans who are not institutionally aligned, and who refuse to attend conventions or take part in "stereotypical" fan activities?' (2002, p.86). This poses a fascinating quandary, as such 'fan-refusers' are likely to be extremely difficult to locate (due to their unaligned status) and even more disinclined to submit to study (due to their presumed unwillingness to participate). But Hills repeatedly stresses the contradictions of fandom throughout *Fan Cultures*. In this instance he marks up the contradictory 'self/other' split constructed in what he describes as his own 'refuser' status in an autoethnographic account of his own fan investments, an unsustainable moral dualism which 'fails in the very moment of its performative claim' due precisely to his being 'far inside the fan stereotype [...] whether I like it or not' [pp. 86-87]. However, issues of alignment, of membership and activity, encompass numerous contradictions beyond this one.

The productive, institutionally aligned fans described in the accounts of Jenkins, Bacon-Smith and Harris, or Hills' figure of the unaligned fan who 'refuses to take part', are merely two points on a broad and complex spectrum. I would here

like to raise the possibility that fandom is such that fans may be 'semi-aligned' to a number of institutions; may switch alignment or allegiance as often as they wish; may participate in, or refuse (or even engage in a manner which cannot be clearly defined as either) 'stereotypical' fan activities when and how they choose. These modes of behaviour are not exclusive; it is not a case of 'either/or'. One aim of my research was to allow for the possibility that an individual might be able to occupy several conflicting and contradictory spaces in fandom *at the same time*.

It would be reductive to suggest that there are hard-and-fast 'rules of engagement' for fandom. Fans may evidence any number of contradictions and as such it may be difficult (impossible even) to understand them through the use of fixed definitions. (Indeed, I am not even making specific claims about fans here – lived culture, everyday life, is shot through with innumerable contradictions of this kind). To select fans for study through their alignment with organized networks and institutions (whether hierarchical fan clubs like the DWAS or less formally defined groups of fan-writers and fan-artists) undoubtedly neglects those who might occupy less organized spaces. And so my research project also aimed to place no such limitations on potential research subjects, allowing the possibility of studying fans who are not necessarily aligned with organised communities or institutions. The problems which arise in actually locating these fans for study are outlined in a later section of this introduction.

Another key issue arose from Jenkins' description of fans as 'consumers who also produce' (1992b, p.208)<sup>10</sup>. Consumption and production were already areas I intended to explore in the research, with section two of my initial questions for research focusing chiefly on these issues. Having returned to Jenkins with these issues in mind, the question 'to what extent is the idea that fans are "consumers who produce" actually the case?' struck me as an ideal place to start. To ask my subjects to give an account of both their consumerism and their production would allow me to make useful comparisons between sets of data. Questions about consumption patterns, strategies and habits would also allow a clearer view of the demographics of the *Doctor Who* market. At the time of my project's inception, *Doctor Who* had been off-air for more than a decade. In the absence of the primary TV text, the *Doctor Who* franchise had been reconceptualised into a number of niche texts (novels and audio plays, for example) which were marketed specifically at a fan audience (this situation is covered in greater detail in chapter one). Such developments made *Doctor Who* ideally placed for some form of investigation of niche consumption. And the situation described in my MPhil thesis, where certain fans had gained access to the modes of production of these 'new' texts, also suggested the possibility of examining niche production strategies. Thus, one of my initial ideas was to run a smaller project alongside the main one, interviewing some of these fan producers. However reasons of time, as well as the gradual shift in focus of the project, meant that this idea never really left the drawing board.

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<sup>10</sup> Alan McKee (2004) conducts a useful exploration of the 'differences' between production and consumption in *Doctor Who* fandom, which is drawn upon in later chapters of this thesis.



In the case of the main project, it became clear that the questions of production I intended to address fitted into a wider raft of issues centred upon the idea of participation. As I detailed earlier, accounts such as those given by Henry Jenkins and Cheryl Harris focus largely on participatory fan subcultures, and on fans who attend conventions, align themselves with certain institutions, write fiction and criticism, sing songs and paint pictures. Indeed, one of the most popular conceptions of the fan (alongside the 'sad, socially inept weirdo') is of someone who actively participates in such activities and the subcultural communities they take place within. Questions were beginning to form, such as 'does fandom always constitute a "participatory culture"?' and 'do individuals have to participate in order to be considered fans?' Fandom is, as has previously been noted, a contradictory 'place'. Fans are able to choose to participate in the forms and fields of their culture, largely at their own discretion. It is not merely a question of 'doing' or 'not doing' – a fan's relationship with fandom might involve some complex navigation and strategy. On consideration of this, it became apparent that my research project must be designed in such a way as to take into account such navigations and strategies. Different aspects of the participatory array available to fandom must be explored in a manner which retained the distinctions between different fields, but which also emphasized that these fields remain very closely bound up in one another.

One major issue in this area fell by the wayside at quite an early stage in the development of this project. This was the relationship between what might be termed 'fan-consumers' and 'fan-producers', which was central to the issues for

further study which emerged from my MPhil thesis. The MPhil thesis was based around an account of the relationship between *Doctor Who* and its fans, particularly the fan-critics who orchestrated campaigns to improve the show in the mid-1980s (see Cornell, 1997 and Gillatt, 1998, for more detailed accounts of this period) and the textual gamekeeper fan-producers I mentioned earlier. However, my own status as both an academic *and* a fan ostensibly led to the translation of some of my own personal viewpoints and fan-investments into stated fact during the course of my argument. I made some quite definitive claims about the relationship between fans-consumers and fan-producers which were based in part, I came to realize, on little more than my personal opinions as a fan<sup>11</sup>. And so I initially thought that an empirical research project might offer me the opportunity to test out these assumptions and avoid the potential slippage between my personal subjectivities and wider fan discourses<sup>12</sup>. However, once I had begun to develop the project a number of other issues quickly began to overtake this initial area of focus in terms of significance, until the relationship between fan-consumers and fan-producers became a minor concern.

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<sup>11</sup> Does such a realization favour the subjectivity of my current academic self over my previous fan self? At first glance perhaps, but then I am not actually saying here that the assumptions which informed the argument of my MPhil thesis were *incorrect*, merely that they were just that - *assumptions* which went largely untested empirically. The current research project provided a means of testing them. For more on the relationship between academic and fan subjectivities, see Hills (2002).

<sup>12</sup> Although my own subjectivities have, in turn, likely been informed by wider fan discourses, through my observation and participation in debates and discussions about *Doctor Who* and fandom, both as a fan and as an academic (bearing in mind, of course, that there may be no clear distinction between these two 'identities', as is discussed later in this introduction)

The slippage between academic and fan subjectivities also informed other areas of my research, particularly the emphasis placed on the relationship between fans and continuity or canon. On reflection, this had already been informed both by previous academic accounts and by fan writing and criticism. That fans place a great deal of importance on maintaining continuity and constructing relatively stable subcultural canons long seems to have been understood as a fundamental 'truth' of fandom. The idea that fans like to view their particular text as 'one big story' (Cornell, 1997, p.7) has found its way into many academic accounts (e.g. Jenkins, 1992) and fan accounts (Cornell, 1997, Gillatt, 1998). And so I repeated it in my own account for the MPhil, with no real empirical evidence other than the testimonies of those who had repeated it previously. Here, I decided, was the perfect opportunity to explore this particular nugget of received wisdom, an opportunity to ask fans if continuity really is as important to their subculture and its forms and fields as has previously been assumed.

The question of slippage between fan and academic subjectivities raises issues of how fans and fandom might be defined. Matt Hills prefaces *Fan Cultures* (2002) with a discussion of the lack of singular definitions for fans and fandom, both inside and outside of 'the academy'. He outlines a key concept in his work as follows:

I want to suggest that fandom is not simply a 'thing' that can be picked over analytically. It is also always performative; by which I mean that it is an identity which is (dis-)claimed, and which



performs cultural work. Claiming the status of a 'fan' may, in certain contexts, provide a cultural space for types of knowledge and attachment [...] Fandom, then, is never a neutral 'expression' or a singular 'referent'; its status and its performance shift across cultural sites. What different 'performances' of fandom share, however, is a sense of contesting cultural norms. To claim the identity of a 'fan' remains, in some sense, to claim an 'improper' identity [...]

(Hills, 2002, pp. xi-xii)

Hills examines a number of attempts at definition (such as Abercrombie and Longhurst's 'spectrum of identities', which include the figures of the fan, the cultist and the enthusiast [1998], and Tulloch and Jenkins' troublesome fan/follower distinction [1995]). His ultimate aim here is to find a way out of the '[...] "decisionist" narratives' (which 'hinge on making political decisions as to the 'goodness' or 'badness' of fan cultures' and construct a 'moral dualism') he sees as having dominated theoretical approaches to fandom. He advocates a 'suspensionist' position, 'a position which refuses to split fandom into the "good" and the "bad" and which embraces inescapable contradiction (the ugly?)' (pp. xii-xiii). Much of Hills' discussion here is centred upon academic definitions of fandom and media cults, although he opens with a recapitulation of some, more general, 'popular' definitions. These academic definitions are characterized by Hills as part of a wider

raft of tactics by which specific academic agendas have attempted to 'dictate the conceptual shape of fandom in cultural studies' (p.8). As I highlighted earlier, Hills flags up both the construction of 'moral dualisms' inherent in such an exercise, and also the academic's *use* of fandom, both institutionally and politically (pp.9-10). 'Fandom', he suggests, 'needs to be represented more on its own terms [...] rather than being used to form part of a moral dualism' (p.9).

But what are fandom's 'terms'? Indeed, what does 'fandom' mean? The term undoubtedly means many things to many people, for a wide variety of reasons. However, in the broadest sense it embodies a double meaning. Fandom can be thought of both in terms of a conceptual 'place' and, I would argue, a *dimension of individual/personal engagement or interaction with a text or object*. It is the former of these that seems to be most often applied as a definition – where 'fandom' is understood as a community or institution or even tradition in which individuals participate. And it is this definition, that of fandom as a network, as a social group, as a *place*, which seems to have informed the selection of research subjects in previous empirical studies of fans. Matt Hills argues that fans and fandom are not (or at least should not be characterized as) neatly quantifiable and clearly definable 'objects of study' (p. xii). Indeed, similar arguments have been made in the wider field of TV audience studies (see, for example, Ang [1996, p.67]). Whilst definitions of fandom as a community in which individuals participate cannot and should not be dismissed or ignored, neither can the more 'individual' definition of fandom, as a dimension of personal investment in a particular text or texts.

As I noted earlier, individual fans might actually be aligned with different organized groups (such as fan clubs, or conventions) and different interpretive communities (ranging from specific fan constituencies, for example the readership of *Doctor Who Magazine* [McKee, 2001, p.9], to social and cultural communities which originate outside of the fan subculture), and these alignments can shift over time, and overlap each other to a significant degree. My research project was specifically intended to focus on individual fans who were not necessarily united by membership of any specific organized community or group. By inviting my subjects to self-select on the basis of whether they considered themselves to be a fan of *Doctor Who*, I hoped to have the opportunity to explore the experiences and activities of fans who were not defined chiefly by their membership of an organized group. A significant amount of the previous studies of fans had been conducted within the social networks of one specific organized group or society, whether that is an institutional fan club (for example Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995) or an on-line community (for example MacDonald, 1998). My aim in this project was to allow for the possibility that individual respondents might intersect a number of groups and communities, rather than locating a specific community and selecting individuals for study from within it.

We reach a problematic sticking-point here, however. I have just simultaneously decided that, for the purposes of my project, fandom will be studied through individuals rather than societies and organized groups *and* asked that fandom, as an *object*, be allowed to dictate its own terms. Perhaps then it is better to rephrase that point, and say that my approach will hopefully allow *fans* to



*express* the terms of their fandom. Of course, if this is to be the case, I cannot remove social networks and organized groups from the bounds of my research – the decision is not mine to make. If my subjects are to represent their fandom on their own terms it is likely that they will draw upon both social *and* individual experiences within that representation. Also, I hardly need to point out that this research project must be contained within some form of structured framework imposed by me, the researcher, and so the representation must always be qualified. I make no claim that this will be an organic, unmediated representation, as no such thing is possible.

This brings us to a problem that seems impossible to avoid in work of this kind, and which must be addressed before proceeding any further. If, as Hills maintains, the shape of fandom within the field of cultural studies has been informed by specific academic and institutional agendas, then surely my own account must be informed by my specific agenda? The question of what that agenda might be and where it might have its origin is worthy of discussion here:

Academia, in fact, works hard to produce difference. Differences of theoretical approach abound, as do differences in the selection of favoured theorists [...] However, despite this multiplicity of theoretical approaches, I want to suggest that academia is nevertheless bounded by its own *imagined subjectivity*.

(Hills, 2002, p.3)

This 'imagined subjectivity', Hills maintains (working from Barbara Herrnstein Smith [1988]), ascribes value to those within a particular community (in this case, 'the academy') whilst '[...] devaluing the "improper" subjectivity of those who are outside the community'. The 'imagined subjectivity of the rational academic' is generally favoured over (what Hills sees as) the reality that academic argument is held together by an 'act of faith'. In the absence of any real 'evidence' for the 'truth claims of any one theory [...] academics have no choice [...] other than to *believe* in their favoured theories' (pp. 3-4). Here we have the suggestion that theorists can be thought of in terms of 'cult heroes' and that academics and intellectuals are thus to be understood (at least in part) as 'cultists'. When a theorist's ideas are agreed upon by a particular group, then 'that person becomes a sacred object for the group', Randall Collins insists (1998, p.36), and Hills would appear to concur (2002, pp. 3-4), later including specific theorists in a discussion of his own fan autoethnography (pp. 84-85).

But if academia 'works hard to produce difference', and different approaches abound, then surely it is possible for an individual not to be specifically aligned with any one approach or 'school of thought'? My own approach can perhaps be described as eclectic. I make use of theorists and theories where they become relevant to my argument, but I do not tend to align myself with any one of them (and certainly do not regard myself as a 'fan' of a particular theory or individual – no 'sacred objects' or 'cult heroes' do I find inside the academy). It is

an approach which has variously been described as ‘fuck ‘em and chuck ‘em’<sup>13</sup> and ‘cherry picking’, and which might leave me open to criticism (certainly when characterized through the second term<sup>14</sup>). However, theory is *not* ‘sacred’. It is a tool, a resource.

Evidently, I cannot maintain that my research and this thesis are devoid of a specific agenda – such a claim would fail even at the moment of expression. However, my research is not specifically motivated by a particular theoretical approach or school of thought. The origin of my interest in this particular field results from influences brought to bear much more from outside the academy than within it. It is my own fandom, my fascination with its modes of operation and with the behaviours of other fans, which precipitated my entry into this research, not any fascination with a particular theory or approach to studying culture. The accounts given by the fans who are my subjects will always shape my account – they will not be tailored to fit pet theories. So, perhaps my agenda is to remain ‘true’ to fandom, as far as that is possible – to allow my subjects/fans and their fandoms to be represented to some degree *on their own terms*. It must also be acknowledged at this point that my project is establishing its own moral dualism, that of ‘truth to fandom’ vs. ‘cultish adherence to theory’, which works towards clearing a space for my project in the wider field. It is an opposition which might

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<sup>13</sup> A colourful phrase, for which I am indebted to Leon Hunt.

<sup>14</sup> For instance: the possibility of using ‘bits’ of theory out of context purely to illustrate/support a particular point; or using elements of different theories that are in some way contradictory or incompatible in their implications or their underlying assumptions.



potentially collapse or fail, but I nevertheless stand by it as one justification for the relevance of this project.

Additionally, I would like to take up Matt Hills' intention of emphasizing the contradictions, the *untidiness*, inherent in fans, fandom and fan culture (2002, xiii). Whilst the centrepiece of this thesis is comprised of a structure, an artificial ordering of fan investment (the spectrums of investment of the title), I will resist as far as possible the tailoring of my data and the representations and discourses of my subjects to fit this model, for the sake of conceptual neatness. The spectrums are unlikely to be straightforward or tidy – indeed, they might only be fragmentary and fleeting and are very likely to contain gaps and inconsistencies. As I have already noted and will discuss further, the focus and design of my research has shifted somewhat over the course of the project, and this is entirely due to the data submitted by the respondents. I have tried whenever and wherever possible to allow the data to set the shape of my account. Broad generalizations and neat models are not the aim of this project. The data and my account are specific to the sample of fifty questionnaire respondents and it is they who have informed that account more than anything else.

Such discussions raise a key point regarding my status as a researcher. I am a fan, and my fan-interest in the issues at stake here pre-exists (as I have already noted) my academic interest. Fans studying fans are nothing new in cultural studies. Matt Hills deals with a number of questions of definition and status in the introduction to *Fan Cultures*, distinguishing between scholar-fans and fan-scholars (2002, pp. 3-21). On the one hand, I would at least attempt to claim that I

have made a determined effort to keep my own fan-subjectivity from informing my account as far as is possible. Certainly I have not allowed my own fan assumptions to shape the ways in which my account uses the responses of my subjects. I specifically sought to avoid using my fan assumptions and justifications as 'supporting evidence' or as a means of rationalizing contradictions in the data, realizing the dangerous moral dualism that this would entail, where my own imagined scholar-fan subjectivity is given credence over that of the respondents. However, Hills suggests that 'scholar-fans' and 'fan-scholars' are 'necessarily liminal in their identities (that is, they exist between and transgress the regulative norms of academic and fan imagined subjectivities)' (2002, p.19), and that individuals from neither group can 'belong' to the other 'unless they temporarily adopt its institutional norms of writing and practice' (p.20).

So, my own position is underpinned by what Hills terms 'between-ness'. My navigation between my fan and academic identities and subjectivities must 'remain sensitive to those institutional contexts which disqualify certain ways of speaking and certain ways of presenting the self' (*ibid*). Hills argues that both fans and academics 'value their own institutionally-supported ways of reading and writing above those practices which characterize the other group', leading to 'mutual marginalization' and the creation of moral dualisms (which are 'made to appear natural' through 'imagined subjectivities' which make 'us' 'good' and 'them' 'bad') (pp.20-21). He sees the most salient fact in this situation as being the 'common sense' categories which both groups use in defending and valuing their activities (p.21). *Fan Cultures* ends by addressing the possibility of 'suspending 'fan vs.

academic moral dualisms' (p.182). The 'suspensionist' approaches Hills advocates above 'decisionist' approaches 'do not seek to protect fandom, to link fan experiences to a series of positive values, but neither do they seek to protect academic imagined subjectivity from its others' (pp.182-183). Ultimately, he suggests, it is impossible to completely separate the figures of the ('good') academic and the ('bad') fan, 'despite the discursive, cultural and institutional mechanisms and legitimations that work to enforce this distinction' (p.183)

Having worked through the issues outlined above, I returned to my initial list of questions in order to try to clearly define what was to be the focus of my research, with the ultimate intention of specifying my mode of inquiry. The key questions seemed to be 'why do fans become fans?' and also 'why do fans become fans of particular objects?' Whilst analyzing the content of a specific fan object (in this case *Doctor Who*) might go some way towards determining specific 'fan-friendly' qualities, my intention had always been to allow fans to discuss their pleasures and investments on their own terms, at least as far as is possible within the framing device of a research account. As I noted earlier, one of my initial intentions was to test the assumptions of the MPhil thesis, particularly the relationships between fan-consumers and fan producers and also the relationship between *Doctor Who* fans and the status of the *Doctor Who* subcultural canon, in the field. However, on reviewing the previous accounts of fan subcultures mentioned above, a number of other issues became of equal significance to my research. All of these issues seemed to revolve around an inquiry into the ways in



which fans engage with their specific object, with their own subculture, and with other fans. It was here that the seed of the idea which was to become the spectrums of investment which lie at the core of this thesis first arose. I began to wonder if fan interest and engagement with a specific object could be divided into a series of positions or spaces to be occupied. Could one determine or construct a typology of fans? Might there be different 'orientations' towards *Doctor Who*, in a similar manner to those orientations to *Judge Dredd* suggested by Barker and Brooks'? (1998).

At this time, however, my primary focus remained an inquiry into the different modes of engagement available to fans. The issues and questions I now found myself considering represented developments of the questions arising out of the conclusions from my MPhil, which were outlined earlier. It was now necessary to decide which specific modes of engagement I would investigate through the project. The starting point here was the unique niche market represented by the (then current) state of the *Doctor Who* franchise. This project was initiated before the 2005 TV revival of *Doctor Who* had been announced. At the time, the series had been off air for almost a decade and a half (save a one-off TV movie in 1996 and spoofy vignettes in the 1993 *Children in Need* telethon and *Comic Relief* in 1999), and *Doctor Who* continued in a variety of non-televisual formats, almost all of which had to be purchased<sup>15</sup>. Virgin Publishing and later BBC books released a range of spin-off original novels, published at a rate of two per month from the early 1990s onwards, whilst Panini's monthly *Doctor Who* Magazine continued

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<sup>15</sup> 'Free' *Doctor Who* in this period consisted of two radio plays, starring Jon Pertwee, in 1993 and 1996, and a number of webcast dramas hosted on the BBC's cult website in the early 2000s.



running a comic strip featuring the ongoing adventures of various Doctors and companions. In the late 1990s these were joined by monthly audio *Doctor Who* plays, produced by Big Finish Productions and featuring numerous cast members from the TV series, and also by a short-lived range of novellas from Telos Publishing.

The continuation of the *Doctor Who* franchise through these formats presented a fascinating area for study for two main reasons. The first I have already mentioned; the fact that fans had gained access to the officially sanctioned and legitimate production of new *Doctor Who* narratives through the novels and audio plays. The second reason is linked with the first. Whilst still being produced for TV, *Doctor Who* was to all intents and purposes *free*<sup>16</sup>. Throughout the 1990s and beyond, however, fans were required to pay piecemeal for new adventures, and in what might arguably be classified as ‘secondary’ (i.e. not televisual) formats<sup>17</sup>. What is more, these new ‘pay-per’ *Doctor Who* adventures were to a large extent being created specifically for and marketed specifically at fans, and to a lesser (but perhaps not significantly lesser) extent *by* fellow fans. I was fascinated by how the fans might view this *status quo*, how they might feel about paying for *Doctor Who* and more, how they actually went about selecting and purchasing these new adventures. I also saw an opportunity to investigate the possible relationship between the consumer-fans and producer-fans, or at least to investigate the perceptions one group had of the other.

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<sup>16</sup> Excepting the necessary payment of the licence fee, of course.

<sup>17</sup> The status of these ‘secondary’ texts is discussed in much greater detail in chapters 2 and 4. McKee (2004) examines how fans classify these texts, and my discussions draw on his work.

These thoughts subsequently led into the second mode of engagement I would investigate, that of participation. Jenkins (1992) regards fandom as a participatory culture. I would like to suggest a different angle on that definition, and describe fandom as a participatory mode of engagement. Fans do not necessarily participate in very obvious and visible ways, such as joining fan clubs or writing and distributing fiction. Participation may also take much less organised or quantifiable forms. Even an apparently solitary activity, such as watching or re-watching a *Doctor Who* DVD alone, involves participation in the text and the subculture at some level, drawing on discourses and contexts and mobilizing forms of capital which are to some extent or other socially constituted or determined. Indeed, this is the case for television watching (and likely all other forms of cultural consumption) in general (Morley and Silverstone, 1990, p.35; Ang, 1996, p.68). Thus, I sought to address the variety of participatory activities which are available to fans, covering a range of degrees of organization and structure. I specifically wanted to allow as much space for the full range of different activities here – this was my central principle for this line of inquiry. It cannot be assumed that there might be a standard level of organization for institutions such as fan clubs, for instance. The focus was likely to be on the degrees to which different individuals participate in the subculture, and how much this participation was liable to change from individual to individual.

A movement towards investigating whether there might be a case for typologies of fandom or for a range of orientations towards a fan object also presents an opportunity to explore how fans perceive themselves. Given the

difficulties which arise in trying to specifically define fans and fandom, discussed earlier, and also my pledge at least to attempt to allow fans to define their own terms, I felt it was vital that any research project allow sufficient space for these terms to be articulated. If the modes of engagement were to explore how fans interact with their text and its subculture, then perhaps an opportunity to define terms such as 'fan' and 'fandom' might allow an investigation of how fans engage with and perceive both other fans and their own fandom. Whilst any exercise in self-definition by my subjects will be framed by my own terms, it will also clear a space for fans to articulate their own specific and individual terms.

These were the issues forming the core of my inquiry when I began to design the empirical research project. The focus had shifted since the initial conceptualisation and was to continue to change and evolve as the data was collected and began to be interpreted. The project, through the voices of my subjects, seemed to take on a life of its own. This is not intended to mythologize my research, or to suggest that the project itself took on some kind of 'special power'. It is merely my observation that I was not fully conscious of quite how much my project would change and develop once the data collection stage, and what followed, had arrived. Whilst designing the questionnaire, I was (or at least, thought I was) still firmly pursuing my initial agenda – to test out the assumptions of my MPhil thesis in the field. With hindsight, and from the issues set out above, it is easy to see how much my project had moved away from this initial conception. Despite this, certain questions pertaining to the 'textual gamekeepers' conceptualization remained, as did the question of why fans become fans of



specific objects. This, at least, would remain an important aspect of my research, a constant in the shifting, swirling questions and issues which surrounded it.

Having arrived at a closer conception of exactly a) what my research was to address and b) who the subjects of my research were likely to be (i.e. self-selecting fans not drawn from any particular organization or group), I then needed to determine exactly what form the research project would take before going any further. From the outset, I had been thinking of my project in terms of ethnographic research, most likely due to the fact that the empirical research into fan communities I was most familiar with, indeed that which had informed a great deal of my thinking, was ethnographic in nature. Henry Jenkins and Camille Bacon-Smith, for instance, both offer ethnographic accounts of fan subcultures and communities which are based upon the practice of participant observation. The two accounts differ quite significantly in many respects and particularly in one key aspect. Jenkins identifies himself specifically as a fan, and states quite explicitly that his account 'grows not only from conventional forms of field research but also from my own active involvement as a fan within this subcultural community over the past decade or more' (1992, p.4). He contends that he writes both 'as an academic (who has access to certain theories of popular culture, certain bodies of critical and ethnographic literature) and as a fan (who has access to the particular knowledge and traditions of that community)' (p.5). Bacon-Smith, on the other hand, specifically identifies herself as 'an ethnographer' (1992, p.224) and constructs a much more traditional ethnographic account.

What I mean here by 'traditional' (and what Jenkins undoubtedly means by the 'classical' ethnographies from which he differentiates *Textual Poachers* [1992, p.3]) is the account in which the researcher lives among, and participates in the activities and rituals of, the people being studied (Holy, 1984, p.14; Hammersley, 1990, p.3). This comes from the original application of the ethnographic method in anthropology (Malinowski, 1922; Polanyi, 1958; etc) to study unfamiliar cultures and communities. David Machin (2002) describes the two main assumptions of ethnographic methodology thus; firstly, that we accept that to understand human behaviour we cannot look solely at isolated moments, but instead need to observe it 'in different contexts and at different times'; and secondly, that 'we have to assume that people may not have access to the reasons why they do things', but instead may cite from available 'official' (common sense) reasons offered by their societies (p.10). Both Malinowski (1922) and Polanyi (1958) raise this concern, Polanyi arguing that 'while a society may have an official version, or story, about why things are done in a particular way, how things are actually done may be very different' (Machin, 2002, p.38). Malinowski contends that 'simply asking people what they are doing is no way to find out what they are in fact doing and why, although it is important to ask them' (quoted in Machin, 2002, p.82). The ethnographer must not simply ask people to account for their activities and behaviour, but instead must investigate 'how their whole social reality fits together, particularly in terms of the cultural framework that is available in that society for thinking about the things we are investigating [...]' (*ibid*, p.38). The ethnographer, David Machin insists, must view people as 'social actors', who not only talk about

the world 'in order to make sense of it', but also try to 'find and indicate their own place' within that world (*ibid*, p.13). Scott Grills notes:

As Rosaldo (1989) has argued, we are all 'positioned subjects'. That is, every social location that we occupy brings with it a mixture of insight and blindness. By being in one 'place' [...] we gain a unique vantage point or sight line. That which allows us to see some things more clearly however also precludes other vantage points. It cannot be otherwise. We cannot be in two places at once. Although we can attempt to take multiple perspectives into account, and others can share their understanding of this or that aspect of social life, we always make sense of these representations through who we are.

(Grills, 1998, p.10)

Grills follows this by noting that field research repositions the social scientist, allowing for questioning that would be otherwise unavailable. Thus, access is gained to the 'lived experiences' of the subjects being studied. Without understanding the perspectives and activities of the subjects, the social scientist cannot truly know their lived experiences. Therefore she/he must develop an intimate familiarity with the social world of the subjects. Grills then goes on to outline the problems of becoming too familiar and sociable and becoming 'too involved' (*ibid*), problems also noted by David Sholle (1991), who warns against



losing the 'dimension of distance from the situation' which might ultimately lead to the confusion of 'one's own stance with that of the subject being studied' (p.84). However, in a discipline such as social science, it is extremely difficult to clearly separate the observer from the phenomenon under observation (Holy, 1984, p.14). We are all, as Vidich and Lyman observe, 'creatures of our own social and cultural pasts'. Ethnography might be an individual activity, but it is guided by values which are not unique to the researcher, values which are socially and culturally determined (1994, p.42). Additionally, observation is always subjective, a 'goal-directed behaviour', resulting from 'an active choice, not a passive exposure' (Kaplan, 1964, p.153). And so, the ethnographic text is often seen as 'a fiction fashioned out of the researcher's engagement with the world studied' and able only to be evaluated 'in terms of their ability to create a sense of verisimilitude for the reader' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.203).

Paul Atkinson and Martyn Hammersley have discussed the 'controversy' which surrounds ethnography, particularly in terms of definition. To some, they note, it is a philosophical paradigm which always demands 'total commitment', whilst to others it is a method to be used where it is appropriate or useful (1994, p.248). Between these two extremes lies a spectrum of definitional and methodological positions. The methods of ethnography have, after all, now become hugely diverse, just as the reasons for doing ethnography have likewise broadened. The values which shaped the work of previous ethnographers have been uncoupled from recent ethnographic subject matter and now 'the points of view from which ethnographic observations may be made are as great as the

choices of lifestyles available in modern society' (Vidich & Lyman, 1994, p. 42). Despite this diversification and 'relaxation' Atkinson and Hammersley compile a list of qualities of which they see ethnography as having 'a substantial number', including an emphasis on exploring the nature of phenomena rather than testing hypotheses, and a concentration on a small number of cases<sup>18</sup>. Ultimately, they see ethnographic methods as relying largely on participant observation, which they see as less controversial than ethnography in terms of definition, but still difficult to pin down with a specific meaning (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p.249). All social research, they argue, represents 'a form of participant observation', due to the fact that 'we cannot study the world without being part of it'. Because of this, participant observation does not constitute 'a particular research technique', but is instead 'a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers' (*ibid*).

This brings us back to Henry Jenkins, who as a fan is always-already 'part of the world' he is studying. As I have previously noted, I also come to this research with the dual identity of fan and academic. And my ethnographic intentions led me to consider the role of participant observation in my research project. If we examine the case of Jenkins, the problematic implications which participant observation might hold for my project should become apparent. For *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins was researching (or participating in and observing) a specific and reasonably clearly defined fan community – a group which he terms (and which he notes also term themselves) 'media fandom'. He also directly claims

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<sup>18</sup> For the full list see Atkinson & Hammersley (in Denzin & Lincoln). 1994 (pp.246-249) and also a similar list in Hammersley, 1990 (pp.1-2).



a fan identity, specifically identifying himself as a member of this community. Jenkins himself deals with any potential problems to which this dual identity might give rise<sup>19</sup>. Despite such problems, participant observation suits his purposes well, and allows him to develop what has since become viewed as a milestone ethnographic account of media fans and their participatory culture. The very nature of the community which *Textual Poachers* studies, with its organized and quite clearly defined hierarchies, systems and modes of subcultural production, means that Jenkins has very tangible, audible and visible phenomena available for his participant observation.

However my project is concerned with what is in some respects a very different fandom from that described by Jenkins<sup>20</sup>. Whilst any number of my prospective subjects might have access to organized fan communities and societies, these societies are not the primary focus of my research. I was not aiming to study a specific, organized network or group of fans. Of course, all my subjects are united by the self-identifying-as-fan act which constituted their response to my questionnaire appeal, and also by the shared particular fan object of *Doctor Who*. But I actively sought not to specifically approach highly organized fan institutions and organizations such as fan clubs, writing groups or other societies with the specific intention of studying their particular members. As I have maintained throughout this introduction, my interest lies in the possibility that

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<sup>19</sup> Which I have briefly mentioned already, and which I would refer you to *Textual Poachers* pp. 4-8 for more details.

<sup>20</sup> Which Hills contends must be viewed as 'a rhetorical tailoring of fandom in order to act upon particular academic institutional spaces and agendas' and as playing the role of 'a community and a term which must be translated into the shape which will allow it to act on the academic community' (2002, p.10).



individual fans might occupy multiple and shifting positions and alignments over different spatial, temporal and social locations.

Thus, working outside a specific organized group or community, participant observation becomes increasingly difficult to instigate. Admittedly I have been engaged in some form of participant observation in the *Doctor Who* fan subculture for a number of years through my own fandom, and this has informed much of the thinking behind the specific questions addressed by the questionnaire. But my participant observation has been largely confined to my own fan activities, which do not extend much beyond the individual. I have never joined a fan club, group or society. I have never written *Doctor Who* fiction, or made any other kind of ‘fan-art’<sup>21</sup>. I am a member of and have participated in an online *Doctor Who* forum, but even here the participation has never extended beyond reading the message boards and the occasional post of my own. I attended a couple of conventions in my teenage years, but again this was (as far as is possible in such a situation) a ‘solitary’ activity – none of my friends have ever claimed the identity of *Doctor Who* fan.

To digress slightly, I would argue that this does not constitute a specific avoidance of other fans on my part, or as some attempt to distance myself from the ‘taint’ of fandom. I am not a ‘self-hating fan’. A number of my friends and acquaintances have equally intense fan passions oriented towards other

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<sup>21</sup> Of course it is difficult to know where to impose boundaries here. I drew *Doctor Who* pictures and made cardboard Daleks as a child, but such activities have not endured into adulthood. This raises some difficult questions pertaining to both the origins of individual fandom and also the ‘status’ of fan-children and childhood fandom which, whilst not the focus of this project, remain tantalisingly unexplored for the most part in fan studies.

phenomena from popular culture, some of which overlap with my own other fan objects. Indeed the fan activities which I conduct around these other fan objects are often more participatory and involved than those of my *Doctor Who* fandom and yet I would still identify *Doctor Who* as the most enduring and intense of my fandoms (which goes some way towards suggesting that degrees of participation in a particular fandom should not automatically be assumed to correspond with the 'intensity level' of that fandom, an issue to which I will return in chapter four). And so whilst my participation in and observation of *Doctor Who* fandom through my own fan activities has informed this project to a significant degree, that participation has not extended into organised fandom in any real sense.

In some respects then, I was and indeed remain an 'ideal' example of one of my intended subjects. The difficulty lay in locating such subjects in situ for participant observation. I *could* have participated and observed to an extent, on-line, on the letters pages of *Doctor Who* Magazine and in fan criticism and fanzines, but those are specific discourses and as such would actually have allowed me very little space to observe the phenomena I wished to study. What other options were available? Attending conventions? Joining Fan clubs? Neither of these were suited to my research, the latter due to the reasons given above, the former because it arguably constitutes a relatively extraordinary activity. My focus has always aimed to fall on the *everyday* lives of fans. How to observe and participate in the everyday life of a *Doctor Who* fan? One possibility here might be autoethnography, as advocated by Matt Hills in *Fan Cultures*:



If fan-ethnography has typically been limited by its view of 'the real' as a matter of discourse and articulation, or by its one-sided accounts of fandom either as a social coping mechanism [...] or a valuable 'interpretive community' [...], then how can the limits of both fan and academic self-expression be explored differently? A useful exercise here is autoethnography, in which the tastes, values, attachments and investments of the fan and the academic-fan are placed under the microscope of cultural analysis. Autoethnography aims to create a partial 'inventory' of the 'infinity of traces' deposited within the self by cultural and historical processes.

(Hills, 2002, p.72)

In an autoethnographic exercise, the self-account of the instigator is repeatedly questioned *by* the instigator leading to 'a variety of possible interpretations of [the] self-accounts, and [the] self-accounts of [the] self-accounts' (*ibid*). Eventually, the process of 'persistent questioning' opens up possibilities in explaining the self and exposes '*the fragility and inadequacy of our claims to be able to 'explain' and 'justify' our own intensely private or personal moments of fandom and media consumption*' (*ibid*, italics in original). Hills critiques a range of academic-fan autoethnographies (pp.72-81) before outlining his autoethnographic method through the development of his own self-account. This method requires 'something which fan-ethnographies to date have neglected', that the multiple



fandoms of an individual should be studied together and any links or shared discourses between them be explored (p.81)<sup>22</sup>. The method involves charting both current and previous fan objects, grouping them through subject matter and intertextual links and also plotting them over time on a relative scale of intensity, before analyzing the resulting diagrams 'in a variety of ways' (p.83). These include identifying common discourses and tracking temporal shifts. Eventually, the autoethnographer must question the inadequacies and omissions in her/his self-account, and how these might be explained.

I briefly considered a project which would involve working with a small group of individual subjects, each developing their own autoethnographic account, but dismissed this almost immediately as unworkable for a number of reasons. Key amongst these is the very specific nature of autoethnography. Autoethnography is an academic method. It requires the subject to have access to specific knowledge from inside the academy, knowledge of the social sciences, in effect the knowledge to operate what Hills has termed 'the microscope of cultural analysis' (2002, p.72). In that case I would be required to either; select subjects on the basis of their having the required knowledge to perform autoethnography (which in effect meant studying fan-academics of one sort or another, who potentially stood somewhat at odds with the fans I had decided to research<sup>23</sup>); or teach my subjects the required knowledge (which beyond the multitude of ideological problems raised would be a logistical impossibility). Even a qualified version of this project wherein I

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<sup>22</sup> The possibilities and problems of studying multiple fan investments in a study such as mine are addressed later in this introduction.

<sup>23</sup> See Hills' introduction in *Fan Cultures* for a discussion of the 'tensions' between fans and academics.

would collaborate with my subjects in the analyses of their own self-accounts would be dubious, as autoethnography would ostensibly return to being ethnography through my involvement in the analysis. However, some remnants of an autoethnographic approach remained in both the questionnaire, and also to a greater degree in this account (for example the discussion of my fan activities [pp.29-30]).

And so, beyond Atkinson & Hammersley's idea that all social research represents a form of it, participant observation was not really a viable option for my research project. The project was now focused on four or five quite specific lines of inquiry (based around the modes of engagement detailed earlier), rather than a more general exploration of the nature of fandom. Whilst I still contend that I was not testing hypotheses (beyond the general assertion that my findings will confirm the contradictions and plurality of fans and fandom to some extent), the shape my project had begun to assume was becoming rather more structured than Atkinson & Hammersley's conception of ethnographic research would allow<sup>24</sup>.

Of course, the shifts and expansion in ethnography and its methodology (see Vidich & Stamford, 1994) likely allow a much looser conception of the term and thus would allow me to claim an ethnographic status for my project. As Matt Hills has noted, the term ethnography has long been used very loosely in media and cultural studies, 'sometimes indicating little more than hour-long interviews with respondents' (2002, p.68). Whilst I had to some extent been immersed in my field of study for a number of years, and whilst this immersion had undoubtedly

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<sup>24</sup> See 'Ethnography and Participant Observation', in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 (pp.248-249).



informed many of the inquiries I made of that field, I did not believe that this had provided nearly enough empirical data to support the development of an account of the issues I was investigating. Nor, as I have said, could the potentially un-aligned or un-organised fans support an attempt at true participant observation. Ultimately I do not feel able to describe my project as an ethnographic account. Others may consider it so, and it is certainly strongly informed by the methodologies and practices of ethnographic research, but I will not make that claim myself. If forced to claim a particular label for my project I would simply call it 'empirical research', as the mixture of quantitative and qualitative inquiries (which are discussed below) and also the specific nature of the issues being addressed make it difficult to fit into any of the 'strategies of inquiry' covered by section three of Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1994).

So what form did my project take? The specific lines of inquiry mentioned above (which I will term consumption, participation, knowledge, definition and justification) needed to be allowed to define the means of empirical data collection. Rather than choosing a specific framework, methodology or strategy of inquiry and tailoring the issues and questions to fit accordingly, I thought it essential to tailor the method of data collection to suit the issues to be explored. Examining each issue in isolation, it became apparent that a combination of approaches would be needed. For instance, in order to examine patterns of consumption and niche marketing of the *Doctor Who* brand, quantitative data would be required (who is spending what, how much, how often, and where? etc). However, structured



qualitative inquiry would also allow me to ask questions about, for example, the choices made by fan-consumers in the *Doctor Who* market. Some issues, particularly those such as definition and justification, would best be served by much more 'open' qualitative inquiry (asking subjects to define the term 'fan' for instance). The two strategies of inquiry I thought might offer the most potential for asking these questions were questionnaire and interviewing. I quickly decided that my research project would take the form of a questionnaire which made both quantitative and qualitative inquiries. The outcomes of this questionnaire could then potentially be followed-up by any subsequent questionnaires or correspondence with the subjects.

Questions remain as to why I dismissed the possibilities of interviewing as my primary means of data collection. One answer has to do with the 'nature' of the fans I intended to study. As I have already stated, I was not seeking out specific organized groups to observe or infiltrate and so there were potential problems in actually finding subjects to study. It seemed to defeat the purpose of studying fans not defined by their membership of or alignment to specific communities or institutions to bring such potentially 'un-organised' subjects together into highly artificial situations and scenarios (effectively imposing organization on my respondents and creating social situations) and so I immediately discounted group interviewing as a potential method.

I was also slightly concerned about my own dual identity and the ways in which my fan-self might potentially intrude on the interview process, inadvertently

influencing the discussion and even the responses of my respondents<sup>25</sup>. It has been widely acknowledged that both the 'social circumstances' of the interview and the interviewer her/himself are 'deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within respondents', and that the respondents 'are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers'(Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p.113). Holstein & Gubrium describe a process of 'active interviewing' where the interpretive resources of both the respondent and interviewer are 'astutely and adroitly crafted to the demands of the occasion, so that meaning is neither predetermined nor absolutely unique' (p.119). However I felt that my own fan assumptions and investments might intrude on the occasion to an greater extent than would be desirable. Whilst I discounted active interviewing as a means of data collection, certain ideas raised by Holstein & Gubrium influenced the questionnaire, as we shall see.

I must admit though that the primary reasons for dismissing interviews were largely born out of practical necessity. In order to investigate the issues I had decided upon, I needed enough individual subjects to both develop as broad a picture of fan engagement as possible, and also to allow comparisons between different subjects. Thus, I required a means of data collection that was most attractive to potential subjects and that could achieve the widest and least problematic distribution. Interviews require subjects to make very specific time and effort commitments, to articulate themselves in very specific (and potentially uncomfortable) situations, and ultimately to submit themselves for study almost

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<sup>25</sup> Whilst this, arguably, is always a risk in interviewing, I felt that my fan status compounded any potential problems to a significant degree.



entirely on the researcher's terms. A questionnaire would bypass a number of these potential problems, ostensibly allowing the subjects to provide data (at least relatively<sup>26</sup>) on their own terms, to set their own timescale<sup>27</sup> and generally perform the tasks demanded of them at their own convenience. It therefore follows that an appeal for questionnaire subjects would be much more likely to elicit a relatively sizeable response than an appeal for interview subjects, due to the issues of time and convenience.

I began the process of research design by addressing some of the basic questions which Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln pose in their introduction to part 3 of *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1994). One question they ask is 'how will the design connect to the paradigm being used?' (p.200). Earlier sections of this introduction are designed to locate my research and its subjects within the wider field of fan studies. The subject and the methodology of my research are directly informed both by previous empirical and academic studies of fans, fandom and fan (sub)culture<sup>28</sup>, and by similar studies and theories of audiences in general<sup>29</sup>. My analysis of a small body of empirical material (the fifty questionnaire responses in my sample) is ultimately intended to contribute to more general 'theories of media fandom', such as that which Matt Hills calls for in *Fan Cultures* (2002, p.1-2). Thus in my research the individual is, in

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<sup>26</sup> i.e. within the overall structuring framework of the questionnaire and the specifics of the inquiry.

<sup>27</sup> That is, within the practical time limits which the researcher must impose.

<sup>28</sup> For example; Jenkins (1992); Tulloch & Jenkins (1995); Bacon-Smith (1992); MacDonald (1998); Hills (2002).

<sup>29</sup> For example; Morley (1980); Ang (1985); Barker & Brooks (1998); Austin (2002).



accordance with the project of cultural studies, 'studied as a single instance of more universal social experiences and social practices' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.202).

Another question asked is 'who or what will be studied?' The answer to this seems very obvious on a basic level. I am studying fans who define themselves as such. Denzin and Lincoln note that qualitative researchers seek out particular groups where the processes which are going to be studied will be most likely to occur (*ibid*). As my current research stemmed from a previous examination of the processes I was going to study, the account of *Doctor Who* fandom in my MPhil thesis, the particular group for study was already decided. Indeed, the research was in part motivated by a desire to examine the potentially unaligned/unorganised fans I have already described, and so these were to be my subjects. However, Matt Hills makes a compelling case against the study of singular fan groups and subcultures in *Fan Cultures*. He argues that 'too many previous works have focused on single TV series, singular fan cultures or singular media' and that this raises the 'danger that fans' readings will be cut off from the wider consumption patterns that surround, and may help to make some sense of, their fan activities' (2002, pp.1-2). He also suggests that this concentration on singular fan cultures arises from theorists following their own 'institutional or theoretical agendas' and effectively using fandom to validate their approach and prove particular points (*ibid*). Autoethnography is one of the methods suggested in *Fan Cultures* by which multiple fandoms may be studied (2002, pp.81-83). Indeed, it might be the only viable *empirical* method by which the researcher can

completely escape from singular fan culture. For whilst Hills' call for a 'general theory of media fandom' (p.1) is appealing, it is difficult to see how empirical research might set about such an endeavour without resorting in some measure or other to the isolation of a singular fan culture.

What do I mean by this? Hills suggests, in his section on autoethnography, that the researcher/subject should adopt as broad a definition of fandom as possible, that non-media objects and also previous, lapsed or obsolete fan objects should also be included (2002, p.83). This works well for autoethnography not least because the researcher is not actually required to locate her/his subject, by dint of actually *being* her/his own subject. But consider the empirical researcher, trying to locate a 'general' fan subjects for study. How might one find such general fans? Indeed, how might one find a broadly *representative* sample of general fans? Placing requests in magazines or newspapers? Stopping people at random in the street and asking 'are you a fan of anything? Of more than a few things?' Whilst not impossible, I would suggest it would problematise the selection process. One might begin by making appeals for subjects on internet fan sites and forums, but such institutions are usually aligned to a particular object (e.g. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) or a particular genre or tradition (e.g. Vampire movies). Whilst single object fan sites often have 'off-topic' forums and message boards (e.g. the 'mainstream media' forums on the 'Outpost Gallifrey' *Doctor Who* website), which could allow access to general fans, the key point I would make is that these fans tend to be *linked by a singular fan object*. I would suggest that for empirical study, the researcher must at least *start* with a singular fan object, and



then gradually explore outwards from that inception point. Thus, whilst I was convinced of the validity of Hills' point concerning the potential reductivism of study of singular fandoms, I nevertheless used *Doctor Who* fandom as my starting point, and it is this fan object which remains central to the general progression of my account. However, I made a firm decision to make at least some inquiry into the 'other' fan objects which my subjects might embrace.

This still leaves the question of how I selected exactly who were to be my subjects for study. As I have already noted at some length, my intention was to specifically avoid approaching any organized fan society, institution or group. To that end, I decided that my survey sample should be self-selecting, that I should make some kind of open appeal for respondents. I initially thought that an appeal on an internet messageboard, such as the Outpost Gallifrey forum, might represent a means of approaching potential subjects. But concentrating on an online community such as that was possibly edging too close to the organized institutions I was seeking to avoid. I did make inquiries about appealing for respondents on Outpost Gallifrey (as part of a wider selection process) with the administrators of the website, but received no reply. I decided that a variety of appeals in different locations would be likely to reach the widest possible array of potential subjects. Ultimately, these appeals were to take two forms. I distributed questionnaires to several specialist retail outlets<sup>30</sup>, asking the staff either to offer them to particular customers, or to leave them in a place where any interested parties might be able

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<sup>30</sup> The BBC Shop in Epsom, Tenth Planet in Barking, The Who Shop in East Ham and Galaxy 4 in Sheffield.



to take one. The second appeal appeared on the letters page of the official *Doctor Who Magazine*, issue 338, dated 07/01/04. It said:

I am currently conducting a research project into the activities of *Doctor Who* fans, as part of my PhD at Brunel University. I need the assistance of any readers who can spare the time to complete a questionnaire. It inquires into a number of aspects of fandom and should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. If you can help, please e-mail me on [...] or write to me at [...] and I will send you a copy and a pre-paid reply envelope. Thanking you in advance...

Placing an appeal in an organ such as *Doctor Who Magazine* has an undeniable impact on my stated aim to avoid selecting subjects for their association with a particular organized society or community. Whilst arguably not a highly organized institutional community such as that represented by fan clubs and societies, *DWM* nevertheless 'forms around it a constituency of readers, [what Tulloch and Jenkins would call] an "interpretive community" [...]' (McKee, 2001, p.9). As Alan McKee notes, *DWM* is by no means alone in its status as a 'hub of *Doctor Who* fandom' (*ibid*). Drawing on John Hartley's work on television audiences, McKee suggests that *DWM* 'gathers' a 'virtual community' (Hartley, 2000, p.158) and that this community shares 'an identity as a particular kind of *Doctor Who* fan' (McKee, 2001, p.9). He notes that membership of this community

(or 'cultural citizenship', from Hartley [p.163]) is 'quite different from previous forms of belonging in that it is voluntary, non-exclusive', that members also belong to a range of other communities, 'even to other kinds of *Doctor Who* communities' (McKee, 2001, p.9). He then goes on to discuss *DWM* as an 'institution', a 'public site for ongoing discussions about value judgements' (*ibid*).

That *Doctor Who* Magazine's readership constitutes an interpretive community cannot be denied. Where does this place my appeal within my attempt to avoid targeting specific communities in locating my subjects? I would argue that the *DWM* readership community is much less organized and participatory than those represented by fan clubs and even web-based forums and message boards, though these can all be considered interpretive communities too. However, this ultimately represents nothing more than an attempt to justify my decision to go against my intentions. Ultimately, pragmatic concerns of practicality and time limitations strongly informed the decisions I made about how the research was to be conducted.

McKee's identification of *DWM* as a 'hub' of *Doctor Who* fandom highlights precisely the reasons why I chose to make my appeal within its pages. The magazine represents an intersection for the individual fans making up McKee's 'constituency of readers'. The hub is a site that not only facilitates ongoing discussions but also brings together a cross-section of different fan identities, which may be as numerous as the individual readers themselves. The individuals in this constituency might, as I have suggested, be aligned to a number of different institutions, interpretive communities and social networks as fans. McKee notes



that these individuals belong to a whole range of other communities, the majority of which are not fan-based (2001, p.9). He also suggests that the members of the *DWM* interpretive community share an identity as 'a particular kind of *Doctor Who* fan' (*ibid*), but does not identify what 'kind' of fan this might be. I prefer to understand, as I have just stated, that instead the magazine unites a range of different fan identities through its readership. The 'particular kind of *Doctor Who*' fan McKee writes of might actually be no more than 'the kind of *Doctor Who* fan who reads *Doctor Who* magazine'. Indeed, appealing for subjects through *Doctor Who* Magazine offered the opportunity to investigate the types of fan who might comprise its readership demographic. Ultimately though, it was again practical necessity which was the primary motivation for my *DWM* appeal. The appeal was required to reach as broad a range of potential subjects as possible, and with a circulation which numbered over 10,000 readers as of the year 2000 (McKee, 2001, p.8), *Doctor Who* Magazine seemed to offer the best possible saturation.

Making an appeal that invited respondents to self-select and effectively include themselves within the bounds of the term 'fan' undoubtedly has certain implications. My stated intention not to approach specific organized fan groups and societies, perhaps compromised slightly by the appeal to the community represented by *DWM*'s readership, worked on the assumption, stated before, that fans might not necessarily be aligned to such groups and societies. This assumption arose from a number of observations, including the common sense reasoning that fans (indeed people) go about their activities in a huge variety of



different ways, and my own participant observation in fan-life over the last 15 or so years. These observations and first hand experiences of life as a fan who is not aligned with any organized groups or societies have directly informed the entire shape of this project and also the research which preceded it, as I have already acknowledged. It was in formulating the questions for the questionnaire that my 'fan-self' came into play, as I attempted as far as possible to address the questions to specific experiences of fandom and using certain fan terms and language. The project is an attempt to study particular fans in a particular way and thus in many respects is as exclusive as the studies of organized fan communities I have sought to distinguish it from (having set up another of Hills' 'moral dualisms' between my own approach and certain previous ones). It is the potentially unaligned/unorganised nature of the fans this project studies and the actual means of studying them which raises a question which needs to be addressed briefly at this point: to what extent does my research create the phenomena it claims to observe?

The constructionist (and constructivist) position tells us that the socially situated researcher creates, through interaction, the realities where empirical materials are collected and analysed[...]

(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.353)

This question was one of the reasons I had dismissed interviewing as a means of data collection. The questionnaire approach still undoubtedly created the reality, the situation where the empirical materials were studied, but unlike interviewing this approach did not create artificial social situations. The questionnaires were informed by a specific experience of fan life, but I felt that the way in which they were constructed left enough qualitative space for the respondents to articulate their own experiences and even challenge my questioning (as indeed some did). So, in bringing together individual fans into a body of respondents, my research does create an 'artificial' reality of data collection. But this is the case with all such research. For example, ethnographic texts have often been viewed as 'fiction[s...] fashioned out of the researcher's engagement with the world studied [...]' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.203), despite the numerous strategies that exist for establishing validity, such as those outlined by Martyn Hammersley (1990, pp. 57-64). In the case of my own research, the questionnaire appeal invited potential respondents to self-select and so it can be argued that, in some respects, the reality of the data collection was constituted by this act of self-selection. In others, admittedly, it was created by my actions as a researcher working in such a loosely defined field.

Another angle on this situation raised by Holstein and Gubrium in their essay on 'Active Interviewing' (2002) is also relevant to this qualitative questionnaire project. They discuss the two 'communicative contingencies of the active subject behind the respondent'. These were 'the substantive *whats* of the interview enterprise', and the '*hows* of the process'. Holstein and Gubrium note



that in the second of these, the position from which the information is given goes through an ongoing process of development in relation to the interaction between interviewer and subject (2002, pp.119-120). Through this development, respondents 'not only offer substantive thoughts and feelings pertinent to the topic under consideration, but simultaneously and continuously monitor who they are in relation to the person questioning them' (p.120). The respondents in the case of my questionnaire submitted to the research by self-identifying as 'fan' in response to an appeal which specifically identified the researcher as *both* fan and academic. The questions they were posed asked them to give accounts of specific fan investments and activities. The distancing mechanism of the questionnaire itself allowed me no direct control over the way in which the respondents answered those questions. If, as Holstein and Gubrium assert, the respondents 'worked at' how the interview (or questioning in this case) 'unfolded' (*ibid*), and monitored their performance of identity in relation to both my expectations and my stated identities, then this must be taken into careful consideration in the interpretation of the data.

Matt Hills raises a related issue through his critique of fan-ethnographies in chapter three of *Fan Cultures*. He cautions against the 'recurring problems' of previous ethnographic accounts, in particular the possibility that fan talk might be accepted 'at face value' rather than being interpreted and analysed as a form of justification or 'defence mechanism' against 'external hostility' (2002, p.66). He goes on to suggest that fans may have access to a 'relatively stable discursive resource which is circulated within niche media and fanzines' which he terms a '*discursive mantra*' (p.67, italics in original). This discursive mantra is 'used (by way of communal



rationalization) to ward off the sense that the fan is irrational' (*ibid*). Merely 'asking the audience' would result in these mantras being 'accepted at face value' rather than uncovering their discursive nature as defences against charges of irrationality (*ibid*). This highlights an ongoing tension within the ethnographic method, between allowing research subjects to articulate their own experiences and interpreting their responses. These issues are addressed in greater depth in chapter four of this thesis.

The questionnaire was distributed and returned between December 2003 and March 2004, to a self-selected sample of fifty respondents. Sixteen of these respondents agreed to the possibility of further research, and a follow-up questionnaire (informed by the responses to the first questionnaire and designed chiefly to explore certain issues in more detail) was distributed in January 2005. However the limited distribution of the follow-up questionnaire prompted a decision to discount it from the account given in this thesis. Analysis of the data from the primary questionnaire came around the same time as I became fully aware of the shift in focus of my research project. Whether the data was coincidental or causal in relation to this shift is still largely unclear. What did become clear was that my project was now only of tangential relevance to the issue of the textual gamekeeper fans. The questionnaires had ultimately asked very few questions about the relationship between the respondents and the 'fan-producers'. The reason for this was very simple. In the process of developing and designing the questionnaires I had identified five particular areas of inquiry which I felt warranted

investigation (modes of engagement such as consumption, participation and knowledge, and the issues of definition and justification), and so made these the object of the questionnaire. The research project widened its focus, largely moving away from a test of the assumptions of the MPhil. In analysis, it became apparent that what united the modes of engagement (mentioned above) examined by the questionnaire was that they all represented *forms of investment*.

Put at its simplest, 'investment' references the differences that are made according to how much people care about their participation or involvement in a leisure activity. High investment, in our research, associated with greater and more detailed preparation for the activity, with a more concentrated but selective manner of attending and participating, and with a greater capacity for disappointment. Low investment, on the other hand, is associated with less focused and less retentive ways of participating.

(Barker & Brooks, 1998a, p.229)

In the essay 'On looking into Bourdieu's black box' (1998b), Martin Barker and Kate Brooks examine the 'ideals against which people measure their possible pleasures' (p.224), which they see as being 'the outcome of dense historical and social processes' (p.225). These ideals were observed during the audience research detailed in *Knowing Audiences: Judge Dredd, its Friends, Fans and Foes*



(Barker & Brooks, 1998a), the core of which was 'an attempt to separate and identify, and then model in detail the specific ideals' (1998b, p.223). In orienting themselves to specific ideals, individuals choose 'the extent to which they will participate in forms and fields of their culture' (p.225). The process of committing to a specific orientation is termed 'investment' by Barker and Brooks, a concept 'intended to summarize all the ways in which audiences demonstrate strength and depth of involvement to a social ideal of cinema' (*ibid*). The investments made in a particular situation, both individually and collectively, act alongside personal history and 'class situation' to determine a particular orientation (p.229).

Barker and Brooks note that their research evidenced a strong linkage between the depth of investment and the 'singularity of preferred ideal' amongst viewers of the film *Judge Dredd* (p.225). Low investors, they suggest, 'will happily mix modes of orientation', whilst those with higher investments in the film 'will tend to adhere closely to a single and consistent orientation' (*ibid*). The orientations in question in this specific instance are the six orientations to *Judge Dredd* (or 'SPACES' – 'Sites for the Production of Active Cinematic Experience') proposed in chapter 6 of *Knowing Audiences* (Barker & Brooks, 1998a, pp.154-178). Whilst Barker and Brooks' model of investment and orientation is specifically related to the cinematic audience of the film *Judge Dredd*<sup>31</sup>, their suggestions regarding the relationship between depth of investment and orientation seemed to be significant to the way my questionnaire data broke down. Close and consistent commitment to a specific orientation, which fandom effectively represents, would correspond

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<sup>31</sup> Though the SPACE model is designed to be flexible and (presumably) adapt to other films (Barker & Brooks, 1998a, pp.178-179).



with high investment in the fan object, according to Barker & Brooks' reasoning. The obvious question which arises here is what kind of investment Barker & Brooks mean.

Barker and Brooks put their emphasis on 'participation and involvement in a leisure activity' when defining investment (1998b, p.229). This works well within their focus on cinemagoing, but in order to examine a *conglomeration* of activities (both interrelated and distinct) such as those available to fans, it is necessary to distinguish between different forms of investment. The data from my respondents allows such a distinction to be made. My empirical project facilitates an investigation into three 'dimesions' or types of investment engaged in by my respondents. These are *financial* investment, *participatory* investment and investment in the idea of *authenticity*.

Analysis of my data under these three modes allows an assessment of the depth of the investments made by the respondents. For instance how might the assertion made by Barker & Brooks that those with committed adherence to single orientations will be likely to make high investments play out in such an analysis? By the reasoning involved in such an assertion we might assume that *all* fans will be consistently high investors – but will this be the case? Might depth of investment vary across different dimensions, or are high investors consistent in their investments? In addition to this, my questionnaire also made a preliminary inquiry into the 'other' fan objects and orientations of my respondents. Whilst there is only a limited amount of data from the questionnaires to support this line of inquiry, it might be possible to investigate an inference which can be drawn from

the argument of Barker & Brooks, that those with multiple fan orientations will make relatively 'low' investments in each.

My results strongly suggest that there exist multiple and complex investment positions which individuals may adopt within a single orientation such as a particular 'fandom'. These investment positions intersect a whole range of individual and social activities, in both organised and 'unorganised' spheres, but are broadly quantifiable in terms of the three distinct modes outlined above. By no means am I suggesting that these are the *only* three modes of investment. Far from it, there may actually be many more. Alternately, it might be possible to break down these three fairly broad modes into a range of subcategories. However the remit of this project dictates that I focus on the data which exists, rather than speculating over phenomena which remain untested and unobserved. Additionally, I have stated quite explicitly that my project represents an attempt to remain 'true' to the accounts of my respondents as far as is feasible, and to allow space for the possibility of contradiction which may exist in fan-life to be expressed and acknowledged.

The questionnaire respondents have written with both passion and sensitivity about the investments they make. Whilst the tripartite organization of the modes of investment represents to some extent an artificial structure imposed by me the academic (as did the organization of the questionnaire itself), it nevertheless remains flexible enough to allow the respondents to express their own terms and also (and this is key) to allow any potential contradictions or difficulties to be confronted (and not 'smoothed over'). Barker and Brooks (1998b)



mention the problem of 'blindness to materials and data which are awkward, and resist the approach being favoured', suggesting that this is a consequence of the 'theory-drivenness of audience research' (p.222). Dedication to favoured theoretical ideas for discussing audiences may conceivably lead to the dismissal or rationalization of empirical materials and data which do not fit those ideas. At the very least, note Barker and Brooks, these contradictory data are turned into 'defeating puzzles' (*ibid*). My research is neither 'theory driven' nor is it concerned with constructing conceptually neat models, or schemas where everything fits perfectly. Thus, my account represents a concerted effort to resist 'blindness to awkwardness' and rationalization of contradictions. Data which is awkward, contradictory and messy will arguably support more complex investigation into fan investments, and so will be foregrounded rather than obscured.

There remains the question of exactly what form the framework which my account of fan investment should adopt. I had at one point, before settling on investment specifically, considered testing my data to see if it would support the development of a *typology* of fans. However I concluded that this might constitute a potentially reductive approach, creating a set of overly simplified fan-types which would close down the whole notion of contradiction and plurality. As the data is *suggestive* rather than definitive, I felt that any schema which emerged from it should also aim to be suggestive and not definitive. Investment represented an approach through which the potential for contradiction and plurality might remain open and also through which the individual voices of the accounts given by my respondents might be retained. Nevertheless, I felt it was important that some



degree of structure was introduced and so I turned to some of the previous empirical accounts of fandom to examine how they had structured their schema.

Henry Jenkins' account of fandom in *Textual Poachers* (1992) provides 'a conception of fandom that encompasses at least five levels of activity [...]' (p.277). The levels are as follows: fandom as 'a particular mode of reception' (which may be translated 'into social interaction with other fans'); fandom as critical/interpretive practice (through which fan critics move 'toward the construction of a meta-text that is larger, richer, more complex and interesting than the original series [...This] meta-text is a collaborative enterprise'); fandom as 'a base for consumer activism' ('from which fans may speak about their cultural preferences and assert their desires for alternative developments'); fandom as a site for 'particular forms of cultural production, aesthetic traditions and practices' (where fan artists use materials from the 'commercial culture' to create a 'contemporary folk culture', 'challenge the media industry's claims to hold copyrights on popular narratives' and where the 'line between artists and consumers' is blurred); and fandom as 'an alternative social community' (which finds the 'utopian dimension within popular culture a site for constructing an alternative culture' that is 'responsive to the needs that draw its members to commercial entertainment, most especially the desire for affiliation, friendship, community') (1992, pp. 277-282).

The relationships between these five levels of fandom are left tantalizingly unexplored. Whilst they are identified specifically as 'levels', Jenkins does not address the fact that such a conceptualization implies some form of hierarchy. Are the levels progressive? That does not appear to be the case. They are not levels

which a fan ascends, or which represent incremental rises in activity. Individuals are likely to occupy multiple levels simultaneously, and participate to varying degrees in each. It would seem, from Jenkins' emphasis on participation and social interaction, that the first four levels would be constituted within the overarching community described by the fifth. And so Jenkins' conception of fandom with its levels does enable him to 'show the complexity and diversity of fandom as a *subcultural community*' (1992, p.277, italics mine). There exists the possibility that fans can be affiliated with a range of subcultural communities, and that multiple communities may occupy each of the levels proposed by Jenkins. The concept of investment moves away somewhat from the potential limitations which might arise from an account of fandom which focuses so closely on fandom's constitution as a 'subcultural community'.

Another account which focuses on fandom as a subcultural community is found in an essay by Andrea MacDonald (1998). MacDonald examines the operation of 'social hierarchies' in fandom, working from empirical research into an online fan community centred on the television series *Quantum Leap* (p.132). She suggests that previous fan theorists have dismissed the possibility that fandom might exhibit 'hierarchies of social power' and that fandom itself does not recognize them due to a 'social construction of fandom' which embodies 'notions of equality, tolerance and community' and which arises from fandom's view of itself as being 'antithetical to "mundane" social norms' (p.136). MacDonald's own research does not support this dismissal of social hierarchies (p.132). Her account is based on the observation of social hierarchies in operation in the fan group she studied.



These hierarchies, she suggests, 'exist along multiple dimensions' and break down into five distinct categories: hierarchy of knowledge ('a fan's position within a specific fan community [...] is determined by the amount of knowledge that person has about the fictional universe'); hierarchy of fandom level, or quality (which 'separates fans by amount of participation – those who attend conventions and other organized events versus those who do not'); hierarchy of access (institutional access to actors and production personnel); hierarchy of leaders (the 'pecking order' within social groups); and hierarchy of venue (dependant on who organizes and hosts fan activities and events) (pp.136-138).

Crucially, MacDonald insists that 'fans may occupy *multiple positions simultaneously*, and thus fans' positions within fandom are determined by their position within all possible hierarchies' (p.138, italics mine). The acknowledgement that fans can occupy different positions is an important one, but it is then effectively undermined by MacDonald's implication that fans have an ultimate and definite *overall* position 'within fandom'. Who decides this 'master' position? MacDonald suggests that exactly *who* constitutes an 'authority' in fandom is determined by the community, dependant on their position in the hierarchies (p.139). This might well be the case in the specific instance of MacDonald's research into a particular group of organized fans. But the idea that fans have an 'overall position *within* fandom' only works for highly organized and hierarchical *institutionalized* fandoms, and even then works to close down the possibility of contradiction. Nevertheless, the schema of hierarchies outlined by MacDonald avoids the reductive problems of



typology and allows individuals to be located on multiple (and potentially contradictory) spectrums.

The work of Cheryl Harris with the group Viewers for Quality Television offers a useful reconceptualization of fandom as 'a spectrum of practices engaged in to develop a sense of personal control or influence over the object of fandom' (1998, p.42). These practices are engaged in as a 'response to subordinated social status' and as a means of 'empowerment in the face of a fragmented and anomic society' (*ibid*). VQT is an institutionalized network of (mainly female) US TV viewers and would seem to be as much a pressure group as a fan group. Their activities revolve around the production and distribution of newsletters and critical discourse, and are motivated by a 'collectively defined notion of quality television', where 'quality' can be broadly understood in terms of 'emotional realism' (p.47). The primary pleasure offered by VQT is described as being 'the promise of being able to assert one's cultural preferences within the framework of a national culture industry', and Harris suggests that this might be the case for 'all fan groups' (p.48). Through a research project encompassing focus groups, social surveys, interviews and textual analysis, conducted over several years (p.49), Harris observed different levels of participation in the activities of VQT members (p.48). The level of participation was affected by 'several underlying variables' and so fandom 'should properly be conceived as existing on a continuum. *It is not a unified concept*' (*ibid*, italics in original). For this reason;

Speaking of fans, even the same group of fans, as homogenous is almost certainly incorrect. They are probably distinct from other fans in special ways due to the object of their fandom; yet they are similar and differentiated from each other within the same group due to the degree of immersion in fan practices

(p.49)

The extent to which individual fans are involved in a range of fan activities seems, Harris suggests, firmly connected to 'an achieved sense of control over the object of [the individual fan's] fandom' and that this is 'arguably perhaps the point of fandom itself and its ultimate pleasure'. She found a wide variety of 'degrees of involvement in fan practices' which were related to different outcomes. The most important of these is the 'sense of control' mentioned above, which works regardless of whether or not the fan successfully influences or controls the object (pp.49-51). Harris proposes that there is a 'spectrum' of fan activities centred upon a particular fan object or orientation. According to her model, the more involved an individual fan is in a particular 'spectrum of fan activities', the more likely the individual is to feel that s/he is able to influence television, regardless of the truth of this assumption (p. 51). This sense of influence is associated with 'how much one enjoys television as opposed to it being a source of negative emotions such as guilt, fear or depression'. Thus the sense of influence becomes, Harris suggests, 'the root of power for fans', being 'intrinsic to the maintenance of fan social identities' (pp.51-52).



Whilst my own project is less concerned with resistant notions of individual and mass culture, the central device of fan activity occupying a spectrum proposed by Harris offers much potential as a framework for my account of fan investment. The remainder of this thesis works to develop a new schema for the consideration of the ways in which fans invest. This schema arises as a direct result of the data provided by my empirical research and by the subsequent analysis of that data. A spectrum of investment, ostensibly running between 'low' and 'high' extremes, allows for individuals to be located in terms of their own investment positions. The absence of a typological breakdown or rigidly defined integers on this spectrum actively works against closing down the potential for contradiction. But analysis of the data clearly indicates that investment is a great deal more complex than something which can be understood in terms of a single spectrum. Previous discussion of investment of this nature (e.g. Barker and Brooks, 1995) has worked to the assumption that investment might be a single 'quality', or at least unite a range of activities under one 'banner'. Separating out distinct modes of investment into individual investment spectrums (four will be proposed here) allows a much more specific examination of the ways in which individuals invest in a particular 'orientation' than has been attempted in earlier research. It allows what is perhaps the key overall finding of this thesis to be played out in full – namely that individuals invest at different levels and in different ways throughout different contexts and dimensions of investment. As we shall see, even within a particular spectrum, investment is influenced and determined by a range of contextual factors. Separating out the dimensions of investment over the various chapters which



follow allows for correlation and comparison of the data from each spectrum. Of course, it must be born in mind that these spectrums may only be fragmentary. They will not be neat, even or even complete in any real sense.

There remains, however, another area of inquiry from the questionnaire which I feel it is important to explore. The issue of definition has an important bearing on the spectrums themselves and must be examined in this context. And so before introducing the spectrums of investment, the first chapter of this thesis looks at the definitions of fandom which my respondents gave and also where they located their own fan-identity in relation to their individual definition.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **'Who writes the script'**

I have an expression about life – 'Who writes the script.' And 'Who' certainly seems to be writing ours. And vice versa.

(4.3, 111)<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the two most important questions I asked my respondents, at least in terms of allowing them sufficient qualitative space to express their own 'terms', were 'what is your definition of "fan"?' and 'why are you a fan of *Doctor Who*?'. Whilst the responses to the latter are dealt with in chapter five, this chapter details the range of responses to the first of these questions. Indeed, the responses largely *write the script* for this chapter, as they rightfully should do in such an account. The question 'what is your definition of "fan"?' allowed the respondents not only the opportunity to define what the term meant to them but also the potential to locate themselves in relation to that definition (the subsequent question asking them if they considered themselves to 'fit' their own definition), and also further opportunities to develop their definitions and the related account of their fan experiences (questions 2.4 and 4.3). All but two of the respondents define themselves as fitting their own definition. What will become clear is that there is no

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<sup>32</sup> As some respondents expressed a wish for their accounts to remain anonymous. I thought it would be best to simply identify all respondents by their 'case identification' coding, and not by name.

one clear consensus of definition in the accounts of my respondents and that the ways in which my respondents define both themselves and others are shifting and contradictory rather than fixed and definitive. That is not to say that there is no rhyme or reason to the process in operation here. The definitions are complex certainly, but they are not chaotic. The key point I wish to make in this chapter is that they are *context specific*, and that many of the contradictions arise from the differences and 'gaps' between particular contexts.

The definition exercise is in part bound up in each individual's conception of self- and social identity. Before moving on to discuss the accounts offered by my questionnaire respondents, some brief discussion of identity and processes such as *self-categorization* is necessary. Whilst this thesis does not approach its subject from a social psychology perspective, certain ideas and theories from this field are relevant to the analysis. Derek Layder notes that the self is both *social* and *psychological* in nature ('but neither exclusively') and that it is flexible, evolving and 'manifest[ing] itself in different (and sometimes contradictory) guises' (2004, pp.7-8). The fact that our lives are grounded in both psychological and social reality is reflected in Layder's concept of the 'duality of separateness and relatedness' (1997), where the self is caught in a tension:

between a life 'apart' from others and being involved with and dependent (although not over-dependent) on others. It is difficult for us as individuals to come to a satisfactory resolution to this problem, since every time we express a desire to be alone, or to



have some space of our own, we are automatically rejecting the idea of togetherness and involvement. Conversely, when we commit to others, in some part, we surrender our autonomy and independence

(2004, p.10)

We interact with others at different levels and in different contexts and to this end, Layder suggests, 'the self is many-sided' and we have several 'sub selves' or personalities which all play roles in representing us at different times in different circumstances (p.15). These different selves reflect the different 'scripts, narratives or storylines' that we live and have lived. They are 'self constructs chosen from a cultural array and shaped by [ourselves]'. We monitor these selves depending on the context or circumstances we find ourselves in and regularly revise our sub-selves, which are more easily changed than the core aspects of ourselves (pp.16-17). Indeed, I have already suggested that the respondents are likely to be monitoring their self-definition in relation to their perceptions of the specific context of the research process and my own agenda as a researcher (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p.120). The construction, monitoring, revision and performance of self arises in part, Layder suggests, from a 'desire to feel we are "normal", that we fit in and are accepted by others' and from the converse desire not to appear odd or anti-social to others. Even eccentrics who 'cultivate personal idiosyncrasies in order to attract attention' are pursuing acceptance (perhaps by a smaller selection of people) and seek to avoid being 'regarded as complete social outcasts' (2004,

p.40). Ultimately, personal identity is 'forged at the intersection between two distinct but overlapping universes or realities, that of individuals (psychological reality) and that of society, or social reality', realities which are 'interdependent' but which still retain their own 'distinct characteristics' (p.87).

Oakes, Haslam and Turner (1994) discuss such an overlap in the introduction to their account of stereotyping and social identity. '[C]ognition', they propose, 'both mediates and *is mediated by* individuals' group memberships and social relationships' (p.9, italics in original). The processes through which individuals perceive both their own identities and those of other individuals and social groups are '*social psychological*' due both to the fact that they 'involve the processing of information about people' and that they are 'the psychological products of an interaction between mind and society' (*ibid*, italics in original). The account of Oakes *et al* is focused on the phenomenon of stereotyping, and will in this respect become relevant to the responses analysed here later in this chapter. However, their account is also useful beyond this specific phenomenon, offering an examination of the relationship between personal and social identity, as does the account of Deschamps and Devos (1998). Here the work of the 'Bristol School' is considered, in terms of the studies which emphasise 'the link between social identity and personal identity' (1998, p.4). The environment is organised into either categories of people, objects and events, or categories of the characteristics of these people, objects and events, according to their similarities, intentions or behaviour (*ibid*, working from Tajfel [1972, p. 272]). This is achieved through a psychological process of *categorization*. A significant effect of this process is that it



emphasises both the differences between distinct categories and similarities which exist within one particular category (a category being seen as 'a group of elements which have in common one or several features'). This in turn 'simplifies the perception of physical and social worlds and the way the individual organises the subjective perception of his or her environment' (*ibid*). Social categorization also works on the implication that subjects themselves exist within a 'system of categories' and simultaneously constitute both subjects and objects of categorization (*ibid*). If the view is held that it is only possible for individuals to belong to one category then 'they end up having a discriminating attitude towards the members of the other categories' (1998, p.5):

much of what happens to us is related to the activities of groups to which we do or do not belong; and the changing relations between these groups require constant readjustments of our understanding of what happens and constant causal attributions about the why and the how of the changing conditions of our life.

(Tajfel, 1969, p.81)

Tajfel (1969, 1972, 1978) explores the relationship between personal and social identity (Oakes, Haslam and Turner, 1994; Deschamps and Devos, 1998). For him, social identity is understood as having a connection to an individual's sense of understanding that s/he belongs to particular social groups and to 'the



emotional and evaluative signification' resulting from it (Deschamps and Devos, 1998, p.5). Members of particular social groups might establish distinctions between the group to which they are aligned and other groups, and this distinction provides '*ipso facto* an identity for their own group' (Tajfel, 1972, pp.39-40). By belonging to different groups, Tajfel suggests, 'individuals acquire a social identity defining their specific positions in a society' (*ibid*). This works by comparing the characteristics of the group to which an individual belongs to those of other groups. The differences established in comparisons between groups by individuals often favour the group to which the particular individuals belong (Deschamps and Devos, 1998, p.5). Social categorization then 'provides a system of orientation for *self-reference*, creating and defining the individual's place in society' (Oakes *et al*, 1994, pp. 81-82). Social identity theory assumes that human beings desire a '*positive social identity*' (1994, p.82, italics in original). As group membership is assigned value through a process of comparison between relevant groups, '*positive social identity* is achieved through the establishment of *positive distinctiveness* of the ingroup from any relevant outgroups' (*ibid*, italics in original).

Oakes *et al* and Deschamps and Devos both then move their accounts on to examine the shift in social identity theory away from Tajfel's idea that social identity reflects group affiliation and towards Turner's suggestion 'that social identity comprised social categorizations of the self which *caused* group phenomena' (Oakes *et al*, 1994, p.93, italics in original), an idea which appears to place the individual ahead of the group in terms of social identity. It was in this

context that Turner (1987) developed his 'self categorization theory' (Oakes *et al*, 1994, p.94; Deschamps and Devos, 1998, p.7), which proposed that :

the group is a distinctive psychological process, but in doing so [the theory] reminds us that group functioning is a part of the psychology of the person – that individual and group must be reintegrated psychologically before there can be an adequate analysis of either

(Turner and Oakes, 1989, p.278)

Beginning with the assumption that 'self-conception reflects *self-categorization*' (Oakes *et al*, 1994, p. 95, italics in original), Turner's theory seeks to explain the opposition between psychological and social aspects of identity by outlining three distinct levels in self definition (Deschamps and Devos, 1998, p.7), the three 'levels of abstraction' (Oakes *et al*, 1994, p.95). The example given by Oakes *et al* to illustrate different levels of abstraction is the distinction between the identities of 'Scientist' and 'Biologist' (*ibid*). For our purposes this could just as easily be demonstrated by 'Sci-Fi fan' versus '*Doctor Who* fan'. The three levels of abstraction which Turner proposes are as follows: the *Interpersonal* (or subordinate) level, where the self is defined as an individual and differentiation is made between the self and other ingroup members; the *Intergroup* (or intermediate) level, where self is defined as a group member and differentiation is made and similarities drawn between outgroups and ingroup members



respectively; and the *Interspecies* (or supra-order) level, where the self is defined as a member of the human race, differentiated from other species (Oakes *et al*, 1994, p. 95; Deschamps and Devos, 1998, p. 7).

These levels are not defined by specific attributes but by the level at which people are being compared or categorized, and so are dependent on the *context* in which they operate (Oakes *et al*, 1994, p.95). And when an individual locates her/himself in a particular level of categorization then they 'obviously have to occlude the other two levels' (Deschamps and Devos, 1998, p.7). Deschamps and Devos, having observed the difficulty in removing the opposition between the individual and the collective as 'two poles which depend on each other negatively' which previous studies (such as those made by Turner) have suggested, then attempt to move beyond this opposition. They note that the categorization model, social identity theory and self categorization theory have all identified a tendency:

to consider one's own group as relatively less homogenous than a group one does not belong to (or the fact that a group tends to be considered more heterogeneous by its own members and not so by individuals who are not part of it) [which] has been called the 'outgroup homogeneity effect'

(Deschamps and Devos, 1998, p.8)

Studies carried out by Deschamps (amongst others) in the 1970s proposed that it should not be assumed that emphasis on ingroup similarities will automatically lead



to emphasis on outgroup difference, indicating that (for example) the division of individuals into two different groups could 'cause discrimination between groups in favour of one's own group' and also 'engender differentiation between the self and the rest of one's group'. In particular conditions, differentiation between self and others from the outgroup(s) might become less significant than differentiation between the self and the rest of the ingroup 'when belonging to a group and dichotomy in groups are significant criteria in defining a situation' (1998, pp.8-9). Such observations led Deschamps and Devos to develop a new perspective, which they termed 'the intergroup and in-group covariation'. They argue that, rather than viewing 'interindividual and intergroup differences' as two ends of a spectrum (and thus mutually exclusive, at least in part), it should be assumed that 'the stronger the identification with the group, the more important is interindividual differentiation within the group' ('in *certain conditions*') (*ibid*, italics mine), an argument which is underlined by Codol's (1975) theory of 'superior conformity of the self'.

Codol proposed that an increase in an individual's conformity to the standards of (and identification with) a particular group will correspond with an increase in that individual's differentiation from the other members of that particular group, 'believing that she [sic] corresponds to the standards better than the others' (Deschamps and Devos, 1998, p.9). Deschamps and Devos then go on to outline the 'central concept' of their 'interindividual and intergroup differentiation model' as follows:

A general process of cognitive centrism appears when individuals are induced with the representation of a dichotomized world, divided into two mutually exclusive categories. According to this representation, both ingroup favouritism or intergroup differentiation (which can be called sociocentrism) and autofavouritism or differentiation between self and others (which can be called egocentrism) would increase when categorization is emphasized

*(ibid)*

Deschamps and Devos offer an account of empirical tests of this model (pp.10-11), concluding that such studies 'underline the relevance of the simultaneous variation of differentiation between groups and between self and other' (p.11). However, they argue that it should not be assumed that 'under certain circumstances there is an opposition between personal identity and social identity'. Whilst 'relationships between the individual and the collective' might be analysed according to particular situational, cultural and societal contexts, 'one must at least consider the possibility of simultaneity between similarity and difference'. For this reason, 'similarity and difference, social identity and personal identity must no longer be considered as two poles of the same continuum which are negatively dependent'. Instead the different elements should be understood as 'two disconnected dimensions', which might be 'orthogonalized' in one way or another, intersected at an angle with each other (p.11).



Oakes *et al* reach a similar conclusion in their account of categorization and social identity theory. They reject the possibility of opposing unreal categorized groups with real, uncategorized individuals, arguing that instead of identifying one level of perception as 'more real' than another, we should do 'both or either when appropriate'. They suggest that what people actually do is 'define people as individuals in one context and groups in another. There is context-dependent variation in levels of categorization' (1994, p.189). The purpose of categorization, according to Oakes *et al*, is one of uniting 'stored knowledge and current input in a form which both makes sense of the world and facilitates our goals within it'. The 'goal- and context-dependence' of such a process, that it functions on different selective levels of abstraction and in selective dimensions, is what affords the possibility of 'perceptual selectivity' (p.125). This psychological process of definition and categorization, relative to the self, is 'flexible rather than rigid' as it is dependent upon and determined by 'social comparisons *that are specific to a particular setting*' (p.142, italics mine)

The definition exercise which encompasses questions 2.1, 2.2, 2.4 and 4.3 in the questionnaire, and which forms the main body of the account related in this chapter, effectively invites the respondents to engage in processes of both social- and self-classification. At different points (in different contexts or *particular settings*) of the development of their self-account, respondents discuss their own identities in relation to both individual and social conceptions. As Oakes *et al* have suggested, the respondents tended to define people (including themselves) as

'individuals in one context and groups in another' (1994, p.189). However, as we shall see, these contexts do not appear to be fixed or definitive, and there is much potential for contradiction and plurality. Additionally it is possible here to observe the concept of 'interindividual and intergroup covariation', modelled by Deschamps and Devos (1998), in operation. As Cheryl Harris suggests, there are likely to be just as many distinctions drawn between individual or groups of fans aligned to a specific fan object as there are between fans of different objects (1998, p.49), or wider, between fans and 'regular' viewers<sup>33</sup>. Indeed, a significant number of respondents drew very definite distinctions between fans and viewers, and this seems the most apposite point to begin this account. Returning briefly to the response which opened the introductory chapter of this thesis:

If you were to plot a spectrum for viewers of TV programmes at the far end of the spectrum would be a fan – the other end being total dislike. A fan is someone who's [sic] enjoyment is so great that they desire more interaction with the programme than simply viewing it when it is on T.V. Indicitive [sic] behaviour might then be visiting websites, buying merchandise, writing fiction, a desire to learn about it's [sic] making, a desire to meet like minded people.

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<sup>33</sup> This is a potentially difficult term as I have already noted. Perhaps carelessly, I used it in question 2.4 in the original questionnaire but then allowed space for qualification, suggesting it might remain unclear exactly what the distinction between 'fan' and 'regular' might be. The question allowed space for the respondents to mobilise their own distinctions and terms. However, the distinction arose independently in the responses to the earlier question 2.1. I use it here, but with this important qualification.



Here the fan is placed at the far end of a spectrum of potential viewing positions running from 'total dislike' (which would presumably involve 'not viewing'). The spectrum proposed by 110 represents a relatively straightforward ascending scale of enjoyment, but it is one which seems to suggest that there is an interactive dimension to watching TV (similar to that acknowledged by Virginia Nightingale [1996, pp.145-146]). This respondent is not dismissing casual viewers as passive dupes, and yet there is a distinction observed between 'simply' watching TV and the excess enjoyment which provokes the 'desire for more interaction' in the fan. The word 'simply' is deployed here in a manner which clearly emphasises its negative connotations. The increased interaction between fan and object can be observed and may be quantified through the investments listed at the end of the extract. In such a definition, it is these investments which mark out the difference between a fan and someone who 'simply watches TV'. A number of other respondents give broadly similar definitions which adopt an equally dismissive tone when discussing the activities of the casual viewer:

It is exactly what the name means – a “fanatic”. Someone who does not merely watch the programme, but takes an active interest in it. This could take the form of simply collecting videos or other merchandise, or take a creative role (i.e. writing fiction, drawing pictures, making short films etc).

(2.1, 092)

Fan, to me, is someone who doesn't just "watch" the TV series when it's on, it's someone who gets involved with the whole universe of it, collects the merchandise regularly and regularly chats about it with like minded people.

(2.1, 081)

A fan is a person who has an attachment to a particular thing, which is a constant source of enjoyment and inspiration. So much so that they may wish to pursue it to greater degrees than a person who merely enjoys it once over.

(2.1, 088)

The distinction, I think, revolves around the pro-active nature of being a fan. A fan buys things, visits places, interacts with others, creates, as opposed to a viewer who simply "leans back" and is entertained. Maybe fans "lean forward"!

(2.4, 110)

[A] "fan" is more than just someone who watches the show and enjoys it. A fan is someone who attends conventions, buys the merchandise, follows the news, and overall connects with the



show in some inexplicable way on a personal level. I'm not sure  
I can articulate it better than this...

(2.1, 086)

Someone who has more than a passing interest in something.  
They will invest both time and money and will go out of their way  
to enjoy their chosen subject.

(2.1, 038)

Someone who has more involvement than a transient interest.  
i.e. won't just enjoy something "in the moment" but actively  
seeks out more information, re-watches, etc.

(2.1, 105)

Almost every one of these responses makes use of terms such as 'merely' or 'simply' in order to dismiss the viewing activities and pleasures of the casual viewer in comparison with that attributed to the fan. In one way or another, responses such as these set up an oppositional relationship between 'fan' and 'viewer'. Broadly, fans are constituted as an ingroup that is more differentiated (or in some way more sophisticated) than the 'regular viewer' outgroups. Fans are seen as *pro-active*, they 'get involved with the whole universe' of their particular fan object. Their (possibly inexplicable) *attachment* or *connection* with the object is the motivation for this pro-active involvement, which takes (broadly) *consumptive*

(collecting merchandise) and *productive* (personal interaction, writing fiction) forms. The 'viewer', on the other hand, merely *enjoys watching*, 'leaning back' to be entertained. This enjoyment is transitory, existing only in the moment. When this moment of interaction has concluded (i.e. the episode ends) the viewer 'moves on to the next instalment' because '[t]hey are less interested in the detail' (2.4, 071).

Matt Hills challenges Henry Jenkins for splitting 'fans and non-fans' into "good" and "bad" subjectivities (thereby creating a moral dualism to support his own academic agenda), and suggests that if fandom is to be 'represented on its own terms' then it cannot be split into a moral dualism (2002, pp.8-9). And yet here we have fans themselves, in the very act of defining on their 'own terms', dividing fans and viewers into different types of subjectivity. There is of course a possibility that academic accounts such as that of Jenkins have influenced the definitions given by the respondents, but we cannot assume this without an evidential basis. In the responses detailed above, however, there is not the same sense of "good" and "bad" subjectivities as those which characterize the moral dualisms operating in *Textual Poachers*. These particular respondents are not distinguishing between themselves as fans and viewers as 'non-fans' in terms of a perceived hostility from the viewer toward the fan. We shall soon see however that anxiety over ridicule and prejudice from those external to the fan experience was prevalent in the accounts given by other respondents. Neither are the respondents here making an explicit distinction between themselves as 'producers' and regular viewers as 'consumers' (another moral dualism in operation throughout *Textual Poachers*



[Hills, 2002, p.30], and which has arguably pervaded much writing on fans and fandom).

And yet a clear distinction is made between the 'passing interest' of the casual viewer (2.4, 071) and the 'greater degrees' of interest and attachment of the fan. These respondents have broadly similar notions of what regular viewers actually *do* with television programmes and write of this in a dismissive manner. Regular viewers '*just watch the show*' (2.4, 078, italics mine; 086, 110, 088, 081 and 092 also make the same claim). They take enjoyment from it, but this is a different type of enjoyment from that taken by fans. Fan enjoyment might require 'active interest'. At no point is the pleasure of the regular viewer explicitly stated to be passive in nature, but the implication is present in several of the responses, not least the assertion that the viewer 'simply "leans back" and is entertained'. Taken as a group, regular viewers (the *outgroup*) appear to be constituted as much more *homogenous* in terms of their engagement with television. They 'just watch', whilst the fans (the *ingroup*) are perceived as embodying at least the potential to engage with the medium in a wider variety of active and sophisticated ways. The pleasure taken by the regular viewer is then, in some way, *easier* than the pleasure taken by fans. Consider this particular response:

Your affinity with the programme means you already care about it to a greater degree & so will pursue it more thoroughly, in terms of money and time. Consequently you find yourself

becoming annoyed at continuity errors & things like that, that pass casual viewers by, or don't mar their enjoyment

(2.4, 088)

Here, the assumed 'greater degree of caring' that the fan exhibits in comparison with the casual viewer makes a pleasurable experience of the programme more difficult. The casual viewer is assumed to care less about the programme, and so does not possess the requisite knowledge to pick up on continuity errors and other transgressions which may problematize fan pleasure. Either that or their enjoyment is in some way different from that of fans and is consequently not affected by these complications. The idea that fans and regular viewers take different pleasures from TV programmes has had currency through a number of accounts of fandom, and the implications of this are explored elsewhere in this thesis. However the focus at this moment is on the 'effort' which fan pleasure is deemed to require in comparison with regular viewers. The questionnaire specifically asked respondents whether they considered being a fan to require effort. One respondent suggests that 'dressing in costume and attending conventions are essential [...] to his fan experience, concluding that 'a regular viewer *wouldn't bother* doing these things' (2.4, 083, italics mine). So, both the pleasures of watching *Doctor Who*, and the activities which take the fan beyond 'just watching TV', need to be worked at. They require investment of time, money and knowledge. In short, they require effort on the part of the individual. This effort is acknowledged by some respondents in response to a question which enquires



specifically about whether fan activity requires it, but with a number of qualifications:

In a sense, being a “fan” requires more effort, but equally it is not an effort because you actively want to do it.

(2.4, 069, emphasis in original)

[B]eing a fan requires more effort and investment. But when you are a fan of something, the seeking out and hunting down of material inevitably becomes part of the pleasure.

(2.4, 094)

Yes – although this is part of the choice you make when you become more interested. Although it can be strangely annoying that there’s so much material...If money is an object. But if you’re a fan, you do become interested in most things bearing the logo (even if you end up dismissing a lot of it). At the end of the day (and money permitting) you only need to invest time & money on those areas of it that you want to.

(2.4, 105, emphasis in original)

It doesn’t require it. It’s a consequence of being fan, that enthusiasm and desire to learn.

Fan investment is defined in broadly positive terms, contrasted with an apparently negative conception of effort, in the first of these responses. The freedom of choice available to the fan is emphasized both here and by respondent 105, with individuals 'actively wanting' to invest and participate in the programme. By asserting the active nature of the choice to invest, these responses may ward off the possibility that fans may be seen as cultural dupes, perhaps unable to make discerning choices and distinctions in their consumption. Whilst the fan may be drawn to 'most things bearing the logo' she/he will not invest in all these things indiscriminately. Some assessment of the value of these things is made and although the details of this process of judgment are not made clear, much of the merchandise encountered might subsequently be dismissed as being unsuitable to the needs of the individual. This process of 'seeking out and hunting down' material may become a pleasure in itself. Indeed, effort here is contrasted with both choice and pleasure. Fan investment might not actually constitute an effort because fans choose to make these investments and do so on pleasurable terms. Indeed of the many other responses to 2.4 which chose not to go into any qualitative detail, more than eighty percent acknowledged the effort involved in being a fan, and almost all those who answered with more than a simple 'yes' qualified this with the assertion that they made the effort 'by choice' or that it was 'a pleasure'. Choosing to make such investments in *Doctor Who*, and the pleasures



the programme and the investments made might yield, were regarded by certain respondents as appearing strange to those outside the fan experience:

Someone who has an interest in a topic or activity where that interest could be described by a casual observer as obsessive, or unusually intense.

(2.1, 103)

A person who devotes a level of attention to a topic or event, person or concept which the majority of other people consider excessive or unusual.

(2.1, 104)

Fandom is again distinguished from the ways in which regular viewers watch TV, but here the distinction observed is slightly different from that witnessed before. Firstly, it marks fandom out as 'unusual', instead of marking casual viewing out as 'minimal' in terms of the activity required. And secondly, the respondents attempt to adopt the perspectives of those external to fan-experience, 'other people'. It is through this lens that the 'unusual' nature of fan interest is observed, and thus these two definitions arguably act as a means of deflecting precisely the negative characterization of fandom they express. The 'majority' of casual observers would consider fans to be 'obsessive' or 'excessive' but *we insiders know better* is what such responses seem to suggest, if we read between the lines.

The negative conception of fans as obsessive anoraks, geeks and nerds pervades much external discourse on fandom, whether refuted by successive academics eager to reclaim fandom as active, productive and utopian, or recapitulated straight in popular media. It also surfaces in a wide range of the definitions offered and experiences recounted by my questionnaire respondents:

It's a word I don't like – mainly because it conjures up those rather geeky/nerdy images of males who slavishly follow every aspect of the series to the exclusion of all else, spend too much time in their bedrooms, are unable to relate to other people in social situations and don't have girlfriends.

(2.1, 061)

This particular individual is one of only two respondents in the entire survey group who do not recognize themselves as fitting their own definition of 'fan', and the only respondent who makes that denial categorically (the other considered himself to 'almost' fit his definition, 'but not quite' [2.2, 079]). The fact that this individual responded to the questionnaire appeal means that he must in some respect consider himself to be a fan. However, his response to 2.1 gives an indication of how this definition exercise is not straightforward. The definitions given by all the respondents are not organic statements of fact. They are informed by a number of factors. The responses are all, to some degree or other, *tactical*. They form part of the process of monitoring and presenting the self which has



already been discussed. The respondent quoted above makes quite a complex manoeuvre in his definition. He himself does not define fans as being 'geeky/nerdy males' who are unable to function socially and 'don't have girlfriends'. What he does admit is that he dislikes the term because it *conjures up* this image. Whether this is conjured up in his own perception or the perception of those external to fan experience is not specified here, but the response given to the later question 4.3 reveals that this respondent keeps his fandom 'a bit of a secret' due to his concern that others (even 'close family and trusted friends') will 'take the piss'. He also admits that he 'dies of embarrassment' on behalf of fans who engage in the 'geeky/nerdy' activities he describes in his response to 2.1. The definition offered therefore allows the negative characterization of fandom to be outlined and then refuted ('er, no' was the answer to 2.2), whilst also leaving open the possibility that this characterization might still be based on an external and thus not fully 'informed' (*false even*) conceptions of what fan experience entails. This suspensionist position continues in the response to question 4.3, where the respondent acknowledges that '*Dr Who* fans are undoubtedly the victims of stereotyping' but qualifies this with the suggestion that 'some of them don't do themselves any favours' in this respect.

A number of other respondents make active use of negative conceptions of fandom in their accounts, both in response to the definition exercise in question 2.1 and the more broadly qualitative question 4.3. Some respondents draw definite contrasts between what they perceived to be acceptable and unacceptable modes of fandom:

My love of the show is not something I drop into casual conversation as I am not the average fan. Most fans are quite anal, I think, and can come over as “geeks” (for want of a better word). My mates know I’m a fan, but I don’t bleat on about it, or try to force them to like it [...] I buy the magazine and the DVD’s, but I’m not obsessive and let it rule my life, buying everything like some kind of fans. I’m not saying they are wrong, but I’m not that kind of fan. I’m not into conventions or such the like [sic].

(4.3, 097)

This respondent makes a very definite point of differentiating himself from what he sees as being ‘the average fan’, who is characterized as ‘anal’ and ‘obsessive’. Again, the assumed viewpoint of those external to the fan experience is cited – respondent 097 is open about his fandom with friends, but takes care not to ‘come over’ as “geeky” by ‘bleating on about’ *Doctor Who* or attempting to share his interest with them. Distinctions are also drawn between what the respondent views as the undiscerning nature of the average fan and his own investments. Buying *Doctor Who* Magazine and DVDs of the series are acceptable investments (perhaps due to their practical, ‘common sense’ use-values), contrasted with the obsessive investments of the ‘kinds of fans’ who will buy every item of *Doctor Who* ephemera. The possibility that ‘average’ fans might be passive consumers or



cultural dupes is raised again here, with respondent 097 making an active effort to not let his fandom 'rule [his] life'.

However the idea that 'average' fans might exist, that there might be a relatively normative and standardized fan (anal, geeky and obsessive), is somewhat at odds with respondent 097's earlier definition of fans given in response to question 2.1. He suggests that there are 'different degrees to being a fan' and that 'each "fan" loves the show a different amount and lets it play a part of different sizes in their life'. Something quite complex and 'difficult' is going on here then. The respondent gives what are, in effect, two very different definitions of 'fan' in answer to two different questions. There are small qualifications which intersect these different responses (the suggestion that the respondent 'is not saying that [these 'obsessive' fans] are wrong' in what they do, merely different, and in response to 2.1, the suggestion that a keen interest in *Doctor Who* might sometimes go beyond the limits of acceptability), but nevertheless the definitions are broadly oppositional. Why might this be?

The answer, I think, lies in the questions themselves. Question 2.1 requires respondents to describe what they understand the term fan to mean. Question 4.3 on the other hand invites them to describe their experiences of fandom. In the case of respondent 097, it is likely that the definition given in answer to 2.1 is a personal definition. The respondent is likely to be defining 'fan' in terms that best suit his own perceptions of himself (he subsequently answers 'yes' when asked if he fits his own definition). By offering a broad and utopian definition (emphasis is placed on the love of fans for the show and the 'democratic' freedom of choice which

facilitates the degree of interaction with it), the respondent closes down the possibility of negative connotations. Later, in response to 4.3, a negative conception of fandom is mobilized, but as a means of further emphasizing the 'positive' nature of the respondent's own fandom. 'I'm not that kind of fan', the respondent insists. The questions effectively occupy two different contexts. The definition given in response to 2.1, whilst arguably tailored to fit the respondent's self-perceptions, is also broad enough to apply to anyone within the fan ingroup and is positively emphasised in comparison with more 'casual' modes of engagement, therefore differentiating the fan ingroup from the viewer outgroup. However, when question 4.3 shifts the focus to the respondent's experiences of the ingroup, interindividual differentiation is made between the respondent and others within the category of 'fan'.

A similar situation is evident in the accounts given by a number of other respondents. For instance, the following three individuals all give similarly 'positive' definitions in answer to 2.1 (discussing fan investment in terms of choice, activity and pleasure/enjoyment). Yet their responses to question 4.3 are as follows:

I'm oddly nervous of other fans. That's why I don't go to conventions – I think perhaps I still hold the old-fashioned view of the spotty speccy geek who asks very serious questions about the minutiae of continuity, smells of Clearasil and dresses like *Dr Who*. Fandom is important, though, because without it,



I'm sure there'd be no *Who* today. I just don't connect very well with it.

(4.3, 106)

I think some fans take themselves and *Dr Who* far too seriously! It worries me that some go to extreme lengths to show their affection for *Doctor Who*. Here are some examples: Attending conventions, dressed up as The Doctor! That is taking things a little too extreme; Wearing a replica of the Seventh Doctor's question mark pullover, even though it looked and still looks hideous! Even Sylvester McCoy hated it with a passion, yet I have spied some fans wearing replicas. The manufacturers have a lot to answer for!; Correcting other fans when they mispronounce an aliens' [sic] name or when they use the incorrect title of an early episode of *Dr Who*, etc ("It's 'The Dead Planet', not 'The Daleks, episode 1'"); Writing in to *Dr Who* magazine to complain when the editor incorrectly spells an aliens' [sic] name or uses the incorrect title of an early episode of *Dr Who* [...]; Never criticizing any CD or book release, no matter how bad it is, for fear that BBC Worldwide or Big Finish may cease production; Spending a fortune on merchandise and buying any old crap they can find, no matter how awful it might be. On eBay recently, a pair of *Dr Who* Y-Fronts were on sale

and approximately four people placed a bid for them! I kid you not! Somewhere there is a fan in proud possession of the pair of *Dr Who* Y-Fronts! In short, some fans take their fandom a bit too far and live up to their stereotypes! I try to avoid that at all costs.

(4.3, 066)

I avoid fanatic fans. I enjoy the show for what it is – a long-running and sometimes enjoyable past-time. Its [sic] not my life goal to aspire to be a “Doctor”, he is not a role model. I realize that many fans are much more into the show than I am and can quote chunks of dialogue or tell which serial code applies to particular episodes, there is however a fine line between fan and obsessive.

(4.3, 071)

Here, ‘other fans’ (or at least ‘some other fans’) are clearly separated from the respondents’ own fan identities. Whilst their definitions of ‘fan’ for question 2.1 are expressed in broadly positive utopian terms and the descriptions of their own personal investments and activities given in response to question 2.4 detail the pleasures of buying merchandise, participation and acquiring and utilizing specialist knowledge, these perspectives are subsequently reversed when discussion turns to wider fields of fandom in general. For example, respondent 066 lists a range of activities and investments which he considers to be ‘going to



extreme lengths to show [...] affection for *Doctor Who*'. These activities and investments are a sign that the individuals involved take their relationship with the programme 'far too seriously'. The suggestion made by Oakes *et al*, that people define other people in terms of individuals or groups in different contexts (1994, p.189), seems to be in operation here. The responses to question 2.1 differentiate the fan ingroup from the perceived 'non-fan' outgroup, whilst the responses to 4.3 differentiate between members of the ingroup. However, the responses to 2.1 are also defined in relation to the individual and, more importantly, the responses to 4.3 appear to be informed (at least in part) by the perceived negative external viewpoints of the outgroup. The respondent concludes with the suggestion that taking fandom 'too far' leads to individuals 'living up to their stereotypes' (in this account, taking participation to 'unacceptable' extremes by 'dressing up' in 'hideous' costumes, being pedantically obsessed with the minutiae of specialist knowledge, being passive, undiscerning consumers, cultural dupes who either purchase any item of related merchandise indiscriminately or are unable or unwilling to criticize any possible shortcomings in the products they buy). The respondent claims to take great care in his fan-life to avoid living up to this stereotype 'at all costs'.

The response given by 106 here details what might be considered to be the classic archetypal negative conception of the fan, a pervasive and enduring stereotype. This fan (we might well call her/him 'the anorak', as do a number of other respondents [038, 101, 086, 074 – 'I can't stand *Dr Who* fans, they're such anoraks']) is a 'spotty speccy geek', who takes *Doctor Who* very seriously, is

obsessed with arcane information and trivia, dresses like a character from a fictional TV series and smells of acne lotion. The respondent confesses to being 'oddly nervous' of other fans, precisely because of the possibility that they may conform to the 'anorak' stereotype, and this might be the reason that he does not 'connect very well' with fandom. But why should this respondent be nervous of anorak fans? I think the inference here is that he is nervous of the *association* with this stereotype in the eyes of others external to the fan experience. His description of 'the anorak' is primarily characterized by its potential physical/sexual unattractiveness (spots, glasses, strange clothes, 'smelling of Clearasil') and this follows through in a number of other responses. As we have already seen, respondent 061 detailed an external perception of fans who 'don't have girlfriends'; similarly, respondent 069 suggests that 'the notion of a male *Doctor Who* fan having a girlfriend is generally considered to be a ludicrous prospect!', although he '[doesn't] know why this should be, however'. Identification as a fan, either by attending conventions and joining fan clubs or by simply admitting your fandom to those external to the fan experience, is seen to risk association with the negative, unattractive and socially undesirable stereotypes which the external world is assumed to hold.

Oakes *et al* describe stereotyping as 'the process of ascribing characteristics to people on the basis of group membership' and note that it has often been criticized as a misrepresentative process, due to the exaggeration of both similarity and difference between 'individuals and others in groups and out of groups' and also because it leads people to believe in the superiority of ingroups



over outgroups (1994, pp.1-2). However, they spend much of their account examining the problems they see in such criticisms, eventually concluding that 'the standard picture of stereotypes as fixed, rigid and insensitive to reality is mythical' and arguing for a reconsideration of stereotypes as being 'fluid and variable', able to change 'with the social context' (p.192). It is outside the remit of this thesis to try to attempt to explain either the provenance or the validity of the stereotypes which emerge in the accounts of my respondents. However, the way in which these stereotypes are *used* in the process of self-definition and self-categorization is of significant relevance to the accounts under consideration in this chapter. As with other categorization processes we have observed thus far, stereotyping is 'context-dependent' (Oakes *et al*, 1994, p.86). Oakes *et al* suggest that stereotypes are 'selected and constructed to represent meaningfully the observed relations between ingroup and outgroup on specific content dimensions'. They are not fixed, varying 'in content as a function of [the] represented relations' (p.191).

There are two main stereotypes in operation in a number of the accounts of the questionnaire respondents. The first is that of the 'regular television viewer' being passive and 'leaning back'. This is not a stereotype which is specific to any one particular ingroup. Instead it is perhaps one of the most wide-ranging and pervasive representations of 'audience' (or wider, of 'TV consumer') over the last century or so, albeit one which has been almost categorically refuted in successive academic accounts of audiences over the last thirty years (see, for examples, Hall, 1980; Fiske, 1987; Nightingale, 1996, amongst many others). This has been utilised in the definitions offered by a number of my respondents (detailed earlier),

as a means of differentiating between the fan ingroup and the 'regular viewer' outgroup. In the responses detailed earlier, (at least) the possibility of outgroup homogeneity might be observed, with 'regular viewers' on the whole characterized as much less active and discerning in their engagement with *Doctor Who* (and thus, by association, with television as a whole). So, the stereotype of the 'passive TV viewer' is invoked by certain respondents in order to accentuate the activity (or perhaps interactivity), investment and passionate engagement of the fan-viewer.

The second stereotype in operation is that examined in the section immediately preceding this discussion – the negative, perhaps pathologizing, conception of the obsessive, unattractive 'anorak' fan, the 'nerd', the 'geek'. As we have seen, the use of this particular stereotype in various accounts from different respondents has been quite complex. The 'anorak'<sup>34</sup> has variously been invoked as either a conception perceived to be held by held by outgroup members which is applied to fandom indiscriminately, and which might taint by mere association, or as a means of establishing a sense of interindividual differentiation within the fan group, which might perhaps be described as 'ingroup heterogeneity'. These two modes are by no means distinct or oppositional. The ingroup heterogeneity deployments of the 'anorak' have undoubtedly been informed by the perceptions of potential negative outgroup conceptions of fans and fandom, and have arguably been motivated by a desire to distinguish individuals from the associative taint of these conceptions (in the eyes of both outgroups and members of the ingroup). Fan ingroups additionally have their own sets of stereotypes, certain of which have

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<sup>34</sup> As noted earlier, I use 'anorak' here as a *generic* term for the wide variety of related negative obsessive/geeky fan categorisations.



surfaced in the accounts of my respondents, but to a much lesser degree. The ways in which stereotypes are used by the respondents in this study are, as Oakes *et al* propose, *context-dependent*. Negative conceptions of fans and fandom shift and alter across different contexts, whilst the characteristics ascribed to both the ‘anorak-fan’ and ‘passive viewer’ stereotypes (passivity, undiscerning consumption) are broadly similar, despite occupying different contexts.

As I stated earlier, it is not within my power to test the validity of the stereotypes deployed in the definitional accounts of the respondents. Oakes *et al* would have it that stereotypes are not ‘insensitive to reality’, and so potentially there might be more than a ‘kernel of truth’ in those invoked within the accounts examined here (1994, p.192). However, at least one respondent infers that actual first-hand experience of fandom might reveal the ‘imaginary’ nature of such negative stereotypes:

I used to be quite scared of fandom. However, as I enjoy more and more the conventions I am finding that my stereotype, in the main, does not exist.

(4.3, 102)

Nevertheless, stereotypes remain at least an important influence on the accounts related by a number of respondents. As I noted previously, there is a dual process of definition in operation in a number of responses to the questionnaire. In order to strengthen the positive personal/individual self-image of their fan-identities cited in

response to question 2.4, these respondents conjure up negative external images and stereotypes of the fans they wish to contrast themselves against (these images and stereotypes may also have arisen or evolved further within internal fan discourse). These external (and internal) negative stereotypical images of fans and fandom are in themselves of serious concern to a number of respondents. Some, like 106, say they do not associate with other fans for fear of being tainted by undesirable and unattractive stereotypes. Others say they keep their fandom secretive or solitary to protect against the possibility of ridicule and social isolation:

I like to keep my fan status private. I'm not ashamed but if you describe yourself as a Doctor Who fan first people pre judge you. I think many of us do have an 'anorak' side to us, even if we don't care to admit it. I'm not the sort to say to an actor 'why did your character do this in that episode?' (breaking established continuity), but I am fascinated by what goes into making an episode [...] I despair of fans who criticize writers or producers for the sake of it. They do more damage to us and to the show than they realize.

(4.3, 101)

Solitary. I'm not ashamed of "Doctor Who" as an institution but I am ashamed of my obsessing of it. Better to be known as



someone who says little rather than someone who talks about 'Zagreus' to people who don't care. Obsessives are dangerous to the object of their fascination, giving it a reputation for nerdiness and putting people off. Like the Isma'ili missionaries of old, pretend to be something you're not until you have their confidence. Or never breathe a word.

(4.3, 067)

It is the possibility that one might be pre-judged against some imagined negative construction of the 'anorak' upon publicly claiming the identity of the fan which leads these individuals to 'keep [their] fan status private'. One respondent acknowledges that 'assumptions and clichés [...] have become attached to the word' fan, and that for this reason identifying oneself as a fan is not 'appealing' (2.1, 068). Thus, as I have already suggested, the perceived opinions and viewpoints of those outgroups external to the fan experience have very definite impacts on the ways in which some fans define themselves and go about managing their fan-identities. Some accounts given by respondents make it clear that this has arisen from first hand real-life experiences (099 writes of 'being mocked'; 061 of people 'taking the piss'; 109 admits that his girlfriend thinks he is 'a bit sad'), whilst others draw upon negative stereotypes which have their foundations in a range of popular discourses and imaginations. Whether as a normative viewer whose act of 'just watching' TV in the moment allows fans to define the pro-active nature of their engagement with *Doctor Who* and construct

clear distinctions, or as an arbiter of what is socially or culturally acceptable, it is clear that conceptions of those who are *not* fans are just as important in terms of defining terms such as 'fan' and 'fandom' as those who *are*.

In the extract quoted above, respondent 067 makes a particular point of emphasizing the 'danger' of obsessiveness. Here the danger is in making the fan object seem less appealing to those outside the fan experience due to its potential to attract obsessive 'geeks'. Respondent 101 likewise suggests that overly critical fans damage both the reputation of fandom and the fortunes of the show (again perhaps because this criticism in some way reduces its appeal to regular viewers), as does respondent 068 ('fandom both breathes life into the series, but just as successfully kills it too. The vocal minority all to [sic] often gain very damaging publicity' [4.3]). This reflects a number of wider fan concerns, which can be observed both in my own empirical data, and in previous accounts of fan subcultures. For instance, John Tulloch (in Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995) suggests that whilst the fans in his research group opposed themselves to 'they' (the 'wider audience'), they nevertheless acknowledged their reliance on this wider audience (or 'floating voters') for the survival of their favourite show. If enough of these floating voters 'switch off' for whatever reason, then 'the fans' favourite show would be switched off too' (p.141). The fans are rendered 'powerless' in terms of their influence on the fortunes of the show, as its future 'depends on ratings, and therefore on viewers 'outside the society' [...]' (*ibid*). Here we see respondent 067 express something of the same concern, that the potential negative effect of *Doctor Who's* association with obsessive and 'geeky' fans 'endangers' the fortunes



of the show itself. It is therefore important to him that he does not contribute to this negative association by ‘talk[ing] about “Zagreus” to people who don’t care’ (at least until he ‘ha[s] their confidence’).

Both respondents 101 and 067 also contrast themselves with the types of fans they do not wish to be associated with (e.g. the sort who asks actors questions about continuity and narrative minutiae [101]). If we compare the answers given by 101 here to the inquiry made by 4.3 into experience of fandom with those given in response to 2.1, it becomes apparent (as in earlier comparisons) that the definitions of fan given are, respectively, *inclusive* and *exclusive*. The definition for 2.1 is characterized by ideas of ‘loyalty’ and ‘special passion’, and the respondent subsequently aligns his own fan identity with this definition, whereas in answer to 4.3 he takes care to distinguish his own activities from those fans who criticize excessively or obsess over minutiae. This process of distinguishing between oneself and a conception of something which one believes oneself emphatically not to be can be seen in operation in a number of different responses to questions 2.1, 2.4 and 4.3:

Somebody with a great interest in something – implies fanatic  
but some fans are more fanatic than others. Some live and  
breath [sic] Dr Who while I have other interests to fill my time.

(2.1, 083)

I can't stand Doctor Who fans, they're such anoraks [...] My relationship with Doctor Who is very introverted. I watch videos, read books, listen to CDs. I don't go to conventions or chat on message boards, I don't feel the need. I am a fan of the show, not of the fans.

(4.3, 074)

All I can say on the subject of fandom is that they are generally seen as a very scary collective of people and, in many cases, rightly so. I can't get away from the fact that I'm a Doctor Who fan, but it's not something I bang on about because of an immediate association with the relatively small but vocal minority of people who are frighteningly obsessive about the show [...] These are the people who give us fans a bad name [...] I just hope Russel [sic] T. Davies and his team don't get harassed by these people!

(4.3, 088)

To be honest, I don't like many other fans (apart from Ben and Andy at Galaxy 4!). Few seem to like the whole of Dr Who and have very definite ideas of how it should be made. Therefore they often complain and don't seem like fans at all! [...] And some really are like the stereotypical anorak!



Respondent 083 implies a vague spectrum of interest or involvement (which is characterized by degrees of fanaticism). He distances himself from the more fanatical interest which he sees in certain other fans, suggesting that whilst some 'live and breath'[sic] *Doctor Who* he himself had 'other interests to fill [his] time'. There are implications underpinning this assertion. *Doctor Who* might possibly be considered an abnormal interest – certainly 'living and breathing' it represents an excessive, fanatical degree of interest in terms of this particular definition. However, this notion may be informed by an imagined or real external negative conception of the fan as excessive and 'unusually intense' (2.1, 103). To combat the presumably undesirable or unacceptable potential of an overwhelming, singular fan interest, the respondent indicates that his interest in *Doctor Who* is only one in a range of wider interests and pastimes. *Doctor Who* does not 'fill [his] time' as it does with others, and a distinction is constructed between the respondent's own life and the lives of these 'others' (who might be implied to be 'inadequate' in some way, owing to their need/desire to fill up their time with *Doctor Who*). Respondent 074 describes an introverted relationship with *Doctor Who*, whereby he avoids other fans who are by and large dismissed as 'anoraks' (in the full response he goes on to describe at length a particular incident where he was 'shown up' by 'anorak' fans at a specialist shop). This respondent implies an opposition between individual and social conceptions of fandom, distinguishing his

own personal relationship with *Doctor Who* from the subcultural networks and communities formed by other fans ('I am a fan of the show, not of the fans').

Respondent 088 seeks to distinguish himself from the 'relatively small but vocal minority who are *frighteningly obsessive* about the show' (italics mine). The obsessive fans are characterized in almost pathological terms – 'frightening', 'a very scary collective of people'. Again, this minority is considered to be damaging to wider perceptions of fandom, 'giving us fans a bad name', and for this reason the respondent doesn't 'bang on' about his own fandom, keeping it quiet for fear of association with the obsessive fans. In the relative safety of the self account given in the questionnaire he admits his own fandom, but takes care to provide an explicit distinction between himself and the 'obsessive fans'. Respondent 038 contends that he 'doesn't like many other fans', establishing an opposition between himself and fans who complain or express dislike for *Doctor Who*, and who in his words thus 'don't seem like fans at all!'. Pleasure is a key aspect of this respondent's definition for 2.1, with fans understood as 'going out of their way to enjoy' the object of their fandom. The fans who criticize, complain and express dislike then do not fit his definition and this is why they don't 'seem like fans'. Further accounts in answer to question 4.3 reveal a number of other respondents who see distinctions between themselves and other types of fans, who have found in their personal experiences other fans who 'don't seem like fans', who have found themselves either alienated or excluded from social groups or even definitions of fans, or who have chosen exclude themselves from these groups and definitions:



I have yet to have a good experience of fandom, and that's a depressing statement. I have been to 3 conventions and always felt cut out of fandom and slightly ashamed to be associated with people who appear and act so differently to me. I went to a local *Dr Who* group that wasn't that friendly. It seemed to consist of people bitching and tearing the show apart. That's not being a fan. Some parts of fandom have, and still are so negative, and destructive. I feel certain fans helped destroy *Dr Who* in the 1980's. I've yet to meet a *Dr Who* fan who I'd like to be a close friend, who I could chat to for hours, watch stories with and I find that sad. There must be someone out there, I guess I just have to keep looking.

(4.3, 099)

My one and only convention was the 1993 Panopticon. I thought it would be nice to mingle with fellow fans; but I was wrong! I personally found the majority to be downright rude with other fans. If you weren't in a group, you ended up sitting isolated. It seems to me that being a fan doesn't mean you enjoy the company of fellow fans.

(4.3, 075)

I think there are many Whovians who do not really help the show and/or the general public's view of it. They plead for the show's return and then shoot down any product that is the result of their plea [...] They are not realistic, in that they want the show to return in it's original format with no changes whatsoever I have also encountered some fans who just take the series too seriously. I was actually verbally crucified once by a group of fans by saying that I didn't think the Pertwee<sup>35</sup> era was particularly good as a whole!!!!!! By all means enjoy the series in any way you wish, but don't judge others.

(4.3, 092)

Here the point of exclusion seems to be in criticizing the programme too harshly, which impacts on the enjoyment of others ('bitching and tearing the show apart'), or conversely in being criticized for one's own critical judgments and tastes (being 'verbally crucified' for criticizing the 'Pertwee era'). Respondents 099 and 075 both write of their isolation as fans, and suggest that the cause of this isolation is the behaviour of other fans, whether by 'being downright rude' or by being 'negative and destructive'. Both 099 and respondent 092 also express the notion, discussed earlier, which sees negative criticism of *Doctor Who* and its production team as potentially harmful to public perceptions of the show. However, another respondent evidently saw the questionnaire as a means of expressing such criticisms, evincing very strong views on 'how the series should be made':

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<sup>35</sup> Jon Pertwee. Portrayed the Third Doctor from 1970-74.



In the mid 80's 'fandom' went to civil war in a way!! 80% of fans were disgusted by the way the series had gone and voiced their opinions. JNT<sup>36</sup> and recently Gary Downie<sup>37</sup> argued that these 'fans' should not watch it if they don't like it. They missed the point. These 'rebels' (and I was one)!!, deeply cared for the programme, and to sit and watch the series you love, just send itself up and just looked [sic] pathetic, made you want to cry. Something had to be done. Even Verity Lambert<sup>38</sup> on the recent documentary said it was sad to see the series go so low. When it was cancelled it was a sigh of relief in many ways. I bet Michael Grade<sup>39</sup> rubbed his hands with glee!! When McGann<sup>40</sup> came along, it was great again (a proper production crew at last!!). It had its flaws, but for a first outing, it was a breath of fresh air!! Even McCoy<sup>41</sup> was great without the JNT touch!! He

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<sup>36</sup> John Nathan-Turner, Producer of *Doctor Who* from 1980-89

<sup>37</sup> Production Manager on several *Doctor Who* serials throughout the 1980s and partner of John Nathan-Turner.

<sup>38</sup> *Doctor Who*'s original Producer (1963-65), interviewed for *The Story of Doctor Who* (BBC, 2003)

<sup>39</sup> Controller of BBC1 (1984-86) and widely regarded as the man responsible for the decision to cancel *Doctor Who* in 1985. Public pressure (largely fan implemented, but backed by appeals from *The Sun* and *The Daily Star*) led to this decision being commuted to an 18 month hiatus. *Doctor Who* was eventually cancelled in December 1989. For a more detailed account of this period, see Gillatt, 1998.

<sup>40</sup> Paul McGann. Cast as the Eighth Doctor in the BBC/Universal TV Movie *Doctor Who* (1996)

<sup>41</sup> Sylvester McCoy. Portrayed the Seventh Doctor from 1987-89, and again in *Doctor Who* (1996)

and C. Baker<sup>42</sup> are OK with the Big Finish CD's so again there is proof that the JNT era was at fault. The fans all used to groan with despair when JNT announced he was to do another season. Oh the pain!! I see fandom are [sic] excited with the new series and I for one cannot wait. We have the best production team in TV today so that is encouraging!! We wish it luck. It deserves it!!

(4.3, 033, emphasis in original)

This respondent spends a great deal of his account constructing a characterization of a very particular *Doctor Who* fan-identity and set of taste judgements. He mobilizes a number of what might be termed 'discursive mantras' (Hills, 2002), which claim to account for what constitutes 'good' *Doctor Who* and detail perceived reasons for the show's decline. These justifications are likely based both on personal opinion, and on widely circulated subcultural discourses concerning the 'JNT era'<sup>43</sup>. This conception of a particular fan taste and identity arises in the respondent's definition given in response to 2.1 (he 'loves' the programme 'despite the crap last 4 seasons'), and follows through into the response to 4.1, which asks the question 'why *Doctor Who*?'<sup>44</sup> ('NO MORE PARADISE TOWERS CRAP, NO MORE TIME AND THE RANI CRAP, NO MORE

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<sup>42</sup> Colin Baker. Portrayed the Sixth Doctor from 1984-86. Sacked from the role at the behest of Michael Grade in 1986 (Downie, in DWM, issue 338, dated 07/01/2004)

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Gillatt, 1998, Leigh, in DWB issue 116, Aug 1993, Munro, in DWB issue 113, May 1993, Orman, in DWB issue 123, January 1994.

<sup>44</sup> Which is examined in chapter five of this thesis.



DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN CRAP, NO MORE GHOSTLIGHT CRAP, NO MORE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD SHITE, etc'<sup>45</sup>).

The response to 4.3 quoted above works to perform two particular functions. Firstly, as in a number of responses analysed earlier, the respondent seeks to define himself in opposition to a particular conception. In this case it is a conception of the programme itself, rather than other fans, against which the distinction is developed. Respondent 033 seeks to be understood as a fan who considers the 'JNT era' to be 'crap' *Doctor Who*, effectively claiming the identity of a discerning fan who cares a great deal about the standards of the programme ('to sit and watch the series you loved, just send itself up and just looked pathetic, made you want to cry' [emphasis in original]). Mention of 'civil war' and 'rebels' ('of which I was one!') also implies a conception of an undiscerning and uncaring fan, against whom the respondent might distinguish himself. Secondly, the respondent attempts to assert the particular fan taste and identity he has himself claimed as being dominant within fandom. It is claimed that '80% of fans were disgusted with the way the series had gone and voiced their opinions'.

This assertion is possibly based in part on an article in a 1986 edition of the fanzine DWB<sup>46</sup>, which claimed '89% of fans want a NEW producer' (Leigh, in DWB issue 116, August 1993). Nevertheless, there is no real evidential basis to support the claim that four fifths of *Doctor Who* fans inhabit a single taste formation of *any*

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<sup>45</sup> These are titles of serials from the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> seasons of *Doctor Who*.

<sup>46</sup> *Doctor Who* Bulletin. In the early 1990s, the fanzine began featuring other sci-fi and fantasy programmes and was re-branded as 'Dream Watch Bulletin'. By the late 1990s, it had become the professionally published and successful cult TV magazine 'Dreamwatch'.

particular alignment. Yet in making such a claim, respondent 033 is able to locate his own fan identity within a wider subcultural formation and thus define himself both in opposition to and aligned with particular conceptions of fan. There is, then, an attempt to draw interindividual distinctions between members of the ingroup (again, ingroup heterogeneity), but the potential for this is simultaneously restricted, at least partially, by the homogenizing claim that eighty percent of the ingroup share the same opinion. Thus, self-categorisation is likely to be a process shot through with contradictions and based on shifting (and often personally defined) contexts and situations.

However, it is not only distinctions between fans and viewers, different types of *Doctor Who* fans or opposing *Doctor Who* taste formations which are drawn in responses to this questionnaire. Some respondents choose to distinguish between themselves as fans of *Doctor Who* and as fans of other things, or between the cultural value of *Doctor Who* and that of other fan objects. One respondent chooses to make a distinction between the notions of 'intelligent' British and 'dumb' American TV Science Fiction (she suggests that she enjoys *Doctor Who* so much because it 'treats the viewer/listener intelligently, unlike some American science-fiction I could mention!' [2.1, 077]). This assertion ties in with a whole series of ingroup/outgroup oppositions and distinctions which have been identified as existing between fans of British and American Sci-fi and fantasy TV in a number of previous accounts (see, for example, Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995; Hills, 2002). This particular account might be read as an attempt to justify interest in *Doctor Who* by drawing favourable parallels between the show's intellectual potential (constructed



as a 'respect' for the intelligence of the viewer) and that of shows supported by other fan outgroups. Another respondent compares his *Doctor Who* fandom with both football fandom and, rather oddly, driving a car:

There's an off balance belief that only football fandom is normal, personally one has only to observe how mind numbingly boring football is to the extent that it drives its supporters to acts of mindless violence in order to relieve that boredom. It may be the largest minority interest, but the TV view that we "all hope England win" (no, only supporters) "we all have trouble parking" (no, only twits who drive, and they park anywhere particularly on pavements) whereas Dr. Who fans absorb masses of info on diverse subjects as geography (locations) history and literature (script and plot references) railway and bus fans have a love of scenery and travel. The mindless football fan/driver regards any interest outside this as odd (!) compared to experiences in letters pages of special interest magazines I have been extraordinarily lucky that my family/friends/colleagues numbers no football fans and drivers in single figures.

(4.3, 078, emphasis in original)

The respondent invokes a particularly negative conception of both football ('mind numbingly boring', prone to encouraging violent behaviour) and football fans

(‘mindless’, violent, unable to comprehend interest in anything other than football), arguably making use of certain stereotypes which have long had currency in popular media accounts of football-related violence (although perhaps only tangentially – such accounts often remove the game itself from the discussion, accusing the perpetrators of such violence of using the sport as an ‘excuse’, or of not being ‘real’ football fans; here the respondent makes a definite connection between the game and its followers as a whole and violent, ‘mindless’ behaviour). As a comparison, the respondent draws upon a broadly utopian, intellectual and literary conception of *Doctor Who* fans (who ‘absorb masses of info on diverse subjects’ through their interaction with the programme). The relative merits of fandoms which might be marginalized (*Doctor Who* fans, trainspotters) are emphasized in comparison with the perceived shortcomings of mainstream fandoms (like football fandom, which is presented as ‘the largest minority interest’). The respondent subsequently takes the trouble to disassociate himself from these undesirable ‘other’ fandoms (and activities, such as driving cars) by noting that he has been ‘extraordinarily lucky’ that none of his friends or family are football fans and very few drive. This response, I would contend, represents an attempt to reverse what is seen as the socially determined ‘received wisdom’ or ‘common sense’ regarding fandom (that football fandom is ‘normal’ and Sci-Fi fandom is ‘abnormal’), by emphasizing the ‘negative’ aspects of the former over the ‘positive’ aspects of the latter. Thus being a fan of *Doctor Who* might be reclaimed as a ‘normal’ leisure pursuit. Whilst not going to the same extremes as 078, other respondents attempt to stress the ‘normalness’ of *Doctor Who* fandom.



For example, respondent 100 defines a fan as '[s]omeone who has a healthy hobby away from work or partner, to interest, stimulate & be enjoyed [...]' (2.1). Here we have an inclusive definition which does not appear to seek to set up any opposition or moral dualism between good fan and bad 'other'. Nor does it seek to distinguish between good and bad types of fan. It merely constructs a positive utopian and normalized reading of fan activity. In this respect, it has much in common with certain other responses:

To enjoy something to want to give up your free time for it, and to want other people to enjoy it as much as you do. To fan is to enthuse!

(2.1, 070)

Without trying to sound "sad" a definite relationship exists. It really is a love affair for me. It makes me happy. Yes, it really is a source of joy and comfort in my life. A definite friend.

(2.1, 102)

Respondent 070 emphasizes the freedom of choice with which fans engage and interact with their beloved object. Fandom is not understood in negative terms as a compulsion or obsession, but as a mode of enthusiasm and enjoyment, the appeal of which is so great that it might compel an individual to

share her/his enthusiasm with others. This is supported by a broad range of responses from different subjects and to different questions. Some of these are undoubtedly motivated by the concerns expressed earlier, those outlined by John Tulloch (1995), for the continued understanding, enjoyment and engagement of the 'floating voter'. And yet others like respondent 070 seem to express their desire to share in purely pleasurable terms (whilst still making an attempt to ward off the possible taint of 'sadness'). 070 goes on, in response to 4.3, to describe fans as 'loving people' who are 'happy to know they're not alone' due to the shared experiences which take place in social fandom and also the constant presence of *Doctor Who* in their lives. The possibility of a 'loving relationship' between the fan and their beloved object is mobilized in respondent 102's fan definition. He again notes the 'comfort' which the presence of *Doctor Who* in his life affords him, likening the programme to a 'friend'. The love between fan and object forms part of other definitions, as does the notion that *Doctor Who* is a comforting, friend-like constant through an otherwise difficult life:

Being a fan is about feeling passionate about something. It can be lonely though and people may mock you. But that doesn't matter because loving it is like loving part of yourself.

(2.1, 099)

Someone who loves something other than a personal friend or family member, I suppose – whether it's a programme, a football



team or a pop star that they follow and give a measure of devotion to. And, I guess, like an ordinary friend, a fan can be intrusive, critical, resigned to faults, but still loves them! It's the level of interest that defines it, I think, rather than material evidence (size of collections, or whatever). *We love it, and it makes us happy.*

(2.1, 048, italics mine)

Both respondents here suggest an 'imperfect' dimension to the possible pleasures offered by fandom. Respondent 099 suggests that being a fan can lead to loneliness and mockery (likely due to the negative stereotypes and perceptions of those external to the fan experience and the potential for social isolation which this presents, as discussed earlier). However, the passionate relationship between the fan and her/his fan object counters these negative potentialities, again suggesting that the constancy of this relationship offers some degree of comfort or even a form of coping mechanism (see Bacon-Smith, 1992, for an account of organized fan communities as a form of social coping mechanism). What seems key in respondent 099's definition is the implication that the fan object becomes bound up in some way with the individual persona of the fan, that it might become 'part of yourself'. This in turn further suggests that the fan object is understood as a constant reassuring presence in the fan's life which provides some form of comfort or solace.

Respondent 048 similarly likens his 'love' for his fan object to that (unconditional?) love between family members or close friends. The bottom line here seems to be that, despite potential disappointments, the fan object is loved because it makes the fan 'happy'. The definition offered actually works to perform a number of different tasks. The comparison between 'fan-love'<sup>47</sup> and familial love is arguably an attempt to both illustrate the depth and strength of this devotion, and also to naturalise it in some way. Additionally, the evidential basis for defining fandom is shifted away from quantifiable fields ('size of collections') towards a more personal and qualitative spectrum ('level of interest'), which cannot be accurately measured or quantified and so relies on the personal account of the individual fan. It might be the case that this shift is implemented for tactical reasons (e.g. to support the assertion of a 'strong' fandom despite a lack of material signifiers and artefacts), but there is little in the way of evidence which might support this in the remainder of this respondent's account. It might be possible to infer this from the response to question 1.1, which inquires about the regular financial *Doctor Who* investments made by respondents. This is more clearly the case with respondent 026, who defends against the possibility of perceived shortcomings in his financial, participatory and knowledge investments through his definition ('[A fan is] someone who likes something that is it. It does not mean that you have to know a lot about it or own lots of merchandise or watch it all the time' [2.1]).

As with some of the responses examined earlier, respondent 048 discusses the relationship between fan and fan object in terms of a 'friendship'. In this case however, certain difficulties are conceded. Like friends, fans may be

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<sup>47</sup> By which I mean the love a fan holds for her/his fan object.



'intrusive', 'critical' and 'resigned to faults', but still love the object of their interest all the same. This is reflected in other responses:

[A fan is] someone who enjoys Dr Who, likes to watch it both to enjoy and criticize, who can see its faults, will occasionally laugh at it and slag it off, but will also defend it to non-fans.

(2.1, 065)

I suppose it's – strangely enough – being more critical & less critical at the same time.

(2.1, 105)

In the eyes of some respondents, criticism is evidently an important aspect of being a fan. The critical dimension of fandom has already been raised in a number of the accounts which have previously been analyzed in this chapter: respondent 088 suggests that this critical approach might be part of the distinction which separates fans from casual viewers (mistakes and transgression which 'annoy' fans 'pass casual viewers by' [2.4]); respondents 066, 101, 088 and 038 argue that criticism has its limits and, along with respondent 110, ('I do wish that *Dr Who* fans were less critical as a body – I worry that we constantly damage *Dr Who's* chances by being critical' [4.3]), suggest that too much criticism is harmful to the programme's wider public perception; respondent 033 constructs an image of a discerning, critical consensus (or perhaps hegemony) to support his own assertion

of fan-identity. The two responses quoted above stress the shifting, ambivalent nature of fan pleasure, and note that criticism is as much a part of this as enjoyment. Respondent 065 makes a clear distinction between the internal criticism practiced by fans and the external criticism made by 'non-fans', which fans attempt to 'defend against'. The implication here is that fans might have an understanding of the programme which is in some way more informed or superior to that of 'non-fans' – whilst fans criticize the programme and 'see its faults', able to laugh at its shortcomings and 'slag it off', they are nevertheless also able to defend the programme against potential external criticism.

It is likely that the difference between internal and external criticism is the same distinction observed as existing between fans and regular viewers in the accounts of some respondents. 'Being more critical *and* less critical *at the same time*' (italics mine) appears to be an illustration of this distinction. (It is frustrating that this point remains a tantalizing fragment in the account of respondent 105, as it is never pursued or expanded upon any further than this. My analysis here moves into the realm of the speculative then, and so I would issue a caveat to the effect that the conclusion I reach here is not drawn directly from the account of any of my respondents). Individuals may be more critical when evaluating the programme from a 'fan perspective' and when making critical judgments within internal fan discourses. When the programme disappoints or exhibits faults, then criticism is justified and the fan is entitled to 'slag it off' or 'laugh at it'. However, when criticism is directed at the programme from an external source, fans may become 'less critical', mobilizing defences and justifications (which might be



socially determined within the fan subculture) which might include 'discursive mantras' and 'cult phrases' (Hills, 2002, p. 67). Whether these internal and external criticisms can be divided along the same lines into 'informed' and 'uninformed' oppositions must remain speculative and, for the moment due to a lack of empirical data, unexplored. Nevertheless the idea raised by these two responses, that criticism is important to the internal experience of fandom but undesirable when emerging outside that experience, adds further weight to the idea that many of the questionnaire respondents have divided 'fan' and 'regular viewer' into very different types of subjectivity. Additionally the suggestion of ambivalence and contradiction which emerges has also been expressed by a number of other respondents in their accounts of their own experience of fandom:

Fandom...can be a really great place. I've met a lot of very good friends through fandom, some of whom are the "überfans", some of whom are just regular people who happen to love the show. It's been responsible for some great silly nights in front of the television with mates and I've met (albeit briefly) some fantastic actors at conventions.

Fandom...can be a complete bitch. I've had people e-mail vitriol at me for having a different opinion to them on various stories, I've had bitchy comments made at me by "überfans" for giving their products bad reviews. It's made up of humans, what else can I say?

(4.3, 081)

I feel so ambivalent about fandom! It upsets me that people can hate aspects of *Dr Who* so much, particularly when I loved them (e.g. the anti-Jon Pertwee strand). But I also know there are things that I really hate – ‘Death Comes to Time’, for instance. I think fans often forget that *DW* comes in many forms, some which lots of people like (say, Tom Baker), some which only a few people like – and we shouldn’t all expect to like all of it. But then I’m a conciliatory sort of person!

(4.3, 079)

The account of respondent 081 is particularly interesting in the light of certain issues that have emerged through the analysis of a number of other responses earlier in this chapter. This respondent establishes a clear distinction between what he sees as being different types of fans (or perhaps individuals existing on a wider spectrum), which include ‘überfans’ and ‘regular’ fans. However he does not then explicitly define himself in direct alignment *or* opposition to either of the categories, unlike the respondents examined earlier who exercised similar distinctions. Additionally, this account refuses to split these different types of fans into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ subjectivities and does not seem to seek to establish a ‘moral dualism’ in this respect. Respondent 081 acknowledges both the negative and positive potentialities inherent in both of the fan ‘types’ he explicitly identifies. On



the one hand he notes that he has established 'good' friendships with both 'überfans' and 'regular' fans, and describes pleasurable social encounters which have resulted from such friendships. However, both 'überfans' and 'regular' fans have also attacked or criticized him for his beliefs and opinions, leading to the possibility that fandom can also be 'a complete bitch'. Both types of fan are presented as potentially able to occupy both good and bad subjectivities in relation to the perspective of an individual fan. Fandom here seems to be characterized by these different potentialities and possibilities, by contradiction, ambivalence and plurality. Fan pleasure then might rely on a number of contexts, and indeed be constituted and operate differently depending on these different contexts.

Respondent 079 likewise acknowledges the ambivalence and potential of fandom. Indeed, in his response he discusses his own ambivalent relationship with fandom. He admits that certain opinions about *Doctor Who*, which are expressed as being negatively opposed to his own, 'upset' him, but then subsequently acknowledges that he has similarly negative opinions of aspects of the programme himself. The respondent goes on to suggest that different aspects of *Doctor Who* are liked or disliked by different individuals and for different reasons, and that there may be varying degrees of consensus about the merits of these different aspects. He concludes that fandom should perhaps embrace this ambivalence and the potential for contradictory opinions, and this, along with his closing statement ('but then I'm a conciliatory sort of person!'), works to establish a democratic and liberal fan-identity. The ambivalence towards fandom which the respondent expresses is also reflected in the definition of 'fan' he gave in response

to question 2.1. Respondent 079 was the only other subject besides 061 who did not consider themselves as fitting their own definition of 'fan'. The respondent makes quite a detailed and reflexive analysis of exactly what constitutes a fan:

Someone who loves an activity so much that it occupies a large amount of their time, their emotions, their recreational life. Does a fan have to collect things? I think so – part of being a fan is wanting to commemorate what interests you, to make it present in your life through memorabilia/merchandise. A fan lives their relationship to what they love very intensely – passionate angers and disappointments, as well as deep joys. A fan also has to have strong opinions about what is right for the thing they love – how *Dr Who* should be developed, when it was good and bad – like football fans feel about line-ups and management strategies! One last important aspect of being a fan is access to fandom – wanting to talk to others who share your interest, to share ideas, to socialize together with a shared feeling for what holds you together. This is the one thing that I feel stops me being a 'true' fan – I'm happy just to read the books, think to myself, read other people's debates online – I have no real desire to share with others. Although – I do like to read the DWM letters page, and online fan discussions: so I like to feel I know what other



fans are thinking, but have no interest in participating. Perhaps because I feel I don't really know the issues well enough? I feel like my knowledge is not quite up to fan standard maybe? My opinions not sufficiently thought through – my interest is both passionate and casual.

(2.1, 079, emphasis in original)

The absence of a dimension of 'sharing' leads this respondent to suggest that he 'almost' fits his own definition of fan 'but not quite' (2.2). Of course, it is possible to argue that respondent 079 accesses fandom to a more significant degree than he himself believes, that by reading the debates and discourses of others and by 'think[ing to him]self' he cannot avoid participating in fandom in some way. However, the key point is that he does not consider his own activities to constitute direct participation in or access to fandom. The reasons he perceives to be behind this are bound up in a self-perception which seems to suggest an 'incomplete' or 'inadequate' degree of fandom or fan-identity. Certainly he considers his own fan knowledge to be 'not quite up to fan standard'. Once again we find a respondent working from a specific 'othered' conception of a normative or regular fan. It is unclear here though exactly how this distinction is intended to operate. The earlier part of the definition is constructed in a broadly positive light, fan investment discussed in terms of 'emotional intensity' and 'passion', and the subsequent account (which continues into the answer to 2.2) claims that the respondent does fit with this aspect of the definition. The qualification that the

respondent does not however constitute a 'true fan' might be an attempt to imply an acceptable level of involvement in fan activities, a boundary which the respondent seeks to clearly locate himself on one side of. Again, this must remain speculative. What it does clearly illustrate is the potential for plurality and contradiction in the accounts of the respondents. Before moving on to the conclusion of this chapter, I would like to examine another extract which I feel encapsulates the sense of plurality and contradiction which has arisen through the research:

Not much experience of *Who*-fandom. It's something me and my '*Who*-loving' friends tend to scoff at if I'm being honest and yet when we get together we call it a 'nerd' night. We are those nerds. We send ourselves up. It's the perception of a po-faced aspect that we ridicule on the whole – the details, the incessant appetite for facts and figures, is it 'canon' etc. We discuss anything and everything but the subject keeps coming back to *Who* and a drunken episode of Pertwee usually rounds off the evening. I'm sure it's probably the same with most other fans. Like a ritual. Nobody else understands it. It's ours. We take the show very seriously but not ourselves. And yet to others it must seem that we do. Here I am at 3.30 in the morning completely wrapped up in this. Why? This has been an interesting, absorbing exercise – defining the 'fan' thing has not been as



straightforward as I thought. I went to a comics convention in 86 or thereabouts. There were all types of fans it seemed. Cool fans, and not so cool ones who bugged Alan Moore and were following him to the toilets. And me. All different, all the same... It's a contradiction. The lonesome man in the queue at Tenth Planet<sup>48</sup> who buys every seemingly pointless piece of merchandise is the man responsible for getting the series back on air. He is writing, producing and probably starring in the new series. It's immensely strange and gratifying to think that. I have an expression about life – 'Who writes the script.' And 'Who' certainly seems to be writing ours. And vice versa.

(4.3, 111)

The assertion of having 'not much experience of *Who*-fandom' expressed by this respondent likely refers to experience of organized fandom. Indeed, the majority of responses to question 4.3 work from the conception of fandom as an organized social community (or communities) and tend to describe their experiences of interaction with other fans within this community. However, despite the claim of 'not much experience' in this case, respondent 111 immediately goes on to describe activities and interactions of social friendship networks which exist between himself and '*Who*-loving friends'. The account of this relationship, and the relationship between this group and both other fans and *Doctor Who* itself, is quite reflexive and sensitive to the potential contradictions which arise from fan

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<sup>48</sup> A specialist *Doctor Who* outlet in Barking, Essex.

investments and activities. It also works on a number of levels to distinguish the respondent from particular outgroups.

For example, the respondent describes his participation in 'nerd nights', at which he convenes socially with other *Doctor Who* fans to discuss 'anything and everything' (but usually *Doctor Who*) get drunk and watch episodes of the series. However these gatherings are deliberately and self-consciously labelled 'nerd nights' – adopting and performing the identity of a *Doctor Who* 'nerd' is an important part of the 'ritual' ('we are those nerds'). This 'performance' is specifically identified as one of self-aware irony, it is a parody of the 'po-faced [...] appetite for facts and figures' which is often perceived in the activities of certain fans (perhaps the 'anoraks' we described earlier). And yet there is a tacit acknowledgement that the 'nerds' who are ridiculed are perhaps not so far removed from the respondent and his friends. At the same time that they 'scoff' at fandom and ridicule 'nerds', the respondent also notes that they 'send [them]selves up'. There is however still a distinction drawn, or at least heavily implied, that the difference between the ridiculers and those ridiculed lies in the ability to poke fun at oneself. 'We take the show very seriously but not ourselves' insists the respondent. In this account, then, taking *Doctor Who* seriously is justified but taking one's own interest in it as seriously is less so.

A key qualification here, and one which establishes other potential distinctions in itself, is the possibility that 'others' might not be able to distinguish between fans who do not take themselves seriously and those who do. These others might read the ironic send-up of 'po-faced' fans straight. It remains unclear



precisely who these others might be, whether they comprise other fans, other viewers, or on a more exclusive level, anyone external to the experience of this particular group of friends. Nevertheless the experiences described here, with emphasis on fun (or perhaps even play) and friendship, are not claimed to be unique or even out-of-the-ordinary in relation to the experiences of other fans. The respondent suggests that he's 'sure it's probably the same with most other fans'. This definition seems to be pulling in a number of different directions – the respondent claims to 'scoff at' and ridicule certain types of other fans (by enacting a performative perception of 'po-faced' obsessive fans, a performance which might not be distinguishable from actuality by those not in the know). At the same time that this push for distinction is articulated, the respondent closes it down in part, by situating his own experiences broadly in unison with those of 'most fans', in opposition to an outgroup who 'don't understand' *Doctor Who* and therefore can have no claim on it ('Nobody else understands it. It's *ours*' [italics mine]).

A further distinction is suggested as the account moves on. The respondent describes his experiences at comics convention, and a push for individuality is asserted in the suggestion that '[t]here were all types of fans it seemed. Cool fans, and not so cool ones who bugged Alan Moore and were following him to the toilets. And me.' The respondent seeks to identify himself as neither 'cool' nor 'sad', rather as just 'me'. Yet once again the potential distinction is simultaneously asserted and closed down by the suggestion that fans might be '[a]ll different, all the same'. However, here the contradiction is explicitly acknowledged and the respondent makes a sensitive observation that might best be crystallised as the notion that

fandom is inherently contradictory, but what overarches it and unites fans regardless of disposition or alignment is a deeply committed and interactive relationship with *Doctor Who*. The idea that '[t]he lonesome man in the queue at Tenth Planet who buys every seemingly pointless piece of merchandise is the man responsible for getting the series back on air [...] he is writing, producing and probably starring in the new series', has the potential to both impose and erase distinctions between different 'types' of fan and different conceptions of fandom. To me, it suggests that such distinctions are fluid, contextual and linked into the overarching sense of potentiality and plurality offered by fan-hood. The one constant is *Doctor Who* itself, here understood as both *shaping* and in turn being *shaped by fans* – '*Who writes the script*'.

Over the course of this chapter, I have examined a wide range of responses to the qualitative definition exercise which run through successive sections of my questionnaire. Whilst they have all arguably been shaped by broader discursive concerns which are determined and constituted by different cultural and subcultural social formations, each of these definitions is also shaped by the experiences of the individual respondent. They are also shaped by the specific context of the research, which emphasises (or imposes the need for) categorization, explicitly inviting the respondents to locate both themselves and others within categories which they are asked to define on their own 'terms'. And as Deschamps and Devos suggest, such an emphasis on categorisation does indeed lead to increases in 'both ingroup favouritism or intergroup differentiation (which can be called



sociocentrism) and autofavouritism or differentiation between self and others (which can be called egocentrism)' (1998, p.9). A large number of respondents draw a range of distinctions between their own ingroup and a number of different outgroups (ranging from 'regular viewers' to 'car drivers'), whilst an equally numerous selection of respondents also draw complex (and often contradictory) distinctions between themselves and other members of the ingroup. Additionally, there might be a case to argue that the *Doctor Who* fan ingroup itself breaks down into a number of sub-categories (which are self-defined by either their members or by the members of other sub-groups); however, this is a matter which would need to be explored at length in any subsequent research, as the extant data would not support a detailed analysis of such a possibility. This is nevertheless reflected in part by the concentration on four distinct dimensions of fan investment over the following chapters.

One constant which intersects almost all the respondents' definitional accounts at some point or other is the use of *oppositional* categorizations. Whether defining themselves by emphasising their distinctiveness or differentiation from outgroups such as 'regular viewers' or fans of things other than *Doctor Who*, or making interindividual distinctions between themselves and other members of the ingroup(s) (or doing both simultaneously – not only did some respondents treat 'people as individuals in one context and groups in another' [Oakes *et al*, 1994, p.189], they also did *both* [perhaps contradictorily] in the same context), most respondents define themselves in opposition to *something* at a certain point in their self-account. Such a process of dividing phenomena up into different subjectivities

is arguably an inescapable mechanism of self- and social categorization. Indeed Sarah Thornton argues, in the investigation of the distinction between 'the 'hip' world of the dance crowd' and the 'mainstream' which forms part of her book *Club Cultures*, that the 'contrast between 'us' and the 'mainstream' is more directly related to the process of envisioning social worlds and discriminating between social groups' (1995, p.5).

Thornton goes on to examine the meaning of the 'mainstream' as a 'trope, which, once prised open, reveals the complex and cryptic relations [in the case of her research] between age and social structure' (*ibid*). The distinction between ingroup and 'mainstream' outgroup(s) is seen to 'reaffirm binary oppositions such as the alternative and the straight, the *diverse and the homogenous*, the radical and the conformist, the distinguished and the common' (*ibid*, italics in original). The status of the mainstream is also questioned, in relation to both its representation in previous academic accounts of subcultures (e.g. Hebdige, 1979; Grossberg, 1987) and also its relation with the subcultures themselves (Thornton, 1995, pp. 87-105). The previous academic accounts are viewed as being largely problematic in their depictions of mainstream and subculture. These accounts, Thornton argues, construct 'binary oppositions' that invoke 'inconsistent fantasies of the mainstream' (p.92). Instead of making direct comparisons between the social, economic, ethical and political issues which are involved in establishing the value of a particular culture or subculture over that of another, such oppositional accounts instead allow 'cultural studies [to] find pockets of symbolic resistance wherever [it] look[s]' (p.93).



Ultimately, Thornton acknowledges that dichotomies such as that represented by the axis 'mainstream/subculture' relate less to actuality than they do to the 'means by which many youth cultures<sup>49</sup> imagine their social world, measure their cultural worth and claim their subcultural capital' (p.96). She suggests that a much more complex conceptualization than that allowed by the oppositional relationship needs to be developed. This should take into account 'both subjective and objective social structures as well as the implications of cultural plurality' (p.97). Thornton examines Lawrence Grossberg's (1987) assertion that the 'fluid boundaries' between subcultures and mainstreams mean that the two fields become indistinguishable. She identifies two problems with such an assertion; the construction of youth as a homogenous 'undifferentiated mass'; and the absence of consideration of 'the social significance of the concept of the "mainstream" to youthful maps of the cultural world'. If 'the mainstream' constitutes a meaningful aspect of the 'embodied social structure' of youth then it cannot be understood as being 'value free' and needs to be contextualised, Thornton argues (1995, p.98). She suggests that that 'the vast majority of clubbers and ravers distinguish themselves against the mainstream'. Such a process of distinction is understood as reflecting the 'social logic of subcultural capital' which 'reveals itself most clearly by what it dislikes and what it emphatically isn't' (p.105).

'Subcultural capital' is Thornton's adaptation of the concept of cultural capital, drawn from the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (primarily

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<sup>49</sup> Whilst Thornton specifies 'youth culture' here, as this was the field in which her empirical research was situated, I would contend that this assertion is not (nor cannot) be limited to specifically youth-based subcultures.

*Distinction*, 1984). Bourdieu examines the cultural processes which operate within judgements of taste, describing such processes through an overarching 'economistic' metaphor (Hills, 2002, pp. 46-47; Gershuny, 2000, pp. 84-85). As Hills notes, the metaphor employed by Bourdieu 'treats all social relations as if they are economic', defining human social and cultural interaction in terms of 'investment' (2002, p.47). Thus people have access to types of capital other than economic; social and cultural capital are also 'unequally distributed across society' and their distribution is related to 'our place in the class system' (*ibid*). Different class fractions possess different levels of economic, social and cultural capital, the distribution of which is largely related to factors such as education and exposure to culture. Hills sees Bourdieu's work as offering an 'interesting challenge to fan studies' through its assertion that 'fandoms may be thoroughly reducible to the practices of specific class fractions' (2002, p.47). He criticises the assumption which he sees as being inherent in Bourdieu's argument, that Bourdieu's idea of 'cultural capital' is 'fixed and monolithically legitimate', a 'single thing' which carries the same value across all fields and class fractions (pp.48-49). A model such as this neglects considerations of how 'cultural capital' may be 'fragmented, internally inconsistent and struggled over':

Our objects of cultural knowledge and education are various and are themselves caught up in networks of value which may vary between communities and subcultures as well as across class distinctions. Such a fixed model also neglects the



possibility that struggles over the legitimacy of “cultural capital” may occur both between and *within* class fractions, communities and subcultures.

(2002, p. 49)

Thornton’s development of the concept of ‘subcultural capital’ represents one attempt to address the problems in Bourdieu’s fixed and singular model. She stresses that *Club Cultures* is ‘not about dominant ideologies and subversive subcultures, but about subcultural ideologies’, which she sees as ‘a means by which youth imagine their own and other social groups, assert their distinctive character and affirm that they are not members of an undifferentiated mass’ (1995, p.10). She describes the *tactical* nature of distinctions, which ‘are never just assertions of equal difference’ but instead ‘entail some claim to authority and presume the inferiority of *others*’ (*ibid*, italics in original). In Bourdieu’s conception, cultural capital is ‘the linchpin of a system of distinction in which cultural hierarchies correspond to social ones and peoples tastes are predominantly a marker of class’ (and is linked with social and economic capital). Thornton notes that the ‘subcategories’ of capital which Bourdieu elaborates are ‘all at play within Bourdieu’s own field, within *his* social world of players with high volumes of institutionalized cultural capital’ (which is effectively a ‘privileged domain’) (p.11, italics in original).

Thus, Thornton proposes subcultural capital as one of a ‘subspecies of capital operating’ inside a ‘less-privileged domain[...]’ than that represented by

Bourdieu's own field. Subcultural capital, it is suggested, 'confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder', working in a similar manner as its 'adult equivalent' (p.11). (The notion that subcultural capital effectively represents a 'juvenile' form of cultural capital feels slightly odd, as it both potentially conflates 'youth culture' with subculture [it is surely both overly reductive and counter-productive to suggest that subcultures are entirely, or even predominantly, youth-based], and also seems to suggest that subcultural identities are 'grown out of', subcultural capital giving way to legitimate cultural capital as an individual matures.) A key distinction between cultural and subcultural capital is that the latter is 'not as class-bound' as the former. Though Thornton suggests that class is by no means irrelevant, 'it does not correlate in any one-to-one way with levels of subcultural capital [...] in fact, class is wilfully obfuscated by subcultural distinctions' (p.12). This 'obfuscation' is due, in part, to the 'extra-curricular' nature of subcultural capital (p.13). Whilst cultural capital is 'accumulated through upbringing and education' (p.10) subcultural capital is 'knowledge one cannot learn in school'. Additionally, subcultural capital is not easily translated into economic capital, unlike cultural capital (p.13).

How might Thornton's argument relate back to the responses analysed over the course of this chapter? She describes popular distinctions as 'means by which people jockey for social power, as discriminations by which players are both assigned social statuses and strive for a sense of self-worth'. These distinctions are best understood as 'forms of *subcultural capital* or means by which young



people negotiate and accumulate status within their own social worlds<sup>50</sup> ‘ (p.163, italics in original). The cultural hierarchies in which subcultural capital is positioned as a linchpin are determined in part (both deliberately and accidentally) by the sources of information and discussion constituted in the media (p.164). Issues of taste are described as being ‘essential’ to Thornton’s conception of popular culture. They are ‘fought over precisely because people define themselves and others through what they like and dislike’ (*ibid*).

Returning briefly to the discussion of self- and group categorization which opened this chapter, we see a similar ‘fight’ over alignment and dis-alignment in the sociocentric and egocentric differentiation described by Deschamps and Devos (1998, p.9). If, for our purposes, fan ingroups are constructed as *taste communities* (for instance, individuals are linked as a group by a shared passion for *Doctor Who*), then we can observe over the course of this chapter a variety of attempts to define both individuals and groups through the means of taste. However, what also becomes apparent is the range of distinctions drawn by different respondents, and the contextual bases on which these distinctions are founded. Where Thornton observes a relatively fixed opposition between the disparaged, subordinated ‘mainstream’ (the characteristics of which are actually those of ‘a feminine working class minority’) and the dance music subculture, this chapter observes a number of oppositions in operation, sometimes more than one simultaneously, and this points toward what I would consider to be the key finding of this aspect of the data analysis. By offering the respondents the opportunity to define what ‘fan’ and

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<sup>50</sup> Again, I would remove the word ‘young’ from such a definition to better reflect the context of my own research.

'fandom' mean in relation to their own senses of personal and social identity, we have been able to observe in some detail the complex, often contradictory definitional manoeuvres that individuals engage in. In the course of these manoeuvres, the respondents draw upon relatively consistent and stable constructions of 'other' that appear to have socially- or discursively-constituted origins (the 'anorak', the 'ordinary viewer'), and also upon different specific personal, social and subcultural alignments.

The key element here is the *contextual* nature of identity. The accounts of the respondents analysed over the course of this chapter strongly suggest that the identity of 'fan' is by no means a fixed or stable categorization, that it is always claimed or conferred 'in context' and constructed or conceptualized differently, according to the specific context. A number of the contexts in which the identity of fan is claimed involve quite clearly articulated oppositions. However, as observed over the course of this chapter, these cannot necessarily be considered in relatively simplistic binary terms, such as the mainstream/subculture axis observed by scholars such as Tulloch (1995) and Thornton (1995). Instead we find oppositions that are shifting and difficult to pin down, that may become contradictory or pluralistic, or that change in relation to specific contexts. Individuals define themselves in opposition to one definition of fan or 'fan-identity' and in alignment with another, or define themselves in opposition to a range of different definitions or 'fan-identities'. They define themselves in opposition to 'mainstream' or 'ordinary' viewers in one moment, but then align themselves more easily with 'ordinary' viewers than 'anorak' fans in another. Both intergroup and



interindividual differentiations take on a variety of forms and make use of a variety of distinctions. Individuals make active and tactical use of definitions, categorizations, distinctions and stereotypes, in order to locate themselves in relation to other individuals, social groups and taste formations.

Mention of Bourdieu's 'economistic' central metaphor leads me to a brief discussion of where this thesis has already been, and how the ground covered is significant to where it is about to go next. We have so far examined the overtly 'institutional' nature of much of the previous empirical work on fan communities, and I have offered a potential means of redressing the balance in my self-selection-based and 'decentralized' (in terms of appeal and distribution) questionnaire study. Analysis of the 'catergorizational' aspects of the questionnaire responses has revealed wide range of context-specific (and sometimes contradictory) definitions by which the respondents defined individual and group relations. This, I would argue, subsequently problematizes any attempt to impose definitive classifications onto fans and fandom. Indeed it becomes difficult, even within a single fan orientation such as *Doctor Who*, to describe a singular and stable 'fandom'. Alignments, associations, social and interpersonal relations are dependent upon particular contexts, which can and do shift and change over time. Therefore, the next four chapters each investigate a different 'dimension' of fan *investment*. These dimensions are not necessarily reliant on specific alignments or even upon specific definitions of 'fan' or 'fandom'. They leave space for difficult or contradictory data. They reflect both the open, non-exclusive nature of my subject

selection process, and the contextually-dependant nature of the different dimensions of investment.



## CHAPTER TWO

### **The Spectrum of Financial Investment**

[I'm] a bit irritated that the BBC continued to exploit the programme commercially in so many ways for so long without making a new series, although when the programme was on TV I still bought things (Target books etc). Ultimately it's my choice as to whether to spend money on it. I sometimes feel a bit annoyed with myself for spending so much time & money on it over the years – maybe it's some kind of weird compulsion?

(1.3, 061)

Whilst the previous chapter deals with a broad range of definitions and characterisations of both individuals and social groups, two key constants are apparent throughout many of the varied responses analysed. The first of these informs the development of the model that is central to this thesis (which will begin to be extrapolated in this chapter), the investment spectrums. What becomes very clear in the previous chapter in this regard is that the respondents themselves identify and define their fan-activities, at least in part, as forms of investment. There is undoubtedly something of a 'chicken and egg' situation operating here. The questionnaire is deliberately (though not entirely explicitly) organized around specific modes of engagement which mirror the ultimate spectrums fairly closely

and yet is itself informed by previous participant observation in fan activities. However, I feel it is justifiable to suggest that the spectrum model is directly inspired by the data offered by the respondents.

The second quality that unites a significant proportion of the accounts offered by the respondents is a sense of contradiction or plurality. This, I suggested, results at least in part from the contextual nature of self- and group categorization and also of fandom itself. I also argued strongly the necessity of keeping this potential for contradiction open and transparent, and the undesirability of rationalisation in the interpretation of the data from the questionnaires. These ambivalences and pluralities are prevalent in responses relating to each of the spectrums of investment. For example, the respondent quoted at the head of this chapter expresses annoyance with both the institutional authority responsible for the continued commercial exploitation of *Doctor Who* in the absence of the TV show and also with himself for making such large financial investments in the franchise. He also emphasizes the freedom of choice he exercises in making such investments and yet simultaneously ponders the possibility that these investments are the result of an (involuntary and uncontrollable) 'compulsion'. The later section of this chapter will examine some of the qualitative responses to questions relating to financial investment in light of such ambivalences. However, the primary data which informs the construction of this particular spectrum is quantitative. Once the spectrum has been proposed and outlined, the qualitative data will come into play in order to allow me to attempt to locate the respondents upon its axes.



What is actually under consideration here is the consumption of the *Doctor Who* product (and this is the case with at least the first three spectrums proposed by this thesis – indeed, they might just as easily have been labelled ‘spectrums of consumption’<sup>51</sup>). The relationship between fandom and consumerism has been explored by a number of theorists, and each of them uncovers different facets of a complex dynamic. For example, Jonathan David Tankel and Keith Murphy (1998) examine what they term (working from McCracken [1988]) ‘curatorial consumption’ amongst comic book fans. Here, fans are constituted as collectors, a perspective which sees ‘the process of acquisition [...] as the primary activity of the fan [in this specific case]’ although Tankel and Murphy are careful to note that ‘in many contexts of fandom, acquisition of artefacts is a subsidiary activity’ (p.56). In the case of the spectrum model proposed by this thesis, ‘acquisition of artefacts’ (financial investment) is neither a dominant or subsidiary activity. It is better understood as specific dimension of fandom. Nevertheless, Tankel and Murphy’s account of comic book fans contains much of relevance to the concerns of this chapter and so some discussion, albeit brief, is necessary.

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<sup>51</sup> I use the term ‘easily’, but this must not be conflated with ‘equally’. Whilst a number of commentators have attempted to redress the balance, ‘consumption’, I would argue, carries with it a potentially negative charge (with connotations of passivity and cultural dupism) in comparison with ‘investment’, which implies both freedom of choice and the likelihood of ‘returns’. Matt Hills sees a problem here. in that ‘investment’ constructs the fan as a ‘calculating subject’ aiming to maximise such returns. If we work on the assumption that these returns are largely taken in terms of abstract (unknowable?) qualities, such as pleasure and emotional attachment, rather than solid use- or exchange-values of artefacts, then Hills’ criticisms seem somewhat more remote – the implication of Hills’ challenge appears to be that fans might invest ‘selflessly’ with no real desire for any return, which perhaps belies the complexity of the situation.

The value of specific fan-artefacts (such as comic books) is determined, according to Tankel and Murphy, not merely through use- or exchange-values, but through 'a complex set of criteria' which 'identify unique qualities in [artefacts] that are deemed valuable, qualities that permit differentiation among a range of mass-produced artefacts' (p.58). Thus, they argue, the value of mass-reproduced cultural artefacts 'is determined by the consumers of such artefacts, who are able to recognize what is unique from what is, by Benjamin's definition, uniform'. The ability, to recognize value in artefacts which others may view as uniform or banal 'describes an essential component of fandom' (*ibid*). This in turn feeds into the construction of fans and fandom as resistant prevalent elsewhere<sup>52</sup>, as the consumer's preservation and valuation of mass-products designed for obsolescence (in order to maintain the evanescence of consumption and thus generate capital) 'brings pleasure and possibly financial reward to the consumer rather than the producer' (*ibid*). This is explicitly characterized by Tankel and Murphy as confronting 'the widely accepted view of mass production and consumption' (*ibid*), part of wider 'strategies of resistance that recognize the futility of modern life, while simultaneously offering the possibility of finding personal meaning in an impersonal world' (p.67).

The value of each fan-artefact is determined in part by the fan her/himself 'in terms of psychological value and as an entrepreneur in terms of resale/exchange within the network of other collectors' and solely not on the basis of 'traditional criteria such as production and distribution costs' (pp.58-59). Financial gain, where such a possibility exists, is deferred in favour of a present

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<sup>52</sup> See chapter 1 of Hills' *Fan Cultures* for an overview (which is itself discussed later in this chapter)



sense of possession or preservation (*ibid*). Tankel and Murphy then draw on the work of McCracken (1988), concerning the curatorial nature of the possessions of Lois Roget, who sought to preserve a series of artefacts deriving from the history of her family. Each of these artefacts was described through its meaning from the use it was put to during the history of Roget's family, and not through its specific function. Thus, the artefacts are rendered not merely things, but instead as 'conveyers of personal and social history' (p.59). McCracken termed Roget's behaviour 'curatorial consumption' due to the fact that 'possession, preservation and orderly succession of ownership superseded the immediate use dictated by industrial production' (*ibid*). Tankel and Murphy see 'the personal investment in artefacts' inherent in McCracken's concept of curatorial consumption as being 'similar to cultural practices associated with fandom' (*ibid*). Whilst this is true, I feel it requires a brief clarification, particularly as the authors then move on to claim that producers use curatorial behaviour amongst fans as a marketing tool. Such curatorial behaviour (or at least the potential for it) is likely to be inherent in *all* collecting activities – 'collecting' implies retention of artefacts which have become significant to the experience of the individual in some way and which are not simply purchased for their projected future exchange values, whereas 'dealing' or 'trading' imply less complex and more knowable profit-driven strategies of acquisition.

Whilst producers and publishers utilise curatorial behaviour in order to market their products to niche consumers such as fans, in the case of comic books the consumers themselves, Tankel and Murphy suggest, also take an active role in the 'direction and maintenance' of the product through fanzines and letter-writing.

The fans form a 'textual community' which, through the access afforded by fanzines, 'is in a position to determine the direction of the plot and who will write or draw specific titles' (p.62). This parallels the situation in *Doctor Who* fandom to a degree, and makes it difficult in both cases to distinguish exactly where the boundaries between niche marketing and (what I will term) 'fan-determinism'<sup>53</sup> might be drawn. Ultimately, Tankel and Murphy note that curatorial behaviour has an emotional or psychological basis; that it is closely bound up with age-based identities (cf Hills, on age-based identities and the subjective intensity of different fandoms, 2002, pp. 82-83) and social context; and that it develops in relation to a sense of 'aesthetic pleasure'. This, they argue, 'supports the notion that collecting fulfils psychological needs and desires distinct from ephemeral consumption' (1998, p.64)<sup>54</sup>. They conclude that collecting comic books is more akin to the activities of museum curators than the purchase and use of mass culture artefacts<sup>55</sup>, arguing that curatorial behaviour and the interactions of the collector with the artefact are the motivational factors for both the curatorial behaviours themselves (an uneasy paradox which is not satisfactorily explained) and also '*for fandom in general*' (p.67, italics mine). This last assertion is deeply suspect, as in

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<sup>53</sup> That is, where the content and 'shape' of the fiction or product is shaped (at least to an extent) by the discursive activities of fans.

<sup>54</sup> Again, a couple of slight qualifications here. Firstly, it must be emphasized that this is not specific to fan activities by any means. And second, there is the possibility that the separation of curatorial and ephemeral modes of consumption evokes at least the spectre of another 'moral dualism' whereby curatorial consumption (through its potential for 'resistance' and fulfilment of 'psychological needs and desires') is somehow more rewarding or 'better' than ephemeral consumption, rather than merely *distinct* from it.

<sup>55</sup> Edging yet closer to the moral dualism mentioned above by invoking the 'high culture' domain of the museum (or even art gallery) and pitting it against the 'mass culture' domain of the shopping mall...



the case of *Doctor Who* it would mean that the text itself has no bearing on the development of fandom (Tankel and Murphy insist that 'the motivations [...] for fandom in general [...] do not derive from qualities uniquely inherent in the artefact' but from the interaction with and curation of the artefact [*ibid*]). Whilst it might conceivably be the case that motivations for fandom may sometimes have little or indeed nothing to do with the specific qualities of the fan artefact or text, this seems like rather a sweeping generalization on the part of Tankel and Murphy. It seems reductive to attempt to totally divorce the distinct qualities of the text itself from any explanation of the motivations for fan activity. They then go on to make another even more dubious claim, one which seems particularly pessimistic in its view of 'modern life':

*Curatorial consumption* and fandom permit the individual, alone and in community, to find pleasure and satisfaction from the products of mass culture. Curatorial consumption and fandom are strategies of resistance that recognize the futility of modern life, while simultaneously offering the possibility of finding personal meaning in an impersonal world

(1998, p.67, italics in original)

The notion that fandom represents a means of cultural resistance, with which Tankel and Murphy conclude, has (as has already been discussed) found currency in a great deal of the academic writing on fans and fandom. What is

more, such a notion time and again revolves around a binary which splits consumerism and resistance into distinct 'bad' and 'good' subjectivities (Hills, 2002, p.27), or sets up an axis between 'good' (resistant) fans and 'bad' capitalism. Such dualisms are in play in the work of Fiske (1992), Bacon-Smith (1992), Jenkins (1992), Harris (1998), MacDonald (1998), Classen (1998), Baym (1998) and others, and this viewpoint has been investigated and challenged by a number of commentators. For instance, Matt Hills questions the origin of the 'notion of the "resistive" fan or cultist', whilst taking care not to dismiss this as 'entirely a fiction of cultural studies researchers seeking to romanticise active audiences' (p.28). He identifies a number of specific attributes which appear to bear out the resistive categorization but then notes that these have often led to the conceptualization of many media fandoms in 'anti-consumerist' terms. This viewpoint is criticized for being 'one-sided' and determined by the specific agendas of the academics studying fandom which distinguish between 'bad' consumer identities and 'good' fan identities (pp. 28-29).

Hills highlights a contradiction inherent here, one which is not 'simply [...] theoretical' but 'an inescapable contradiction which fans live out', namely that fans simultaneously 'resist [...] norms of capitalist society and its rapid turnover of novel commodities' and 'are also implicated in these very economic and cultural processes'. They are 'ideal consumers' with stable, predictable consumption habits, and yet they 'also express anti-commercial beliefs (or "ideologies", we might say, since these beliefs are not entirely in alignment with the cultural situation in which fans find themselves)'. This contradiction should be 'tolerated'



theoretically, and not closed down 'prematurely'. Hills discusses the work of Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) and Henry Jenkins (1992) in light of their adherence to a logic which seeks to 'construct a sustainable opposition between the 'fan' and the 'consumer' [...]', and which 'falsifies the fan's experience by positioning fan and consumer as separable cultural identities' (2002, p.29). Such work, Hills suggests, 'seemingly colludes with 'half' of the fan experience (anti-commercial ideology) by writing out or marginalising the other, contradictory 'half' (that of the commodity completist)' (p.30). In order to combat this, he develops the idea of the 'dialectic of value' (working from Adorno [1996]):

This considers fans to be simultaneously inside and outside processes of commodification, experiencing an intensely personal "use-value" in relation to their object of fandom, and then being re-positioned within more general and systematic processes of "exchange value"

(2002, p.44)

Such an approach might thus allow an 'awareness of contradiction and complexity in specific cases' (p.34). Exchange-value and use-value 'cannot ever be fully separated out from one another', as the system of exchange value is inescapable even in the act of finding one's own use for a text. For this reason, Hills suggests, 'fan "appropriations" of texts or "resistances" to consumption can always be reclaimed as new instances of exchange-value' (*ibid*). He then moves on to

examine the relationship between niche marketing and fandom in light of the 'dialectic of value', a discussion which is of prime relevance to the focus of this thesis, *Doctor Who*.

However before going any further, I feel it is necessary to examine an 'established' assumption which is played out intact in Hills' discussion. He cautions against the inflation of the resistive fan in order to support specific academic agendas. Yet he also emphatically states that 'fans [...] express anti-commercial beliefs (or 'ideologies' [...])'. Whilst this is undoubtedly the case in a number of key studies of fan subcultures (the work of Jenkins [1992, 1998] and Bacon-Smith [1992] being two examples which immediately spring to mind), it is by no means a normative or essential quality of fandom, yet Hills' lack of qualification here would appear to carry such an implication. The subcultural groups in which Jenkins and Bacon-Smith conducted their respective studies were heavily involved in resistive, anti-commercial strategies, and this was undoubtedly a key motivating factor in the selection of the groups for research. In my own research I have not encountered one single response throughout all fifty questionnaires which explicitly vocalises anti-commercial beliefs or ideologies. As we shall see, in many cases the situation is actually completely the reverse. Of course this is not to suggest that none of the respondents in my subject group might be capable of resistive behaviour of some form. Rather it is a caution against assuming that such behaviour reflects firmly held beliefs, or is prevalent throughout the entire 'global population' of media fans.



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In essence, the culture of consumption is never simply a mere symbolic echo or the purely functional realisation of product positioning by advertising and marketing strategies. Similarly, the market is never a simple reflection of consumer tastes and needs, or for that matter an institution which slavishly follows autonomous or sovereign cultural practices. This suggests that consumers have clear limits placed upon the range of meanings and uses which they may assign to commodities by the fact that those commodities are already adapted, both functionally and symbolically, by advertising and their design to meet the imagined needs of an ideal market. Likewise, the design and symbolic contextualization of commodities by producers and advertisers are structured by the lived meanings and uses of commodities as they have passed over into the status of cultural objects in everyday life.

(Lee, 1993, p.49)

The niche market represented by 'cult TV fandom' is bound up in what Hills describes as a 'complex situation' (2002, p.36). Whilst fans may be understood as being empowered in this light, they are simultaneously 'disempowered', both culturally and economically, 'via their niche isolation from

wider “coalition audiences” and via the related decline in the wider economic viability of [their] favoured media text(s)’ (*ibid*). He sees the relationship between cult TV fandom and target marketing as ‘essentially contradictory’, arguing that unexpected or seemingly resistive consumption practices are often ‘rapidly recuperated within discourses and practices of marketing’ (*ibid*). Thus fan subcultures have actually offered consistent patterns of ‘dedicated and loyal’ consumption which represent a strong appeal to niche producers and programme schedulers working within the non-terrestrial multi-channel system (*ibid*). Reeves *et al* offer an account of these developments, following the shift from the network TV era of what they term TVI to the ‘diffused, multi-channel, post-fordist and postmodern’ TVII (1996, p.29). Here, syndication, globalization, the advent of multi-channel and non-terrestrial TV, VCRs, personal computers and the internet have led to a fracturing and atomization of audiences which has necessitated programme-makers pursuing small but desirable niche audiences (pp.29-31). Satellite/digital channels such as the Sci-Fi channel (incidentally the US home of the 2005 series of *Doctor Who* at the time of writing) ‘constitute and target “cult” audiences by defining their programme content in terms of genre’ (Jones & Pearson, 2004, xii).

‘Cult’ channels develop brand-identities and appeal to loyal, advertiser-friendly demographics through niche strategies, bringing success ‘through specialist not generalist programme content’ (*ibid*). Hills argues that such channels are ‘unlikely to reach anything resembling a mass audience’ and so use strategies such as ‘financial clout’ (e.g. Sky TV’s consistent pursuit of first-run rights on cult



TV shows such as the various incarnations of *Star Trek*) and specifically targeted and themed inexpensive reruns of cult series to attract consistent niche audiences. Thus fans are 'directly targeted as a niche market, rather than emerging unexpectedly through 'grassroots' movements of TV appreciation' (2002, p.36). Cult TV, Mark Jancovich and Nathan Hunt suggest, has 'virtually acquired the status of a market category' (2004, p.38). Cult audiences, far from being considered either an irrelevance or an irritation by the TV industry, are now both actively pursued and *generated* by programme-makers and schedulers (Hills, 2002, p.36; Jancovich & Hunt, 2004, pp.37-38). The creation of new fans (which Jones & Pearson suggest shows like *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are specifically designed to do [2004, xiii]), is vital for the survival of niche broadcasters as it allows them to maintain and increase viewing figures and so expand potential advertising revenue (Jancovich & Hunt, 2004, p.37). However, Jones & Pearson suggest that 'cult television is fairly mainstream fare' compared with cult film, as the fragmented audiences which cult programmes attract are still reckoned in the millions (2004, xiii).

Jancovich & Hunt examine this situation from the perspective of the oppositions and distinctions which fan ingroups construct and maintain. Fans, they argue, police the boundaries of their communities quite rigorously, placing a great deal of value in the notion of community membership, and oppose themselves to the media. And whilst the media act to produce fandom (as described above), they are also seen to threaten to destroy fan communities at the same time, by 'undermining the sense of exclusivity' (the influx of new 'media-created' fans

potentially eroding the sense of 'community membership'). Jancovich & Hunt suggest that the media actually solve this potential problem by presenting themselves as 'an organic element of fandom itself' (one example of the idea of production 'by fans, for fans') (2004, pp. 29-30). The example given to illustrate this idea is the fan magazines which are either edited or presented as being edited by fans with the intention of reassuring fans 'of the exclusivity of the magazine' by addressing the readership as "genuine" insiders (p.30).

Hills takes this further to explore the possibility that 'textual poachers' might turn 'gamekeeper' in the case of fan-production which has become legitimized and industry-approved (and even sanctioned). This he views not as straightforward empowerment but as occurring 'quite precisely within the economic and cultural parameters of niche marketing whereby fan-consumers and producers are more closely aligned within a common "reception sphere" or "interpretive community" [...]' (2002, p.40). This represents a very precise form of target marketing 'in which fan's values and authenticities are [...] sold back to them'. There is no-one 'better placed to produce this material [...] than the fans themselves', as the marketability of such productions is very much dependent on fan knowledge and product authenticity (*ibid*). And so fan production does not automatically constitute resistive behaviour. In fact this seems to be far from the case. I would strongly suggest that there is every possibility that the complex relationship between media fandom and the media itself is best understood as a form of *symbiosis*. As Jancovich & Hunt note, cult audiences are very much related to the media institutions, despite any declared opposition or perceived antagonism (2004, p.38).



Much of what is outlined above can be identified at work within the research subjects under consideration in this thesis. I will shortly move on to specifically examine the role which niche marketing and fan production play in the financial investments made by the questionnaire respondents. However, a number of ideas raised by others are not borne out by the data I have available. I have already noted the complete absence of 'anti-commercial' discourses from the responses to the questionnaire. It is also important to examine the status of *Doctor Who* as a cult series, as considered under this banner it is markedly distinct from most of the programmes identified as cult by the writers drawn on above. Having originated in a time which likely predates even the concept of 'cult TV', *Doctor Who* was designed to be (and so remained for the most part) populist, mainstream, 'family' television. At least until 1987, when it was scheduled as 'complementary' programming opposite *Coronation Street*, it was neither considered to be, nor produced as, a niche series. The inception of an institutionally-based organized fandom is usually dated to the foundation of the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society in 1975, 12 years into the show's 26 year original run (though a *Doctor Who* Fan Club had existed since the turn of the decade) (Cornell, 1997, p.8). Put simply, *Doctor Who* has never been considered by TV producers to be a cult franchise in terms of its *televisual* format. Indeed, the 2005 revival series has been awarded flagship status in the BBC's Saturday night schedules, supported by arguably the most concerted and pervasive publicity campaign British television ever witnessed. *Doctor Who* has been returned to TV not as a niche cult show designed to slowly build an audience of loyal fans, nor as an attempt to capture a nostalgic audience

of thirty- and forty-somethings who grew up with the show, but rather as a calculated effort to appeal as broadly as possible across a range of audience demographics and thus 'rediscover' a family audience. This aim has been explicitly stated many times by all involved and seems to have been borne out by an average viewing figure of 7.95 million for the 2005 series and 7.71 million for the 2006 series (Spilsbury, 2006, p.8).

The mainstream, populist nature of *Doctor Who* may well account for the comparative absence of anti-commercial beliefs expressed in the accounts given by my questionnaire respondents. The potential problems of a cult show 'going mainstream' (selling out?) and thus declining in fan-appeal, being 'ruined', as identified by Jancovich & Hunt, cannot therefore apply to a show which has always *been* mainstream. There is strong evidence to suggest that, pre-1980, the fans of *Doctor Who* were considered little more than a minor irritation by successive production teams (for example, when asked by John Tulloch how much influence the fans had over *Doctor Who*, Graham Williams [series producer from 1977-1980] replied 'None whatsoever. They would rather like to think they have' [in Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995, p. 150]). The qualities that are traditionally identified as appealing to fan viewers (continuity, character development, etc) were more often than not disregarded by production teams more concerned with maintaining popular audience appeal, and this led to outspoken and vociferous criticism of the show within organized fan communities such as the DWAS. Accounts of this period (1975-1979) are to be found in Cornell (1997) and Tulloch & Alvarado (1983, the qualitative material from which was later returned to in Tulloch & Jenkins [1995]).



The latter of these accounts in particular offers an insight into the opinions of 'executive' fans who occupied key positions in organized fan hierarchies at the time<sup>56</sup>. The problem was not the media or the 'mainstream' threatening the show by making it seem less exclusive, but instead threatening certain of fandom's specific pleasures by not treating the show (in the opinions of certain fans) 'seriously' (Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995, pp156-159). Indeed, an oft-expressed concern was that the show would lose its popular appeal and thus be cancelled (see Tulloch's explanation of the 'powerless elite', in Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995, pp. 141-151).

The relationship between the fans and the institutional authority responsible for *Doctor Who* altered quite significantly in 1980, with the appointment of John Nathan-Turner (JN-T) as series producer, a position he was to hold until the cancellation in 1989. Nathan-Turner began actively to court organized fandom, attending conventions, appointing a high-ranking member of the DWAS, Ian Levine, as unofficial continuity adviser to the series, and making concerted efforts to maintain consistency in continuity and satisfy the perceived needs of fandom. However, this ultimately led to even more vociferous fan criticism and eventually a fanzine-orchestrated campaign to have JN-T sacked from the post of producer (see Tulloch & Alvarado [1983], Tulloch & Jenkins [1995], Cornell [1997] and Gillatt

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<sup>56</sup> There is a slight issue of balance here, as Tulloch and Alvarado seem to have actively sought out those individuals with strong negative opinions of the 'Graham Williams era', which sometimes gives the misleading impression of an overwhelming consensus of opinion against Williams' stewardship. This is, I believe, a common problem amongst studies which concentrate on the qualitative accounts of 'executive' fans and individuals occupying key positions within organized fan hierarchies – assumed hegemonies are deployed which misrepresent ground-level fan 'opinion' and neglect the complex reality of fan discourse.

[1998] for more comprehensive accounts of this period). The efforts to appeal to fandom have often been linked with the slow decline in audience popularity of *Doctor Who* between 1985 and 1989. Matt Hills (working from Brooker [1999]) suggests that:

capitulating to the fans' agenda as a target market ('empowering' the fans) potentially spells the end of the text which has inspired their very fandom, since the isolation of the fan audience from any wider coalition audience effectively terminates any economic viability for the text beyond its ghetto of 'preaching to the converted'

(2002, p.38)

Whilst such a situation was undoubtedly a contributing factor to the apparent 'death' of televisual *Doctor Who*, it is impossible to ignore the numerous other factors (such as scheduling, the switch to independent production and shifts in audience) which were just as influential.

*Doctor Who* finally became a niche-targeted cult franchise at the outset of the 1990s, *after* it had been cancelled as an ongoing BBC TV production. The transition from televisual to other formats (novels, and later, audio plays, internet 'webcasts' and novellas) mirrored almost exactly the transition from populist to niche product. Indeed, Matt Hills argues that 'cult fandom' is characterized by the 'absence of "new" or official material in the originating medium', suggesting that



neither *Star Trek* nor *Doctor Who* became cult until the persistence of popularity after the cancellation of each series (although he qualifies this in the case of *Doctor Who* with the admission that the series cult status may have 'preceded cancellation') (2002, x-xi, italics in original). Such an approach also leads to the dismissal of fans of the (then current) *The X-Files* from classification as cult fans due to the ongoing nature of the show (*ibid*). However this seems at odds with much writing on cult TV (e.g. Reeves *et al* [1996], Jones & Pearson [2004] and Jancovich & Hunt [2004]), which tends to work from the assumption that shows such as *The X-Files* are explicitly conceived and marketed as 'cult'. The shift from its original format to other formats affected the means by which fans of *Doctor Who* accessed the text in a number of ways, most significantly: the shift from televisual to literary (and audio/radio) conventions; the shift from easily accessed 'free to air' broadcasting to 'pay-per' narrowcasting; and the infiltration of members of the fan community into textual production, leading to *Doctor Who* made 'by fans, for fans'.

Whilst any sustained examination of the 'by fans, for fans' phenomenon is the work of a different thesis, it remains tangentially relevant to the concerns of this account, both in this chapter and the two which follow. Alan McKee's 'case study in *Doctor Who* fandom' (2004) makes a number of useful observations and suggestions which are pertinent to the issues under discussion here and elsewhere. McKee's account is entitled 'How to Tell the Difference Between Production and Consumption', and he immediately suggests that such a distinction is blurry and unclear, that there is 'no clear dividing line' between the two (pp.171-173). He notes that a number of previous studies of fan-writers and producers (e.g.

Jenkins [1992], Penley [1997]) have tended to emphasize the differences between fans and producers by mapping out the distinction 'between collective, non-profit making modes of cultural production and capitalist modes of cultural production'. This, McKee argues, constitutes 'a binary which maps quite poorly onto the fan/producer binary' (p.173). Fan-produced but industrially-licensed products such as *Doctor Who* Magazine (and presumably the novels and audio plays) have 'capitalist statuses'. If this is the case, McKee inquires, then 'how do we explain that a group of fans are creating the primary text that should, logically, belong only to the faceless and powerful producers?' (p.174). And what of unofficial, unlicensed fan productions which are produced to sell at profit which are 'not produced as part of a democratic, anticapitalistic enterprise?' (*ibid*). The boundaries between 'fan' and 'official' production are by no means as clear as previous accounts would have us believe.

Indeed, McKee proceeds to follow production 'down the line' from fanzines to posts and messages made by individuals on fan websites and on to 'casual conversations over drinks [...a]nd private interpretations made of programmes', asking:

at what point do we draw the line, claim here is production, the industry, and here are fans, the powerless, those who may produce, but do not really produce? Of course we do not. We must find other ways than such simple binaries by which to



distinguish between cultural objects produced by different people.

(2004, p. 175)

One suggested method of distinguishing which McKee proposes is 'the concept of *canonicity*' (*ibid*, italics in original), which I shall return to address in more detail in chapter four. What is of relevance here is the suggestion that the size of audience is not a means of determining the 'authenticity' and 'production status' (whether it is 'industry or powerless') of a particular text, due to the relative nature of ratings and audience size. McKee notes that 'there is no number above which the producers suddenly become powerful' (p.175). Instead, the authenticity of each text to the meta-textual understanding of both individuals and of groups of fans, its 'canonicity', might be a better means of distinguishing between the objects produced. This is validated not by the industry, but by 'the fans themselves' (p.177). In *Doctor Who* fandom at least, 'the text is not simply industrially-determined' (p.179). Canonicity is 'produced discursively inside fan communities', is *never* 'determined industrially', and is 'always provisional' as fans never agree unanimously over what constitutes the true canon (pp.181-182).

The cancellation of televisual *Doctor Who* in 1989 'profoundly altered the forms taken by [the programme's] fan culture' by removing what McKee terms 'an easy centre'. The proliferation of non-televisual forms of *Doctor Who*, some of which contradict or are entirely incompatible with others, has since 'made more commonplace debates about [the] canonicity' of these forms, as we shall go on to

see in chapter four. However the canonicity and authenticity of these various forms have also been essential, both in terms of the marketing of the products and the choices made by individual consumers. The financial investments made by my questionnaire respondents are informed, as we shall see, by a number of distinct factors, but key among these is the individually perceived sense of 'authenticity' in the products purchased.

Different *Doctor Who* products were marketed in a variety of ways, ostensibly to appeal to different sectors of the nice market. Virgin Publishing's *New Doctor Who Adventures*, published between 1991 and 1996, were initially described as 'stories too broad and too deep for the small screen' and soon gained a reputation for being often radically different from the TV show which inspired them, a reputation which they often played upon in publicity. When Virgin developed a 'sister' novel range, *Doctor Who – The Missing Adventures*, it seemed like a concerted effort to appeal to more 'traditionally-minded' fans who found the *New Adventures* not to their taste. The *Missing Adventures* aimed to re-create previous television eras of the show, and were given a cover design which both marked them out as 'different' from the *New Adventures* and as 'vintage' (with a silver re-creation of the diamond design *Doctor Who* logo used in the series title sequence throughout much of the 1970s). The back cover informed the reader exactly where the novel might be located within the canon (e.g. 'this novel takes place in between the television stories *The Space Museum* and *The Chase*' [Roberts, 1996, back cover blurb]), a further claim towards authenticity, and a tradition continued when BBC books took over the publication of 'new' and



'missing' *Doctor Who* novels in 1997 (following very similar 'different' and 'traditional' trajectories to those established by Virgin).

As Matt Hills (2004) has noted, the *Doctor Who* audio plays produced by Big Finish Productions from 1999 onwards initially employed a range of devices in order to lend the plays an authenticity and canonicity derived from a sense of 'televisuality'. Beyond more obvious tactics such as employing the original casts of the 1980s TV series and producing stories in the 4x25 minute episode format, the CD booklets contained fake *Radio Times* listings presented as cuttings; the plays were prefaced by spoken introductions in the style of a BBC 'continuity announcer'; and they were previewed in issues of *DWM* with short comic-strip 'trailers', similar in style to those produced by the artist Frank Bellamy in the *Radio Times* in the early 1970s. These product differentiations were not absolute however. Certain *New Adventures* were pitched as 'traditional' and, vice versa, a number of *Missing Adventures* contained material wildly out of character with the TV 'eras' they were supposed to evoke. A small number of Big Finish plays consciously reject the 'televisual' approach (e.g. the '*Doctor Who* adventure as live radio news broadcast' attempted by *Live 34* [2005]). Characters and situations from different (and sometimes contradictory) *Doctor Who* formats cross over into other formats for 'guest appearances' (the *DWM* comic strip companion Frobisher has appeared in 2 Big Finish plays<sup>57</sup>, whilst the Big Finish companion Dr Evelyn Smythe appeared in the BBC Books 'past Doctor' novel *Instruments of Darkness* [Russell, 2002]).

So, 'canonicity' has a direct bearing on the ways in which the post-televisual formats of the *Doctor Who* franchise have been produced, marketed and

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<sup>57</sup> *The Holy Terror* (2000) and *The Maltese Penguin* (2002), both written by Robert Shearman.

purchased. When the bones of the spectrum of financial investment have been laid out in the following section, we shall see the extent to which the marketing of the products and the subsequent choices made by the respondents dictate the position that individuals occupy on the spectrum. Another factor which influences the consumption patterns and spectrum positions of the respondents is rather more prosaic, if no less vital. Indeed, the issue of *paying* for, and of *making effort* to engage with *Doctor Who* is the central focus of this particular section of the questionnaire. I would argue that it is the financial dimension of 1990s/early 2000s *Doctor Who* which has had the biggest influence upon how the new texts have been produced, marketed and consumed.

After the cancellation of the television series, the only way to access new (and officially sanctioned<sup>58</sup>) *Doctor Who* texts was to buy the novels, *Doctor Who* Magazine (for the comic strip), and later the Big Finish CDs and the Telos Publishing novellas. These products are not spin-offs from the main text (the absent TV series) or secondary status texts, they were the only officially licensed new texts in production and available at this time (though as McKee notes, their authentic status within the 'canon' remains hotly debated though various forums for fan discourse [2004, pp. 181-182]). Whilst the TV series retains its status as the original format for *Doctor Who*, its absence has necessitated the continuation of the primary text through these other means. As Matt Hills acknowledges, these niche-marketed *Doctor Who* productions do not constitute a brand re-invention because 'the "brand" of *Doctor Who* has, quite simply, never become absent for

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<sup>58</sup> There were also a vast number of 'unofficial', fan-produced texts produced both for profit and not, which were available from well before the cancellation.



the programme's cult fans' (2002, p.39). These new texts cannot be easily classified in terms of commodities: they are not 'spin-offs' in the same way that action figures, board games or DVDs of original series episodes might be considered to be (although the relationships between playing, production and consumption, along with the possibility of 'curatorial consumption', must be considered here, as the situation is a complex one). My argument here is not that their officially licensed status makes them in some way compulsory investments, nor is it that they do not constitute commodities *per se*. However this does mark them out as different from other non-textual *Doctor Who* products, and as we shall see, has a direct influence on their consumption.

But what are the patterns of consumption within the *Doctor Who* market? For this particular section of the questionnaire, many of the questions are quantitative in nature, in order to allow some examination of the consumption patterns of the sample. What is initially presented here is an analysis of the data from the quantitative inquiry, forming the basis for the spectrum of financial investment. The responses to a particular qualitative question are then used to make some preliminary attempts to isolate and identify distinct positions on the axis of this spectrum. This spectrum, much more so than those outlined in the following three chapters, follows a fairly straightforward and simple trajectory running from 'low' to 'high' investment positions. However, as we shall soon see, this scale is far from definitive or fixed, as the very act of determining and assigning 'low' and 'high' values is troublesome for a number of reasons. What

follows initially is a straightforward account of the data from the quantitative questions relevant to this spectrum.

The first question in the questionnaire, 1.1, asks respondents to indicate which of the listed *Doctor Who* products they purchase regularly. The list comprises twelve specified products then currently on monthly (or regular) release, such as BBC books and Big Finish CDs, and a further three general 'catch-all' categories, such as toys/models and 'other' (for the full question and list, see the questionnaire in appendix 1). The data from this question will be broken down in four different ways. First we will examine the most straightforward of these breakdowns, the percentage of respondents who purchase each item listed (figure 2.1).

The position of *Doctor Who* Magazine amongst the listed products as clear leader in terms of sales might be accounted for, to some extent at least, by the fact that the majority of those who contacted me to offer to participate in my research responded to the appeal letter published in issue 338 of the magazine and were thus pre-existing members of the magazine's 'constituency of readers' (McKee, 2001, p.9). However a number of respondents who became involved in my research through means other than the *DWM* appeal (by picking up questionnaires in specialist retail outlets) also identify themselves as regular purchasers of the magazine. For this reason, I feel it is unlikely that the position of *DWM* as 'most purchased product' amongst those listed can be fully explained by pointing out the



high response to the appeal printed in the magazine. The fact that *DWM* was, at the time of asking, the only officially licensed periodical devoted entirely to *Doctor*

Figure 2.1: Listed *Doctor Who* products with percentages of respondents making regular purchases.

BBC <i>Doctor Who</i> videos	78%
BBC <i>Doctor Who</i> DVDs	90%
BBC 'Eighth Doctor Adventures' novels	28%
BBC 'Past Doctor Adventures' novels	38%
BBC Radio Collection <i>Doctor Who</i> CDs	52%
Big Finish Productions <i>Doctor Who</i> CDs	80%
Panini Publishing <i>Doctor Who</i> Magazine	96%
Telos Publishing <i>Doctor Who</i> novellas	12%
Fanzines	8%
Toys/models	24%
Big Finish Productions 'other' CDs	32%
Big Finish Productions books	14%
BBV Ltd videos	10%
BBV Ltd CDs	10%
Other (please specify)	16%

*Who* content<sup>59</sup>, and one which in 2000 reached a circulation of over 10,000 readers (McKee, 2001, p.8), must also be taken into account.

With the exception of *DWM*, the other products which score more than 50% here can be considered 'performed' *Doctor Who*, in that they feature actors giving performances (and as might be expected, versions of the original TV episodes released on VHS and DVD score very highly in this survey). Whether or not this

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<sup>59</sup> In April 2006 it was joined by the BBC's own '*Doctor Who* Adventures', aimed at a younger readership than *DWM* and published fortnightly.

has some bearing on the perceived 'authenticity' (or 'canonicity') of the product and thus the motivation to purchase will be discussed later in this chapter and also beyond. What it does indicate at this quantitative stage is that it might be possible to define a 'core' of regularly purchased items in which a high proportion of the respondents invest. The results detailed in fig.2.1 already give some indication that these core products might be defined and united by their performed nature. In order to further assess the validity of such a notion, I examined the data again, in terms of the number of items purchased regularly by the respondents (see figure 2.2 overleaf). The majority of the respondents make regular purchases in less than half of the categories of inquiry. A total of 68% purchase six or less of the items listed on a regular basis. This again might point towards a 'core' group of products which are purchased regularly by a significant proportion of the sample. Also of interest here are the extremes of the table in fig.2.2. Not one of the respondents purchases less than two *Doctor Who* products on a regular basis. And similarly, none of the respondents make regular purchases in every category. Indeed, out of 15 possible categories set out in question 1.1, the highest investment given by a respondent is 12.



*Figure 2.2: Percentage of respondents regularly purchasing products in x number of categories.*

<b>15</b>	0%	<b>14</b>	0%
<b>13</b>	0%	<b>12</b>	2%
<b>11</b>	6%	<b>10</b>	4%
<b>9</b>	4%	<b>8</b>	12%
<b>7</b>	4%	<b>6</b>	10%
<b>5</b>	24%	<b>4</b>	18%
<b>3</b>	12%	<b>2</b>	4%
<b>1</b>	0%	<b>0</b>	0%

The lack of responses at these extremes arguably indicates two things. Firstly, some degree of financial investment is apparent in the fan activities of the entire sample of respondents. The respondents in my sample are quite clearly and explicitly engaging in consumer practices as part of their ‘fan-lives’ – as we shall see when I come to analyse the qualitative material here – and, furthermore, they do not express ‘resistant’ or ‘anti-consumerist/capitalist’ beliefs. This brings me to the second point I wish to make here. Hills states that ‘fans are both commodity-completists and they express anti commercial beliefs’ (p.44). As noted previously, I find no ‘anti commercial’ beliefs expressed in the accounts given by my respondents – indeed, as we shall see, the situation is entirely the reverse in a number of cases. Whilst the figure of the resistive fan has been regularly invoked to justify specific academic agendas in a number of previous writing, the figure of the ‘commodity-completist’ fan has gained much wider currency. The ‘curatorially consumptive’ fan, who collects every item of merchandise with almost fanatical

attention is, like the 'anorak' already discussed, a pervasive stereotype in media and public conceptions of fandom. Hills (and also Fiske [1992] and Tankel & Murphy [1998]) evidently sees some kernel of truth within the stereotype, and I do not dispute the possibility of commodity-completists existing in fandom. Yet the data offered by my respondents evidences no such completism amongst my sample. A number of respondents invoke the phantom of the popular 'completist' stereotype in both their self-definitions (see previous chapter) and their accounts of their own consumption (which follow shortly) whilst others acknowledge that financial considerations limit the extent of their consumption and inform their purchasing choices.

And so between these extremes we might begin to see the extent of the spectrum of financial investment. The extremes form the hypothetical 'ends' of the spectrum, hypothetical because no evidence exists within the sample to support them beyond this state. The spectrum runs between 'completism' and 'non-investment'. These are the 'high' and 'low' investment positions between which respondents might be located. (However, it is important to note that the spectrum does not assign more value to one extreme over the other. It does not work on the assumption that individuals in some way aim or aspire to 'move up' the spectrum, that each successive position is more desirable than the one preceding it, that fans ultimately aim towards being completists. This is very much the case with the following three spectrums also.) The points or positions which lie between the two extremes of the spectrum are defined by two main issues which are inextricably linked, to the extent that they might indeed be one and the same. These are, the



amount of financial investment, and the extent of commodity-collection. Additionally the spectrum is fragmentary rather than smoothly linear. The points on this particular spectrum are arranged somewhat erratically between the two extremes. This is not a one-dimensional linear spectrum, but one that contains elements that overlap and can be contradictory.

Having examined the data pertaining to the extent of commodity-collection within my sample, we must also consider the actual financial investments made by the respondents. Figure 2.3 (overleaf) shows a breakdown of this data, generated in response to question 1.2 which asks respondents to indicate their average monthly spend on *Doctor Who* merchandise. As might be expected from the data examined previously, not one of the respondents makes no sort of monetary investment in *Doctor Who* products on a regular basis. This indicates that the proposed spectrum might be a valid model for interpreting the investments made by the respondents – the entire sample is making regular financial investments and so theoretically it should be possible to locate any one of them on a spectrum such as that I am developing. The hypothetical nature of the extremes of the spectrum is further established through the data in figure 2.3: the ‘non-investor’ position is indicated in the table, whilst the high extreme of £151+ (respondent 100, who notes that he spends ‘£100-£150 (sometimes £200 – but then the boyfriend shouts at me!’), hence the split result) comes from a respondent who does not purchase all the listed products, and so the ‘completist’ extreme likewise remains hypothetical. By far the largest proportion of the sample invests between £21 and £30 per month, and not all the listed products are released on a monthly basis (e.g.

DVDs), which might again indicate the possibility of a core group of products which are purchased regularly by a significant percentage of the sample. What might this core group comprise?

Figure 2.3: Average monthly spending of respondents, given as percentages of whole sample.

£00.00	0%	£01.00 - £10.00	12%
£11.00 – £20.00	14%	£21.00 - £30.00	34%
£31.00 - £40.00	14%	£41.00 - £50.00	9%
£51.00 - £100.00	7%	£101.00 - £150.00	3%
£151.00+	1% <sup>60</sup>	'other' response <sup>61</sup>	6%

An examination of the data in figure 2.2 reveals that 84% of the respondents purchase four or more of the listed *Doctor Who* products on a regular basis, 66% purchase five or more and 42% purchase six or more. Furthermore, returning to the data in figure 2.1, it can be observed that five of the listed products are regularly purchased by 50% or more of the sample (Videos, DVDs, BBC radio collection CDs, Big Finish CDs and *DWM*). Cross-referencing these figures reveals

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<sup>60</sup> A small number of respondents give broad-ranging amounts (e.g. respondent 100, quoted above). I have divided these between the relevant categories, hence the odd-numbered percentages.

<sup>61</sup> Three respondents do not respond with a definite amount here, though all three indicate regular investments in response to question 1.1. They are: 038 ('too much'); 068 (who indicates regular and irregular purchases but gives no amount); and 080 ('It varies. I always spend at least £3.40 on Dr Who Magazine. Sometimes that's all I'll spend and sometimes I'll buy a video/DVD or CD in addition to this. It would be very unusual for me to spend more than £25 in one month'). Whilst it would be simple to work out a potential sum invested by each, estimated from the products indicated in response to 1.1, this would I feel be both unethical and 'unscientific'.



that 32% of the sample purchase all five of these products regularly and 72% of them purchase four or more (though this figure is comprised of different combinations of the four). A 'core group' of products is suggested by the data – 70% of the sample indicated that they regularly purchased BBC DVDs, Big Finish CDs and *DWM*. The latter two of these are released on a four-weekly schedule, whilst the DVDs were released at the rate of one every two months at the time of the survey. Therefore, a regular monthly investment of £27.38 was necessary to purchase all three<sup>62</sup>, a figure which aligns well with the £21-30 band into which 34% of the responses fell. It is interesting to note that these three products each have the potential for a high claim of authenticity in terms of 'canonicity': the DVDs are the nearest thing to 'definitive' versions of the TV serials, featuring restored and remastered prints of the episodes themselves and also supplementary material - deleted or alternative scenes, trailers, continuity announcements, behind the scenes footage, documentaries, subtitled production information and audio commentary tracks featuring cast and crew discussing the making of the serial in question; the Big Finish CDs were (at the time) the nearest thing to 'new' broadcast *Doctor Who*, officially licensed by the BBC and featuring actors from the cast of the TV series, deliberately designed, structured and marketed to evoke the 'feel' of TV episodes; and *DWM* was at the time the only periodical devoted entirely to *Doctor Who* content, again officially licensed by the BBC, and allowed access to cast,

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<sup>62</sup> At the time of the survey, *DWM* cost £3.40 per issue, Big Finish CDs retailed at £13.99 for a monthly release double CD, and BBC DVDs were released bi-monthly at £19.99, which breaks down as £9.99 per month if purchased regularly.

crew and production. However as an attempt to account for the high proportion of investment in these three products, this must remain speculative as no hard evidence is available from the data acquired.

The spectrum of financial investment exists between the two extremes of completism and non-investment. It does not work as some kind of even, graduated sliding scale. As with the other spectrums which will follow, it is fragmentary and shifting. Individuals should not be understood as occupying fixed and stable positions on the spectrum – the point at which they might be located is dependent on a number of contextual factors. We might define the position of an individual quite simplistically using the two related contexts of spending and commodity collection. In this respect, the spectrum *is* even and graduated, running between ‘high’ and ‘low’ investment positions. But constructing a spectrum from this perspective alone has the potential to reveal nothing more than how much an individual invests, information which is only of limited use. Many individuals may occupy the same space on such a spectrum, and yet factors such as what they invest in, how they invest, what motivates the investment choices they make, and what they gain from these investments might all be very different, arising from unique individual or wider social contextual factors. Thus alongside the graduated axis of the spectrum exists a more fragmentary, less straightforward axis, which is dependant on these contextual factors and the accounts individuals give of their own investment activities. Only by examining these accounts might we even begin to suggest what some of the positions on this axis might be.



Question 1.3 allows space for the respondents to give some sort of qualitative account of their financial investments in the *Doctor Who* franchise and also their opinions on the move from televisual to post-televisual formats which the text encountered in the 1990s and early 2000s. It asks respondents how they feel about the effort and financial investment which accessing the post-televisual forms of *Doctor Who* requires. If we examine the responses to this question, we might begin to suggest some of the potential and specific positions which might be located within the spectrum.

One key factor which runs through a significant proportion of the responses is choice. In particular, the relationship between choice and financial concerns and also that between choice and personal interpretations of the canon seem to be key factors in the investment activities of a number of respondents. It is likely in a number of cases that an individual's position on the financial investment spectrum is dictated largely by personal economic concerns. Several respondents intimate that perhaps only economic constraints prevent them from making larger investments in the *Doctor Who* franchise, that their activities as consumers are limited by the imbalance between their disposable incomes and the extent of the available commodities. For example, respondent 107 complains that the only channels which broadcast repeats of the series are on Sky satellite TV and he cannot afford the subscription. If 'choice' is limited in one respect by such a factor, then it becomes vital in another respect. A number of respondents indicate that financial constraints make the content and emphasis of a particular commodity a

key factor in deciding whether to buy it. It is here that personal tastes and meta-textual assumptions concerning canonicity and authenticity might come into play as a means of deciding what investments to make. And although it is never explicitly stated, socially-circulated fan discourses are very likely to have some degree of influence over such reasoning too. CDs or novels featuring favoured or disliked characters might be selected or discarded as potential purchases. Likewise, novels or plays written by 'controversial' or 'traditionalist' authors may appeal to different sectors of the fan subculture, and the manner in which they are marketed and previewed often reflects this. A number of respondents indicate that such concerns inform their investments:

There is too much Doctor Who, I don't know how anybody can buy all the BF/BBV CD's, read all the books, all the comics and find the time! My attitude is to buy selectively, and get some of the DVD's, most of the webcasts [...], some of the BF audios I particularly want to hear (such as Davros, Zagreus or anything with Colin Baker and Maggie Stables) but I'm not a completist. I think that Big Finish should transmit stories on the radio/digital TV to open it up to the public and save fans a fortune! I tend to borrow CD's [sic] off friends as there is no way I can afford all of BF's range. So to sum it up, be selective is my attitude!

(1.3, 083)



In many ways I feel this is just an extension of what I've always done – investing in my interest in 'Doctor Who'. In the past it was buying the 'Doctor Who' or 'Dalek' annuals, target novels, magazines with articles relating to the series and so forth, and, of course with the advent of video, access to the series' past required financial investment because the BBC seldom repeated the series. On the plus-side, although it costs money, the calibre of the material to buy (novels, Big Finish etc) is better than it ever was when I was younger and, by and large, is more faithful to the series than comics/annuals etc ever were. The minus-side is that I tend to play safe and mostly buy books/CDs etc that I think will appeal to me in terms of type of story, or 'Doctor', that I like. I never really got to grips with Virgin's 'new adventures', for example, because I found the earlier one's [sic] rather grim and so stopped buying them, which probably means I've missed some good ones. Also, while it would be nice to have all the 'Big Finish' CDs, I have to be selective because of cost and don't try the more 'experimental' stories, and again I probably miss out on some I would enjoy. I suppose this is the main difference between 'free-TV' 'Dr Who' and bought 'Dr Who' – it didn't matter on TV if I didn't like every story, it was on and I watched it irrespective.

(1.3, 103)

One the one hand, I feel it's fair given that it's largely produced by a fan community without any source of funding other than sales! I've accepted that new *DW* only comes in that form (a small, self-generated, specialist market) – and I know that some benefits come with that:- the material is more experimental, more geared towards established fans, and more eclectic than it would be if it were pitched towards a more mainstream audience – i.e. not at me! On the other hand, I can't afford to follow as much as I would like. I don't buy *DWM* every month, select Big Finish CDs quite selectively, and rely on libraries often for the BBC books: I can't always get the books I want to read as a result, unless I treat myself. So I do feel a bit marginalized from the current Dr Who (except on BBCi)

(1.3, 079)

I don't really have an issue with it. I don't buy many of the books or audios unless I hear they're pretty special, ie: Lawrence Miles' books or audios like *Chimes of Midnight*. I'm not desperate for new Who in the non-TV sense. Have a problem with the audios in general, don't like the Colin Bakers or McCoys and on the whole they sound too 'stagey' – knowing



that the actors are reading their lines only emphasises that it's 'interim' Who. A stop-gap. Second best.

(1.3, 111)

Certain respondents acknowledge the role of their personal meta-textual understanding of what constitutes 'good' *Doctor Who* in the consumption choices which are necessitated by financial constraints. Respondent 083 suggests that there is 'too much' *Doctor Who* and, with most of the products requiring the devotion of leisure time (e.g. reading novels, listening to CDs), not enough time in which to engage with it all. If this is the case, then financial constraints are evidently not the only key limiting factor on the degree of investment and consumption. Respondent 083 buys 'selectively', as do other respondents, both those quoted above and others: 066 notes that 'Nobody is forcing me to buy any particular form of Dr Who merchandise [...] I pick and choose what I buy'; 109 writes of 'minimizing the expense' through selective purchasing; 083 acknowledges the importance of particular actors or characters in this process of selection; similarly, respondent 111's dislike of particular actors and formats informs not only his purchasing but also his understanding of the authenticity of the products ('A stop gap. Second best'). The 'interim' nature of these products as a continuation of the *Doctor Who* master-text is relevant in varying degrees to the selection process in which respondents engage. Respondent 109 suggests that buying novels and CDs is 'a necessary expense if you are a fan of the show and want to follow the Doctor's further adventures'.

Conversely, a number of respondents indicate that they consider paying for *Doctor Who* to be merely an 'extension' of the merchandise consumption they engaged in whilst the programme was still in regular TV production. 109, quoted above; 106; 104; 092 - 'I have always had to invest both effort and finances in my Whovian hobbies. It started with the 60p per month purchase of "Doctor who Monthly" in 1981 and escalated from there. As I was keen to see or hear new Doctor Who I have always been willing to pay for it'; 048 - 'it's a bit of a canard to say buying Doctor Who is new – there's always been more merchandise than anyone could possibly buy, and at least these days it tends to be more interesting than stuff I couldn't afford as a kid'; 061; 069 – 'I just see the CDs etc as forms of merchandise akin to toys and books that were available during the TV run of the show'. One distinction which is drawn between pre- and post-cancellation merchandise focuses on the notion of 'quality'. Respondent 109 suggests that the current material is of a higher 'calibre' than that available previously and, in an admission which has an important bearing on the earlier discussion of 'canonicity', that it is 'more faithful' to the TV series than previous forms<sup>63</sup>. On a related note, 067 states that he does not mind paying for *Doctor Who* CDs 'as long as the quality remains high'. One suggested reason for the quality and 'faithfulness' of the available products is that they are made 'by fans, for fans'. However this situation can often mean the reverse is also true:

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<sup>63</sup> This will be examined in greater detail in chapter four, which deals with the 'authenticity' ranking exercise of question 4.1, amongst others.



The new Dr Who is aimed directly at us, and made by Dr Who fans – so the care and attention is good. There are some fantastic finds, especially the ‘funny ones’, the One Doctor for example – then again there is some bloody awful stuff, either too continuity ridden, solving cont. problems or pushing the Dr too far.

(1.3, 065)

This references much wider debates within fan discourse over the relative merits and problems of legitimate ‘fan-producers’. It is certainly true to say that ‘fandom’ (or at least, individual fans) has had a big influence on *Doctor Who* since the early 1990s. Respondent 074 understands effort and investment as ‘the nature of being a fan’. Such effort might lead individuals from consumption into production (bearing in mind Alan McKee’s caution concerning the problems associated with trying to separate these two terms). 074 describes *Doctor Who* as having ‘grown and developed since 1989, the fans have shaped that, and in many ways that is more rewarding than the TV show’. This remains a fascinating but isolated fragment of thought, as almost all the other respondents tend to emphasize the subordinate nature of such fan-determined texts in relation to the TV show. Regarding the idea that effort and investment represent ‘the nature of being a fan’ (074 goes on to suggest that ‘a fan of anything from football teams to record collecting will spend a large sum of money on his/her chosen subject’), a number of other respondents

express similar viewpoints, some insisting that investment is a vital part of 'keeping the series alive' during the hiatus years:

This is acceptable to me. I have several other interests which require time and money in similar ways. I understand Doctor Who to be, essentially, a minority interest (until the new TV series) and to me it is worth the time, effort and money.

(1.3, 104)

Was it ever free? There was a license fee to pay! Re: Novels & Big Finish? Actors need paying as do directors etc. We must be realistic and anyway it seems keeping the Doctor in the public domain has paid off and soon his adventures will be back on the BBC and 'free' again!!

(1.3, 064)

The fans need to support Dr Who more now than before. I don't mind making the effort.

(1.3, 029)

To some respondents, financial investment is seen almost as a 'basic requirement' of all similarly fannish interests. Indeed at one point in his discussion



of autoethnography, Matt Hills appears to suggest that 'specialist media consumption' might be a standard identifying trait amongst fans (2002, p.83). To others, the effort of specialist consumption might almost be understood in resistive terms – fan-producers and the fans who consume their products have kept the franchise going in the face of apparent industry abandonment. Investment and effort are also explicitly characterized in terms of their pleasurable potential by a number of respondents: 099 notes that he 'doesn't mind spending the money if I feel it's something that's going to be a pleasurable experience'; despite the limitations of a 'tight budget', respondent 102 is 'more than happy to spend money on something which gives me great pleasure'. Other respondents describe specific pleasures associated with investment in some detail:

There is I suppose a kind of perverse satisfaction in this extra effort. You are buying something the majority don't have experience of. It is a product tailor-made for its audience. Because it's a CD for example, and not broadcast telly, Joe Bloggs doesn't have an ill-founded opinion about it, and so your enjoyment is not tarnished by having critics slate it or friends do it a disservice. The downside is of course the cost. To keep up with all *DW*'s various forms would take a huge financial commitment, and so (as a student) I certainly find myself portioning my money off for a *DW* CD or a DVD or whatever before realizing there was a non-*DW* novel or an album I

wanted to buy that I will miss out on. This is annoying. I would rather there was a slightly smaller range of products, to give fans who collect, a more manageable task.

(1.3, 088)

It never bothers me, really. As there's no alternative, and since I consider that it's "by fans, for fans" (for the most part) it makes no difference to me that I have to seek it out. To own pristine copies of what was on TV...you have to pay. So paying for my own (instant) copy of new material is no problem. In fact, it's ideal – you get to hear/read it, and have it as your own straight away. And spin-offs from currently running TV shows aren't free either – the only difference here is that we have a clear changeover from "free" to not.

(1.3, 105, emphasis in original)

The potential for exclusivity that the niche nature of these *Doctor Who* products offers, in terms of establishing a distinction between in-group and out-group, is, respondent 088 suggests, one 'return' which the investment and 'extra effort' might bring. The criticism of those in the out-group which is seen as being a (perhaps inevitable) possibility with broadcast television is evaded by the 'narrowcast' nature of the new texts. Such 'uninformed' criticism is seen as in some way 'tarnishing' the pleasure which the respondent finds in *Doctor Who* and so the



fact that the new texts circulate largely within the confines of a fan-oriented niche market allows the possibility that this might be avoided. What is implied in 088's response here is some degree of appropriation of the text – by purchasing these niche marketed products, fans might exercise some degree of ownership over the text itself. This is crystallized in the 'by fans, for fans' production system. The downside to this is, of course, the financial implication. Indeed, 088 almost suggests that *Doctor Who* products take automatic (and perhaps unconscious) precedence over other purchases.

Respondent 105 also writes of appropriation, and of the immediacy of ownership of the text which these new forms offer. He suggests that in buying books and CDs, he is able to experience the text for the first time (as with a TV broadcast) *and* immediately possess it as an artefact, a 'pristine' legitimate copy of the text (which is not the case with television). This situation is 'ideal' because owning official copies of the new material renders engagement with the text subject to the individual's convenience and choice, rather than the being subject to the institutionally motivated concerns of television executives and schedulers. The pleasure is available 'instantly' on demand. Respondent 071 makes a similar observation, noting that he pays 'for the convenience of reading a book at my choosing or listening to a CD (watching DVD) when I have time'. 105 also suggests that spin-offs from current TV shows occupy a similar position in the market, a situation which might be accounted for by more general shifts in television and the culture which surrounds it:

[T]he whole medium of TV has changed anyway – after all, many people now pay a premium to view more TV Channels. This would not have been a viable prospect for most families in Doctor Who's glory days of the 1970's. I think the whole nostalgia market has also made it more acceptable for us to expect to pay to see/hear/read new material.

(1.3, 092)

I've never really considered this before, as the whole landscape of entertainment has changed so drastically since *Dr Who* was last regularly on T.V. ie new media growth & fragmentation of T.V. channels in UK. Probably the biggest negative aspect to accessing *Dr Who* differently is the lack of shared experience that the show used to offer

(1.3, 110)

The suggestion made by respondent 092 is quite a compelling one, and fits well with the changes in which have occurred in TV production and reception since the late 1980s. The switch from 'freeview' to 'pay-per' *Doctor Who* coincided with a steady increase in subscription TV (such as satellite and cable), which featured not only new and imported programming, but also rerun channels such as UKGold and Bravo, part of the 'nostalgia market' 092 mentions. Respondent 110 makes a similar observation about the 'changing landscape' of the entertainment



industry over the last two decades. A 'negative aspect' of this is that the transmutation of *Doctor Who* from a mainstream to a niche text, and the shift from a broadcast, televisual, singular format to a range of narrowcast non-televisual formats, has led to a 'lack of shared experience'. Respondent 048 expresses a similar sentiment ('it's [...] a little sad that there's less of the 'shared experience' [...]'). This then is the flip side of the coin to the exclusivity mentioned before. While some respondents find pleasure in the in-group-friendliness of the post-TV *Doctor Who* franchise, others find that it detracts in some way from their overall pleasure. The shared experience is still available to those who purchase the products, but it is rendered much less immediate and tangible, the sense of sharing isolated to smaller groups. The suggestion above that the purchase of new *Doctor Who* might have become more normative and acceptable due to the changes in the entertainment market as a whole fits with a number of the responses analysed earlier. However, a number of respondents used the qualitative space provided by question 1.3 as a means of expressing their dissatisfaction with this situation:

It's really mean and unfair – more so as the BBC wasn't and refused to make it for the last 15 years - but still expected us to fork out dosh for it

(1.3, 063)

It makes *DW* only for the rich and therefore many people miss out on some great stories.'

(1.3, 038)

I [...] feel that the BBC have rather unfairly used the situation to their advantage. They have made enormous amounts of money from the series, but have kept it off air for 15 years.

(1.3, 068)

The financial investment required to access many of the post-televisual *Doctor Who* products is for some a marginalising factor in their relationship with the text (respondent 079, quoted earlier, explicitly described this). The sense here is very much that some respondents would like to invest in the franchise to a much greater extent than their disposable incomes allow. Furthermore, the shift from free broadcast to purchased narrowcast *Doctor Who* has left some of the respondents feeling exploited by the BBC (here is the closest any respondent ever comes to expressing what might be considered the 'anti-commercial ideologies' suggested by Matt Hills). If not taking advantage of the fans directly, the BBC have taken advantage of the situation and perhaps have even maintained such a *status quo* in order to generate profit from it, is the implication in the responses of both 063 and 067. However, for certain respondents, having to pay for new *Doctor Who* has long, if not always, been the 'norm':

Obviously I'm not thrilled by this (after all, free is always better), but it's a situation that I've grown accustomed to. You see, once



the PBS stations in America stopped showing DOCTOR WHO (my then-local station, WGBH Channel 2 in Boston, Massachusetts, dropped the show from their schedule in late 1988 or thereabouts, not even airing the Sylvester McCoy stories), I was obliged to purchase stories as VHS commercial releases in order to get decent copies of the episodes for my collection. Also, I was a long-time collector of the Target novelisations and other DOCTOR WHO merchandise, so the concept of spending money for the show that I loved was hardly a foreign concept.

(1.3, 086)

I became a Dr Who fan in 1992 and it was the repeats that year that started my interest. Although I watched Dr Who before it was cancelled I have only vague [sic] memories of it and was not a fan then. Apart from the small amount of new TV Dr Who during 90s [...] I have never been able to just to just switch on the TV to access it. I am used to having to buy Dr Who videos/CDs to see/hear Dr Who. Being able to access Dr Who simply by switching on the TV and for free is something I have always thought of as a luxury.

(1.3, 080)

Respondent 086 is the only member of the sample who lived outside the UK, and so his experience of watching and consuming *Doctor Who* remains different from the other respondents in fundamental ways. Until the 2005 series was picked up by the Sci-fi channel in early 2006, *Doctor Who* was broadcast in the US on local TV stations, so scheduling and sequence differed from region to region and series were often transmitted months or even years after debuting on the BBC. Thus the show always occupied a niche rather than a mainstream position in the US schedules, a situation which continues to this day (at the time of writing, the 2005 series is achieving viewing figures of just over 1.5 million for debut transmission on the niche Sci-fi channel [news page, [www.gallifreyone.com](http://www.gallifreyone.com)]). 086 notes that when his local TV station ceased transmission of *Doctor Who* before screening all the extant episodes he was 'obliged' to make financial investments in order to complete his viewing experience. What is notable here is the suggestion that unofficial pirate copies of the episodes might have been available, but again that 'pristine' copies are preferable to these as part of a commodity collection. The experience of being a *Doctor Who* fan in the context of US 'import' transmission, it is suggested, prepared the respondent for the shift from free broadcast to purchased narrowcast (he writes of 'growing accustomed' to the situation).

Respondent 080 is likewise another exception to the majority of the sample, as he became a fan during the hiatus period (1989-2005). For him, *Doctor Who* is not something regularly produced and broadcast as new every year in a



mainstream timeslot on a mainstream channel. Beyond a 'small amount' of new televised *Doctor Who* during the 1990s (meaning the 1996 TV movie and possibly the 'Children in Need' and 'Comic Relief' spoofs, from 1993 and 1999 respectively), the show is available from two sources; either free to air (and very occasional) 'classic' repeats, in a specifically designated cult timeslot (6-7.30pm on BBC2, alongside reruns of *Thunderbirds* and the imported *Star Trek – The Next Generation*); or through a range of products and services requiring financial investment (Videos and DVDs, novels, audio CDs, subscription satellite channels such as UKGold, etc). Thus, effort and investment are seen as part of the overall experience of engaging with *Doctor Who* in this account. Free-to-air TV broadcasts of the series are considered a 'luxury', rather than the norm.

In conclusion then, what might we consider to be the key findings to have emerged from the development of the spectrum of financial investment? What unites the responses offered by the entire sample (indeed, what both suggests and facilitates the development of this spectrum) is a clear sense of commodity consumption as a more-or-less 'essential' dimension of fan engagement. At the very least, the data from the sample strongly indicates that 'fan' and 'consumer' cannot be considered as separate cultural identities. Each of the respondents makes regular financial investments in their relationship with *Doctor Who*, investments that allow a number of them to be located in very similar regions of the financial investment spectrum proposed here. However, within such 'surface' similarities, we might observe that individual investment is dependent on more

personal contextual factors (which, as ever, cannot be divorced from wider social/cultural determinants), some of which differ substantially from person to person. Whilst spending and commodity collection are the two key determinants in locating an individual in a specific region of the spectrum, these two determinants are themselves dependent on such contextual factors. Whilst analysis of the *quantitative* data indicates that by far the largest single proportion of the sample occupy a space between what might be termed 'low' and 'medium' levels of investment in terms of their spending (sixty percent of the respondents spending £30.00 or less per month, within a sample which goes as far as £151.00 per month and beyond) and commodity collection (fifty-eight percent of respondents making regular purchases in a third or fewer of the listed product categories), analysis of the related *qualitative* data reveals the range of contextual factors at play within this dimension of investment.

The influential factors I have observed in the accounts of the respondents are as follows. Perhaps the most obvious, but also arguably the most 'powerful', is the personal economic situation of individual respondents. The degree of choice in purchasing *Doctor Who* commodities is acknowledged by a significant number of respondents to be dependent on or limited by how much of their income an individual can afford to spend. This is, to a large extent, a factor which cannot be 'controlled', a fact of which many respondents seem well aware. Indeed, a number of the other contextual factors that follow might be considered as 'responses' to this limiting factor. Chief amongst these others seem to be judgments of personal taste, particularly concerning the 'authenticity' of particular artefacts or



commodities. As we shall see in chapter four, this sense of 'authenticity' or 'realness' is linked to notions of institutional authority and the 'performed' nature of televisual *Doctor Who*. In addition, the determination of a commodity's 'authenticity' is likely to be influenced by socially and subculturally circulated discourses of fan criticism.

Other contextual factors suggested by the accounts of various respondents include: time constraints (respondents note that the sheer volume of commodities available, particularly those which require the investment of time and effort such as novels and audio plays, mean that selective purchasing and consumption is required); the absence of the primary *Doctor Who* TV text throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (meaning that purchasing commodities is the only way to access 'new' *Doctor Who*); notions of 'quality' (several respondents suggest that many 'inferior' products bear the *Doctor Who* logo); the need to 'support' *Doctor Who* during the programme's absence from TV, and also support niche fan-produced texts to enable their continued production; the possibility of maintaining a sense of 'exclusivity', of distinguishing between the in-group and external out-groups but also of distinguishing between different individuals and 'factions' within the in-group; commodity consumption as a means of 'appropriating' the text, of claiming 'ownership' over *Doctor Who*; changes in consumer culture (the rise of subscription TV channels and niche marketing); the possibility of maintaining a sense of community and 'shared experience' in the absence of the primary TV text; and, for a small section of the sample, the fact that such commodity consumption is a normative method of engaging with *Doctor Who* (one respondent notes that he

became a fan after the cancellation of the programme in 1989; another that he lives in the USA, where the programme was never broadcast consistently on a mainstream TV network). These factors constitute a dynamic system of influence over the financial investment activities of the respondents in the sample and likely over *Doctor Who* fans as a whole. Different factors, often in different configurations that are dependent on the precise relationship between an individual and *Doctor Who*, influence the financial investments made by different individuals. The two spectrums which follow are closely bound up with this and in themselves constitute part of the influence over the financial investment of the individuals in this sample. The spectrum proposed in this chapter gives the appearance of being simplistic and straightforward, a sliding scale of investment running from 'low' to 'high'. And yet, as we have observed, the means by which individuals might be located on this spectrum are more complex than this suggests.



## CHAPTER THREE

### The Spectrum of 'Participatory' Investment

[A] "fan" is more than just someone who watches the show and enjoys it. A fan is someone who attends conventions, buys the merchandise, follows the news, and overall connects with the show in some inexplicable way on a personal level. I'm not sure I can articulate it better than this...

(2.1, 086)

So far, we have observed the respondents in the questionnaire sample describing and accounting for the financial investments they make in their *Doctor Who* fandom and proposed a spectrum on which various levels of investment might be located. However, financial investments are only part of a much wider process of participation in the world of *Doctor Who*. This process, as respondent 086 notes above, might also involve activities such as attending conventions and 'following the news'. Indeed, for the purposes of this thesis (and returning to the distinction between fandom as something one belongs to and as something one does), we might best consider fandom to be a participatory state. Whilst this is by no means exclusive to fans (the relationship between human society and its media being innately participatory), fandom has most often been characterized as a 'participatory culture' by media academics (e.g. Jenkins, 1992). Many definitions of fandom include notions that it requires *effort*.

In chapter one, we observed at some length the ways in which the respondents define and categorize both themselves and others as fans. One of the key distinctions drawn by a significant proportion of the sample is between what are termed 'ordinary viewers' and fans. Ordinary viewers are described in a reasonably consistent dismissive tone across a wide range of respondents. Terms such as 'just', 'simply' and 'merely' are mobilized to characterize the viewing activities of outgroups in response to *Doctor Who*. The casual viewer is understood as watching TV in the moment, once over, then forgetting about it and moving on. The casual viewer 'leans back' to be entertained (2.1, 110). Fan pleasure is described in terms which mark it out as being fundamentally different from 'casual' pleasure. Fan engagement with a TV programme such as *Doctor Who* is active or 'pro-active' even (*ibid*). Fans 'get involved with the whole universe' of a TV show (2.1, 081), they make concerted and prolonged efforts to pursue their interests in it. If casual viewers lean back, fans might then be understood as *leaning forward* (2.1, 110).

Whilst the preceding chapter examined one specific means by which fans 'lean forward' (economic investment), here we will take into account a whole range of activities that might be regarded as forms of investment. Whilst economic investment can be considered as one component of a wider participatory array, I have chosen to keep it distinct and allocate it its own spectrum. This chapter deals with a spectrum which hinges around the investment of time and of personal effort. If the spectrum proposed in the previous chapter can be understood broadly as a spectrum of consumption, the spectrum proposed in this chapter might best be



conceived as representing a spectrum of production. This term is not unproblematic when deployed in this context, and so needs to be unpacked a little.

I examined Alan McKee's 'How to Tell the Difference between Production and Consumption' (2004) briefly in the previous chapter and will go on to discuss the implications of his identification of 'canonicity' as a means of distinguishing 'between cultural objects produced by different people' (p.175) at greater length in chapter four. However, before McKee turns his discussion to the issue of canonicity, he makes some qualifications to the idea of cultural production, qualifications that are pertinent to the current discussion. McKee starts by noting that in trying to separate out the production/consumption binary, academics often classify fans as "producers". This is complicated by the need to draw distinctions between 'different types of production' (and also between 'fan production' and 'industry production'), which leads academics right back to the very binaries from which they 'want to escape' (2004, pp.167-169). According to McKee, in academic accounts of fan production (he uses the example of John Tulloch's 'powerless elite' [Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995, pp. 141-151]), the production described in the accounts is always characterized in such a way that it is ultimately rendered consumption. The binary works on the assumption that: 'the fans are, finally, the consumers – not the producers – of the text (although they may be producers of 'zines and interpretations)' (p.171).

McKee goes on to suggest that the difference between the cultural production engaged in by fans, and the production engaged in by programme makers and television producers, is by no means as distinct as the binary at work

in the accounts described above makes it appear. There is, he argues, 'no clear dividing line' between forms or spheres of production in a case such as this. McKee takes his inquiry 'down the line', from fanzine production, to postings on internet message boards, to 'casual conversations over drinks [...] and private interpretations made of programs' (p.175). 'At what point', he asks, 'do we draw the line, claim here is production, the industry, and here are fans, the powerless, those who may produce, but do not really produce?' (*ibid*). He argues that no such line can be drawn, either in fandom or elsewhere, an assertion which I will challenge to some degree in the following chapter.

The overall point which McKee makes is that binaries such as those which aim to separate the 'powerful' and the 'powerless', or the 'fan' and the 'producer', are 'misleading'. He argues that the simplistic dualism they exhibit works against the 'complexity' embodied by the differences between distinct 'productions' (p.182-183). Whilst I make qualifications of this in chapter four, such reasoning informed my decision to classify the spectrum of participatory investment as a 'spectrum of production': following McKee 'down the line' (p.175), I have chosen to define all of the participatory activities which are detailed in the accounts of the respondents as forms of cultural production. I recognize the potential binary which might be generated by labelling the two spectrums as 'consumptive' and 'productive': however, the spectrum proposed in the previous chapter might almost be understood as an offshoot of the spectrum which will be proposed here. An important qualification which must be made here is the fact that the term 'production' may be used in a variety of ways. It is, for example, possible to



distinguish between production of artefacts of culture and production of meanings. The 'romantic' notion which would insist that 'all moments of consumption can be understood as moments of production' might unduly blur the distinctions between different modes of production. The device of a spectrum allows such distinctions to be maintained without recourse to simplistic binaries.

Here we must return briefly to the work of Cheryl Harris with the VQT group (Harris, 1998). Harris' findings indicate that there are 'widely varying degrees of involvement in fan practices oriented towards' the central principle embraced by her sample: the notion of 'quality television' (p.50). Working to a 'resistant' agenda, she conceptualizes fandom as a 'spectrum of practices engaged in to develop a sense of personal control or influence over the object of fandom, in response to subordinated social status' (p.42). In this way, fan practices are understood as being 'more visible instances' of wider patterns and tactics of resistance, whereby 'everyone' is involved in 'everyday struggle[s] over cultural meanings and cultural space in a battleground of commodified culture' (p.45, working from Fiske [1987, 1989]). Harris observes that her subjects displayed different levels of participation in fan activities and suggested that an individual's participatory level is affected by 'several underlying variables' (p.48). The actual extent of a subject's participation in 'a range of fan activities' is, according to Harris' findings, 'strongly related to an achieved sense of control over the object of one's fandom – *arguably the point of fandom itself and its ultimate pleasure*' (*ibid*, italics mine). The branch out into a more general theory of fandom here seems rather dubious. The subject group which Harris is studying, 'Viewers for Quality Television', is characterized as a

'pressure group' as much as it is identified as a 'fan group'. The activist nature of VQT makes it sit uneasily alongside other fan groups, and so the claim that 'the ultimate point and pleasure' of fandom *in general* might be an 'achieved sense of control over one's object of fandom' does not hold up to scrutiny without wider supporting evidence.

Harris' spectrum of participation in fan activities is, then, coloured by her need to understand cultural production as empowerment, the 'ability to challenge hegemonic or dominant pressures and get pleasure from what the cultural system offers' (p.51, working from Brown [1990]). For this reason, her spectrum does not take into account either the potential myriad actual 'reasons' for participating in particular fan activities, or the sheer range of different activities themselves. The spectrum proposed in this chapter represents an attempt to allow as full a range as possible of activities in which the respondents participate, and the (often personal and perhaps unknowable) reasons for such participation, to be explored outside such a potentially reductive agenda. Accordingly, the questions in the questionnaire which are relevant to the spectrum of participatory investment were specifically designed to allow respondents to give the broadest possible account of their fan activities. As with the previous chapter, the questions are a mixture of qualitative and quantitative. However, each of the quantitative questions either invites or leaves space for qualitative discussion too. The questions attempt to take into account a broad cross-section of fan activity, ranging from individual and social activities, such as letter-writing and posting on internet forums, to organized and institutional activities, such as fan club membership and production of



commodities. The amount of data available in this case makes it possible to examine each individual respondent's participatory status, and make comparisons between them. Therefore, it is likely that we will be able to develop a more definite picture of where each respondent might be located on the spectrum of participatory investment.

Once again, the spectrum is constructed as existing between the two extremes of high and low investment. A potentially problematic issue here is exactly how the positions of high and low investment might be determined. Participatory investment is, in this sense at least, much more difficult to assign high and low values, compared with the 'self-defining' extremes of the previous spectrum. High and low values might apply both to the various types of participatory activity *and* to the amount of activities which an individual participates in, and so the terms must be allocated with care. For example, we cannot automatically assume individual or 'low visibility' investment activities (such as solitary viewing, reading or listening) to be 'low' investment positions. Conversely we cannot either assume institutional or 'high visibility' investment activities (such as attending conventions or even producing/distributing new fiction) to be 'high' investment positions. The time spent participating in these activities must also be allowed to have some bearing on the assignment of high and low values. An individual might spend a significant proportion of her/his leisure time engaged in activities such as solitary viewing or reading, whilst another might spend very little time engaged in organized or institutional activities (e.g. attending one or two conventions every year), and little else that is *Who* related, although it is probably

much less likely. Thus, both factors must be taken into account in locating an individual within the spectrum. Ultimately, the positions assigned to individuals must be considered on a case-by-case basis, paying attention to specific contexts. It is important to avoid imposing an overall hierarchy that favours number of types of participatory activity over the total amount of participation.

Initial analysis of the data from some of the quantitative questions allows the development of the basic structure of the spectrum, and also an examination of patterns of participatory investment amongst the sample group. Figure 3.1 is a tabulation of the data from question 2.5, which asks respondents to indicate how often they engage with *Doctor Who* (e.g. watch the TV series, read a novel, listen to an audio CD, access on-line material etc) within a range of given time periods. The use of the loosely defined and broad term 'engagement' offered in the rubric for this question is deliberate. Other questions in the questionnaire inquire about specific engagements (attending conventions, membership of fan clubs etc), and so here I wanted a 'catch-all' question designed to serve a dual purpose. Firstly it is intended to cover the activities which are not specifically investigated by earlier questions, in order to avoid an interminable slew of questions such as 'how often do you watch Dr Who a) on video, b) on Sky or cable, c) listen to audio CDs, d) read DWM?' and so on. Secondly, it offers the respondents an opportunity to indicate exactly how often they interact with *Doctor Who* in any capacity.



Figure 3.1: Percentages of respondents engaging with Doctor Who across a range of time periods (2.5)

Every day	30%
4+ times per week	32%
2+ times per week	26%
Once per week	8%
1+ times per month	3%
Once per month	1%
Occasionally	0%
Rarely	0%
Never	0%
No response	0%

Ninety-six percent of the respondents indicate that they engage with *Doctor Who* in some way once per week or more often, and none of the sample claimed they engage less than once per month. Slightly less than a third of the sample watch, read or access *Doctor Who* on a daily basis. The data from this one question alone might feasibly be used to construct a very basic spectrum of participatory investment. If we take ‘every day’ to be the high investment extreme of this hypothetical spectrum, then ‘never’ becomes the low extreme (it is possible to push the high extreme further, by imagining a potential response of ‘every spare minute of every day’; however when working from a definite list of possible responses, as is the case with question 2.5, we must limit ourselves to the actual responses). Comparing this ‘mini-spectrum’ with that proposed in the previous chapter, a striking difference might be observed. The majority of respondents

occupy positions in the lower third of the spectrum of financial investment, and not one can be located at either of the extreme positions of the spectrum (indeed, none of them are even relatively close to the extremes). The nine possible responses (discounting 'no response', for obvious reasons) are broken down into nine distinct investment positions on this 'spectrum'. So, the fifth response, '1+ times per month', becomes the 'median' position on this hypothetical spectrum. Working from such a division of responses, 88 percent of the respondents are located within the 'upper' third of the spectrum, with almost a third of the sample occupying the extreme high investment position. From such a comparison it is possible to conclude that the degrees of investment engaged in by individuals are unlikely to remain consistent across different spectrums.

However, such a spectrum fails to take into account a large range of contextual factors and motivations, of differentiations between modes of participation and types of activity. The data which follows allows a deal more scrutiny to be applied to these factors and thus a much more complex and reflective spectrum to be developed.

Questions **1.4** through **1.13** inquire about a number of specific participatory activities. These range from accessing online material and convention attendance to production activities such as writing fiction or fanzine articles. Three questions in particular ask the respondents about their alignments to certain institutional or organized fan arenas: conventions, the *DWAS*, and other 'unofficial' fan clubs or associations. This is an area of particular interest, as a significant



proportion of previous studies of fans have been based around the memberships and constituencies of organized or institutionalized groups (Jenkins [1992]; Jenkins et al [1998]; Harris [1998]; Bacon Smith [1992]; Tulloch & Jenkins [1995]), and as I argued in the introduction, organized fandom seems to have been allowed to dictate or represent more general conceptions of fandom. As one of the concerns of this thesis is to suspend the assumption that fandom is an organized 'place' and investigate the possibility that fandom might equally be a dis-organized *state*, an investigation into exactly what proportion of the sample group are aligned to organized fan institutions is necessary.

Figure 3.2 shows the convention attendance of the questionnaire respondents at the time the survey was conducted. Working to the assumption that going to one or more conventions per year might constitute a 'regular' level of participation in this particular category, we can observe that sixteen percent of the respondents attend conventions on a regular, or more than regular, basis. One tenth of the sample occupies the high investment position for this particular mode of participation, while conversely, forty-six percent occupy the low extreme and have never attended a *Doctor Who* convention. There is a marked difference

Figure 3.2: Percentages of respondents attending Doctor Who conventions across a range of time periods (1.4)

1+ per year	10%
Once per year	6%
Occasionally	30%
Once	8%
Never	46%
No response	0%

between the patterns of participation here and those in figure 3.1. As the following three figures go on to suggest in conjunction with 3.2, there is likely to be no clear connection or between participation and organization in the fan activities engaged in by the respondents. A high degree of participation in the world of *Doctor Who* does not by any means suggest a high degree of participation in organized *Doctor Who* fandom. Additionally, the suggestion that non-participation in organized, institutional or 'high-visibility' fan activities might be assumed to evidence a tactical identity of 'refuser' (Hills, 2002, p.86) is also open to question.

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show the breakdown of the respondents' alignments to first the official *Doctor Who* fan club (the DWAS) and then to any other *Doctor Who* fan associations or institutions. At the time the survey was conducted, ninety percent of questionnaire respondents did not have active membership of any organised *Doctor Who* fan club or institution. However, as may be observed, data from the two questions differs substantially beyond this initial comparison.

Figure 3.3: *Alignment of respondents to the Doctor Who Appreciation Society (DWAS), given as percentages (1.5)*

Current member	10%
Former member	34%
Intend to join	12%
Never joined	44%
No response	0%



Figure 3.4: Alignment of respondents to 'other' organised Doctor Who fan institutions, given as percentages (1.6)

Current member	10%
Former member	6%
Intend to join	0%
Never joined	84%
No response	0%

Just over a third of all respondents indicate that they were formerly members of the DWAS, compared with only 6% who were former members of other fan organizations. The reason for this is unclear from the empirical data available, but we might reasonably assume that the high profile official status of the DWAS might account for the significant lead in membership it exhibits over other organizations<sup>64</sup>. There are also a number of likely reasons for the high percentage of respondents who had allowed their membership of the DWAS to lapse prior to the time of the survey, and these are indicated in the qualitative responses to question 1.7 ('if you have answered yes to either 1.5 or 1.6, please state your reasons for joining and how long you have been a member'). A number of respondents indicate that they had left the Appreciation society in the mid-to-late 1980s in response to what they considered to be a critical decline in the quality of the TV series; others note that they had left the society once the TV series had been cancelled; whilst a sizeable minority acknowledge that they had joined only for a brief time, and had not renewed their membership due to disappointment with the society itself, or the magazines and services it offered.

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<sup>64</sup> The DWAS was publicized throughout the 1990s on the sleeves of BBC *Doctor Who* videos and DVDs, in the pages of *DWM*, and at various conventions.

The distribution of data in figures 3.3 and 3.4 also suggests that an individual's participatory investments and the relative level of activity are unlikely to remain constant over time. Alignments shift, the intensity of engagement and participation waxes and wanes. Not only do individuals participate in organized institutions such as fan clubs for different reasons, but they also participate at different levels and for different lengths of time. And this is also undoubtedly the case with the other spectrums proposed in this thesis. Financial investments, as we have already seen, are highly dependent upon particular contexts, and thus are likely to alter significantly over time and in different contexts. Investment in the idea of 'authenticity', explored in the following chapter, is also dependent upon changing textual, subcultural and social contexts. Thus, whilst the spectrums proposed here are (at least to an extent) fixed, the positions which the respondents occupy on them represent only a brief isolated moment of a complex, dynamic and ongoing process of investment. The investments made by the respondents at the time of writing are likely to have changed compared with those made at the time of asking. This is a vital aspect of the suspensionist aims of this thesis – it cannot be assumed (as has arguably been done in the past) that fans maintain a constant or stable level of interest or participation in the world of their treasured text.

Figure 3.5 (overleaf) tabulates the data from question 1.13, which inquires whether the respondents had ever corresponded with *Doctor Who* Magazine. I felt this was an important question to ask for a number of reasons. Firstly, the magazine pre-dates all of the internet *Doctor Who* fan sites (indeed it predates the internet itself, at least its current status as a globally accessible 'information



superhighway') and largely pre-dates fanzine culture. Next to the *DWAS*, which was founded in 1975, *DWM* is the oldest established officially licensed and institutionalized forum for discussion of *Doctor Who* (it was first published in September 1979 and at the time of writing numbers 374 issues). Secondly, the majority of the respondents contacted me to become involved in the study in reply to the letter of appeal printed in issue 338 and so I had a sizeable cross-section of the magazine's constituency of readers in my sample group. To what extent might membership of this constituency involve direct participation in the debates within the pages of the magazine? The 'high' level of participation here ('frequently'<sup>65</sup>) constitutes eight percent of the sample, which is broadly consistent with the ten percent who occupy the high position in the three preceding sets of data. And again, roughly half of the respondents questioned indicate that they have contributed a letter to the magazine on at least one occasion. Slightly less than half have never engaged in this form of participatory investment.

Figure 3.5: *Percentages of respondents to have written letters to Doctor Who Magazine (DWM) (1.13)*

Frequently	8%
Occasionally	24%
Once	20%
Never	48%
No response	0%

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<sup>65</sup> I gave no indication in the rubric of exactly what 'frequently' and 'occasionally' entailed, as I had no objective means of defining each term. This left the question open to the individual interpretations of the respondents.

If the number of respondents who occupy the 'low' investment position in this data (forty-eight percent) is compared with those who occupy the low positions in the previous three sets of data, a consistent correlation between the figures becomes apparent. Forty-six percent of the sample indicate that they have never attended a *Doctor Who* convention (1.4); Forty-four percent indicate that they have never purchased membership of the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society (1.5); and eighty-four percent indicate that they have never been members of any other *Doctor Who* fan organizations (1.6). Whilst 1.6 is the odd one out here, for undetermined reasons (though perhaps this has to do with the 'unofficial' status or low-profile nature of unlicensed fan organizations), the percentages of respondents occupying the low investment positions for the three remaining questions are all within a four percent range of each other. On first glance, this might appear to suggest that it may be possible to determine probable or normative levels of investment which intersect different participatory activities.

Comparison of data from other questions also lends some weight to this possibility. If we consider questions 1.10 (which asks if respondents have made any contribution to *Doctor Who* websites), 1.11 (which asks if respondents have made any contribution to *Doctor Who* publications), and 1.12 (a 'catch-all' question which asks if respondents have made any other contribution to *Doctor Who* commodities), we notice a similar correlation between the percentages of positive and negative responses to each. Eighty-four percent of the sample give negative answers to both questions 1.10 and 1.11, whilst seventy-eight percent give negative responses to question 1.12. Again, there would appear to be relatively



consistent levels of investment and non-investment across a range of participatory activities, and this increases if we compare these results with the data from question 1.6, where again, eighty-four percent of the sample offer responses in the negative. This clearly requires further investigation. These correlations might be merely coincidental, or they might be impossible to account for given the available data. However, the collected data for all the questions is available for each individual respondent, and so comparison is possible. For example, are the eighty-four percent of the sample who are not members of other fan organizations the same eighty-four percent who never contribute to *Doctor Who* websites?

An examination of the collected data reveals the answer to this question to be 'not entirely'. Comparison of the responses to questions 1.6, 1.10 and 1.11 reveals that sixty-four percent of the total sample occupies the low investment positions consistently across all three responses. The individual figures for low investment in the responses to each of the three questions are all eighty-four percent. Taken in isolation, these results might be interpreted as an indication that it may be possible to determine patterns of regular participatory activity across a whole cross-section of a subculture. However, if the responses to questions 1.4, 1.5, and 1.13 are compared, it becomes apparent that such correlation exists in isolation rather than across a range of formations. Only twelve percent of the sample occupies the low investment positions consistently across all three responses here, a figure which represents roughly one quarter the individual figures for each question (forty-six percent for 1.4, forty-four percent for 1.5 and forty-eight percent for 1.13). The remaining three quarters of this percentage of the

sample occupy a variety of configurations of investment positions across the three responses.

If we consider the respondents who occupy the high investment positions for these two groups of questions, a further lack of correlation becomes apparent. None of the respondents occupy the high investment positions across responses **1.4**, **1.5** and **1.13**, and only four percent of respondents occupy the high investment positions across **1.6**, **1.10**, **1.11** and **1.12**. The individual responses to these questions range from ten percent to twenty-two percent. A number of conclusions can be drawn from this brief comparison exercise. The appearance of correlation between data from different questions looks to be largely co-incidental. There are, however, lesser correlations between sets of data and these indicate that there might be identifiable patterns of participation and investment amongst the sample group. For example, the twelve percent of respondents who invest at the lowest level in convention attendance, fan club membership and correspondence with *Doctor Who* magazine indicates that this might be the case. A closer examination of the data given by individual respondents might shed some light on this possibility.

The key conclusion which can be drawn from this comparison exercise is that the variation which exists beneath the *appearance* of congruence here indicates once again the complexity that might be seen to characterize this whole system of investment. That very similar numbers of respondents make no investment in three separate categories, but that only a quarter of these investments are made consistently across all three categories by respondents,



would suggest that the respondents are making different investments in different categories at different levels of intensity. Additionally, the qualitative commentaries offered by a number of respondents to support their quantitative answers might allow some investigation of the possible reasons for individual participatory investment strategies. Ultimately, the aim is to attempt to locate individuals in specific positions on the spectrum through the analysis of this collective data.

In order to define the extreme positions of the spectrum of participatory investment, careful consideration must be given to the limitations within which the questionnaire and resultant data are situated. The questionnaire inquires about a number of specific participatory activities yet there are also 'open' questions, which allow a broad interpretation of engagement. As with the previous chapter, an individual's position on the spectrum will be determined by both the number of inquiry categories s/he invests in and the degree of investment in each category<sup>66</sup>. Alongside the data from the questions in section one the responses to question **2.5** will have a direct bearing on the position of each respondent on the spectrum. The 'open' nature of question **2.5** means that it is impossible to determine exactly what the engagement indicated by each respondent entails. The rubric for the question suggests more 'individually-constituted' activities, such as watching or reading, be considered, as the questions in section one which precede question **2.5** ask specifically about participations in organised fandom and fan communities. Thus, in the construction of this spectrum, we effectively have access to two different 'types'

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<sup>66</sup> This will be a relative scale of intensity, and will be determined by a number of factors which will be addressed when brought into play.

of data (although I am aware of the binary implied by such a breakdown and address this issue shortly).

Given my oft-expressed intention not to favour institutional or organised fandom over more individually-constituted engagement with *Doctor Who*, it is thus extremely important not to favour one 'type' over the other in determining the location of each respondent on the spectrum of 'participatory' investment. As we will see, certain respondents engage quite highly in one 'type' of participation and to a much lesser degree in the other. The obvious means of addressing this would be to propose two separate spectrums. However, such an enterprise effectively imposes a definitive (and potentially reductive) binary on participatory activities. 'Individual' and 'organised' participatory activities are actually very closely bound up with each other, and so a respondent's location on the spectrum must reflect this. What I propose here is that both are considered alongside one another and the final positions on the spectrum represent an 'averaging out' of data, in cases where an individual invests at different levels. Cases where such averaging out becomes problematic, because of clear discrepancies between investment of one form and another, will be flagged up as such. What must ultimately be borne in mind is that a significant proportion of the sample indicates relatively high levels of activity in response to question 2.5, and this must be considered alongside responses to question one, in order to determine overall positions on the spectrum.

In addition to the responses from section one and question 2.5, the qualitative responses to question 2.4 (which asks if respondents feel that being a fan requires more effort or investment than being a 'regular viewer') might also



provide illustrative supporting material. The two absolute extremes of the spectrum remain once again in the realm of the hypothetical – they might be conceptualized as ‘consistently participating in every *Doctor Who*-related activity at the highest degree of involvement possible’ and ‘never participating in any *Doctor Who*-related activity’. The spectrum which arises from the data in the case of the present sample must run between lesser extremes which exist inside these hypothetical points. The high extreme here is ‘consistent participation in all inquiry categories at the highest degree of involvement possible’, which would automatically presume a response of ‘every day’ for question 2.5. The low extreme is ‘no participation in any inquiry category *and* a response of “never” for question 2.5’.

Whilst none of the respondents occupy either of the extremes of the spectrum, a number of the sample can be located in investment positions that are *relatively* close to the high extreme, at least in terms of the entire sample. Three respondents in particular appear (from the data available) to be, in terms of consistency across categories and degree of engagement, the highest participatory investors in the sample. Respondent 081 attends at least one convention per year (‘as I’m on good terms with the organizers’ [1.4]; is a member of his local fan group; accesses a number of *Doctor Who* websites ‘once every couple of days’ (1.9); maintains two *Doctor Who* websites of his own and has contributed to others; produces and contributes to fanzines; frequently writes letters to *DWM*; and, cryptically, is ‘listed in the “with thanks” section of at least one *Who* [sic] reference book and a Big Finish CD!’ (1.12). The account offered by 081 claims a consistently high level of participation in both organized and institutional

fan activities (clubs, *DWM* correspondence, fanzines) and more individual activities (he answers 'every day' in response to question 2.5), relative to the majority of the sample. This relativity is a key point which must be stressed here. None of the sample invests (or does not invest) at levels which put them close to the hypothetical extremes outlined earlier, or even particularly close to the more limited extremes dictated by the available data. However, in relation to the other respondents in the sample, certain individuals can be located in either very high or very low investment positions. Respondent 081 is one such individual: respondents 048 and 086 are two others.

Respondent 048 and 086 also both make consistently high investments across both institutional and individual participation categories relative to the remainder of the sample. 048 is or has been a member of a number of *Doctor Who* fan social organizations, both formal and informal, licensed and unofficial. He has contributed articles to a number of websites ('perhaps my strangest was on "How Doctor Who Made Me a Liberal" for a site in the 2001 General Election, whilst standing for election!'), writes short stories (which he notes he 'rarely polishes [...] up to submit' for publication), and is a frequent correspondent with *DWM*. In response to question 2.5 he notes that he engages with *Doctor Who* 'every day', as does respondent 086, who offers an extremely detailed qualitative commentary alongside his responses to the questions relevant to this spectrum. In particular, respondent 086 writes extensively of both his association with the local fan group 'NETLA' ('the New England Time Lord Academy' [1.6]) and his production of the fanzine 'Enlightenment' with a high-school friend (1.11). Both of these accounts



detail breakdowns in friendships and personal relations which are presented as resulting from disagreement and factionalism within the fan organizations. As a result of these events, the respondent notes that his 'enthusiasm' for fan associations was 'palled' and he now remains 'on the periphery' of organized fandom (1.6), but still attends 'one or two' conventions per year and is an occasional *DWM* correspondent. He also contributes *Doctor Who* articles to a certain professional genre publications and also to wider publications, such as his local Lesbian and Gay newspaper.

The account given by 086 describes significant shifts in participatory activity over time, and even offers reasons for these shifts. Different factors have motivated changes in his participatory investment, and these factors have been dependant on specific personal, social or institutional contexts. For instance, the respondent notes that his current level of convention attendance is dictated by the reduced number of general sci-fi/telefantasy events which 'bother' to include *Doctor Who* actors or personnel on their guest lists, compared with those he attended in the 1980s (1.4). Conversely, his move away from institutionalized fandom towards a less organized, friendship-based fan association arose from 'distress' at the factionalism and personal disagreements within the local fan group (1.6). However, such shifts should not automatically be assumed to indicate a decline in either the degree of investment or the relative intensity of the respondent's fandom.

No respondents in the sample occupy positions close to the 'low' extreme of the spectrum. There are two respondents who might be determined to be the

lowest participatory investors relative to the rest of the sample, 067 and 078, but only in terms of their participation in more organised or institutional activities. 067 indicates no participation in any of the inquiry categories pertaining to this particular spectrum. However, in response to question 2.5, 067 answers that he engages with *Doctor Who* at least four times per week on average, a level of engagement indicated by thirty-two percent of the entire sample and which constitutes a 'median-high' level of investment in terms of responses to this question. The only participation in the inquiry categories indicated by 078 is through accessing the BBC *Doctor Who* website 'about twice a month' (1.9) and in answer to question 2.5, the respondent indicates that he engages with *Doctor Who* '2+ times per week'. Whilst both these respondents participate in organised or institutional activities at very low levels relative to the majority of the sample, they nevertheless engage with *Doctor Who* at levels which might be considered to fit a 'median-relatively high' region of investment if the total overall participation is averaged out. What must be recognised here, as with the majority of the other respondents, is that a single overall conclusion cannot always be easily reached when there is a potential 'clash' between responses at different levels.

A significant number of other individuals can be located in a broad-ranging 'region' close to (and in many cases, extending significantly beyond) the 'median' point of the spectrum, when considered in a similar light to the two respondents above. Respondents 080, 074, 109, 038 and 088 all indicate regular access to *Doctor Who* websites but no other participation in the remaining inquiry categories, whilst 068 indicates former membership of the *DWAS* and no other participation. In



answer to question 2.5, these individuals give responses which range from engaging with *Doctor Who* twice a week or more, to engaging on a daily basis. Once again, some of these respondents offer qualitative commentary on their responses. 109 suggests a probable reason for his decision not to become a member of the *DWAS* – ‘perhaps I avoid this as it would formally “cement” my fan status’. This reflects a wider caution which characterises his entire self account, a desire to be understood as the ‘right’ kind of fan, the kind who does not ‘edge towards [...] the excessive’ or the ‘fanatic’ (2.1). Here, perhaps, the institutional and official nature of the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society is a step too far towards being definitively labelled ‘a fan’, with all the potential difficulties that such a label might present.

Respondent 040 is difficult to locate on the spectrum. He indicates former participations in a number of the categories of inquiry but notes that, at the time of inquiry, his only participations in fan activities are daily access to websites and a weekly engagement with the franchise. If we are assigning investment positions to respondents according to their current level of participation, respondent 040 will be located relatively close to the median region of the spectrum. Respondents 103 and 111 are similarly difficult to locate on the spectrum. Both indicate that they engage with *Doctor Who* ‘1+ times per month’ in response to question 2.5, which constitutes a relatively low level of investment in this field. However, 103 indicates that he is a former member of the *DWAS* and occasional *DWM* correspondent, regularly accesses *Doctor Who* websites and frequently contributes artwork and design work to a range of *Doctor Who* fan publications and video projects –

activities that suggest a higher overall level of participatory investment. Respondent 111 indicates infrequent website access, *DWM* correspondence, and writing activity, having once produced a 'satirical' fanzine with friends 'for our own amusement' and also co-authored a sitcom pilot about *Doctor Who* fans (1.11, 1.12). Ultimately, seeking to balance these different levels of participation in activities of different kinds, I have chosen to locate both 103 and 111 in the region approaching the median point of the spectrum.

Also located in this region of the spectrum are respondents 112, 079, 107, 071, 065, 066, 064, 026, 061, 076, 075, 106, 104 and 095 all offer positive responses in two inquiry categories (not including responses to question 2.5). All access *Doctor Who* websites regularly, and engage with the franchise at least twice per week. 112, 079, 071, 065 and 066 have each also written letters to *DWM*, although 071 notes that his went unpublished ('how fast a dream of fame shatters! [1.13]), whilst respondents 064, 026, 061, 076, 075 and 106 attend occasional conventions over time. 107 indicates that he formerly maintained a website which included *Doctor Who* related material. 104 and 095 are both current (at the time of inquiry) members of the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society. Respondent 094 also offers positive responses in two inquiry categories, indicating infrequent correspondence with *DWM* and that he has both acted in and written a script for Big Finish Productions' *Doctor Who* audio plays. Respondent 097 offers positive responses in three inquiry categories (besides responses to question 2.5), indicating that he accesses websites, correspond with *DWM* and attends conventions. In addition to the three categories which 097 participates in,



respondent 069 has also acted and performed the role of assistant director in a number of fan-produced *Doctor Who* video dramas, whilst 105 also indicates that he was formerly a member of the *DWAS*. Thus we might locate him in a position which is much closer to the median point than a number of the respondents who have just been discussed.

There are a number of other former *DWAS* members among the respondents who occupy this region of the spectrum centred on (but extending beyond) the median: Respondents 110 and 033 were both members of the Society in the 1980s, 033 indicating that his decision to leave was motivated by his disappointment with the TV series ('I joined in 1979 till 1988, because the series I love was shit under JNT!!' [1.5]). In addition, both respondents access *Doctor Who* websites regularly and have attended conventions (though 033 notes that he 'stopped going about 5 years ago' [1.4]). In addition to his former *DWAS* membership, respondent 101 is a frequent *DWM* correspondent who engages with *Doctor Who* 'every day' (2.5), but who accesses series material on-line 'very rarely'. Respondent 032 is also a former member of an unofficial local fan group and accesses *Doctor Who* websites regularly, whilst respondent 100 indicates that he is a member of a gay fan group, 'The Sisterhood of Karn', and also an occasional *DWM* correspondent. Respondent 082 can also be positioned here. A former *DWAS* member who indicates that he regularly attended conventions 'years ago', but 'never go[es] now' (1.4), 082 accesses online material regularly and has corresponded with *DWM*. He additionally outlines a sustained period of writing activity, both illegitimate and officially approved, running from the 1980s up to the

time of inquiry. He currently contributes reviews to websites (if the owners 'bribe me with DVDs' [1.10]) and articles to the *Radio Times*, and previously contributed articles to 'extensive fanzines in the 80s' and fiction to officially licensed short story anthologies published by Virgin and BBC Books (1.11). Respondent 029 will also be located in this region. This individual indicates participation in only one inquiry category but gives an answer of 'every day' to question 2.5. Whilst his participation in only one inquiry category might arguably place him lower than this, he indicates that he attends conventions 'about 3-4 times [...] a year' (1.4), the most frequent occurrence of convention attendance in the entire sample. As I noted earlier, it is important to assign positions on the spectrum on a case-specific basis, rather than assuming an overall hierarchy that favours number of types of participatory activity over sheer amount of participation.

The remainder of the sample can be located at different points within a further broad region that stretches towards a point relatively near the higher extremes of the spectrum. Respondents 034, 102, 063, 103 and 070 each indicate positive responses in four or more of the inquiry categories. 034 and 102 both answer that they engage with *Doctor Who* '2+ times per week' in response to question 2.5, whilst 063 and 070 answers 'every day'. The former of these pair of respondents are also both current (at the time of inquiry) members of the *DWAS*, whilst the latter pair both indicate that they are former members of the Society. All four respondents from these two pairs attend conventions on regular bases, with respondent 102 attending as much as '2-3 times a year' (1.4), and frequently accessing *Doctor Who* material online. Each respondent indicates correspondence



with *DWM*, with 070 noting that he ‘frequently’ writes letters to the Magazine (1.13). In addition to these investments in common categories, three of the respondents also indicate individual investments in other categories: 034 has occasionally written *Doctor Who* fiction (1.11); 063 maintains a webpage detailing his ‘collection’ of merchandise (1.10); and 070 is a ‘regular’ contributor to a number of *Doctor Who* websites (1.10).

Respondents 099, 092 and 083 all attend (and in the case of 092, helped to organize) conventions regularly; all three were also members of ‘other’ *Doctor Who* fan clubs, either formerly or at the time of inquiry; and each indicates daily access to *Doctor Who* websites. Additionally, each individual also indicates participation in a number of other of the categories of inquiry. Respondent 083 offers details of an amateur drama production company which he ‘set up in 1992’:

We’ve made lots of amateur Dr Who audios from 1992 onwards, and the group has grown over the years and meets socially for an amateur Christmas party. We’ve done a few videos and have branched out to doing [sic] dramas other than Dr Who such as Blake’s Legacy (spin-off from Blake’s 7) and other original videos, the most recent featuring the cybermen. Recently, we’ve done extra work for the History Channel.

(1.7, 083)

Here, *Doctor Who* investment has led to participatory activities outside the world of the primary text, not only in related genre texts (*Blake's 7*), but in largely unrelated spheres ('extra work for the History Channel'). Respondent 083 also indicates that he writes articles and conducts interviews for a science fiction publication which features *Doctor Who* material. In addition to the participation in the common categories mentioned above, respondent 092 indicates that he has also contributed articles to a number of *Doctor Who* websites and fan publications (one of which he 'helped edit' [1.11]), submitted a letter to *DWM*, and assisted in the organization and running of a number of conventions in the 1990s, also producing video material for some of them. Respondent 099 is the only one of these three individuals to indicate an active membership of the *DWAS* at the time of inquiry, alongside an active membership of a gay *Doctor Who* fan group. He notes that he had formerly attended a local group but that he 'didn't stick at it as the people were odd and not that friendly'. He also indicates a frequent correspondence with *DWM*, and that he has seen 'a couple' of these letters published.

Whilst all three of these respondents are located in positions which seem relatively high on the spectrum in comparison with the rest of the sample, there is not a great deal of differentiation between the investment in which they engage and that of those respondents located closer to, but still above, the median. Indeed even respondents 081, 048 and 086, who can be located in high investment positions on the spectrum at the start of this exercise are only *relatively* close to the hypothetical 'possible high extreme' of the spectrum, compared with the rest of



the sample. Whilst the participation in the world of the text engaged in by these respondents might potentially be considered 'high' in comparison with that of those outside the fan ingroup (and even this is prone to the development of a false binary which separates out fan and viewer activities and pleasures), when considered alongside the absolute extent of possible participatory activities available to *Doctor Who* fans, it rapidly seems less so.

Over the course of this chapter, we have observed every one of the respondents engaging in some form of participatory activity through their relationship with *Doctor Who*, and this supports the construction of a further spectrum of investment. The degree to which an individual participates in *Doctor Who*-related activities, and the form that this participation takes, differs significantly from person to person. As we saw earlier, when a 'sketch' spectrum is drawn from the responses to question 2.5, in terms of individual and undifferentiated participation, a significant proportion of the sample occupy the high extreme. However, once the data is broken down further and more factors are taken into consideration, the spectrum becomes more complex whilst at the same time the positions which the respondents are located in become less extreme and dispersed.

A key observation here is that the respondents engage in participatory activities at various different levels of organization. A small number make relatively large participatory investments in highly organized and institutional activities, such as attending conventions and joining fan clubs, and this might be interpreted as a

more 'intense' form of investment compared with those respondents who do not. However, analysis of the full range of available data reveals that many of the respondents who do not participate significantly in organised fandom make deep and sustained participatory investments in other, less organised (and thus, less clearly quantifiable), participatory activities. The spectrum proposed here does not impose any hierarchical order on participation in the world of *Doctor Who*. High participation in organised fandom or forms of cultural production such as fanzining is not (and, I would argue, cannot ever be) considered a more 'important' form of fan activity than less organised, or institutionally un-aligned, activities. Neither can it be treated as an indicator of the intensity level of fandom. As with the spectrum proposed in the previous chapter, whilst many respondents can be located in very similar regions of the spectrum of participatory investment, the actual investments they make do not break down into clearly discernable patterns and so must be considered on a case-by-case basis.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Spectrum of Investment in the Idea of ‘Authenticity’**

Ah, continuity. On one level, the one about being entertaining, continuity is an arse. Story arcs, back story *as content* are the kiss of death. There are thousands of examples of this deadening force from the late Davisons onwards. On another level, that of ordering things on shelves, it is vital. “Pescatons” CD does indeed go between the video of “Seeds of Doom” and the novelization of “Masque of Mandragora”. It has to and does have a place. Which is at the root of why “Death Comes to Time” is so disliked. Its not that its not entertaining or that it has little to do with what *Who* actually is, its just that no-one knows where it belongs.

(3.2, 067, italics in original)

The relationship between a fan and the diegetic history (or continuity) of her/his beloved text has long been a central focus of academic accounts of fandom. Fans are generally understood as making deep and sustained investments in the establishment of a definitive textual continuity, and in policing extensions to this continuity which may arise in new serials/films/novels/comic strips/etc. This often involves the construction of cultural (or perhaps better,

*subcultural*) canons that are socially determined and which, according to Henry Jenkins, are measured and evaluated against a collective 'idealized conception of the series', or 'meta-text' (1992, pp.95-107). It is through the discussion, analysis and writing of the continuity (or 'aesthetic history') that the 'powerless elite' of fandom described by John Tulloch becomes empowered, and establishes 'an officially constituted reading formation' (in Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995, pp. 141-145).

There is little doubt that continuity is an important influence on a range of fan activities. As a number of commentators have noted, inconsistencies, contradictions and extensions to the mythology and continuity of a particular text or tradition can open up a variety of potentialities for discussion, debate, criticism and creative writing (Bacon Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Penley, 1992). Continuity and canon form the backbone of a vast amount of fan discussion and criticism; on internet forums and messageboards; in fanzines, guidebooks and articles in *DWM*; through on-line archives and time-lines. The fan-run publishing company Mad Norwegian Press recently released *Ahistory – an unofficial history of the Doctor Who universe*, in which author Lance Parkin attempts to reconcile the events from the TV series (including the 2005 revival), the Virgin and BBC novels, the Telos novellas and the Big Finish audio plays into one definitive historical document. At the time this thesis was written, a thread appeared in the discussion forum of Outpost Gallifrey, a *Doctor Who* fan-site (or, as it describes itself, 'web community'), entitled 'find the Who consensus'. The originating poster asked members to come up with statements about *Doctor Who* that no fan would or could disagree with, statements that would be impossible to challenge, that would unite



fan opinion absolutely. The statements which the forum members who replied came up with covered a range of fan debates and discourses, ranging from straightforward value judgments (one story is better than another) to more complex arguments concerning, for example, the cultural status of the programme. Each statement was soon challenged by another poster, who then posted her/his own attempt.

This exercise was treated by the forum members as a game, a bit of fun, forming part of what might almost be considered a tradition, in other such threads, of individuals jokily trying to outdo or top each other in various arguments or parodic scenarios. But I would argue that it actually points towards a key condition of the relationship between fans, discourse, continuity and canon. Not one of the forum members who posted in that thread managed to find a '*Who* consensus'. It seems that in *Doctor Who* fandom, debates over canon and continuity are never fully resolved. Consensus is never truly reached. An unquantifiable number of canonical debates remain current and active within fan discourse, concerning both the diegetic history (for example, 'who do the "extra" faces during the mind-battle sequence in *The Brain of Morbius* belong to?' [see 'Who are all these strange men in wigs?' in Miles and Wood, 2004, pp. 83-85 for a discussion of this]), and the production and reception conditions of the series (for example, the quest to apportion blame for the 'decline' and eventual cancellation of *Doctor Who* in the 1980s [see Miles and Wood, 2005, pp.311-319, Gillatt, 1998, pp.143-147 and Chapman, 2006, chapter 7, amongst others, for overviews of this situation]). Whole

'eras'<sup>67</sup> of the show are subject to fierce debate and re-appraisal, as 'popular myths' and assumed hegemonies of taste are challenged and overturned (for a good illustrative example of this, see the fanzine articles by Amanda Murray [discussing the 'detourning' of Jon Pertwee], and Gareth Roberts [re-appraising the Tom Baker/Graham Williams serials], both reprinted in Cornell, 1997). It is safe to say that in organized and institutional fandom, debate over canon and the establishment of coherent continuity is prominent in terms of its importance.

An examination of academic accounts concerning other fan subcultures would reveal similar discourses being uncovered. The factors which motivate both the writing of 'aesthetic histories' (Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995, p.145) and the construction of subcultural canons amongst fans of many different texts are likely to be wide-ranging. These factors are also likely to depend, at least in part, on specific contexts unique to each text or tradition. In the case of *Doctor Who*, I would suggest that two specific but related contextual factors have influenced the proliferation of discourses surrounding the continuity and 'canonicity' of the master-text. The first of these is a phenomenon I explored at length in my MPhil thesis – the lack of a single 'creator' or author figure overseeing the production of *Doctor Who*. The idea of *auteurism* in television is troublesome, usually reserved for discussion of writers of 'quality' television, such as Dennis Potter, Stephen Poliakoff, or Alan Bleasdale, rather than directors (as is the case with cinema).

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<sup>67</sup> *Doctor Who* can (and often has) been carved up into distinct 'eras', both in fan discourse and popular historiography (Chapman, 2006, p.10). Such eras are neither definitive nor singular: for example, they might be defined by Doctor/lead actor; by production personnel such as producer and script-editor; or even by qualitative judgements.



However, a number of prominent genre TV shows have been seen as being shaped and overseen by an individual creator or 'show-runner' (e.g. Joss Whedon for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Chris Carter for *The X-Files*). These individuals become associated with the core themes and narrative trends of the show they originated. In the eyes of the fan, they might take on what Michel Foucault has termed 'the author function' (1984, p.107):

[The author's] name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others [...] The author's name serves to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse: the fact that the discourse has an author's name, that one can say "this was written by so-and-so" or "so-and-so is its author", shows that this discourse is not ordinary, everyday speech that merely comes and goes [...] on the contrary, it is a speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status [...] The author's name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture [...] we could say that in a civilization like our own there are a number of discourses that are endowed with the "author function" while others are deprived of it.

*(ibid)*

In *Science Fiction Audiences* (1995), Henry Jenkins examines the relationship between the fans of *Star Trek* and the show's creator Gene Roddenberry, in the light of Foucault's work on authorship. Jenkins notes that whilst the fans acknowledge the 'collaborative aspects of the production process', they also ascribe 'primary inspiration to a single author figure', in this case Gene Roddenberry, whose '[...] "very personal" philosophy' is seen to guide and shape both the show and the fans' response to it. Thus, Jenkins argues, 'the myth of the author remains a central determinant of audience response to *Star Trek*'.<sup>68</sup> He then goes on to locate Roddenberry's stewardship of the *Star Trek* franchise within Foucault's threefold 'basic functions' of the 'myth' of the author. Firstly, the author is a 'principle of classification, helping to organize the relations between texts'. Secondly, the author is a 'principle of explanation': Roddenberry's articulation of a 'personal vision for the series', and definition of a 'canon of core episodes' which best fit this vision, allowed fans to view him as 'personif[ying] its ideas and ideals' (Irwin & Love, 1992) and to police 'betrayals' of his 'personal vision'. And thirdly, the author is a 'sign of value, since only certain texts are read as authored'. *Star Trek*, Jenkins suggests, was regarded as the 'artistic vision of a single creator', and this allowed fans to distinguish it in terms of quality from 'the bulk of commercial TV' (1995, pp.188-190).

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<sup>68</sup> The phrasing here seems slightly odd. Jenkins has been specifically discussing fans throughout this particular section, and yet he chooses to use the term 'audience' at this point. I would argue that what he means here is 'fan response', and that some slippage has occurred.



Unlike *Star Trek*, and a significant proportion of other genre TV series, *Doctor Who* had no such author figure or at least, no *single* constant author figure. The programme, its format and central concepts and characters, were created almost by committee. Sydney Newman, described by James Chapman as 'arguably the most important single figure in the history of the golden age of television drama in Britain' (2006, p.14), is the man most often identified as the creator of *Doctor Who*. Certainly Newman was responsible for commissioning the show but as Chapman notes, the BBC's head of Light Entertainment, Eric Maschwitz, had set up investigations into 'the field of published science fiction, in its relevance to BBC Television Drama' (Maschwitz, quoted in Chapman, 2006, p.15) a year before Newman arrived at the BBC. Following a number of reports on the viability of science fiction as a TV genre which, Chapman notes, 'seem to have planted the idea of a time-travel theme' (p.17), Head of Serials Donald Wilson met with writers Alice Frick, John Braybon and Cecil 'Bunny' Webber (Howe, Stammers & Walker, 1996, p.166-169) to devise:

a "loyalty programme", lasting at least 52 weeks, consisting of various dramatised SF stories, linked to form a continuous serial, using basically a few characters who continue through all the stories

(Wilson, quoted in Chapman, 2006, p.18)

This group of four worked through a number of possibilities, eliminating those which were deemed unsuitable, whilst Webber was asked to 'suggest a set of viable characters' (Howe, Stammers & Walker, 1996, p.169). Sydney Newman then assessed the suitability of the proposals and characters arrived at by the group, approving the idea of a space-time machine (*ibid*, p.171), which was apparently Wilson's suggestion (Wood & Miles, 2006, p.9). Newman later claimed that at this point he devised a 'new' addition to the characters outlined by Webber: 'a frail and grumpy old man called the Doctor, who has stolen the time machine from his own people, an advanced civilization on a far-distant planet' (Howe, Stammers & Walker, 1996, pp. 171-172), but Howe, Stammers & Walker could find no documentary evidence to confirm this (*ibid*). The series was commissioned and assigned a 'caretaker' producer, Rex Tucker, and either Tucker or Newman coined the title *Doctor Who* (*ibid* p.173). Webber was then asked to draft 'general notes on background and approach' for the proposed series (in effect, the initial writers guide), which outlined the characters, the (as yet unnamed) TARDIS and the set-up (Howe, Stammers & Walker, 1996, pp. 173-177; Gillatt, 1998, pp. 11-15). However, Webber's scripts for the first serial were rejected, and he had nothing more to do with the series<sup>69</sup>, remaining uncredited for any of his work in its creation and development. As Gillatt noted, 'the words "created by C.E. Webber" were never to be seen on a single episode of *Doctor Who*; not even the very first

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<sup>69</sup> A note on terminology here, for the sake of clarity. *Doctor Who* was produced in distinct series, broadcast yearly, which were made up of various amounts of distinct episodes (ranging from forty-two in the 1960s to fourteen in the late 1980s). These episodes were further broken down into distinct 'stories' taking the form of cliffhanger serials (ranging from two to fourteen episodes). Thus each the programme as a whole is referred to as 'the series', whilst each individual story is referred to as a 'serial'



instalment that so casually and confidently employs almost all his core ideas' (1998, p.14).

*Doctor Who's* debut serial, *An Unearthly Child*<sup>70</sup> (1963), was eventually written by Anthony Coburn, produced by Verity Lambert and script-edited by David Whitaker. All three individuals would seem to have varying claims of authorship over *Doctor Who*. Coburn, working from Webber's 'general notes' and drafts of the first episode, introduced the lead characters to the viewing public and, according to Wood & Miles, suggested the Police Box exterior for the TARDIS (2006, p.11). However, *An Unearthly Child* remains the only serial written by Coburn to have been produced, and he arguably had no further influence over the series. Whitaker was script-editor for the first year of production and continued to write regularly for the series until 1970. Verity Lambert, James Chapman argues, was a 'decisive influence' over the development of the series, casting the regular parts, setting the 'tone' of the series and determining the audience identification (2006, p.22). Wood & Miles concur with this assessment and suggest a tension between Wilson and Newman's intentions and Lambert's decisions:

We now understand [*Doctor Who*] to be "about" aliens, scary monsters, cliffhangers, mind-blowing concepts and the Doctor's relationship with his human chums. The programme's Founding

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<sup>70</sup> The serials made over the first three years of *Doctor Who* bear no overall on-screen titles: each episode has an individual title, and debates have raged for years about the 'correct' names for these serials. I have chosen to use the titles used by BBC worldwide for video and DVD releases: *An Unearthly Child* is also known elsewhere as *100,000BC* and *The Tribe of Gum*. See the essay 'What Are These Stories Really Called?' in Wood & Miles, 2006, for more details.

Fathers saw it differently. The Founding Mother had the casting vote, and circumstances (and Lambert's populist instinct, often spot-on in giving people what they didn't know they were going to want), pushed the show from the classroom to the sixpenny stalls. Saturday Morning Serials replaced literary adaptations as the role-model.

(Wood & Miles, 2006, p.64)

This shift in emphasis was undoubtedly due at least in part to the popularity of the Daleks in the second broadcast serial, written by Terry Nation. However, the shift took place gradually over the course of *Doctor Who's* first season and concerned not only the types of stories being told and the manner in which they were presented, but also the characterization of the Doctor himself. For this reason Wood & Miles suggest that the seventh serial in the first season, *The Sensorites* (1964), is 'quite possibly the most important *Doctor Who* story of all', as it is the first time the Doctor 'elects to go into a hazardous place and save a planet' not out of curiosity or necessity but '*because he's good*' (2006, p.73, italics in original). This is the point, they conclude, at which '*Doctor Who* as we understand it comes into existence' (*ibid*). *The Sensorites* was written by Peter R. Newman, an individual who, like Anthony Coburn, never worked on the series again in any capacity. By now it should have become very clear that, even at this early stage in its production, *Doctor Who* was influenced and shaped, *created* even, by a wide range of individuals working in different capacities. No one single 'creator figure' or



'author function' can be determined. The three closest contenders are Sydney Newman (according to popular historiography), C.E. Webber (as Gillatt insists [1998, p.11]), and Verity Lambert (who arguably had the most hands-on influence over the series' development). None of these three figures had any influence over the show beyond 1966 (when Newman's approval was sought over the casting of Patrick Troughton to replace William Hartnell as the Doctor). *Doctor Who* had no 'guiding hand' which remained constant over the lifetime of the series, and thus no definitive authority in a position to resolve or rationalize contradictions in diegetic continuity.

Over the next 26 years, *Doctor Who* was overseen by nine producers and fifteen script-editors in various combinations. Almost seventy different writers authored scripts for the show. And it would appear that until 1980, comparatively little heed was paid to continuity by the programme-makers. 'Facts' about the Doctor, the TARDIS, the Time Lords, the Daleks and many other facets of the show's mythology and 'back-story' were revealed and then revised, ignored or contradicted. Serials such as *Genesis of the Daleks* (1975) and *The Deadly Assassin* (1976) contradicted developments in previous narratives, re-writing the origins of the Daleks and the conceptualization of the Time Lords respectively. The transmission of these two serials coincided with the formation of 'the first sizeable organized network of individuals who would identify themselves as *Doctor Who* "fans" [...]', the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society (Gillatt, 1998, p.133). A number of fans became outspoken in their criticism of the series after the society was

established (see Cornell, 1997, p.3, pp. 8-10, Gillatt, 1998, p.132-135, and Tulloch & Alvarado, 1983, pp.65-67, for overviews and examples of this). Even under John Nathan-Turner, the self-styled 'fans' producer' (Cornell, 1997, p.9) who made a concerted effort to police continuity and to appeal to the fans by basing an increasing number of serials around ideas and monsters from previous ones, contradictions (and the inevitable fan criticisms) still occurred (Gillatt, 1998, pp.132-135, pp. 158-159). By the time *Doctor Who* ceased regular production in 1989, the show's mythology and back-story was already convoluted and shot through with contradictions. Post-cancellation, in the absence of any new broadcast *Doctor Who*, this situation was to become more extreme.

This brings me to the second of the contextual factors which I proposed earlier, which is closely related to the absence of an author figure in *Doctor Who*. Once the TV series had been cancelled, 'new' textual formats of *Doctor Who* began to develop and other already existent ones (e.g. the *DWM* comic strip) assumed new degrees of significance. Between 1989 and 2003 (the year the questionnaire for this thesis was conducted), officially-licensed *Doctor Who* existed in a wide variety of textual formats: a TV movie (*Doctor Who*, 1996); four distinct ranges of original novels; 2 radio plays; a series of commercially-produced audio plays on CD, and a number of spin-off 'mini-series'; a range of novellas; 2 comic strips; three distinct series of short story anthologies; and 4 'webcast' animated dramas. Besides these, there are likely to have been a vast number fan-produced texts created in print, on audio, and on video, circulated at different levels. The officially-licensed products were produced by a variety of companies and so were



overseen by a number of different individuals, some of whom had 'risen from the ranks' of organized fandom (for example, the producers of the Big Finish audio plays, and most of the writers of the Virgin and BBC novels). The sheer range of textual formats being produced simultaneously by different organizations led not only to further contradictions and inconsistencies in continuity, but also to certain authors and producers attempting to resolve or neutralize previous contradictions, or to fill in 'gaps' in established continuity, within the new narratives. With the predominance of admitted fans amongst these producers and authors, it is tempting (and, to an extent, justified) to suggest that the fan subculture itself began to adopt the 'author function' for *Doctor Who*; that textual poachers were transformed into textual gamekeepers through access to legitimate textual production. However, as only a tiny minority of the subculture gained such access, such a suggestion would at the very least be unrepresentative.

I would further suggest that it is not just the absence of an identifiable author figure/function, or the fragmentation of the text in its post-televisual forms, which allowed such a significant amount of contradictory continuity to be generated. The format of *Doctor Who* itself arguably makes contradiction likely. Consider the words of C.E. Webber, in his 'general notes on background and approach' to *Doctor Who*: 'we are not writing science-fiction [...] neither are we writing fantasy [...] In brief, avoid the limitations of any label and use the best in any style of category as it suits us, so long as it works in our medium' (quoted in Gillatt, 1998, p.13). The narrative device central to *Doctor Who*, the TARDIS which allows travel through space and time, also allows the series to traverse different

genres and styles of storytelling. Whilst the show has always largely been grounded in the conventions of science fiction and to a lesser extent fantasy and horror, over the years *Doctor Who* has borrowed from sources as diverse as *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *Carry On Cowboy* (Gerald Thomas, 1965), Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* and the sitcom *Hi-De-Hi!* (BBC, 1981-88). Additionally, as Miles & Wood suggest throughout their series of *About Time* guides to *Doctor Who*, the programme's narratives were also often shaped by then current events in the real world, for example Britain joining the EEC in 1972 (Miles & Wood, 2004, pp. 78-79, but see also the *Where does this come from?* sections for each *Doctor Who* serial in Miles & Wood 2004, Miles & Wood 2005a, Miles & Wood 2005b and Wood & Miles 2006). Besides the wide range of influences brought to bear on the programme, the time/space travel element itself also gives rise to potential for contradiction.

Although initially pains were taken to ensure the establishment of certain rules regarding time-travel and interaction with history in *Doctor Who* narratives, these were soon disregarded or at least bent in order to facilitate the demands of a particular story. In *The Aztecs*, the fifth *Doctor Who* serial broadcast, the Doctor's companion Barbara impersonates a deity and attempts to persuade the Aztecs to abandon the practice of human sacrifice and thus save them from the genocidal fervour of Cortes and the conquistadors. The Doctor furiously insists that such a course of action is impossible and cannot be allowed: 'But you can't re-write history. Not one line [...] What you are trying to do is utterly impossible. I know. Believe me, I know.' (*The Aztecs*, 1965). Recorded history is established as being



immutable and sacrosanct. When the series travelled into the past, the characters were initially required to 'watch history unfolding', remaining in the position of spectators and unable to interfere in the patterns of cause and effect. However, to all intents and purposes, 'history' (or at least the programme's conception of it) stopped in 1963. Thus the characters were able to interfere with the patterns of cause and effect in 'the future'. The instigator of this attitude towards history appears to have been script-editor David Whitaker (Wood & Miles, 2006, p.67). When asked in a letter by a viewer why the TARDIS crew were able to interact with future events but not past history, Whitaker replied:

The basis of time travelling is that all things that happen are fixed and unalterable, otherwise of course the whole structure of existence would be thrown into unutterable confusion and the purpose of life itself would be destroyed. Doctor Who is an observer. What we are concerned with is that history, like justice, is not only done but can be seen to be done.

(quoted in Wood & Miles, 2006, p.67)

This attitude towards history lasted only as long as Whitaker's occupation of the post of script-editor. By 1965, halfway through the show's second season, Whitaker's successor Dennis Spooner had altered the status of the Doctor and his associates from observers of history to participators in events (Wood & Miles, 2006, p.69). By the end of the season, the Doctor has inspired Nero to start the

great fire of Rome (*The Romans*, 1965), the Daleks have caused the mystery of the *Mary Celeste* (*The Chase*, 1965), and a rogue Time Lord has come within a hair's breadth of changing the outcome of the battle of Hastings (*The Time Meddler*, 1965). From this point on history could be altered and contradicted, and not only the written history of the planet Earth and its peoples – the diegetic history, the continuity of *Doctor Who* itself, was also open to re-interpretation and change. Thus alongside the three separate explanations for the disappearance of the legendary civilization of Atlantis, the two distinct and contradictory accounts of the creation of the Daleks, several different 'versions' of Time Lord civilization and history, the programme also attributed the development of homo sapiens into the dominant species on Earth to more than half-a-dozen alien influences.

Whilst it might be expected that the format of a long-running series revolving around the travels of a moral crusader through time and space would allow (if not actively *invite*) the possibility of multiple 'versions' of history, many of the discourses initiated by *Doctor Who* fans in different constituencies (such as on-line forums and magazine letters pages) have been concerned with closing down potential contradictions and 'rationalizing' different 'versions' of history and continuity. The series itself largely shied away from any concrete attempt to address this on-screen. There is nothing in any broadcast *Doctor Who* episode which definitively suggests that there is or can be only one version of history, that the entire lifespan of the universe is pre-determined and thus, by implication, that there is no such thing as free will. As I have already noted, the multiple versions of events such as the 'genesis' of the Daleks might at least imply that change is



possible. However, a significant amount of fan discourse and criticism has been devoted to the establishment of fixed and definite 'histories' and documentations of the *Doctor Who* universe (a task which, I would argue, is ultimately impossible to complete, due to both the constant expansion of the fictional universe and the individual and personal judgements involved). On a fictional level, fandom has often identified the Time Lords themselves as the 'guardians of history' who strive to ensure a single cosmological continuity (often described as 'the web of time', a phrase used in one episode out of almost 700 in the 26 year run of the original series, but which has become central to much fan-originated fiction), and this has been reflected in the novels and audio plays produced over the last fifteen years.

As suggested earlier, the sheer breadth and depth of the diegetic history of the *Doctor Who* universe, which has originated from a continually diversifying range of formats and sources since the cancellation of the TV series in 1989, has made contradiction difficult to avoid. The producers of the various new formats of *Doctor Who* seem to have recognized this, and also perhaps reached the conclusion that a single consistent continuity might be a straightjacket on the potential narratives, although this remains speculative. Different formats have addressed these two issues in different ways. In 1996, the *Doctor Who* Magazine comic strip killed off the Doctor's companion Ace, in a deliberate attempt to separate the comic from the Virgin *New Adventures* novels in terms of continuity. In 2000, in the novel *The Ancestor Cell* (Anghelides & Cole, 2000), BBC books destroyed the planet Gallifrey, erasing the Time Lords from history and leaving the Eighth Doctor amnesiac. This meant that subsequent authors could 'act [...] as if

Gallifrey never existed [...and] open themselves to exploring a very interesting point: the Time Lords are no longer policing other races' (Pearson, 2001, p.147). Additionally, the amnesiac Doctor was rendered unable to 'remember' any of the preceding continuity, allowing authors the freedom to contradict previous narratives.

Big Finish productions followed suit in 2003, exiling the Eighth Doctor and his companion to live in an alternative 'Divergent' universe, with no TARDIS, Time Lords, Daleks or Cybermen. Immediately prior to this development, the play *Zagreus* (Barnes & Russell, 2003) featured a scene in which the Doctor openly acknowledges that he exists in multiple contradictory versions (two of which are identified as the *DWM* comic strip and the BBC EDAs), which was designed to 'negat[e] the need for anyone to try to work out the audios or Virgin's *New Adventures* or the BBC Books into the same concurrent universe' (Cook, 2003, p.226). Also in 2003, Big Finish commenced production of a series of plays entitled *Doctor Who: Unbound*, featuring 'new' Doctors (including David Warner and Arabella Weir) and based upon 'what if?' scenarios. Finally, when *Doctor Who* returned to TV in 2005 it was revealed that, prior to the first episode, Gallifrey and the Time Lords had been completely destroyed in the 'Time War' against the Daleks and that the Doctor considered himself to be 'the last of the Time Lords' (*The End of the World*, 2005; *Dalek*, 2005). Whilst this development became integral to the overarching plotline of the new series, it also allowed the scriptwriters to contradict previous established history and continuity, with dialogue clearly establishing that time is in flux and the Time Lords are no longer around to



'sort out' such problems as interference in history or parallel universes (*The Unquiet Dead*, 2005; *Father's Day*, 2005; *Rise of the Cybermen*, 2006).

Despite such developments and any impact they may have had on either *Doctor Who* or the programme's fanbase, debates over continuity and canon have continued to unfold in print, on the internet and in private discussions and correspondence. Alan McKee actually suggests that the cessation of TV *Doctor Who* in 1989 'made more commonplace debates about canonicity of the various products that have replaced it' (2004, p.182) I would argue that these debates, whether 'public' or 'private', whether conducted individually or socially, are a key dimension of fandom, and constitute another dimension of investment. The investment under consideration in this chapter is rather less defined and quantifiable than the investments examined the previous two chapters, and thus the spectrum which will be proposed here is the most fragmentary and fleeting of the four. There is no simple means of asking respondents how much they invest their knowledge of *Doctor Who* and subcultural capital 'back' into the text; even inquiring how much importance an individual places on the concept of continuity or canon (as was asked in question 3.2) provides no definite answer, as we shall soon observe. The dimension of investment which will be investigated by this spectrum is closely related to the idea of 'canonicity':

Entry into the canon is discursively managed, and it is this, finally, which enables it more accurately to account for the

difference in status of various texts. Modes of production cannot be relied on to determine the importance of or to understand the circulation of texts. The canon is never absolute. Its definition is achieved by consensus within various groups, but it is never stable. It is always open to challenge, is different for different groups – and can, of course, change over time. And it is the fans, finally, who make these decisions. It is they who are ultimately the powerful ones.

(McKee, 2004, p.183)

As we observed in the previous chapter, Alan McKee has suggested that ‘canonicity’ might be a more appropriate means of distinguishing ‘between cultural objects produced by different people’ than what he dismisses as ‘simple binaries’ such as the dualism between production and consumption (2004, p.175). He defines canonicity as ‘the decision as to what constitutes “real” *Doctor Who*’ and cautions that previous academics (such as Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995) have ‘mapped this canonicity back onto the boundaries already noted’ (i.e. the binary which separates ‘industry’ and ‘fan’ production into two separate modes and arranges them hierarchically). Tulloch & Jenkins, McKee argues, automatically assume that the ‘primary text’ (the industry produced one, in this case the TV series) is more authentic than the ‘secondary text’ and therefore ‘the producers have the power and the fans do not’ (p.176). However, McKee suggests that the decision as to which texts are considered to be ‘real’ is dependent on the reader and thus on the



'assumptions and opinions of individuals' (2004, p.177), and compares this with the process of 'how texts become real', proposed by Henry Jenkins (1992, pp.50-85). Both Constance Penley (1992) and Tulloch & Jenkins (1995) imply that the powerlessness of fan producers is powerlessness to affect the canon (McKee, 2004, p.177).

If this is the case, McKee argues, then 'the canon is *not* simply what is produced by the industry [...] it is a status granted to the texts – of being real, of carrying authority – that is, finally, validated by *the fans themselves* – and not by the producers' (*ibid*, italics in original). For this reason, there can be no 'simple production context that guarantees canonicity' (*ibid*). In *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins describes the process by which fans determine the canon through an assessment of the 'real' (i.e. 'transmitted on TV') text, a process which McKee views as a validation of parts of an already existing text (2004, p.178). *Doctor Who* fandom does not follow the pattern described by Jenkins, as the canonicity of the text is not 'simply industrially-determined' (*ibid*). As I noted earlier, the canonicity of a particular text is discussed in fan discourse and debate in a wide variety of spheres and forums (McKee, 2004, p.179). McKee draws on an example from a particular internet newsgroup forum in order to illustrate such a debate in action. A member of the newsgroup forum (a 'poster') initiated a discussion thread asking members to consider thirty-nine categories of possibly canonical *Doctor Who* texts and rate them in terms of their authenticity or canonicity. In his analysis of the responses, McKee noted different levels of 'uncertainty':

It is instructive to note, in the responses to this post, not only a lack of agreement on what constitutes a canonical – real, authentic – part of *Doctor Who*, but also a sense of uncertainty in it in individual responses

(McKee, 2004, p.179)

Each of the forum members who posted a reply in the thread agreed that limits must be imposed on the canon and yet the question of how these limits might be established remained more difficult to address (*ibid*). The most notable tendency which McKee observed amongst this particular group of fans was ‘towards uncertainty’ (p.180). From his empirical data, he posits that the fan community does not assume *all* televised *Doctor Who* to constitute canonical text and that they also do not consider *only* the televised episodes to constitute canonical text – novels, audio plays and other textual variants are also considered (pp.180-181). Thus, canonicity is ‘produced discursively’ within the fan community itself, not ‘industrially determined’. Furthermore, ‘it is always provisional’, due to the lack of consensus between different fans or fan groups over the status of different texts (pp.181-182).

Access to communications technology such as the internet, alongside more specific contextual developments such as the removal of the ‘easy centre’ for debate provided by the *Doctor Who* TV series in 1989, has allowed fans increased access to means of textual production. McKee notes that the fans/consumers of *Doctor Who* ‘have become particularly involved in the production of more or less



canonical texts' (p.182). Ultimately, he suggests, increased access to methods of production means that the 'binaries that rely on the difficulty of gaining that access can no longer be easily accepted' (*ibid*). The binary between the powerful and the powerless (or between fan and producer) is misleading, drawing away from the complexity between different 'productions' (*ibid*). However, significant *and quantifiable* differences still remain between fan and producer and between the powerful and the powerless. Whilst canonicity is undoubtedly produced 'discursively' within the fan community, I would argue strongly that the industry remains a powerful influence over the determining of textual authenticity. McKee's desire to move away from 'simple binaries' indeed allows for complexity to be taken into consideration, but the power of institutional authorities and dominant cultural constructions cannot be underestimated when attempting to understand how people differentiate between cultural objects.

Question 3.1 in my questionnaire asks respondents to perform a similar exercise to that which McKee observed on the internet newsgroup. Section three of the questionnaire is designed to inquire into the issues of continuity, canon and knowledge in a variety of ways. 3.1 presents the respondents with a list of the different textual formats of *Doctor Who* and asks them to assign each a score of between one and five, where one is 'least authentic' and five is 'most authentic' (see appendix A for the full list and rubric). The list details 23 separate 'types' of *Doctor Who* - fewer than in the exercise detailed by McKee – including what might

be termed 'fan texts', 'industry texts' and 'fan-industry texts'.<sup>71</sup> The ultimate point of the exercise is for each respondent to construct her/his own hierarchy of canonical texts. The more authentic an individual considers a text or category to be, the higher the numerical score assigned to that particular category and thus the more prominent the text/category's position in the hierarchy. The numerical scoring format devised for question 3.1 is designed to place all the respondents on an equal footing, which is why a quantitative approach was adopted rather than a qualitative one. This also allows much more potential for cross referencing and comparison of data from different responses, although the question also leaves space for qualitative commentary if an individual so desires.

The reason why cross-referencing and comparison is so important for this particular exercise is simple. For question 3.1, I am working from a hypothesis (which was generally not the case for the remainder of the questionnaire). I hypothesize that the general pattern of the responses to question 3.1 will be a hierarchy in which the industry-produced, broadcast category of the *Doctor Who* TV series will be considered to be most authentic, and in which fan-produced, narrowcast categories such as fan fiction will be considered to be least authentic. The closer a 'spin-off' text is to the primary TV text in terms of aesthetics, content and legitimacy, the higher the position in the hierarchy it assumes. The categories

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<sup>71</sup> The research was conducted prior to broadcast of the 2005 'revival' of *Doctor Who*. This is unfortunate, as the inclusion of the new series in question 3.1 would have allowed an overview of both how it was compared to the 'classic' series by the respondents and also how it might have affected the way in which the 'secondary' texts are considered. I did also consider asking the respondents to rate the authenticity of every individual serial from the TV series. However, as these number in the region of 150, I decided that this would over-complicate the questionnaire and subsequent data analysis.



are deliberately arranged in a random order in the questionnaire, so as not to suggest any sort of pre-supposed hierarchy of authenticity which might influence the way in which the respondents complete the exercise.

The categories themselves are determined through a number of observations and considerations, such as how particular texts have been categorized by fans and fan publications and how the data would be tabulated and used. For example, the BBC cult TV website 'webcast' four animated *Doctor Who* dramas in the early 2000s. All four have what might be termed 'troublesome' canonical status: *Death Comes to Time* (Meek, 2001-2002) comprised a wholesale 'reboot' of the programme's ethos, ignoring the existence of the 1996 TV Movie and re-imagining the Time Lords and their relationship with the universe; *Real Time* (Russell, 2002) was produced by Big Finish productions and featured the character of Evelyn Smythe, a 'new' companion created for the company's audio plays; *Shada* (Adams, 1979, 2003) was a remake of a uncompleted and unbroadcast serial from the seventeenth season of *Doctor Who*, with Paul McGann replacing Tom Baker in the lead role; and *Scream of the Shalka* (Cornell, 2003) featured a new one-off incarnation of the Doctor, voiced by Richard E. Grant. Thus for question 3.1 I decided to keep the four serials separate, rather than include them under a generic category such as 'webcasts', as this allows respondents to rank them on an individual basis but also allows the freedom to rank them identically if desired.



Fig. 4.1: Breakdown of results from authenticity ranking exercise (question 3.1). A-Y represent the textual categories (see key below). 3-digit numbers are respondents' identification codes. Response scale: 1= 'least authentic', 5= 'most authentic'. n= no response for category. Figure continues on next page.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
098	3	3	4	5	4	3	2	4	2	3	4	4	2	5	5	2	3	4	3	5	3	2	4
107	n	n	2	n	n	n	3	3	1	3	n	3	1	5	n	n	n	n	n	1	2	n	n
071	4	3	1	5	5	3	1	5	4	4	5	1	2	5	4	1	4	4	1	5	5	1	4
097	3	2	4	2	1	3	3	4	3	4	2	2	2	5	2	3	3	2	1	5	3	3	2
081	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	3	1	3	5	3	4	4	4	1	5	4	4	4
095	4	4	2	3	3	3	1	5	3	3	2	1	2	5	4	1	3	3	1	5	3	2	3
092	1	1	4	1	5	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	5	4	3	2	4	2	4	1	3	3
099	1	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	1	4	n	n	1	5	4	1	4	4	n	4	1	n	3
082	3	2	4	3	5	5	1	4	4	3	1	1	1	5	4	1	3	3	1	4	3	3	4
083	2	n	3	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	1	3	2	5	5	3	5	5	3	1	n	4	5
104	4	3	3	5	5	2	2	4	4	4	2	3	2	5	5	3	3	5	2	5	4	3	5
078	5	n	1	5	5	5	n	5	3	5	n	4	5	5	n	n	5	5	4	5	5	n	n
079	4	3	1	4	4	2	2	3	1	4	2	3	1	5	4	1	4	2	1	5	5	1	4
103	1	n	2	n	4	2	1	3	2	2	n	1	1	5	n	1	2	2	n	5	1	n	n
077	n	n	n	n	5	n	n	5	3	3	n	n	n	5	n	n	n	5	n	1	n	n	n
065	3	2	1	2	3	3	1	3	2	3	2	1	1	5	3	1	3	2	1	5	3	2	3
029	3	2	4	2	5	2	2	5	3	4	3	3	3	5	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3
026	3	2	4	1	1	1	1	5	4	5	n	5	2	5	1	3	3	3	1	5	5	2	1
064	n	4	4	3	5	3	2	5	3	5	2	1	1	5	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	2	2
066	1	5	1	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	1	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	5
070	5	4	1	3	5	3	1	1	4	3	2	3	1	5	5	1	3	4	1	5	5	1	4
069	4	1	1	3	4	3	1	4	4	4	2	2	2	5	4	2	4	4	2	5	4	2	4
061	3	3	3	4	4	3	2	4	3	3	4	2	2	5	4	3	3	4	2	5	3	3	4
041	1	1	5	3	2	1	1	5	2	3	3	1	1	5	4	3	2	5	1	5	2	5	3
088	4	3	1	1	5	3	1	2	2	3	3	1	1	5	4	1	3	2	1	5	3	1	4
112	2	n	3	n	4	n	n	5	3	2	n	2	2	5	n	1	1	n	n	1	3	n	n
111	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	4	3	2	1	1	2	5	1	2	1	1	1	3	3	1	1
086	5	3	2	4	5	4	2	4	3	4	n	2	1	5	4	1	4	3	2	5	4	1	4
067	3	1	1	5	5	3	1	3	3	1	5	1	1	5	5	1	3	5	3	5	3	3	5
032	1	1	2	1	5	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	4	1	5	1	5	1	3	5
033	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	5	1	3	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	1	1
034	4	3	1	1	5	3	1	3	2	4	5	1	1	5	5	1	4	5	1	5	4	2	5
038	2	3	4	5	5	2	1	3	2	4	4	1	1	5	5	2	2	4	1	5	4	3	4
076	5	4	4	5	5	3	3	4	4	3	n	n	2	4	5	4	3	3	3	4	5	n	4
094	2	2	4	3	4	2	1	n	1	2	3	1	1	5	3	1	2	3	1	4	2	1	3
091	3	1	4	3	3	1	1	3	2	3	3	1	1	5	3	1	3	4	1	n	3	n	3
109	4	4	4	5	5	2	1	4	3	5	3	2	1	5	5	2	4	5	2	5	5	3	5
101	4	4	2	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	3	2	2	5	4	2	4	4	2	5	4	3	4
105	5	n	1	n	5	n	n	3	3	5	1	3	1	5	n	2	5	4	3	5	5	1	5



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
063	n	3	1	n	n	3	1	n	n	n	2	2	n	5	n	n	n	n	2	4	4	n	2
080	2	2	4	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	5	4	3	5	5	1	3	5	3	5	2	1	5
075	5	2	1	4	5	4	2	5	1	5	1	2	1	5	5	2	5	5	3	5	5	5	4
100	2	4	3	3	4	4	3	5	4	4	1	n	2	4	5	2	4	2	4	5	1	2	2
074	4	4	1	3	4	4	1	1	1	4	4	1	1	5	4	1	4	4	1	5	4	1	4
106	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
068	2	n	2	n	3	2	3	4	3	2	n	2	2	5	n	2	2	3	n	3	2	n	n
048	5	3	2	4	4	2	n	4	2	2	1	n	2	5	1	2	3	3	n	n	2	2	4
102	3	n	3	n	5	n	n	5	1	3	n	1	1	5	n	n	3	4	n	5	3	n	n
110	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
040	4	3	2	3	3	2	1	2	2	3	n	2	1	5	2	1	3	3	1	4	4	2	n

**KEY for Fig. 4.1:**

**A:** *Virgin New Adventures* **B:** *Telos novellas* **C:** *1960s Dalek movies*  
**D:** *Scream of the Shalka* **E:** *Big Finish plays* **F:** *short stories* **G:** *fan fiction*  
**H:** *TV novelisations* **J:** *DWM comic strip* **K:** *BBC Past Doctor Adventures*  
**L:** *Death Comes to Time* **M:** *fan videos* **N:** *other comic strips* **P:** *TV series*  
**Q:** *Shada* **R:** *annual stories* **S:** *Virgin Missing Adventures* **T:** *radio drama*  
**U:** *fan audios* **V:** *TV movie* **W:** *BBC Eighth Doctor Adventures* **X:** *stage plays* **Y:** *Real Time*

Fig. 4.1 represents a complete tabulation of the data from question 3.1, allowing both the responses of each individual and the data from each category to be compared and cross referenced. Analysis of this data will allow a number of separate issues and ideas to be explored, each of which might contribute to the construction of the spectrum for this chapter.

A key point which might be observed upon initial examination of the data is that no two complete sets of individual responses are the same. The pattern of ranked categories for each individual set of data is different from the others in the sample. This complicates the development of a spectrum of investment for this chapter. Question 3.1 does not actually ask the respondents to indicate the degree to which they invest in the idea of canonicity and so it is impossible even to



speculate from my data as to the 'strength' of different individuals' investment. The question also presupposes that all the respondents are on an equal footing with regards to their construction of a hierarchy of authenticity, that no one set of individual opinions outweighs another. There is no clear method by which we might determine which respondents constitute high or low investors from the available data. However there is another set of data available from a related question in the survey, data which might at least allow the consideration of the importance which individuals accord to the idea of continuity and canon, and so I propose to examine this briefly before returning to the analysis of the data from question 3.1. Question 3.2 asks the respondents 'is it important to you that a clear sense of consistency and continuity is maintained across the various "versions" of *Doctor Who*, that they all "fit together" without contradictions?'. They are asked to indicate whether they consider this to be 'essential', 'very important', 'important', 'mildly important', 'not important' or 'don't care'. There is also the option not to respond.

Fig 4.2 tabulates the data from the responses to this question. A point which must be noted here is the possibility that the responses to this question might be deployed tactically. As was observed in chapter one, a number of respondents seek to separate themselves from a conception of 'anorak' fans, who are seen as paying far too much attention to ideas such as continuity and canon. The possibility that these respondents may answer question 3.1 in such a way as to maintain this distinction cannot be discounted, and neither can the possibility that other tactical responses may be mobilised. However, the 'don't care' option available in the question would seem to be the most likely place for individuals



seeking to distinguish themselves from ‘anorak’ fans to make their answer, and yet only four percent of the sample respond in this category.

Fig. 4.2: Percentages of responses to question 3.2

Essential	6%
Very important	14%
Important	32%
Mildly important	30%
Not important	10%
Don't care	4%
No response	4%

As with the data from question 2.5 in the previous chapter, we can use the data tabulated in figure 4.2 to produce a basic response spectrum for question 3.2. The ‘high’ extreme of this spectrum is simple to determine and is assigned the value of ‘essential’. The ‘low’ extreme is more problematic to determine as there are two possible options – ‘not important’ and ‘don’t care’. However ‘don’t care’ cannot automatically be assumed to indicate a ‘low’ investment in this case – in fact all it definitely indicates is a lack of interest in the importance of continuity. Thus we will assign ‘not important’ as the ‘low’ extreme of the spectrum, which makes ‘important’ the median point. On such a spectrum, a relatively low proportion of the sample occupies either of the extremes. Compared with any of the spectrums previously proposed, the respondents are considerably more evenly distributed in this case. There are, however, twice as many respondents occupying positions below the median point of the spectrum than those occupying positions above it.

At first glance we might thus assume that whilst most of the sample considers consistency in continuity to be important to at least some degree, the

majority invest in the idea at a median level or below. As noted earlier, we cannot discount the possibility that the responses to this question might not reflect the true feelings of the respondents. But this cannot by any means be considered a 'true' spectrum of investment in the same sense that those proposed in the previous chapter might be. Question 3.2 merely asks the respondents to indicate the importance of consistent continuity to their experience of *Doctor Who*. As suggested earlier, the investment here is a particularly complex phenomenon, one for which the limitations of the question and thus the available data curtail further speculation. However, as we shall see, there is another spectrum which may be constructed which is of more relevance to the topic under consideration

The account of *Star Trek* fandom by Henry Jenkins in *Textual Poachers* suggests that authenticity is 'evaluated' against a socially constituted and relatively stable 'meta-text' – the fan consensus of what constitutes the 'ideal' version of the text (1992, pp.98-108). In *Science Fiction Audiences*, John Tulloch describes a situation in which 'a particular generation' of *Doctor Who* fans 'establish[ed] an officially constituted reading formation, which supervises reading of the show' (1995, p.145). These 'senior fans' are understood to exercise 'discursive power in establishing the "informed" exegesis for their subculture of fans' (*ibid*, p.150) implying regulated and hegemonic control over discourses such as the 'management' of the canon. Tulloch's research was conducted largely among what he describes as 'society' fans (p.141), individuals who occupied high-ranking or executive positions in organized fan institutions such as the *Doctor Who*



Appreciation Society or the Australian *Doctor Who* Fan Club. Tulloch's suggestion that 'fans are remarkably univocal' was likely shaped by the specific context of this research (interviewing individuals with vested interests in maintaining their status in the fan hierarchy and thus the appearance of 'control') and raises the suspicion that a degree of slippage is in operation, between the 'society fans' in his sample and a more general conception of 'fandom' as a whole.

This is a situation that, I would suggest, occurs on a regular basis in academic accounts of fan communities. The distribution of discursive and subcultural power is often distorted by research which focuses on distinct organized fan communities and allows the more outspoken and high-ranking members to speak for the entire community. Once again it is *context* which needs to be taken into consideration above all else. In the specific situation created by my research, the conferment of canonicity is conducted on a personal level by each individual, rather than being defined hegemonically by a small group of executive fans. However, we must still bear in mind the possibility that the influence of such hegemony may be at work, even if it cannot be measured by this data. As I noted earlier, the format of question 3.1 is specifically designed to give equal weight to the opinions of every respondent and thus avoid creating misleading hegemonies within the sample. McKee suggests that in such a situation consensus is unlikely and, if it occurs, is 'always provisional' (2004, pp.181-182). Whilst consensus on the *exact* shape of the canon, or in this case the exact formation of the hierarchy of authenticity, is highly unlikely, consensus on the authenticity of particular categories or the general pattern of canonicity is much more probable. What I

would stress here, however, is that both consensus and dissent should be observed amongst groups of fans and not inferred from the potentially 'loaded' testimony of senior members of organized fan institutions.

Returning to the data from question **3.1**, we can observe that two sets of data in figure 4.1 *are* identical, but these are included for the sake of completeness and transparency only. Besides the five authenticity values available for the exercise, the respondents have a sixth response option – to leave a blank space instead of assigning a numerical score. As I shall discuss in more detail shortly, a number of respondents leave particular categories blank for reasons specified in qualitative comments. However, two respondents choose not to engage in the authenticity ranking exercise. Respondents 106 and 110 leave question **3.1** completely blank and, frustratingly, give no qualitative reason for refusing to complete the exercise. Thus we can only speculate as to the possible motivations for this choice, which might ultimately be due to pragmatic reasons such as a lack of free time or a desire to complete the questionnaire quickly. Alternatively, the refusal to complete the exercise might reflect firmly held beliefs regarding the establishment and management of the canon. What is interesting to note is that in comparison with the other forty-eight responses, these two individuals are the only respondents to offer a consistent single 'value' across all categories. None of the other respondents score each category equally. However, for the purposes of analysis, I have decided to discount these two respondents from the data so as not to assign speculative 'values' to their unaccountable decision not to respond.



A significant number of the respondents choose to make no response in certain categories, with forty-four percent of the entire sample leaving at least one category blank. Some respondents indicate that the reason for this course of action is that they feel unable to make objective assessments of the canonical value of texts of which they have no first-hand experience. This is likely to be the reason for textual formats that are difficult to access, such as *Doctor Who* stage plays, receiving a significant number of blank scores. Whilst it is probable that the respondents who give no justification for leaving some of the categories unrated are motivated by the same reasons as those who do, this again must remain speculative without empirical evidence. By the same reasoning, it can neither be assumed that those individuals who assign a score in every category have first hand experience of every category. There are evidently a number of different approaches to the exercise in operation here. Some individuals make statements which seem to indicate that their own direct interaction with a textual variant is a vital component in the determination of canonicity, hence the unwillingness to assign scores to 'unseen' texts that can be observed in a number of responses here. Others offer no such qualitative justification for not assigning scores. Whilst the reasoning behind their 'refusal' might be the same as that given by the other respondents, another possible explanation is that the refusal to assign a score might be a deliberate strategy to exclude certain texts from the canon entirely. In effect, assigning no score to a particular category excludes that category from an individual's notion of the canon, whether as part of a deliberate strategy or not.

A (narrow) majority of respondents assign scores in every category, offering no explicit qualitative acknowledgement of whether the score they assign is based on first-hand interaction with the text or not. Whilst it is not inconceivable that some of the respondents will have had such first-hand experience of every textual category, I would argue that it is likely that a number of the respondents have completed the exercise without it. So we have another approach to the exercise, which at present remains hypothetical, in which an individual assigns canonical value to 'unseen' texts through consideration of a wide variety of 'secondary' sources and discourses (reviews, debates and discussions, hearsay), or by some other 'personal' means as yet undetermined. The fact that certain respondents refuse to assign value to texts that they have no first-hand experience of whilst others do just that is an indication of the complexity of different approaches to this phenomenon. Additionally, the tactical potential of assigning different values to certain texts and refusing to value others is also important to consider. One respondent notes both the tactical possibilities and also the 'personal' nature of assigning canonicity, in his qualitative commentary which accompanies question 3.1:

Am I allowed to say I find the whole business of "authenticity" inauthentic? It's mainly used by fans to put other fans down. I don't think its possible to say for certain what is authentic; for me, my own "canon" is a mix of what I think fits in, and what I



like. However it's dressed up, anyone else's definition boils down to the same – it's subjective.

(048, supplementary to 3.1, emphasis in original)

Respondent 048 raises a valuable point here: he notes that his own canon is determined by, what are ostensibly, both 'objective' and 'subjective' means. The 'objective' determinant here (and I am keeping the term within quotes, as such judgements can never be *entirely* objective) is how and where a particular text 'fits in' with the rest of the canon. Whilst I am not suggesting that some kind of scientific or even historiographic methodology is at work here, finding the place where a text fits within a wider canon does involve some degree of cognitive rigour. Different texts are assessed in terms of their relationships with others and the consistency of information they exhibit. The 'subjective' determinant here (again the term remains within quotes, for reasons that will shortly become apparent) is *pleasure*, as the respondent puts it; 'what I like'. Henry Jenkins (1992) implies that pleasure and consistency might be bound up as far as the subcultural canon is concerned. Particular texts are discarded *and disliked* because they do not fit in with the 'meta-textual constructions' and continuity which are established through fan discourse (pp.98-107).

Matt Hills draws on John Michael's (2000) critique of Jenkins' 'political use of fandom' to suggest that academics have often represented fans as 'miniaturised academics' (Hills, 2002, p.10). Here fan communities might begin 'to resemble a sort of idealized research seminar engaged in a fairly traditional form of literary

study' (Michael, 2000, p.120). The implication that like or dislike of a particular text is supported by assessment of its meta-textual status or canonicity only reinforces such a notion. After all, academia is supposedly concerned with establishing cultural value through objective means rather than subjective value judgements. However fandom is not academia. Similarities between the two spheres are numerous and, as Hills notes, the distinction between 'academic-fan' and 'fan-academic' is blurry at best. But human beings are not required to give reasoned account of their judgements of taste or value. Indeed, anthropology owns that we might not even have access to the means to fully account for our thoughts and actions. The way in which an individual reacts to a particular text or cultural form is bound up in much broader concerns than those which might be considered 'fannish'. Why a particular individual likes or dislikes a particular episode of *Doctor Who* might be down to a multitude of factors that might have everything or nothing to do with the episode's relationship with the rest of the series. Fans are not *just* fans; their fandom is a specific dimension of a much broader construction of identity. A *Doctor Who* fan's 'habitus' is by no mean a *milieu* comprised solely of other fans and fannish concerns and activities; according to Bourdieu (1984) a whole range of influences are at play here, influences which are largely bound up in an individual's class background. Pleasure, taste and distinction are subject to complex social, cultural and institutional forces and this must remain a key consideration in our analysis of the data from question 3.1. At the very least, the implication that the pleasures which fans take in their interaction with a fan-text are



Fig. 4.3: Textual categories from question 3.1 ranked in order of mean average score, with mean average score and total number of '5' responses for each category.

Category	Mean average	Mean average ranking	# '5' responses
TV series	4.94	1	46
Big Finish	4.20	2	24
TV movie	4.13	3	31
TV novels	3.85	4	16
<i>Shada</i>	3.67	5	14
Radio	3.60	=7	12
<i>Real Time</i>	3.60	=7	9
PDA novels	3.40	8	8
EDA novels	3.37	9	11
<i>Scream/Shalka</i>	3.30	10	11
MA novels	3.18	11	5
NA novels	3.07	12	7
Short stories	2.77	13	3
<i>DWM</i> strip	2.66	14	1
Novellas	2.64	15	1
Dalek films	2.47	=17	1
<i>Death/Time</i>	2.47	=17	4
Stage plays	2.35	18	2
Fan videos	1.98	19	1
Annual stories	1.95	20	1
Fan audios	1.83	21	0
Fan fiction	1.69	22	0
'Other' strips	1.65	23	2



dependent on meta-textual concerns seems rather reductive and suspect when considered in this light.

Fig. 4.3 provides an overview of the average scores assigned to each category and arranges them in an order ranked according to these mean scores. The amount of '5' scores assigned to each category is also listed alongside the mean average, allowing for comparison. The two sets of results exhibit similar patterns if ranked side by side. In both cases it is the TV series which is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the clear leader in terms of authenticity, according to the scores assigned by the respondents. If we discount the results of the two individuals who chose not to respond to this question, then an overwhelming majority of the respondents (almost ninety-six percent) assign a score of '5' to the TV series, which represents an almost unanimous consensus of the sample. We can use the data from fig. 4.3 in the construction of a possible spectrum for this chapter. This however does not truly constitute a spectrum of investment as such, as it does not deal with the relative intensity or degree of an individual's investment in canonicity (for reasons outlined earlier); rather it might be better thought of as a spectrum of perceived 'authenticity'. In effect, it is a spectrum of all the possible responses to question 3.1. The sheer volume of possible responses to this question mean that the spectrum would be vast and complex; it certainly cannot be reduced to two extremes on a single axis, with graduated 'degrees' located in between. Indeed, there can be no 'high' and 'low' extremes to this spectrum. However, this degree of complexity does not mean that such a spectrum cannot be illustrative in terms of the central discussion of this chapter. If we simplify it somewhat into a spectrum of



response *patterns* in the conferment of authenticity, it becomes rather more easy to construct and thus to comprehend. As the title of this chapter suggests, this spectrum might best be perceived as a spectrum of investment in the idea of 'authenticity'. Before we continue to construct this spectrum, the data in fig. 4.3 must be examined further.

As I noted earlier, a majority of almost ninety-six percent of the sample score the TV series as '5 – most authentic'. Indeed, what is slightly surprising here is that the TV series does not quite achieve the highest average score possible. Two respondents, 076 and 100, assign a score of '4' to the TV series in the exercise. Both these individuals assign scores of '5' to categories other than the TV series (*Virgin New Adventures*, *Scream of the Shalka*, Big Finish plays and BBC *Eighth Doctor Adventures* for 076, and TV novelisations, *Shada* and the TV Movie for 100). Unfortunately, neither respondent offers any supplementary qualitative material which might account for the reasoning behind this decision. One (speculative) possibility is that these individuals' first, perhaps 'formative', interactions with and experiences of *Doctor Who* might not have involved the original TV series.

The only new televisual *Doctor Who* in the 1990s was the 1996 TV Movie and, as we have already seen, there was a proliferation of textual formats such as novels, audio plays and webcasts over the course of the decade. Additionally, between the early 1970s and 1991, the majority of the serials from the original TV series had been novelised under the Target Books imprint (listed in fig. 4.2 under the category of TV novels) and these books were a staple of children's sections in

libraries throughout the UK (Wood & Miles, 2006, p.145). Wood and Miles stress the 'importance' of these books, both to the 'literacy of – literally – thousands' and as 'a kind of prototype home video' (*ibid*), which allowed broadcast adventures (which may have been repeated once on television) to be re-experienced as often as the reader liked. Whilst '[n]one of the Target novelisations were canonical, in the way we now understand the term' Wood & Miles suggest that they 'provided a baseline of what *Doctor Who* was supposed to be' (*ibid*). If any or all of these formats provided respondents with their first experience of *Doctor Who* (in effect becoming that individual's conception of the 'primary' text), then it could be possible that such an individual would regard it as being the most 'authentic' version of *Doctor Who*. Alternately such 'secondary' texts might better fit an individual's meta-textual understanding of *Doctor Who*, or elicit a more pleasurable response, than the original TV series. The authenticity ranking exercise might even be approached from a tactical viewpoint, or as a means of constructing a particular type of fan-identity (i.e. 'unconventional' or 'eccentric').

The three categories which score average ratings of '4' or higher all constitute 'performed' versions of *Doctor Who*, which are either produced by (the TV series, the TV Movie) or under license from (Big Finish audio) the BBC. As noted in an earlier chapter, the Big Finish audios are largely designed to evoke the 'feel' of the TV series, using actors, characters, music and sound effects from the original series. The Big Finish audios also 'square the circle' with regards to the canonicity of the Paul McGann Doctor. As may be observed here, the canonicity of the TV Movie starring Paul McGann has been subject to debate over the decade



since it was broadcast, hence my decision to assign it a separate category in the exercise. The placement of Big Finish in between the original TV series and the TV Movie in fig 4.2 seems apposite, as Big Finish have produced plays starring Paul McGann as the eighth Doctor but in a format which consciously evokes the original TV series rather than the movie (4 part serials released in distinct 'seasons'). The Big Finish eighth Doctor plays have also ignored the two most contentious issues which surfaced in the TV Movie and which fuel at least some of the debate over its canonicity; the suggestion that the Doctor is half-human; and the Doctor's new-found interest in kissing women. The data concerning the amount of '5' scores assigned to each category also places the TV movie and the Big Finish plays at the top end of the scale below the TV series. However in terms of this data, the positions of the two categories are reversed, with the TV movie ranked second and Big Finish ranked third. There is also a significant gap in between the TV series in first place and the TV movie in second, with fifteen '5' scores separating the two. Below these three categories, the amount of '5' ratings declines very sharply, with more than half the categories rated '5' by ten percent of the sample or less and two (unlicensed fan audios and fiction) receiving no '5' ratings at all. This is a further indication of the power of such factors as the industrial produced or performed nature of texts in the determination of their authenticity.

The remainder of the mean average ranking tabulated in fig. 4.3 appears somewhat more arbitrary, although a couple of other loose patterns might be observed. Ranked below the three categories mentioned above are a group of other 'performed' texts (webcasts and radio plays), and novels, all of which are

either BBC-produced or officially licensed. All of these categories receive a mean average score of between '3' and '4'. Those which score less than '3' tend to be texts which are explicitly at odds with significant aspects of the texts which average a score of more than '4'. Thus we might observe the low averages achieved by both *Death Comes to Time* and the 1960s Dalek films, officially produced/licensed textual formats which contradict fundamental aspects of the TV series and many of the other licensed texts (*Death Comes to Time* was discussed earlier; the 1960s Dalek films feature a human scientist called 'Dr Who' who invented the time-ship *Tardis* – a name rather than an acronym – in his garden shed). Close to the bottom of this ranking are the unlicensed fan-produced texts, although the lowest mean average score is reserved for officially licensed comic strips which appeared in various children's magazine throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and which again often contradicted the TV series wholesale (see Gillatt, 1998, for an overview of these). Wood & Miles suggest that the content of certain merchandise (including textual formats such as *Doctor Who* annuals, which feature among the bottom five categories in fig. 4.2) might be fundamentally different from the content of the TV series itself:

[It is] interesting that the content of some of the [*Doctor Who*] toys/games/annuals and the content of the programme seem almost totally distinct [...] The *idea* of the programme (as exemplified, perhaps, by the annuals) and the actual broadcast series were related, but sometimes very separate. The



programme as a concept, the promise made to the viewers of what might happen, is easier to sell than the actual series. Any given episode is an example of one of the things the programme can do, but no one episode can live up to the expectations of the programme as a whole, and its place in the British viewing diet.

(Wood & Miles, 2006, p.269, italics in original)

That the unlicensed fan-texts achieve consistently low authenticity values whilst the industry-produced broadcast texts achieve the highest is very revealing, and seems to confirm my hypothesis. If we examine the data tabulated in fig. 4.3 as a whole, then striking (if fairly predictable) patterns can be clearly observed. Arranged in descending order, both the mean average score and the total '5' responses follow a broadly similar sequence of ranking which might be described as follows: the further away a text moves from the original BBC-produced TV series, in terms of production, 'ethos', aesthetic, content or medium, the less authentic it is considered to be by the respondents in the sample. Whilst there are degrees of variation in the responses given by individuals, most of the respondents broadly conform to this pattern. Here, then, we might sketch out the spectrum of authenticity response patterns mentioned earlier. Possible positions on this spectrum would reflect different potential patterns of response to question 3.1, such as the possibility that certain individuals, for whatever reason, might rate fan-produced texts as more authentic than any other textual format, or that others

might rate *every* category as most authentic. These, however, must for the moment remain speculative, due to a lack of evidential data.

As noted above, the results from question 3.1 as given by my respondents conform to a general pattern in which the 'authorized', broadcast and industrially produced TV series is considered to be most authentic and the 'unauthorized', narrowcast and fan-produced texts are considered least authentic. If this is constructed as one 'region' on a complex and largely undefined spectrum, then most if not all of the respondents in my sample would occupy positions within the vicinity of this region. Even the two respondents who do not rate the TV series as '5 – most authentic' assign it a score of '4', indicating that they nevertheless consider it to be a significantly authentic textual format. Whilst none of the respondents offer identical sets of results, the broad similarities are clear. Thus there might be a host of smaller gradations between the responses of different individuals, but this will all be located within a very narrow band of the wider spectrum. This spectrum is significantly different from the two proposed in the previous chapters for a number of reasons. Key among these is the fact that both of the previous spectrums evidence a much wider relative spread of individual respondents on their axes than that which is proposed here.

In terms of investment, the spectrum proposed above does allow certain conclusions to be drawn. In particular, we might argue that all of the respondents in the sample make a significant investment in the idea that the TV series represents the most authentic form of *Doctor Who*. The data strongly indicates the existence of a hierarchy of authenticity with the TV series in the highest position and fan texts



among the lowest, confirming what might be expected. This in turn suggests that perhaps the determination of authenticity and canonicity is heavily dependant on a text's relationship with institutional authority and industry. As we observed earlier, Alan McKee has suggested that the canon is:

*Not* simply what is produced by the industry. It is a status granted to texts – of being real, of carrying authority – that is, finally, validated by *the fans themselves* – and not by the producers.

(2004, p.179, italics in original)

Additionally, he insists that 'modes of production cannot be relied upon to determine the importance of or to understand the circulation of texts' (*ibid*, p.183). Whilst the challenge to certain simplistic or dualistic assumptions which such an argument advocates is necessary in fan studies, McKee appears to move too far in the other direction. Depending upon binaries which carve fans and producers up into respective 'powerful' and 'powerless' positions as a means of 'determining between cultural objects produced by different people' (*ibid*, p. 173) may be reductive and unrepresentative of reality, especially when dealing with so complex a phenomenon. However, the suggestion that 'the concept of canonicity' might be a better way to account for this (*ibid*) appears almost to suggest that the fans are 'powerful' and the producers are 'powerless', which is clearly not the case. McKee argues that it is impossible to 'draw the line, claim here is production, the industry,

and here are fans, the powerless', because activities such as 'web postings', 'casual conversations' and 'private interpretations' can be considered forms of cultural production. And so they can, but relatively clear distinctions remain in place between different modes of production. Oversimplification of such distinctions can and does take place, but this does not constitute a reason to ignore or do away with them wholesale.

At this point it seems pertinent to ask exactly what McKee means by 'canonicity'. He offers this definition - 'the decision as to what constitutes "real" *Doctor Who*' – before arguing that previous academics have 'mapped this canonicity back onto the boundaries already noted' (2004, pp.175-176). Instead, he suggests, the authenticity of a particular text depends on the 'assumptions' and 'opinions' of individual readers. The implication here is that canonicity is largely subjective and constituted either individually or by different subcultural groups. Validation of textual authenticity is fan-centric rather than being dependant on the industry or on specific modes of production. And if the distinction between 'industry production' and 'fan production' is dependent not on the mode of production but on the subjective 'realness' of a text, McKee suggests, then the subjective decisions of fans are '*intensely important*' (2004, pp.180-181, italics in original).

The key question here becomes obvious – on what criteria might these 'intensely important' subjective decisions be based? McKee offers no definite answer to this, arguing that canonicity is produced 'discursively' within the fan community, not 'industrially determined', and that 'it is always provisional' because fans disagree over the status of different texts (pp. 181-182). I would argue that



this subjective discursive 'production' of canonicity is heavily influenced by determinants such as mode of production and relationship with industrial/institutional authority. Authenticity and canonicity are, as I suggested earlier, likely to be determined by a number of distinct factors. 'Canonicity' is not and cannot ever be an organic quality or discursive category in and of itself. Binaries and dualisms might be considered to be misleading in many ways, but so is the suggestion of open plurality or even any kind of even shading between the two poles of fan and producer. Whilst to some degree the final decision over what is 'validated' as canonical of a specific text remains, as McKee suggests, in the hands of the fans, this decision is, ultimately, heavily informed and influenced by potent (and perhaps inescapable) institutional and cultural forces.

This is undoubtedly the key finding to have arisen from the data analysis in this chapter. The data from question 3.1 overwhelmingly suggests that the decisions over the authenticity of particular *Doctor Who* texts which are made by the questionnaire respondents are strongly shaped by cultural and institutional forces. That the TV series is rated as 'most' authentic by such an overwhelming majority of the sample, and that those texts which strongly resemble the TV series in terms of style, content or other factors are rated relatively highly, indicates that the respondents make clear and consistent connections between 'authenticity' and what is produced by 'official' sources. This in turn suggests the influence of dominant cultural constructions in which industry, authenticity and cultural power are closely bound together. Of course, a whole range of other discourses are likely to influence the decisions which the respondents make in completing the exercise.

Those texts which occupy the 'middle' positions in the hierarchy of authenticity represented by fig. 4.3 are subject to much less consistent scoring than those which occupy the higher and lower extremes. As I noted earlier, a large amount of fan debate and criticism, across a whole range of different spheres, has been devoted to discussion of canonicity, and so this too undoubtedly influences some of the decisions that the respondents make here. Subjective decisions and individually constituted distinctions cannot be discounted as having influenced the way individuals approach the exercise, but my data overwhelmingly suggests that it might actually be very difficult for individual subjectivity to go against a quite strongly shaped (though by no means absolute) pattern. This allows space for the two respondents who do not rate the TV series as being 'most authentic', whose reasoning I speculated over earlier. Indeed both of these individuals assign a score of '4' to the TV series, which further indicates the potency of the forces which hold influence over such decisions.

What has also become clear through analysis of the data from question 3.1 is that the respondents do invest a great deal in the idea of canonicity and continuity, as has regularly been suggested in previous accounts of fans and fandom. Exactly what is invested here is much less clear than in the previous two chapters, which dealt with relatively quantifiable investments (i.e. time and money). Both knowledge of *Doctor Who* and any resulting subcultural capital form dimensions of this 'canonical' investment but so do much wider ranges of knowledge and *cultural capital* (an example here might be an understanding of exactly how television drama is produced by the BBC). Indeed, as I noted earlier,



we cannot carve up knowledge or cultural capital into discreet and independent 'units' – what an individual 'knows' about *Doctor Who* forms only part of a wider reservoir of knowledge from which it cannot ever be divorced. And whilst knowledge and subcultural capital are invested in the idea of the canon, the individual also invests *in* the idea that their own knowledge and subcultural canon are in some way authentic and valuable.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **The Spectrum of Multiple Investments**

The Avengers, certainly. Quatermass, perhaps. After that there are a lot of other TV series that I'd buy on DVD, or read about from time to time, say, but none that I'd follow with such consistent love (and expense). Similarly with films and some recording artists. I suspect most people looking at my flat would say I'm a "fan" of a load more – it's all a matter of perspective.

(048, 2.6)

As we saw in chapter one, we might justifiably define every one of the respondents who completed my questionnaire as a *Doctor Who* fan, even the individual who chooses to define himself as an 'enthusiast' rather than submitting to his own negatively inflected definition of 'fan'. However, I would argue that by considering a single fan-alignment without at least touching upon the possibility that individuals can invest in multiple fandoms, we might significantly misrepresent the ways in which individuals engage in fan-life, closing down a number of potentially useful avenues of inquiry. Matt Hills suggests that by focusing on 'fans of single texts or narrow intertextual networks', previous ethnographies of fans and fandom have treated them as 'naturally occurring (and spectacular) communities' (2002, p.89). He argues that multiple fandoms might be 'linked through the individual's realization of self identity', with disparate-seeming fan objects perhaps



bridged by shared discourses and aspects of self-identity (pp.81-82), and that the single-text or narrow-intertext focus adopted by many previous ethnographers 'closes down' investigation of this (p.89). Whilst this is an undeniable problem with single-text/intertext focus work in this field (this thesis included) it remains, as I noted previously, difficult to formulate a means of selecting 'general' fans for research. Thus the focus on a single textual alignment is arguably difficult to avoid. However, this does not mean that an individual's other fan investments might not also be explored.

Hills' suggested method for investigating multiple fandoms and self-identity is autoethnography. However, as explained in the introduction, this was not a viable option within the framework of my questionnaire given the need to focus on a particular fan alignment and a self-selecting and 'inclusive' sample. Thus, the issue of multiple fandoms ended up being addressed by a single question. Question 2.6 asked the respondents 'would you describe yourself as a fan of anything other than *Doctor Who*?', and invited them to give details of any other fan investments. In retrospect, it seems unfortunate that I did not pursue this line of questioning more significantly. Indeed the follow-up questionnaire, compiled in light of the responses given to the first questionnaire, focused on multiple fandoms in more detail. However, as less than twenty-five percent of the sample completed and returned the follow-up, I have decided to exclude this data from the current thesis, although it may facilitate further research in this field. The data resulting from question 2.6 in the primary questionnaire does allow some consideration of the 'other' investments made by the respondents. At the very least, we might begin

to construct a spectrum of 'multiple investment' and locate the respondents upon that spectrum. One issue which will arise here is the question of how 'high' and 'low' extremes are defined, as there are both the issues of *number* and *intensity* of investments to consider in the construction of the spectrum.

Another question from the survey which needs to be analysed, and which I feel fits in best in this chapter, is question 4.1. This asks the respondents 'Why *Doctor Who*? Can you articulate the reasons for your interest?' The data from this question might allow some (speculative) discussion of the relative 'intensity' of the investments made by various respondents in their *Doctor Who* fandom, as well as the discourses which this may have in common with 'other' investments. Of course, such an exercise is open to challenge, and Matt Hills has examined what he considers to be the shortcomings in the ethnographic process of 'asking the audience' when studying fans and fandom (2002, p.66). Asking a question such as that posed by question 4.1, Hills suggests, 'assumes that cultural activities can be adequately accounted for in terms of language and "discourse" [...]' (*ibid*), that people might have access to the means to explain the reasons why they do the things they do. This is, as has been widely noted, a fundamental problem in *any* ethnographically- (or anthropologically-) inflected study of human culture and society; it is certainly not a problem which is specific to this particular context. As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, it is an issue which I have kept constantly in mind whilst analysing the data from the questionnaire, in order to avoid presenting discourse as what Hills terms 'interpretive "knowledge" [...]' (*ibid*).



Hills sees 'cultural studies "ethnography" [...]' as having generally neglected to consider the possibility that fan discourse might constitute a process of 'auto-legitimation' when presented with a question such as 'why *Doctor Who*?'. He argues that instead of being understood as a neutral expression of 'knowledge', fan discourse needs to be considered as an active construct, a process in which acts of self-legitimation and justification by fans are in operation. The emphasis on fan knowledge and the means by which it is displayed, which he sees as being central to previous ethnographic account of fandom, acts as 'an alibi for the ethnographic process' (*ibid*). Here, the articulate nature of "the fan" is 'a reduction of subjectivity' which functions as a 'foundational legitimation of, and for, ethnographic methodology' (*ibid*). At this moment:

Fandom is largely reduced to mental and discursive activity occurring without passion, without feeling, without an experience of (perhaps involuntary) self-transformation. This ethnographic version of fan culture seems to have no inkling that discursive justifications of fandom might be fragile constructions, albeit socially-licensed and communal ones. This is *not* to argue that fans *cannot* discuss their feelings, passions and personal histories of fandom in any meaningful manner. Far from it. Instead I am trying to emphasise that *fan-talk cannot be accepted merely as evidence of fan knowledge. It must also be interpreted and analysed in order to focus upon its gaps and*

*dislocations, its moments of failure within narratives of self-consciousness and self-reflexivity, and its repetitions or privileged narrative constructions which are concerned with communal (or subcultural) justification in the face of external 'hostility'.*

(Hills, 2002, p.66, italics in original)

Hills states his aim as being 'to reconsider fan discourse as a justification for fan passions and attachments' (*ibid*). He draws upon an article written by Michael Haslett for the *Doctor Who* fanzine *Skaro* (1994), which states that '*Who* fandom as a community typically presents particular justifications of its collective love for the programme, but these justifications are – to a great extent – merely a way of defending the fan's attachment against external criticisms' (2002, p.67). Such justifications often take the form of what Hills terms a 'discursive mantra', effectively a 'relatively stable discursive resource which is circulated within niche media and fanzines and used (by way of communal rationalisation) to ward off the sense that the fan is "irrational" [...]' (*ibid*).

The particular discursive mantra highlighted in the Haslett article is that *Doctor Who* has 'the most flexible format on British television, [that] its narrative range incorporate[es] horror, sci-fi, fantasy, historical adventure and comedy, to name but a few of its multiple genres' (1994, p.10, quoted in Hills). Hills argues that 'discursive structures and repetitions' such as this run the risk of being 'accepted at face value' by the ethnographic practice of asking the audience, instead of being



considered in terms of their defensive or justificational deployment (2002, p.67). Terming the belief that fans are able to 'fully account for their fandoms' (which he sees as prominent within ethnographic accounts) a 'fallacy of internality', he refutes the 'adequacy of ethnographic methodology *in this precise instance*' (i.e. studying fans) and suggests that autoethnography might be more useful (pp.68-72). Ultimately, the 'fallacy of internality' is prone to 'assum[e] that the "in-group" is a source of pristine knowledge' and this neglects 'the sociological dynamics whereby the culturally devalued "in-group" of media fandom is compelled to account for its passions' (2002, p.68).

This line of reasoning exhibits a number of flaws. First and foremost among these is the suggestion that the ethnographic practice of 'asking the audience' might involve accepting the reasons through which people explain their activities 'at face value'. As I have repeatedly stressed throughout this thesis, the central tenet of ethnography and the wider field of anthropology is that *it cannot be assumed that people have access to the reasons why they do the things they do*. Both Malinowski and Polanyi, working more than half a century before the time of writing, suggested that there are likely to be socially-constituted and discursive 'official' reasons for doing things, reasons which do not necessarily reflect reality (see introduction). Discursive mantras are by no means limited to fandoms; they are likely to be at work in every civilization and culture (an issue which Hills neglects to address). Of course, there has always been a tension in the disciplines of ethnography and social anthropology, between the desire to respect the ways in which people describe themselves and their culture and the danger of relying on

surface claims and taking discourse at 'face value'. Whilst I am not arguing that ethnographers *never* accept justifications at face value, I would suggest that ethnographers researching fan communities are no more or less likely to be prone to this 'problem' than those engaged in any other sort of research.

By insisting that ethnographic methodology is inadequate in the '*precise instance*' of study fans and fandoms, *but not* 'across all instances of media consumption in all contexts and modalities' (2002, p.68), Hills falls into the very trap which he cautions against constantly throughout *Fan Cultures*. The underlying implication here is that fans and fandom are in some way more complex objects of study than other media consumers, or that 'non-fan' discourses are perhaps easier to interpret than fan discourses. At the very least, the suggestion is that fans and other media consumers are fundamentally different from each other. Thus, Hills constructs a 'moral dualism' which effectively separates out 'fan' and 'media consumer' into two distinct subjects for study, which seems to contravene his stated aim to present fandom 'on its own terms [...] rather than being used to form part of a moral dualism' (2002, p.9).

Furthermore, there is a related problem with the evidential basis for Hills' suggestion that 'fans typically register some confusion or difficulty in responding' when faced with a question such as 'why *Doctor Who*?' and that they subsequently 'fall [...] back immediately on their particular fandom's discursive mantra' (2002, p.67). Leaving aside the rather reductive notion of a singular discursive mantra (rather than a series of them), Hills' evidence for this assertion seems to be the account of Haslett (detailed above) and the contribution of Roger Langley, a former



president of *The Prisoner* Appreciation society, to the book *The Prisoner: A Televisionary Masterpiece* (Carraze and Oswald, 1990). There is no suggestion of wider research to support the fairly definitive claim that fans 'typically' find it difficult to account for their fandom and 'immediately fall back' on a discursive mantra to justify their investment. Whilst I am by no means suggesting that this is definitely not the case, I would argue that a significant weight of empirical data is required to substantiate such a claim. That Haslett's account of *Doctor Who* fandom's supposed inability to account for its own interest is written by a fan, drawn from a fanzine and is effectively presented *at face value*, rather undermines Hills' criticisms of previous accounts of fandom. If the reasons offered by *Doctor Who* fans for their interest in the show are to be understood as tactically deployed discursive justifications then it follows that Haslett might be doing exactly the same in his account. Or does the fact that Haslett is writing in a fanzine and might conceivably be regarded as a 'scholar-fan' (Hills, 2002, pp.10-11) mean that his account is somehow more 'true' and thus less open to question than the accounts of fans in general?

None of this is to suggest that Hills' argument is wrong *per se*. The idea that fans might respond tactically when asked to give reasons for their judgements of taste, that they might seek to justify and legitimate their investments through the deployment of a 'discursive mantra', remains compelling. However this cannot be restricted to fans and fandom. If it is in operation in this specific context, then it may also be in operation in countless other social and cultural contexts. Thus,

ethnography must be dismissed equally across the board if it is to be dismissed here. There is no justification for treating fandom as a 'special case'. I would argue that instead of dismissing the practice of 'asking the audience', ethnographic research into fans and fandom would do better to treat Hills' critique as a *caution* against the *possibility* of presenting fan discourse as 'pristine knowledge' without interpretation and analysis. Additionally, whilst it is very likely that 'discursive mantras' are mobilised by fans in the manner that Hills describes, the underlying implication that the mantras might be reducible to 'cult phrases' or even dismissed as untrue (drawn by Hills from Haslett's account [2002, p.67]) also seems reductive. Such mantras are likely to be grounded in objective reality at some level, although again Hills' critique needs to be recognized as a caveat against research presenting them at 'face value'. Indeed, this thesis contains a version of the Haslett/Hills *Doctor Who* 'discursive mantra', in the examination of the programme's format in the previous chapter, which is 'deployed' in full knowledge of Hills' claim.

Bearing in mind the issues I have outlined above, I feel that the data from question 4.1 might be used to test certain of Hills' assumptions, alongside the primary exercise of constructing the spectrum. How might the sample respond to the question 'Why *Doctor Who*?' And what bearing, if any, might the respondents' other fan investments have on the way in which they answer the question?

Once again, we will begin the construction of the spectrum by assigning extreme values. Examining the breakdown of the responses to question 2.6 in Fig. 5.1 (asking about 'other fan investments'), it becomes apparent that eighty-four



percent of the sample indicate that they are also fans of things other than *Doctor Who*. Of the remaining respondents, twelve percent answer that they are fans of *Doctor Who* alone, whilst four percent chose not to respond to the question. The existence of 'single investors' within the sample allows one extreme of the spectrum to be defined quite easily. However, in the case of this spectrum, 'high' and 'low' values indicate the range of other fan investments only.

*Fig 5.1. Percentages of respondents indicating number of 'other fan objects' in response to question 2.6*

# 'other' fan objects	% respondents	# 'other fan objects	% respondents
16	2%	15	0%
14	0%	13	0%
12	2%	11	0%
10	0%	9	0%
8	4%	7	4%
6	2%	5	8%
4	18%	3	12%
2	12%	1	18%
0	12%	No response	6%

An individual might invest highly in a single fan orientation, whilst another might make slight investments in a large range of orientations. Conversely, it is equally possible to make only a slight investment in a single orientation or invest highly in a large range. There is also the possibility that an individual might invest at different levels or degrees of intensity in different fan orientations. If this is the case, it

becomes extremely difficult to assign 'high' or 'low' values to any one investment position.

Further, the limited data available from the questionnaire does not allow much more than speculation as to the *relative* intensities of the other fan orientations detailed by the respondents (which I consider to highlight a weakness in the overall design of the questionnaire, namely that certain questions should have been asked in more detail). As it stands, the spectrum for this chapter will confine itself largely to the *range* of non-*Doctor Who* fan orientations, rather than the *intensity* of these other investments. If one extreme of the spectrum is to be understood as representing 'single investors', then the other might best be defined as representing 'manifold investors'. In order to take the spectrum to another level (perhaps best understood as 'three-dimension', compared to the 'two-dimensional' spectrum proposed here), it would be necessary to return to the same sample group and ask them questions that are near-identical to those posed by the original questionnaire, about each of their other stated investments. The resulting data would then form the basis for constructing spectrums of financial, participatory and knowledge investment for each of the other fan orientations. Comparison between each set of spectrums (and the *Doctor Who*-data spectrums), might allow the construction of a hierarchy of fan-intensities for each individual respondent, which would in turn allow relative intensities to be factored into the construction of a much more detailed spectrum of multiple investments for each respondent. However, this is the work of a future research project. Here we must restrict ourselves to a two-dimensional spectrum, using the available data.



As I noted, the 'single investment' extreme is, as the name implies, self-defining. However, defining the 'manifold investment' extreme is more complicated, as there is no way of determining the maximum number of fan-orientations any individual might have. Matt Hills has suggested that, for autoethnography at least, 'as broad a view of fandom as possible' should be taken, 'including any devoted media consumption as well-as non-media-based passions, enthusiasms or hobbies which may have led to specialist media consumption' (2002, p.83). Exactly why 'specialist media consumption' is seen here as either a marker or a necessary consequence of fandom is not made clear: if an individual is designating the objects of her/his own fandom then surely it is up to that individual to decide both what is included *and the reasons for its inclusion*. For this reason, question 2.6 is left as open as possible. I did not offer any framework or checklist against which the respondents must define their 'other fan objects': instead it is left entirely up to the individual to decide what constitutes fandom in each case. Thus, the question allows respondents to take as broad a view of fandom as they wish.

The highest volume of fan orientations listed in answer to question 2.6 comes from respondent 094, who lists sixteen distinct fan objects besides *Doctor Who*. However, this should by no means be considered to be the highest possible number of fan-investments an individual might make. For example, I recently conducted an autoethnography of my own fandom, as part of a paper on the practice (Duckworth, 2005, unpublished). Taking 'as broad a view of fandom as possible', I identified fifty-seven distinct objects of which I am, or have been at some point, a fan. Again, this is highly unlikely to be the maximum possible

number of fan objects, as the range of possible investments need not have any finite limit. However, what must be born in mind here is the difference between the question asked of my respondents and the autoethnographic exercise I myself submitted to. My own autoethnographic account explicitly sought to identify and include every possible fan object, both current and previous. However, question 2.6 in the questionnaire is much more open, and gives no instruction for the respondents to assemble an exhaustive list of fan objects. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this particular spectrum, the 'manifold investment' extreme must remain undefined, beyond the understanding that it represents a 'large number or range' of fan orientations. Respondent 094 represents the nearest any of the questionnaire sample have come to this extreme, and, whilst this constitutes a high volume of orientations relative to the rest of the sample, it may be relatively low in terms of the hypothetical limit (or lack thereof) assumed by the spectrum.

As we have already seen, twelve percent of the sample occupies a position at the 'single investment' extreme of the spectrum, having indicated that they consider themselves to have no fan-attachments other than *Doctor Who*. A further eighteen percent of the sample indicated one other fan-attachment. Overall then, sixty-eight percent of the respondents indicate that they invest in five or fewer 'other' fan objects or orientations, a figure which rises to eighty percent if the single investors are included. Therefore, the majority of the sample occupies positions which are relatively close to the single investment extreme of the spectrum. If we confine ourselves just to the data from the questionnaire respondents, this eighty percent might be located in the 'third' of the spectrum closest to the single



investment extreme. I would also suggest that there should remain a gap between those respondents who are located at the single investment extreme and those who even invest in one 'other' fan-object, as the two effectively constitute different dimensions of investment. With four-fifths of the sample located relatively close to the single investment extreme of the spectrum, the remaining respondents are more widely distributed; with ten percent of the sample listing between six and ten other fan attachments and four percent listing more than ten. There is one respondent for whom it is not possible to define a position, for reasons which will shortly be explained. From the data above, it is apparent that the overwhelming majority of the respondents consider themselves to be fans of a relatively small volume of texts. This could perhaps be read as an indication that fans tend to invest in a relatively low volume of texts. I would, however, strongly suggest that the data available makes such an assertion problematic at least: the sample is relatively small and the question makes no inquiry as to the process by which the respondents have identified their fan objects. Additionally, as we shall see, the data gives a resounding sense that many respondents do not include a complete list of their 'other' fan objects.

By examining the responses given by each respondent in answer to question 2.6 we will be able to locate each individual on the spectrum of multiple investments. Additionally, we might also be able to trace any links or similarities between their other fan objects and *Doctor Who* and also analyse any qualitative comments they have made concerning their other fan investments. I will start with the respondents who can be located closest to the manifold investments extreme.

Respondent 094 lists 16 fan objects besides *Doctor Who*. The complete list is as follows: Lindsay Anderson, Wire, James Hadley Chase, 1970s UK Horror films, David Lynch, The Avengers, Nic Roeg, Ludus, William S. Burroughs, The Simpsons, 60s UK Psych, Stanley Kubrick, Gilbert & George (up to 1980), Peter Walker, UFO, Tarkovsky's "Mirror". Most these fan objects can be arranged by 'category' – Cult TV (*Doctor Who*, *The Avengers*, *The Simpsons*, *UFO*), 'Auteur' filmmakers (Lindsay Anderson, David Lynch, Nicholas Roeg, Stanley Kubrick, Andrei Tarkovsky), Musicians/bands (Wire, Ludus, Peter Walker, '60s UK Psych') and novelists (William S. Burroughs, James Hadley Chase). There are possible intertextual linkages which may be drawn between the objects in certain categories (for example, Lynch, Roeg and Kubrick) and also between categories (Lynch and Burroughs, perhaps). The key point here, as with the data offered by a significant number of other respondents is the sense of incompleteness in the response, as evidenced by 094's final comment, that 'the list goes on...'

There are a variety of possible explanations for this. The first, and perhaps simplest, is down to the amount of time and effort the respondents were prepared to devote to the questionnaire. Calling to mind and compiling a complete list of fan objects is time-consuming, and so the best way to expedite the task is to suspend the list by stating 'there are many more', or a similar phrase. Another possible explanation is that 'suspension' of the list is used tactically, as a means of implying a more wide-ranging or developed fan identity than a complete list of actual fan-objects would suggest. Whatever the reason, almost one third of the entire sample engages in this suspension in their answer to question 2.6. Respondents 048, 106,



063, 105, 038, 033, 086, 111, 077, 083, 082, 097, 099, 098, 041 and 091 all indicate in some way that their fan investments go beyond those objects listed in the response. Some, like 083, provide an initial list of quite specific objects, but end the response with a phrase such as 'and many others'. Others, such as 041, give more vague responses, listing genres of film, TV or music and then commenting that there are 'too many' individual objects 'to list'. Respondent 086 simply ends his response with three dots (...), which again suggests that the list he specifies is only a fragment of a wider range of fan objects and investments. Respondent 099 does not list any specific fan objects in his account, instead noting 'I follow many other things and have wide interests but not to the degree of Dr Who'. Such a response suspends closure of the list and also works both to ward off the possibility of a negative fan identity (i.e. one who focuses 'too much' time and attention on a TV programme – see chapter one) and to reinforce the intensity of the respondent's *Doctor Who* fandom.

These seventeen respondents are the most problematic to locate on the spectrum due to the 'suspended' nature of their responses to question 2.6. Whilst some of the respondents here list as few as two other fan investments in their response (048, 041), the suspension of closure in their lists makes it difficult to clearly distinguish where they might be located on the spectrum. Relatively manifold investors, such as 094, 086 (who lists twelve other fan objects) and 105 (who lists nine) are less problematic, yet locating them on the spectrum still remains tricky. And responses such as that offered by 099, as seen above, are impossible to convert into a definite investment position or level. Such responses

can only be located in very broad terms, as having a 'multiple but unspecified' number of other fan investments. Those respondents who do not explicitly suspend their answers to question 2.6 can be more easily assigned positions on the spectrum, keeping in mind the possibility that the lists they have assembled might not be complete. Respondents 112 and 078 list seven fan objects or attachments in their responses, both of which include *Star Trek* (though 078 makes a point of excluding the *Enterprise* series from his *Star Trek* canon). Both respondents also include other cult TV programmes in their fan-inventory; *24*, *Nip/Tuck*, *The Simpsons* and *Birds of Prey* for 112; *Babylon 5*, *Xena/Hercules* (listed as one object) and *Blake's 7* in the case of 078; whilst the remainder of the listed objects are cult or genre texts, such as comics and James Bond (112) and *Lord of the Rings* (078). As is the case with many of the other respondents in this sample, these two individuals might be defined as 'media fans, although respondent 078 also indicates that he is a fan of 'railways' and 'buses'. With seven identified fan objects apiece, 112 and 178 can be located in median positions relative to the rest of the sample, but nonetheless remain relatively close to the single investment extreme of the spectrum.

Respondents occupying positions slightly closer to the single investment extreme also included cult/genre texts in their fan-inventories. 110 lists *Inspector Morse*, *Blake's 7* and *Robin of Sherwood* (alongside golf and cricket), whilst 100 lists *The Muppet Show*, *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings*, James Bond and Terry Pratchett. Other respondents who fit into the broadly defined categories of 'cult' or 'media fandom', and who are can be located relatively closely on the spectrum,



include; 104, 034 and 064 (who lists four other fan objects); 068 and 088 (who lists three other fan objects); and 107 and 103 (who each list two other fan objects). Some respondents who can be located at similar positions on the spectrum list slightly more eclectic ranges of fan objects: for example, 070 includes rock and pop bands, Japanese manga, cult TV & film texts and fantasy novels in his fan-inventory, whilst 095 includes football, *Star Trek*, film and sex in his. 070 also makes a specific point of noting the potential for embarrassment which he sees as inherent in one of his fan objects, *CardCaptor Sakura*, a children's manga/anime series. Though he does not expand on the reasons why this might be embarrassing, the admission might be considered as possibly constituting a tactical attempt to deflect the taint of embarrassment or 'sadness' by displaying an awareness of such a potential and flagging it up.

Whilst I suggested earlier that determining the relative intensities of specific fandoms amongst my respondents would be near impossible with the available data (beyond speculation) and would not form part of this spectrum, a number of individuals in the sample use their responses qualitatively as a means of indicating the comparative intensities of their other fandoms with *Doctor Who*. Respondent 106 notes that whilst he is a fan of several other texts/objects, these have 'perhaps not the intensity' of his *Doctor Who* fandom. A similar indication is made by respondent 081, who is a fan of *Farscape* 'but not to the same extent' as *Doctor Who*. Respondent 029 qualifies the extent of his *Star Trek* fandom, stating that he 'only' attends conventions and watches the show; the implication is that 029 does considerably more than this in his interaction with *Doctor Who*.

Respondent 079 also specifies the activities and investments for his two 'other' fandoms, stating that he spends '£40 a month on comics, a mix of indie, underground and mainstream' but that there is 'no major financial outlay' for his 1940s film noir fandom. This, then, suggests that the investments I have outlined in this thesis might not be a prerequisite for fandom, something I shall return to address in more detail in the conclusion. Whilst these respondents offer a degree of qualitative data concerning the relative intensities of their fandoms, the data remains fragmentary and in some cases perfunctory. In the absence of data from the rest of the sample, these respondents can only be placed on the 'two-dimensional' spectrum of investment volume.

Three other respondents offer similar qualitative commentary on their fan investments or, in one case, lack of them. 097 briefly addresses the subjective nature of defining fandom and the effect this has on his response. He notes that he is a fan of 'loads of things' but that this would depend 'on your definition of the word'. In a statement which is perhaps intended to go some way towards 'normalizing' fandom, reducing the taint of pathology or obsession, he argues that 'the things that people enjoy doing on a daily basis they are fans of! [sic]' and that 'there are different degrees of fan-ness!'. He does not, ultimately, offer a breakdown of his fan objects, beyond the admission that he is a football, music and film fan, which again suspends his response and makes it difficult to assign him a position on the spectrum. Respondent 109, on the other hand, is located at the single investment extreme. Whilst he states that he is 'an enthusiastic Archer', his response to question 2.6 is that he does not consider himself to be a fan of



anything other than *Doctor Who*. This is because 'I don't think you are a "fan" if you participate in sport'. The reasoning behind this remains frustratingly unstated. A possible speculative explanation is that in sport, 'fan' is understood to mean following a particular sportsperson or team, rather than participation. However, what it does illustrate is that investments such as participation and financial outlay, both of which are required at some level when participating in sport, might not necessarily be considered as being equal or transferable across different fields. This is an issue which I feel warrants considerable further study, although not within the limits of this thesis.

Respondent 080 engages in a fairly detailed qualitative account of his other fan investment, *Sonic the Hedgehog*:

I am a long term fan of Sonic the Hedgehog. I have been a fan for 9 years a slightly shorter time than I have been a Dr Who fan (which is nearly 12 years now). My interest includes the computer games which were the starting point of my interest. Getting a new Sonic game is as interesting to me as watching a brand new Dr Who episode and is in most cases more interesting than getting an old episode on video/DVD. My interest in Sonic also includes the animated series'. There are 5 completely different Sonic cartoon series. My favourite is the 2<sup>nd</sup> one as it is the most serious and is more like animated Sci-Fi than a cartoon. I find similar things interesting about the Sonic

cartoons (and games) as I do about Dr Who, for example references to past episodes and in the case of Sonic, past games and even references to the past cartoon series in the newer ones.

(2.6, 080)

Here, 080 details the lengths of time he has been a fan of both of his stated fan objects, and also touches upon the origin of his *Sonic* fandom. He draws comparisons between things that appeal to him in both *Sonic* and *Doctor Who*, which here seem to be continuity references and intra-textual linkages in both cases. The respondent also gives a brief account of why a certain textual format of *Sonic the Hedgehog* (the second animated TV series) is his favourite. This response finds 080 performing a similar task to that asked in question 4.1, making some attempt to explain exactly why he likes *Sonic the Hedgehog*. The assertion that the second *Sonic* TV series is preferable due to it being 'the most serious' and 'more like animated Sci-Fi than a cartoon' appears to fulfil a similar function to the discursive mantra which Matt Hills suggested tends to be deployed when fans are asked to account for their fandom. Here, respondent 080 appears to attempt to counter the idea that fandom of a children's cartoon series is in some way irrational by suggesting that a particular format of the text is 'more serious' (and hence, less childish perhaps) than the others, and that for this reason it might be considered to be 'less cartoonish'. Evidently, without further research it is impossible to know whether this is some form of socially constituted justification, or even to determine



whether 080 is involved at any level in organized or institutional *Sonic the Hedgehog* fandom. Yet there seems to be a distinct resonance between this response and the situation described by Hills. As I noted earlier, analysis of the responses to question 4.1 from the questionnaire might allow Hills' model of the discursive mantra to be investigated empirically, and this seems the most opportune juncture at which to attempt such analysis.

Whilst a small section of the sample offer either no response or one word answers, most of the respondents give reasonably detailed accounts of their *Doctor Who* fandom in response to question 4.1. Amongst these, a number offer responses which, in part, echo the example of the *Doctor Who* discursive mantra which Hills drew from the work of Michael Haslett:

Blimus [sic]. I could witter on for days and still not get there, but I'll have a go. It's a chicken and egg question really. Is it because I was hooked on it at 3½, or did I get into it at an early age and stay that way because it would appeal to me anyway? As there are few other things I still like – other than chocolate – that I did as an infant, I suspect *Doctor Who* would have got me at any age, but I know a lot of important things in my life happened because of it. I learned to read well ahead of my “reading age” because of *Doctor Who* books – it was a trigger to a lot of development. It inspired a lot of my political thought, and helped encourage me to be politically active. And, most

importantly, I met the love of my life through it. But why the series itself? There's something uniquely appealing, and perhaps it boils down to two things. The Doctor is a free spirit – not a hero in uniform, not doing a job, not part of a team, not bound by rules. There are very few heroes who preach, practise and deliver freedom. And he uses that freedom to indulge in infinite variety – if I feel like a comedy, a historical drama, or hard SF, I can find them all in one series. I'm still in love with Doctor Who because it still inspires, and because it can at the same time feel immensely comforting and familiar - and also new and surprising. I love it for its contradictions.

(048, 4.1)

Its very difficult to describe. When I first became a Dr Who fan back in 1992 some of the things which interested me about were [sic]: the idea of traveling [sic] through Space and Time in a Police Box; the idea of the Doctor "Dr Who" that he has a certain amount of mystery about him and the idea of some of the Doctors wearing question marks (My favourite Doctor has always been the 7<sup>th</sup> – Sylvester McCoy); also the Daleks – they have always been my favourite enemy. I still like those things about Dr Who today but their [sic] are also many other things that interest me about it. I have liked Sci-fi related things for so



long that I can't remember how or when my interest started , but Dr Who has always seemed to have something that other Sci fi doesn't. It may be partly down to the variety that Dr Who has, not just in the types of stories but also the way each decade (60s, 70s, 80s) and also each Doctor's era has its own feel. Doctor Who just seems to have something that I can't really explain, people often say that it has a sort of magic about it which I would say is true, but that only partly describes it, there is just something Doctor Who has which makes it unique.

(080, 4.1)

The difficult one...

It warms & excites me more than any other show. I suppose it's [sic] sheer longevity has bred such variety: I like the fact that the eight actors all play the part completely differently, and so many styles have passed through it. It excites me with the simple question "what's going to happen next?" and the interlacing of the varying versions in recent years adds another dimension to that. It feels like an epic, and I enjoy that – an eternally ongoing storyline – each and every story part of some grand adventure, the pieces coming together...I like it because, along with it's own original & distinctive elements, it's also the best of everything else.

(105, 4.1)

The humour. The incredible variety of stories and locals [sic]. The fact that there is so much to choose from. Most sci-fi has 2 story styles (we visit an alien planet or they come to us) with 'Who' I can watch anything from a B&W historical to a flashy future space war. Each story feels slightly different. There's [sic] also a rich history to the programme. Each "season" says so much about TV of its age in terms of production, Writing, filming techniques.

(101, 4.1)

It is intelligent without being patronising. It doesn't necessarily take itself too seriously. It doesn't overly moralize. It is an almost infinitely variable format, with the capacity to do almost any kind of story. The lead character is a strong one who doesn't use violence to solve every problem, but who is not above resorting to a "right-hander" if absolutely necessary. It isn't "hardcore" science fiction, but doesn't alienate fans of that genre. It can be enjoyed by every member of the family, as you don't need to worry that unsuitable scenes will pop up (unless you believe Mary Whitehouse!). There are always characters you can identify with, even if you don't come from Gallifrey. It is in turns



dramatic, thrilling, scary, funny, silly and serious, but it is always fun, and you can't say that about a lot of TV nowadays, which can be downright depressing at times.

(109. 4.1)

The unique flexibility of the series' original premise and the fact that it's forever entwined with the happiest of early childhood memories. It's shadowed my life in a way. Cosy, scary Letts/Hinchcliffe winters with my Dad - my very own 'Doctor'. As the series broke up (twice weekly/template for soap-opera/self-referential) so did my parents. As I became spotty and adolescent so did the series. I lost interest when it lost interest. I became too cool to 'care' when it became...you get the idea. The character and his travels seem to inspire my highest imaginings – it's the biggest little idea ever. The very thought (and viewing) of it still evokes and satisfies a basic longing for fun, the unknown, danger, excitement and safety. Instant time travel! The Doctor is a true enigma, a hero that almost transcends description. In our front rooms he's the best TV character ever but in our minds he is real. In our dreams he is our best friend or our fathers at their best. And in our best dreams he is **us**

(111, 4.1)

Why do I like Dr Who so much? Because anything is possible in terms of storytelling. The concepts behind Dr Who are simple, yet so effective. The Doctor can go anywhere. He can witness the birth of the universe, he can visit William Shakespeare and help him write Romeo and Juliet, he can help defeat a totalitarian alien race, or he can simply relax on Brighton beach and eat an ice cream. The programme's unique concepts make for a flexible storytelling medium; the scriptwriter has virtually limitless choice.

I love Dr Who so much because anything is possible in terms of storytelling.

(066, 4.1)

Oh boy..... I'm sad to say I've got to trot out the clichéd answers. It's flexible, it can be anything it wants, go anywhere it wants and, more importantly, its [sic] nearly always got its tongue very much in British cheek when it gets there. Would love to say something along the lines of it's because it's well written and works on so many levels and stimulates the brain...but it's not. It is, more than anything else, a fun set of "Boy's Own" adventure style stories with a really cool space ship.



Each of these individuals, along with others not quoted here (100, 078, 083, 029), cites relatively consistent reasons as part of their explanation of why they like *Doctor Who*. These reasons are broadly similar to the discursive mantra described by Hills/Haslett, namely that the format of *Doctor Who* is 'flexible' and allows the series to borrow from a wide range of genres (Haslett, 1994, p.10; Hills, 2002, pp.66-67). 048, for example, suggests that the 'infinite variety' of a series which moves from historical drama, to comedy, to 'hard-SF' appeals to him; 105 notes the variety of styles essayed by the programme and suggests that it 'is the best of everything else'. Evidently Hills' concept of the discursive mantra is borne out in part by the responses here. Indeed, respondent 081 appears to be aware of the justificational nature of this form of response, making it clear that he considers his response to draw from a reserve of well-worn, 'clichéd' reasons. He actually goes further and suggests that one potential response, that the programme is 'well-written and works on so many levels and stimulates the brain', might not be true, and that the real appeal might lie in the pulp sci-fi nature of the format. Respondent 081, along with four other respondents (083, 105, 080, 048), also acknowledges the difficulty which arises when faced with a question such as 'why *Doctor Who*?' Once again, this seems similar to Hills' suggestion that fans 'typically register some confusion or difficulty in responding' to such a question. This difficulty arises, Hills proposes, in light of 'the marked absence of an explanatory framework for one's intense devotion', leading to an immediate shift 'onto the firmer ground of

discussing textual characteristics' (2002, p.67). Certain respondents actually seem to suspend their responses at such a point of difficulty or confusion. 074 and 032 merely state that they 'don't know' why they like *Doctor Who* in response to question 4.1. 065 briefly suggests possible reasons whilst acknowledging that he doesn't know if they are true, whilst 095 answers 'no, I just like it and have done since I was a kid'.

It is impossible to determine exactly what happened to the respondents when they were confronted with the task of accounting for their devotion to *Doctor Who*. However, almost all of the respondents in the sample make some mention of textual characteristics in their accounts. However, I am not entirely convinced by Hills' separation of affective passion and textual characteristics in this instance. As we saw earlier, Hills refutes the validity of the practice of 'asking the audience' when studying fans due to its tendency to accept 'discursive structures and repetitions [...] at face value' (2002, p.67). Instead, such discursive mantras should also be:

considered as defensive mechanisms designed to render the fan's affective relationship meaningful in a rational sense, i.e. to ground this relationship *solely in the objective attributes of the source text* and therefore to legitimate the fans' love of "their" programme

(*ibid*, italics mine)



If Hills' model of how fans respond to a question such as 'why are you a fan of ---' reflects reality, then the responses offered by the sample should largely conform to a specific pattern. The respondents should confine their accounts largely to discussion of the textual characteristics of *Doctor Who*, and these discussions should take the form of communally/socially-constituted 'discursive mantras'. However, as may be observed from the responses above, and also those which follow, the accounts which are offered by the sample seem much more varied and complex than perhaps Hills' model might allow. Whilst there are certainly examples and echoes of the particular discursive mantra which Hills outlined, there also seem to be others in operation. For example, two respondents (102 and 068) note their inability to account for their passion for *Doctor Who*, suggesting that the series has a quality of 'indefinable magic'. 068 even notes the clichéd nature of this 'well-worn phrase', which has been used to describe *Doctor Who* on countless occasions in countless discourses. It is another 'cult phrase', one which suspends the need to account for passion by launching it into the realm of the unknowable, i.e. 'magic'. Many of the accounts by no means confine themselves either to such mantras or purely to discussion of the 'objective attributes' of the text.

A significant number of respondents *do* devote much of their accounts to discussion of the content and characteristics of *Doctor Who* (075, 038, 061, 069, 026, 104, 103, 092, 110 and 041). However, whilst this discussion may or may not act as a legitimation or rationalisation of their fan attachment, none of these respondents recount what might specifically be identified as a discursive mantra. Even those who do deploy versions of the mantra also engage in other forms of

discussion of their fandoms. For example, respondent 048 both admits the potential difficulty when faced with the question and makes some discussion of the textual characteristics of *Doctor Who* (qualities of the character of the Doctor and the 'infinite variety' discursive mantra), but these form only a small part of his account. 048 also attempts to explain why his childhood affection for *Doctor Who* endured into adulthood, relates the programme to certain important aspects of his self-identity (his political views, meeting 'the love of my life'). He closes his account with a discussion of the affective/emotional dimension of his relationship with *Doctor Who*, stating explicitly that he is 'in love' with the programme, that he finds it both 'comforting' and 'surprising'.

Other accounts discuss the programme in similar terms, describing relationships between fan and text which are characterized by the intensity of the affective/emotional responses. Respondents 098 and 099 both describe a powerful and enduring love for *Doctor Who*. Their accounts are grounded in discussion of the feelings and emotions which they associate with their interaction with the programme and its resonance in their daily lives, rather than in discussion of textual characteristics or 'objective attributes'. 099 describes the series as making him 'excited, happy, scared, sad, angry, all the big emotions', suggesting that the memories of these emotions and his childhood engagement with the programme as his 'link with what's now passed':

It excited me and got a grip of me that's never gone away. The interest, love and wanting has grown. It's important to me. It's



been my comfort as well as my entertainment. I'd never be without it. I don't think I could ever leave it. Its [sic] my escape from the real world. It's a dream lifestyle.

(099, 4.1)

The programme is described here in terms of the needs it fulfils in the respondent's daily life. It provides escapism, comfort, entertainment. It inspires interest, love, wanting. 098 describes his relationship with *Doctor Who* in similar terms, taking his account further to indicate an almost religious dimension to his fandom: 'In some ways those Saturday tea-times watching with my family were a secular communion'. However, the accounts offered by 098 and 099 are no more an 'actual' statement of reasons for investment and passion than the discursive mantras and grounding mechanisms described by Hills. They might function as another form of justification for the depth of investment (the respondents noting the different functions the programme performs in terms of their self-identity and emotions), but one which is far removed from the rationalisation and objectification which Hills views as central to fan attempts to account for their passions.

Other respondents engage in a multi-faceted approach to the question which involves discussions of both affective passion and textual characteristics, and also other things. 105 discusses his emotional responses to the programme alongside statements which might be considered discursive mantra, whilst 111 draws parallels between his relationship with *Doctor Who* and significant episodes in his personal development. Of the respondents not quoted above, 106 describes

the shift in his interest in the programme through different age based identities, from the immediacy of childhood (the programme was simultaneously 'strange', 'comforting' and 'scary', with 'anticipation' a significant source of pleasure) to an interest in the production of the series in more recent years. Respondent 076 suggests that his father inspired his interest in the series. The fact that he was frightened by something which once frightened his father ('my dad [...] watched the Daleks from behind the sofa') led, he believes, to him becoming 'fixed to the series'. Respondent 088 maps out the development of his fandom, focussing on both the origin of his interest in *Doctor Who* ('my uncle is a fan & [sic] had a huge collection that we could pick from when he [...] babysat me and my brother') and how it inspired his imagination, both in terms of 'story-writing' and 'drawing', and also imaginative play:

I loved DR WHO as a child because it paralleled the normal but with a fantastical slant. Holidaying in Wales looked like the Death Zone, suburban Birmingham resembled Perivale, my uncle's house reminded me of Gabriel Chase

(088, 4.1)

088 goes on to suggest that many of his 'beliefs on morality and friendships have subconscious links with DR WHO'. Respondent 070 goes further, and suggests that the series inspired his ambition to become a writer ('which is the most brilliant thing anyone's ever done for me'). 079 engages in a discussion of the relationship



between what he sees as the 'not heterosexual' nature of *Doctor Who* which embodies a 'very different, appealing masculinity', and his own identity as a gay man (emphasis in original). A number of other respondents discuss the relationship between *Doctor Who* and age-based identities, personal development, or life-choices (094, 033, 077, 064, 097, 107, 091). One respondent in particular offers an extremely detailed and lengthy account in answer to question 4.1:

I started watching DOCTOR WHO as a child (around eight or so) because channel 2 used to show one episode every weeknight at around 7:00pm, after Mr Roger's Neighborhood [sic], Sesame Street and The Electric Company, so it was something else for a kid to watch. This was back in 1978, when we were limited to what TV stations we could pick up with our aerial, and there was very little science fiction other than Battlestar Galactica and later Buck Rogers in the 25<sup>th</sup> Century. Back then, PBS stations showed an endless loop of the Fourth Doctor/Sarah Jane Smith/Leela stories. As soon as "The Invasion of Time" ended, they started with "Robot" the next night. Somewhere along the line, I began watching the episodes again and again, to the point where the stories were burned into my mind.

Quite simply, DOCTOR WHO was like nothing else on TV at that time, especially American TV. Here was a hero – and no

question about it, the Doctor WAS a hero back then – who offered ordinary people a chance to explore the universe with him, tried solving problems with his mind instead of with violence (well, only as a last resort), and didn't try anything sexual with his female companions. The “Gothic horror” of this period (“Genesis of the Daleks”, “Pyramids of Mars”, “The Brain of Morbius”, “Seeds of Doom”, “Horror of Fang Rock”, etc.) also attracted me to the show. While to an adult eye, the sight of a lime Jell-O mold [sic] slithering up some lighthouse stairs is laughable, the first time I saw the Rutan, I was scared silly of the thing...

I was very much a loner (or at least alone) growing up as a child; twelve years of age separated myself from my next-oldest brother (I was the youngest of four, and of the other three, only my sister, twenty years older than I, showed much interest in me), and I was unpopular in school – the “class scapegoat”, if you will. This may be dime-store psychology, but DOCTOR WHO very much offered me an escape route from my unhappy existence. After all, here was a being who was misunderstood and alienated from his own people, who chose to leave the boring confines of Gallifrey and explore the universe, someone who didn't really care what his peers thought of him, and made his life with people that he chose to be with. Of course, I didn't



realize this at the time; I was engrossed by the adventure and spectacle of it all.

As time went on, I wanted to learn all that I could about DOCTOR WHO. I remember being on a day trip with my father in 1983 to Newport, Rhode Island, and towards the end of our trip, I went into a bookstore and found a copy of “Doctor Who: A Celebration” by Peter Haining. This was purchased, and I spent most of the rest of the day (and the train ride home) engrossed in it. I don’t think my father was too happy about this, but didn’t say anything. My interest and enthusiasm just grew and grew from there.

While I realize that I’ll probably never quite enjoy DOCTOR WHO in the same way that I did as a child/teenager, it remains a source of comfort and joy to me, and probably always will.

(086, 4.1)

What respondent 086 is doing here effectively constitutes a form of autoethnography. Whilst the ‘constant questioning’ of the self-account and the ‘microscope of cultural analysis’ (Hills, 2002, p.72) are not in operation, and nor are fan-objects other than *Doctor Who* included, respondent 086 attempts to trace the origins of his fandom and goes on to discuss the relationship between *Doctor Who* and his self-identity. There is some discussion of textual characteristics in the account, but much of this is concerned with the ‘escape route from my unhappy

existence' offered by the character and situation. The respondent draws parallels between the 'outsider' status of the Doctor and his own sense of loneliness and alienation as a child. He is prepared to question his reasoning, noting that his ideas might amount to 'dime store psychology', and notes that these ideas occurred to him in retrospect rather than at the time. Of course, this may constitute a means of justifying the depth of his passion for *Doctor Who* through the potentially 'rationalising' lens of its effect on his self-identity and emotional development. Whilst such a possibility must be noted, it remains a *possibility*. It would be both unethical and unfair to dismiss the volunteered testimony of *any* individual as a justification or a defence mechanism merely on the strength of such a possibility. Hills' model of how fans respond to a question such as 'why are you a fan of ---?' requires qualifications which arise from the key findings of the data analysed here.

Firstly, I would argue that fans cannot be singled out as unsuitable subjects for ethnography on the implied grounds that the answers they give might not constitute 'organic truth'. Ethnography is fundamentally concerned both with not accepting talk at face value, and with allowing space for subjects to discuss things on their 'own terms' rather than immediately embarking on symptomatic analysis or interpretations. Whilst it may be true to say that previous *ethnographic accounts* may have made the 'mistake' of accepting fan talk at face value, Hills appears to throw the baby out with the bathwater and dismiss *the ethnographic method itself* as being insufficient to the needs of the task. As I noted, Hills' suggestions edge towards creating a dualism between 'fans' and 'other media consumers', which is at odds with his desire to remove such binary thinking from fan theory. Secondly,



and perhaps more importantly, the suggestion that fans '*typically* register some confusion or difficulty in responding' to questions such as 'why *Doctor Who*?' before 'falling back *immediately* on their particular fandom's discursive mantra' (Hills, 2002, p.67, italics mine), seems like a reductive oversimplification. My findings have shown that, whilst both expressions of difficulty and discursive mantras arise in response to such a question, different individuals engage in a wide range of discursive activities when trying to account for their fandom. The possibility of justification must remain ever-present, but fans also engage in candid discussion of emotional responses and make relatively self-reflexive inquiries of their personal and social identities. I would argue strongly against the efficacy of any model which so determinedly states that fans '*typically*' do anything or '*immediately*' respond to a phenomenon in near-identical ways. The phenomenon of discursive mantra undoubtedly requires more research, particularly with regards to its origins and '*distribution*', but it must be recognised as existing as part of a *spectrum* of available responses, as is clearly evidenced by the accounts of the respondents.

## CONCLUSION

Try to explain what you understand the term 'fan' to mean. As I'm sure you're aware, the Latin 'fanaticus' referred to one inspired by religious rites (from 'fannum' temple). Yet being a fan of something isn't normally related to things that actually matter – one would not say one was a fan of Amnesty International, no matter how much one admired said organization. By such flawed reasoning, there is something that religion, sport and Doctor Who have in common that is not evident in politics, philosophy etc. (I admire David Hume's philosophy, rather than being a fan of his.) Because Doctor Who is ephemeral and that [sic] one has become a fan of something that is not ultimately significant, fanhood is a very personal state. I imagine my response to a bad audio or book is very much like that of, say, a Leeds United fan seeing their team lose ineptly: A mixture of despondency and rage. God or Immanuel Kant do not let you down in such a way. They can't. Perhaps the Doctor is human after all.

(2.1, 067)

'Fanhood is a very personal state'. That 'definition', offered by respondent 067, might almost be understood as a summation of the approach of this thesis to the complex and often confusing phenomenon of fandom. For too long, fandom



and fans have been conceptualised in terms that place an overwhelming emphasis on organised subcultural communities and social networks, hijacked by academic agendas seeking to find moments of 'cultural resistance' and subcultural empowerment. Whilst, as we have observed, fans engage in a variety of socially-constituted activities and align themselves with different interpretive communities and subcultural constituencies, they also engage with their chosen text in highly personal and idiosyncratic ways, throughout different contexts and 'moments'. The case for understanding fandom on an 'individual' level as a participatory 'state' is compelling, just as compelling as that which perceives fandom as a 'participatory culture' of organised social networks and communities. I do not seek here to emphasise one conception at the expense of the other. As I observed in chapter four, whilst 'individualised' factors must be emphasised in understanding what fans 'do' culturally, the influence of social, cultural and institutional forces must not be de-emphasised in the same moment. Instead, I would suggest that *both* need to be afforded equal prominence in fan studies in order to avoid the danger of overstating the importance of one or the other. Such an approach might then allow fandom to be explored on 'its own terms' instead of being co-opted by and tailored to fit specific academic agendas.

The empirical research project which forms the core of this thesis represents a concerted attempt to allow, as far as is possible within the artificial framing device of the questionnaire, the respondents to articulate their fandoms on their own terms. The spectrums which have been proposed over the course of the previous four chapters were 'created', in a manner of speaking, by the respondents

and by the accounts that they offer. I did not come to the data with a preconceived notion of 'spectrums of investment'. The spectrum model was developed as a direct consequence of my analysis of the empirical data. Whilst it undoubtedly offers a schematized and artificially 'structured' account of the various investments made by the fans in the sample, at the same time it seeks to emphasise the contradictions, uncertainties and ambivalences which characterize the various dimensions of investment. Speculative explanations for some of the contradictions and incongruencies have been offered at certain points, but they have remained suspended in order to avoid closing down or rationalising 'difficult' data. A key point which must be stressed here is that both quantitative and qualitative responses from the *entire* sample of fifty individuals have been utilised in the development of the spectrums. The accounts of 'difficult' or reticent respondents have not been omitted from the analysis in order to facilitate a 'neater' model. I have also attempted to strike a balance between analysis and allowing subjects to articulate on their own terms, taking care neither to accept accounts at 'face value' nor to embark immediately on symptomatic analysis of individuals and the ways in which they responded.

One significant point that has thus far gone unmentioned and that must now be considered briefly is the demographic breakdown of the individuals in the research sample. Section five of the questionnaire asks the respondents to indicate both their gender and which of a number of specified age ranges they fit into (see the appendix for the full list). A further and final 'open' question allows the respondents the opportunity to offer any other personal data, such as ethnicity and



sexual orientation, if they so wish (again, the full rubric for this question is to be found in the appendix). From the data given in response to questions 5.7 and 5.8, we can observe that ninety-six percent of the sample (forty-eight respondents) indicate that they are male. One respondent indicates that she is female and a further respondent gives no data in answer to any questions in section five, instead preferring to be identified by her/his case-number alone. In answer to the question of age (at the time of the research), twelve percent of the sample is between the ages of eleven and twenty, thirty percent is between twenty-one and thirty, forty-eight percent is between thirty-one and forty and eight percent is between forty-one and fifty. No individuals in the sample are below the age of eleven or over the age of fifty<sup>72</sup>.

Over half the respondents chose to give further data in response to question 5.9 and the following data is given in percentages of the entire sample, although the exact figures must remain unknown as many others left the question unanswered. Fifty-two percent of the respondents indicate their ethnicity to be 'white' or 'Caucasian', which is the entire number of respondents (twenty-six individuals) who give any data regarding ethnicity (i.e. no respondents indicate any other ethnic background). Eighteen percent of the sample indicate that they are 'gay' and one further respondent indicate that he is 'bisexual'. Again, the figure might be higher, as a significant minority of the sample offer no data on sexual orientation in response to question 5.9.

On the strength of these numbers, it would appear that the demographic range of the sample is quite narrow. The respondents are almost exclusively male,

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<sup>72</sup> At the time the questionnaire was completed.

and inhabit a relatively consistent age range, with more than three-quarters of the sample aged between twenty-one and forty years old. The limited data concerning ethnicity makes it impossible to make any definitive assessment of the sample in this respect, although the fact that all those who do respond here indicate that they are 'white' or 'Caucasian' is fairly suggestive of the ethnic breakdown of the sample group. This all points towards the possibility that my research project might not comprise a particularly representative sample of fandom as a whole. This is a criticism that I would concede in part, although with a number of qualifications and justifications. For instance, data from certain other sources also indicates the significantly masculine demographic of *Doctor Who* fandom in general; Gary Gillatt contends that '[i]t is a fact that women comprise only a tiny minority of the *Doctor Who* fanbase' on the evidential basis that, in 1996, detailed market research revealed that 'less than 4 percent of [*DWM*'s] readership was female' (1998, p.156), whilst Paul Cornell has suggested that *Doctor Who* fans are 'largely male' (1997, p.13) (although he offers no empirical evidence to support his claim).

Gillatt also offers a speculative attempt to address 'the reason why very, very few non-Caucasian faces are to be seen at a *Doctor Who* convention' (1998, p.157), noting the 'shockingly bad record' of the programme 'on the use of black or Asian characters, and the employment of appropriate actors to play them' (p.35). Matt Hills, discussing his ethnicity in relation to the texts of which he is a fan as part of his autoethnographic account, suggests that 'my whiteness has largely been mirrored back to me' through these texts (2002, p.87). *Doctor Who* figures heavily in his account. Thus, the overwhelmingly white and male composition of



the sample group may be representative of *Doctor Who* fandom in general, though not necessarily of 'fandom' as a whole and certainly not of society in general. That almost one fifth of the sample self-identifies as 'gay' remains a subject for potential further research, although it connects with suggestions made elsewhere regarding the sexual orientation of *Doctor Who* fans (Cornell, 1997, pp.11-13; Hills, 2002, p.87).

Before moving on to more general conclusions and the resulting implications of this project for further research, I would like to spend a little time looking back over the four spectrums I have proposed. Whilst the spectrums have been presented individually through distinct chapters of the thesis, they should not be understood as being individual or distinct from one another. They are closely bound together. Each spectrum represents a particular 'dimension'<sup>73</sup> of a broad system of investment. These dimensions are unlikely to be as distinct and singular as the spectrum model might perhaps allow. Thus I feel it is necessary to make some comparison between the investments made by individuals in different dimensions, and to explore how the positions at which an individual is located on different spectrums might compare. Indeed, an initial 'hypothesis' suggested in the introduction to this thesis asked whether an individual might invest 'highly' across all spectrums or conversely invest at different levels or intensities across different spectrums. Now that the spectrums have been outlined and, wherever possible,

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<sup>73</sup> I use the term 'dimension' here rather than 'mode', as I feel that it more accurately reflects the interrelatedness of the investments explored.

individuals have been located upon their axes, it seems like an opportune moment to 'test' this hypothesis.

The data is tabulated in fig. C.1 (overleaf) allows an overview of the 'regions' in which each individual respondent might be located on each of the four spectrums. In effect, fig. C.1 is a breakdown of each respondent's level of investment in each of the four 'dimensions' outlined over the course of the thesis. The data for financial and 'participatory' investment is straightforward enough, and will form the basis for the analysis in this section of the conclusion. However, given the 'difficult' nature of the spectrum of investment in the idea of 'authenticity', as related in chapter four, the data relating to this investment here is drawn from the simplified spectrum of responses to question 3.2, inquiring about the importance of 'continuity' to the respondents' experience of *Doctor Who*. This should be born in mind, as should the fact that certain responses to question 2.5 remain 'suspended' (that is, that the respondents leave the answer open by indicating that they have more fan investments than are detailed in the response).

The range of response-distributions in figure C.1 is relatively broad. Whilst none of the respondents occupy consistent regions on each spectrum, fourteen percent of the sample (respondents 086, 067, 109, 065, 095, 069 and 070) *appears* to invest at *relatively* consistent levels across all four spectrums. And yet the relationship between different spectrums is by no means one of 'equivalence', and so such a straightforward comparison reveals very little. Similarly, a comparison of the data from the spectrums of financial, participatory and 'continuity' investment reveals little in the way even of broad patterns. Whilst forty-



Figure C.1: Respondents' 'regional' positions on four investment spectrums.  
(Continued overleaf)

	<b>Financial</b>	<b>'Participatory'</b>	<b>'Continuity'</b>	<b>Multiple</b>
<b>081</b>	Med-high	High	Med-high	Low
<b>086</b>	Med-high	High	Med-high	High
<b>048</b>	Median	High	No response	Low-med*
<b>067</b>	Low-med	Median	Low-med	Low-med
<b>078</b>	Low-med	Median	No response	Low
<b>080</b>	Low-med	Median	Don't care	Low-med
<b>109</b>	Low-med	Median	Median	Median*
<b>074</b>	Median	Median	Med-high	Low
<b>038</b>	No response	Median	Low-med	Median*
<b>088</b>	Low-med	Median	Med-high	Low-med*
<b>029</b>	High	Median	Med-high	Low
<b>112</b>	Low	Median	Low-med	Median
<b>079</b>	Low	Median	Low-med	Low
<b>107</b>	Low-med	Median	Median	Low
<b>071</b>	Low-med	Median	Low-med	Low
<b>065</b>	Low-med	Median	Low-med	Low-med
<b>066</b>	Low-med	Median	Median	Low
<b>064</b>	Low	Median	Median	Low
<b>026</b>	Low	Median	High	Single
<b>061</b>	Low-med	Median	Low-med	Single
<b>076</b>	Low	Median	Med-high	Single
<b>075</b>	Low-med	Median	Median	Single
<b>106</b>	Low-med	Median	Low	Low-med*
<b>104</b>	Low-med	Median	Median	Low-med
<b>095</b>	Low-med	Median	Low-med	Low-med*
<b>111</b>	Low	Median	Median	Low-med*
<b>097</b>	Low-med	Median	Low	*



	<b>Financial</b>	<b>'Participatory'</b>	<b>'Continuity'</b>	<b>Multiple</b>
<b>069</b>	Low-med	Median	Low-med	Low-med
<b>105</b>	Low-med	Median	Median	Med-high*
<b>110</b>	Low-med	Median	Don't care	Low-med
<b>033</b>	Low-med	Median	High	Median*
<b>032</b>	Low-med	Median	Median	Low
<b>100</b>	High	Median	Median	Low-med
<b>082</b>	Low-med	Median	Low	Low-med*
<b>034</b>	Low-med	Med-high	Med-high	Low-med
<b>102</b>	Median	Med-high	Median	Single*
<b>063</b>	Low-med	Med-high	High	Low-med*
<b>103</b>	Low	Med-high	Low	Low*
<b>070</b>	Median	Med-high	Median	Median
<b>099</b>	Low-med	Med-high	Low-med	*
<b>092</b>	Low-med	Med-high	Low-med	Single*
<b>083</b>	Low	Med-high	Low-med	Median
<b>068</b>	Low-med	Median	Med-high	Low-med*
<b>040</b>	Low	Med-high	Low	Low-med
<b>077</b>	Low	Median	Med-high	Low-med*
<b>094</b>	Low	Median	Low-med	High
<b>101</b>	Low-med	Median	Low-med	Single
<b>091</b>	Low	Med-high	Median	Low-med*
<b>041</b>	Low-med	Median	Median	Low-med*
<b>098</b>	Low-med	Median	Median	Low-med*

(\* indicates 'suspended' response to question 2.5. See chapter five and current data analysis for details)

two percent of the sample invests at relatively consistent levels across the three spectrums, these respondents are distributed fairly evenly across a range of



different 'combinations' of investment level. Whilst it might be possible to suggest that individuals might invest at broadly similar levels across the three spectrums, twelve percent of the sample invest at significantly *different* levels across the three spectrums. Furthermore, the data given in column three of fig. C.1 only represents the responses to question 3.2, a simplistic 'spectrum' of the relationship between an individual's engagement with *Doctor Who* and the consistency of the programme's diegetic continuity. The true spectrum of 'investment in the idea of "authenticity"' remains problematic, for reasons outlined in detail in chapter four, and is not included here. Even the data from this chapter which *is* reproduced here remains problematic, and thus has been discounted from the analysis which takes place in the next section.

A comparison of the data from the spectrums of financial and 'participatory' investment, and then an examination of their relationship with the data from the spectrum of multiple investments offers the potential for a 'test' of two hypotheses which may be drawn from consideration of claims made by Barker & Brooks in their account of 'orientations' to *Judge Dredd* (1998a, 1998b). Barker & Brooks do not consider 'investment' in a particular text or orientation in terms of different 'dimensions'; in *Knowing Audiences* (1998a), 'investment' appears to be described in terms of a single spectrum, a sliding scale running from 'low' to 'high' (p.225). They also assert that low investors 'will happily mix modes of orientation' whilst those with higher investments 'will tend to adhere closely to a single and consistent orientation' (1998b, p.225).

In the case of Barker & Brooks' research, the 'modes of orientation' are understood as representing different forms of engagement with a single text (in this instance the 1996 film version of *Judge Dredd*). They identify a number of 'orientations', such as fans of the *2000AD* comic which originated the character of Judge Dredd, fans of the actor Sylvester Stallone, action film enthusiasts and a number of different film audience demographics. Thus an individual who makes a 'high investment' in the film will 'adhere closely' to one of these orientations, whilst a 'low investor' is not explicitly aligned with any specific 'mode'. Extrapolating from this idea, we might hypothesise that, amongst fans, 'high investors' will 'adhere closely' to a single fan object or 'orientation'. An individual who invests highly in the 'worlds of *Doctor Who*' might therefore make little investment in other fan orientations. Additionally, the notion that investment might be understood in terms of a single spectrum informed the hypothesis mentioned earlier and so it will be tested here. However, in the case of the current data, we must limit the test of such a hypothesis to investment on the financial and 'participatory' investment spectrums, for reasons noted earlier.

Very few of the respondents invest at a consistent level across the two dimensions of the financial and the 'participatory', with only one individual located in the same region on both the financial and 'participatory' spectrums (respondent 074). However, more than half of the respondents in the sample (fifty-six percent) occupy *relatively* similar regions on the two spectrums, regions which might be considered 'adjacent' to each other, or which bleed into each other. Almost all of these respondents, fifty percent of the sample, can be located in the 'low-median'



region of the financial spectrum and the 'median' region of the 'participatory spectrum'. A further thirty percent of the sample occupies a range of more differentiated positions across the two spectrums (for example, respondents 076, 026, 064, 079 and 112 can all be located in the low region of the financial spectrum but in the broad median region of the 'participatory' spectrum). A small number of respondents (eight percent of the sample) invest at significantly different levels over the two 'dimensions'; respondents 103, 083, 040 and 091 can be located close to the 'low' extreme of the financial investment spectrum but can be positioned in the 'median-high' region of the 'participatory' investment spectrum.

Thus, the comparison exercise reveals that the hypothesis that individuals might invest consistently across different dimensions cannot be completely discounted. Although the number of individuals investing at entirely consistent levels across the two spectrums is small, fifty-eight percent of the respondents occupy either consistent or broadly similar positions across the spectrums of financial and 'participatory' investment. Indeed, this seems like quite an 'obvious' finding. And yet a significant minority of the respondents invest at increasingly different levels across the two spectrums, which, at the very least, suggests that investment needs to be investigated in such a way that recognises distinctions between different 'dimensions', as has been the case in this thesis. I would argue that this remains important even for those respondents who invest consistently across dimensions because, as I noted earlier, the relationship between different 'dimensions' of investment cannot be considered one of 'equivalence'. Assuming that investment can be understood as a singular phenomenon which is consistent

across different 'fields' or dimensions does not allow for the specificity of the contexts in which it takes place, or the range of influences and discourses which are brought to bear upon investment activities. Thus, investment also needs to be examined in qualitative terms as well as quantitative ones, as was the intention of my empirical research project.

Comparison of the data from the spectrums of financial and 'participatory' investment with that from the spectrum of multiple investments allows the second hypothesis to be tested. As I noted earlier, if we consider the suggestion made by Barker & Brooks concerning the relationship between level of investment and 'orientation', we might assume an inverse relation between the intensity of investment in a particular text or fan object and the 'orientations' to other fan objects or texts. Examining the data from the two respondents who invest relatively highly across both financial and 'participatory' dimensions (081 and 086), a striking difference is revealed. For whilst respondent 081 appears to bear out the hypothesis, investing in a small range of 'other' fan objects, respondent 086 invests in a large range of orientations other than *Doctor Who*. However, respondent 086 is ultimately the 'exception' to the general pattern which may be observed in operation in the sample, a pattern which broadly supports the notion that individuals who invest highly in one orientation tend to make fewer investments in other orientations. A 'reverse' conception of the hypothesis may also be observed, one which would appear to confirm Barker & Brooks' assertion that 'low' investors might be inclined 'mix' orientations more freely. Respondent 094 occupies the position 'closest' to the manifold extreme on the spectrum of multiple investments,



and is here located close to the 'low' of the spectrum of financial and in the median region of the spectrum of 'participatory' investment.

However, more than a third of the sample (thirty-four percent) can be located in relatively similar positions (largely in the regions of 'low to median' and 'median' on the three spectrums of financial, participatory and multiple investment. A number of the individuals occupying the 'single investment' extreme of the spectrum of multiple investments can also be located in relatively low-to-median positions on the financial and participatory spectrums. This highlights a problem with the multiple investment spectrum which I suggested in the previous chapter. Unless detailed empirical research into each of an individual's 'other' fan-orientations is conducted, it remains impossible to determine the intensities of the investments which are made in these other orientations. All fan-orientations must be studied equally in order to establish whether or not a hypothesis such as that proposed earlier is valid. An individual who invests at relatively low levels in her/his *Doctor Who* fan orientation might well invest at much higher levels in one or indeed all of his/her other fan objects. The relationship between the various fan-orientations or objects cannot even be guessed at in the absence of such detailed information. Ultimately, what the investigation of this hypothesis does prove is that Matt Hills' caution against the 'dangers' of researching into single fan investments is indeed justified.

Where, then, does this leave the current research project? Instead of resorting to a recapitulation or *précis* of the major assertions that emerged through

the progression of this thesis, I would like to emphasise three main points. The first concerns the concept of investment which forms the core of my account and was highlighted in the opening gambit of this conclusion. I would suggest that investment remains arguably the most apposite 'metaphor' for the complex and varied engagements that take place in the space where 'fan' and 'text' meet and interact. Indeed, I would argue that in some respects 'investment' should not be considered in metaphorical terms. Fans make significant investments of financial capital, time, effort, *physical energy* in their beloved objects, investments which are, in part, *quantifiable* rather than purely conceptual. Other investments, such as subcultural capital, knowledge and emotional engagement are much more difficult to pin down for objective study, hence the more shifting and fragmentary nature of the spectrum which attempts to schematize their deployment (which links forward to the third and final point I will shortly make). The fundamental project of this thesis is to examine investment in terms of its different dimensions, to attempt to observe the relationships between these dimensions and how they might interact or even contradict one another. I feel strongly that fan investment needs to be researched, understood and theorised *contextually*, observing the distinctions which operate between the dimensions I have explored here, and others which have thus far remained uninvestigated.

Mention of *distinctions* brings me to the second point I would like to stress. I argued earlier that fandom is as much a participatory *state* as it is a participatory *culture*. At the same time, fandom remains a system of *distinction*. Fans constantly draw distinctions, both individually and in wider social formations. I would argue



that these distinctions must be preserved, emphasised even, in any research which deals with fans and fandom. They should not be closed down or rationalised by the mechanics of the research process, or by interpretation, or through recourse to generalizing theory. The key point which must be noted here is that these distinctions pervade every level of fan-activity, social, subcultural or individual. As might be expected if we consider the various theories espoused by social psychology, outlined in chapter one of this thesis, fans draw distinctions between various perceived ingroups and outgroups (such as 'fan' and 'viewer'), or interindividual distinctions between members of various ingroups. But, as the data from the respondents in the empirical research sample has illustrated, they also draw distinctions between different interpretations, understandings and 'versions' of their chosen texts. Further, they draw distinctions between *different aspects or dimensions of their own individual sense of fandom and between different aspects of their sense of self-identity*. These distinctions might almost be thought to embody what Hills has termed the contradictory nature of fandom, the 'gaps and dislocations' which emerge in 'fan-talk' (2002, p.66). Thus, I would again stress the vital importance of studying fans as individuals, if socially constituted as such, alongside any study of their social, subcultural and institutional communities.

Finally, I must acknowledge that this current research remains, ultimately, open and unfinished. Over the course of the thesis, I have highlighted the gaps in my research and the potentials for further study which aspects of the project have opened up. In particular, I have identified three potential issues which a continuation of this project might explore. The complex system of distinction into

which the relationship between concepts such as 'canon', 'continuity' and 'authenticity' fits was not, I feel, adequately explored by the questionnaire and so the spectrum proposed in chapter four remains frustratingly vague and fleeting. Any future research must make a much more sensitive and detailed inquiry into this particular field in order to understand more fully the complexities at play in the system of distinction. Secondly, the issue of multiple fandoms needs to be explored at much greater length, perhaps through an empirical inquiry which affords equal prominence to the full range of each individual respondent's fan objects and the investments which are made in them. Finally, this thesis makes little inquiry into the emotional or affective dimensions of fan investment, although issues relating to this arose in the qualitative accounts offered by many of the respondents (and are also likely to be closely related to the investments which were explored through the research). This is an important issue which I feel requires serious exploration through further research. To sound a note in the general direction of such potential research, I will leave the final words of this thesis to one of my respondents:

Being a fan is about feeling passionate about something. It can be lonely though and people may mock you. But that doesn't matter because loving it is like loving part of yourself.

(2.1, 099)



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## Filmography

*Doctor Who* (BBC/Universal, 1996) Scr. Matthew Jacobs, Dir. Geoffrey Sax

*The Story of Doctor Who* (BBC, 2003)

*Coronation Street* (ITV/Granada, 1960-present)

*Doctor Who – An Unearthly Child* (BBC, 1963) Scr. Anthony Coburn, C.E.

Webber (uncredited), Dir. Waris Hussein

*Doctor Who – The Sensorites* (BBC, 1964) Scr. Peter R. Newman, Dir. Mervyn

Pinfield

*Doctor Who – Genesis of the Daleks* (BBC, 1975) Scr. Terry Nation, Dir. David

Maloney

*Doctor Who – The Deadly Assassin* (BBC, 1976) Scr. Robert Holmes, Dir. David

Maloney

*Carry On Cowboy* (Gerald Thomas, 1965)

*Hi-De-Hi!* (BBC, 1981-88)

*Doctor Who – The Aztecs* (BBC, 1964) Scr. John Lucarotti, Dir. John Crockett

*Doctor Who – The Romans* (BBC, 1965) Scr. Dennis Spooner, Dir. Christopher

Barry

*Doctor Who – The Chase* (BBC, 1965) Scr. Terry Nation, Dir. Richard Martin

*Doctor Who – The Time Meddler* (BBC, 1965) Scr. Dennis Spooner, Dir. Douglas

Camfield

*Doctor Who – The End of the World* (BBC, 2005) Scr. Russell T. Davies, Dir.

Euros Lyn

*Doctor Who – Dalek* (BBC, 2005) Scr. Robert Shearman, Dir. Joe Ahearne

*Doctor Who – The Unquiet Dead* (BBC, 2005) Scr. Mark Gattiss, Dir. Euros Lyn

*Doctor Who – Fathers Day* (BBC, 2005) Scr. Paul Cornell, Dir. Joe Ahearne

*Doctor Who – Rise of the Cybermen* (BBC, 2006) Scr. Tom MacRae, Dir.

Graeme Harper

### **Webcasts**

*Doctor Who – Death Comes to Time* (BBCi, 2001-2002) Scr. Colin Meek

*Doctor Who – Real Time* (BBCi/Big Finish Productions, 2002) Scr. Gary Russell

*Doctor Who – Shada* (BBCi/Big Finish Productions, 2003) Scr. Douglas Adams

*Doctor Who – Scream of the Shalka* (BBCi/Cosgrove Hall) Scr. Paul Cornell



## Appendix A

### Research Questionnaire

Thank you for responding to my appeal. This questionnaire forms the first phase of my research project into the activities of the *Doctor Who* fan 'community'. The questionnaire comprises five sections and the questions are a mixture of 'box-ticking' and open-ended questions which you are free to answer however you wish. If, for whatever reason, you do not wish to provide answers for certain questions, please feel free to leave the appropriate spaces blank. Sections One and Two ask about your habits/activities as a *Doctor Who* fan and also as a consumer. Section Three allows you to rate the various *Doctor Who* formats in terms of their 'authenticity'. Section Four is divided into two 'open' sections, asking about your relationship with *Doctor Who* and also about your experience of fandom – if you need more space for your answers to this, or any other question, please continue on a separate sheet/page and attach to the completed questionnaire. Section Five asks for some basic personal/contact details.

Everything you write will remain confidential, unless you agree otherwise.

#### Section One

- 1.1: Which of the following items of *Doctor Who* merchandise do you purchase regularly? (Please tick the relevant items)
- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| BBC videos:                             | BBC DVDs:                     |
| BBC 'Eighth Doctor' novels:             | BBC 'Past Doctor' novels:     |
| BBC Radio Collection <i>Dr Who</i> CDs: | Big Finish <i>Dr Who</i> CDs: |
| <i>Dr Who</i> Magazine:                 | Telos <i>Dr Who</i> novellas: |
| Fanzines:                               | Toys/models:                  |
| Other Big Finish CDs:                   | Big Finish books:             |
| BBV CDs:                                | BBV Videos:                   |
| Other (please specify):                 |                               |
- 1.2: On average, how much money do you spend per month on *Doctor Who* merchandise?
- 1.3: The TV series *Doctor Who* was available free of charge and required little more effort than switching on the TV to access it. Accessing most new forms of *Doctor Who* (e.g. going to a specialist shop) and financial investment. How do you feel about this?

- 1.4: Have you ever attended a *Doctor Who* convention?  
If yes, how often do you attend?
- 1.5: Are you a member of the DWAS *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society?  
Yes:                      No:                      Formerly:                      Intend to join:
- 1.6: Are you a member of any other *Doctor Who* fan organisations? (If yes, please give details)
- 1.7: If you have answered yes to either 1.5 or 1.6, please state your reasons for joining and how long you have been a member.
- 1.8: Did you download any of the following material from BBCi?  
*Death Comes to Time:*      *Real Time:*      *Shada:*  
*Scream of the Shalka:*      *The Dying Days:*      *Human Nature:*  
*The Well-Mannered War:*      *Lungbarrow:*
- 1.9: Do you ever access any *Doctor Who* related material online?  
  
If yes, please give details of the pages/sites accessed and roughly how often you access *Doctor Who* online.
- 1.10: Do you, or have you ever maintained your own *Doctor Who* related webpage/site, or contribute material to any *Doctor Who* websites?  
  
If yes, please give details:
- 1.11: Do you, or have you ever published or contributed to a *Doctor Who* publication (e.g. fanzines or fan fiction)?  
  
If yes, please give details:



1.12: Have you ever been involved in any other *Doctor Who* productions/events/societies etc (either official or unofficial), in any capacity at all?

If yes, please give details:

1.13: Have you ever written to the letters page of *Doctor Who* Magazine?  
Yes, once: Yes, occasionally: Yes, frequently: No:

## **Section Two**

2.1: In your own words, try to explain what you understand the term 'fan' to mean:

2.2: In accordance with your answer to question 2.1, do you consider yourself to be a fan of *Doctor Who*?

2.3: If you do not consider yourself to be a 'fan', how would you prefer to describe your interest in *Doctor Who*?

2.4: Do you feel that being a fan requires more effort or investment on your part (activity, time, money) than being a 'regular' viewer (however the distinction between 'fan' and 'regular viewer' might be defined)?

- 2.5: How often do you engage with *Doctor Who* (e.g. watch the TV series, read a novel, listen to an audio CD, access online material etc)?  
 Every day: 4+ times per week: 2+ times per week: Once a week:  
 More than once a month: Once a month: Occasionally:  
 Rarely: Never:
- 2.6: Would you describe yourself as a fan of anything other than *Doctor Who*?  
 If yes, please give details:

### Section Three

- 3.1: *Doctor Who* has existed in a variety of formats over the years, each with its own claim of authenticity. This section is designed to allow you to rate each format in terms of its importance to your experience of *Doctor Who*.

Rate by number, 1 through 5, with 1 being 'least authentic' and 5 being 'most authentic' – you may assign the same number to as many formats as you wish.

Virgin Books *Dr Who New Adventures*:

Telos Publishing *Dr Who* novellas:

1960s *Dr Who* movies:

BBCi animated *Scream of the Shalka* webcast:

Big Finish Productions *Dr Who* audio plays:

Various format *Dr Who* short stories (*Decalog* etc):

Unlicensed *Dr Who* fan fiction:

*Dr Who* TV novelisations:

*Dr Who* Magazine comic strips:

BBC Books 'Past Doctor' novels:

*Death Comes to Time* webcast:

Unlicensed *Dr Who* fan-produced video productions:

Other *Dr Who* comic strips:

*Dr Who* TV series:

BBCi *Shada* webcast:

World Distributors *Dr Who* annual stories:

Virgin Books *Dr Who Missing Adventures*:

BBC *Doctor Who* radio dramas (*Slipback* etc):

Unlicensed *Dr Who* fan-produced audio productions:

1996 BBC/Universal *Dr Who* TV movie:



BBC Books 'Eighth Doctor' novels:  
*Dr Who* stage productions:  
BBCi/Big Finish *Real Time* webcast:

3.2: Is it important to you that a clear sense of consistency and continuity is maintained across the various different 'versions' of *Dr Who*, that they all 'fit together' without contradictions?

Would you say this is:

Essential:

Very important:

Important:

Mildly important:

Not important:

Don't care:

3.3: How do you feel about the fact that much of the current *Doctor Who* output is produced by fans of the series?

3.4: How important is it to you that the forthcoming television revival of *Doctor Who* is overseen by a fan of the series?

## Section Four

4.1: Why *Doctor Who*? Can you articulate the reasons for your interest?  
(Please continue on a separate sheet if you require more space)

4.2: What are your hopes for the forthcoming television revival of *Doctor Who*?  
(Please continue on a separate sheet if you require more space)



- 4.3: Please use this blank section to try to describe your experience of 'fandom'. Are there any other points you would like to make, perhaps related to the earlier sections of this questionnaire?  
(Please continue on a blank sheet if you require more space)

### **Section Five**

- 5.1: Would you be prepared to be quoted in my write-up?  
(If yes, please state whether I may quote you by name or anonymously)
- 5.2: Would you be prepared to be quoted if my research is published in book form?  
(If yes, please state whether I may quote you by name or anonymously)
- 5.3: Would you be prepared to be involved in follow-up interview sessions on this subject at a later date?  
(If yes, please make sure you provide some form of contact information below)

Please feel free to leave any of the questions in the next section blank (though it would be of help to me if you gave your name and some means of contact). In accordance with data protection, all the information in this section will be kept confidential, unless you have indicated otherwise above.

5.4: Name:

5.5: Address:

5.6: Contact phone #/e-mail:

5.7: Please indicate which of these age groups you fit into:

1-10: 11-20: 21-30: 31-40: 41-50: 51-60: 61-70: 71+:

5.8: Gender: Female: Male:

5.9: Please use the blank space below to give any other personal information you feel comfortable to confide (e.g. ethnicity, employment, sexual orientation, etc) – or alternately, leave this section blank:

**Thank you for your time.**