12-1-1996

Status Passage of the Science Fiction Fan: Becoming a Member of the Science Fiction Fan Subculture

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Recommended Citation

STATUS PASSAGE OF THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN:

BECOMING A MEMBER OF

THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN SUBCULTURE

by

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Bachelor of Arts, University of North Dakota, 1991

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota
December
1996

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This thesis, submitted by B. Diane Miller in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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To the many members of the "United Nations"
of Science Fiction Fandom
and in memory of Roger Zelazny
who told me to tell him this was not his fault

ABSTRACT

In the 1930's a middle class subculture developed around the popular culture genre literature known as science fiction. This subculture calls itself "Fandom" (Sanders, 1994; Bloch, 1962). I have chosen to investigate the status passage of the science fiction fan (Glaser and Strauss, 1971); or to phrase this as a question: What is the process of becoming a member of the subculture of science fiction fandom? Throughout this monograph, I refer to the members of the science fiction fan subculture as SF Fandom to distinguish them from other "fandoms" that have grown and branched off from the original group.

In examining the status passage of the science fiction fan (Glaser and Strauss, 1971; Hart, 1976), I used a phenomenological theoretical perspective and qualitative analytical methods to work from concepts to theory formation.

Two methods were used to collect data on the status passage of the subculture member of science fiction fandom: examination of ethnographies and biographies of subculture participants; and in-depth interviews with subculture participants analyzed using qualitative analysis methods.

Participant observation enabled me to make contact with other subculture participants and identify potential interview subjects.

The process of discovering and becoming part of the science fiction fan subculture is detailed as a status passage as defined by Glaser and Strauss (1971). This study contributes to the body of knowledge about subculture participation and the status passage of becoming a subculture member. It provides a basis for further sociological research inquiries into the formation of avocational subcultures and subculture participation as a status passage.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Introduction

Aspects of status passage have a long history of anthropological and sociological study but have not been used in a conceptual design to study an avocational status passage. This thesis examines the status passage of the science fiction fan, a member of a hobby subculture. Glaser and Strauss (1971) and Brake (1985) recommend the use of qualitative methodology for status passage study.

The five chapters in this thesis cover the introduction and problem statement, the literature review, the methodology, the findings and analysis of data, and the summary, conclusions and recommendations. Chapter one, Introduction and Problem Statement, is divided into five sections; the problem statement, stating the sociological question to be studied and the objectives of the study; the theoretical perspective of this thesis; the significance of the study; the operational definitions of terms used in this study; and the limitations.

Problem Statement

In the 1930's a middle class subculture developed around the popular culture genre literature known as science fiction. As this subculture developed, so did social mores, language patterns and social roles, creating a social structure in which status passage could take place. This subculture continues in existence, is extensive and now encompasses new popular culture genre media. This subculture calls itself "Fandom" (Sanders, 1994; Jenkins, 1992; Ackerman, 1988; Carr, 1986; Hartwell, 1984; Siclari, 1981; Tucker, 1966; Bloch, 1962). My major interest is the "status passage" of the science fiction fan. Specifically, the research questions are as follows: what is the process of becoming a member of the subculture of science fiction Fandom; what are the commonalities of process for those joining the subculture; and how do these commonalities compare to other status passages? Using qualitative analysis, I attempt to answer these questions (Glaser and Strauss, 1971).

Theoretical Perspective

As a graduate student in sociology, I was taught to question and examine all concepts and sociological definitions and to refuse to make assumptions about the work that has gone before. This questioning attitude led to a commitment to try using a phenomenological theoretical perspective and qualitative analysis methodology to study

status passage of the science fiction Fan (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

In examining the status passage of the science fiction Fan (Glaser and Strauss, 1971; Hart, 1976), I use qualitative methodology to work from concepts (identified in in-depth interviews and reviews of biographical materials) to theory formation. Qualitative research is based in the symbolic interactionist paradigm of sociological theory (Glaser, 1993; Ritzer, 1992; Wallace and Wolf, 1986; Holmstrom, 1973; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goffman, 1961). "Qualitative analysis means any kind of analysis that produces findings or concepts and hypotheses, . . . that are not arrived at by statistical methods" (Glaser, 1992:11). This methodology requires identifying concepts in data from written records and oral interviews and working backward from the concepts to midrange theory creation or fit (Glaser, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1968). ". . . The main goal . . . is the systematic generating of theory from systematic research" (Glaser, 1992:6).

The symbolic interactionist paradigm which suggests the use of qualitative analysis "addresses the subjective meanings of human acts and processes through which we come to develop and share these subjective meanings" (Brinkerhoff and White, 1991). Symbolic interactionist theory posits that social meaning is derived from a common set of symbols

and understandings arising through group interaction

(Wallace and Wolf, 1986).

These concepts are particularly useful in examining

subculture formation.

> Cultural publics and subcultures provide access to
> valued activities and objects, contact with like-minded
> others, protective insulation from negative judgments
> and actions of "outsiders," and an evaluative typology
> members can use to maintain positive understandings of
> themselves and the social objects to which they and
> their fellows are committed. (Sanders 1990:10)

A person in status passage, particularly in a desired status

passage, learns the common set of symbols and understandings

of the subculture or occupation they are entering in order

to make that status passage.

According to Herbert Blumer, the common set of symbols

and understandings is created in a socially interactive

process as encompassed by three basic premises of the

symbolic interactionist paradigm:

> 1) Human beings act toward things on the basis of the
> meanings that the things have for them.
> 2) The meaning of things arises out of the social
> interaction one has with one's fellows.
> 3) The meanings of things are handled in and modified
> through an interpretative process used by the person in
> dealing with the things he encounters. (Vander Zanden
> 1987:13)

Erving Goffman, whose work on the interactive nature of

roles, has contributed both to our understanding of the

symbolic interactionist paradigm and its branch known as

phenomenology (Goffman, 1959; Goffman, 1961; Goffman, 1963a;

Goffman, 1963b; Goffman, 1971; Goffman, 1974; Burns, 1992).

Phenomenology attempts to take the basic premises of the

symbolic interactionist paradigm one step further by relating the social actor's actions back to the social structure in which the social actor finds him or herself (Wallace and Wolf, 1986; Ritzer, 1992).

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) phenomenological theoretical approach in <u>The Social Construction of Reality</u> focused on the process by which we come to socially accept any body of knowledge as reality in an attempt to combine micro and macro theoretical perspectives. This reality has both subjective and objective dimensions (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Their work is also considered to be based in the symbolic interactionist paradigm (Ritzer, 1992) and located in the phenomenological branch which a few sociologists list as a separate perspective (Wallace and Wolf, 1986).

In keeping with their goal of "bridging micro and macro sociological levels of analysis" (Wallace and Wolf, 1986:255), Berger and Luckmann (1966) take Herbert Blumer's basic premises of the symbolic interactionist paradigm one step further up the theoretical scale of generalization when they describe the social order as an ongoing process including externalization, "society is a human product" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:61); objectification, "society is an objective reality" (1966:18) and internalization, "man is a social product" (1966:89).

"The test of a theory is ultimately whether it helps us to understand...." (Wallace and Wolf, 1986:5).

Significance of Proposed Study

The process of becoming a science fiction Fan, although heavily documented by individuals, (a favorite topic of initial publications of fan produced magazines) (DeVore, 1993a; Bernardi, 1992; Carr, 1986; Bloch, 1962) has not been examined sociologically for common aspects of status passage. Throughout this thesis, I will refer to the members of the science fiction Fan subculture as SF Fandom to distinguish them from other "fandoms" that have grown and branched off from the original group.

The status passage of females into this subculture may differ based on their ascribed status of gender, and ethnic background may cause differences in status passage for members of the subculture with that ascribed status. These considerations have influenced the choice of sample subjects for interviews.

Studying a primarily middle class subculture with respect to status passage will create a basis for further comparisons to other subculture studies of status passage. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge about subculture participation and the status passage of becoming a subculture member. This will contribute to the sociological body of knowledge about the process of

recruitment into subcultures, achieved statuses and avocational status passages.

Definition of Terms

This section is a set of definitions of terms used that require clarification of their use here.

Status Passage

"Status Passage" as used by Glaser and Strauss (1971) describes the process of becoming and occupying a particular social position. A status is a "specialized position in a group... the range of statuses available in a society and the distribution of people and rewards among these statuses set the stage for further relationships" (Brinkerhoff and White, 1991:90). Glaser and Strauss advocate the examination of status passages because "they reflect conditions for and changes in social structure and its functioning; and these changes may have consequences for the social structure" (1971:4).

Differing statuses have differing features or properties such as whether the status is achieved (such as occupation) or ascribed (such as ethnicity) (Brinkerhoff and White, 1991). Glaser and Strauss (1971) also identify status passages as being voluntary or involuntary. Status passage is a sensitizing concept (a perimeter or boundary area) to define the area of study rather than a set of parameters (or variables) within a formal theory. Becoming and being a science fiction Fan is an achieved status. Achieved statuses, although occupied are also constantly

changing. One may go forward, withdraw, be forced backward or run in place. Most statuses are a blend of voluntary and involuntary roles, with primarily involuntary statuses (such as dying patient) having voluntary role aspects; and primarily voluntary statuses (such as employee) having involuntary role aspects. The primary roles in SF Fandom are voluntary, but like other voluntary statuses, there are involuntary social role expectations associated with the achievement of the status.

Fan

By choosing to become a Fan, the potential subculture member chooses to enter the status passage. To occupy the status of "Fan" one engages in "fanac" (fan activity) such as clubs, convention organization, or fan magazine production (fanzines), or attempts to turn their subculture hobby into a profession (ie: booksellers, writers, editors, agents and academics concerned with science fiction), attempting to move from the status, Fan, to the status, Pro, within the subculture. This definition eliminates the casual convention attenders and the omnivorous but uninvolved science fiction reader, although many of these people identify themselves as science fiction Fans (Hartwell, 1984; Hull and Pohl, 1992). For purposes of this study, Fan and SF Fandom will refer to those people who have been socialized into the science fiction Fan subculture, since someone who only reads science fiction has not entered into status passage.

Limitations

One possible limitation or problem I may encounter with studying SF Fandom is the problem of objectivity. Since I identify myself as a member of science fiction Fandom, I have insights that would not be available to someone who has not participated as a member and gone through the status passage of a subculture member or participated in several possible status roles, but this identification could interfere with an objective analysis of my data.

Even though my sampling frame is broad-based with respect to geography, education, age, gender, and ethnicity, it still contains bias. A judgmental or purposive sampling eliminates the ability to use statistical testing procedures reliably, and this type of sampling can only suggest or indicate the conclusions. Studying status passage requires in-depth interviews to discover how members of the subculture came to participate in that subculture since no other method meets both the limits of time and expense. The attempt to verify or contradict aspects of previous survey findings led to the inclusion of some demographic variables in the list of topics covered during in-depth interviews (Appendix A).

In studying the process of becoming a member of the science fiction Fan subculture, a status passage, I am trying to answer several research questions. What is the process of becoming a member of the subculture of science fiction Fandom? What are the commonalities of process for

those joining the subculture? How do these commonalities compare to other status passages? Why do people voluntarily engage in this status passage; what benefits do they receive? This has produced the information presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews previous status passage studies,
gives an overview of the subculture structure, mores and
symbols where status passage takes place, and reviews prior
studies of the subculture and its members including
ethnographies and statistical surveys, and reviews a related
qualitative analysis.

Previous Status Passage Studies

Michael Brake's book, Comparative Youth Culture (1985)
provides an overview of the sociological research on
subcultures. He advocates an examination of the status
passage of the subculture member as defined by Glaser and
Strauss (1971). Review of Brake's work led to the study of
status passage of the science fiction Fan.

Aspects of status passage have a long history of
anthropological and more recently sociological study (Glaser
and Strauss, 1971; Hart, 1976) starting with Gennep's
sociological study Les Rites De Passage (1906).
Anthropological studies of status passage are more common
and have generally dealt more completely with the entire
status passage rather than aspects of it, but have focussed
on primitive societies with limited status passage options

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(Hart, 1976). Sociological studies of status passage have tended to study aspects of occupational (Becker et al, 1961; Glaser, 1964) or primarily non-voluntary (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) status passages (Glaser and Strauss, 1971). Anselm Strauss' Mirrors and Masks (1959) explores the establishment of social identity, leading to his interest in status passage.

Except for Glaser and Strauss' (196) study, Time for Dying, containing two pages explicitly discussing the status passage of the dying person, and Nicky Hart's (1976) study of status passage of persons going through divorce, there have been no studies that explicitly label the concept of going through changes in status as "status passages." Prior to this conceptual label, Julius Roth (1963) examines the status passage of the tuberculosis patient, and Fred Davis (1963) focuses on similar aspects in the polio patient.

Harold Garfinkel's (1956) work, "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies" mirrors Erving Goffman's (1952) essay, "On Cooling the Mark Out: Some Aspects of Adaptation to Failure" and Goffman's later (1963) work Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity in his examination of control, labeled by Glaser and Strauss (1971) as an element of status passage; while Orrin Klapp's (1949) "The Fool as a Social Type" precedes their work in studying this aspect of status passage.

Howard Becker and others (1961) studied the collective status passage of medical students, and Erving Goffman contrasts this with his (1961) study of several aspects of status passage of mental patients within asylums. Barney Glaser (1964) branched to study of a different occupation when he reported on the careers of "Organizational Scientists," leading to his interest in status passages.

Nicky Hart (1976:4), in her status passage study of divorce, notes:

> In modern secular society, passage from one status to another seems frequently to lack the ritual expression of institutional support which social anthropologists have observed amongst more primitive peoples.

Hart cites Gluckman's (1962) explanation of this as having to do with the greater dispersion of social networks within modern society, allowing different audiences for the differing roles associated with each of the actors' statuses. Goffman's work (1959) on social identity also confirms this aspect of role play to diverse audiences.

As an example of status passage, Hart (1976:124-6) found marital breakdown to be an "unstructured" status passage. Because it is generally also "undesirable," she concludes that society and the person experiencing marital breakdown would benefit by creating a more formal support mechanism and structured passage. She also found "anticipation" a more crucial element in successful status passage than did Glaser and Strauss (1968). "Personal constructions of reality depend heavily upon expectations"

(Hart, 1976:125-6), and status passage consists of both subjective and objective elements. ". . . and a status passage like marital breakdown is one in which roles are as much 'made' by actors as they are 'taken' by them" (126-7).

Status passage is concerned particularly with the dimensions of time and space, their use and effects on the process of becoming and occupying a particular social position. Role career is concerned with the duties, obligations and privileges of particular roles performed within a status. An SF Fan may perform several roles during his/her status passage.

Because becoming a science fiction Fan is voluntary, certain properties of status passage that may apply to involuntary status passage (such as the status passage of one who is terminally ill) are not relevant to analysis of the status passage of the SF Fan. Properties identified by Glaser and Strauss (1971) that are relevant and that need examination are 1) degree of control which various agents have over aspects of the passage; 2) the clarity of the signs of passage; 3) the centrality of the passage to the individual involved; 4) the length of time or duration of the passage; 5) repeatability of the passage; 6) reversibility of the passage; and 7) awareness of the person in passage of collective or aggregate passage.

Overview of Social Structure

Status passages within SF Fandom are continually discussed by participants indicating the centrality of the experience to the participants, and one of the aspects of the status that is constantly compared in discussions is the fact that it is an achieved status rather than an ascribed status (Pavlac, 1994; Sanders, 1994; finder [sic], 1993-94; Pelz, 1993; Eisenstein and Eisenstein, 1993).

In the world of science fiction Fandom, the active fans distinguish between the status of active, inactive and non-active fans [See Appendix C for a glossary]. Active fans are those participating in fan activities. "Fanac" (fan activities, pronounced "fan'ack") includes organizing and participating in conventions or clubs, writing letters to other fans, participating in fan magazines (known as fanzines), or participating in amateur press associations (APAs), or at the very least, subscribing to a fanzine or helping at conventions regularly (Fleming, 1976; Hartwell, 1984; Hull and Pohl, 1992). These are roles available to the person in status passage.

"SF" is the preferred "fannish" term, not "Sci-Fi" which is a term first coined by Forrest J. Ackerman (1993; Wertham, 1973) and is used to describe mass media productions such as television and movies (Lerner, 1985; Bainbridge, 1986). The use of "Sci-Fi," other than to describe movies and television, marks you as an "outsider"

(Lerner, 1985; Bova, 1994), someone not serious about becoming a member of the subculture, someone not in status passage (Becker, 1963). Fans have their own slang that distinguishes "insiders" from "outsiders," passagees from visitors. Familiarity with this slang is one of the criteria of being in status passage (Arnold, 1970; Brake, 1985; Brinkerhoff and White, 1991).

Inactive fans are those that have withdrawn from Fandom, described as "gafiated," a verb coined from the acronym "gafia," from the phrase "get away from it all" (Southland, 1982; Jackson, 1976; Tucker, 1966; Boardman, 1966; Franson, 1962a). Non-active fans are those who only read or watch television and movies and do not become involved with the subculture. These readers are not truly considered Fans since they are not actively involved in status passage (de Camp, 1953; Fleming, 1977; Hartwell, 1984; Coulson, 1994a Coulson, 1994b).

An overview of the subculture history in which status passage takes place creates a background for the rest of the discussion. Science fiction Fans like to think their genre's history is unique, but based on pulp history it is not. Pulps were 1920's-1940 large magazines printed on poor paper with lurid primary color covers. All pulps were disdained by the general public, and a presidential committee was even formed (1931-3) to investigate the effects of all pulp magazines on American youth (Herwald,

1977:29). What is unique is the extent of the subculture built about this genre, the people who participate and what they have done about their hobby.

> Science fiction is unique among literary fields for the size and organization of its fandom. It is unique in that almost all of its editors are also authors. It is also unique in that the majority of the field's most important amateur and professional critics and scholars are also its fans, authors, and editors. And it is unique because many of the professionals write articles and letters for the prozines and fanzines. They attend the conventions as honored guests or as ordinary fans.... Science fiction is special in still another way in that ... certain roles ... lack discrete, clear cut boundaries between amateurs and professionals. (Fleming, 1976:262)

Organized SF Fandom began in the letter columns of Hugo Gernsback's "scientifiction" pulp magazine, Amazing Stories (Herwald, 1977). Gernsback began publication of Amazing Stories in April of 1926 and added the letter column in January, 1927 (del Rey, 1980). In order to create a steady market for his magazine and to fill pages of his magazine with free copy, Gernsback published these letters and tried to organize clubs around the U.S. Active Fans have created their own leisure time activities through correspondence clubs, fan published magazines (fanzines), amateur press associations (APAs) and conventions (Lichtman, 1962; Ash, 1977; Siclari, 1981; Ackerman, 1988; Sanders, 1994).

Fanzines are amateur publications in that generally no financial profit is intended from their publication (Friend, 1975; Wertham, 1973). Wertham (1973) called fanzines a unique form of communication. The status of fanzine fan

(those who subscribe to and participate in production of fanzines) is one of the subgroups within the science fiction Fan subculture to claim the title "TruFan" (a contraction of the words "true fan"). They claim to be the core group, the central status of the subculture (brown [sic], 1994a). Fanzines have, in the last twenty years, seen some production outside the sphere of SF Fandom influence (Gunderloy, 1992; Eisenstein, 1993a; Smith, 1993).

Fanzine fans tend to think of their activity (writing, editing, publishing and exchanging amateur press publications) as not only the central most important activity of fandom (Smith, 1993; brown [sic], 1994a; Warner, 1994a) but as an activity unique to science fiction fandom (Wertham, 1973; Herwald, 1977; brown [sic], 1994a). Participation in a fanzine is one of the measures of status passage (Siclari, 1981; Hartwell, 1984; DeVore, 1993b; Eisenstein, 1993b; brown [sic], 1994a).

Amateur Press Associations (APA) were started as a branch of SF Fandom in 1937 by Don Wollheim as a solution to irregular publication by fan published magazines. Basing the organizational structure on such amateur journalism societies as the New England Amateur Press Club, he created the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA) (Lichtman, 1962; Warner, 1992, Bailey, 1994). Participation in an APA can be used as status passage credentials as can fanzine

participation (Siclari, 1981; DeVore, 1993b; Eisenstein, 1993b; brown [sic], 1994; Pavlac, 1994).

There are also annual academic science fiction meetings including the SFRA (Science Fiction Research Association) conference, where academics and professional writers meet and share information on the academic study of the genre. "As fans founded their fanzines in the 1920's, so too have academics in more recent years. Extrapolation, now a quarterly, began in 1959 as a longish newsletter" (Barron, 1982:196). As pointed out by Friend (1975:135), "many of the present academics are the fans of the past." The exact dividing line where a fanzine becomes an academic publication and where an academic publication becomes a fanzine is one of the questions Wertham (1973) unsuccessfully tries to answer in his book, The World of Fanzines.

The most visible aspect of the subculture is the Fan run science fiction conventions (called cons). Science fiction conventions are unique compared to other types of literary or hobby conventions in that the fans and professional writers get together as equals. Annually, there is the World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon), where the Hugo Awards are given out. Named after SF editor Hugo Gernsback, these awards are voted on by the fans attending or supporting the convention (Siclari, 1981). A 'true' science fiction convention is run by volunteers on a

non-profit basis. As the size of attendance and number of
conventions has grown, so has the programming. The addition
of movies, dealers rooms (where collectors can add to and
exchange from their collections), art shows, and an official
masquerade has further expanded the features of the larger
science fiction conventions and the roles that a Fan with
the sub-status of convention runner may play (Fleming, 1976;
Friend, 1975; Strauss, 1983).

SF Fandom has been described as an anarchistic
meritocracy, first by Ted White (brown [sic], 1994a);
anarchistic because there is no organized central agency.
The closest equivalent is the World Science Fiction Society,
an unincorporated literary society, created to give some
continuity and help to the World Science Fiction
Conventions. Membership is obtained by paying the
membership fee to the next Worldcon and benefits include
Worldcon progress reports, and nominating and voting
privileges for the Hugo awards. An additional fee grants an
attending membership to the coming Worldcon (ChiCon V, 1991;
Standlee, 1994).

Meritocracy is appropriate as the only way to rise
within SF Fandom is by becoming known through one's efforts
for Fandom. Sub-statuses within the subculture are
obtained through role performance. SMOF (secret masters of
fandom) is a sometimes derogatory term applied to those who
enjoy organizing and running conventions and dealing with

the mainstream bureaucracy of hotel contracts and budgeting.
Attaining the sub-status of SMOF is meritocratic as with
other positions within the social structure. The potential
SMOFs volunteer time, talent and money; and may eventually
gain recognition (known as egoboo, short for ego boost)
within the subculture in return. Again, this sub-status may
be obtained without giving up other sub-statuses within SF
Fandom through performance of the various role opportunities
(personal interviews). The meritocracy structure of SF
Fandom contributes to the feuding over who can claim the
master status of "TruFan" (personal interviews).

Prior Studies of the Subculture

Ethnographies

An overview of the sociological studies related to the
study of SF Fandom provides further information about the
structure that affects status passage.

Linda Fleming's (1976) sociological dissertation, "The
Science Fiction SubCulture: Bridge Between The Two
Cultures," is the only sociological work found that attempts
to deal primarily with the subculture of science fiction
Fandom (Letson, 1994). Fleming's (1976) ethnography
conjectures that SF Fandom could be a bridge between the two
cultures identified by C. P. Snow, the literary and the
scientific, because both aspects are represented in the
literature. But SF Fandom tends to resist this co-opting of
their subculture into mainstream literary-academic circles

and this has helped created a fan versus academics feud where the fan group includes the professional writers (Hartwell, 1984; Lerner, 1985; Bainbridge, 1986; Card, 1988).

Letson (1994) writes that "it is the practice of academic literary research and publication carried out by those perceived as non-fans that provokes hostility." And Gunn (1974) explains that part of the resentment stems from the steady income associated with tenured positions at universities that creates resentment on the part of the professional writers and those trying to become professional writers. At the 1995 World Science Fiction Convention, the author guest of honor, Samuel R. Delany, in his guest of honor speech, pointed out that indeed he makes seven times as much teaching writing as he does actually writing (Delany, 1995).

"Fans have called their world an alternate reality, a ghetto, a tribe, a family; many are very possessive of 'their' science fiction" (Fleming (1976:28-9). Fleming is also the first sociologist to try to define SF Fandom, explaining that there has always been a large number of subgroups or "subfandoms" within the boundaries of the subculture, including rival or feuding groups, and subcultural groups who overlap with SF Fandom but are not encompassed by SF Fandom. In a personal interview, SF and fantasy author and editor Roger Zelazny (1993) described the

entire SF related subcultural milieux as "the United Nations of Fandom."

Beverly Friend (1975:69), in her doctoral thesis in modern language and English literature is highly ethnographic, and recounts many of SF Fandom's conjectures about itself including: claims to superior intelligence, lonely childhoods, an insatiable desire to accumulate books and other published materials, bitter feuds, low affiliation needs and independence (Friend, 1975). Some of these play into the general public's stereotype of Fandom, some do not (Jenkins, 1992). Friend advocates the use of science fiction to teach English literature. This suggestion has also flared the fan versus academic feud for the reason cited above, but the idea has still managed to occasionally be adopted into university and high school English departments and into other disciplines such as psychology (Kat et al., 1981) and sociology (Milstead, et al., 1974).

A few sociological examinations of science fiction as literature were found in the literature review. Science fiction Fan and author Damon Knight (1977:253-56) recounts certain traits he found in common among the early subculture participants. These include a shared poverty of the Depression, the desire to write science fiction, an early life isolating event and higher than average intelligence and talent. Others were based in conflict theory, where the sociological writer examines either the purposes of the

science fiction writer in creating the text or the
sociological writer examines the uses to which society puts
the text; discounting the actor/reader and his/her reaction
to the text (Elkins, 1977; Suvin, 1977; Martin, 1980).

Two ethnographic studies of the branch subculture of
Star Trek Fandom, which branched from SF Fandom in the
1970's (Eisenstein, 1993; Pavlac 1994) have been published
recently. Henry Jenkins' Textual Poachers (1992), is a
popular culture ethnographic examination of the uses to
which the "audience" of television shows, most extensively
Star Trek, puts textual materials. Camille Bacon-Smith's
Enterprising Women (1992) is another ethnography of this
same group from a feminist sociological perspective.

Sanders (1990) edited a collection of essays examining
theories of deviance in relation to popular culture. He
found that "a major pleasurable aspect of membership in
subcultures is the exclusivity and unconventionality of
involvement with the core phenomenon." That "involvement
with unconventional tastes and knowledge provides feelings
of uniqueness and separation from the rigid blandness of the
mainstream" (Sanders, 1990:9). Jenkins (1992:17) contends:

> The stereotypical conception of the fan, while not
> without a limited factual basis, amounts to a
> projection of anxieties about the violation of dominant
> cultural hierarchies. The fans' transgression of
> bourgeois taste and disruption of dominant cultural
> hierarchies insures that their preferences are seen as
> abnormal and threatening by those who have a vested
> interest in the maintenance of these standards.

As pointed out by Sanders (1990), the subculture members also have a vested interest in maintaining this separation. This contributes to a dynamic tension between three sub-statuses associated with the subculture; the academic, the professional, and the Fan. The academics wish to control perceptions of the literature by the public in order to legitimate their working with the subject they enjoy (Gunn, 1974; Letson, 1994). The professional writers wish to control the literature in order to move it into the mainstream for both financial and ego reasons (Hartwell, 1984; Disch, 1992). The Fans have a vested interest in their beloved literature remaining "ghettoized" in a subculture (Hartwell, 1984; Lerner, 1985) in order to maintain the functions of a subculture (Sanders, 1990). Status conflict often arises for individuals because many people within the subculture dynamic, because of its "gemeinschaft-like social world" (Fleming, 1976:219), occupy all three sub-statuses, academic, professional and Fan at the same time (Kemp and Kemp, 1960; Knight, 1967; Wollheim, 1971; Aldiss, 1975; Pohl, 1975; Knight, 1977; Pohl, 1978; del Rey, 1980; Haldeman, 1993; Mallett and Reginald, 1993).

Statistical Surveys

Several people and groups have attempted to survey Fandom. Most of these surveys have been either demographic surveys of magazine readership surveys or surveys taken at science fiction conventions of self-selected participants

(See Table 1, page 27) (<u>Locus</u>, Feb. 1992; <u>Aboriginal SF</u>,
1989; Bainbridge, 1986; Berger, 1977; Day and Day, 1982;
Waugh, et al., 1975; Waugh and Schroeder, 1978).

Albert Berger's 1972 survey at the thirty-first World
Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon), TorCon 2, had a
survey sample of 282 from a potential of 2900 in attendance
(Berger, 1977). This was primarily a demographic survey.
Berger's sample was a self-selected sample conducted by
placing surveys in locations where attendees could fill them
out if they wished. Berger found that the respondents were
primarily middle-class, with 86.5% having attended at least
some college and 48.23% reporting they had a large measure
of independence in their work life. He concludes that:

> It is a readership endowed with an almost anachronistic
> affluence, education, and independence which are - in
> most cases - a result of the very technology that SF
> writers so often postulated in advance. That
> anachronistic social position of SF fans helps account
> for the slippery nature of social criticism in the
> genre, notably its inability to come to grips with
> modern society as it stands. (Berger, 1977:242-3)

William Sims Bainbridge's survey at the thirty-sixth
Worldcon, IguanaCon II, got responses from 595 of the 4700
in attendance (Bainbridge, 1986). Besides demographic
information, this survey included a Likert five-point scale
of reactions to science fiction authors. Bainbridge was
primarily interested in readers' reactions to science
fiction rather than members of the subculture of science
fiction fandom although he did collect information on some

Table 1: Surveys of science fiction convention attendance or science fiction magazine readers by year indicating percentage of males and females surveyed.

Year	Survey identification	% Male	% Female	Sample size	Source number
1927 -38	_Amazing_ readers' letters to editor	76.0	5.0	19%un-known	8
1948	Tucker fan survey	89.0	11.0	173/ 1000	7,9-12
1949	_Astounding_ readers	93.3	6.7	?	11
1958	_Astounding_ readers	88.0	12.0	?	2,9,13
mid 60's	_Fantasy_ & _Science Fiction_ readers	71.0	29.0	?	9, 13
1973	31st Worldcon - TorCon 2	64.5	34.8	282/ 2900	9, 6
1974	_Analog_ readers	75.0	25.0	?	10
1974	_Locus_ readers	82.0	18.0	?	10
1975	Waugh combined	73.0	27.0	-	10
1978	36th Worldcon - IguanaCon II	58.6	41.5	595/ 4700	13, 6
1981	_Analog_ readers	75.1	24.9	?	2
1981	_Locus_ readers	77.0	23.0	921/ 3800	1
1982	Day and Day -many conventions	55.0	45.0	~700/?	14
1985	_Locus_ readers	74.0	26.0	976/ 4600	1
1987	Walden's Otherworlds Club	70.0	30.0	?	4
1988	_Analog_ & _Asimov's_ readers	72.6	27.4	?	5
1989	_Aboriginal SF_ readers	63.6	36.4	88/200	3
1991	_Locus_ readers	70.0	30.0	832/ 5150	1

Data Sources as numbered:
1. _Locus_, Feb. 1992; 2. Schmidt, 1981; 3. _Aboriginal SF_, 1989; 4. Reuter, 1988; 5. Carter, 1988; 6. _ChiCon V_, 1991:62-3; 7. Warner, 1969; 8. Herwald, 1977; 9. Berger, 1977; 10. Waugh et. al., 1975; 11. Fleming, 1976; 12. Friend, 1975; 13. Bainbridge, 1986; 14. Day and Day, 1982.

subculture participation (fanac) and drew conclusions about the subculture from this data. Bainbridge was impressed by the new computer programs for statistical analysis of data. His sample lacked both internal and external validity, as it was a self-selected sample (returned surveys) from a self-selected group (convention attendance) and surely was not a representative sample of all science fiction readers or SF Fandom. Bainbridge (1986) set out to construct a quantitative profile of the SF Fan subculture but admittedly only succeeded in identifying four factors of science fiction writer focus that he labeled, "the hard science tradition, the new wave, the fantasy cluster and time."

Day and Day (1982) surveyed almost seven hundred people at science fiction conventions and labeled SF Fandom as a pseudo-religious cult, but spent their popular culture paper recounting the fun of conventions and meeting other fans. SF Fandom is a subculture and therefore fills some of the same functions as a religious subculture such as a sense of community and a value system, but these are both aspects of subcultures non-specific to religious subcultures (Arnold, 1970; Adelman, 1972; Brake, 1985; Sanders, 1990); and the role learning within the status passage of SF Fandom mirrors occupational and ethnic subculture learning processes more than religious subculture learning processes (Berger, 1967).

All three surveys, Berger's, Bainbridge's and the Day and Day surveys, yielded a higher percentage of females in

the return group than were estimated to have attended the conventions by informants who attended the conventions or in comparison to readership surveys of that period (1973-1982) (See Table 1, page 27). If a representative sample of convention attendance was intended to be surveyed, this would seem to indicate skewing in the survey samples. Perhaps the major discovery is that women are slightly more likely to find time to fill out and return surveys at science fiction conventions. Since not all persons attending a science fiction convention consider themselves Fans, these surveys provide only rough estimates of population demographics for comparison to my sample.

Waugh, Libby, and Waugh (1975) attempted a tentative summary of "demographic, intellectual and personality characteristics of science fiction fans" in the United States by comparing the survey information conducted to that time and by conducting two small surveys of their own. They discuss their problems of external validity in that there is no set definition of a science fiction fan in the studies that have been done. They also reveal problems of internal validity in that the magazine readership surveys that have been conducted do not have a sufficient return to indicate whether the results can be generalized to all the readership, much less to the SF Fan population. They came up with a combined estimate of 73% males in the population and 27% females. Educationally, as many as one-fourth of

all American fans may hold graduate degrees. Combining the studies would indicate that the average fan was in his twenties at that time with approximately ninety percent of fans surveyed under fifty years of age (Waugh et. al., 1975:4-5). Twenty years later, the aging of the SF Fan population has become one of the concerns being discussed in fanzines and on the internet (Pavlac, 1994; Brin, 1993; brown [sic], 1994b; Smith, 1994).

Waugh and Schroeder (1978:12) followed up on this research. They found that twelve major variables have been surveyed: "race, sex, age, marital status, religion, education, occupation, income, political orientation, reading habits, hobbies, and birth order." They found that between one-fourth and one-third of American SF Fans are female. Interestingly, this demographic held for Russian science fiction fandom as well, where the majority of Russian doctors are women and over a third of Russian engineers are female (Waugh and Schroeder, 1978:13).

To summarize Waugh and Schroeder's findings, science fiction Fans tend to be well educated white males working in upper middle class professional capacities (if not still in school). At the time of the study, they were in their twenties and tend to report themselves as slightly more liberal than conservative politically. They are eldest or only children and read a great deal. Waugh and Schroeder (1978) also find that the females expressed the same values

and tend to be similarly socially situated with respect to work and educational achievement as the males.

> They are very bright, autonomous, and achievement oriented. While interested in theoretical and aesthetic values, they are disinterested in religion. Not surprisingly, they seem to like science and technology and, for some, an interest in sf has led to scientific or technological careers. (Waugh and Schroeder, 1978:17)

Although all of these surveys are self-selected samples or samples too small to be sure of their statistical significance, the results are consistant enough to draw the conclusion that SF Fandom is a middle-class subculture with the economic benefits of this socio-economic position.

A related qualitative study

Brian Stableford's (1987) book, The Sociology of Science Fiction, which is based on his 1978 sociology doctoral dissertation, examines science fiction as a genre of popular literature and questions what the avid or devoted reader of this genre receives from it. For purposes of his study, he limited his examination to work published with the label of science fiction. "There have been many attempts to define 'science fiction' and the problem of how best to do it remains a constant source of discussion within the science fiction community" (Stableford, 1987:80).

By examining written records of the audience of science fiction, Stableford built a sociological picture of the process of becoming a devoted reader of the genre of science fiction. He found that love of reading science fiction is

based on a gestalt experience similar to that described by
Thomas Kuhn (1964) as necessary to take place for
innovations in scientific theory. This gestalt shift places
the reader in a different worldview affecting the way the
reader is able to look at the world and interpret his/her
surroundings (Stableford, 1987; Berger and Luckmann, 1966;
Kuhn, 1964). Stableford also found that the SF reader
demands two things from science fiction: no "stereotypy
[sic] of ideas" (demand for innovation) and plausibility
(Stableford, 1987:75-80).

> What is important here is a shift in perspective,
> analogous to the "gestalt shift" by which an ambiguous
> drawing can suddenly shift in the mind of the observer
> from one of this appearance to the other. (Stableford,
> 1987:72)

The following drawing represents two perspectives.
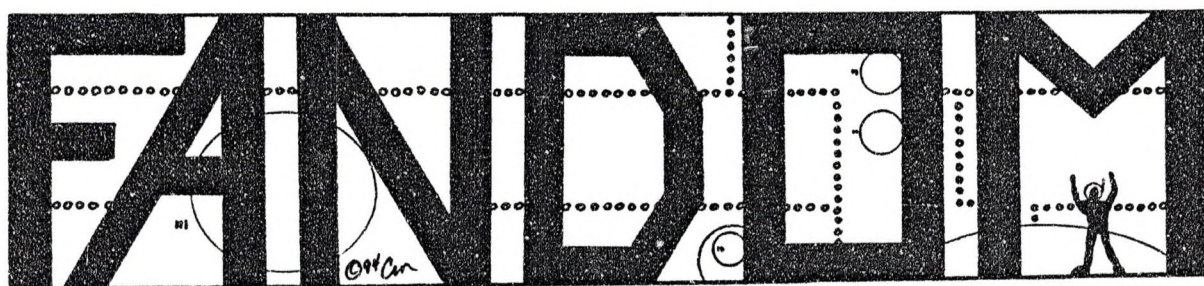
Illustration 1. Gestalt drawing: The word fandom appears in
the foreground while the background when focused on appears
to be a spaceship passing behind silhouetted girders.
                    Drawing by Catherine Mintz

When the foreground is focused on, the word "FANDOM"
emerges. When the viewer focuses on the background, a
spaceship appears to be passing behind silhouetted girders.
The ability to make this perspective shift is a small
example of a gestalt experience.

Stableford goes on to explain:

It is a breakthrough to new concepts, which allow a
new interpretation of the perceived world by setting
"today" in a new context which extends far beyond
yesterday and tomorrow to hitherto unsuspected
imaginative horizons (1987:72).

Korzybski (1921) called this ability to make a
perception shift when applied to our relationship to the
past, present and future, "timebinding." He claimed that
this ability is what set humans apart from animals. Robert
Heinlein was later to conjecture that timebinding was what
set Fandom apart from the mundane (non-fannish or mainstream
world) (Warner, 1969:102-3). Stableford implies that it is
not the ability to make a perception shift in relation to
time itself that is the factor in becoming a devoted science
fiction reader, but the perception of oneself in relation to
time, space and humanity that is the gestalt necessary to
create the "protofan" (Stableford, 1987; Budrys, 1961:12),
the potential SF Fan.

David A. Kyle wrote in an essay for the Science Fiction
League that was printed in the May, 1935, Wonder Stories:

In particular, one might expect that special value
should be attributed to a perspective-shift which
reduces the world, previously seen as a vast and
complex place within which the child is very

vulnerable, to a tininess and insignificance in which, the planet and the race are reduced to similar vulnerability. (Stableford, 1987:73)

Kyle has succinctly described the perspective shift which Stableford found by examining written records of SF Fandom.

In summary, studies prior to this one have not been done of avocational status passages. The ethnographies of the subculture yield rich descriptions. Statistical data is sketchy on the specific subculture in which this avocational status passage takes place. For anyone interested in pursuing a broader picture of this subculture, I highly recommend Joe Sanders' book Science Fiction Fandom (1994) and David Hartwell's Age of Wonders (1984). Next, the methodology of this study will be discussed including a description of the actual sample.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in gathering and analyzing data for this thesis is explained in this chapter. Qualitative methodology is discussed and the sample is described. Although it is more common to include the description of the sample with the findings, because this is a qualitative analysis and the sample is presented statistically and compared to previous statistical studies, I chose to include the description of the sample in the chapter on methodology.

Methods

Qualitative methodology is "a nonmathematical analytic procedure that results in findings derived from data gathered by a variety of means" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:18). Data were collected using in-depth interviews with subculture participants. This was supplemented with an examination of written biographical materials of subculture participants. Both were analyzed using qualitative methods. These in-depth interviews and biographical materials enabled me to collect data on the status passage and role careers of subculture participants.

Qualitative analysis of data relies on validation through comparison of "the hypothetical statement regarding

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relationships of categories against the data" (Strauss and
Corbin, 1990:129-30) rather than the quantitative
methodological tests for internal and external validity and
reliability.   Qualitative methodology is subject to many of
the same sources of bias as survey research, and the
sociological interview is in particular vulnerable to
interviewer/researcher bias, lack of candidness/truthfulness
on the part of the subject, and the effect of gendered
identities on the social interaction of the interview
(Denzin, 1989:140-50).   The effect of gendered identities is
one reason why literature is "used as supplementary
validation" of the theoretical statement (Strauss and
Corbin, 1990:52).   They go on to explain:

> Though not testing in a statistical sense, we are
> constantly comparing hypotheses against reality (the
> data), making modifications, then testing again.   Only
> that which is repeatedly found to stand up against
> reality will be built into the theory. (Strauss &
> Corbin, 1990:187)

Sampling Procedure

The snowball sampling technique was used in order to
select participants.   Because of my previous participation
in subculture activities and the contacts I have made, I was
no more than one person away from any other subculture
participant.   If I could not travel to their location, they
were interviewed by telephone.   The consent form used and a
list of interview focus areas related to status passage
participation in the subculture are in Appendix A.

Participant observation of subculture activities to make contacts for the snowball sample and to gather additional data consisted of attendance at club meetings both locally and in other geographic locations, attendance at convention gatherings, correspondence club participation, fanzine production and exchange, and convention organization participation. Even local convention attendance exposed me to a broad geographic base. The local convention, ValleyCon, held in October 1992-1995 drew Fans from Arizona, California, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Washington D.C., and Winnipeg, Canada. Participant observation also enabled me to see if my observations confirm the information I collected from my biographical reviews and in-depth interviews in order to reach "theoretical saturation" as defined by Glaser and Strauss (1971), Glaser (1978), Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Glaser (1993).

I did not take a representative or statistically weighted sample in choosing interview subjects, but used the snowball sampling technique to identify and contact subjects. The choice of subjects to interview was based on three major considerations:

1) Limiting the in-depth interview sample to continental United States-based science fiction Fans. This geographical limitation was based on practicality, limiting expenses, and desire to focus on United States Fan

experience. Griswold (1987) found that audience interpretation of cultural materials may vary between national cultures, and information from key informants indicates that this may be the case for SF Fandom (Carter, 1977; Hull and Pohl, 1992; Eisenstein and Eisenstein, 1993; finder [sic] 1993; Sanders, 1994).

2) Sampling science fiction Fans across a range of age, current United States location, ethnic background, gender, employment status and types of participation in science fiction Fan activities. The diversity of work status, age, gender and ethnicity were examined because we cannot know when conducting a qualitative inquiry whether or not these variables have any relevancy to the study (Glaser, 1992:4), and past subculture studies have found work status, age, gender and ethnicity to be relevant variables (Brake, 1985). Variation in location within the United States was necessary to find the other variables within subculture members.

3) Generally identifying persons having active experience of participation in science fiction Fan activities.

The longer the involvement and the more actively involved the participant is in the science fiction subculture, the more it was likely that I would obtain that person's name from several sources.

Sample Selection

Participant selection was organized around an attempt to find diversity in work status, geographic location, age, gender, ethnicity and extent and type of subculture participation. Variation in location was necessary to attempt to find the other variables within subculture members. The minimum age was limited to eighteen. Finding an ethnic diversity was difficult since from participant observation and literature review (Berger, 1977; Delany, 1977; Day and Day, 1982; Bainbridge, 1986; Book Industry Study Group, 1991; DeVore, 1993b), I know that Fandom tends to be predominantly white. I did make an effort in my contacts to identify an Afro-American woman and a man of Puerto Rican descent to interview. I did not find that the status passage of the science fiction Fan varies based on ethnic background. Any screening based on background takes place prior to introduction to the subculture (Stableford, 1987).

From preliminary literature review, I wanted an interview sample that was not gender representative of science fiction subculture participation but was skewed toward females. I wanted this skewing because female science fiction subculture participants are still in the minority, and only in the last 20 years have they reached more equal numbers both as fans and as professionals (Berger, 1977; Herwald, 1977; Day and Day, 1982). Studies

of female subculture participants of any kind are scarce, so
we do not know if their experience of status passage varies
greatly from that of male subculture participants (Brake,
1985).   Although my intention was to interview more female
participants, my actual sample turned out to be
proportionate to most current research findings and
estimates as to current active male to female ratio
participation in the science fiction subculture (see Table 1
page 27) (Waugh and Schroeder, 1978; Trimble, 1993).

Interviewing Procedures

The interviews were open but focused. I allowed the
interview subject to discuss what was of interest to the
subject related to subculture participation, but made sure
to ask questions and collect additional data according to
the interview focus areas. This allowed me to cover certain
areas of interest in the status passage or background of the
participant and still collect open-ended data suitable for
qualitative analysis. Appendix A contains the participant
consent form used and a list of interview focus areas.

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.
For purposes of analysis, several copies were made.
Pseudonyms or very general identification are used in cases
where the information might reveal the identity of the
participant.

Qualitative Analysis Procedures

The qualitative analysis procedures, used in analyzing the data collected, required identifying concepts of importance and interest to the subjects in in-depth interviews and biographical works, then using these concepts to create a theoretical statement describing an aspect of the sociological process of the subjects' milieu. This theoretical framework was then related back to the identified status passage of the subjects within their social structure.

In order to identify concepts of importance to the subjects, it was necessary to transcribe interviews and make several copies of these interviews. In addition, several copies of each paragraph in biographical works relevant to status passage were made. These copies, both transcriptions and biographical passages, were examined over and over again and labeled with concepts that were expressed in the sentences and paragraphs. As more concepts were identified, it was necessary to go back over the paragraphs previously labeled to see if they contained new concepts not previously identified, or if the previously identified concepts are further related to concepts later identified. I used colored markers to circle related concepts making them easy to identify visually and to sort. I then cut apart one set of copies so that I could group the concepts. This was an ongoing process, along with collecting additional data.

When only an occasional new concept was identified, theoretical saturation was assumed to have been reached (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Description of the Sample

To analytically describe the process of becoming a science fiction Fan, I interviewed thirty-seven persons at length and in-depth. Of the in-depth interviewees, eleven were part of husband/wife teams where both spouses identify themselves as science fiction Fans. Two couples were interviewed together and apart. Two of the interviewees were non-active science fiction readers who identify themselves as fans (one male, one female). Two interviewees were persons who read science fiction and participate in science fiction Fan activities but who identify themselves as not being Fans (one male, one female). Fourteen members of the in-depth interview sample were female and twenty-three were male. In addition, I talked and corresponded with over fifty additional people identifying themselves as science fiction Fans or connected with science fiction in a professional capacity (See Appendix B for references). Also, I examined over forty biographical sources including several science fiction reference books and ethnographies containing biographical information (see Appendix B references) for comparisons of those experiences using qualitative analysis methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Glaser and Strauss, 1971; Glaser, 1993).

Finally, I interviewed five readers in addition to my in-depth sample whose reading preferences were: classics, romance, self-help books, horror and westerns, and a sixth person who does not "read much" and does not consider herself a science fiction Fan but just likes to come to science fiction conventions to "party." This enabled me to obtain a general comparison of attitudes, interests and reading patterns for a clearer understanding of the data.

Thirty-seven percent of the sample were female (n=14) and sixty-three percent were male (n=23).

Following are two tables divided according to gender. They were divided into two by gender strictly for convenience. A summary description of the sample follows the tables.

The males ranged in age from twenty-three to seventy-nine. The three oldest males (68, 73, 79) did not complete high school, but all three are published authors in the science fiction field, attend conventions and have produced fanzines. This is probably demographically representative of the educational and work opportunities of their age cohort. Only one claims author as his primary occupation. Of the next four oldest males (57, 61, 63, 67), one has a doctorate, two have master's degrees and one has a bachelor's degree plus some additional education. The one

Table 2. Male subjects age distribution, fan participation and activities, profession and education level.

Subject Number	Age 1993	Fan participation and activities	Profession	Education Level
1.	72	extensive, moved to pro status	writer, editor, agent	high school
2.	33	collector, subscriber	postal worker	4 BAs
3.	28	non-active reader, artist	postal worker	some college
4.	47	trying to gafiate	bookstore owner, writer	MA
5.	36	con-goer, collector, gopher, committee and club member	accountant	BA
6.	47	con-goer, club member, collector	librarian	MA
7.	62	dealer, con-goer, committee and club member	retired	some college
8.	30	club member, con-goer, gamer	graduate student	MS
9.	67	dealer, collector, fanzine writer, APA participant	retired	some high school
10.	41	con-chair, club member, con-goer	counselor	MA
11.	31	dealer, costumer	maintenance worker	BA
12.	23	con-goer, gamer	student	some college
13.	29	con-goer, dealer, fanzine editor, costumer	store owner	MA
14.	48	extensive	freelance writer, illustrator	2.5 college + art
15.	79	extensive	projectionist	9th grade

Table 2. Male subjects age distribution, fan participation and activities, profession and education level, continued.

Subject Number	Age 1993	Fan participation and activities	Profession	Education Level
16.	63	club member, fanzine editor	cashier	MA +
17.	24	con-goer, "non-fan"	writer	BA
18.	40	con-goer, club officer, collector	engineer	high school+
19.	67	returning from gafia, fanzine editor, con-goer	accountant	BA +
20.	42	con chair, APA member, club member, extensive	computer consultant	BA +
21.	56	moved to pro status	author, editor	MA
22.	44	extensive, con-chair	travel agent	BA
23.	64	extensive, con-chair	librarian	MA

with the doctorate has several academic books published. There are a total of eight males with master's degrees in the sample: two with degrees in history, two with degrees in library science, one in mathematics, one in English literature, one in both chemistry and college administration and one with a degree in counseling. Of the two youngest males (23, 24), one has just completed a bachelor's in literature, and the other is in college majoring in aerospace science.

Two males in the sample support themselves as science fiction authors and editors, two others work primarily as authors, supplementing their income in other ways. One of the sample members is published primarily in the horror

genre and supports himself as a book dealer. At least seven
of the male sample members have articles published in
science fiction reference texts. Two of the males, although
proud of their writing (letterhack, a person who writes
letters, that are published, to the editors of professional
magazines and SF club newsletter editor, respectively), do
not consider themselves writers. One does not write but
desires to be an artist; he is not active in the science
fiction fan subculture. The rest of the sample consider
themselves at least avocationally writers.

The sample professions range quite literally,
alphabetically from accountant to writer. There are two
librarians and one librarian assistant in the sample and
four postal workers, three university professors, four
students, and one engineer. The sample appears to be skewed
in this respect since no one currently working in the
physical sciences is represented, although several people
who do work in the aerospace industry and physical sciences
were consulted with non-in-depth interviews.

The females ranged in age from nineteen to sixty-six.
The two oldest (59, 66) have doctorates which they obtained
in their late thirties. The youngest woman (19) is in high
school. The next youngest (20) just entered college as a
physics major. The 25 year-old has a master's degree in

Table 3. Female subjects age distribution, fan participation and activities, profession and education level.

Subject Number	Age 1993	Fan participation and activities	Profession	Education Level
1.	59	club member, academic, author's wife	college professor	Ph.D
2.	42	con-goer, club member	civil court clerk	some college
3.	35	con-goer, costumer	library associate	AA
4.	39	dealer, costumer, club member	postal worker, store owner	AA
5.	47	reader, non-participant	postal worker	some college
6.	19	club member, con-goer	student	high school
7.	31	club member, con-goer	student	college fresh-man
8.	38	club member, con-goer, dealer	kindergarten teacher	BA
9.	24	club member, editor	waitress	MS
10.	20	gamer, club member	student	college fresh-man
11.	49	con-goer, club member, author's wife	college professor	MA
12.	61	con-goer, club founder, author's wife	retired	BA
13.	66	club member, "former fan"	retired	Ph.D
14.	36	club member, fanzine writer	disability retirement	BA

space studies. Other than the high school student, all the women have some college and over half have college degrees (n=7).

All consider themselves at least avocational writers. Two are published as editors of science fiction anthologies. Five supplement their income through published writing.

The difference in publication credits by gender is probably reflective of the later age in which women have tended to become actively involved in the subculture (Bainbridge, 1976; Bainbridge, 1986), their lesser exposure to the hard sciences (Lerner, 1985; Bainbridge, 1986) and their proportionally fewer numbers.

Ethnic Background

Ethnic background of my sample was predominately Caucasian (97%) with twenty percent of Jewish descent (n=7). This may actually under-represent the people of Jewish descent actively involved in science fiction Fandom (Eisenstein, 1993b; DeVore, 1993b; Bainbridge, 1986; Knight, 1977; Lerner, 1985; Weiner, 1979). "A high proportion of fans are Jewish, three to four times the proportion in the general population, which is not so surprising, because Jews are disproportionately represented in almost all liberal intellectual movements" (Bainbridge, 1986:168; Mannheim, 1936). DeVore (1993b) estimated that until the late 1950's that nearly 60% of SF Fandom was Jewish and Phyllis Eisenstein (1993b:5) writes that a popular saying within SF

Fandom at one time was, "Jewfandom is Trufandom." Four of
the people of Jewish ethnic descent also consider themselves
religiously Jewish. This is comparable to the fourteen
percent in Bainbridge's (1986:168) survey taken at the 1978
Worldcon identifying themselves as affiliated with the
Jewish religion. There was one non-Caucasian in the sample,
an Afro-American, and a second person born and raised in
Puerto Rico.

Religious Orientation

Religiously, the majority is not affiliated with any
specific religion, and the balance show great diversity.
Four consider themselves religiously Jewish (two of these
actively observe religious practices), four are Catholic
(three males, one female), two are active in their religious
affiliation. One is a Jehovah's Witness, one attends the
Unitarian church, one is Buddhist, three identify as non-
denominational Christians (two male, one female), one
identifies as atheist, another protestant, seven are not
identified, and the balance (n=15) specifically identify
themselves as not having any religious affiliation.
"...science fiction is primarily an intellectual subculture
[sic], deviant mainly in its attitudes toward intellect and
ideology..... America is still a religious nation, but SF is
irreligious" (Bainbridge, 1986:167). Because Jehovah's
Witness as a religious affiliation seemed out of place for a
subculture that tends to be highly pro-technology, I asked

the 29 year-old Caucasian woman that I was interviewing at a

Star Trek club meeting about her affiliation with the

church. She replied:

> "I'm one of Jehovah's Witnesses... so I'm a bit radical
> and I just figure it's none of their business. There's
> no one in the congregation that I can speak to and have
> fun like I can with these people here. It's just good
> clean fun."

Two of the three persons reporting themselves as just

"Christians" are the members of the sample who do not

identify themselves as science fiction Fans although they

participate in the activities of the subculture. The male

is one of the youngest in the sample and identifies himself

as a "pro" and feels this excludes him from identification

as a fan. The female is the oldest in the sample and stated

that she no longer felt she was a Fan because she didn't

enjoy reading science fiction anymore now that she was

studying the Bible.

Marital Status

Marital status among the males in the sample group

ranged from twelve married (four in second or more

marriages), an additional two currently divorced, seven

never married, one currently cohabitating and one widowed.

Marital status among the females held a similar pattern with

eight currently married of which two are second (or more

marriages), four are single, one is currently divorced, and

one is cohabitating. The unmarried females tended to be

younger (mean = 28) on average than the unmarried males
(mean = 44).

Political Affiliation

The subject of politics was discussed with sixteen
members of the sample. They tended to give descriptions of
themselves as "liberal-conservative" or "conservative-
liberal." One described himself as apathetic, another as
humanist. Four asked for specific topics and expounded
their opinion on those. I interpreted this to mean they
disliked being classified. One labeled himself conservative
leaning toward Republican, another labeled himself as a
Republican, another labeled herself as a Democrat, and one
labeled himself as liberal. There is a Libertarian subgroup
in the subculture, but none are represented in this sample
(Strauss, 1983; Lerner, 1985).

Bainbridge (1986:169) reported his survey group as
leaning toward reporting themselves as "slightly to very
liberal" with 15.5% identifying themselves as "very
liberal." This was a self-selected sample at the 1978 World
Science Fiction Convention. A survey Bainbridge conducted
of students at the University of Washington in 1979 shows
only 1.9% reporting themselves as "very liberal," and the
National Opinion Research Center data for the previous year
shows only 1.5% of the general public reporting themselves
as "very liberal" (1986:169). Berger (1977:243) interprets
his earlier survey results (1972 World Science Fiction

Convention) "to suggest that the often contradictory social criticism contained in this very commercial brand of literature is related to the economic status and consciousness of the people to whom it appeals" indicating the same mixed self-classification apparent in my sample.

Fan Participation

The older the person in the sample, the more fan activities they have had the opportunity to participate in and generally the more activities they have actually participated in. Two males and one female are not active in the subculture, and one other male has only attended local conventions, leaving twenty males and thirteen females to describe their participation activities. Eighteen of the males and nine of the females have contributed to the production and/or contents of fanzines. Seventeen of the males and twelve of the females have attended one or more science fiction conventions in the last year. The remaining female is housebound and unable to easily attend conventions, but she is an active contributor to fanzines. The three males who are active in the subculture but who did not attend a convention last year have attended conventions in prior years. Eleven of the males and three of the females have helped to organize and run conventions.

Three of the males and two of the females participate in amateur press associations. All twenty of the active males belong to SF related clubs, and twelve of the women

hold SF related club memberships, the thirteenth is the Afro-American in the sample. She had just won the amateur writing contest held for a local convention where we met and she is an active costumer. Five of the males and three of the females have had tables in dealer's rooms at conventions to sell merchandise. One of the males and one of the females has displayed art in convention art shows.

All of the science fiction readers sampled are bibliophiles and technophiles. Bibliophiles is not surprising since I was looking for science fiction readers who considered themselves science fiction fans. The majority, thirty members of the sample, consider themselves book collectors, with three of the remaining five qualifying that they appreciate books and accumulate books, but do not systematically acquire them and that the books are there because they like them, that they are not an investment.

Locale

Seven of the sample participants currently live in California, and three of these were born in California. Six currently live in Illinois, four of whom were born in this state. Five are located in North Dakota, and two of these were born in North Dakota. Four currently make residence in Wisconsin, one of whom was born there. Two reside in Florida, and two live in Nevada. The two from Nevada were also born in Nevada. The balance reside, one each, in Arizona, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska,

New Mexico, New York, and Ohio. Of these only the Louisiana
resident was born in that state.

Age Started Reading

Three of the females report being able to read around
age four as does one of the males. The earliest age that
anyone is aware of starting to read science fiction was age
five for two of the women in the sample, the eldest and the
next to youngest. The latest age anyone in the sample
reports starting to avidly read science fiction is age
sixteen, two males and one female. Additionally, two of the
sample members are natural speed readers, one male and one
female. The average age at which sample members are aware
they began to read science fiction was almost eleven (mean =
10.9 for either males or females).

Qualitative methodology was used in gathering and
analyzing data for this thesis. I chose to include the
sample description in this chapter rather than including it
with the next chapter on findings since the demographic
characteristics of the sample are only peripherally
important to the findings and conclusions of this thesis.
The next chapter reports the findings from the in-depth
interviews and qualitative analysis, and the final chapter
reports the conclusions I draw from these findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

> Did you mention that the slogan: REALITY IS A
> CRUTCH FOR THOSE PERSONS UNABLE TO HANDLE
> SCIENCE FICTION, came from me? By the way,
> the above wording is the original and correct
> one. I brought out the bumpersticker in 1977
> at the con I ran in Manhattan . . . .
>   (jan howard finder [sic],
>   personal correspondence, 1993)

This chapter contains the presentation and analysis of
data regarding status passage of the science fiction Fan.
The first part of this chapter introduces Fan status passage
and then goes on to delineate the preliminary or
preconditions necessary for a person to desire status
passage as an SF Fan. This section is titled Protofan.
Following this section, the Fan status passage is described.
In this discussion, concepts found through qualitative
analysis methods appear in bold print for easy
identification.

Becoming a science fiction Fan is an achieved status
within an avocational subculture and generally considered a
desirable status by those embarking on the passage. Most
members of the subculture as they begin undergoing passage
are not fully aware that they are learning a new role set of
a status. It is not until someone has been a longtime

member and achieved a more involved (with the subculture) level of the status that awareness of the status passage takes place (Bloch, 1962). Therefore, discussion with longtime, very involved subcultural members yields richer descriptions of their status passage while new members have not yet decided whether to continue with the status passage [personal interviews and correspondence].

My status passage differed from others within the subculture because I studied the status passages of others within the subculture as I was going through this process. I was able to role learn and make connections to other subculture members in a conscious pattern rather than the more haphazard method typical of the Fan status passage. This conscious drawing of data from personal experience has further informed my work on the status passage of the science fiction Fan. Because I was also undergoing the status passage and performing recognizable roles, and because I made contacts in various locations rather than strictly through linear connections, my additional status as an 'academic' studying the subculture, rather than setting up a false situation, enabled me to obtain honest and reliable data and verify it from many sources. This allowed me to avoid the situation faced by many sociologists and anthropologists where the 'informant' feeds data to the researcher that the researcher 'wants' or where the researcher inadvertently violates taboos of the group. It

was not until late 1993, two years into the study, that I had obtained sufficient connections and role performance 'credits' to make these connections, build a reliable picture of the subculture, and discover the status passages taking place within that subculture.

Protofan

Using qualitative methodology and a phenomenological theoretical perspective to examine ethnographies and biographies of subculture participants and in-depth interviews with subculture participants, I set out to discover the status passage of the science fiction Fan.

In order to embark on the status passage of science fiction Fan, some preconditions are necessary. The type of person in which these preconditions are present has been labeled by some as "protofan" (Budrys, 1961:12). Stableford's (1987) research indicates a gestalt switch to a different worldview is necessary in avid readers of science fiction, and that this new perspective prepares the avid reader to be a potential recruit for the SF Fan subculture (the protofan). Stableford examined the written records of subcultural participants, the majority of whom attained the status of professional writer, and found:

> Virtually all science fiction writers "graduate" from
> being science fiction fans. Their autobiographical
> comments provide a record of their enthusiasm for
> science fiction and their dedication to it as readers
> as well as writers.... From an inspection of all this
> material there arises a very strong impression of the
> isolation and alienation of many recruits to habitual
> science fiction reading. It is, of course, not

universal, but it is a pattern which recurs constantly:
stories of children who are precocious, imaginative,
and virtually friendless but who seem to be able to
find a special relationship with science fiction
(Stableford, 1987:91). . . . It gives a new
significance to a life which is threatened with
insignificance by its maladjustment to the ordinary
criteria of social accomplishment. (Stableford,
1987:94)

The comments from the in-depth interviews of the

science fiction Fans interviewed confirm Stableford's

findings regarding this perspective shift. Thirty-four of

the thirty-seven in-depth interviews contain comments

related to the worldview of the science fiction Fan. The

following quotes from interviews are some examples related

to the worldview of the potential subculture recruit:

> Jane: "Fans are more open-minded. We have to be open-
> minded. How are you going to get out of today's world
> as it is unless you can perceive something else to get
> to?"

> Ron: "It's almost a gestalt with the total being much
> more than the sum of its parts."

> Max: "Given my natural proclivities, I would rob banks
> and ravish maidens; fortunately for society I
> discovered SF . . . by the time I was in 4th grade, I
> was hooked . . . . The thing that really pisses me
> about the mundane world is its willful
> unreasonability."

> Rachel: "They're [fans] willing to create their own
> world, and in the face of really strange odds. "

> Zeke: "SF fans once shared a zeitgeist, a basic
> psychology, a worldview or a consistent point of view,
> regardless of other differences (and occasional feuds,
> brouhahas, and donnybrooks) among them. As members and
> co-celebrants of a society in miniature, they had a
> self-constructed culture to partake of and work within,
> as well as a primary literature on which this culture
> was centered. They had a set of major philosophical
> rallying points, like the cause of space travel and
> belief in a plurality of worlds; a pool of oral and

written folklore, and a sophisticated mythos about the development of SF and fandom; a sense of being keepers of a precious and somewhat arcane flame; and a set of loosely held customs that, by and large, fostered a palpable aura of brothers-and-sisters-under-the-skin. . . . It is not easy to tell if this same sense of broad community truly exists anymore, and the basic <u>articles of faith</u> that once obtained can no longer be commonly assumed to be held in every quarter."

This last statement expresses a concern that I heard repeatedly from subculture members from age thirty-five on up, that the subculture has lost its cohesiveness through loss of the shared value system learned through subculture membership:

Ron: "The reasons people choose to read science fiction today are a lot different than the reasons they read science fiction ten, fifteen, twenty years ago. For one thing, people don't read nearly as much. You can get your dose of science fiction visually; but getting back to your question, I think people who read science fiction are more imaginative. They have a better work ethic because you have to work at reading. You have to invest in some imagination because you have to fill in the visual imagery. You have to imagine what the heros look like, what the villains look like. . . . They have to fill in the blanks not just in normal ways. They work a little harder, have more imagination, pay attention to detail more. . . . I think people who read science fiction are a little more intelligent, a little more academic, maybe not wise. . . ."

Andy: "The difference between fandom then and now is profound. Day and night. . . . There is no melting pot effect anymore."

When I asked how the subculture had changed, Forrest Ackerman (personal interview, 1993) commented that "the fans (LASFS members) are now fined if they read." But my interviews indicate that the core perspective and shared experience is still going on in science fiction readers. The members of the interview sample were all readers; and

the ones between ages nineteen and thirty have read the same
works, enjoyed the same authors and share the same worldview
as the older members of the subculture. Two author's names
came up in almost every interview, Robert A. Heinlein and
Isaac Asimov, with Andre Norton and Arthur C. Clarke in a
close race for third most often mentioned. That they may
not be as readily exposed to some of the subculture values
and language through the dilution and expansion of
subculture activities cannot be denied; but that core group
with the shared perspective of the science fiction reader
still exists and is still being recruited into SF Fandom,
although the loss of the letter columns and fanzine reviews
in the professional magazines has interfered some with the
pre-fandom socialization process that used to take place.

Some of the new ways that protofans are learning the
values and have the possibility of being recruited into the
subculture are through the computer bulletin board systems
and through gaming. The computer net groups have
transferred to electronic media many of the early fanzine
conventions such as fan feuds, now called "flames," and the
use of first names, no matter what the age or professional
status of the participants, except in anger (e-mail
correspondence: Lerner, 1993; Smith, 1993; personal
interview: Zelazny, 1993). The gamers who participate in
the very involved role-playing games which include character
creation and plot formation and planning are participating

in activities in preparation to become writers. There is
also a strong correlation between participating in these
games and reading science fiction and fantasy (personal
interviews: Trocchia, 1993; Zelazny, 1993).

> Franklin: "Most of the people who game read fantasy and
> some science fiction. . . . 95% of them."

Three of the five males in my sample group under the age of
thirty, and one of the three females were drawn into Fandom
from gaming.

The following interview quote expresses and agrees with
my findings:

> Betty: "I think fans are generally people who care
> about the world and get deeply engaged in what they are
> doing and what they are reading. The younger fans tend
> to the older fans eyes to be a little shallow in their
> tastes and their motivations and everything, they go
> for the gaming and the films, you know. Those are
> frequently the ones that don't want to reflect on what
> the literature is doing to them. But I don't think
> that's different from young readers of anything. Adult
> fans, the people who stay with it past adolescence,
> they become people who care about the environment,
> worry about political things. They're not all liberal
> and so on in their orientation and so on, but they have
> a commitment to whatever position they have. They've
> thought about it."

How do science fiction Fans come to know they are
science fiction Fans? Discovery of science fiction as a
genre literature generally takes place in mid-youth, about
age eleven. These avid readers, protofans, find that the
majority of the members of their culture do not share their
reading enthusiasm. Efforts to introduce friends, family
members or acquaintances to the preferred reading material

generally meet with resistance unless the protofan happens to be a second generation science fiction reader.

Not finding anyone to share their interest, at first, but still attracted to this "weird" literature, the SF reader continues seeking out this type of reading material at libraries and bookstores where occasionally these SF readers meet others like themselves. At this point, when they have identified their preference for this type of literature, many will come to define themselves as fans. Eventually they may become aware of the magazines with science fiction short stories and find out about conventions. They may meet someone who shares their interest and who tells them of clubs, conventions, or fanzines. They might see an ad for a club meeting or convention and decide to attend.

By attending a convention, subscribing to fanzines or joining a club, the protofan has the opportunity to learn the language and values of the subculture and be with "like-minded" individuals. If the protofan identifies with these values and shares in the main rewards of the subculture (**egoboo** and **friendship**) then the label "fan" becomes legitimized and reified (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). There are not clear demarcation lines indicating the signs of status passage of the science fiction Fan, and consequently there are often disagreements over who may claim the status.

Status Passage

"Science fiction may be the first category of fiction to have developed a body of enthusiastic amateurs--a fandom." (Ackerman, 1988:160). Protofan, the person with the science fiction worldview, then becomes aware that reading science fiction is considered slightly deviant behavior by many others. In light of the media successes such as Star Wars and Star Trek, this label of deviance maybe less harsh today than in the past. A common comment from the non-SF reader that I still hear is "too weird for me." Comments by subculture members made more recently than those examined by Stableford also confirm the deviance status necessary to subculture formation (Sanders, 1990) and that reading science fiction is less deviant behavior today than it used to be:

> Odin: "Fans tend to be a little bit off the beaten path. . . . [Mundanes] They thought that people who go to these conventions are a little bit crazy, a little strange. . . . They looked at me a little funny."

> Andy: "It was hard being a science fiction fan. . . . In St. Louis, people were stopping fans asking, 'Are you all devil worshippers?' It was very insulting."

> Max: "I don't very often discuss SF with people who are not themselves into it to some extent because my experience in doing that is almost routinely negative. There is a mundane attitude. There are people who won't have anything to do with science fiction. You mention SF and these people look at you like you just asked them to worship Satan by cutting off their grandmother's private parts."

> Zoe: "Some [Mundanes] don't understand at all. Some have a violent reaction against it."

Rachel: "[discussing SF with a mundane] you run up against some kind of wall."

Sanders (1990) reminds us that subcultures perform four valuable services for the members: subcultures make available activities and objects of value; provide contact with "like-minded others" who share these same interests; provide a schemata to evaluate themselves in a positive light; and provide protection from "outsiders" who do not share the same values. In-depth interviews showed over and over again that SF Fandom as a subculture preforms these functions.

Agents of passage

All but three of the thirty-five subjects in this study found SF Fandom through an active permission agent. Someone they cared about and whose opinion the subject respected gave them permission to become involved with subcultural activities. In addition to a permission agent, they also had recruitment agents. In seven cases, the permission agent and recruitment agent were the same person. In five of these cases where the permission/recruitment agent was the same person, the permission/recruitment agent was a person of the opposite gender from the subject. In four cases, the permission agent was the subject's parent. In two cases the permission agents were siblings. In eight cases, the recruitment agent was passive media such as newspapers, flyers or television advertising which were brought to the subject's attention by the permission agents.

The agents of recruitment and permission have little control over the actual status passage of the science fiction Fan, but they are present in the majority of cases. This indicates that the recruitment and permission agents act as facilitators to the status passage rather than agents of control.

> Andy: "I went to my first science fiction convention when I was 16. . . . My mother saw an article in the newspaper [early 1960's in New York]. . . . It was just so exciting."

One of the thirty-three active science fiction fans, who identify as Fans, describes himself as self-permissioned and recruited through exposure to passive media:

> Alan: "Another thing that most of these zines had was convention reports. When I read about science fiction conventions, I fell in love with the idea of being surrounded by people who had the same interests as me. Due to other commitments, I wasn't able to get to a convention until 1979 (I was 26 years old). I will never forget the wonder of sitting in the lobby, waiting to check in, and having a total stranger sit down next to me and start a conversation about the science fiction books I had been reading. The whole weekend was like that, giving me a feeling that I had finally come home. Here were people who understood what I was talking about and took it seriously. I met professional writers and editors and artists, heard filking for the first time, and carried on the most fascinating conversations with a great variety of people. I was **hooked**."

The two other persons in the study who describe themselves as self-permissioned and passively recruited are the two persons active in the subculture who do not consider themselves science fiction Fans.

Centrality of passage

The concept of being hooked, of a pleasurable addictive experience, comes up often in both the literature by subculture members and in the in-depth interviews. This phrase is used both to describe the discovery of the literature and the discovery of the subculture.

> Ron: "Then I got **hooked** on the Burroughs books and I went on from there."

> Ursula: ". . . found out more about cons. I then found a friend at work who also was interested, and we headed for our local one, got **hooked** and the rest is history."

> Odin: "That's when I really got into it. When my friend got me **hooked** on it. . . . The same guy introduced me to conventions."

My analysis shows the **hook** to be the discovery that others share one's perspective, whether it be the initial discovery of the literature or the discovery of the subculture built around the literature. The concept of **being hooked** also indicates that the status passage tends to be very central to the individual involved. This will vary in degree between individuals based on the other support networks in their lives and the degree to which they embrace both the science fiction worldview and the subculture values. This is expressed by the ongoing argument over the sayings "Fandom is a way of life (FIAWOL)" versus "Fandom is just a good/goddamn hobby (FIJAGH or FIJAGDH)."

The concept of coming home, of being in an extended family, of finding a group where they belonged, where they fit and were accepted, came up repeatedly in interviews and

literature review. The following quotes sum up several

aspects of the subculture including fan feuds and the

feeling of belonging to an **extended family** as part of the

subculture:

> Betty: "There is always the phenomenon of infighting.
> It's like a huge **extended family**. You don't always
> like your cousins. But the funny thing is, even if
> you're feuding, fan feuding with some other faction, if
> some outside group is perceived as a threat, or maybe
> threat's too strong a word, but seen as a common
> opponent, boy will fans come together in a hurry. They
> come together for things like raising money for
> somebody's medical bills. There's a lot of bonding even
> though there's this **anarchy** thing. Still they're quite
> loyal to each other and quite, trusting is too strong a
> word, but there is an assumption of good will toward
> each other."

> Ron: "It is a very large family and there is a lot of
> acceptance in that family. There is an awful lot of
> acceptance by those people that are involved as science
> fiction fans. It is not just that we have interests in
> common, that we can talk about an author and we've both
> read the same book and that gives us common ground or
> we've both seen the same movie and that gives us common
> ground, but it's much more than that."

> Eric: "It's a **family** relationship. **Extended family**.
> **Extended family**, the, ah, you don't have to like your
> relatives, in fact you probably despise some of them,
> but they're still your relatives. It's a blood
> relationship and it exists all over the world."

Duration, reversibility, repeatability

I found the length of time or duration of the status

passage to vary greatly. Because it lacks clear lines of

demarcation and takes place in a system of **anarchistic**

meritocracy it is an ongoing process and not a destination.

One does not graduate into being a Fan as one graduates into

a profession. This also feeds the argument over centrality

expressed in the acronyms: FIAWOL/FIJAGH. The value of

tolerance expressed in the subculture makes repeatability

and reversibility of the passage possible.

> Carl: " I think the big difference is their tolerance.
> They're willingness to be in a group that accepts all
> types of handicaps, physical, mental, emotional. To
> get along with them. To try to help one another."

> Odin: "Strange and unusual people, but that's what's so
> great about it, Fandom, is the unusual people."

> Red: "They're [Fans] a very insular group, but very
> accepting. . . . I don't think mundanes are as tolerant
> as Fans are."

One can be involved to a small degree or a large

degree, but because one of the two major rewards of

involvement is friendship, the measure of involvement is the

number and degree of friendships one maintains in the

subculture.

> Zeke: "It's not easy to describe SF Fandom, really,
> because for every Fan, the constitution of Fandom
> depends on the net of relationships one develops and
> the various fan activities one participates in."

> Red: "I joined the [SF] club for social reasons . . . .
> to be with a group of people with like-minded
> interests."

Max: "My primary social life is Fandom."

It can be difficult either to withdraw slowly (reverse) or

to suddenly withdraw completely leaving a bewildered set of

friends and feuding fans (Donaho, 1993; Warner, 1992; Bloch,

1962). In 1948, Francis Laney felt compelled to type and

publish a 130 page fanzine explaining why he was leaving SF

Fandom.

About three-forths of the interviews contained a

concept that I labeled distrust of authority figures. It is

also described as "a belief that adults... could not be
trusted" by Fratz in his fanzine, _Quantum_ (1993:52).
Bainbridge (1986:197) labeled this a desire to question
everything learned from a literature of "persuasion and
debate" and SF author and editor Fred Pohl (personal
interview 1992) described it this way:

> Fans are self defined. . . . But they are in general
> pretty bright. Generally rather aware of it. . . .
> And in stubbornness, or pigheadedness I think science
> fiction people are very unlike most. They all have
> their own arrogance.

That it is not an unreasoned arrogance, Pohl goes on to say,
and other interview subjects phrased it this way:

> Gary: "I'm not sure the intelligence is any higher, but
> I think it is used more."

> Rachel: "They [Fans] think about the possible
> ramifications of ideas. They think more."

Fratz (1993) also points out that the distrust is based
in real experience. I think this concept, **distrust of
authority figures**, contributes to the anarchistic structure
of the subculture by discouraging dictatorial leadership and
in this way differs from other subcultures that tend to have
more prominent leadership and more easily identifiable
hierarchical structures.

Sanders (1990:8) has discussed deviant subcultures in
some detail. He notes that deviant subcultures serve as a
protective layer between the subculture member and society
by offering "group support," providing "information about
protective techniques," and provides alternate definitions

to the "negative labels conferred by conventional agents of social control." He goes on to say, "Not infrequently, these informal groups develop a more formally organized core which directs collective efforts intended to encourage a redefinition of the condemned behavior thereby easing the pressure of negative social reaction." In the case of SF Fandom, there has been the three-headed Hydra of professionals, academics and SF Fandom working to be the organized core and control the "redefinition of the condemned behavior" (personal interview: Friend, 1993). The professionals, writers, editors and publishers want to control the definition of science fiction in order popularize it and increase sales. The academics wish to control the definition of science fiction as literature in order for the genre they enjoy to be acceptable as a teaching and research material. The Fans desire to keep science fiction ghettoized in order to maintain the subculture that has been built around the literature. The concepts of being with "like-minded" individuals and the comfort of sharing the deviance with others were recurring themes in the interviews, showing that SF Fandom functions in this way as a typical subculture where status passage takes place.

One of the recurring problems within SF Fandom that came up in almost a dozen of the interviews was a concept I labeled unrecruiting. "SF has been, through most its

history, a great attractor of interesting people -- but not
a very good sifter" (brown [sic], 1994a:79). It would seem
that not all "like-minded" individuals are "like-minded"
enough about such things as hygiene, appropriate social
behavior and fannish activities. For example, Bjo Trimble
(phone conversation, 1993) spoke of "Nazi Skinheads"
claiming to be science fiction Fans, and Ellison (1990)
recounts some uncomfortable and horrifying incidents in his
article "Xenogeneis."   Of the potential of being
unrecruited, one of the subjects remarked:

> Max: "Five years ago I would have cracked. This is, my
> behavior would have been so odd they [SF club] wouldn't
> have wanted me."

Various strategies exist for **unrecruiting** including
starting new clubs or mailing lists excluding the undesired
person, dropping out (gafiating) oneself, conspiring to make
the undesired person unhappy enough to leave, or designating
someone with authority and charging that designate with the
task of asking the undesirable person to leave.

Some screening does go on prior to entrance to the
subculture based on involvement with the literature. Gary
relates an experience evidencing the weeding out of those
without the quality that Juanita Coulson (1994a:6) calls
"stamina" necessary to become involved in the subculture:

> Gary: "Sean remarked, 'You see that woman? She comes
> to my store every Saturday, asks a million questions
> and never buys anything. I even offered to give her
> free books if she would just pick them up and get out
> but she won't do it. I think she's just lonely and
> wants someone to talk to.'

Sure enuf, when I returned to my table she wanted an opinion on some book and I said I hadn't read it, then she held up another one and asked if that was a good one and I said I didn't know. She picked up another one and asked if I liked that one?

I looked at her and said, 'Lady, I don't read books. I just sell books and I never read them. Besides all those people that read this Buck Rogers stuff are a little crazy themselves. You don't read it, do you?'

She dropped the book, turned and left the room and I didn't see her again. Sean came rushing over, asking how I'd managed to get rid of her and I explained that he couldn't do it because she knew he read it."

Recruiting and motivation

Through interviews, two initial motivating pre-statuses were found to operate in recruiting to the convention aspect of the subculture, neither of them mutually exclusive. These pre-statuses are writer/artist and/or collector. Author, editor and a subcultural founding member Fred Pohl (personal interview, 1992) describes the writer aspect of subculture motivation along with the value of **tolerance** evidenced in the subculture:

The fan is the larval state of the writer. They're also very accepting. That's why you also see a fair number of people who are handicapped or obese, or one thing or another. They're not looked down on. They may have a little trouble getting around in the normal world, but not at a science fiction convention. And they are also quite accepting of color, religion, whatever, or lack of the same. I think one of the very few organizations that I was ever in that had black members, outside of the Young Communist League, was science fiction groups. They've always had anybody who was interested. An interest in science fiction, that was the qualification right there.

SF and fantasy author and editor, Roger Zelazny (personal interview, 1993) discusses the lack of age discrimination within the subculture that is another

manifestation of the type of **tolerance** evidenced in SF

Fandom:

> I noticed early on that there wasn't any distinction
> made on the basis of age. You find in fandom, someone
> say in their seventies who's been in fandom for years
> talking to some twelve year-old. They have this in
> common. They seem to talk in a perfectly normal
> fashion, which you don't usually see in other areas of
> life.

And two of the interview subjects reiterate this

observation:

> Rachel: "There's this umbrella that covers it all so
> that you have this wide range of people under this
> umbrella. That's part of what makes it interesting.
> You have Ph.D's who are teaching at prestigious
> colleges and the thirteen year old dork who is
> basically a social outcast and might never integrate
> with society to any reasonable level . . . . You have a
> whole range of people, intellects, different kinds of
> people who come together under one umbrella. "

> Zeke: "The truest thing one can say about fandom, when
> I got in, is that it really was a place where a
> teenager or even a bright child of ten would be treated
> as a social equal simply because he or she read science
> fiction."

Additionally, one of the in-depth interview subjects

describes the negative side of **tolerance** in this way:

> Red: "On the one hand, the fans can be a little more
> accepting of things than the general population but
> they can also be extremely backbiting like any
> specialized clique of people. If you're not with the
> in-crowd, you're not worth their attention. . . . You
> have to know someone to be considered a fan. The
> general population tends to look down on fans, to them,
> we're strange. It's a very insular group, but if
> you're in, your attitude is more accepting of things. .
> . ."

Two primary rewards are available to members of the

subculture: **egoboo** and **friendship**. On the surface, fan

feuds might appear to be part of **unrecruiting** strategy, but as Hartwell (1984:170) explains, "the legacy of feuds is in reality a legacy of competition for ego gratification, for success on the only terms recognized by fandom (**"egoboo"**)." About friendship within the subculture, participants said: **"Friendship** is the glue of fandom" (brown [sic], 1994a:85).

> Ron: "I owe a very deep and profound debt to science fiction and fantasy. . . for me it's such an integral part of my personality to read science fiction, and the **friends** that I have now in my life that I'm closest to also share that interest. It's a sense of immediate belonging."

> Carl: "For the Fans, it's a chance to get together with a group of people that won't laugh at them."

> Gary: "Fandom is pretty important in that I don't really have any other social activities at all. I've never been one to pay much attention to the neighbors, and many years ago I lost contact with the few other **friends** I had. We didn't have anything in common to begin with. And I don't make any effort to find **friends** outside of that."

And using other terms for the same reward system:

> Zeke: "The essence of fandom, of course, is communication and other sorts of intercourse between fans. The nature and content of that intercourse has varied over the years and decades, and it was never limited to ideas and arguments about science fiction."

This Fan explains about **egoboo** and **friendship** using these terms:

> Quin: "Fannish paybacks: intellectual stimulation; a shelter, more than **friendship**, a shelter. **Egoboo** is a very important thing. but egoboo is balanced out by a couple of factors. The more accomplishments you make, the more enemies you accumulate. The other is the amount of effort you put in for the reward you're getting. The sheer number of hours."

"A shelter" is most certainly another way of referring to the concept of **extended family**. The accumulation of "enemies" is still a way of measuring **egoboo**. And although I heard stories, over and over, of Fannish enemies working against the reputations of prominent Fans, when a convention finally happens or a problem outside Fandom arose, I saw these same enemies work side by side to help the convention or solve the problem.

The friendship aspect is readily discussed, but the **egoboo** aspect remains primarily a taboo subject with respect to one's self. One may discuss another's search for **egoboo** (and that is usually the explanation given as an enemy's motivation) but not one's own in that term even though there are constant requests for recognition of status through the listing of fannish accomplishments or friendship connections.

> Ron: [Con chair for last five years] "I had gone to a couple of conventions on the West coast, and I just loved being a part of that, but when you are on the outside looking in, you almost feel you don't belong and so I wanted to get involved with being behind the scenes so that I felt like I was a part of things."

> Art: "I'd like to be remembered for having served the most years as president [of SF club]."

> Max: "I'm glad you are using pseudonyms. Mine should be 'Maximum Ego Trip'."

The leading quote for this chapter from jan howard finder [sic] (personal correspondence, 1993) illustrates in summary form many of the concepts identified in the in-depth interviews of SF Fandom participants. The saying itself,

"reality is a crutch for those persons unable to handle science fiction," points out both the shared perspective of the subculture participants and the protective in-group aspect of belonging to a subculture. The request for credit for invention and inclusion in the thesis are requests for **egoboo**, one of the two main rewards of belonging to the science fiction fan subculture. The communication of this information along with other information about the subculture is a gesture of **friendship**, the other main reward of SF Fandom. The rewards are intertwined because **egoboo** without **friendship** is nearly non-existent. The formation of feuding groups within the subculture evidence the support of one's friends and also provide **egoboo** through the attention of one's "enemies." There is little way to experience **egoboo** without an audience, someone to see your name in print (otherwise a diary would be as good as a fanzine), to recognize your contribution (otherwise why have fan guests of honor, ribbons and badges, awards), to share in joint accomplishments such as conventions, clubs and amateur press associations.

Awareness of collective or aggregate passage

Another common concept expressed in over half the interviews is one of constant social comparison that I labeled **being exceptional**. This concept was sometimes expressed in statements of inclusion: you and I are... but we are not like [the majority of fans]....

> Zoe: "As a couple, we're not typical. Probably everyone says that about themselves."

> Ron: "I'm the exception to the rule because I've done so many more kinds of things."

> Red: "I'm enough of a mundane to get along in both worlds."

> Andy: "By and large, science fiction attracts people who have a hard time adjusting to the world, who find a lot of release in books. Unfortunately I was like that to an extent, but not terribly so."

This seems related to egoboo but also to a concern with social comparison, to in-groups and out-groups, to a social hierarchy. The people in a subculture that is based on anarchistic meritocracy [see Chapter II] have little way of measuring social position; thus constant personal comparison seems to be an important way of measuring the benefits of identification with and belonging to the subculture. It also expresses the subcultural value of individualism, or as this Fan explains it:

> Ursula: "Everyone is an individual and becomes as interested and participates on their own level. I have many interests and SF is not really a lifestyle for me as much as it is an interesting part of a balanced interest in life."

Because of the value placed upon individualism within the subculture, there is only peripheral awareness on the part of the person undergoing status passage of collective or aggregate passage with other persons as evidenced by the next quotes:

> Gary: "Yeah, they [Neofans] popped in and out constantly. I fit in, I think immediately."

Max: "There I was with my badge and program, looking lost, when a large, broad-shouldered woman came up to me and said, 'You look like a Neo.' I answered, 'Yes, I guess I am new.' She took me under her wing and showed me around."

And another younger fan explained:

Odin: "The first couple of times I went [to a convention], I was going with some of my friends who were new to it, so we were experiencing it together. We discussed it a little bit."

But comparing preliminary status passage through fan writing that presents the individual writer's experience is very common (for examples, see Bernardi, 1992; DeVore, 1993a).

Related concepts

Related to the increase in female representation in the subculture I brought up the question "is there a difference between science fiction fans based on gender?" The most common answer was that there was **no gender difference** or **less gender difference** than in the mundane world. A few of the subjects (mostly those involved in the subculture as dealers) conjectured that more women support the fantasy factor identified by Bainbridge (1986), which agreed with Bainbridge's findings. The problem with this question and the answers to it are the subject's definition of who is a fan, because in this case they were identifying as fans anyone at an SF convention.

Quin: "Fandom has always been more egalitarian towards women."

Rachel: "They [Fans] celebrate the gender difference. Viva la difference! But they don't discriminate based on gender. Intelligence is intelligence. And the natural born leader is the one who should lead and if

the natural born leader happens to be female, then that's who should lead."

Another concept that I found in a few of my interviews was labeled by three interviewees as **mixed marriages**, marriages between a fan and a mundane (non-fan). Because SF Fandom is so often compared to an **extended family**, this concept is a recognition that marrying outside of the subculture may involve someone who does not share the SF worldview. Eighteen of those in active status passage in my sample are currently married. Of those eighteen, ten are married to other fans, and eight are married to mundanes. A single man in the sample commented, "I'm looking for a Fannish significant other." And a divorced male spoke of "converting" the mundane woman he was dating. In at least two of the cases where the fan is divorced, the divorce was attributed, in part, to the **mixed marriage** with the lack of the shared worldview of the avid science fiction reader.

The two persons who are cohabitating in the sample group, cohabitate with Fans and voiced how important they thought it was that they shared Fandom. One of these interview subjects describes this lack of shared perspective between herself and her mother:

> Zoe: "I'm thinking really long term. I'm thinking about when the Sun is no longer there and the Earth will be destroyed. Most people don't think that far ahead, but I think if we are going to colonize, we have to start now. I like to read about some of the ways they might do that because that might end up the way we do that. . . . I was trying to explain once to her [my mother] my philosophy, that we have to start colonizing

now, the Sun's not going to last forever, and she
couldn't really conceive of that at all."

Three of the males in the sample married to non-fans are
primarily employed in a field related to science fiction
(author, editor, and scholar) so that even if their wives do
not share the SF perspective, status passage is work related
and therefore socially more acceptable. The two female Fans
in the sample married to mundanes tend to try to include
their mates in the subculture activities by taking them
along to conventions and meetings, while the males in the
sample married to non-fans seem to have given up on this
idea. This is another indication of the centrality of the
status passage to the Fan.

Women in the interview sample were most likely to bring
up the concept of SF Fandom being a **safe** place.

Rachel: "There's a core to these people that's
trustworthy. That's why you feel **safe**."

Because of its intellectual focus rather than a focus on
physical prowess like in sports subcultures, SF Fandom has
created a subculture that tends to be non-physically
threatening. This is another aspect of the concept of
extended family and allows women to compete for degrees of
status on an equal basis with men in the subculture.

Six of the interviewees conjectured that SF Fans tend
to be depressed more often than mundanes. Reasons for this
depression usually focus on the disparity between the way
the **world** is and the way they perceive it could be. This

concept seems related to the SF perspective or worldview necessary for recruitment into SF Fandom. In the case of SF Fandom, worldview is probably the most appropriate term, based on the number of times the word "world" appears in the transcriptions of interviews.

Sub-statuses

Several advanced sub-statuses are available within the subculture. The sub-statuses I identified were: SMOF (secret master of fandom), sercon/academic, fanzine/APA fan, huckster/collector, professional and Big Name Fan (BNF). None of these sub-statuses are mutually exclusive, and obtaining these advanced sub-statuses are all based on performance, the meritocracy aspect of the subculture. Being a SMOF, a secret master of fandom, consists of performance on a convention committee. Sercon as a label may be self-bestowed, and is generally based on role performance outside the subculture, thus the often negative connotation of the label. In order to be taken seriously, Sercon must be backed by role accomplishment of critical writing or academic participation, those types of activities considered serious and constructive with regard to the literature.

Academic as a label may be obtained by either academic achievement or by focus and participation in academic areas, but to be considered a Fan, one must also participate in fanac and not just academic criticism. Fanzine fan is

solely based on participation and includes participation in fanzines or amateur press associations (APAs). A huckster is a dealer, most of whom start out as collectors, and is only recognized in SF Fandom for that sub-status if they also participate in other Fan activities.

Professionals are those who, by definition, make their living by writing or editing, or producing science fiction art. That professional is also a sub-status within the bounds of the subculture is evidenced by the categories of Hugo awards that also recognize amateur publications, "best fan artist," "best fan writer," along with "best professional editor" "st professional artist," and "best novel."

Finally, being a Big Name Fan (BNF) is an indication of recognition bestowed by the subculture for contributions to the subculture. It means more than your name being recognized by a lot of people in the subculture, although that is a contributing factor to the possibility of recognition as a BNF. It means that your contributions to the subculture are recognized. All these sub-statuses are obtained through role performance, and the last two are most dependent upon successful continued role performance. The following comments express the necessity of continued role performance to maintain one's Fan credentials:

> Quin: "Even Bruce Pelz [1972 WorldCon chair] works within the auspices of the club."

Hal: [fan guest of honor] "In fandom one earn's his or her name, notoriety, etc. con by con.... It is a lonely and proud thing to be a fan. It is also quite regional.... I'm also insecure as hell."

Comparison of status passages

An overview and comparison of the status passage process indicates that although the status passage of becoming a science fiction Fan is voluntary, it tends to become very central to the social identity of those who move beyond the NeoFan role. Rather than control agents, the new recruit has facilitation agents. The friendship coalitions provide a degree of control over aspects of the passage, and those that fail to build these coalitions will be unrecruited from the status passage. The signs of passage are vague and unclear for the majority in passage and even when highly recognizable roles are performed or sub-statuses obtained through role performance, continued performance is necessary for continued status recognition by the subculture.

The status passage, because it is avocational and voluntary, may endure for the person's lifetime or may be terminated voluntarily through gafiation (getting away from it all) or involuntarily through unrecruitment or fafiation (forced away from it all), and begun again later, providing repeatability of the status passage. The status passage is not truly reversible since one can never be a NeoFan after the first time. The next quote explains why this interview subject returned actively to Fandom:

Abe: "Fandom was getting so big I didn't find it as much fun anymore. So I thought I'd cut back, but still keep up with my fan friends, still get a few fanzines, etc. But it didn't happen that way. I kept up with friends in the ____ area and that was about it. But I find that gafia does <u>not</u> agree with me. I miss my friends. And I miss fandom too."

Persons in status passage in science fiction Fandom are generally only peripherally aware of others in status passage -- it is perceived as an individual experience.

Al: "Some people consider fandom to be a way of life (FIAWOL) and have fandom as a central point in their lives; others just consider fandom to be a hobby (FIJAGDH) and it involves the rest of their life only peripherally. Many people alternate between these two views, sometimes taking fandom very seriously and at other times being only marginally active in fandom."

Comparison to studies of status passages that are involuntary, such as dying (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) or getting divorced (the majority of the subjects in Hart's 1976 study), indicates that voluntary status passages are more desirable and rewarding to the person in status passage. There are recruitment agents with voluntary status passage, but both may have agents of control. When an involuntary status passage is taking place, it tends to move to a central position in the person's identity, but then if the status passage is reversed or terminated, moves out of that central position. This is in contrast to an avocational status passage, which takes on more centrality, voluntarily, and continues as long as the perceived rewards tinue. The xt quote gives glimpse of voluntary

centrality along with the rationalization used for that
degree of involvement:

> Ron: "I owe a great debt to it [SF] and that's one of
> the reasons I got into helping out as a convention
> chairman, of putting so much work into it. It is
> simply my way of giving back to science fiction some of
> what it's given to me."

As in the two studies of involuntary status passage cited,
the signs of passage are also vague for the majority in
passage in the avocational subculture.

Comparison to studies of formal status passages such as
entering a profession (Becker et al., 1961; Glaser, 1964)
indicate that an avocational status passage allows the
person in passage much more control, but less clearly
defined signs of the status passage. Unlike most
avocational pursuits, SF Fandom has created an extensive
subculture in which status passage may take place and be
studied. In a formal status passage, there are both formal
control agents and formal signs of the status passage with
clearly define duration expectations. In an avocational
status passage, outside influences such as health, family
relationships and job expectations, control and influence
involvement to a much greater extent than they control and
influence formal status passages such as vocations. The
next two quotes illustrate being forced away from a focus on
science fiction by outside influences:

> Odin: [college sophomore] "Right now it's not that
> important, my studies have really taken over in the
> past year."

Max: "I lost the habit of reading anything that wasn't relevant to school work."

In this chapter, the status passage of the science fiction Fan was examined. The concepts important to the members of the SF Fan subculture were identified along with examples of these concepts from the in-depth interviews. The final chapter summarizes these findings, draws conclusions about the findings, and makes recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> By now, fans reared in the computer age are
> mingling with those who have been active in fandom
> for nearly fifty years. There <u>are</u> occasional
> frictions and differences of opinion, but by and
> large SF fandom accommodates a wide variety of
> generations much more readily than the "mundane"
> world can. And fandom has grown large enough to
> constitute a considerable **extended family**.
>   Juanita Coulson (1994a:6)

The summary and conclusions focus on the relationship

of the concerns of the subjects identified in the previous

chapter and the Fan as avocational status passage. The

conclusions are followed by a series of recommendations for

further investigation.

Relationship of Concerns of Subjects

According to my identification of important concepts

and concerns in the interviews with my subjects, the chief

concern or problem of the subjects in my study is finding a

social fit within society when their view of the world is

different than the majority. The concepts identified using

qualitative analysis that are of concern to the subjects

represent three interrelated subgroupings under the main

over-arching concept of the differing worldview (represented

by the concept labels **being hooked** and **world**). Those

concept groupings are:

1) <u>main values</u>: individualism, distrust of authority and tolerance; 2) <u>structure</u>: anarchistic meritocracy and extended family, and; 3) <u>rewards</u>: egoboo and friendship.

A subculture is an informal social structure which is created by mutual agreement. Subcultures as social structures do not have clear boundaries or delineations. Human beings create social structures in an attempt to satisfy their needs. The majority of the members of the subculture of SF Fandom have experienced a feeling of isolation from, or of not belonging to, the majority culture. This may either produce the perspective shift necessary for recruitment into the subculture or may be a product of the perspective shift.

The potential subculture members also adopt a **distrust of authority** in this process of the perspective shift as a defense based in real life experience. The subculture members set about creating and perpetuating a subculture with values that allow for their being different. The subcultural values of **individualism** and **tolerance** are two sides of the same coin. If I desire your respect for my individual quirks, anomalies, and handicaps, then I should be tolerant of your idiosyncracies. To perpetuate these values, SF Fandom has created a **safe** environment likened by the members to an **extended family**. This **extended family** consists of brothers and sisters with no parental figures, an **anarchistic meritocracy**. The values of **distrust of**

authority, individualism and tolerance all work together to
make this the only subcultural social structure possible.
These values also work against a central leadership arising
and organizing the subculture in more formal ways. Attempts
to organize more formal hierarchies have repeatedly failed.
Because of the structure created by the adoption of these
values, SF Fandom has created an intangible reward system
for its members. These rewards, egoboo and friendship, are
measures of belonging within the subculture. Belonging
within the subculture satisfies the original concern, that
of not fitting into society when one's view of the world is
different from that of the majority.

Fan as Avocational Status Passage

The status passage of the science fiction Fan is an
avocational status passage and takes place in the social
structure of science fiction Fandom that is created to
satisfy the needs and values of the subculture members. As
a voluntary status passage, a high correlation of values and
a sharing of the central worldview are necessary elements
for the science fiction reader to desire status passage. If
the majority's worldview should shift closer to the science
fiction subculture worldview, the subculture will have lost
its major attraction to status passagees of being a haven
from the "mundane" and will cease to exist. Also, if
information becomes available that causes a shift in the
subcultural worldview that aligns more closely with the

majority worldview, that will end the major reason for the subculture's existence.

Because the subculture is more extensive and long lasting compared to other avocational subcultures, it provides a historical background and precedents that status passagees are expected to become aware of and embrace. In many ways, Fandom is most comparable to ethnic subcultures that provide a sense of family, history and belonging while providing cultural indoctrination and social training that the status passagees did not experience in the rest of their reality. As an avocational subculture, status passage within Fandom is also strongly comparable to a youth gang in that the desire for acceptance by the group and having a group to confront the outside world, are strong motivating factors. Aspects of vocational subculture status passages involving career training and work are only peripheral to the actual status passage of the science fiction Fan but may provide justification to significant others outside Fandom for the status passagee's participation.

Science fiction Fandom has created a social structure, in miniature, where the individuals who manifest this form of deviancy can have their needs met in a non-physically threatening way. Rather than the primarily illusionary solution to deviance offered by youth gang subcultures of emotional support, science fiction Fandom offers real solutions of physical support and cultural training usually

only available in ethnic subcultures along with the socially
acceptable kind of emotional support that promotes positive
integration into society. SF Fandom can also provide the
career training available in vocational subcultures. The
subcultural values of **tolerance** and **individualism** contribute
to an admirable solution to many of the problems these
individuals face in regular society.

Recommendations

Further studies of status passages within ethnic
groups, avocational groups and vocational groups will inform
us of possible social structures that human beings find
workable and desirable. Changes in status passages over
time may indicate changes in society as a whole or changes
in the subculture in which status passage is taking place.
Tracing those changes back to possible causes may indicate
trends in society worth noting.

Further studies of the subculture of science fiction
Fandom should attempt to take into consideration the effects
of television mass media influence on society and on the
subculture. It is hypothesized that mass media that does
not require reading does not involve the perspective shift
that is required for membership in science fiction Fandom,
but the two studies of organized media fans do not address
this area. Mass media changes in society may affect the
status passage desirability and elements within the Fan
subculture. More extensive studies of women's exper.ence

with the subculture may indicate more explicitly why there
has been and still is a gender differential in
participation. This may in part stem back to the
perspective shift, or it may be lack of societal support for
women in scientific fields. Or possibly some of the same
self-selection forces that act to keep ethnic minority
membership small may also be acting upon women.

Focus on ethnic minority experience in status passage
within science fiction Fandom may shed further light on why
ethnic minorities are under-represented in the subculture
and whether this has implications for society. I may make
conjectures, but did not have the opportunity to interview a
sufficient numbers of ethnic minority members to state my
theories with authority.

Studies of second and third generation Fans and
children of Fans who reject the subculture may provide
further insight into positive structures for learning
situations and background for understanding why children
often feel the need to reject their parents as role models.
Does the child of a deviant member of society feel the need
to be further deviant than the parent, or to align
him/herself more closely with the mainstream of society, and
what factors contribute to these choices?

I learned many things in the process of this research.
I had long been aware through reading science fiction that
there was a certain amount of tension, sometimes bordering

on animosity, between academics studying science fiction, science fiction fans, and science fiction writers, but it was not until I understood the dynamics of subculture formation that I understood why this tension existed.

Becoming aware that my own view of the world differed from many other people prepared me to see the validity of Brian Stableford's findings, which turned out to be the pivotal in my understanding of the relationship of the concerns of the Fans I interviewed. Understanding the dynamics of the science fiction Fan subculture and how it exists as a smaller subculture inside a larger subcultural milieux provides positive models for possible organizational structures and further ideas of recruitment conditions necessary for other organizations and subcultures.

When beginning this research, I was concerned that qualitative methodology might not yield anything of significance. Instead, I was richly rewarded for my time and effort learning to use this methodology. Hopefully, this study has provided needed insight into how the Fans themselves shape their social world.

APPENDIX A

Consent form, interview focus areas, and permission to use illustration

CONSENT FORM
Science Fiction Readers

I am a graduate student in the Sociology Master's program at the University of North Dakota; interested in the experiences and perceptions of Science Fiction readers who define themselves as Science Fiction Fans.

As a part of this study, you are being asked to participate in an in-depth interview regarding your background, and your experiences and perceptions as a Science Fiction fan. These interviews take approximately two hours. One of my goals is that this should be an enjoyable experience for both of us.

I plan to analyze the materials from your interview in order to better understand the life experience of Science Fiction fans, specifically those who participate in Science Fiction fandom related activities rather than just read Science Fiction or watch media Science Fiction. As part of my thesis, I may compose the materials from your interview as a "profile" in your own words. I may also wish to use some of the interview material for journal articles or presentations to interested groups, or for instructional purposes. I may wish to write a book based on the thesis work.

The interview will be audio-taped and then transcribed by me or by a typist (who will be committed, as I am, to confidentiality). The audio-tape and transcription documents will remain the property of and in possession of the interviewer. In all written materials and oral presentations in which I might use materials from your interview, I will not use your name, names of people close to you, or the name of your city of residence. In final form the interview material will use pseudonyms.

You may at any time withdraw from the interview process. You may withdraw your consent to have specific excerpts used, if you notify me at the end of the interview. If I were to want to use any materials in any way not consistent with what is stated above, I would ask for your additional written consent.

In signing this form, you are also assuring me that you will make no financial claims for the use of the material in your interview.

I have read the above statement and agree to participate in the interview under the conditions stated above.

_____
Signature of participant

_____
Print name of participant

_____   _____
Signature of Interviewer   Date

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Interview Focus Areas:

Demographics -

Name:
Age:
Gender:
Primary occupation:
Secondary occupation:
Yearly Income:
Marital Status:
    Children:
Level of Education:
Ethnic origin:
Religious Affiliation:
Political identification:
Parents professions:
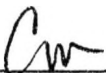
1. Do you consider yourself a SF fan? Do you participate in
fanac? (Fandom related activities.) How important is fandom in
your life?

2. How/when did you become involved with science fiction?. How
did you find out about science fiction? Reading or media?
Friend, school, family member?

3. How did you become aware of/involved in fandom?   How
introduced? Who? When?   Types of fandom participation.   Clubs?
Fanzines? Writing? Costuming? Collecting? Other? Are you
affiliated with any special segment of fandom?

4. Have you ever gafiated for any period of time? (Left fandom)
When? Why?

5. Why does SF appeal to you?
Are there any special needs or desires that SF fills in your
life?

6. Do you think SF fans are in anyway different from the general
population? What distinguishes a fan from a non-fan? Do you fit
this description? Have you ever discussed SF with a non-SF fan,
and if so what kind of reaction did you get?

7. Do you think SF fans are different from each other based on
gender?

8. Were you aware of other neo-fans when you became involved in
fandom? Did you compare experiences?

PERMISSION TO USE ILLUSTRATION

Illustration Title   Gestalt drawing

Artist   Catherine Mintz

For Master of Arts Thesis by B. Diane Miller prepared for
Department of Sociology: Preliminary status passage of the science
fiction fan: becoming a member of the science fiction fan
subculture.

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APPENDIX B

Science Fiction Fans talked to about thesis,
List of biographical references consulted,
and References where interview subjects' writing is published

APPENDIX B

Science Fiction Fans talked to about thesis, List of biographical references consulted, and References where interview subjects' writing is published

Science Fiction Fans talked to about thesis

Paul Abell, Forrest Ackerman; Emily Alward; Raul and Sunnie Andreau; Poul Anderson and Karen Anderson; Neil Barron; Greg Benford; Jeff Berry; Robert Bloch; Jeremy Bloom; Nina Boal; Charlie Brown and Barbara Brown; Tony Bruno; Lindy Bright; Carol (LASFS); L. Sprague de Camp and Catherine de Camp; Paul Carter; William T. Center; Curt and Melissa Clemmer; Howard Davidson; Howard DeVore; Bill Donaho; Alex Eisenstein and Phyllis Eisenstein; Steve Eldred; jan howard finder; Beverly Friend; M. Bruce Farr; Blair Flegal; Don Franson; Barbara Gatewood and Tim Gatewood; Hugh Gregory; James Gunn; Brenda Hagel and Jim Hagel; Gay Haldeman; Hal Hall; Michele Hendrie; Elizabeth Anne Hull; Al Jastram; Gardner Johnson; Jack Cohen; Michael Levin-Mansfield; Fred Lerner; Daryl Mallett; John Mansfield; Crystal Marvig; Mary Mason; Stephen Mezyk; Stephen K. Metzger; Joe Miller; Karen Miller; Janet Moe; Tom Moore; Sean Moyer; Ross Pavlac; Bruce Pelz; Frederik Pohl; Linda Ross-Mansfield; Alexei Panshin and Cory Panshin; Charles Ryan; Joe Sanders; Joe Siclari; Amy Sisson; Dick Smith and Leah Zeldes Smith; Michelle Smith; Mike Smith; Dick Spellman; Sheldon Spitzer; Brian Stableford; Kevin Standlee; Carol Stenstrom; Tony Tilton; Vanda Thiel; Laura Todd; Bjo Trimble; Greg Trocchia; Bob Wilson Tucker; Milton Wolf; Anne Valley; Paul Vanderbloomen; A.E. van Vogt and Lydia van Vogt; Robert Vardeman; Cyndi Weber; Robert Weinberg; and Roger Zelazny. [With apologies to those whose names I missed.]

List of biographical references consulted

(Aldiss and Harrison, 1975; Asimov, 1974; Asimov, 1979; Asimov, 1980; Atheling, 1964; Atheling, 1970; Bailey, 1972; Barr, 1981; Bacon-Smith, 1992; Berger, 1993; Beragonzi, 1961; Bernardi, 1992; Bloch, 1962; Bloch, 1993; Carr, 1986; Clareson, 1987; Clute and Nicholls, 1993; Cogswell 1992; Coulson, 1994a; Coulson, 1994b; Davenport, 1955; DeVore, 1993a; DeVore, 1994; Donaho, 1993; Franson, 1993; Fratz, 1993; Gordon, 1980; Goulart, 1972; Green and Hooper, 1974; Gunn, 1988; Hartwell, 1984; Hassler, 1982; Heinlein, 1980; Heinlein, 1990; Hilary-Burroughs, 1993; Jenkins, 1992; Ketterer, 1974; Kemp and Kemp, 1961; Knight, 1977; Lane, 1979; Laney, 1948; Larson, 1986; Letson, 1994; Lupoff, 1994; Madle, 1994; Moskowitz, 1957; Moskowitz, 1963; Moskowitz, 1974; Moskowitz, 1990; Nicholls, 1979; Panshin, 1968; Pohl, 1975; Pohl, 1978; Rogers, 1964; Staicar, 1982; Siclari, 1981; Smith, 1982; Strauss, 1983; Trimble, 1982; Trimble and Trimble, 1994; van Vogt, 1975; Warner, 1969; Warner, 1992; Warner, 1994b; West, 1930; Widner, 1994; Williamson, 1984; Wolfe, 1982; Wollheim, 1971; Yoke, 1979.)

References where interview subjects' writing is published

(Ash, 1977; Ashley, 1976a-b; Barron, 1987; Bretnor, 1974; Burgess, 1992; Clute and Nicholls, 1993; Davenport, 1964; Gunn, 1975; Gunn, 1988; Magill's, 1996; Nicholls, 1979; Sanders, 1994; Tymn et al., 1977; Tymn, 1981; Tymn and Ashley, 1985; Wingrove, 1984.)

APPENDIX C

Glossary

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GLOSSARY

ASFA   Association of Science Fiction Artists (finder, 1993).

APA   Acronym for Amateur Press Association. A group of
            people who publish fanzines and send them to an
            official editor (central editor) who assembles them and
            mails a copy of each to each member   in a regular
            bundle. Members comment on each other's fanzines in a
            kind of group discussion (Hartwell, 1984:162; Franson,
            1962a; Jackson, 1976; Friend, 1976; Sanders and brown,
            1994).

BNF   Acronym for Big Name Fan. One of importance and
            influence in fandom; well-known and with a solid
            reputation (Franson, 1962a; Jackson, 1976). One whose
            accomplishments in fandom give his or her opinions
            extra weight; the label does not result from a formal
            vote and cannot be self-awarded (Sanders and brown,
            1994).

Con   a gathering of fans from various localities. When the
            numbers are larger than a handful, short for convention
            (Hartwell, 1984).

ConCom   contraction of Convention Committee. The directors,
            advisors and financial controllers of a convention
            (personal interviews).

Costumer   someone who makes and/or wears costumes at conventions,
            often competing for prizes in the masquerade (Mintz,
            1993).

Egoboo   short for ego boost. Praise for some fannish
            accomplishment: the fuel of fandom (Sanders and brown,
            1994) That which boosts the ego, such as a favorable
            comment on one's fanac. The reward of fan activity,
            usually seeing your name in print, especially but not
            necessarily in a favorable context (Franson, 1962a;
            Friend, 1976; Jackson, 1976; Hartwell, 1984; Mintz,
            1993).

FAFIA   Acronym for Forced Away From It All. Forced to leave
           fan activities by life circumstances and not by choice
           (Friend, 1976; Sanders and brown, 1994).

Fan   a science fiction and fantasy enthusiast (Mintz, 1993).
           "What exactly constitutes a fan is too deep to go into
           here. The different kinds of fans, such as fanzine fan
           and convention fan are self-explanatory, while trufan
           and fake fan are too subjective to be easily defined"
           (Franson, 1962a).

Fanac   short for fan activities, the traditional activities of
           fans (Mintz, 1993; Hartwell, 1984).

Fandom   The group as a whole, the fans and the pros who are in
           contact with one other, an empire of vast boundaries
           and small popula   n. Fandom here is used in the same
           way we say "the sun" and "the moon" (Franson, 1962a).

Fannish   of or pertaining to fans. Used to distinguish a form
           of activity from the professional or from aspiration to
           the professional, or even relation to the professional.
           A fannish fanzine is a publication about SF fandom (not
           necessarily about SF at all) (Hartwell, 1984). Of and
           pertaining to fans, fandom, and what fans do in fandom
           (Sanders and brown, 1994).

Fanspeak   fannish jargon. Fanspeak has developed because it
           speeds communication between experienced fans. The
           purpose is not to exclude newcomers. However, fans
           might not be unhappy at discouraging outsiders who are
           unwilling to exert much effort to listen so they can
           grow comfortable with fannish attitudes as well as
           learn the vocabulary. If neos get discouraged easily,
           that shows they actually are fake fans, mundanes who
           put on fannish appearances while hanging onto their
           narrow comfortable outlook (Sanders and brown, 1994).

Fanzine   a fan publication, an amateur magazine published by
           fans (Friend, 1976).

FAPA   Fan Amateur Press Association (Mintz, 1993) In
           existence since 1937 (Franson, 1962a).

Fen   plural of fan. Fans is perhaps more widely used
           (Jackson, 1976).

FIAWOL   Fandom Is A Way Of Life. (Friend, 1976; Hartwell, 1984)

FIJAGH   Fandom Is Just A Goddamn Hobby... an acknowledgement
           that there are other things in life! (Jackson, 1976).

Also used as Fandom Is Just a Good Hobby (Friend, 1976).

Filk song   Fannish folk song, often a parody of a mundane folk song (Franson, 1962a).

First Fandom   Fans arising in the nineteen-thirties, and including many well-known SF authors (Jackson, 1976) A club originally restricted to fans active before 1938 (Franson, 1962a; Friend, 1976).

Futurians   New York based science fiction club of the 1930's (Knight, 1977; Pohl, 1978)

GAFIA   Get Away From It All. Verb - gafiate. Said of an active fan who abandons all fannish activities out of distraction or loss of interest, and ends his/her contract with the fannish world. It is possible to return to fandom after an extended period of gafiation, but of course many gafiates are never heard from again (Jackson, 1976; Hartwell, 1984)

Hugo   The Hugo Awards, or officially the Science Fiction Achievement Awards voted for annually by members of the World Science Fiction Conventions during the early months of the year, and then presented at the convention itself (Jackson, 1976).

Huckster   a dealer in prozines and other science fiction and fantasy material for profit (Franson, 1962a; Jackson, 1976; Friend, 1976).

LASFS   usually pronounced "Lossfuss" (Pelz, 1993; Ackerman, 1993). Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Society, Los Angeles area fan club in existence since 1934 (Laney, 1948; Franson, 1962a; Ackerman, 1993).

letterhack   Fan known as a prolific composer of letters of comment (locs). Originally, one who deluged prozines with letters to be printed in their letter columns (Sanders and brown, 1994).

loc   Acronym of letter of comment. Plural form locs. Fan editors usually would rather receive this personal response to their efforts than a cash payment (Mintz, 1993).

Mainstream   The SF community uses the word to describe the fiction that is getting the attention they want;

the word is a confession the SF is felt to be a sidestream, a tributary. Mainstream is not the only current word. Mundane is used to refer to nonfantasy and non-SF, with deliberate overtones of dullness, worldliness, and un-inspired realism (Card, 1988:298).

Masquerade   a contest of costumed people at a convention (Mintz, 1993).

Mundane   noun - a person who is not a fan (Hartwell, 1984); adjective - non-fannish, pertaining to the outside world (Franson, 1962a). From an adjective meaning "commonplace and routine," this has become a fannish noun describing the majority of the human race that is content with familiar types of literature and thinking. Frequently used with disdain to describe people who denigrate fandom because it differs from the mainstream (Sanders and brown, 1994).

N3F   The National Fantasy Fan Federation (Friend, 1976, Warner, 1969; Laney, 1948).

Neffer   Member of the N3F (Franson, 1962a).

Neo   also "neofan", short for neophyte fan, a newcomer to fandom (Sanders and brown, 1994). For the first year or so in fandom, a person is expected to exhibit neofan (brash and noisy) characteristics (Hartwell, 1984).

Neofan   neo for new combined with fan, short for neophyte fan (Sanders and brown, 1994).

Perzine   (also personalzine) fanzine mainly written by the editor in which he recounts and discusses events in his own life; often used as a letter-substitute (Jackson, 1976).

Protofan   a potential fan, an avid or omnivorous science fiction reader with the potential to become a fan (Budrys, 1961).

Prozine   Professional science fiction magazine (Jackson, 1976; Friend, 1976).

Sercon   contraction of the words serious constructive. Refers to an attitudinal disposition to improve fandom and /or SF. The term has come to be the antonym of fannish. Example: the academic criticism of SF in recent years is "too sercon." (Hartwell, 1984).

SCA   Society for Creative Anachronism (Friend, 1976).

Sci-Fi   Term used by outsiders to describe science fiction.
            Regarded by SF fans as an unbearably ugly and
            condescending abbreviation (Jackson, 1976). This term
            was invented by Forrest Ackerman (Ackerman, 1993;
            Friend, 1976).

SCIFI   pronounced "skiffy" and is an incorporated group of 30
            directors in the Los Angeles area who finance
            convention bids and other fannish activities (Pelz,
            1993).

SF (sf) (S.F.) science fiction (Friend, 1976)

SFRA   Science Fiction Research Association: an organization
            for science fiction teachers and scholars (Friend,
            1976).

SFWA   Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (Locus).
            An organization that is partly a critical discussion
            forum and partly a near-trade union (Jackson, 1976).
            [Often pronounced "Siff-wah" (personal interviews).]

SMOF   Acronym of Secret Masters of Fandom. Powers behind the
            throne (Friend, 1976). [Verb - Smoffing; example:
            Where's Jane? Oh, she's off smoffing with the concom.
            Adjective - Smoffish; example: Working on the concom is
            smoffish (personal interviews).]

Space Opera   Analogous to "horse-opera" (western), a science
            fiction adventure which deals with action in space
            instead of the West (Franson, 1962a). Reportedly,
            Bob Tucker coined the phrase (Fleming, 1977;
            finder, 1993).

TruFan   A true fan. A dyed-in-the-wool SF fan, familiar with
            the ways of fannish fans and enthusiastically active
            (Jackson, 1976).

WorldCon   World Science Fiction Convention. (Jackson, 1976) The
            annual official gathering of Fandom (Friend, 1976).

Zine   Magazine, either amateur or professional. (Fanzine or
            Prozine) (Jackson, 1976).

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