



Regionalism and the Publishing Class: Conflicted Isomorphism and Negotiated Identity in a Nested Field of American Publishing

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Abstract

In sociology different streams of field theory have not been systematically integrated, despite their common intellectual heritage. Incorporating insights from three streams of field theory – Bourdieusian, neo-institutional, and strategic action fields – this work examines the oft-neglected field site of cultural production outside of geographic cores. The case is concerned with book publishers in the San Francisco Bay Area, how they work to balance competing isomorphic pressures between the regional and national fields, and their strategic decoupling of identity and practice while working to maintain legitimacy both in the national field on which they depend for promotion and sales, and in the regional field on which they depend for a sense of group identity and purpose.

Keywords

culture, cultural production, field theory, fields, regions, regional, regionalism, organizations, work, literature, literary, publishing, publishers, Bourdieu

Introduction

In sociology there is a long and rich tradition of analysis of the US literary field, from studies of authors (e.g. Ekelund and Börjesson, 2002; Kingston and Cole, 1986), to reviewers (e.g. Berkers et al., 2013; Chong, 2011), booksellers (Miller, 2008; Radway, 1997) and readers (Childress and Friedkin, 2012; Long, 2003). Within the US ‘fiction complex’ (Griswold, 2000) the publishing industry is the most frequent object of study (e.g. Corse, 1997; Coser et al., 1982; Thompson, 2010), yet analysis of American book

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publishing beyond the island of Manhattan is incredibly sparse. To date Thompson (2010) has made the greatest inroads to analysis beyond Manhattan, dedicating a chapter to the upstart and independent Sparrow Press in Brooklyn.

This focus on Manhattan is partially due to the financial dominance of publishers located on the island, as the international ‘Big Four’ of book publishing – all of whom maintain their US headquarters there – together account for roughly two-thirds of the physical US trade market and about half of the US ebook market. Publishing from Manhattan also holds symbolic value. Having an office in New York is a locational form of symbolic capital to agents on the literary-supply side who send manuscripts, and to reviewers and booksellers who connect to the literary-demand side, and use a variety of signals to decide which books from a sea of hopefuls to review and stock. New York is so central that publishing with a New York firm, getting reviewed in the *New York Times* and even living in a New York zip code all correlate with longer authorial careers (Ekelund and Börjesson, 2002). As editor Jack Shoemaker noted of his decision to locate North Point Press in Manhattan, ‘There are agents, perhaps, and authors, perhaps, who feel that because we have a New York office we are somehow more “real”—not that they ever utilized the office’ (McDowell, 1988: D12).

Despite the centrality of Manhattan in US publishing, the vast majority of publishing houses in the United States are actually not located there (Greco, 2004), and literary culture in the United States is much more diffuse.¹ Vermont has more working writers and novelists per capita than New York, Los Angeles is the number one book market in the United States, Seattle has more booksellers per capita than any other city in the nation, and San Francisco and Seattle both rank in the top six ‘literate cities’ in the US measured along six indices, with New York ranking 26th (Miller, 2010). The last 20 years have also seen a shift from Manhattan as the sole dominant player in American arts and letters to a competing and diffuse network of MFA programs in creative writing across the country (Childress and Gerber, forthcoming; Harbach, 2014). While Griswold and Wright (2004) highlight the enduring role of regionalism among American readers, to date publishers have not been analyzed in parallel fashion.

Relying on mixed-methods data on the American trade book publishing industry, this article focuses on how publishing employees conceptualize their roles and identities in publishing when working outside of New York. Incorporating insights from three streams of field theory to make sense of these ‘outside’ (or regional) identities, I highlight how Bay Area publishers navigate competing isomorphic pressures between the regional field and the national field – in both of which they are embedded – through the articulation of a Bourdieusian framework of a relative focus on the values of art and commerce.

Lessons from Field Theories

In sociology different streams of field theory have not been systematically integrated, despite their common intellectual heritage (Martin, 2003) and efforts at synthesis (Dobbin, 2008; Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008). The three leading approaches are DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) neo-institutional analysis of organizational fields, Bourdieu’s fields of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1993), and Fligstein and McAdam’s (2012) strategic action fields (see Table 1).

Table 1. A simple taxonomy of emphases.

	Neo- Institutional Fields	Fields of Cultural Production	Strategic Action Fields
Meso-Level	X	X	X
Legitimacy and Status	X	X	X
Position and Orientation	X	X	X
Power and Control	X	X	X
Attunement to Cultural Fields		X	
Relationship Between Fields			X
Organizations	X		X
Competing Frameworks Within Fields		X	X
Pressure for Conformity	X	X	

Neo-Institutional Field Theory

The neo-institutional version of field theory defines a field as ‘those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 148). Inclusive of ‘all the relevant actors’ (Meyer and Scott, 1983: 218), neo-institutional fields are arenas in which organizations face normative pressures, ambiguous goals, and uncertain means and ends to accomplish those goals. As ‘the major factor that organizations must take into account are other organizations’ (Aldrich, 1979: 265), in a quest for legitimacy within the field, organizations face three types of isomorphic pressures: mimetic isomorphism due to uncertainty, coercive isomorphism due to resource dependency, and normative isomorphism due to the professionalization of actors within organizations. The key insight of neo-institutional field theory is that as fields mature, diverse organizational forms and practices standardize over time as peripheral and less powerful players mirror the forms and practices of central and more powerful players. These adaptations can be conscious or unconscious, can extend to the level of practice, or may lead to a decoupling between heterogeneous actions and homogenous institutionalized frameworks for action (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Taken to its natural conclusion, neo-institutional field theory predicts standardized worlds in which organizational forms diffuse from the central players to periphery players (Meyer and Jepperson, 2000; Strang and Soule, 1998). Such is the case with increased standardization through isomorphic pressures in the global television field (Kuipers, 2012), the global literary field (Franssen and Kuipers, 2013), and global film industries (Kuipers and de Kloet, 2009).

Yet despite these organizational pressures, regionalized identities within fields are not uncommon, such as the geographic relations of Los Angeles to the film industry (Scott, 2005), the interactive influences between New York and the art and fashion industries (Currid, 2007), and more localized bifurcations in identity and practice, such as between uptown or downtown New York art galleries (Rawlings, 2001). Spatially arrayed organizations can think locally but act globally (Marquis and Battilana, 2009), as they are

forced to situate themselves within local polities with local demands, as is the case with local music scenes in Manchester and Sheffield, England (Brown et al., 2000), and the global casino industry in California and South Africa (Sallaz, 2012). Regional variation in institutionalized demands can lead to different outcomes across geographic space, as is the case for New York chefs who face higher demands for conformity than San Francisco chefs (Leschziner, 2007), or through the indelible meaningfulness of national or regional identities, as is the case with the production of foie gras in France (DeSoucey, 2010), and the relationship between the Lord of the Rings and New Zealand (Jones and Smith, 2005). On the national stage, regional identity can also produce reputational advantage as regions become known for standardized differences (Phillips, 2013; Regev, 2011). Although neo-institutional field theory accurately captures the standardizing demands of national and international isomorphic pressures, it has more trouble explaining regional variation, and the presence of multiple, and sometimes competing, institutional logics within fields (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012).

From neo-institutional field theory, the empirical case that follows shows evidence of the effects of isomorphic pressures on peripheral organizations as well their strategic decoupling between action and stated frameworks for action. Yet neo-institutional field theory is unable to account for the particularities of the framework leveraged in this decoupling (i.e. negotiated identities), or, in its conception of singular fields, the competing isomorphic pressures faced when balancing participation in both a regional field and national field (i.e. multiple isomorphism).

Bourdieuian Field Theory

In contrast to the neo-institutional approach, the presence of conflicting and competing logics is part and parcel of Bourdieu's fields of cultural production. Bourdieu defines cultural fields as competitive arenas in which actors jostle for power while navigating constraints, competing for recognition through the leveraging of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. At stake is the 'monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of the works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated' (Bourdieu, 1993: 78). Like neo-institutionalists, Bourdieu conceives of actors within fields relationally, taking 'positions' and working to maximize their legitimacy within the space of possibles. These positions in social space are homologous to actors' habitus - that is, the cognitive frameworks of sense and meaning making that serve as 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). Rather than the singular standardizing force of neo-institutional field theory, Bourdieu's fields of cultural production are competitive arenas in which competing logics of orientation and action construct and rely on different metrics of what 'counts'. On the one hand, actors orient toward a logic of art for art's sake in which autonomy and recognition from within the field of participants is paramount, and on the other, actors orient toward a logic of profit for profit's sake in which status is consecrated through market success as producers orient toward broader consumer demand. As explicated in Bourdieu (1985), the art-for-art's-sake pole is constituted on a mode of production which is oriented toward the community of producers, and an investment in a principle of differentiation that depends on 'a speciality, a manner, a

style' (p. 19) in disposition, and an orientation toward the 'pure, abstract, and esoteric' (p. 23) in literature rather than 'cynicism of submission to the market' (p. 31).

While Bourdieu is more equipped than the neo-institutionalists to deal with competing frameworks for action, he too suffers shortcomings in the relational analysis of players in physical rather than relational space. This is partially due to Bourdieu's emphasis on dispositional space and his aversion to thinking of fields as situated in substantive relations, given that, from his perspective, 'to think in terms of field demands a conversion of the whole ordinary vision of the social world which fastens only on visible things', be they network relations or a geographic propensity for increased face-to-face interaction (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 96). Put another way, Bourdieu's fields of cultural production are interactive but not based on interaction, as their arrangements are instead conditioned on similarity and dissimilarity in positions. This causes Bourdieu to systematically overlook the role of physical space and interaction within it, and, as a result, the establishment of reputation and trust within fields in face-to-face interaction (Heebels, 2013), as well as the ways in which social (Laursen et al., 2012) and cultural (Benzecry, 2011) capitals can be highly localized and non-transferrable into wider field contexts. Likewise, and in direct contrast to the neo-institutional approach, in focusing his attention on actors and objects, Bourdieu largely overlooks the roles of organizations (Martin, 2003; Swartz, 1997). So too is Bourdieu unclear on the relationship of fields to other fields, sometimes referring to the dispositional conflicts between art for art's sake and profit for profit's sake as two poles of the same field (i.e. the 'autonomous' and 'heteronomous' poles in Bourdieu, 1983), and sometimes as two separate fields (i.e. the 'field of restricted production' and 'field of large-scale production' in Bourdieu, 1985).

From Bourdieusian field theory, the empirical case that follows shows evidence of the roles of social and cultural capital in both the national and regional fields, as well as the leveraging of an identity based upon autonomy, intra-field recognition, and a professed interest in literary 'cultural' values over profit-seeking in the regional field. Yet the Bourdieusian framework is incapable of clearly explicating 1) the conflicted isomorphic pressures that regional field participants face and how they go about balancing them, 2) the roles of geographic space and substantive interaction in field construction, and 3) the relationships *between* fields, which when understood through the strategic action framework may be seen to be both *nested* in other fields and ultimately *dependent* upon them.

Strategic Action Fields

Fligstein and McAdam (2012) define strategic action fields as 'constructed social orders that define an arena within which a set of consensually defined and mutually attuned actors vie for advantage' (p. 64). In a blending of organizational theory and social movements theory – which have both taken a renewed interest in culture – Fligstein and McAdam's field theory focuses on the roles of incumbents and challengers, framing, internal governance units, coalitions, resource mobilization, exogenous shocks, episodes of contention and settlement, and the role of 'social skill' in mobilizing change through strategic action. Given their emphasis on conflict and change, unlike Bourdieu and the neo-institutionalists, Fligstein and McAdam see fields as 'only rarely organized around a truly consensual "taken for granted" reality' (2012: 11).² Of central import in their

variation on field theory is that fields are embedded in broader environments, and are the building blocks of macro-social orders. On this point they also note that ‘virtually all of the previous work on fields... [focuses] only on the[ir] internal workings ... depicting them as largely self-contained, autonomous worlds’ (2012: 12). Instead, for Fligstein and McAdam, fields can be embedded in other fields and nested like Russian dolls. A field that requires the presence of another field to function can be ‘dependent’ and one that does not can be ‘independent’, and fields ‘with recurring ties to, and whose actions routinely affect, the field’ in question can be considered as ‘proximate’ fields, whereas those that do not can be considered as ‘distant’ (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 18).

Although Fligstein and McAdam’s notion of strategic action fields is the most recent of these three sociological approaches to field theory and therefore more equipped to both retroactively critique other approaches and shore up their shortcomings, their approach loses some of the specificity of the neo-institutional and Bourdieusian approaches. While critical of Bourdieu’s overly-deterministic micro-motivational conception of habitus, and of the reliance of neo-institutionalists on ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ (DiMaggio, 1988), it is unclear how Fligstein and McAdam’s actors with ‘social skill’ are any less created than Bourdieu’s, or how they more successfully sidestep accusations of ‘great man theory’ than DiMaggio and other neo-institutionalists.³ In turn, as part of a broader shift in sociological theory-making, Fligstein and McAdam build a wealth of flexibility into their approach, causing them to be particularly susceptible to the general critique that field theory runs the risk of being tautological (e.g. Hesse, 1970; Martin, 2003). While their flexibility offers significant benefits, it comes at the expense of testable hypotheses, such as whether firms do or do not face isomorphic pressures in the neo-institutional account, or if cultural fields are or are not bifurcated according to the logics of autonomous and heteronomous principles in the Bourdieusian account.

From strategic action field theory, the empirical case to follow shows evidence of the Bay Area literary field being both nested in and dependent on the national literary field as represented by New York. The *results* of this nesting and dependence, however, are best explicated through competing isomorphic pressures from the regional and national literary fields, which in practice are leveraged through the narration of an oppositional identity (which resonates with Bourdieu’s understanding of fields) which values autonomy in the construction of literary culture over more base concerns with financial profitability within the literary ‘business’.

Insights across Field Theories

Despite substantive variation, neo-institutional, Bourdieusian, and strategic action field theories share four key insights: 1) fields are meso-level social orders, in which 2) actors have a shared orientation to the field but heterogeneous self or normative interests within it, which 3) are dependent on their location in field, causing 4) variation in strategies to achieve dominance, power or control through the procurement of structural, physical, financial, or symbolic status and resources. From this baseline definition of agreement, and using the case study of a regional literary field, I provide evidence along three lines: 1) the regional field in question can be accurately described as a field which is nested in a proximate national field on which it depends, 2) causing participants to face isomorphic pressures both from the regional field and national field they are embedded in,

which 3) they respond to through leveraging Bourdieusian distinctions between art and commerce to legitimize their occupational identities and position.

Methods

Data for this article were collected through semi-structured interviews with over 100 publishing professionals on the east and west coasts of the United States, with a disproportionate focus on acquisition editors ($N=42$). Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, with the majority occurring over lunch, dinner, or coffee, with some interviews also occurring in respondents' offices, and occasionally over the phone. Although open-ended, the interview schedule asked respondents to narrate their entry into the industry and their current position, their typical process in working on a project, their activities on a typical day, the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of their jobs, how they saw their firm fitting into the industry, and who they went to with problems. The topic of regionalism was arrived at inductively early in the field work when respondents working in the Bay Area talked about the differences between their current jobs and previous jobs in New York, a topic that was also discussed by many respondents in the Bay Area who made regional distinctions when discussing how their firm fitted into the wider industry, and in their narrations of who they spoke with on typical days. While responses from both lifetime Bay Area employees and their counterparts who have had bi-coastal careers are used, respondents who have worked both inside and outside of Manhattan are treated as 'telling cases' (Mitchell, 1984).

Interview data are supplemented by a six month participant-observant organizational ethnography of an independent publishing house in the San Francisco Bay Area. One to four day-long visits to three other Bay Area publishing houses and three New York houses were also conducted, as well as ethnographic fieldwork at national and regional publishing conventions, writing workshops, author signings, and sundry formal and informal publishing events. In total, data collection spanned 20 months from August 2008 to April 2010.

For comparative clarity, data for this work are limited to firms with over US\$1,000,000 in annual revenue, formal office space, non-familial full-time employees, and which sometimes publish 'literary' fiction. For this research, the literary field in the San Francisco Bay Area is the primary site for analysis. The area is home to over 50 presses, as well as a concentration of authors, bookstores, a national distributor, and MFA programs in writing that both subsidize the incomes of the region's authors, and provide new talent and audiences for the region's work.

Findings

Orientation to, Participation in, and Pressures from the National Field

That publishers in the San Francisco Bay Area must both be mindful of, and be in the minds of, field participants outside of the region is unavoidable, as one cannot successfully operate and run a publishing house while only catering to a local market. Just as innovations in the jazz canon did not have to emerge in New York alone but had to flow

through New York to be recognized (Phillips, 2013), works of fiction – and even those that are written by authors from the west coast about characters living on the west coast and published by firms located on the west coast – must pass through New York to be successful. On the creation and production side, almost all non-self-published books pass from authors to literary agents and then to publishers. As well-known literary agent and blogger Nathan Bradford notes, one of the eight ways to know you have a ‘good agent’ is if he or she ‘either lives in New York or visits on a regular basis’ (Bradford, 2014). On the marketing, publicity and placement side, novels pass through reviewers and book-sellers before hopefully traveling into the hands of readers.

As David, the publisher and owner of Peach Tree Press in the Bay Area, notes, for a book to be successful it must be sold ‘twice’; first to the industry itself, so that reviewers can make consumers aware of its existence and to achieve placement in bookstores so that it is available to consume, and then second to consumers, who may or may not choose to consume it.⁴

This first ‘selling’ to the industry primarily occurs through two channels, both centered in New York: 1) participation in BookExpo America, and 2) securing reviews for new novels in national trade publications (e.g. *Publisher’s Weekly* and *Kirkus Reviews*, both with editorial offices in Manhattan) and in national print media (e.g. the *New York Times*, *New York Review of Books*, and the *New Yorker*).

Peach Tree Press rents a booth at the American Booksellers Association’s (ABA) BookExpo America, the annual ‘field configuring event’ at the Javitz Center in lower Manhattan, where they give away galley copies of their lead titles to bookstore representatives from around the country, as do most of the other major publishers in the Bay Area. With regards to securing reviews, as Samantha – a publicist for a Bay Area publisher who started her career in New York before moving west – noted, ‘I couldn’t do my job here if I hadn’t fostered those connections [while working in New York]’. Central to her job is to ‘cultivate a relationship, and then also for outlets that I already have a pretty established relationship, I’m just trying to maintain it’. This, takes at minimum one trip per publishing season to Manhattan, as many people ‘really want to schmooze, they want to talk a little bit more’. While the social capital Samantha possesses in New York is instrumental in getting placement for the book she represents, also important is that the publisher she works for, Peach Tree Press, is a known entity to the book editors for New York media outlets:

[we] have a really good reputation amongst reviewers. So if we say that we are the most excited about [a particular book] they’re going to definitely look at it.

David and Samantha, respectively owning a successful west coast publishing house and promoting books from within it, must be mindful of New York, and must be in the minds of those working in New York, which is what makes them players in the national field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Martin, 2003).

Yet all of these ties, trips, and formal and informal relationships to Manhattan exert coercive isomorphic pressures from the national field onto Bay Area publishers, as they cannot succeed without these connections, and are dependent on them for resources such as publicity and placement. They also face normative isomorphic pressures, as many

employees in the Bay Area, like Samantha, 'did time' in big New York firms before moving west, or first attended the summer Columbia University Publishing Course to learn from New York publishers and agents about how the industry works. These pressures cause Bay Area publishers, in both organizational form and day-to-day practice, in many ways to be indistinguishable from their conglomerate New York counterparts, if operating on a smaller scale. On both coasts, editorial and marketing and publicity staff are physically separated, yet they regularly interact and are sometimes co-present in meetings. Seasonal lists are built to meet targeted sales projections, which can most generously be described as legitimizing guesses (Childress, 2012), and lists are balanced between books intended to contribute quick shocks of revenue and books intended to contribute longer, if slower, sales on the backlist, in order to stabilize revenue during down times. On both coasts acquisition editors feel that too much of their days are taken up in meetings, and lament that they can usually only find time actually to read manuscripts on nights and weekends. The 'Big Four' conglomerates with offices in New York moved to an 'open-system' (Lopes, 1992) or 'federal' model (Thompson, 2010) of publishing in the 1990s, in which they diversified risk but maintained innovation through controlling multiple but largely autonomous imprints. At its founding in the 2000s, Peach Tree Press published under three separate imprints, while also owning the backlist of a fourth. Importantly, for David, one of those imprints even maintained office space in New York so that Peach Tree could have a formal presence there.

For New York transplant employees and Columbia Publishing Course graduates, moving to the Bay Area does not so much require the learning of new tasks, but rather involves learning a new way of being while accomplishing those tasks, and learning how to embrace the Bay Area field and conceptualize oneself as a part of it, without ever fully turning away from New York.

Orientation to, Participation in, and Pressures from the Regional Field

While Bay Area publishers face isomorphic pressures from New York because they are dependent on the national field for resources, talent and legitimacy, they also constitute a regional field with its own power relations, orientations, logics, relevant actors and identities. The region is home to locally and nationally celebrated authors such as Michael Chabon, Amy Tan, Michael Pollan, Maxine Hong Kingston, David Eggers and Isabel Allende, as well as members of the San Francisco Writer's Grotto such as Ethan Waters and Po Bronson. In the Bay Area there are over 50 publishing houses of varying size, as well as Publisher's Group West, the distributor now owned by Perseus Book Group. Influential 'major indy' bookstores such as City Lights in San Francisco and Book Passage in Corte Madera also populate the regional field, as do literary journals such as the Three Penny Review and online portal The Rumpus, and MFA programs in creative writing at Stanford, UC Berkeley, Mills College, St Mary's College, and San Francisco State which sponsor events and feed local authors to publishers.⁵

These diffuse players in the Bay Area literary field also coordinate around their own regional field configuring events, such as the annual Bay Area literary celebration, LitQuake, which for one week per year consists of over 400 author readings and attracts over 14,000 attendees. While BookExpo America is the national field configuring event

for the ABA that Bay Area publishers descend upon to gain national bookstore placement and national recognition as active players in the field, they also attend the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association (NCIBA), one of eight regional annual trade shows sponsored by the ABA in the United States. Whereas some New York presses bring out their lead author for the season to the regional events, the NCIBA is overwhelmingly populated by regional publishers promoting the works of regional authors to regional bookstores. That an author is local means that he or she can easily travel to readings and events, and also means that he or she may be more invested in the regional literary field and attend signings at bookstores that are ignored by national players. Through these regional field configuring events, highly localized and non-nationally transferrable forms of social and cultural capital are fostered and traded, and it is for these reasons that all of the nationally celebrated authors *from* the Bay Area are not equivalently celebrated by literary field players *in* the Bay Area, as they must dedicate time to cultivating local relationships, and to using their national reputations to contribute to the local field. Raquel, a buyer for a local bookstore, summarized Michael Chabon's status as not only a bestselling author and literary darling of the national field, but also of the regional field, due to his support of the local One Book Program:

From January through April he's expected to speak about 20 times and it's all on his dime. And Michael Chabon, who has better things to do, said yes. It's the generosity of his heart to do all of these little things for the whole four months [the One Book Program] runs. This guy's won a Pulitzer ... and he's got four kids and he writes a lot and he's a very busy man and he needs to be everywhere. And he said yes. And that's just one example.

A similar situation was noted by Daryl, another bookstore buyer, when describing partnerships between the regional literary field and local non-profit organizations:

We have Amy Tan, and Isabelle [Allende] have both done endless donating of their time for one benefit after another. And these people are very sought after and well known people. But they're just, they're great, they're really great.

While Raquel and Daryl cite positive examples, they also cite negative examples of nationally recognized authors who have little recognition in the regional field, as well as authors who are not big players on the national stage but whose social and cultural capital are highly localized (Benzecry, 2011; Laursen et al., 2012) and recognized by players in the Bay Area literary field.

Just as Bay Area publishers face isomorphic pressures to signal their legitimacy on the national stage, they also face isomorphic pressures to signal their legitimacy on the regional stage. While not always mirrored in organizational form and to some degree overstated, in practice, these legitimizing frameworks take on Bourdieusian principles of differentiation, such as orienting one's self to the community of producers, taking on a way of being that celebrates one's autonomy from the market and formal 'business', and professing a preference for abstract or esoteric works that are overlooked by the national field in New York. Mary, a New York transplant, most succinctly described the difference, 'The focus there [in New York] is the literary *business*. Here we're investing in literary *culture*' (emphases added). Ron, an acquisition editor, started his career in the Bay Area

and moved to New York because it better matched his dispositional market-focused orientation:

Here it's much, more intense, more competition, more intensity at every level than can possibly happen in [another] place. People go there [to the Bay Area] because it's a little bit more relaxed and a different attitude. The people that want to be right in the center of things and who want to run stuff are going to try to get to New York.

Mary echoes the intense, market-focused competition that infuses interaction in New York when noting, 'In New York, it's just very competitive in general and so even within the houses you feel like you're competing against the other editors'. In contrast to the competition of New York, according to respondents who have worked on both coasts, the Bay Area literary field is more oriented toward the community of producers, and actors within it rarely views themselves as in competition with other local producers. During my fieldwork, an editor at Peach Tree Press who had worked for Mandible Press had just organized a softball game between the presses. Participants noted that nobody talked about work, and the game was just to hang out, have fun and enjoy each other's company, part of a regional emphasis on seeing the value of friendship between ostensible competitors (Ingram and Roberts, 2000). The focus on business and productivity in New York is also reflected in differential demands in publicly performing the accomplishment of work, or taking on 'a manner, a style' that contributed to perceptions of productivity (Bourdieu, 1985: 19). Andrew clarifies this difference:

[In the Bay Area] there isn't the sense that you need to put in face time to be taken seriously. In New York I felt like you were expected to stay till 6:30 or 7:00 every night just as everyone else did but it didn't really matter if you were getting your work done. And here people work from home one day a week and it's really about doing your job and not so much about like making it look like you're doing your job.

These demands also extend to one's 'off-hours', as the implicit expectation that one should use one's 'free time' to network is not uncommon in media industries, and is a frequent source of tension (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Neff et al., 2005). Sarah, who felt that not having a large expense account once she had moved to the Bay Area was 'liberating', explained that 'schmoozing around lunches and then after work drinks is so much more important in New York than it is here. I started to feel as if there was pressure from all of my social circles to somehow serve my work'. Hannah echoed Sarah's summary, pointing to less pressure for business-oriented and instrumental social interaction in the regional field:

In New York you're constantly in face-to-face contact with agents and other editors, you see them at events, you go to lunch, you have drinks, whereas here it's a smaller world ... It's more about fostering a sense of the literary community here. If you meet with people it's just to meet with them, rather than to build relationships in the hopes of doing business with them one day.

Compared to New York, workers in the Bay Area's regional literary field felt they had the free time to engage more deeply in literary culture, and were also encouraged to do so.

Rather than their social lives being taken up by utilitarian appointments, they found themselves more frequently speaking with ‘readers, aspiring writers, just people in the independent bookstore world’. They weren’t just meeting with ‘industry people’ and could spend time talking to ‘potential consumers or practitioners of the art’. Sarah described spending a day with her boss on a field trip, going to independent galleries, a festival, small independent bookstores and national chains just to ‘see what’s on the shelves’. This was remarkably different from the field orientation toward work she experienced in New York, where it ‘was just business, instead of spending a day out in the world to come up with book ideas’.

In the regional literary field, according to Hannah who adopts a kind of Bourdieusian stance to the difference between the Bay Area and New York, ‘the culture of it is just much more creative, we’re expected to come up with ideas and generate our own projects’, which was framed in contrast to New York’s world of business and ‘straightforward publishing’ where ‘there was a bottom line and [more] emphasis on profitability’. Although employees in the regional field, such as Andrew, acknowledged that they are ‘definitely driven by the same business model’, they also felt that even in comparison to the independent houses in New York ‘culture wise it’s just much less corporate and less top down’. This distinction made by Andrew in which ways of ‘doing’ remain the same but ways of ‘being’ diverge and take on a localized coloring characterized many of the subtle distinctions which respondents leveraged.

The perceived freedom of time to invest in literary culture rather than literary business, as well as the familial attitude of the regional field – or orientation towards maintaining good relations and positive appraisal within the community of producers – was most clearly expressed in reference to socializing with authors one did not represent and was not trying to represent, which was quite common in the Bay Area. In the field of large-scale production in New York, where one’s status is defined by one’s success in having acquired best-selling books, socializing with others’ authors was viewed with suspicion; it may be an attempt to poach them. Yet in the regional field of restricted production, in which status is defined through the esteem of one’s peers, editors could more freely socialize with authors they did not represent, as poaching an author would ultimately diminish their capital among producers in the regional field rather than expand it.

In line with a restricted field identity, respondents felt that this alternative orientation and freedom to participate more broadly in literary culture allowed them to publish different types of books, and what they considered to be more innovative or off-kilter books, or the ‘pure, abstract, and esoteric’ in Bourdieu’s terms (Bourdieu, 1985: 23). Gerald, an editor with a Bay Area publisher, makes the distinction by noting that ‘there are projects [i.e. submitted manuscripts] that we ask ourselves, “well why would *we* do this over a New York house?”’ As an example, he offered that this is the case ‘especially if it’s a novel that takes place in Brooklyn or something ... which we’ve seen plenty of’. Gerald thinks that part of not working in New York is being able to take an off-center regional author onto the national stage, instead of publishing books set in Brooklyn like ‘all the New York presses’. Gerald’s account, and others’, however, should not be viewed simply as freedom to do what one wants. Instead, in the regional field there is pressure, in terms of the presentation of one’s work, *not* to orient toward the national field by publishing Brooklyn-based novels, *not* to network ‘too much’ in a utilitarian way, and *not* to focus ‘too much’ on profitability.

While Bay Area respondents adopt terms reminiscent of Bourdieu's understanding of restricted production, they do so within a context which goes beyond the boundaries of Bourdieu's understanding of fields. For Bay Area publishers, the regional literary field exists in both social and geographic space, and its capitals are often highly localized and non-transferrable within the wider literary field. Rather than occupying space at a particular pole, in reality they work in two fields – one of which is nested within and dependent upon another – and must balance competing isomorphic pressures between them.

Balancing Regional and National Pressures

Facing competing isomorphic pressures, one from a dependent regional field which professes an orientation toward literary 'culture', and the other from a proximate national field oriented toward literary 'business', requires acts of balancing for authors, publishing employees and publishing houses. Just as local authors may be reputationally diminished by not being local contributors, and editors may be viewed with suspicion if they are 'too' oriented to New York, publishing houses also must balance competing demands. The cases of Mandible Press, Peach Tree Press, and Anthem Press, all of which are located in the Bay Area and take different approaches to balancing these competing fealties, serve as illustrative examples.

Mandible Press is deeply and near-universally respected in the regional field, as their well-known founder dedicates significant time and resources to local causes, including Mandible's substantial non-profit work with adolescents. Mandible Press, probably more so than any other press in the Bay Area, has driven the national reputation of the regional field as 'something different', because of their atypical organizational structure and their distinctive and often off-center books. Yet in investing so heavily in the regional field, Mandible also actively works to keep the national field at arm's length, although they still participate in it. Unlike other regional publishers of their size, Mandible does not rent formal space at BookExpo America, although they are there, and also host their own after-hours literary event close to the convention but outside of its formal space. Mandible, which participates in the national field, is circumspect while doing so.

In contrast to Mandible Press, Peach Tree Press takes a more negotiated stance between the regional field and the proximate national field on which regional players still depend. While very well respected in the regional field due to their participation in it, and their founder's deep investment in preserving independent publishing, some regional participants made non-complimentary remarks about their New York-like collection of different imprints, and their orientation toward publishing as a generalist firm rather than as a quirky or niche specialist publisher, the latter being marks of status in the regional field. Peach Tree, which equally weights the competing pressures they face, are forever insider-outsiders in both spaces.

In the third telling case, Anthem Press, although located in the Bay Area and very well known, was seen by some regional players as being *too* oriented toward the national field. As one respondent described their presence in the regional field, 'they're here, but they're not "here"'. They have offices here, if that makes sense'. While physically located in the Bay Area, for some Bay Area respondents Anthem Press was not seen as an active or consistent player in the Bay Area field. Although in practice the day-to-day life of

working at Anthem was no different than working at Peach Tree, decoupled from such practice was a critique of Anthem's *orientation*; their manner, style and tastes were too New York-focused to be consistently viewed with legitimacy in the Bay Area field.

Discussion

Despite an impressive level of academic work on the US literary field, to date, the culture and commerce of publishing outside of New York have not been subjected to sociological analysis, causing scholarship to overlook regional subfields of the industry outside of New York and the competing pressures which actors within those subfields must navigate. Relying on interviews and participant-observer research, this work intervenes in the study of the US literary field by centering the analysis on a regional field of American book publishing that is dependent on the proximate national field for both legitimacy and sales, but also involves actors who are dependent on the regional field for a sense of group identity and purpose.

Drawing on organizational field theory, this paper provides evidence of isomorphic pressures on both individuals and organizations, as the dependence on resources, the regularity with which employees were trained in New York, and the inherent uncertainty that is a normal feature of cultural production, all exert pressures on regional players to signal their legitimacy on the New York stage. Neo-institutional theory, which envisions a singular field, more commonly finds that in decoupling processes, organizations are more heterodox in practice than they are in policy and presentation. Yet in line with strategic action field theory, this paper shows that normalizing pressures are not unidirectional, and instead, that the regional field also exerts its own legitimizing pull, despite being nested in the national field. As a result, in these data, there is a decoupling in which policies and presentation between the regional and national fields diverge while practice in both fields remains more similar.

These distinctions in presentation are narrated by Bay Area participants through a Bourdieu-style distinction between a restricted and a large-scale field of production; one focused on autonomy and esteem among the field of producers, and the other on a market orientation and esteem based on sales. This form of decoupling, perhaps a response to contending isomorphic pressures, calls into question the degree to which respondents are narrating their lived realities, rather than signaling their allegiances to differing legitimizing frameworks that exist on a gradation rather than at competing poles. That publishing professionals in the Bay Area are not always leaving the office as early as they claim, just as publishing professionals in New York are not always leaving the office as late as they claim, does not diminish these findings, and instead, what may be an overstated variation of practice in narration is a mark of the competing pressures regional field players face. While there are some differences (in gradation), in practice and organizational culture in the regional and national fields, just like their corollaries in New York, Bay Area editors' nights and weekends are still largely dedicated to reading, and Bay Area firms still publish some titles to generate quick sales, and other titles to contribute to their backlists or because they believe that the work 'must be' published.

These findings are not meant to imply that by definition all regional scenes must be fields, or that all cultural fields must have nested regional fields within them. While this is possible, these are empirical questions and in need of analysis across a diversity of sites, both within the literary field and beyond it in other cultural fields. To date, despite

cultural research occurring across a diverse array of locales (Markuson, 2013), the sociological analysis of cultural fields in the United States has almost exclusively centered its focus on geographic industry cores, such as Los Angeles for film (e.g. Faulkner, 1985; Scott, 2005; Zafirau, 2008) and television (e.g. Bielby and Bielby, 1994; Gitlin, 1994), and New York for art (e.g. Currid, 2007), fashion (e.g. Mears, 2011) and book publishing (e.g. Coser et al., 1982; Thompson, 2010). The degree to which cultural production exists outside of these cores, the degree to which non-core areas constitute fields, and how actors balance their regional identities in relation to the cores if required, are all issues in need of further sociological analysis.

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Notes

1. This statistic is based on registered businesses in the United States, and does not speak to sales or market share, which are much lower.
2. For an alternative account of the relationship between social movement theory and cultural change, see Baumann (2007). For an alternative account of dynamic change in fields more generally, see Beckert (2010), and for an application to the US literary field, see Childress (2011).
3. For a general critique of the paucity of focus on deliberate cognition in field theory more broadly, see Leschziner and Green (2013).
4. Pseudonyms are used for respondents and for publishing houses.
5. For a spatially arrayed view of the major players in the Bay Area literary field, see the *San Francisco Chronicle's* interactive map: <http://www.sfchronicle.com/theliterarycity/>.

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