

How Fields Vary¹

Abstract:

Field theorists have long insisted that research needs to pay attention to the particular properties of each field studied. But while much field-theoretical research is comparative, either explicitly or implicitly, scholars have only begun to develop the language for describing the dimensions along which fields can be similar to and different from each other. In this context, this paper articulates an agenda for the analysis of variable properties of fields. It discusses variation in the degree but also in the kind of field autonomy. It discusses different dimensions of variation in field structure: fields can be more or less hierarchical, and more or less contested. The structure of symbolic oppositions in a field may take different forms. Lastly, it analyses the dimensions of variation highlighted by research on fields on the sub- and transnational scale. Post-national analysis allows us to ask about how fields relate to fields of the same kind on different scales, and it allows us to ask about the role resources from other scales play in structuring symbolic oppositions within fields. A more fine-tuned vocabulary for field variation can help us better describe particular fields and it is a precondition for generating hypotheses about the social conditions under which we can expect to observe fields with specified characteristics.

Keywords: Fields, Bourdieu, Field autonomy, Field structure, Symbolic differentiation, transnational fields

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Introduction

The concept of field has inspired decades of research across sociological subfields with contributions, for example, to the sociology of art (Bourdieu 1993, 1995; Sapiro 2003a, 2003b), the sociology of media (e.g. Champagne 1991; Marchetti 2002; Benson and Neveu 2005; Benson 2013), religion (McKinnon, Trzebiakowska, and Brittain 2011), and science (Bourdieu 1975; Albert and Kleinman 2011; Panofsky 2014). Initially focused on national fields, there is now a significant body of research that also includes sub- (e.g. McQuarrie 2013), supra (e.g. Go 2008), and transnational fields (e.g. Hagan and Levi 2005; Guilhot 2005; Dezalay and Garth 2006; Go and Krause 2016b).

Field theorists, starting with Bourdieu, have long insisted that research needs to pay attention to the particular properties of each field studied. But scholars have only begun to use observations arising from individual studies to systematically develop the language for describing variation among fields (but see Calhoun 1993; Benson 2005, 2013; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Gorksi 2012). There has been no dedicated discussion of the variable properties of fields discussed in the writings of Pierre Bourdieu and the tradition as a whole as it has developed in research using his work.

This paper articulates the agenda for a more systematic analysis of the variable properties of fields. It builds on distinctions among fields drawn by Bourdieu and discussed in later work and draws more generally on work that compares different fields, either explicitly or implicitly, seeking to exploit the comparisons accumulated by the tradition for an exercise of variation-finding as we might call it, using the term coined by Charles Tilly (1984).

A more fine-tuned vocabulary for describing field variation has several advantages. Firstly, it allows us to better describe particular fields. It is one of the promises of field theory to help avoid duplication of work - across studies of artistic, political, or religious practice, for example - and to allow investigations in different sociological subfields to speak to each other. This potential can be better exploited if findings about any particular case, including Bourdieu's own findings, are not just 'applied' to other cases but rather are compared to findings about other cases and to the different claims implied by different field theoretical hypotheses. Secondly, a systematic discussion of field variation is the basis for generating hypotheses about the social conditions under which we can expect to observe fields with specified characteristics. Lastly, a more fine-tuned vocabulary for describing field variation can also allow us to speak better to concerns about the different kinds of outcomes that different kinds of fields may enable, and with that to the various normative concerns that sometimes shape the discussion about fields in implicit ways.

This paper will begin by briefly reviewing the heritage of the field theoretical tradition in order to discuss some of the presuppositions and some of the limits of the argument developed here. In the second section, I will review some of the reservations one might have about formalising the description of field variation because these reservations point to important trade-offs that we should consider going forward. I will then discuss two kinds of variation among fields. Firstly, I will discuss variation in the degree but also in the kind of field autonomy: depending on their relationship to other fields, fields can be autonomous in different ways. Secondly, I will discuss variation in field structures: fields can be more or less hierarchical, and more or less contested. The structure of symbolic

oppositions may take different forms. In the last section, the paper will discuss the dimensions of variation highlighted by research on fields on the sub- and transnational scale. When we consider how fields co-exist with other fields on different scales, we can ask new questions about field autonomy and field structure: Post-national analysis allows us to ask about how fields relate to fields of the same kind on other scales; and it allows us to ask about the role resources from other scales play in structuring symbolic oppositions within a particular field.

‘Field’ as a Hypothesis for Meso-level Relationships

The field-theoretical tradition consists of two elements: on the one hand, it entails a specific *approach*, which it brings to all objects of analysis, and on the other hand, it has generated a set of *hypotheses* about fields and about specific kinds of fields, which need to be examined empirically for every case. As part of its approach, field theory tends to conceive of its objects relationally; that is the focus is on relationships, not on entities (Emirbayer 1997; Martin 2003; Hilgers and Mangez 2014). It is worth noting that on a general level, field theory shares this feature with network theory (e.g. White 1992; Erikson 2013), actor-network theory (Latour 2005; Latour et al 2012), and, in principle, with the structuralist approaches that have shaped much of contemporary cultural studies (de Saussure 2004 [1916], Barthes 1993 [1957]).

Among relational sociological approaches, field theory focuses specifically on relationships between actors – individual or corporate – that take each other into account, either directly (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Fligstein 2001;

see also White 2002) or, for Bourdieu, through an orientation towards the shared stakes of a field. Building on these features of its general approach, field theory offers a set of hypotheses that can be examined empirically in relation to specific cases.

Different variants of field theory have different ideas about what constitutes of field. We could in principle call all relationships whereby actors are oriented towards each other a 'field'. It would be possible for example to speak of the field of kinship, or the field of sexual relations (Martin and George 2006), or to speak of organizations or social movements as fields (Fligstein and McAdam 2011; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; see also Emirbayer and Johnson 2008). In this paper I reserve the term field for the more specific case of actors who consider each other relevant with regard to specific professional or specialized practices, on which the bulk of field-theoretical research has focused (see also Lahire 2014). In that sense, the variation among fields discussed in this paper is only part of a more general study of variation in social spaces and forms.

Fields in this narrow sense are studied by a number of traditions, which have tended to describe fields in different ways for theoretical as well as historical reasons: Bourdieu comes out of the differentiation theoretical tradition, building on Kant (1992[1794]) and Weber 1958 [1915], see Lahire 2014). Scholars here initially had in mind specific fields such as art, religion or science, which are organized around a distinct 'highest value.'

Bourdieu offers specific hypotheses based on his analysis of such fields: he suggests that fields are shaped by competition for a specific type of symbolic capital; and he leads us to expect a certain pattern of symbolic differentiation among positions in the field.

Neo-institutional approaches have used the concept of 'field' to emphasize shared norms

rather than competition (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). This paper takes the Bourdieusian tradition as its starting point, but also considers work in the neo-institutional tradition. My aim in reading work in different traditions is to ask about ways in which we can use the differences in emphasis, which are usually treated as *theoretical* differences for generating competing hypothesis that can be put in dialogue with empirical observations about specific cases. I will return to this point below in my discussion of field structure.

Why *not* to Formalize Dimensions of Field - Variation

The basis for the formal description of fields and field-variation is laid in Bourdieu's work, and some authors in the tradition he established have made pertinent interpretations and observations (Calhoun 1993; Benson 1999, 2005, 2006, 2013; Gorski 2013; Bourdieu, Champagne and Wacquant 2013). But the tradition as a whole has been hesitant to fully embrace formal discussion of field variation. In the section that follows, I want to suggest that the reasons for this are not trivial; they are worth examining in some depth because they are instructive in different ways. To the extent that this hesitation points to potential costs of a formalization of properties and comparative analysis, these costs need to be born in mind as we consider how to balance the costs and benefits of particular strategies in individual research projects and in research traditions as collective efforts.

Firstly, there is a long tradition in the social sciences of arguing that there is a tension between thick description and good interpretation on the one hand and classification and

comparative analysis on the other hand (see Steinmetz 2004, 2014). As Rodney Benson (2005) has pointed out, the Bourdieusian tradition has valued comprehensive analysis and thick description. Ideally, a field study includes a study of the historical genesis and context of a field and considers structural factors and actors' orientation at the same time. These virtues could be perceived to be in tension with a move towards categorization and more formal comparison.

This line of arguing raises an important issue. It is true that contextualising the analysis of a field in relation to other forms a field could take sometimes may be at the expense of situating it in a context that is historically or culturally specific. I would argue, though, that this is more because of opportunity costs in any given study, than because these are in principle incompatible. Comparison can also add to the project of grasping particularity by making forms of particularity visible that would otherwise be naturalized (see also Benson 2005). Here the debate in sociology echoes an anthropological debate that has been very critical of comparisons but has also always again re-discovered comparisons as a tool for analyzing diversity as well as shared patterns (see e.g. Barnes 1973; Kuper 2002; Fox and Gingrich 2002).

Bourdieusians, secondly, have at times been hesitant to focus on the formal status of the concept of field because they have been reluctant to isolate a concern with fields from the intellectual context of Bourdieu's work as a whole. This context is conceived with different emphases: on the one hand, the concept of field is closely linked to the concept of habitus, practice, and capital in Bourdieu's work. Comparing other work to Bourdieu's, it is then common for critics to lament the fact that one of these concepts is used without the others, for example that the concept of field is used without habitus, practice, or

capital (e.g. Emirbayer and Johnson 2008). Keeping this set of concepts in play at the same time is certainly a very important part of what enabled Bourdieu to produce such comprehensive and original work in a context that had been shaped by a division between structuralist and phenomenological approaches.

However, we can also note that some of the fissures, which Bourdieu strove to overcome, re-emerge in later work inspired by Bourdieu, which tends to be strong either in its account of habitus and practice (see e.g. O'Connor 2006; Wacquant 2007), or in its account of field dynamics (e.g. Hjellbrekke et al 2007; Medvetz 2012; Mudge and Vauchez 2012; Mudge and Vauchez 2016). Given this, in addition to continuing efforts to combine attention to field, practice, and habitus in specific studies, it might also be productive to more explicitly explore where the strengths of particular concepts lead us if we put them at the centre of dedicated research programs (see also Lahire 2014).

If one context of the concept of field that scholars identifying with Bourdieu's work are reluctant to lose is the context of other concepts in Bourdieu's work, the other is a substantive concern with inequality, social hierarchy, and the reproduction of power relations. A lot of research inspired by Bourdieu has focused on inequality, and in some of this work the notion of 'field' is used in the general sense of 'social field' rather than with particular attention to the differentiation of spheres associated with modern societies. This has been especially prominent in British sociology, where research on organizations and professions is relatively less central to sociology than in the US or Germany, for example (but see e.g. Couldry 2003; Thompson 2005, 2010; McKinnon, Trzebiakowska, and Brittain 2011;). There is a tension among Bourdieu's own studies of fields, some of which are primarily concerned to show how positions in fields relate to

class positions of origin (e.g. Bourdieu and St. Martin 1982) and others focus more on intra-professional distinctions (e.g. Bourdieu 1995).

Substantive concerns about inequality and power are at the core of the sociological tradition, but to associate the concept of field exclusively with these concerns might lead us to explore only selectively what the concept of field has to offer as a tool for describing patterns and aspects of social order. An inquiry into the formal status of the concept of field means bracketing inequality and power as the *starting points* of the inquiry. The patterns that are revealed by such an inquiry can then themselves be interrogated with regard to their implications for power and inequality (see Schwinn 2004).

There is a third factor that has held back an inquiry into field variation, which has less to do with the intellectual costs of formalizing description and more to do with the way theoretical schools are formed and function in the social sciences. Processes of school formation and personalization, in the social sciences, but particularly in social theory, can encourage scholars to relate empirical findings back to existing founding texts, rather than work to develop and differentiate the conceptual vocabulary. In this context, I would argue that developing our understanding of field variation is an important part of maintaining and developing field theory as a progressive research programme. Borrowing the terms of Imre Lakatos (Lakatos and Feyerabend 1999), I would call a degenerative research programme one that applies its concepts and hypothesis to the world and seeks data to confirm their usefulness – this is perhaps inevitably a feature of some of the published work in any theoretical school; a progressive research programme is one that that is also sensitive to provocation by empirical research and uses new findings to

develop and differentiate its vocabulary and specify its hypotheses.

Dimensions of Field-Variation

Variation in Autonomy

The property of fields most prominently discussed as varying in research drawing on Bourdieu is 'autonomy'. I shall review the studies by Bourdieu, which speak to the point that fields can be more or less autonomous, before discussing the limits of asking only about *degrees* in field autonomy. Bourdieu has an argument about autonomy as a variable in his explicitly historical writings: According to Bourdieu, fields have developed as contingent outcomes of processes we might call modernization in the 19th and early 20th century. When fields emerge, they become more autonomous.

In his analysis, the field of art, for example, only emerges in the mid 19th-century (Bourdieu 1995). The practices associated with art such as writing, or painting, of course have a much longer history. But those engaged in these practices were initially directly dependent on political patronage and specific clients. As art becomes organized as a relatively autonomous field, actors are at least to some extent guided by the norms of the field, and the pursuit of field-specific capital. Relatively autonomous fields have the capacity to organize field-specific practices and have a logic or law of their own.

Bourdieu also diagnoses a loss of field autonomy in some of his writing. This theme is particularly strong in his late work on neo-liberalism: Bourdieu argues that neo-liberal reforms threaten to collapse the separation between economics and politics and between

economics and science (Bourdieu 1998). This account echoes concerns in his earlier work about the politicization of academia associated with the movements of ‘1968’ (Bourdieu 1990; see Calhoun 2013). Others have followed both with accounts of field emergence (Chalaby 1998, Ferguson 1998; see also Armstrong 2002, 2005) and loss of field autonomy (Strand 2011; Maton 2005; McQuarrie 2010).

Bourdieu also makes comparisons across different fields with regard to autonomy. He notes, for example, that the degree of autonomy from demands of elites varies across different scientific fields (Bourdieu 1975). He suggests that the social sciences are less autonomous than the natural sciences because the legitimate representations of the social world, which it claims to produce, are also stakes in the political field. He argued that both biology and sociology at the time of his writing in the 1970s were less autonomous in this regard than physics in Einstein's time.

Variations of Autonomy

While some field-theoretical work has addressed varying degrees in field autonomy, scholars have only rarely discussed how fields can be autonomous in different ways. The idea that field autonomy takes only one form may be related to the heritage of normative assumptions associated with the term, which are only rarely discussed explicitly. ‘Field autonomy’ is sometimes referred to as though this was a good thing: Bourdieu at times implies that field autonomy helps a field serve its particular purpose, and his account of the loss of field autonomy under neoliberalism is certainly critical and perhaps mournful (see Calhoun 2013). But Bourdieu also writes, ‘Autonomy can lead to ‘egoistic’ closing

in on the specific interests of the people engaged in the field' (Bourdieu 2005: 45). In these remarks, Bourdieu seems closer to a notion of 'self-referentiality,' the term used by Niklas Luhmann for the internal closure of functional sub-systems, which explicitly rejects expectations that systems might make contributions to some greater good as naive (Luhmann 1987, 1988, 1999; see McCarthy 1985 and Habermas 1985).

If we abandon both the notion that there is one (good) way for a field to fulfill a particular function, and the idea that the differentiation of spheres is inherently harmful, we can ask open questions about how field autonomy is practiced under particular conditions, but also how we can group particular forms of field autonomy using field-theoretical categories of analysis. In these terms, we can distinguish different forms of autonomy based on different positions a field as a whole might have in the overall architecture of fields that it is embedded in.

Relatively autonomous fields can be closer to specific kinds of other fields, and further from others. Rodney Benson has developed this point most explicitly in his comparative study of the journalistic field in France and the United States (Benson 2013). He suggests that the French journalistic field is closer to the French political field but more insulated from pressures of the economic field; the US field of journalism is closer to the economic field but further from the US field of politics (Benson 2013).

Fields can be vulnerable to elite or to popular sources of pressure within other fields. If a field is close to the political field, for example, it can be closer to the state or closer to pressures from social movements below (Bourdieu 1994: 3). When Michael Schudson writes, 'a democrat should not want journalism to be as self-enclosed and separated from

outside pressures as mathematics and poetry' (Schudson 2005: 218), he implicitly distinguishes between popular and elite incursions on autonomy, reminding us of the link between the former and the value of democratic control of professional practice.

More generally, we can examine the ways in which any given field is linked to other fields, or not (Fligstein and McAdam 2012, Hess and Frickel 2014). It is important to note that more links do not necessarily mean less field autonomy in the way Bourdieu used the term. We can recall, for example, that a growing dependency on markets enabled the autonomy of journalism (Chalaby 1998). The fact that markets for information, and advertising were emerging, enabled actors in this fields to emancipate themselves from political patronage; they traded one form of dependency for another, but were able to gain a space for setting their own terms in the new configuration. In a different period of history, journalistic practice seems to have depended on political regulation and protection from market forces (Krause 2011, Benson 2013).

This underscores the importance of examining the kind as well as the degree of links. We can ask about how and at what cost field-specific capital can be converted from one field to another. Drawing on work in science and technology studies, these links can be further broken down for particular fields and with attention to socio-material aspects of these links. In addition to examining what it is that is being transported across links - such as different kinds of capital - we can examine in some detail the technologies and devices that are doing the linking and their history and implications.

To use the example of the links between the journalistic field and the economic field, we can distinguish between journalism's links with owners, advertisers or audiences (Benson

2005). Journalism, like other fields of cultural production, are linked to the audiences for their products, and with that to the economic field, via a changing set of technologies and media that may be fruitfully examined in terms of the kind of autonomy it helps shape. In other examples, restaurant reviews link the field of gastronomy to the journalistic field (Ferguson 1998; Leszschiner 2015), and grant proposals are very important for linking the field of development NGOs to the state.

Variation in Field Structure

Research has revealed variation in the way fields are structured. At the most fundamental level, research can investigate how positions in a given field are filled, that is how people with specific backgrounds are allocated to positions (Bourdieu 1990, Bourdieu and de St Martin 1982). This is an important question given its implications for our understanding of social mobility. But to only ask that question would mean to take the properties of a field's structures themselves for granted. We can distinguish between questions about the allocation of positions and questions about field structure properly, defined as the way positions in a field are differentiated from each other - or are not differentiated from each other. Some of this variation is explicitly addressed in specific studies, others can be gleaned from observing different studies, and from observing different traditions of studying fields.

Field structures can be examined with regard to three dimensions of variation: firstly, the degree of consensus and contestation in a given field; secondly, the nature of the symbolic oppositions in a given field; and thirdly the distribution of different types of

capital across positions. These variations in field structure describe fields at a given point in time; combining observations across time, we can make diagnosis along a fourth dimension of variation, that of ‘settledness’ (Steinmetz 2005, 2007b) or field stability (Fligstein and McAdam 2012).

Regarding the first dimension, it is worth recalling that, historically, there has been a division between approaches that emphasize the shared assumptions and practices in a field and those that emphasize competition and symbolic divisions. Neo-institutional approaches have used the concept of ‘field’ to emphasize shared norms, partly to draw attention to culture and norms as relatively independent of technical demands and efficiency criteria (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). In the work of Bourdieu we also find an account of shared understandings in a field when he discusses the ‘rules of the game’ and in the notion of ‘doxa;’ but he tends to emphasize competition and symbolic divisions among actors in a field.² Rather than ask ‘who is right?’ about fields in general, we can ask, ‘how do different fields vary along this axis?’ or ‘how much are implicit assumptions shared and how much are they contested?’

To the extent that symbolic contestations matter, we can ask about the form that contestation takes in a particular field. Bourdieu draws on Durkheim and the structuralist philosophy of language to analyse the symbolic oppositions that structure the ways positions within fields are differentiated from each other. He adds an institutional dimension to work that has shown how the opposition between ‘the sacred’ and ‘the profane’ shape discourses in different realms (Durkheim 1965 [1912]). It is commonly emphasized that field positions are structured around an autonomous pole, high in field-

specific capital and a heteronomous pole high in other forms of capital. This usually leads to two-dimensional maps of the fields in question. But some later studies indicate that the kind of oppositions that structure symbolic competition can vary, especially because the sources of heteronomy can be quite varied.

A study of the field of international humanitarian relief suggests, for example, that the divisions and debates within it are structured by an opposition between a two-fold autonomous pole on the one hand and a range of positions that are heteronomous in different ways (Krause 2014). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Doctors without Borders (MSF) occupy slightly different positions of autonomy, the former somewhat close to sovereign states, the latter slightly closer to social movements and non-state actors. Resources from the religious field, from local states, social movement and donor governments are all considered sources of symbolic pollution in different ways within this field.

Other findings pertain to a conversation about variation in the kind of symbolic oppositions that shape fields. In their study of the Norwegian field of power, Johs Hjellbrekke and colleagues point out that in addition to the commonly emphasized opposition between field-specific capital – in this case political capital - and economic capital, the tension between established groups and newcomers also matter (Hjellbrekke et al. 2007; see also Bourdieu 1995 and Denord et al. 2011). Scholars who analyse the media industry point out that the opposition between ‘high’ and ‘low’ occurs within the mass-market end of cultural production (Champagne 2005 cited in Hesmondhalgh 2006; Hesmondhalgh 2006).

Antoine Vauchez and Stephanie Mudge point to a limit case in terms of the structure of symbolic competition in fields. They note that ‘weak fields’ such as the scholarly field of European studies do have symbolic competition but one cannot observe an autonomous pole at all (Vauchez 2008, 2011; Mudge and Vauchez 2012). This seems also to be the case for the American field of think tanks, analysed by Thomas Medvetz as an interstitial field between academia, the state, and journalism (Medvetz 2008, 2012; see also Eyal 2002, 2013; Stampnitzky 2011, 2013; Panofsky 2014).

The third dimension of variation in field structure is the distribution of capital across positions in a field, which can be more or less unequal. Bourdieu, writing on science, notes that the structure of a field ‘can vary between two theoretical limits, which are in fact never reached: at one extreme the situation of a monopoly of the specific capital of scientific authority and at the other the situation of perfect competition, which would imply equal distribution of this capital among all the competitors’ (Bourdieu 1975: 29).

Bourdieu, alluding to the Catholic Church, notes that in the limit case of extreme centralization, one would speak of a ‘corps’ rather than a field (cited in Sapiro 2013: 73).

Another example of strong hierarchy is the discipline of economics as analysed by Marion Fourcade. She notes that US economics, and to some extent, economics as a global profession is characterized by a very clear hierarchy of positions. She notes that ‘the top American economics departments represent the vast majority of the authoritative work produced by the discipline and they exercise a significant amount of hierarchical control over the rest of the field ...’ (Fourcade 2006: 1971). This clear internal hierarchy, combined with weak professional credentialization, has helped economics establish its global influence, also vis-à-vis other forms of expertise.

I would note that hierarchy and consensus must be distinguished in principle: a strong consensus might be the result of hierarchy and power relationships but it might not be. It might be arrived at relatively freely, or it might be due to the technical nature of some fields. Conversely, strong hierarchy may produce a consensus or it might not. Powerful actors might not seek to establish consensus and if they do, they might face intense contestation along with compliance (Gorski 2012).

Post-national Analysis and Field Variation

Having analysed variation in degrees and forms of field autonomy as well as variation in field structures, I now discuss the forms of variation that become visible when we consider fields on scales other than the national. Based on a casual reading one might accuse Bourdieu of methodological nationalism: his own studies, including the classic *The Rules of Art* (1995) and *Homo Academicus* (1990), have mostly been of fields organized on the national level. But as Gisèle Sapiro has argued, Bourdieu's work offers significant resources for the analysis of fields on different scales (Sapiro 2013; Go and Krause 2016a). Bourdieu's work is a resource for sociological studies beyond the nation-state because, firstly, a field-theoretical approach calls for establishing relevant research objects empirically based on observed relationships, rather than assuming isolated units of analysis such as individuals or nation-states as the starting point of the investigation. Secondly, building on this and the classical sociological tradition, Bourdieu makes the nation-state an explicit target of his analysis (Bourdieu 1994). Because Bourdieu develops a historical account of how states and national fields have formed, his work

enables questions about other possible forms that political orders and fields may take.

A number of studies have used field theory for sub- (Scott et al. 2000; McQuarrie 2013), and transnational cases (e.g. Dezalay and Garth 1996, 2002a, 2002b, 2006; Bigo 2000, 2007; Guilhot 2005; Steinmetz 2007a, 2008; Heilbron, Guilholt and Jeanpierre 2008; Lebaron 2010; Cohen 2011; Mudge and Vauchez 2012; Vauchez 2012). Based on this work, scale itself can be identified as an additional dimension of variation, and the dimensions of field structure and autonomy can be further specified.

Scale itself is a property of fields that can vary and that can be examined empirically. Returning to the definition of fields as an area formed by relationships among actors that take each other into account, be it directly or as mediated by a shared orientation to field-specific capital, we can ask about local, national, regional or transnational reference points for actors. I would argue that relationships on different scales might matter to actors at the same time: local, national, and global fields of the same kind, such as art or science, can coexist (see also Kuipers 2011, Buchholz 2016).

When studying field formation on different scales, we should not assume that we know which scale ‘comes first’ or that fields always expand ‘outwards’. It might be tempting, for example, to focus on the globalization of national fields, but it is not clear that all fields were national before they were global. It could be argued, for example, that science, was a transnational set of relationships before it was nationalized in the 19th century (Gingras 2002). Among professional economists, to take an example from the 20th century, ‘global’ links preceded regional, intra-European ones. Economists from different national fields in Europe started to network on a European level after the United

States had emerged as a shared privileged point of reference (Fourcade 2006).

We can ask about scale as a variable property of fields; examining fields from a post-national perspective also leads to new questions about field autonomy and field structure. I have suggested that we can distinguish between different forms of autonomy based on the different positions a field might have in the overall architecture of fields. We can now also distinguish the ways a field on a given scale is autonomous from other fields in its context on the same scale from the ways it is autonomous (or not) vis-à-vis other fields of its kind on a different scale.

If we take the field of art as an example, questions about the field's autonomy have traditionally been asked as questions about the autonomy of the *French* field of art from the *French* political or the *French* economic field. But recognizing the relevance of transnational ties, and acknowledging that these need not supersede national ties, we can ask about the autonomy of, for example, the French field of art from the global field of art. Larissa Buchholz (2016) has coined the term 'vertical autonomy' to describe this aspect of field autonomy.

Moving beyond the national as the only scale of analysis also allows us to ask about the relationship between different national fields of the same kind, raising questions about what I would call 'horizontal autonomy'. That means - to take the example of art - in addition to asking about the relationship between the French field of art and the French field of politics, or about the French field of art and the global field of art, we can ask about the relationship between the French field of art and the US American or the Swiss field of art.

Distinguishing between intra-national and cross-national dimensions of field autonomy and heteronomy allows us to make sense, for example, of findings from the sociology of science. Sociologists of science have noted that the American social sciences are very autonomous with regard to non-American social science: American social scientists rarely cite non-American work and recognize foreign degrees in recruitment only in exceptional cases. In this type of horizontal autonomy, American social science is more autonomous than Argentinian or German social science, which highly values publications in American journals. But that does not necessarily mean that American sociology, for example, is more autonomous from American political or economic forces than Argentinian or German sociology is from Argentinian or German political or economic forces (Gingras 2002; Beigel 2014a, 2014b).

Considering fields on different scales also allows us to ask additional questions about the symbolic dimension of field structures. For a field of any given scale, we can ask to what extent access to resources from fields on other scales plays a role in the symbolic oppositions that differentiate positions. Scale here becomes a stake in the competition within a field. National fields, for example, may be divided between globalisers and their opponents. Marion Fourcade, for example, discusses how international links have played a role in national fields among economists in ‘peripheral countries’. The Chilean field of professional economics, for example, is divided between those with American degrees who advocate internationalisation and others who insist on local standards and signs of recognition (Fourcade 2006).

International influence also plays a role in structuring national fields in core countries (Fourcade 2006; see also Bockman and Eyal 2002). American social scientists can use

recognition from abroad as a resource when competing against each other. In a related analysis, Ulrich Best has argued that the debate critiquing Anglo-American hegemony in geography has been driven by those seeking to bolster elite positions in national European fields by investing into a European field of geography (Best 2009).

We can also ask how resources from national fields create symbolic divisions within global fields. There is some evidence that resources from different national fields carry different kinds of symbolic value within global fields, creating an opposition between hegemonic and anti-hegemonic positions. In the global field of humanitarian relief, for example, sources associated with some governments, such as Sweden or Norway, are seen as purer than others, such as the USA (Krause 2014)

Conclusion

This paper has drawn on the work of Bourdieu and research in the tradition to discuss some of the ways in which fields can be different from each other. I have examined variation in degree and form of field autonomy: fields can be more or less autonomous but they can also be autonomous in different ways, depending on their position in the overall architecture of fields. I have also considered variation in field structure: Some fields may be shaped by consensus, others by symbolic competition. In some fields, consensus may be the result of a very clear hierarchy; in others there may be consensus without hierarchy. In fields shaped by symbolic oppositions, the dividing lines can be drawn in different ways.

The analysis of fields on scales other than the national offers opportunities for theoretical development, which we are only beginning to exploit: If we recognize that fields do not only co-exist as national fields with other fields in their own national context, but also relate to fields in other national contexts and to fields on other scales, we can ask about the ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ dimensions of field autonomy, or lack thereof. Any national field may be more or less autonomous from any other national field, and it may be more or less autonomous from the relevant local or global fields.

Considering how fields are embedded in a multi- and transnational context, we might also ask more routinely what role resources from connections to other scales play in the symbolic positioning we observe in fields we study. The division between ‘globalisers’ and ‘nationalists’ or ‘traditionalists’, for example, may become increasingly important to the symbolic structure of national fields of different kinds.

Researchers will continue to be interested in features that make ‘their’ field or fields unique. The language for field variation can be a tool for better describing a particular field. It provides us with a set of questions that can sharpen our observations when we study specific cases. Beyond description, field properties can function as an explanans or as an explanandum. An analysis of distinctions between different kinds of fields can be related to outcomes that we care about. Field autonomy, for example, supports field-specific practices but different forms of autonomy might enable different types of field-specific practices or a different distribution of different field-specific practices in a field as a whole.

We can turn to work on journalism for a hint of what this type of inquiry might yield:

Rodney Benson has suggested that different forms of field autonomy in France and the US can explain different outcomes in terms of journalistic content (Benson 2013). As discussed above, he argues that the French journalistic field is closer to the political field but further from the economic field than the US journalistic field. This diagnosis is then related to the finding that French journalists provide a more debate-oriented coverage of immigration. Another study (Krause 2011) has argued based on a comparison of different periods in the history of the journalistic field in the United States that political regulation or state-protected field autonomy is associated with a higher prevalence of the practice of original research and reporting -as opposed to only 'writing' - in journalism across different media.

We can ask about the consequences of different field properties and we can also try to explain why a specific field has specific properties in a given context. Formalising the description of fields is compatible with different approaches to this kind of explanation. Explaining field-forms can consider particular national and historical contexts, as well as examine conditions in the environments of fields more formally. Learning from work in science and technology studies we can consider the properties of the objects and settings of practice in explaining field-forms: the socio-material corollaries of specific practices such as art, gastronomy, or medicine might pose constraints for the form a field can take.

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Notes

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² It is useful to contrast Bourdieu's account to another variant of field theory: Authors in the institutional logics tradition also discuss divisions within fields. They describe their work as a departure from classic neo-institutionalist work (Thornton and Ocasio 1999; Lounsbury 2001 2008; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury 2012).

These authors draw on Friedland and Alford (1991) and analyse fields as shaped by the competing logics of key institutions of modern society, such as markets, state bureaucracies, democracy, the family or religion. For Bourdieu the stakes driving internal differentiation do not derive from logics outside the field; they are generated internally to the field.