

8-2019

## Fields and Consumer Groups: The Layered and Overlapping Roles of Culture

Brandon James McAlexander  
*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd>



Part of the [Behavioral Economics Commons](#), [Economic Theory Commons](#), [Marketing Commons](#), and the [Sociology of Culture Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

McAlexander, Brandon James, "Fields and Consumer Groups: The Layered and Overlapping Roles of Culture" (2019). *Theses and Dissertations*. 3363.

<https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/3363>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact [ccmiddle@uark.edu](mailto:ccmiddle@uark.edu).

Fields and Consumer Groups:  
The Layered and Overlapping Roles of Culture

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration, with a concentration in Marketing

by

Brandon McAlexander  
University of Oregon  
Bachelor of Science in Economics, and Political Science, 2011

August 2019  
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

---

Jeff Murray, Ph.D.  
Dissertation Director

---

Molly Rapert, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Anne Velliquette, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

## **Abstract**

The first essay investigates Bourdieu's conceptualization of fields and its use in the marketing literature. It suggests that fields do not exist in isolation, but rather work together in a number of different possible configurations. Fields are reconceptualized as dominated, overlapped, unrelated, contrasted, and co-constituted, rather than completely distinct and opens a new theoretical space for interpretive researchers in marketing. The second essay is a descriptive ethnography of a local fab lab. The essay describes in rich detail the ways in which new skills are developed in a shared work environment, and contextualizes the findings using practice theory as a lens. The essay serves to highlight the co-productive nature of the workshop as well. The final essay merges the theory development from essay one and the context and data collection of essay two to create new insights into the nature of layered fields. The essay demonstrates meaningful connections between disparate cultural fields using the cultural context of computer construction. In doing so, the essay demonstrates the real-world effects of overlapping and layered fields, and how the social structure plays out within the space of personal computer builders. Depending on how the field is configured, the layered fields allow for transfer of capitals, a better understanding of liminality, and important insights into the social structure and institutional nature of the field.

©2019 by Brandon McAlexander  
All Rights Reserved

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to everyone who supported me through this Journey. My family, Jeff, the rest of the Marketing department at the University of Arkansas, all of my co-authors, my past and current office mates, Anastasia, Beth, John, the CCT PhD Community, Kendra, the friends I've made since moving to Arkansas, Milo, Bean, and Pickle. You all helped me get to where I am today, and for that I am eternally grateful.

## **Dedication**

For my family, especially my father. Without their love, support, and patience, I would never have accomplished what I have today.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 – Fields and Consumer Groups.....	2
References and Appendix.....	22
Chapter 2 – Technocraft.....	26
References.....	40
Chapter 3 – Artworlds of Consumer Culture.....	42
References and Appendix.....	71
Conclusion.....	76
Appendix.....	78

## **Introduction**

My advisor and I have chosen to follow the published essays format for my dissertation, as the currency of the field of marketing is primarily journal articles rather than books. As a result, it seemed more valuable to spend my time working on discrete journal articles instead of writing a book. None of these essays have been submitted to journals yet but will be soon. The essays were designed as a step-by-step pattern of writing towards a top tier journal within the field of marketing. The first essay is purely theoretical, as an attempt to explicate a previously unexplored phenomenon, and provide a lens through which I can examine my cultural context. The second essay is an ethnography of a local fab lab, with an emphasis on data collection and method. The third essay uses the lens developed in essay one to examine the data collected for essay 2 (as well as other related data) to provide a real-world context where my phenomenon can be examined closely. Each essay represents a step in the process of writing a top-tier article. Essay 1 is a literature review, essay 2 is focused on context and method, essay 3 is analysis and conclusions.

In these essays, the nature of fields is explored more in depth than previously done. The Bourdieuan concept of “field” is something heavily leaned on throughout interpretive marketing research, but fields are typically treated as isolated from one another. The concept of field has room for clarification, especially as they relate to one another. These essays expand on the idea of fields being interrelated and examines a context of people building their own computers as well as modifying their cases to help contextualize this idea of networked fields. As a result, typologies of field relationships are established, new insights are provided for a unique marketing context, and interpretive scholars are encouraged to think about fields as a more complex phenomenon.

## Chapter 1

### Fields and Consumer Groups - The Layered and Overlapping Roles of Culture

#### Introduction

In marketing, we have established two sets of communities meant to describe individuals and their collective consumption behaviors. Brand Communities, in which “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” is formed (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001), and Subcultures of Consumption, in which “distinct, homogeneous groups of people united by a common commitment to a particular set of consumption items or activities” are formed (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Beyond these, we can include psychographic segments, fan communities, and other terms commonly used to describe groups of people participating in similar consumption patterns. Within the academic paradigms of interpretive marketing research, critical marketing, micromarketing, and Consumer Culture Theory, these types of subgroups are often the unit of analysis. For example, an investigation of surfers resulted in an uncovering of the practices a community uses to consecrate a romantic sense of place in the face of external and “unnatural” marketing practices (Canniford and Shankar 2012). Similarly, a study of cosplay enthusiasts uncovers how cosplayers work together to allow for consumers to facilitate their own ludic experiences, rather than one that is traditionally curated by a marketer (Seregina and Weiyo 2016). An examination of skydivers reveals a meso-level model of how individuals participate and normalize high-risk activities (Celsi et al. 1993). A study of whitewater rafters reveals the importance of narrative experience over an expectation-satisfaction model (Arnould and Price 1993). These few examples are just the tip of a very large iceberg of interpretive research and its reliance on consumer communities as a unit of analysis. This underscores the importance of a solid foundational knowledge on the

topic of subcultures and reinforces the notion that more should be done to build on this foundational concept.

The topic of subculture has traditionally been framed using theories on community. Communities are formed as a way to ameliorate feelings of anomie, and to create new and lasting social bonds (Canniford 2011). Using this lens, the subculture is understood using other social theories relating to community building, group behavior, and social bonding. In marketing, we look at how and why these bonds are formed over shared consumption behaviors and practices, and the insights an understanding of those relationships give. However, the practice of isolating a social group to study it has been called in to question. Arnould and Thompson suggest to Consumer Culture Theory scholars that analyzing the historical and institutional forces that shape the marketplace and consumers as a social category is a new frontier that should be explored (2005). Askegaard and Linnet (2011) take this idea one step further and state that Consumer Culture Theory researchers need to begin to understand these contexts without resorting to true isolation from each other. As researchers, we need to understand the context in which our context exists, as no subculture truly exists independent of others. While Askegaard and Linnet call out Consumer Culture Theory specifically, it is important to note that any researcher relying on subcultures or consumer groups as a unit of analysis should seek to understand the context in which their subculture exists. Thus, it is important to understand how social groups and social relations interact and inform each other on a structural and systemic level.

Interpretive researchers look for patterns that transcend context. Through a hermeneutic and phenomenological lens, interpretive researchers are trained to look for collective behaviors, emotions, and meanings that can be transposed, often isomorphically, outside of the context

through which they were discovered (Thompson 1997). By suggesting that context lies within a layer of another context, Askegaard and Linnet put a potential ideological hurdle into the knowledge generation process of interpretive research. If one context can be dependent on another macro-level context, then the phenomena we are investigating are possibly bound by the macro-context. Askegaard and Linnet do not suggest this to imply a weakness in the interpretive field, but simply call for a better understanding of macro-level patterns. In examining these patterns, we may find the root cause of certain isomorphic properties, a boundary condition to a phenomenon, and/or a better understanding of one context's relationship with another. Thus, a conceptualization of the complexities of subcultural relationships would be a valuable tool for interpretive researchers.

To that end, very little has been written about the interacting nature of subcultures. One study examines the process by which Mormons leave their faith, and the difficulties they find in keeping their familial and social relationships intact (McAlexander et al. 2014). In doing so, the researchers show how their participants move from one social context (Mormonism) to a new social context (ex-Mormonism). They investigate the ways in which cultural and social capital transform when moving from one community into its antithesis community. In this study, the roles of capital take center stage, but another important lesson is learned: subcultures do not exist independently of one another and can interact in ways that have not been previously explored in-depth. While the focus of the research is primarily on the exchanging of capitals across contexts, a focus on the context of Mormonism and its relationship to ex-Mormonism, rather than the traditional focus of the lived experiences of the participants may provide more insights into the interrelationship between contexts.

Similarly, Arsel and Thompson (2011) discuss the sticky nature of field dependent capital, once again suggesting that there is an alternative - for capitals to transfer over to another potential field. Arsel and Thompson investigate the hipster myth and its influence on “indie” culture. By examining the field of the hipsterism and how it influences music, fashion, and media, they examine how capital can transfer between settings. Importantly, they identify ways in which individuals high in cultural capital in those contexts make themselves distinct from the hipster field, even when the practice is very much aligned with the hipster myth. Capitals being marked as different between two different social settings provide further evidence that social settings are capable influencing each other without the need to be perfectly antithetical.

While these studies in particular open the door to a subculture and its relationship to an alternative, it is also important to note that subcultures are not necessarily binary oppositions. Üstüner and Holt (2007) worked to understand the rejection of a primary socialization, suggesting that individuals can transfer from one field into another, without it having to be a strict binary opposition such as in the case of leaving the Mormon faith. In their study, Üstüner and Holt examine the acculturation process of migrant women into Turkish consumer culture. They suggest that migrants can try to bring their village culture into the city, pursue the dominant culture, or give up on both resulting in a fractured identity. This is an important point of distinction, as field membership is not always uniformly considered an “insider” or “outsider” relationship, but a panoply of many possible field memberships that an individual belongs to. This all stands in contrast to the fits-like-a-glove (FLAG) model proposed by Allen, who suggests that membership in a particular field is very sticky (2002). While Allen’s context of college selection is generally quite sticky, other fields appear more fractured and fluid.

Within the ethnography of new bikers, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) explore the subculture of “bikers” very broadly. However, the term “bikers” as they describe it, does not do service to the possibility of dirt bikers, racing enthusiasts, chopper engineers, and those not associated with Harley Davidson motorcycles and its contingent lifestyle. Further, the bikers under study were steeped in Americana, yet motorcycle riders are not exclusively American. None of this is in attempt to denigrate past work, simply to point out the use of a broad umbrella term in past work, and its inability to capture all potential component parts of the umbrella. Certainly, the above described communities would both consider themselves part of that umbrella culture of bikers, while also considering themselves a separate entity. In fact, Martin and Schouten (2013) analyzed Mini Moto enthusiasts, who may very well fall under that broad category of “bikers” yet were treated as a separate entity for their investigation on consumption-driven market emergence.

Clearly there is a need to understand how the multiplicity of subcultures relate to one another. In the case of the relationship between mini moto riders and bikers, there is a clear superseding subculture, bikers, which envelops the other. In the case of religion, there is a structure of mutual exclusion: one cannot be both Mormon and a non-Mormon simultaneously. Further, there may be more overlap than the antithetical relationship implies. For example, non-Mormons are partially made up of apostates who share an experience with the faith prior to their “non-Mormon-ness”. Additionally, in any relationship of mutual exclusion, there are likely to be boundary conditions that create a tension between what is part of the subculture and what lies outside of the subculture. In the Mormonism example, this may be a non-strict follower who has a glass of wine at dinner. Some of the more extreme members may consider this person “non-Mormon”, while others who are more tolerant would be accepting of the behavior.

To understand these potential relationships, multiple steps must be taken. First, a theory must be used to define the concept of subcultures and their constituent parts. After that has been established, a typology of subcultural relationships can be constructed. Once the typology has been established it will yield a lens through which marketing academics and researchers can understand the functional component of the different types of subcultural relationships that exist.

### **Practice Theory**

To understand this phenomenon of subcultural interaction, Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory serves well (1977). In recent history, Consumer Culture Theorists have been using practice theory to understand phenomena within a subculture, or as Bourdieu would call it, a field. Bourdieu's theory is well cited within recent literature, and primarily started with Holt's research on creating a typology of consumption practices (1995). Holt continued to extend practice theory into marketing literature through his work on cultural capital in American culture (1998). The fits-like-a-glove model is one of the earlier papers in the field of marketing to use practice theory (Allen 2002). More recently, in their paper on time flow, Woermann and Rokka (2015) describe paintball enthusiasts and snowboarders as discrete fields with a shared phenomenon. Maciel and Wallendorf (2016) use practice theory to understand the ways in which consumers develop their palate for beer brewing. The study on the marketization of religion also relied heavily on practice theory in its interpretation (McAlexander et al. 2014). Using Bourdieu's theory to conceptualize consumer subcultures has enabled Consumer Culture Theory scholars to look at these types of social groupings in isolation of one another, in addition to describing the sets of social structures and internal dispositions that describe individual actor's

behaviors. It also serves the discussion of the multiplicity of fields very well, as will be demonstrated.

Bourdieu describes the concept of “field” as a social arena in which status games are played (1977). Agents and their social locations are also located in this social arena. This social arena has a relational connection: there are multiple actors that must interact for the field to exist. Fields tend around one social arena governed by a unique set of social rules. That is to say, multiple fields do exist as a structure for different social areas. Academia is its own field with a unique set of rules and social structures in place to allow for status games to be played between individual actors. Actors compete for things like prestige, capital, and status in this field, though much of these resources competed over often are restrained to the social arena where they were sourced. One’s success in academia does not place any bearing on their success elsewhere in say, the field of craftsmanship.

To help understand the nature of fields, it is important to go over other components that are employed in a field. For example, a “practice” is a set of behaviors that are chosen by individuals within a field. As Schatzki succinctly puts it, it is the set of behaviors that make sense for an individual to do, or a “practical intelligibility” (2005). These practices are oriented around the central components of a field. In academia, research, publication, teaching, and social networking are all goals to be achieved for the sake of status. These are all regular practices of the field. If one were to decide to present their research through interpretive dance, the practice is relatively unintelligible to the field, and will be met with confusion and derision from the actors in the field.

To account for individual differences, both in terms of social locations within the field, and pursuit of one particular behavior within a practice, Bourdieu describes habitus. Habitus is

the internalization of a set of dispositions. In many ways this is connected to the concept of a personality within a more cognitive paradigm, though it does not quite capture all of the complexities of habitus to describe it as such. It is also similar to the concept of a “narrative” when coming from the existential-phenomenological paradigm (Thompson et al. 1989). For the individual agent, the habitus is both discursive and pre-discursive, and the concept is dialectical in nature. The upbringing and development of an actor inculcates the habitus over time. Habitus is a significant determinant of the subject position an individual actor takes within the field.

Working in tandem with habitus is the concept of capital. The term capital includes economic capital as traditionally considered: money, access to credit, and assets of significant value. The term capital also includes other types of capital that can be spent socially. Social capital describes the social relations between two or more actors that would allow the holder of the social capital to influence the second actor. The ability to ask someone important for a favor, or to ask for help in a task would be a representation of social capital. There is also cultural capital, which describes the sayings and doings that afford an individual respect within the field. An example of this would be using proper etiquette for a formal dinner. The final version of capital Bourdieu discusses is symbolic capital. Symbolic capital corresponds to prestige, honor, and status. When looking at practices through this lens, high symbolic capital is the outcome that all actors within the field are seeking.

The various forms of capital are fluid, in the sense that one can often be traded for another, although not always easily. The most fluid of those is economic capital, with the least fluid being symbolic capital (in the sense that it is traditionally the most difficult to acquire). One core component of capitals is that they can span across fields, though the transition between those fields can be rather tricky. The marketization of religion paper explores that relationship in

more detail (McAlexander et al. 2014). Those four forms of capital all help to position actors across the social field. Capital is connected directly to habitus, as social and cultural capital are part of the inculcation process. Habitus, when combined with those forms of capital, orients an actor to the field, and leads to practice and the list of actions that “make sense to do”.

The practices themselves are governed by doxa – sets of social rules that determine what is and is not acceptable. These doxa are represented as normative values and beliefs that are genuinely thought of as universal among agents within the field and are thus internalized. In the interpretive dance example, knowing not to do that given the potential social consequences is part of the doxa of the field. These can be thought of as the norms, taboos, morays, etc. that help govern social relationships within a particular field. They are not universal but are in fact specific to individual fields. They are also generally stable over time, as social norms typically are.

The social positions of the actors are then grouped together to describe the various classes of people. For example, individuals are considered “high” and “low” class based on their “tastes”, which is set by habitus and the capitals it implies (Bourdieu 2013). This relationship between classes of people within the field are not dichotomous, nor do they necessarily have a superiority claim over other sets of individuals. Another example of distinction in this regard would be a professional tennis player in relation to an amateur tennis player. Both of these players occupy a similar social space based on an activity both do. Their social capitals are very different, in terms of who they know within the realm of tennis players, and a professional player is likely to have more sway over the individuals they do know within the field. Additionally, a professional player has more cultural capital in the sense that they know much more about the accepted “form” of tennis than does an amateur player. A professional tennis player also incorporates tennis much more into their identity and habitus than does an amateur player.

Professional players also have access to symbolic capital that amateurs do not. Symbolic capital (through fame and respect) is used to communicate to others their social and cultural capitals as distinct from those who do not have nearly the same level of capital. Due to this substantial difference in their positions within the social field, professional players are considered “distinct” from amateur players.

This very brief description of Bourdieu’s theory of practice describes social fields and how they help to determine both the ways in which structures influence human action while also allotting for agentic decisions by those actors. Again, marketers have used this conceptualization to understand a variety of market principles. One key feature missing from practice theory is the relational nature between two separate fields. Bourdieu explicitly states that fields do exist independent of one another and can be broken into contingent parts (for example, art can be broken into literature, painting, photography, etc.), but he never adequately describes the relationship between those fields. He does also explicitly state that all fields are subordinate to the field of “power”, but again declines to expand meaningfully on the relationship (1998). This leaves the door open to the idea that fields do have functional relationships with each other in one way or another. If a field is considered “part” of another field, or “subordinate” to another field, there is necessarily an implied relationship. Simply put, subcultures interact in ways that have not been explored in depth, and the implication that has on actors within their respective subcultures, and indeed on the subcultures themselves, could yield exciting insights into how decisions are made within a field.

## **Sets of Field Relationships**

An important point to concede prior to attempting to make a typology of field relationships is that fields are an abstract social construct rather than a true physical space. This makes objective discussion on the nature of fields difficult and hazy at best. However, there is still merit in discussing different potential relationships that fields have, even in the abstraction. The following discussion makes no claim with respect to the completeness of typology. Any attempt to create a complete typology is well outside the scope of this paper. Another deficiency is that all relationships examined will be strictly dyadic. Given that there are infinitely many possible field configurations that could be examined, and that all fields have a relationship to the field of power, it is very clear that all fields have some relation to another. For the sake of simplicity, dyadic relationships are going to be suggested, but it is acknowledged that these relationships could be configured in a way to have more than two possible fields interacting at once. It is also acknowledged that the description of the relationship and its interplay with practice theory is purely theoretical up to this point. The intent is not to create a holistic and complete view of all possible field relationships, but to initiate conversation and develop the language with which subcultures and fields influence the development of each other. The understanding of the field relationships will help us further in our understanding of the actors within the fields, as well as the fields as a unit of analysis.

The first field configuration is one of pure overlap, which is a “dominated field” (Figure 1). An example of this has already been given with the broad concept of “bikers” being used in the *Ethnography of New Bikers* (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), and its relationship to a constituent component, Mini Moto riders as laid out by Martin and Schouten (2013). In this configuration, the square-rectangle metaphor is apt: all Mini Moto riders are Bikers, but not all

Bikers are Mini Moto riders. The implications of the relationship are not completely clear but given that a Mini Moto rider has membership in both fields, it would be likely that the doxa and capitals have remarkable similarities. Speculating further, it is possible that the status achieved in one field could be meaningful to the other field. Given the encompassing nature of bikers relative to Mini Moto riders, it is likely that status gained in the biker field would be recognized within the field of Mini Moto riders, yet the status gained in the Mini Moto field may not transfer back to its parent field of Bikers. Further investigation into a dominated field is required to better understand the ways in which individuals experience this relationship.

Undoubtedly, Kozinets ran into Star Trek cosplayers in his ethnography of Trekkies (2001). These cosplayers would also be a dominated field, as they likely experience the context of Star Trek fandom differently than those who do not engage in the practice. The rituals, capitals, doxa, and habitus is determined by their fandom of Star Trek, but there is also a completely separate field of serious cosplayers that plays by slightly different rules. The focus on Star Trek may be completely secondary to the focus on cosplay, and the sharing of practices between cosplayers likely rarely makes it into the greater Star Trek field. Additionally, Seregina and Weijo look at cosplayers more broadly (and across many popular culture contexts) as its own separate field (2016). That is not an attempt to say they were wrong in doing so, but simply to highlight the fact that interpretive researchers in fact regularly use fields that have strong relationships (to the point of being lumped in together) as distinct units of study.

The next field configuration is one of partial overlap called an “overlapped field” (Figure 2). A unique feature of this field is that it consists of the intersection between two seemingly unrelated fields. To adhere to the previous example of bikers, an investigation of chopper culture within the field of bikers is merited. Bikers who make custom motorcycles using creative and

personal designs demonstrate an exceptional understanding of both the engineering and creative aspects of motorcycle creation (and ownership). In this case, I suggest that the field of bikers intersects with the field of art or engineering (possibly both, but in the name of simplicity, we will stick to dyadic relationships and focus on the field of art) to create a new subfield of chopper makers. In this case, the maker of the motorcycle occupies a space that can be validly considered both within the field of “bikers” and the field of “art”. This relationship that seems remarkably different work together to form a new field. It is expected that the transition of capitals between these fields is (relative to unrelated or antithetical fields) smooth, with the doxa of the overlapped field taking on doxa from the source fields.

The cosplay enthusiast example could also be reconceptualized as an overlapped field. The intersection of popular culture and costume design (and/or make-up, drama, acting, fashion, etc.) overlap together to create the subfield of cosplayers. With the previous example of Trekkie cosplayers, it is possible that the field of Star Trek fans intersects with the field of cosplayers. If a company were targeting cosplay enthusiasts as a market, it would be important for them to understand the relationship that the field has with its parent fields (both the cosplay field and the popular culture field). The practical needs of costume design have to be merged with the authenticity needs of popular culture with respect to the required materials. The dispositions of individual cosplayers are likely informed by both sets of fields. Additionally, the status gained through cosplay may not transfer over to pop-culture, which would be considered a very large field and therefore hard to earn status in. However, status earned by a cosplayer may transfer over very well to the field of costume design, as it is a much smaller field, meaning dissemination of the individuals work will become recognized more quickly. Investigation is

needed to examine the ways this relationship works, as there are seemingly many possible permutations.

This example also highlights the complexity of these relationships. These fields of Star Trek fans and cosplay enthusiasts combine to create a field of Star Trek specific cosplayers. Depending on what's important to focus on, you could consider it either an overlapped field with its two parent fields, or you could consider it a dominated field by isolating one of the parent fields and only looking at the relationship between just Trekkies and Trekkie cosplayers. This question will likely be determined by the focus of a given study, giving the conceptualization a level of modularity.

The third field configuration is one of complete disassociation - an "unrelated field" (Figure 3). This subject is difficult to write meaningfully on, as all fields are related to the field of power, suggesting that a relationship must always be possible through some intermediary field (power). More practically, a field of culinary arts has very little in common with the field of, say, golf outside of perhaps a dedication to the craft. Status and capital earned in one field would have little to no meaning in the other, excepting economic capital. No clear relationship exists that would suggest that the doxa of one field has any bearing on the other. Any shared doxa would likely be a result of coincidence, or because of the influence an intermediary field is exerting on both fields simultaneously. An example of this intermediary field would be a country club with a well-known restaurant. This would allow for an intersection of the two unrelated fields that may allow some levels of transfer of capital. If Jack Nicklaus was a regular at this hypothetical country club, it would likely bring the cachet of the restaurant up. It may also give the impression that Mr. Nicklaus is a gourmand, provided the restaurant is of significant quality.

The next field configuration is one of complete antithesis, named a “contrasted field” (Figure 4). An example of this has already been given in the marketization of religion paper. Individuals are transitioning from one field of Mormonism into a new field of non-Mormonism. This relationship is unique in that membership in the “inside” field excludes you from membership in the “outside” field. This relationship is more meaningful for those in the “inside” field, as those in the “outside” field likely do not regularly consider the implications of being “outside”. Only those who were formerly “inside” who transitioned to the “outside” would really grasp the meaning. Importantly, this suggests that there may actually be a field quite literally on the fringe: an ex-“insider” who no longer belongs to that particular field, but still retains the habitus, the capitals, and the doxa from the field they left. According to McAlexander et al. (2015), these “leavers” attempt to translate their capitals from the “inside” to the “outside”, and often rely on those who have a similar experience to form those social bonds and replace those former social networks. This network could potentially be that fringe community.

The final field configuration is one of inter-reliance, named a “co-constituted field” (Figure 5). The suggested relationship here is an example of a non-dyadic relationship. In this case, there is one over-arching group that is made up solely of other similar-yet-different subgroups. For example, American barbecue as a culinary field is made up of many different regional barbecue fields. Memphis barbecue is typically based on a rub rather than a sauce, while Kansas City barbecue tends to have a sweet barbecue sauce. These identifying characteristics make these subgroups very distinct, yet they both fall under a broader umbrella of American barbecue. Each constituent part of the American barbecue field is equally important, as there’s no one “canonic” flavor or type, yet each is distinct enough to be recognized as separate field on its own. That’s nothing to say of something like Hawaiian barbecue, which tends to include more

rice and pineapple. This also can get more complicated when you add international barbecue scenes like Korean barbecue. This would suggest that barbecue as a culinary field may be made up of a co-constituted field within a co-constituted field.

Ultimately without an empirical examination of these field configurations using this orienting framework, the relationships proposed are purely theoretical. Additionally, it cannot be overstated that the suggested configurations are not the only possibilities, nor that all field relationships must be dyadic. A need for a context with which we can study the multiplicity of fields and how they inform each other is an imperative next step in the research. Ultimately the concept of subcultures, fields, segments, etc. are more complex than we have been directly acknowledging. We must do better to think about fields and its related concepts more deeply and meaningfully to strengthen our research.

### **Distinction**

One important potential criticism of this work that must be addressed is the relationship between fields and the concept of distinction as laid out by Bourdieu (2013). One could argue that the dominated field of Mini Moto riders is simply a reflection of the habitus and capital differences between individuals within the broader domain of bikers. Through use of their interest in engineering small bikes for the sake of riding them, these individuals have set themselves apart from their peers and created a distinction within a field rather than an entirely different field. Distinction, as proposed by Bourdieu, implies that those with a high amount of cultural capital within a given field determines the taste of that given field. Those with lower status accept that taste as natural. Thus, Bourdieu might suggest that engineering a MiniMoto

may just be individuals high in cultural capital expressing their cultural dominance rather than its own field.

However, distinction and a layering of fields can coexist. As an example, Bourdieu himself said that the field of art can be broken into fields of painting, sculpture, and literature (to name a few) (2013). Each of those potential avenues through which an artist creates art could be viewed as a point of distinction. For example, photography for a long time was disregarded as art. It was considered simple and tasteless by painters and other members of the art community (Becker 1982). Foundational questions about whether art could be produced by a machine needed to be answered. While many of the apparatuses of what constituted art existed (structural components in addition to a focus on the aesthetic), the recognition of the status of “art” was not granted upon photography’s inception. Photography has since become an accepted form of art, with pictures hanging alongside historically important paintings in museums.

Every form in which art is created is a point of distinction in the Bourdieuiian sense. But the rules that govern what is and is not considered “true art” is different for each form, implying entirely different doxa, and major differences in required cultural capitals for artists to acquire. The dramatic differences in the overarching structures, and necessary habituses imply that they could be considered unique fields in addition to points of social distinction. Social distinction as Bourdieu describes it does not mean that an independent field cannot exist for those distinctions within the greater field of “art”. The taste makers of the art field prevented photography from being considered art. Each form of art has all the traits of their own unique field. Therefore, it seems very likely that distinction can co-exist with layered fields. It is also worth considering that a change in taste or social class within a field may create an entirely new field. Mobility in

social class may be simply a change in field, and research done on moving through social classes may provide new insights into transitioning habitus and capital into a new field.

Ultimately Bourdieu's conception of field is not meant as a reified concept and has a semi-nebulous definition that allows for many types of social settings to be considered a field. He never explicitly denies the possibility of a separate class of people also being considered their own discrete field and seems to embrace the possibility of a plurality of fields that have intersecting and overlapping relationships, without explicitly calling them in to existence.

## **Conclusions**

Under no uncertain terms does this essay claim to have established all possible typologies of field configurations, nor does it claim perfect knowledge of all possible subcultural relationships. An exhaustive typology is outside of the scope of this essay. This essay seeks to point out that there may be more nuance required when analyzing a field. Given that the concept is crucial to any Bourdieuan analysis, and the popularity of practice theory in the field of interpretive consumer research, a reflection on these complexities should expand their potential meanings.

Relying on primarily dyadic relationships may also be limiting in the framing of this issue. As suggested with the co-constituted field, many fields may be integral to the explanation for the existence of a grander field, or possibly to the creation of a smaller one. The diagramming of fields as two-dimensional circles may also be masking real world complexities. It is possible that the representation given not only misrepresents reality, but also encourages researchers to entrench such a misrepresentation. Perhaps three-dimensional figures help to better paint the

structure of related fields, or perhaps giving them a visual in the first place creates unnecessary restraints in how we think about these social configurations.

However, an attempt at “real world” perfection in the model would be missing the point of the essay entirely. The intent of this essay is to contribute to the thinking language of a theory often used in the paradigm of Consumer Culture Theory. This work will provide a unified way of thinking about and discussing relationships between what we as marketers have established as subcultures of consumption, or brand communities. Ultimately, our ability to describe interrelationships between seemingly unrelated consumption patterns and behaviors should be much sharper when using this lens. The nature of this intent allows for others to call in to question the suggested structures, and to encourage others to think about different possible configurations of fields.

The essay also provides examples of fields both found in the literature and outside of the literature that have levels of overlap that have traditionally been overlooked. While past literature historically viewed fields as fixed, with capitals and habituses being relatively inflexible across fields, the marketing literature was slowly working towards explaining relationships between fields (McAlexander et al. 2014). In providing these examples, we encourage other researchers to begin thinking about Bourdieu’s theories not as rigid fixtures, but as more fluid and dynamic than we had in the past.

This work also highlights the importance of subcultural relationships, especially as it pertains to how Consumer Culture Theory scholars approach their context selection.

Understanding the relationship a field has with other relevant fields is important to having a holistic understanding of the chosen context of study. In addition to this, it is also important to note that seemingly unrelated contexts may have an unforeseen relationship and using this lens

will help to identify fields that are having an impactful role on the chosen context. Understanding the roles that other social realities have on the chosen context used for study will hone our understanding of not only the context itself, but the marketing topic under investigation as well. While this may not fulfill the desires of Askegaard and Linnet, it hopefully will begin to get the ball rolling on important conversations that need to happen about the relationships contexts of study have with the temporal and cultural situations they are found in.

This theoretic development also has strong implications for marketing researchers hoping to understand a community or a segment. The understanding that these things cannot exist in isolation is an important lesson in understanding consumer behavior. Broadening the scope of an investigation to include communities and segments that are tangentially related to understand the influence they have over the target segment is of substantial importance. Lastly, understanding that chosen segments can be broken into smaller sub-segments and understanding the relationship that the collection of sub-segments share could aid in our understanding of consumer behavior.

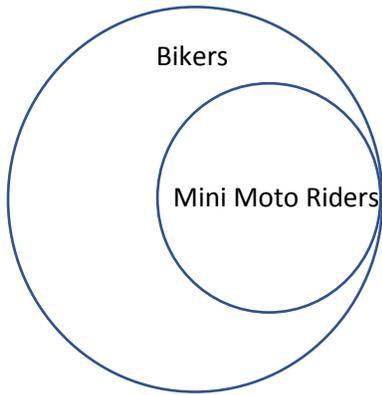
Finally, the research here is incomplete. It bears repeating that this paper does not profess to have all the answers for how fields, subcultures, communities, or any other set of social relationships interact with each other. The intent was solely to aid in the understanding of possibilities of interaction between these social groups. To better understand how these fields, interact, a context rich in potential fields needs to be selected and examined closely, with data from individual perspectives of agents within each social setting. Talking to those agents about their knowledge of the other fields, their feelings towards those fields, and past experiences interacting with individuals in those fields should yield much richer insights than what has been offered here.

## References

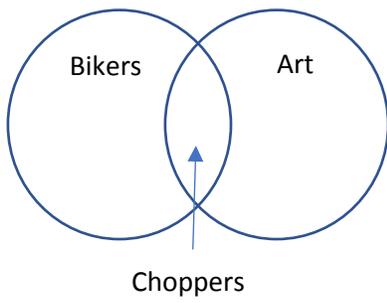
- Allen, D. E. (2002). Toward a theory of consumer choice as sociohistorically shaped practical experience: The fits-like-a-glove (FLAG) framework. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(4), 515-532.
- Arnould, E. J., & Price, L. L. (1993). River magic: Extraordinary experience and the extended service encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(1), 24-45.
- Arsel, Z., & Bean, J. (2012). Taste regimes and market-mediated practice. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(5), 899-917.
- Askegaard, S., & Linnet, J. T. (2011). Towards an epistemology of consumer culture theory: Phenomenology and the context of context. *Marketing Theory*, 11(4), 381-404.
- Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 868-882.
- Becker, H. S. (1982). *Art worlds*. Univ of California Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (translated by R. Nice).
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *The State Nobility: Elite schools in the field of power*. Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2013). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.
- Canniford, R. (2011). A typology of consumption communities. In *Research in Consumer Behavior* (pp. 57-75). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Canniford, R., & Shankar, A. (2012). Purifying practices: How consumers assemble romantic experiences of nature. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(5), 1051-1069.
- Celsi, R. L., Rose, R. L., & Leigh, T. W. (1993). An exploration of high-risk leisure consumption through skydiving. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(1), 1-23.
- Holt, D. B. (1995). How consumers consume: A typology of consumption practices. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), 1-16.
- Holt, D. B. (1998). Does cultural capital structure American consumption?. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(1), 1-25.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2001). Utopian enterprise: Articulating the meanings of Star Trek's culture of consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(1), 67-88.

- Maciel, A. F., & Wallendorf, M. (2016). Taste engineering: An extended consumer model of cultural competence constitution. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43(5), 726-746.
- Martin, D. M., & Schouten, J. W. (2013). Consumption-driven market emergence. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(5), 855-870.
- McAlexander, J. H., Dufault, B. L., Martin, D. M., & Schouten, J. W. (2014). The marketization of religion: Field, capital, and consumer identity. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(3), 858-875.
- Muniz, A. M., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412-432.
- Schatzki, T. R., Cetina, K. K., & Von Savigny, E. (Eds.). (2005). *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. Routledge.
- Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), 43-61.
- Seregina, A., & Weijo, H. A. (2016). Play at any cost: How cosplayers produce and sustain their ludic communal consumption experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44(1), 139-159.
- Thompson, C. J. (1997). Interpreting consumers: A hermeneutical framework for deriving marketing insights from the texts of consumers' consumption stories. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(4), 438-455.
- Thompson, C. J., Locander, W. B., & Pollio, H. R. (1989). Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: The philosophy and method of existential-phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(2), 133-146.
- Üstüner, T., & Holt, D. B. (2007). Dominated consumer acculturation: The social construction of poor migrant women's consumer identity projects in a Turkish squatter. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(1), 41-56.
- Woermann, N., & Rokka, J. (2015). Timeflow: How consumption practices shape consumers' temporal experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(6), 1486-1508.

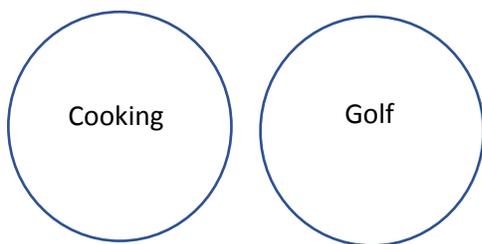
## Appendix



*Figure 1: Dominated Field*



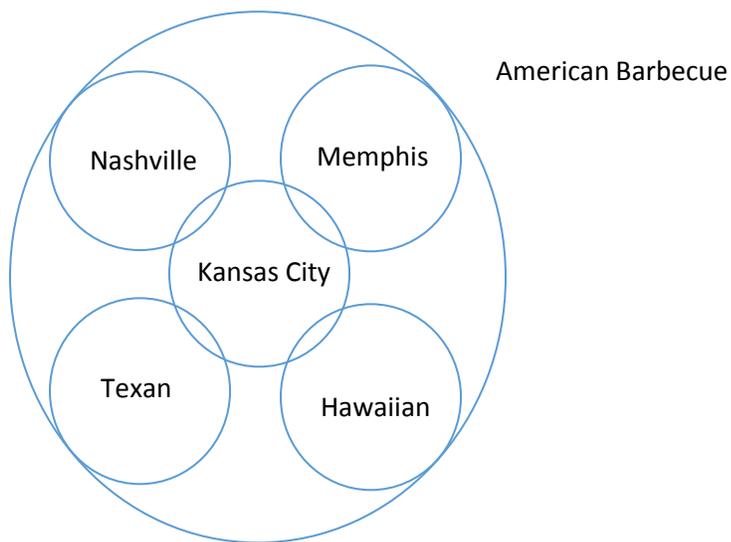
*Figure 2: Overlapped Field*



*Figure 3: Unrelated Field*



*Figure 4: Contrasted Field*



*Figure 5: Co-Constituted Field*

## Chapter 2

### Technocraft - An Ethnography of a Fab Lab

#### Introduction

In the early 2000's with a grant from the National Science Foundation, the first Fab Lab was founded at MIT (Chandler 2016). The impetus for the Fab Lab was work done by Mikhak et al. suggesting that there was a digital divide in information technology (2002). As the digital revolution was in full swing and moving into the realm of personal fabrication, Mikhak realized that there was a missing sense of democratization of technology, only further reinforced by Tanenbaum et al. (2013). Given the inherent value of being able to print and fabricate a physical object in the world, there is a concern about who gets access to that technology, especially as it takes a very particular and technologically advanced skillset to complete the fabrication process. Mikhak suggested a more communal process by which individuals could come and go as they please, learn to use the latest fabrication technology, and learn how to create things for themselves at a reasonable cost, to prevent socioeconomic barriers to who could access this advanced technology and why.

After the success of the first Fab Lab in MIT, the success of the project spread, with as many as 1,000 labs across the country as of 2016. Fab Labs are not completely uniform, but many come equipped with 3D printers, Computerized Numeric Control (CNC) machines, vinyl cutters, 3D cameras, and other equipment and workspaces. Some consumers are there to prototype new products, others are there to pursue a hobby and passion, and some are there simply to engage with a new and exciting technology. These Fab Labs also often host classes to teach members of the community how to use the fabrication technology, even if they're not members of the Fab Lab.

The concept of the workshop is not new. There have always been places for humans to craft, but some of the earliest organized shared workshops were the medieval guilds (Sennett 2009). These guilds were not as inclusive as a modern Fab Lab, as they were often led by an authoritative craftsman who chose his disciples, who would then learn the trade. Guilds were also very hierarchical in nature, which is very antithetical to the concept of a Fab Lab. Importantly though these workshops, past and present, work to create a sense of community and education, and offer a place where the lay person can learn to become an artist.

Fab Labs often have diverse sets of tools and people with a wide variety of backgrounds. It is this that motivates my study into a Fab Lab. In creating a community environment, I am interested in learning how that sense of community plays out, and how people with diverse skillsets come together to teach one another how to create something new. The process of creation is one that is vital, especially as technology is allowing for modular fabrication of complex machines only using a computer, a printer, and some acrylic. As this technology becomes more readily available, I am interested in how individuals of differing skill sets can learn from each other to learn a new skill set far more complex.

To do so, I joined a local Fab Lab in the American Southeast as a member, with the intent of designing something fun for myself. I am not a particularly creative person, especially as it pertains to visual arts, but I wanted to see if I could learn how to produce something for myself. From January 2019 to May 2019, I attended the Fab Lab twice a week for about 2 hours each visit. Some visits lasted as long as 4 hours, and some were as short as 10 minutes, but an average visit would last about two hours. At the end of each visit, I would take diligent field notes, recalling everything I could about what I had learned, how I had learned it, and who I had learned it from, compiling to about 40 pages single spaced of field notes.

Over that 5-month period, I worked on a case for a personal computer I had planned on building. I used the theme of the University I am attending to receive my PhD as a thematic influence and was hoping to incorporate at least two skills I felt I was deficient in to facilitate the learning process. Three major skills I learned were painting, use of LED's in a case, and laser cutting. All of these are skills I felt I had little to no experience in. Outside of painting walls, I have never spent much time painting in any artistic sense before, and I have never used a laser cutter, or the programs involved with designing the pattern to be cut prior to joining this Fab Lab. Additionally, while I have built a few computers before, I have never modified a case before, including use of LEDs to light up the case. To help provide context to some of the data, it is important to describe the case. It is a steel body case, but the left façade of the case has a rather large acrylic window looking in to it. The final design of the case had me paint the steel the school colors, and the acrylic window was painted white in order to prevent light from passing through. The acrylic was then laser etched with the school mascot as well as the name of the school (using the school's font). LEDs of the school color were placed behind this etching, so that way the etching of the mascot and the name of the school would "glow" when the computer was powered on.

## **Method**

My method primarily was composed of auto-ethnography, though not exclusively (Ellis et al. 2011). Rather than informant or culture as a unit of analysis, the researcher immerses themselves in the context, both participating and observing others, and use their own experiences as data. My data primarily consisted of personal reflections on what I had learned, but it did not exclude memorable quotes or events that were not entirely experienced by me as a unit of

analysis, so it was not completely auto-ethnographic. There were no formal interviews, nor any recordings, but any conversation that was recalled by the end of any given trip to the field was included in the notes as best as I could get them. As a result, any quote is likely paraphrased, rather than direct. I did the best I could to capture the essence of any given statement as it was likely intended by the speaker, using my best to employ the cultural understanding I was learning as I went along.

While there are concerns about using autoethnography as a method, the chosen context served best as autoethnographic based in part on the guiding research question, but also because of the nature of the context itself. In wanting to understand the learning process, it would be difficult to really get to the core of the question through an intermediary, rather than simply attempting it myself. Additionally, the Fab Lab I attended was not particularly large. There were three people I regularly worked with at the Fab Lab, with a few other ephemeral characters interspersed, that really had limited bearing on my success in producing my case modification. As a result, an auto-ethnography serves to provide good insights into the skill learning process at a Fab Lab.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

In order to analyze the data given, I approached my field notes using a semi-grounded approach (Charmaz 2006). Rather than imposing a theory on the data as it was received, I chose to let the data speak for itself, and looked for themes that emerged from the data. I did my best to put all bias and pre-conceived notion aside as I iteratively looked through my data, using open codes and looking for patterns between the codes. My approach was not completely a grounded theory approach, as I overlaid my findings with a theory from the literature: practice theory.

In using Bourdieu's practice theory, I relied most heavily on only a few of his concepts while looking through my data (1977). Primarily I relied on doxa and the various forms of capital. Doxa are the unwritten rules of a field that are generally accepted as fact. Actors in the field do not really think too much about doxa, unless another actor breaks that doxa. Bourdieu also describes four forms of capital in his practice theory: First, he describes social capital, which is symbolized by the ability to ask for a favor or get someone else to do something for you. Next is cultural capital, which is an awareness of the sayings, doings, and skills demanded of a field. There is also economic capital, which is money, access to credit, and the ability to convert money into goods and services. Lastly, there is symbolic capital, which is something akin to honor and prestige. Actors in a field are most concerned with acquiring symbolic capital. In my data, I primarily found cultural and social capital to be the most useful.

In analyzing my data, I took my open codes and reread the passages with practice theory in mind. I would code individual passages with how it impacts capital and doxa, and how it related to learning a new set of skills which is essentially just acquiring new cultural capital. In doing so, I found several themes that emerged from the data as it relates to learning and community engagement. The themes were as follows: Failure creating embodied capital, cooperation over competition, and external capital.

## **Themes**

### *Failure Creating Embodied Capital*

One of the most common emergent themes was that failure often creates embodied cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital is traditionally a technique employed by the body of the actor in the field. While planning for failure is a regular occurrence in the workshop, failure

is a very important part of the learning process. When I first began designing my case, I thought I wanted to use the CNC machine to drill into the side of a metallic case, rather than use the laser to etch the siding. Wendy, the director of the Fab Lab, suggested I speak with Dave, as he was known as the “CNC expert” of the office. When I spoke with Dave, he told me that the CNC can only handle certain materials, but he primarily worked with wood. I did some research and found that cases could either be aluminum or steel based. When I brought this information to Dave, he let me know that aluminum *might* be okay, but steel would almost certainly cause damage to the machine.

When painting the acrylic inlay of my case, I had originally planned on painting the inside of the acrylic rather than the outside, so that way the laser would not be cutting directly into paint (leading to paint fumes). Additionally, I thought this would look much cleaner than painting the outside, as the acrylic would mask any imperfections in the paint. I was wrong on both accounts, with imperfections being perfectly visible, despite my best attempts. I was also told by Justin that the laser cutter actually had a vent that went outside of the building, so no matter what was cut, the laser would not be spewing noxious gasses. Additionally, I discovered that my acrylic had a slight tint to it, and painting the back side led to an odd gray color, rather than a nice flat white.

I also learned why people traditionally do spray painting in their garages rather than outside. I was generally hesitant to spray paint indoors, as I lacked the proper equipment to make sure that I could breath properly. I decided to put down a tarp and some cardboard outside of the Fab Lab to spray paint my case. I had the misfortune of attempting to do so on a windy day. I checked regularly to see if the paint had dried, but regularly found hair, gravel, and loose dirt attaching itself to my case. This was not desirable for several reasons, not least of which was the

fact that it impacted the clean look of the paint I was using. I had the foresight to buy a spare piece for that side of the case, and so I painted the next one in the garage of my home, rather than in an outdoor space near the Fab Lab.

In my many failures, I acquired a new embodied cultural capital. I knew to be less afraid of using the laser cutter with what I felt were unsafe materials. I learned that painting the inside of the acrylic did not have the desired effect and looked terrible. I learned that what CNC machines were capable of, when I previously had not known exactly what it is that a CNC machine even did. By exploring these “bad ideas” and reflecting on what about them went wrong, and why I so stubbornly believed my original idea to be the “right way” of going about things, I ended up acquiring embodied cultural capital that would have been difficult to learn otherwise. I now feel much more confident with spray paint and know how to perform these practices more precisely than I did prior to my failures.

Expectation of failure is also baked in as part of the process of teaching someone how to use the equipment at the Fab Lab. When I first met with Wendy and described to her what I wanted to do, she asked me how long I had. I suggested around 5 months, and she said “Good! Most people come here with the expectation that they can finish their project within a week”, implying that people have unrealistic expectations about their own skill sets and how easy some of the equipment around the Lab were to use. When using the laser cutter, we also regularly would use cardboard or wood to test the cut design, just to make sure it was centered properly, roughly the size we wanted, and to ensure it looked the way we wanted it to. All of these precautions stand as a testament to the importance of failure in the process of accumulating embodied cultural capital. In order to learn how to use this complex equipment and machinery, it

is important to mess things up to see what *can* go wrong. In doing so, you can make adjustments to do things correctly.

### *Cooperation over Competition*

In defining fields and the purpose of capital, Bourdieu also talks about symbolic violence and status games. Bourdieu suggests that fields are rife with status games, and that actors high in cultural capital for that field will often express their superiority over those lower in cultural capital to reinforce the social structure. At the Fab Lab, those high in cultural capital often choose cooperation over this competition. And while they do still demonstrate a superior sense for embodied and dispositional capital, they were far more eager to teach than they were to flex their status.

When describing my project idea to John, one of the informants that helped me to learn how to use the laser printer, he immediately took to helping me. John was a volunteer and did not work for the Fab Lab for pay. John started immediately making suggestions for what I should do in order to get the ball rolling and wanted regular progress updates as I got further along. While I brought a cultural competency from the PC building field (John had never directly considered modifying a computer case before), John brought his knowledge of laser etching and cutting. The two cultural competencies combined in to one to help me with my project. Rather than doing all the steps for me, John also taught me what each button on the laser cutting machine did, as well as helped me design my case the way I wanted it. John shared his embodied knowledge with me, rather than simply doing everything himself, which would have constituted symbolic violence.

Additionally, towards completion of my project, the last thing I needed to do was etch the acrylic. When the paint had finally dried on the piece of acrylic I intended to use for my case, I

went to the Fab Lab, only to find that the laser cutter was “slipping”. Periodically, during the etching process, the laser printer would lose its position on the x-axis, causing those etchings to be off-center starting at a specific point. Not wanting to risk the piece I had spent nearly a week painting, I decided to wait to see if Justin could fix the machine. After a week though, the machine was still having slipping issues. I expressed my concern to John, especially as my deadline was nearing, and he let me know that he and a business partner had purchased a laser cutter of their own. John and his business partner both were cabinet makers, and the laser cutter was a valuable tool for them. He suggested a time and a place for me to meet at his workshop so that way I could just use his laser cutter instead of the one at the Fab Lab and risk losing the piece I had worked so hard on. This is another example where John set aside the status games and ignored the fact that he was far better situated than I was with respect to being a maker and wanted to cooperate.

While the context of a community Fab Lab that you pay for membership may have informed this important component of cooperation over competition, it is important to note that I never paid John, and the Fab Lab did not either, so his volunteered time should be considered strange in the face of Bourdieu’s status games. John wanted to share his cultural capital with me, rather than hoard it for himself, and he did not do it in exchange for economic capital or social capital. He may have done it for symbolic capital – as a way of demonstrating himself as a good member of the community, thus establishing some level of honor or prestige, but as far as I know he never told anyone (other than his business partner) that he let me use his machine. This could be an interesting concept to explore in the future: is cooperation used to establish symbolic capital? Or is something else happening here?

## *External Capital*

One of the most important themes that established during my time at the Fab Lab was that there were many cases where skills and capitals were being brought over from wildly unrelated fields in order to help in the production of my project. This is important because it implies that cultural competencies are not fixed, nor are they static to the field they were earned.

For example, when I was trying to figure out which paint to use on my acrylic piece, I was about to use a primer to get the flat white look I was going for. Justin, one of the employees at the Fab Lab, told me that it probably would not work as well as I would expect, and suggested that I use latex paint instead. He said he's done a lot of work with painting acrylic before because he was involved in modifying fish tanks. He thought acrylic paint would look a lot better. I had already bought the primer, so I tried the primer anyway, but in the end, Justin was right. Importantly, he brought in a cultural competence from a field very unrelated to building a computer. This suggests that there are definitely overlaps for cultural capital across various fields.

John was a cabinet maker, which is what led him to be interested in laser etching in the first place. He was working on etching interiors of cabinets with family recipes when I met him. He has since used his knowledge of woods and laser etching to fabricate more creative projects for himself. He showed me an Eiffel Tower that he built out of laser cut wood that was joined together rather than glued, nailed, or screwed. Once again, this is a case of bringing in a cultural competency from one field (cabinetry) to a new one (laser cut art).

Wendy also was bringing a skillset from a previous job. She is the director of the Fab Lab, but she used had a masters in teaching, specifically in teaching children to read. She had good people skills, and also was one of the more knowledgeable points of contact with the 3D

printer and the 3D camera. I saw her consistently use her teaching experience to help high schoolers overcome difficulties in learning how to use 3D printers. She was very patient with them and was very good at communicating complex tasks. She also brought with her a strong desire for cleanliness. She regularly would bemoan how difficult it was to get Fab Lab members to clean up after themselves, which she attributed to having dealt with enough messes as a teacher.

Bringing old skill sets into a new field is an intriguing concept. Capital is generally thought of as very sticky within its field rather than fluid (excepting economic capital), but it may be important to start thinking of cultural capital as fluid. Competencies and experience very apparently lend themselves to important lessons in seemingly unrelated contexts. While the idea that we occasionally learn things that help us in unexpected places is not new, it is difficult to explain how that works within the realm of practice theory. This suggests that more work needs to be done within the realm of practice theory to help understand how cultural capital can be fluid between fields.

## **Discussion**

This work helps us to understand the cultural factors of why consumers may be engaging in DIY practices. While community seeking, fulfillment of craftsmanship, and empowerment are all already established reasons for why consumers may engage with a DIY community, the desire to learn new skills that can apply to other real-life situations may also be a motivating factor (Wolf & McQuitty 2011). Additionally, Wolf & McQuitty recognize empowerment as literal physical power and social power. They do not adequately recognize the empowering feelings of learning something new. This work also suggests that failure is of value when

engaging with Do-It-Yourself-Behavior. While failure would likely lead to feelings of disempowerment, in my case, failure lead to feelings of progress.

Past work has also looked at how consumers evaluate products that they build themselves, with consumers valuing things they built with their own two hands more than the same product, just built by someone else (Norton et al. 2012). While Norton et al. suggest that this may be a result of the feeling of accomplishment that comes paired with the completion of a task, or that building a product increases positive attitudes towards the product thus increasing the affect, they fail to consider that their consumers have gained valuable skills in the process of building their product. It is entirely possible that the familiarity and the cultural competence brought about by working on *that exact* object is what bestows extra value upon it.

Additionally, as marketers are considering themselves to be co-creators of value with consumers, it is important to consider the impact that teaching a consumer has on value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). By sharing a new competency with the consumers, they will perceive the experience as more valuable than simply just having something done for them. While this is very foundational to the idea of co-creation of value, it is important to remember it is not just the feeling of making something with your own two hands, nor the feeling of satisfaction that comes with making an object that is unique to you, but there is great value in learning how to do those things for yourself.

Importantly, this work also suggests that there's need for more research on how capital external to one field can be used in another. Bourdieu's conceptualization of cultural capital traditionally treats it as very sticky and difficult to transpose between different cultural contexts. The concept of field and capital are also both very foundational to how we approach interpretive consumer research. In countless foundational works, consumer communities take center stage,

each of which could be considered a field from the lens of Practice Theory (Schouten & McAlexander 1995, Muniz & O'Guinn 2001, Schau et al. 2009). In fact, many papers do use practice theory as their lens, and conceptualize consumption communities as discrete fields. Given how important the concept is to interpretive researchers, more needs to be done to understand this new relationship (Maciel & Wallendorf 2016, McAlexander et al. 2014).

## **Conclusion**

The process of failure producing cultural capital is an interesting finding. While failure is definitely a frustrating thing, it is an important process to help us to learn how to do things properly. Without this natural process, cultural capital would be hard to come by without cooperation through an other. This is a component of cultural capital that does not get brought up very frequently, since typically failure is associated with low cultural capital. Failure to follow the doxa of a field leads to embarrassment, for example. But what gets overlooked is that, to avoid embarrassment again in the future, the actor learns from their mistake and works to correct that behavior. Failure and learning need to be brought in to models of cultural capital to better reflect reality.

Acquiring status through cooperation is also an interesting case for practice theory. Traditionally, practices are marked by status games played between social actors. But in my context, cooperation came without the expectation of transferring of economic, cultural, or social capital. While John may have been helping me for the prestige of being known as a "helper", I cannot help but think there's more to the story here. Rather than selfish notions of helping others to acquire status for yourself, it'd be interesting to delve more into this idea in another context

where cooperation is not required but is often seen. A study of volunteerism with the lens of practice theory could lead to some interesting findings in this regard.

This work pushes against traditional notions of capital and field as being sticky and isolated respectively. Fields and capital both need work in the realm of theory development to help us understand this transferability and seeming interrelationship between fields. Once these theoretic components have been developed, we can then begin to analyze contexts more thoroughly for the dimensions of these new forms of fields and capital.

## References

- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (translated by R. Nice).
- Canniford, R. (2011). A typology of consumption communities. In *Research in Consumer Behavior* (pp. 57-75). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Chandler, D. L. (2016, January 04). 3 Questions: Neil Gershenfeld and the spread of Fab Labs. Retrieved July 15, 2019, from <http://news.mit.edu/2016/3-questions-neil-gershenfeld-fab-labs-0104>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory a practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: an overview. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 273-290.
- Mikhak, B., Lyon, C., Gorton, T., Gershenfeld, N., McEnnis, C., & Taylor, J. (2002, December). Fab Lab: an alternate model of ICT for development. In *2nd international conference on open collaborative design for sustainable innovation* (pp. 1-7).
- Maciel, A. F., & Wallendorf, M. (2016). Taste engineering: An extended consumer model of cultural competence constitution. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43(5), 726-746.
- McAlexander, J. H., Dufault, B. L., Martin, D. M., & Schouten, J. W. (2014). The marketization of religion: Field, capital, and consumer identity. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(3), 858-875.
- Muniz, A. M., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412-432.
- Norton, M. I., Mochon, D., & Ariely, D. (2012). The IKEA effect: When labor leads to love. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(3), 453-460.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(3), 5-14.
- Schau, H. J., Muñiz Jr, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How Brand Community Practices Create Value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 30-51.
- Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), 43-61.
- Sennett, R. (2009). *The Craftsman*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Tanenbaum, J. G., Williams, A. M., Desjardins, A., & Tanenbaum, K. (2013, April). Democratizing technology: pleasure, utility and expressiveness in DIY and maker practice. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 2603-2612). ACM.

Wolf, M., & McQuitty, S. (2011). Understanding the do-it-yourself consumer: DIY motivations and outcomes. *AMS review*, 1(3-4), 154-170.

## Chapter 3

### The Artworlds of Consumer Culture

#### Introduction

From subcultures of consumption, to brand communities, to segmentation and beyond, marketers have historically had access to many different forms of classifying and categorizing consumers (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Historically, these classifications have had significant overlap, and the distinction between them was rather tight. A typology of these consumption communities has been established to help disentangle these consumption communities from one another, but there's still more work to be done to understand consumption communities more broadly (Canniford, 2011). For example, in their article, Arnould and Thompson suggest that Consumer Culture Theory scholars need to do better in analyzing the historical and institutional forces that shape the marketplaces and consumers as a social category (2005). Askegaard and Linnet take this one step further to suggest that isolating chosen contexts of study from these historical and institutional forces is an error and call for a more macro-level theory to help contextualize chosen consumption communities (2011).

In interpretive marketing research, the focus has traditionally been to focus on meso-level interactions: the individual actions that create, recreate, and reinforce these communities. Very little has been done to understand the nature of how these communities interact. McAlexander et al. do find a point of overlap in their investigation of the ex-Mormon community, by identifying the transition of cultural and social capital between two distinct communities, they analyze how an individual can transition to a new community (2014). While this work does an excellent job at examining an under studied phenomenon, more can be done to reach the standard set by Arnould and Thompson as well as Askegaard and Linnet.

Given the nature of the relationship between consumption communities and interpretive marketing research and its many constituent fields, a deeper understanding of how the institutional, social, and historical settings of consumption communities influence the community would be immensely valuable. This essay seeks to uncover the interrelationships between disparate communities to assist in developing a thinking language for how interpretive marketing researchers approach this problem of contextualized contexts.

## **Theory**

To understand this phenomenon of subcultural interaction, an appropriate theory must be chosen as a lens to view the issue. Historically, the topic of subculture has been framed using theories on community. Communities are formed as a way to ameliorate feelings of anomie, and to create new and lasting social bonds (Canniford 2011). Using this lens, the subculture is understood using other social theories relating to community building, group behavior, and social bonding. Over time, however, interpretive marketing research has moved toward using Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory (1977). This movement primarily started with Holt's research on creating a typology of consumption practices (1995). Holt continued to extend practice theory into marketing literature through his work on cultural capital in American culture (1998). The fits-like-a-glove model is one of the earlier papers in the field of marketing to use practice theory (Allen 2002). More recently, in their paper on time flow, Woermann and Rokka (2015) describe paintball enthusiasts and snowboarders as discrete fields with a shared phenomenon. Maciel and Wallendorf (2016) use practice theory to understand the ways in which consumers develop their palate for beer brewing. The study on the marketization of religion also relied heavily on practice theory in its interpretation (McAlexander et al. 2014). This reliance on Bourdieu's practice

theory has enabled interpretive researchers to look at consumption communities in isolation of one another, in addition to describing the sets of social structures and internal dispositions that describe individual actor's behaviors. It also serves the conceptualization of intersections of community well.

In order to evaluate how communities influence each other, a sound understanding of how Bourdieu describes "field" is paramount. A "field" is a social arena in which status games are played (1977). Agents and their social locations are also located in this social arena. To maintain a status as a field, social actors must interact regularly, you cannot have a field that consists of only one person. Fields tend to be fixed around a social arena governed by sets of social rules that the agents follow. Importantly, the concept of a field applies to many different social realms. Academia is its own field with a unique set of rules and social structures in place to allow for status games to be played between individual actors, the same as an art community, sports community, or fandom. Actors in these fields compete for things like prestige, capital, and status in this field, though these resources are historically thought of as constrained to that particular field. Success in one field does not necessarily mean an individual is successful in another.

To further assist in the understanding of fields, it is important to go over other pieces of practice theory. A "practice" is a set of actions that an actor chooses between that makes sense for the individual to do. As Warde succinctly puts it, a practice is a "practical intelligibility" (2005). This concept is what makes practice theory dialectic, rather than purely structural or agentic. The structures of a field determine the sets of actions that an actor perceives as reasonable, and the agent chooses between those sets of actions. These practices are oriented

around the central components of a field. In academia, research, publication, teaching, and social networking are all practices that must be employed in the name of status.

An agent's social location helps to determine the sets of practices the agent chooses from. Bourdieu describes this as "habitus". Habitus is the internalization of a set of dispositions which are learned socially. Habitus is both discursive and pre-discursive. Choosing the right fork at a fancy dinner is something that is learned socially, and able to be described by the agent, for example. Developing an "eye" for the spin of a tennis ball to hit it just right in return would be an example of habitus that is pre-discursive. The upbringing and development of an actor inculcates the habitus over time. Habitus is a significant determinant of the subject position an individual actor takes within the field.

Another vital component of practice theory is capital. Capital includes economic capital: money, access to credit, and assets of significant value. However, Bourdieu includes other forms of capital that can be acquired and spent in a similar manner. Social capital describes the social relations between two or more actors that would allow the holder of the social capital to influence the second actor. The ability to ask someone for a favor would be a representation of social capital. Cultural capital describes the sayings and doings that afford an individual respect within the field. A common representation of cultural capital in society is "etiquette". Doing something "dignified" or "refined" makes an individual appear more versed in the culture or customs of whatever field they are part of. Finally, symbolic capital is what all actors are seeking within a field. Symbolic capital is represented by prestige, honor, or status.

The fields are governed by doxa – sets of social rules that determine what is acceptable. Doxa are very similar to norms, and actors within the field believe them to be universal and are thus internalized. Knowing not to pick your nose in front of your students is part of the doxa in

academia. Doxa are not universal but specific to individual fields. They are also generally stable over time.

Bourdieu explicitly states that fields do exist independent of one another and can be broken into contingent parts (for example, art can be broken into literature, painting, photography, etc.), but he never adequately describes the relationship between those fields. He does also explicitly state that all fields are subordinate to the field of “power”, but again declines to expand meaningfully on the relationship (1998). While Bourdieu never gets into the specifics of the relationships between fields, in describing fields as “subordinate” or able to be broken down, then fields must be able to interact in some way. Additionally, the work on the ex-Mormon community does begin to touch on the idea that communities are related (McAlexander et al. 2014). In conceptualizing consumption communities as a field, we can examine complex consumption communities and analyze how the habitus, doxa, and capitals from one consumption community influences another community.

In order to understand how communities influence each other, a typology of community interactions must be discussed. The first theorized field configuration is a “dominated field”. The broad concept of “bikers” being used in the Ethnography of New Bikers (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), and its relationship to a constituent component, Mini Moto riders as laid out by Martin and Schouten (2013) highlight the configuration. All Mini Moto riders are Bikers, but not all Bikers are Mini Moto riders. The implications of the relationship are not completely clear but a Mini Moto rider has membership in both fields, hence they are “dominated” by both fields (with one being more inclusive than the other).

The next field configuration is called an “overlapped field”. The core component of this configuration is a level of intersection. The cosplay enthusiast as described by Seregina and

Weijō are an example that could be reconceptualized as an overlapped field (2016). Cosplayers take objects from popular culture and attempt to emulate the style and typically impersonate a character in popular culture. This sets up an overlap of both the source material within popular culture as well as with the drama/costuming/make-up communities. The practical needs of costume design have to be merged with the authenticity needs of popular culture with respect to how both fields would perceive the success of the cosplay. The dispositions of individual cosplayers are likely informed by both sets of fields, and out of the combination of both fields comes a whole new one. Investigation is needed to examine the ways this relationship works, as there are seemingly many possible permutations.

The next field configuration is a “contrasted field”. The marketization of religion paper cited earlier is a good example of this. Individuals are transferring from one field (Mormonism) to a field that explicitly excludes that previous field (non-Mormonism). This relationship is likely more meaningful for those on the “inside”. Those not part of that field do not regularly consider the implications of being “outside”. Agents who have transitioned from the “inside” field to the “outside” field may consider the implications more directly. This suggests that there may actually be a field quite literally on the fringe: an ex-“insider” who no longer belongs to that particular field, but still retains the habitus, the capitals, and the doxa from the field they left.

The final field configuration is a “co-constituted field” (Figure 5). The suggested relationship here is an example of a non-dyadic relationship. For this field, there is one “umbrella” field that by definition cannot exclude individual dominated fields that fall under it. For example, American barbecue as a culinary field is made up of many different regional barbecue fields. Memphis barbecue is typically based on a rub rather than a sauce, while Kansas City barbecue tends to have a sweet barbecue sauce. These identifying characteristics make these

subgroups very distinct, yet they both fall under a broader umbrella of American barbecue. Each constituent part of the American barbecue field is equally important, as there is no one “canonic” flavor or type, so excluding one type leaves its umbrella field incomplete.

Ultimately without an empirical examination of these field configurations using this orienting framework, the relationships proposed are purely theoretical. A need for a context with which we can study the multiplicity of fields and how they inform each other is an imperative next step in the research.

## **Context**

To understand this phenomenon more clearly, I focused on the consumer group building their own personal computers (PCs). Much like cosplayers, PC builders often take inspiration from popular culture in order to inform the designs of their builds. Additionally, the reasons consumers get in to building their own PCs varies quite a bit. These consumers tend to be gamers, coders, graphic designers, and video editors that need higher powered computers for their respective activities. These builders are drawn in by lower prices, higher degree of control over their build, and the general appeal of building something yourself. They pick parts based on computing power, costs, or how it fits their aesthetic desires. The PC building marketplace has created a field in which people converse about the metrics of new parts, the efficiency of a build, and troubleshooting problems that arise as they build their computers. The complexity of the context was a big draw, as it likely meant lots of interactions with different subcultures, both obvious and obscure.

Another draw with this context is a small group of people engaging in something called “case modifying” (or case modding). These consumers go beyond just designing the guts of their

computer and build something more artistic. Cases have been designed to look like objects from video games, cars, and other culturally relevant objects. Not all cases have been modified to “imitate life”, as some cases are designed to look technically impressive, with water cooling tubes, LED’s, fans, and other objects that make the design look very impressive and “futuristic”. In essence, these computers are the hot rods of computer culture. This artistic community found within PC builders made the context a very appealing choice. In a search for a community that is being influenced by other communities external to the core community (of PC builders), this seemed like an opportunity rife with cultural layers to be unpacked.

While the practice of building a home computer is not new, there has been a relatively recent expansion in the number of consumers choosing to build their own PC. Personal computer ownership really began with the introduction of the Apple II in 1977, but the Altair 8800 was originally marketed to enthusiasts in 1974. The Altair 8800 was one of the first “kit computers”, where the end user had to solder and assemble the kits themselves. The designers originally thought they would sell a few hundred, a few weeks later thousands had been ordered (“March...” 2009). The process for building a computer was much more complicated in those early computing years, but although computers have become far more complex, the process for building one yourself has become much simpler than even the old 8800’s. Many in the field liken the process to “building Legos, but only slightly more complicated”.

As a result of the process becoming simpler and manufacturers of components making their parts available to the general public, the PC building marketplace has been growing steadily in the past few years. While there is no hard data on how many home-built PCs there are in the marketplace, the substantial growth of websites such as “pcpartpicker.com” and “newegg.com” can be attributed, in part, to this movement. Additionally, a social news aggregator that I used for

data collection had more than 260,000 subscribers to their page dedicated to the “buildapc” community when I first started data collection in 2015 but is now well over 1.5 million subscribers. This page is ranked 112<sup>th</sup> out of over 1 million different page topics on that social news aggregator. By no means is this a completely accurate indicator of the popularity of the movement, it does shed light on the number of people interested in the practice.

In examining this context, I seek to answer the following questions: In what ways are seemingly unrelated and related communities influencing the core community of PC builders? How can we conceptualize these community interactions? What types of interactions are occurring? Can we use those interactions to try to evaluate the nature of the interrelationships of communities?

## **Methods**

My methods followed from the tradition of multi-sited ethnography (Falzon, 2016; Kjeldgaard, Csaba, & Ger, 2006), in which complex phenomena are explored in and across connected social worlds. From April 2014 through April of 2019, I collected and analyzed data gathered from several internet sites, a convention located in Texas (“QuakeCon”), a local fab lab in the American Southeast, and interviews done via a VOIP program (Kozinets, 2014; Falzon, 2016). Interviews only had a select few pre-selected questions, with interviews playing out organically rather than through a script. In general interviews were done with McCracken’s method in mind (1988).

I initially started by spending time on a social news aggregator (reddit.com) focusing on the subtopic of “buildapc”. I also regularly browsed the internet to see case modifications and the reactions that were generated from their viewers. This process was mostly to help in ensuring a

level of cultural competence, as many participants had a very technical level of knowledge in computing. This netnography was an important building block in developing a baseline level of cultural awareness of the context itself (Kozinets 2015). In February 2017, I built a new computer of my own to make sure I was up to date on my processual knowledge, terminology, and technical competence.

As for the convention, QuakeCon takes place annually in Dallas, Texas and is one of the largest “LAN Parties” (where gamers link their computers to play games together) in the world. Additionally, QuakeCon has a generally well-recognized case-mod competition, which gets publicized in a PC enthusiast magazine every year. There are three separate categories for the competition: classic, scratch builds, and id/Bethesda theme. Classic case mods take a retail PC case and modifies it. Scratch builds means that there was no retail PC case as part of the build at all. The id/Bethesda is as a result of the sponsors of QuakeCon and asks participants to include a theme from any of the intellectual properties of id/Bethesda. Bethesda and id are both video game producers that have a vested interest in QuakeCon (as Quake is an id game, and id is owned by Bethesda). Typically, early in the convention, id/Bethesda has a presentation showing off new games to the public. In 2017, there was also a major tournament for a recent game, with a very large payout.

As for the LAN party, the vast majority (I estimate 90% or more), of the computers brought by participants to QuakeCon are consumer built. Image 1 is a picture from QuakeCon 2015 that gives some sense of scope for how large the LAN is. The picture was taken at roughly the midpoint of the convention center. There are thousands of players that attend the convention each year. While at QuakeCon I spent time wandering around the convention, speaking with people who were not hyper-focused on the games they were playing. Additionally, I made note

of locations of case modifications and made special efforts to check back and talk with individuals who had modded a case. After speaking with a few case modders, I asked if they had any friends that had also modded their case, and thus followed a snowball sample. These interviews were informal, but most of the ones lasting longer than 10 minutes were recorded and transcribed. Many of my informants are from Texas and Oklahoma, as many of the informants I spoke with lived near the convention.

After spending much time collecting data at QuakeCon, I determined that a more personal understanding of the work that goes in to modding a PC case was required. I needed to go further beyond just building a PC, but I needed to make a case mod myself. I also needed to spend time in a community workshop to garner a better understanding of the human resources that case modders relied on in creating their PCs. In January of 2019, I joined a local fab lab in the American Southeast. This fab lab is a community workshop that consisted of a handful of employees helping newbies like myself become familiar with the complex tools the lab could offer. The lab had several 3D printers, a large computer numerical control machine, two laser cutters, a 3D camera, a vinyl cutter, and many other tools used for prototyping and creative endeavors. There were three major participants in helping me to build my case mod, two of which were employees of the fab lab, while the third was a volunteer. By early May of 2019, I had finished my casemod.

My data collection work is summarized in Table 1. My data set consists of transcripts, field notes, and photos taken on site. These data are supplemented with pamphlets, promotional materials, and magazines collected at QuakeCon. Data collection and analysis have occurred iteratively and simultaneously throughout this study.

Given that my research questions focus on the nature of overlapping consumption communities, investigating a complex context where there were a lot of variation in how the context was approached was paramount to my investigation. Thus, I began my analysis by focusing on the interviews with informants that had modded a case and identifying actors that had clear connections to external communities that were relevant to their modding processes, but somewhat unrelated to PC building. Next, I focused on interviews with informants that did not engage in case modding, but were generally aware of the practice, to get data that could stand in contrast to the case modders, as well as to get their perceptions of case modding as a practice.

Data analysis occurred throughout and subsequent to the data collection process in an iterative way. Given the pointed nature of my research question, I identified the different communities involved in PC building and case modding. Codes were developed iteratively between data and literature (Corbin and Strauss, 1990), first identifying the fields with which each participant was influenced by, followed by dimensionalizing the way these fields interacted. While a pointed theoretic lens was used to analyze the data, the fields themselves, and the dimensions were emergent from the data. Data was examined first intratextually, then intertextually between coded fields to strengthen the themes both within and between units of study, as is traditional when approaching qualitative data hermeneutically (Arnould and Fischer 1994, Thompson 1997).

## **Findings**

### *Field Dynamics*

The first finding involved the configuration of the many identifiable fields within this chosen cultural context. While many emerged from the data, the most prominent ones were: PC

Owners, PC Builders, Cultural Production, Popular Culture, and Case Modders. The fact that many fields were identified is a testament to the complexity of the chosen context, as well as the complexity of placing a simplistic theory into the real world. The five listed fields were clearly the most prominent, however. PC Owners are consumers who own a personal computer. Laptops alone do not qualify for this specific field, as, despite initial appearances, laptops are not quite the same in terms of functions. PC Builders are those who buy individual computer parts from retailers and assemble the parts into a functional PC themselves. Cultural Production is the field of art as described by Pierre Bourdieu (1993). Functionally this is the realm in which art is produced, disseminated, and appreciated. Popular Culture is distinct from Cultural Production in the sense that it is produced for the masses, rather than some form of high art. Bourdieu might argue that the distinction between popular culture and cultural production more broadly is that those who are producing “high art” are of higher social status within the field. The final field is one of Case Modders. These are consumers who are not only building their own computers for their own purposes but are also building their cases in a way that is expressive and creative beyond a brutalist or strictly functional PC.

At QuakeCon, all of these fields were very evident (less so Cultural Production). A handful of attendees were PC Owners but not builders. The majority of attendees were PC builders, as evidenced by the stickers plastered on many of the computers present at the LAN party which said, “built not bought”. The point of distinction was very important to builders. The difference is primarily in cultural capital, as those who built computers tended to be more versed in the technology and procedures of actually building a PC. One participant said *“Maybe just because it’s the art of the ‘I knew I made that’. It’s that was just a pile of parts and then now it’s something that I put together”* (Ben). When asked if someone could build a computer for the

same price, he could build it himself. There's a clear demarcation point where PC builders feel separated from PC owners. Additionally, the same participant said his friends influenced him to become a PC builder because "*They just convinced me if you spend the money and you take your time to do it it's going to be a lot nicer*". While there was some level of elitism with respect to computer performance relative to price, PC builders do not try to make PC owners inferior, but rather encourage them to join in on the fun.

Pop culture is evident in the creative processes of both the case mods and the PC builders. Case modders are taking cultural artifacts from video games, consumer culture, and popular films in order to design their cases. I saw PCs designed to look like a gumball machine, a character from a popular video game, Wall-E from the Disney film, a Coke can, and an album cover by the band "Nine Inch Nails". While one of these (the video game character) was driven by the id/Bethesda category for the case mod competition, the rest of these were done by people who were just flexing their creative muscles. One participant used his college education in art to mod his case into an object from the popular video game series *Fallout*, because "...*why do what I do? I just really love Fallout*". Relatedly, this participant's formal education in art also adds the Cultural Production field, as he was using that education that would normally be reserved for "high art" to not only produce something from popular culture, but also a case mod.

These intertwined fields do not just have some nebulous undefined relationship. Based on the archetypes of field configurations listed earlier, a configuration of the fields influencing case modders can be established. Cultural production and popular culture are both related, with cultural production dominating popular culture. Some level of artistic creation is required to produce popular culture, and while those high in cultural capital in the cultural production field may argue that popular culture lies outside of art, those that do are simply enacting symbolic

violence to keep their status. PC builders, on the other hand, is clearly dominated by PC owners. In order to qualify to be a PC builder, you must also own the PC you built. On the other hand, not all PC owners are builders (as they may have purchased a pre-built computer at a retailer). Case modders lie in an interesting space between both PC building and popular culture/cultural production. It is not completely one or the other, and it is very clearly drawing influences from both.

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the cultural influences that help to create the case modding community. The two pairs of dominated fields intersect to create a new overlapped field for case modders. In examining the fields as overlapping and dominating, several themes emerged.

### *Social Learning Dynamic*

Social learning plays a big role in how fields are formed, and how individuals transfer between fields. Cultural and social capital can be more fluid with help from a social actor in a related field. For example, one of my informants fathers would disassemble items around the home for the informant to fix: *“He would break appliances for me to fix. I remember the first one was a can opener. I had to take that apart and put it all together”* (Mark). He attributes this learning process to his interest in building PCs. His father, an engineer, taught his son a passion for understanding how things work by deconstructing an object and having his son reconstruct it. A cultural competence of craftsmanship and engineering imperative to being able to feel confident building a computer was given not from the computer building field itself, but from somewhere else entirely. It was also learned through a social actor. This dynamic is prevalent in overlapped fields.

One of my informants, a judge at the case modding competition was asked about some of his favorite builds in 2017, he revealed the background of one of the modders:

*“It’s two woods; it’s three panes of glass. I couldn’t find seam work on it. He had done a custom—not a dovetail, but he was a cabinetmaker. He had gotten back into woodworking and he came up with this custom way of cutting his wood so that he had six different cuts before he even assembled anything, and all the cuts just fit together all at once like a jigsaw puzzle...”* (Carl).

The case mod was a wooden case that had no visible seams and was built completely from scratch. The case also had no screws or nail in the wood, the wooden joinery was the only thing holding it together. The entrant used his extensive knowledge of cabinetry to assist in his build, drawing on his cultural capital to impress the judge (this mod won first place the year it was entered). He overlapped the two fields of cabinetry and woodworking with PC building to create a truly impressive piece of work. Interestingly, the judge did not have a ton of woodworking knowledge himself and was educated by the entrant in order to judge it soundly. Simply in the judging process, the entrant bestowed some level of cultural competence on the judge.

In my own experiences with my case mod, I had a lot of help building my case. I was taught what programs to use, and how to effectively use a laser cutter, as well as a lot about painting by informants at the fab lab. In transitioning into an overlapped field, the cultural competences tend to be taught by “insiders” on the overlapped field. While only one of the informants had modded a case before, the informants all taught me valuable skills that came from completely different fields. John, a carpenter, was the one who taught me how to use the laser cutter. He had quite a bit of experience with it when building some of his cabinets. He taught me the cultural competence of using the laser cutter. Justin taught me which paints work best with acrylic sidings on the basis of his interest in fish tanks. He suggested a latex paint as the best option. I initially ignored him on my first attempt at painting my case, but after being

unsatisfied with the outcome, I repainted it with the latex paint. Cultural competences brought in from fields like “fish tank painting” and wood working overlapped and helped me to transition from a pc builder to a case modder.

While this pattern of having a social agent in an external field teaching cultural competences holds well for overlapped fields, the experience of agents transferring into a dominated field is a little different. Rather than using social capital to learn new cultural competences, friends already inside the dominated field are often the ones encouraging the actor to learn the skills themselves. One participant, describing his experience in transitioning from PC owner to PC builder said his friends encouraged him to begin building his own PC: *“They were just kind of like just get one new part. It is terrifying. That first time you snap a GPU it’s like— it’s a lot. When you’re putting that graphics card in the first time you’re like, “Ah!”* (Ben). Ben’s experience is a common one, both in terms of friends encouraging him to learn the skill set to build his own PC, and to rely on his own competence to do it himself - but also in the level of certainty he had while enacting that competence. When building a PC, a generally accepted rite of passage is getting over the crunching sound of securing the CPU into the motherboard. First time builders often balk at the sound thinking they’re breaking one of their most expensive components. Additionally, a thermal paste is typically applied to the back of the CPU, which feels very wrong to a first-time builder. Applying a glue to facilitate heat transfer between the heat sink and the CPU is not what one expects when they think of PC construction.

### *Liminality*

Liminality also plays a big role in the ability to transfer fields. A lot of the informal conversations at QuakeCon lead me to believe that lots of participants want to get in to case

modding, but lack the cultural capital required to achieve it. Carl, the case mod judge, has a vested interest in getting more people involved with case modding. When he talks to people at QuakeCon, the first reaction is often

*“I can't do a case mod.’ That's the thing to try and get people past. There's an initial hesitancy. Because they see these incredible works of art, they think my first mod has to look like one of these or else it's a failure.”* (Carl).

Carl describes the initial hesitation that many potential case modders feel when thinking about their mods. They come up with elaborate designs that are relatively difficult to pull off in their heads but know that they lack the skill set to actually achieve it. To encourage people to become more involved, Carl tells them *“It doesn't have to be huge. It doesn't have to be flamboyant. We actually recommend that people start easy. Start small”* (Carl). This new mindset can help to get people across that liminal stage. This piece of advice is also what helped to encourage me to make my own case mod as part of my data collection.

Carl also works for a company that creates case mods for professional events (like as a prize for a giveaway, for example), and actually earns cultural capital in the case modding field as a result of his recruitment. Of his recruiting, he said: *“I guess in an indirect way the more that we can represent the enthusiast computer user and get them more into wanting to try customizing their case and case modding, in an indirect way that more vendors will look at us and say, ‘These guys know what they're talking about,’ and the more prizes we can bring to QuakeCon. It's an exposure”* (Carl). By growing the field, he very directly receives more social and symbolic capital. The prestige of being an expert in a growing field is a desirable outcome to help the liminal actors become involved in the more specific field.

A dominated field has less liminality to it. As one participant, Oscar put it:

*“I’d just switched components out before, maybe replaced some screws or something, so I was like I think I can do this. I started going on the Internet and just taking different websites of ‘How do you build a computer?’ and it didn’t seem that difficult” (Oscar).*

Because of his existing cultural capital from being a PC owner, he already had the required skill set to transition into becoming a PC builder. Unlike the transition across overlapped fields, Oscar was capable of building his own PC without needing to seek much help or encouragement from a social network. Being high enough in cultural capital in the parent field will, on its own, encourage members of the field to transition into the dominated field.

### *Transfer of Capital*

As an individual moves from one field and crosses over in to the next, there must be some level of capital accumulation between the two fields. As shown in McAlexander et al. (2014), actors in a field struggle to transpose capital between two fields. In overlapped fields, social capital converts directly into cultural capital, and the social actor will often take the effort (and revel) in teaching their skillset to apply to a new context. For example, Michael said he would often help people 3d print for far less than he should simply because he enjoys doing it so much: *“If you play to people’s talents, they love it. If somebody asked me to do 3D printing I’m probably going to undersell myself and print for way under what I should be charging. That’s why I’m broke”* (Michael). He, too was taught by social agents with a similar zeal for their work. In building his case mod at the workshop he frequented, he would ask for help, and *“...people were just willing to give it that whole day to be able to do it”* (Michael). The social network brings about new skills and cultural competencies. Without those social networks, there would be no way of learning the appropriate skills and how to apply them to a new field.

In a dominated field, social capital does not quite convert into cultural capital. A dominated field allows for smooth transitions for cultural capital across fields, however. The more you know about a PC, the easier it is to build one. Thus the skills that come from PC ownership help to transition an individual to the PC builder community. Mark got into PC building because his old computer could not play a popular video game: *“It wasn’t able to run Doom at all. It was just like what’s going on and I started researching and I was like, oh, it’s memory. That was my first inquiry into like I need to update the memory”* (Mark). Every time he attempted to run the game it would crash. Once he discovered that he needed more RAM for his computer to play the game effectively, he went to an electronics store, bought the part, and slotted it himself. Inserting RAM into a motherboard is as easy as just snapping it in the correct place. When Mark accomplished this, he realized, like many others do, that the inside of a computer is much less complex than he initially thought. This encouraged him to learn to build his own computer. His cultural capital in computer ownership transferred directly into the PC building field.

Lastly, the path into a new field is not unidirectional. Eric went to school for studio art and employed those skills when learning to build his own computer. His case for the 2015 competition was a mannequin that was dressed up to look like a character from a popular video game. He *“...Painted him, sculpted him, weathered the clothing”* (Eric), which were all part of his formal studio art education. Michael, on the other hand, had been building computers with a family friend and his father for years: *“...(he) did IT and stuff in the early ‘90s and that’s when I started building computers, and so he taught me a lot that I know now about building computers and using computers...”* (Michael). He then had an idea for a case mod but needed to learn a new skill set to make it reality. He joined a local workshop that could teach him to do 3d

printing, where he ultimately ended up making his build. One can come from a field of PC building and move into case modding, or they can come from a field of cultural production and get into PC building, allowing them to hybridize those skillsets. The paths are not uniform.

### *Structuration*

Another important theme that emerged was the issue of structuration. In a dominated field, it appears that the structure of the field has more to do with status games, taste/distinction, and symbolic violence than any true change in doxa. For overlapped fields, the doxa from each field are important in determining the doxa for the central field.

In the dominated field of PC builders, there was a clear pattern of symbolic violence as Bourdieu would describe it (2013). Many of the computers at QuakeCon had a sticker placed prominently on their cases that said “built, not bought”. This was a clear point of pride for PC builders, as they wanted to stand out from PC owners. In doing so, they’re demonstrating their superior levels of cultural capital over PC owners. They do not do so with this power discrepancy in mind, they simply just have a level of pride in the fact that they built the computer with their own two hands, rather than going to a retail outlet and buying one. This reinforces their status as “above” PC owners.

PC builders will also often chide those who buy a retail PC for “wasting their money” as well. PC builders often save a little bit of money and gain a lot of flexibility in the desired metrics of their PC by building it themselves. However, they also lose out on the certainty of the build quality in addition to things like anti-virus software and warranties that typically come with a store bought computer. Getting defective parts is an irregular, but non-zero occurrence when building a computer yourself. Determining which part is defective in a complete build can

also be difficult, as the interrelationship between each part is integral to its function. If a graphics card is overheating, for example, it could be the graphics card itself, the power supply giving it too much power, or a problem with the PCI-E slot in the motherboard. It could also be unrelated to hardware entirely, and a program could just be very taxing on the graphics card. In order to effectively troubleshoot the issue, one needs either a good social network, or enough knowledge directly about computers to test it themselves. The certainty of knowing you're getting a working computer right out of the box is appealing for many PC owners. PC builders will often ignore these facts because they are already so culturally competent that none of those are major barriers. A warranty is not necessary if you know how to troubleshoot and fix your own problems. A defective part can be returned for a new one with the manufacturer at no charge. Many PC builders are also confident enough to know how to very effectively avoid viruses in the first place, so anti-virus software actually becomes a detriment due to system resource usage.

This type of symbolic violence is very much in line with Bourdieu's conception of distinction and taste. Those who are high in cultural capital get to determine what is "tasteful" and those lower in cultural capital accept it as a natural fact (2013). In this way, the cultural elites remain in their superior position, and reinforce the structures that allow them to stay on top. This could mean one of two things: either differences in capital can create new fields (that is to say that there is a field of high cultural status and one of low cultural status), or Bourdieu's concept of distinction applies to fields. In both cases, this is an expansion of how we need to think of fields and/or distinction and taste.

Overlapped fields, on the other hand, appears to draw from the doxa of both parent fields. Focusing on the overlap between cultural production and pc building as producing case modding

highlights this very well. It appears that the doxa of cultural production is being layered into the field of PC building in order to produce the case modding field.

Cultural production as a field is generally difficult to draw strict lines around. Any attempt to define art often falls short and is notoriously difficult to do. Howard Becker suggests that the actors, norms, and institutions are vital to the field and are the root source of the definition of art and cultural production (1984), in addition to defining what is and is not art. Not only this, but Danto believed that cultural production is not monolithic, and the many “Artworlds” are completely distinct from one another. Bourdieu describes the field of cultural production as all the actors, norms, and institutions as well, but, the institutions, actors, and norms consist of the doxa of the field of cultural production. He also suggests that art is endowed with meaning based on a cultured habitus within the artistic field. Following his practice theory, the Artworld is defined as a field of art, and to be culturally versed enough to determine what objects belong in the artworld, one must have developed a habitus well oriented to that field, as well as the necessary cultural and social capitals either through education or through practice to establish one’s self as an authority on art.

At QuakeCon’s case mod competition in 2017, there was a populist uproar over who should have won the best case. One mod was based on a character from the popular video game “Overwatch” and was a fully remote-controlled tank that was roughly 2 to 3 feet tall. The other was the wooden case with all the unique joinery. The wooden case won, much to the ire of the general participants at QuakeCon. During one event at the convention, a host asked for a catch phrase from the audience, and one of the most popular catch phrases was “Bastion was robbed!” – bastion being the name of the tank. Many of the modders I spoke with felt that was really disrespectful of the wooden case, with one modder saying: *...they appreciate that wood build*

*more than the average BYOC attendee would because BYOC sees 'Tank! Computer inside tank!'"* (Samuel). Another one of my modder informants wrote on a forum post asking for case mod pictures

*"If you didn't talk with (creator of the wooden case) about his bread box, I can see how it seems like it should not have won 1st place, but please trust me when I say it was very deserving of 1st place. I think the order they ranked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd was extremely fair and they recognized that Bastion was the fan favorite."* (Eric).

This is another example of those high in cultural capital creating taste, as there was a clear winner among the general participants, yet those with the cultural competence were able to see what an incredible work the wooden case was. These creators are trying to establish themselves as the authority on case modding, though not seemingly intentionally.

Another element that Bourdieu emphasizes as important to the Artworld is the elaboration of an artistic language. He claims that the way of naming the artist, of speaking about her/him, about the nature of her/his work establishes a definition of artistic value that is independent of any use value. By the same logic, the biography of the work is of equal importance, playing a determining role in the artistic value of the object. The biography of the work creates a value that was not there before and makes both the artist and the work worthy of historical account. This is consistent with the practice of "logging" a case mod or taking many pictures throughout the process of the build, describing each step, and posting them online. Providing the backstory of any work they are doing helps to add to the value of the case itself. In the same post from earlier, Eric described the process that the wood case modder went through to build his mod to help some of the others see why it deserved first:

*"...he didn't just use plywood, he got wood and let it adjust to the climate for months and then cut rough pieces and let those sit for more months so they'd release their tension. He cut his own joints in the wood so that every piece linked together from multiple angles WITH a separate groove to house the tempered glass (he used tempered glass instead of plexiglass because the way the glass diffused light was important to him and plexiglass*

*wasn't good enough). There were no screws or nails in any of the wood. It was linked together so smooth you couldn't feel the seams and without any hardware” (Eric).*

He continued on to describe how much attention to detail the modder put into his work, but importantly helped to tell the story of the mod that helped deliver value to it.

Becker defined the complete roster of the social world of art as individuals who: conceive of the idea (composers/playwrights), execute the idea (actors/musicians), provide the equipment for the creation (instrument makers), and consist an audience (playgoers, critics). Bourdieu also heavily emphasizes the consecrating and replicating effects of museums and art institutions. All of these elements are present for case modders. The creators are the modders themselves, who take an immense amount of pride in their work. The materials merchants also obviously exist, with manufacturers of PC parts and the equipment manufacturers needed to perform their craft playing this role. The general attendees of QuakeCon also plays the role of the audience, with critics both professional and amateur alike.

The institutions are not quite as visible, yet they still clearly exist. The institutions are a core component that help create a self-replicating effect for the artworld, and includes art schools and museums that curate the art. These institutions can also be found in the case modding community. The “GeForce Garage” is a frequent presence at QuakeCon, and a resource that many PC builders can go to, to learn how to put their components together. QuakeCon itself acts as a potential museum for case mods. These PCs are put on display, with markers placed on the computers to identify them as part of their mod competition. The computers are usually used by their owners during the LAN party, but these PCs are given special status by these markers. Given the layout of the convention, with case mods frequently placed at the end of aisles and near exits, many observers walk by these cases and stop to observe them and appreciate them as an individual piece of art. In many ways, this mirrors the behavior that one would expect at a

museum. Works of art are placed among peers for them to be observed and critiqued. It can also be thought of as an art showing where the artist is present, allowing for feedback from their audience.

There are also several magazines that feature case design and computer building as their primary features. An example would be *Computer Power User*. Many of their articles feature discussions about specifications of new parts, and interviews with people in the computer industry, but they regularly have articles that feature case mods as well. *Computer Power User* will often show designs that have recently won other competitions, as well as have interviews with the artists themselves. In many ways, it looks a lot like a publication that follows a specific medium of art. In one copy, the magazine interviews the CEO of Modders Inc. who describes the inception of the company as “for the sole purpose of allowing others to have a place where they could show off their work, talk about projects, and help others learn about modding.” There are other online spaces where these artists’ work can be shown as well.

All of these structures and institutions that support “an artworld” correspond to doxa that are present in the field of cultural production. This suggests that there is likely some shared doxa for the overlapped field (case modders). Status games are not played between the two overlapping fields like they are for the dominated field.

## **Discussion**

Fields appear to be more complex than an isolated unit of study that interpretive researchers tend to rely on. While Askegaard and Linnet asked for a grand model of Consumer Culture Theory, this work claims no such honor. However, it does begin to scratch at the surface of the institutional forces that help to create, recreate, and inform our contexts of study. This

work also serves to expand the concept of field with respect to how it has been used in interpretive marketing research. By establishing a concept of a layered field, we expand a foundational concept both for marketers, and scholars of Bourdieu.

Additionally, creating a better understanding of the nature of consumption communities can help marketers as they think about brand communities, segmentations, and subcultures of consumption, and how the structures of related and unrelated fields inform each other. It also helps to inform how consumers move between communities, describing the relationships between capitals as they move between groups, and possibly across cultural capital levels. This expands on the work done by McAlexander et al. in that regard, as it contextualizes capital transference into a new field, as well as a new field configuration. While McAlexander et al. found that capital is sticky to it's field, this work suggests that is dependent on field configuration, rather than universally true.

As we think about other concepts in the marketing literature, this work can also serve to help understand the nature of engagement with a brand community (Schau et al 2009). In becoming high-capital within a field, consumers are creating a new subculture where they can interact with each other as a discrete standalone field. It also works to think about brand communities as fractured, rather than monolithic. It should encourage marketers to understand that communities do not have just one culture, but often consist of many, and that community engagement may be more complex depending on field configurations.

This work also builds on craft consumption (Campbell 2005). Rather than simply suggesting that craft consumers need to be recognized by social scientists as a class of consumers, it suggests that there may be entire subsystems constituting a field that supports them. This also stands in contrast to what Campbell's conclusion that craft consumption is based

on the over-commodification of the good. These PC builders are not always wealthy, though they are high in a type of cultural capital. They also are not seeking to decommodify, given that they often have loyalty to brands like Intel or AMD. Additionally, this helps to understand the concept of co-creation of value. Not only do consumers gain value out of the process of co-creation, but they may also be gaining value out of the creation of a field that sustains, supports, and encourages the co-creation itself (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). This may also be seeing some residual effects from the IKEA effect, as not only are consumers building their own computers and clearly getting satisfaction out of it, but they're also helping to build a community around the practice (Norton et al. 2012). Lastly, it may also help to expand the concept of the extended self (Belk 1988). Our extensions of self certainly include products that we buy and produce ourselves, but also extend into the communities we become a part of. If a consumer can effectively tie two communities together, it stands to reason that they enrich their identities in both communities. For example, the wood case modder would likely be able to demonstrate his case at a wood working convention to extend his symbolic capital there as well as with the case modding community.

One interesting note is that, based on the institutional theory of art, the title of "art" is bestowed upon an object based on the institutions that support art. Given that there's ample evidence of all of these institutions that Becker and Bourdieu describe, it is possible that an artworld exists within this consumer subculture. Using this information, marketing managers can foster an artworld in their consumption context by cultivating the institutions that constitute an artworld. By providing artists the resources to create their art, and a forum for which their art can be observed and critiqued, the manager will have created at least an ephemeral artworld for their subculture and may bring value to the brand or consumption context.

## **Conclusion**

This work stands, not to provide a complete explanation for all possible layered fields, but as an initial exploration into the concept. It is hoped that this work is not treated as an end-all-be-all of layered fields, but to get the discussion going. Interpretive consumer researchers do in fact need to do a better job of understanding the historical and institutional settings their contexts are in, and while this work does not really speak much to the history, it does hopefully set the table to begin some discussion on institutions.

More should be done to help refine the concept of layered fields. It is hoped that, as interpretive consumer research moves forward, this concept or something similar is considered and addressed to help build a more complete theory. This particular context only consisted of overlapped and dominated fields, but there are certainly more types of field configurations out there. The concepts may be more abstract than the ones described here, so I encourage researchers to think outside of the box with respect to how they configure their fields. In doing so, not only will we have a more complete list of field configurations, but we may also uncover new phenomena within the context of layered fields.

## References

- Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): twenty years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 868-882.
- Askegaard, S., & Linnet, J. T. (2011). Towards an epistemology of consumer culture theory: phenomenology and the context of context. *Marketing Theory*, 11(4), 381-404.
- Becker, H. S. (1984). *Art Worlds: 25th anniversary edition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Belk, R. (1988). *Possessions and self*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Bourdieu, P. (1968). Outline of a sociological theory of art perception. *International Social Science Journal*, 20(4), 589-612.
- Bourdieu, P. (1987). The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 46, 201-210.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. Columbia University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). The forms of capital (1986). *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, 81-93.
- Bourdieu, P. (2013). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.
- Campbell, C. (2005). The craft consumer: Culture, craft and consumption in a postmodern society. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(1), 23-42.
- Canniford, R. (2011). A typology of consumption communities. In *Research in Consumer Behavior* (pp. 57-75). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Corbin, Juliet M and Anselm Strauss (1990), "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria," *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Falzon, M.-A. (2016). *Multi-sited Ethnography*. New York: Routledge.
- Kjeldgaard, D., Csaba, F. F., & Ger, G. (2006). Grasping the global: Multi-sited ethnographic market studies. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing* (pp. 521-533).
- Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. Sage publications.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2015). *Netnography: Redefined*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- March of the outdated machines. (2009, September 20). Retrieved July 12, 2019, from <https://www.newscientist.com/gallery/dn17805-computer-museums-of-the-world/>

- McAlexander, J. H., Dufault, B. L., Martin, D. M., & Schouten, J. W. (2014). The marketization of religion: Field, capital, and consumer identity. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(3), 858-875.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The Long Interview*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Norton, M. I., Mochon, D., & Ariely, D. (2012). The IKEA effect: When labor leads to love. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(3), 453-460.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(3), 5-14.
- Prasad, P. (2005). *Crafting Qualitative Research: Working in the Postpositivist Traditions*. ME Sharpe.
- Schau, H. J., Muñiz Jr, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How Brand Community Practices Create Value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 30-51.
- Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), 43-61.
- Seregina, A., & Weijo, H. A. (2016). Play at any cost: How cosplayers produce and sustain their ludic communal consumption experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44(1), 139-159.
- Sherry Jr, J. F. (1999). *Qualitative inquiry in marketing and consumer research* (Doctoral dissertation, School of Mangement, Northwestern University).
- Thompson, C. J. (1997). Interpreting Consumers: A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Marketing Insights From the Texts of Consumers' Consumption Stories. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 438-455.
- Thompson, C. J., & Arnould, E. J. (1998). Narrative Analysis of a Marketing Relationship: The Consumer's Perspective. *Psychology and Marketing*, 15(3), 195-214.
- Warde, A. (2005). Consumption and Theories of Practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(2), 131-153.

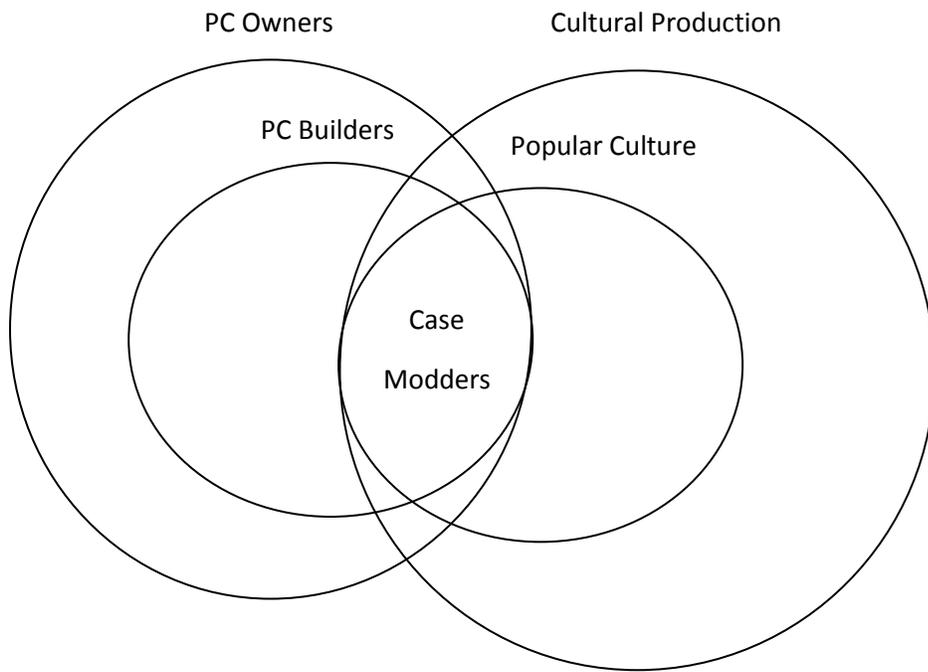
## Appendix



*Image 1: Layout of QuakeCon  
Photo by author*



*Image 2: A Case Mod at QuakeCon  
Photo by author*



*Figure 1: Hypothesized Field Configuration*

**Table 1:**

<b>Data</b>	<b>Sites</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>QuakeCon</b>	-Roughly 25 informants, all male -Field notes taken about the details of the conventions and the presence of businesses on the convention floor -Attended August 2015/2016	-informants asked about their experiences building a PC, what they thought about case modding, the personal story of their builds.
<b>Interviews with scratch case modders</b>	-2 adult informants, male, mid twenties, college educated (Michael and Eric). -One interview done on-site (Michael), one interview done via VOIP	- informants asked about their experiences building a PC, what they thought about case modding, the personal story of their builds. Also asked about how they felt during evaluation of their builds during the competition.
<b>Self-reflective build</b>	-Author built an i5 PC for work/personal use.	-Brief notes were made reflecting on how the author felt, and what the author learned. -PC being used to write dissertation
<b>Participant observation: electronic field work</b>	-Subreddit /r/buildapc browsed on a daily basis -Occasional checking of forums related to case modding	-Author's personal reflections -Predominately used to get a sense for community and get immersed into the language of the field.
<b>Participant observation: Local Fab Lab</b>	- Modded my own case using various tools provided by the local fab lab -3 major informants, with others appearing at irregular intervals	- Spent around 4 hours a week over 4 months starting in January 2019, finally finishing the work on May 2019 - Field notes were taken after each trip to the field - Some work on the case mod had to be completed at home

## **Conclusion**

This set of essays stands as an exercise of how to write towards a top tier journal. The first essay works as a literature review and theory development on the basis of existing literature. The second essay focuses on method, data collection, and data analysis. The final essay stands to combine the theoretical lens developed in essay 1 with the data collected in essay 2, in order to contextualize the theoretical lens and provide new insights into the theory and how it is applied in the real world. Essay 3 is the final product of this process and is the one I will be submitting to an A-tier journal.

This work also examines the relationships between fields as Bourdieu and interpretive marketing researchers conceives of them and finds that there is much work to be done with respect to how we treat practice theory in a practical sense. We oversimplify the complex nature of fields by isolating them from each other and treating them as discrete constructs, when they are fluid and inform the doxa, as well as transform the capitals. This work does not establish a complete archetype of how these fields interact, and that is work that could be done in the future. As of now, this work only establishes the following five types: overlapped fields, dominated fields, unrelated fields, contrasted fields, and co-constituted fields. More certainly exist, and most don't even exist in just the dyadic sense.

The research also works to establish the complex dynamics of learning from a craft-consumption context, and how learning new sets of skills is under valued in past work. Future work in craft and DIY consumption should consider the value of new skill sets that can transfer across social contexts that consumers are learning through engaging with craft consumption, rather than focusing almost strictly on the embodied sensations of doing something for yourself.

Lastly, this research establishes that the nature of fields is fractured and helps to understand the contextualized differences between an overlapped and dominated field. Overlapped fields aren't marked by status games quite like dominated ones are, and overlapped fields also tend to inform the doxa of the newly created central field.

I hope that the biggest take away from any of this work is that more needs to be done to describe this complex phenomenon. The foundation of practice theory needs to be expanded on further to truly understand the nature of subcultures, brand communities, and other consumption communities. Until we establish a better foundation, then our work will continue to be one dimensional.

## Appendix



Office of Research Compliance  
Institutional Review Board

March 20, 2015

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Brandon McAlexander  
Jeff Murray

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 15-02-558

Protocol Title: *Technocraft*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 03/20/2015 Expiration Date: 03/19/2016

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

**This protocol has been approved for 400 participants.** If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).