Bourdieu, strategy and the field of power

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of the *field of power*, we examine the cross-national translation of organizational models and the strategic processes induced in recipient institutional contexts. By means of an in-depth historical case study, we demonstrate how elite strategists mobilized networks and symbolic capital to disrupt field relations and embed the US community foundation model of philanthropy in North East England. Our findings suggest that instead of simply copying alien field-level practices, strategic actors within the philanthropic field adapted and modified them to deliver *fit-for-context* change legitimated by support from the regional power elite. Our main contribution is to show how strategic elites drawn from different life-worlds build coalitions within the field of power to modify institutional infrastructures and embed innovative organizational models, simultaneously bolstering their legitimacy and symbolic capital. We hold that the field of power construct offers uniquely valuable insights into how strategic elites accomplish institutional change.

Keywords:

Bourdieu, Elites, Field of power, Institutional work, Non-market strategy, Symbolic capital

1. Introduction

How might the theoretical constructs of Pierre Bourdieu be deployed to enrich strategy research? In this article, we propose that Bourdieu's understanding that strategies and strategizing cannot be disentangled from the everyday struggles that take place between

more or less powerful actors within hierarchically stratified fields of human endeavour provides a valuable counterpoint to mainstream strategy theory (Bourdieu, 1990b; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Whereas mainstream theory is founded on the idea that any organization with the right strategy might liberate itself from present constraints and limitations (Barney, 1991; Porter, 1996), in the Bourdieusian world, the availability of strategic options is a function of power, defined practically as *command over resources* (Maclean, Harvey, & Chia, 2010, p. 328). Entirely blue skies strategizing is not possible when enmeshed in power-laden networks of dependencies within fields. On the one hand, dominant actors pursue *strategies of domination*, bringing to bear the full weight of superior resources to stay ahead of challengers (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009; Wright, 2009). Their strategies are heavily conditioned by the power and resources they already possess, consolidating existing positions and seeking avenues for future growth, often by acquiring would-be rivals before they become strong. On the other hand, subordinate actors, lesser players within fields, in lacking the full complement of critical resources, pursue *subversive strategies* to undermine the positions of dominant actors and actively create new positions within markets and fields (Emirbayer & Williams, 2005). In doing so, they take advantage of newly emerging possibilities stemming from developments in tastes, incomes and technologies, moving quickly before more dominant players can nullify their strategic moves (Bourdieu, 1993a). In what follows, we elaborate these ideas theoretically and demonstrate their value empirically through a case study of strategic translation within the philanthropic field.

We take our lead from Carter and Whittle (2018, p. 1) who make a strong case for liberating strategy research and discourse from the economistic mainstream, with its roots in industrial economics, to 'articulate ways of evaluating *how it is done*, and *how it could be done differently*, from the perspective of society as a whole not just the corporate elite.' What is missing from mainstream strategy, they hold, is serious consideration of the *social realm*,

inside and outside organizations; of the crucible in which real world strategies are forged and enacted (Mueller & Carter, 2007). Hence the disregard in mainstream research for issues relating to 'social norms, rules, values, roles, identities, beliefs, discourses, symbols, meaning-systems, systems of domination, power relations and ideologies' (Carter & Whittle, 2018, pp. 1-2).

This lacuna is addressed in this paper through consideration of the potential value to strategy research of Bourdieu's core constructs, especially that of the *field of power*. Bourdieu is eminently qualified to represent both dominant and dominated classes, having experienced the 'life world' of both as a 'sociologist whose origins are in what is called the people and who has reached what is called the elite' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 178). Coming from provincial, lower-middle-class social origins, he rose to the pinnacle of the academic pyramid (Maclean, Harvey, & Press, 2006). Born in 1930 in Béarn in southwestern France, Bourdieu secured a place at the elite Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Paris, which annually admits a small number of talented recruits. Lacking the social and cultural capital of his classmates, without the 'unselfconscious belonging of those born to wealth, cultural pedigree and elite accents', he considered himself a frustrated 'oblate' (Swartz, 1997, p. 18). The experience of alienation induced in him a thirst for revenge against the institutions responsible for his success, incensed by the contrast between their ostensible ideals and imputed prejudice against the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1996). He lambasted their role as institutions of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1970, 1979).

Bourdieu's ideas on social domination began to take shape during his period of military service in Algeria beginning in 1955. Discerning parallels between Kabylian society and the peasant community of Béarn, he began social scientific research as a self-taught ethnographer (Bourdieu, 1962, 1979). His status as a provincial outsider excluded from the social elite was confirmed by experience on returning to Paris, imbuing his writing with an

anti-institutional critique (Calhoun & Wacquant, 2002). Even after election to the Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France in 1981, he remained excluded from the very highest echelons of the French academic elite. Lacking a *doctorat d'Etat*, the primary qualification for a university chair, meant his career lacked a key element of state-conferred legitimacy and distinction; he was not entitled, for example, to preside over the viva voce examination of a doctoral thesis. The absence of an exemplary manifestation of symbolic capital doubtless pained Bourdieu, for whom the state represents the main perpetrator of symbolic violence in society, partly due to its power to name, to bestow on individuals 'its social titles of recognition' (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 337). In sum, Bourdieu's lived experience was critical to his understanding of the social processes that inform and regulate society (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Within the literatures of accounting as well as organization studies, Bourdieu's master concepts of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic resources), field (social spaces of objective relations between positions) and habitus (internalized dispositions) have been deployed in numerous studies to help make visible social processes whose successful operation depends on remaining invisible to those involved (Maclean & Harvey, 2019; Malsch, Gendron, & Grazzini, 2011). Yet, to date, his ideas have impacted only marginally on strategy as a field of research, despite the evident potential to enrich theory by taking power seriously as variable impacting strategic practices and outcomes (Hardy & Thomas, 2014). We address this issue in what follows both theoretically and empirically. Our theoretical contribution is to elaborate the importance to strategy practice of Bourdieu's concept of the *field of power*, defined here as the social space in which elite actors at the pinnacle of diverse fields form coalitions to promote significant changes in laws, rules, regulations, practices, and societal resource flows (Maclean, Harvey, & Kling, 2014). Our empirical contribution is to demonstrate the value of Bourdieu's theoretical schema to

strategy through a case study of strategic translation: the embedding of the community foundation model of philanthropy in North East England.

In what follows, we first present our ideas on the potential value of Bourdieusian theory to enrich strategy research, considering achievements to date and future potentialities. Our primary purpose is to identify hitherto underexploited opportunities, particularly with respect to the field of power as a unifying theoretical construct. In the next section, we lay the groundwork for our case study of the Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland (CFTWN), now the largest philanthropic foundation of its type in the UK and one of the largest in Europe. Next, we detail our methodology, that of historical organization studies. Our case analysis is then presented in the form of a theoretically informed narrative of strategic translation. We consider the implications in our discussion and conclusion.

2. Power and strategy

Bourdieu's ideas have not been pursued extensively by strategy researchers, who, by and large, remain wedded to positivism and to economic rather than sociological perspectives (Carter & Whittle, 2018). There are notable exceptions. Indeed, Bourdieu's book *The Logic of Practice* (1990b) is claimed as one of the foundational texts of the strategy-as-practice school (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2006), which argues that strategizing 'relies on organizational and other practices that significantly affect both the process and the outcome of resulting strategies … [offering] an alternative to the individualistic models of decision-making that still dominate the field of strategic management' (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 285). His articulation of the role played by social capital in mobilizing strategic networks has also been influential (Acquaah, 2007; Moran, 2005), and so too several other key concepts such as habitus (Tsoukas, 1996). What is striking, however, is the selectiveness with which Bourdieu's concepts are often applied, abstracted from his broader theoretical project,

without reference to the underlying politics and power relations at work in making and implementing strategies (Hurtado, 2010). Thus, we begin here by exploring the conceptual unity of his theoretical schema and how this might inform strategy research.

2.1 Power and the transmutability of capitals

For Bourdieu, all symbolic systems – whether cultural or linguistic – are sources of domination, helping to fix and preserve social hierarchies. Like many social theorists, Bourdieu views power as fundamental to understanding how change occurs in society and organizations (Bourdieu, 1996; Friedland, 2009). This is a crucial point because strategy is fundamentally about the accrual and exercise of power (Freedman, 2018). Power, in Bourdieu's view, is multifaceted and distributed, embedded in structures and relationships, and exercised in innumerable ways, sometimes visible, often unseen and irrecoverable (Bourdieu, 1996, 1999). According to this view, power emanates not only from above but also from below, dependent on those who bear its effects, on rulers and ruled in equal measure (Bourdieu, 1996, 1999, 2014). The ultimate source of power in society derives from the possession of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The power stemming from command of such resources is ever varying in quantum, because capital formation is an on-going, dynamic process, subject to both accumulation and attrition (Bourdieu, 1985).

An agent's positioning in social space is contingent upon 'overall volume and relative composition of capital' (Anheier, Gerhards, & Romo, 1995, p. 892). We typically think of capital in its economic forms – for example, as industrial plant, real estate or financial assets – but equally it may be cultural, in the form of education, valued knowledge or expertise, or symbolic, as, for example, in the authority to define and legitimize cultural values. Capital may also be social, defined by access and positioning within important social networks (Stringfellow, McMeeking, & Maclean, 2015). Each form of capital is transmutable to a

degree, since economic capital is liquid and might via intermediation purchase cultural, social, and even symbolic capital, while possession of any of these affords opportunities to make money (Bourdieu, 1986). Legitimacy, the acceptance of domination by the subordinated, is signified by possession of symbolic capital, including titles, qualifications and belongings, itself bound up with the other three forms of capital, possession of each incorporating the symbolic capital that goes with it. Capital is field-specific, which means that different forms of capital dominate and legitimate different fields. According to Bourdieu (1985, p. 724), '(c)apital … represents a power over the field … The kinds of capital, like the aces in a game of cards, are powers that define the chances of profit in a given field.' The implications are that success in strategy implementation depends on having the right quantities of each type of capital and that strategic management involves mastery of the processes of capital conversion and accumulation.

2.2 Fields as arenas of competition

Fields, for Bourdieu, are networks of social relations, structured systems of social positions within which struggles take place over resources, stakes, and access. They overlap and are often in flux. According to Bourdieu (1993a, p. 135), 'what defines the structure of the field … is also the principle of its dynamics.' Bourdieu (1984, p. 94) argues that 'dispositions constituting the cultivated habitus are only formed, only function and are only valid in a field, in the relationship with a field.' Positions within individual fields are 'positions of possibility' (Oakes, Townley, & Cooper, 1998, p. 288), because they are not stable but reflect relations of power. In our empirical study, for example, community foundations constitute a sub-field operating within the broad philanthropic field in which the main actors are philanthropic foundations, non-profit organizations, public bodies, and the frontline charities that deliver services to clients. Individual fields and sub-fields are nested in a hierarchically structured set of fields, including the economically dominant field of

entrepreneurship, the ultimate source of cash for charitable organizations (Harvey, Maclean, & Suddaby, 2019).

For Bourdieu, forms of capital and the structure of a field are interdependent (Bourdieu, 1985; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Capital endowments determine the strategies and tactics available to actors, and the ability of actors to define field boundaries and degree of autonomy enjoyed inside the field (Bourdieu, 1984). Possession of capital is also fundamental to change. Within the philanthropic field, for example, the negotiating power of foundations, charities, public bodies and firms is a function of the capital at their disposal (Harvey et al., 2019). Relations between actors are always in flux because capital endowments vary in relative worth depending on market and quasi-market valuations. When entrepreneurs, firms, and foundations dominate, it is because economic capital is most highly valued; whereas when charities and public bodies dominate, it is because social and symbolic capital are most highly prized, typically in conferring legitimacy or in bringing vital knowledge to an established project or new charitable initiative. There are two main implications for strategy. First, actors within fields have widely differing degrees of strategic freedom; dominant actors, with abundant resources, being far more agentic than subordinate actors possessing fewer resources. Secondly, dominant actors become vulnerable to competitive threats when the value of their cultural and symbolic capitals is marked down due to exogenous changes in taste, technologies and incomes impacting on demand (Harvey, Press, & Maclean, 2011).

2.3 Symbolic power and world-making

The socially embedded nature of power frequently causes it to be 'misrecognized' by those it holds in its sway (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 112–123). This applies especially to symbolic power, 'that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it'

(Bourdieu, 1991, p. 164). Objective relations of power reproduce themselves in relations of symbolic power (Harrits, 2011). In the struggle to impose common sense meanings, agents put into action symbolic capital acquired in previous struggles. Thus, the historic titles of nobility, won by ancestors in bloody conflicts centuries ago, still confer on titleholders the right to share in the profits of recognition (Bourdieu, 1999, 2014). In fact, there are always, in any society, conflicts between symbolic powers that aim at imposing a vision of legitimate divisions between people. Symbolic power, in this sense, is 'a power of "world-making"', which, according to Bourdieu (1989, p. 22), consists 'in separating and reuniting, often in the same operation … by the use of labels.' To change the world, therefore, actors must change the ways of world-making (Bourdieu, 1987). They must change both the prevailing vision of how society is ordered and the means of classifying and reproducing groups in society. Symbolic power is 'a power of consecration or revelation, the power to consecrate or to reveal things that are already there' (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

Bourdieu introduces the notion of 'symbolic violence' to understand social reproduction through cultural mechanisms: 'symbolic violence, to put it as tersely and simply as possible, is the *violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity*' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). Bourdieu (1977) uses the term symbolic violence to indicate that mechanisms of social control are not always explicit and do not necessarily involve conscious and direct strategic action. It is not therefore necessary for power to be visible or even felt in order to be effective. Thus, Bourdieu (1977, p. 196) refers to symbolic violence as the 'gentle, hidden form which violence takes when overt violence is impossible.' This should not be seen as overly deterministic (Calhoun, 1995; Spence & Carter, 2014), as Bourdieu (1985, p. 728) states, 'objects of the social world can be perceived and uttered in different ways they always include a degree of indeterminacy and fuzziness.' Individuals or groups may collectively strategize to obtain or create important positions, but, for Bourdieu,

strategies are not entirely rational calculative decisions. The existence, form, and direction of change depends both on the state of the system, the 'repertoire of possibilities which it offers', and 'the balance of forces between social agents who have entirely real interests in the different possibilities available to them' (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 34). The ability of agents to 'un-make' and 're-make' the social world depends on 'realistic knowledge of what it is and what they can do with it from the position they occupy within it' (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 734).

What Bourdieu offers strategists, as his thinking on symbolic power makes plain, is an entirely different conception of *strategy context* from that offered by the mainstream theories of strategy focused on competitive positioning (Porter, 1996) and the resource-based view (Barney, 1991). Mainstream theory conceives of power purely in terms of market power, both in terms of strategic intent, the pursuit of sustainable competitive advantage, and rewards, the most powerful firms earning super-normal profits that might be reinvested to perpetuate domination. In contrast, Bourdieu's conceives of a more complex and realistic strategy context in which power stems from multiple sources, actors are interdependent, history and habitus matter, and goals may be collective as well as self-interested.

2.4 Habitus and the logic of practice

A particular strength of Bourdieusian theory is its focus on formative practices within organizations and the logic underpinning such practices, conceived as customary, habitual or naturalized ways of doing things (Bourdieu, 1990b). Hence Bourdieu's appeal to the strategy-as-practice school (Burgelman, Floyd, Laamanen, Mantere, Vaara, & Whittington, 2018; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2006). The most comprehensive review of strategizing from this standpoint is provided by Gomez (2015) in the second edition of *The Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice*. In this, Gomez highlights the interconnectedness of Bourdieu's thinking on habitus, field, forms of capital and social practices, and how actors draw on these when playing the strategy game. The everyday

practices on which the strategy-as-practice school focuses depend crucially on organizational and field norms. In turn, the differing positions of actors within fields depend on the quantities and composition of capitals they possess (Gomez & Bouty, 2011).

The appeal of habitus as a theoretical concept, according to Chia and MacKay (2007, p. 226), lies in its role as 'the real author of everyday coping action.' Habitus, as a system of lasting, transposable and socially constituted dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990b), lends actors 'a feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 25). Habitus 'resides in codes of behaviour that strategists learn and internalize (encompassing their beliefs and rituals); it is something tacit and unspoken but yet well understood and followed.' (Rasche & Chia, 2009, p. 718). Habitus is important because it shapes the *praxis* of strategizing. In generating similar dispositions within groups, habitus induces commitment to a common praxis based on categories of 'perception and appreciation' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 170). This affords strategists a secure feel for the game, an intuitive understanding of available options and how these might play out. Habitus causes strategists to favour options their dispositions suggest will lead to success. Spence and Carter (2014), for example, show how the habitus of partners and other senior accountants shapes praxis at 'Big 4' accounting firms, leading to professional hierarchies in which the commercial logic of practice holds sway over its technical counterpart.

How habitus, field and capital interact and impact on the formation, embedding and normalization of strategic practices is demonstrated in Oakes et al.'s (1998) study of the introduction of business planning at provincial museums in Alberta, Canada. The authors explain how language and power may be used to facilitate control by means of symbolic violence, enabling establishment of a new normal in discourse and practices relating to markets, consumers, and products. This was made possible by fundamentally changing 'the allocation of capital to positions within the field … attrition of the field's traditional cultural capital [leaving] the division and its members increasingly vulnerable to further external

challenges in the name of economic capital' (Oakes et al., 1998, p. 284). What this demonstrates is that strategy should be understood as a collective, socially and politically embedded phenomenon (Carter & Mueller, 2006; Mueller & Carter, 2007), not as the individualistic pursuit of the visionary leaders beloved in the strategic management literature (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). It confirms, moreover, that power is ultimately the 'motor of field dynamics in Bourdieu's theory' (Friedland, 2009. p. 888).

2.5 The field of power

At the apex of Bourdieu's conceptual schema is the relatively neglected construct of the field of power, which, we believe, has the potential to open up fresh avenues of strategy research (Bourdieu, 1993b, 1996; Swartz, 1997, 2008). The construct is essentially the capstone of his theory of fields in which society is conceived as divided into a series of domains and sub-domains, each defined by prevailing field-specific rules of competition, practices and actor dispositions (Swartz, 1997). The most dominant actors within each field constitute the *field elite* (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990b), such as corporate leaders within the field of business and government ministers within the field of politics. The field of power thus embraces members from a multiplicity of fields, at the head of their respective fields, but with fields like business more heavily represented than others (Wacquant, 1993). It might be thought of as an affiliation of dominant agents transcending individual fields. The construct of the field of power effectively shifts the emphasis away from the hierarchical distribution of power to the inter-organizational, where dominant agents compete and collaborate variously with peers across different life-worlds (Maclean et al., 2014).

The field of power functions as an 'arena of struggle' (Swartz, 2008, p. 50) concerned with change or resistance to change It both sets elite agents against one another, whilst providing the necessary structural conditions for them to collaborate through the formation of time-limited, issue-based coalitions (O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008). Through networks forged

within the field of power, elite agents seek to influence societal decision-making processes, resource flows, opinion formation and wider logics of action by strengthening commitment to particular projects or objectives or to the status quo. As purveyors of legitimizing narratives, they inform collective systems of meaning (Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002). Fligstein (1997) explains how they exploit their social skills to direct authority and frame action. It is essential that their actions are legitimized by wider public perceptions of civic-mindedness and disinterestedness (Bourdieu, 1996), since, as Fligstein (1997, p. 400) argues, 'if others think that one wants something and that it is narrowly for selfish purposes, then they are unlikely to try to negotiate'.

The implications for strategy research are profound because, on this account, strategy is Janus-faced. On the one hand, it is about on-going struggles for status and resources within fields. On the other hand, it is about how the most powerful actors in society band together in time-limited coalitions to engage in world-making ideological, regulatory, fiscal and institutional struggles. This latter brand of strategy has obvious affinities with non-market strategy, but even here the potentialities of the field of power construct have gone unnoticed (Doh, Lawton, & Rajwani, 2012; Lawton, McGuire, & Rajwani, 2013).

2.6 Summation

The essential difference between Bourdieu's understanding of strategy and that of the mainstream economistic writers who have dominated the field for three decades (Barney, 1991; Porter, 1996) is captured most memorably in his assertion that 'practice has a logic which is not that of the logician' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 86). According to Bourdieu (1990b, p. 92), all social practices, strategizing included, are rooted in historically evolving contexts and subject to 'a "logic in itself", without conscious reflexion or logical control'. Yet, notwithstanding the implications of his philosophical stance, researchers within the strategy mainstream have conscripted individual concepts in the service of orthodoxy. It is tempting,

for example, to construct and test hypotheses like 'the social capital developed from the networking relationships and ties with top managers at other firms will be positively related to organizational performance' (Acquaah, 2007, p. 1240). With notable exceptions, as pointed out by Gomez (2015), few scholars have fully embraced Bourdieusian theory as a radically different way of viewing and analysing strategies and strategists.

3. Research context and case study

Our aim in what follows is to apply Bourdieu's master concepts, especially that of the field of power, in studying the strategic practice of translating an organizational model. Our empirical focus is the philanthropic field in North East England, and the strategy that underpinned the launch and embedding of the CFTWN. We argue that for translation to be successful, adopted practices must be homologous with – or at least not obstructing – existing structures and practices within the field. Alignment, when introducing an alien organizational form into a traditional setting, requires significant institutional adjustment, negotiated by hyper-agents within the field of power. Pronounced power differentials are to be found in the philanthropic field as in other fields, wherein the most dominant actors, the so-called dominant dominants in possession of the largest agglomerations of capital, are routinely able to inflict symbolic violence on lesser actors (Swartz, 2013). We next locate our case study organization within the contemporary history of the region it serves.

3.1 Strategic context

The North East of England is one of the most peripheral economic regions in the UK. Peripheral regions lack adaptive capacity and often require state-led policies to stimulate innovation, entrepreneurship and growth (Pike, Dawley, & Tomaney, 2010). Following the collapse of its staple industries – shipbuilding, heavy engineering, iron and steel, coal mining – in the 1970s and 1980s, the North East lost the economic vitality for which it had once been famed. Most of what remained of the traditional industries that had previously employed

hundreds of thousands of people, disappeared after the colliery closures following the miners' strike of 1984-85. Deindustrialization, which impacted negatively across Britain, hit the North East particularly hard, shaping the region's culture in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (Tomaney & Ward, 2000). The North East continues to suffer from the socio-economic and political malaise identified with deindustrialization (Pike, 1999), and associated inequalities in household incomes, education and health (Hudson, 2005).

As industrial decline bit hard after the late 1960s, regional policy emphasized the need for industrial modernization (Morgan, 1985). The attraction of inward investment in sectors such as electronics became a key part of this drive (Cooke, 1982; Dawley, 2007). In the North East, periodic coalitions comprising business leaders, trade unionists and public-sector bodies formed to attract inward investment and promote economic modernization (Carney & Hudson, 1978; Morgan, 1985; Shaw, 1993). In Bourdieusian terms, elite actors active in the field of power, whose collective interests were under threat, joined forces to lobby government for support and to promote economic regeneration (Lanigan, 1997). They participated in central government initiatives like the North East Economic Planning Council (1965-79), the Northern Development Company (established 1986), and the North East Regional Development Agency, *One North East* (1999-12). A notable success came in 1984 when Nissan Motors of Japan decided to locate its first European plant in Sunderland, having garnered a total of £112 million in subsidies from the British government and the acquisition of a 930-acre factory site at agricultural land prices (Kenner & Rehder, 1995).

3.2 Case study

The CFTWN launched in October 1988 as the Foundation for Tyne & Wear with the support of two local philanthropists, historical novelist Catherine Cookson and affordable house builder Sir William Leech[i], and substantial funding from the Baring Foundation and four North East charitable trusts (CFTWN, 2018). It was conceived by its founders, elites

active within the regional field of power, as part of a wider campaign for socioeconomic renewal within the North East. They took the view that 'funds should mainly come from those who had a great deal of it – the wealthy, businesses, and other charitable trusts – not from those who have relatively little' (CFTWN, 2010, p. 23), rejecting mass solicitation of funds as its *modus operandi*. Following early successes, the foundation extended its geographic scope in 1992 to include Northumberland, changing its name to the CFTWN.

Community foundations constitute a distinctive organizational sub-field nested within the much broader philanthropic field, as shown in Figure 1. In the UK, sub-field formation substantially took place in just two decades between 1985 and 2006 when 41 of the present 46 members of its representative body, UK Community Foundations, were established. In 2019, the movement as a whole had total assets of near £800 million, including endowed funds of almost £700 million, and in 2018-19 made grants to frontline service providing charities and community groups of approximately £100 million. Like other community foundations, the CFTWN raises money from individuals, companies, and other trusts and foundations, the majority held in donor-advised funds. Charities apply for grants, which, following completion of a due diligence process, are awarded at the ultimate discretion of fund holders under advice from community foundation staff. Grants stem either from in-year donations or from the interest received on endowments. Fund management companies appointed by the CFTWN trustees manage endowed funds as a pool. The foundation strives to enable effective giving by individuals, families, and businesses; to support non-profit organizations with money, time, and skills; and to influence and inform about issues affecting communities in its catchment area (CFTWN, 2011). It has grown to become the largest and most successful community foundation in the UK and, indeed, outside North America (CFTWN, 2010; CFTWN, 2018). The CFTWN's endowed funds grew from £20,000 in 1990

to £81.2 million in 2019, and in 2018-19 it made 1,515 grants with a total value of £7.8 million from 239 donor funds (CFTWN, 2019).

[Figure 1 about here]

Most of the grants awarded by the foundation are small; the majority (78%) under £5,000, and just 11% worth more than £10,000 (CFTWN, 2019). Yet, despite the emphasis in much of the literature on scaling up social impact (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009), the small scale does not imply being without impact. Arguably, through smaller, more targeted, precision grants, more people, projects, and ultimately communities can benefit, enhancing the CFTWN's capacity to 'enrich lives through effective giving' (Maclean, Harvey, & Gordon, 2013, p. 752). The CFTWN's success suggests that small wins have the capacity to improve the configuration of the general circuitry through which power relations flow (Carter, Clegg, & Kornberger, 2010).

4. Methodology

The methodology of our study is that of historical organization studies: organizational research that draws extensively on historical data, methods and knowledge to generate analyses 'whose validity derives from both historical veracity and conceptual rigor' to enrich 'understanding of historical, contemporary, and future-directed social realities' (Maclean, Harvey, & Clegg, 2016, p. 609). Fundamental to historical organization studies is the gathering of primary data from documents and oral testimonies that might cast fresh light on the power-laden procedural processes fundamental to change within institutions and organizational fields. In-depth historical case studies are valued as a means of developing, refining and challenging theory (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009). Within the philanthropic field in the UK, the CFTWN stands out as a 'significant case' (Yin, 2009). Significant cases facilitate theory building by shedding light on characteristics that are

exceptional, thereby helping to ‘unfreeze’ thinking and to extend conceptual understanding (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). We therefore selected our case study purposefully (Siggelkow, 2007), as the largest UK community foundation, and an acknowledged role model within the field.

Consistent with other studies of non-profit organizations (Heinze, Soderstron, & Heinze, 2016; Moody, 2008), we collected multiple forms of qualitative data, including the views and reflections of board members past and present, donors and leaders in the nonprofit sector. Examining the CFTWN’s documentary record over a 30-year period, including an unpublished history written by one of its founders, affords the potential to reconstruct strategies, field-wide interactions and capital deployments at the time of its creation and institutional embedding. Further depth was lent to the study through the collection of 19 oral history testimonies from elite actors involved in the UK community foundation movement. Maclean, Harvey and Stringfellow (2017, p. 1231) argue that such testimonies enable recovery of ‘the voices of those who are disregarded by macro-accounts as they renegotiate memories of identity, place and belonging.’ In total, we collected 19 testimonies, of which 9 were with people identified primarily with CFTWN and 10 with people knowledgeable about the more general diffusion of the community foundation model from the US to the UK. Further details are provided in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

The first stage of data analysis involved transcribing digital recordings of interviews and typing up accompanying handwritten field notes. The second stage involved reading and rereading transcripts and documents to understand how participants made sense of the community foundation model through their ‘meaning-making in vivo and in situ’ (Zilber, 2007, p. 1051). We coded the data using a computer-based qualitative analysis program, NVivo 11, identifying distinct passages of text framing translation in particular ways, for

example, ‘allocation of funds’ and ‘forging networks.’ The third stage involved selecting revealing extracts from interviews and documents for analysis and discussion at research team meetings. In doing so, we created, in the manner recommended by Pentland (1999), a contextualized narrative of events, with the goal of moving beyond description to examine the role of strategic actors operating within the field of power in translating organizational models across space and time. In this *explicating* mode of historical organization studies, history is used in applying and developing theory to reveal the operation of transformative social processes (Maclean et al., 2016, pp. 613-614).

5. Explicating the translation of an innovative philanthropic model

In this section, we present five major findings from our research. First, we find that adoption of the community foundation model in the mid-1980s was spurred by the triumph of neo-liberalism. Secondly, we find that strategic elites promoting the model intentionally disrupted longstanding philanthropic practices to better address challenges confronting communities in the wake of deindustrialization and globalization. Thirdly, we find that successful translation required modifying the model to render it *fit-for-context*. Fourthly, we find that successful implementation depended on mobilizing the capitals of diverse elite actors within the regional field of power. Finally, we find that only once the model had been institutionally embedded could it evolve better to realize its potential. Each of these findings is elaborated in the sub-sections that follow.

5.1 Ideology into action

In the UK, the community foundation model of philanthropy gained traction in the mid-1980s when the government led by Margaret Thatcher rolled back the boundaries of the state (Crowson, 2011). Local government budget cuts resulted in the withdrawal of financial support to charities. As an alternative to grant funding, frontline charities increasingly competed for contracts to provide specified services on behalf of government, lessening the

capacity of the voluntary sector to respond to newly identified needs and unpopular causes. In this environment, the idea of establishing US-style community foundations in the UK gained ground (Interview Former CEO Charities Aid Foundation, 2018), establishing the preconditions for the strategic translation process that followed.

The incapacity of the UK government to satisfy growing social welfare needs had promoted the ideology of neo-liberalism (Finlayson, 1994; Harvey, 2005), which considered the private sector more effective in serving the common interest than the public sector (Interview Former Board Member A CFTWN, 2020). Members of the upper and upper-middle classes had the most to gain from lower taxation and a smaller state, increasing their capacity, and potentially willingness, to help fund charitable causes in their own communities, strengthening further the historical bond between entrepreneurship and philanthropy (Harvey et al., 2019). As the CFTWN's Former CEO reflected:

> 'It's not necessarily that they're extremely philanthropic in a pure sense of the word of wanting to support disabled children or whatever. It may be as much to do with the fact that it is known that they're wealthy and they want to show they're responsible citizens' (Interview Former CEO CFTWN, 2018).

Moreover, far from being antagonistic toward the third sector, Thatcher encouraged voluntarism, imagining a future in which local communities flourished through the activities of self-governing groups and societies supported by grants from charitable sources (Crowson, 2011). Michael Brophy, an elite strategic actor connected to all parts of the philanthropic field, then CEO of the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), took his lead from the Prime Minister. Brophy had studied community foundations in the US sponsored by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation of Flint, Michigan and decided that the model was transportable to the UK (Leat, 2006). CAF and the UK government jointly funded a short-lived Community Trust Development Unit to promote the development of community foundations, making

modest grants over three years to cover the start-up costs of six would-be foundations. The process of transatlantic diffusion had begun in earnest.

5.2 Disrupting the philanthropic field

The importance of philanthropy to social welfare in the UK diminished sharply after 1945, displaced by the welfare state (Owen, 1965). Welfarism cut away the rationale for voluntary transfers of funds, and high taxes reduced both the capacity and desire of wealthier people to support charitable causes (Finlayson, 1994). However, grant making philanthropic foundations supported by endowments and public donations continued to fund charitable causes complementary to or outside the purview of the state. In North East England, as elsewhere in the UK in the early 1980s, numerous small and medium-sized charitable foundations, often under family control, dispensed grants to favoured causes, but increasingly were seen as lacking in transparency and strategic direction (Davies, 2015). As recalled in one oral history testimony:

> ‘The most difficult thing up here was the old boys network. Grant-making worked on the basis that if Lord [name withheld] wanted you to do something, you did it. A lot of family and charitable trusts worked on that basis. It wasn’t the quality of your application; it was if you knew the trustees. If you had worked with a trustee, then sure enough the grant would follow’ (Interview Former CEO CFTWN, 2018).

To progressively minded elites, a more systematic and professional approach to philanthropy was needed, one that could tap into fresh sources of wealth and distribute funds to maximum social benefit (Harvey et al., 2019).

In North East England, the impetus for change came not from potential philanthropists but from the charitable sector. Two third sector networking organizations commissioned a report in August 1986 from the Charities Information Service of Tyne & Wear on the feasibility of establishing a community foundation in the region (CFTWN, 2010). The author, Peter Deans, presented his report in March 1987 (CFTWN, 1987). Deans was optimistic about the prospects for one or more ‘community trusts’ raising additional

funds to support charities within a specific geographic area. In his opinion, 'developing Community Trusts would be rather like investing in an advertising campaign on behalf of our local voluntary organizations and then effectively co-ordinating the funds raised from it' (CFTWN, 1987, p. 1). He envisaged raising substantial additional philanthropic funds from companies, national grant making trusts, individuals via payroll giving, legacies, and events, and from local and central government.

Deans' recommendations won approval among progressive elements within the third sector, leading to the appointment of a steering group and the solicitation of funds from Barings and other grant makers to cover start-up costs. The steering group comprised a mixed strategic elite of a former business school Dean cum businessman, Grigor McClelland, appointed Chair, three prominent businessmen, all trustees of the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Finance, a local authority Director of Social Services, and the Directors of the Councils for Voluntary Services for Newcastle and Gateshead (CFTWN, 1988). Its challenge was to convince influential others to commit to an unproven philanthropic model that some feared might hinder rather than help the third sector by diverting funds that would otherwise flow directly to frontline charities. Thus, when the 'idea was first mooted … it met with considerable scepticism' (CFTWN, 2010, p. 6), encountering resistance in some quarters and outright rejection in others, even after CFTWN's establishment in October 1988.

This is unsurprising. Disrupting the philanthropic field raised fears among existing actors of loss of status and resources. The US community foundation model's focus on building endowment to produce a stable, long-term income for grant making, its interest in supporting local voluntary and community activity, and its aim of recruiting a wide range of donors were all novel ideas, alien and imperfectly understood. At interview the CFTWN's first CEO, *de facto* leader of the local campaign, highlighted the severity of cultural barriers to change:

> ‘In America, private philanthropy has been much more important as a source of funding charities than it has in this country where much more money has come from government grants… The level of individual charitable giving is much higher in America than it is here because it’s a low-tax economy’ (Interview Former CEO CFTWN, 2018).

Indeed, philanthropic dispositions were and continue to be very different in the two countries and those involved in the translation of the community foundation model were seen as pursuing ideas that ran against the grain of the prevailing logic of practice, which understood philanthropy as the preserve of independent foundations supported by wealthy individuals, families and companies, not third-sector activists.

5.3 Translating the community foundation model

Translation theory proposes that the successful diffusion of organizational models depends not on remaining invariant and stable but instead on having ‘interpretive viability’ (Benders & Van Veen, 2001, p. 36), ‘leaving room for interpretation in different contexts’ (Mueller & Whittle, 2011, p. 188). At the CFTWN, such adaptations related mainly to board composition and governance. According to the CFTWN’s current CEO:

> ‘When we were being set up back in the late 1980s, the consultants from the US said that boards should be made up of donors. It was felt that this was wrong for this place, and that the donor interest had to be balanced with other perspectives, that’s why our membership arrangements and board structure were put in place’ (Interview CEO CFTWN, 2018).

Rather than creating a US-style donor-led organization, members joined one of four constituencies – companies, local authorities, charitable organizations and donors – with three board members appointed to represent each constituency (CFTWN, 1988). The intention, reflecting the mixed elite composition of the steering group, was to make the foundation a stakeholder-based organization with policymaking delegated to stakeholder representatives (Interview Former Board Member D CFTWN, 2019). According to one close observer, McClelland, as Chair, developed a collegial citizen board, which at the time was ‘not found elsewhere, at home or abroad’ (Interview Former Project Officer CFTWN, 2019).

In consequence, the CFTWN's culture and practices became suffused with an ethos of collaboration and knowledge sharing, in recognition that it needed 'more than just money, it also needed influence in other quarters' (Interview Former Board Member C CFTWN, 2019). The stakeholder model in effect enabled the foundation to extend its reach into all parts of the regional field of power, rendering it *fit-for-context* as well as fit-for-purpose. However, in other respects, the CFTWN deliberately set out to learn from US practitioners. In May 1989, for example, CEO George Hepburn and Chair Grigor McClelland attended a community foundations event in Rugby, England organized by the CAF, but led by a team of US consultants hired by the Mott Foundation (CFTWN, 2008). The salience of this event is that it marked the beginning of a new stage in the translation process, moving from local adaptation to acceptance of some standard US practices. This stage was facilitated by social capital mobilization processes, which opened up new vistas for local strategists. At Rugby, Hepburn and McClelland met the evangelical Doug Jansson, then CEO of the Rhode Island Foundation. Jansson convinced them of (a) the need to focus on raising large sums from wealthy individuals and companies, and (b) the need to accumulate a substantial endowment in order to achieve independence and permanence (CFTWN, 2009). Following the conference, Jansson spent three days in Newcastle spreading the message across the region, positioning the CFTWN as a vehicle for the expansion of individual philanthropy (Interview Former Project Officer CFTWN, 2019). Translating the community foundation model from the US to North East England thus created a new network, while inculcating in the recipient organization new desires, projects and strategies.

5.4 Strategic elites and the mobilization of capitals

A game-changing development occurred in 1991 when the CAF and the Mott Foundation created a £2 million challenge fund, inviting the CFTWN to bid for an endowment building grant on condition that for every £1 in grant a further £1 had to be raised

locally (Interview Former Board Member C CFTWN, 2019). CFTWN bid for a £1 million grant and successfully raised a further £2 million from 40 donors to create an initial endowment of £3 million. This accomplishment depended crucially on the social capital of the CFTWN board and, more importantly, the social and symbolic power wielded by McClelland. As McClelland later recalled:

> 'I learnt that we should target our fundraising at a very small market sector – the top. We developed our standing partly by appointing honorary officers – the Lord Lieutenant of the county as President, two established local philanthropists, William Leech and Catherine Cookson, as Patrons, and a dozen well-known figures connected with the region, as Vice-Presidents' (CFTWN, 2008).

McClelland was a patrician and a Quaker social activist, whose networks spanned the fields of academia, business and philanthropy (Philanthropy North East, 2018). He passionately believed that 'what is important is that institutions and their administration be constantly tested against human values, and that those who are concerned about these values be prepared to grapple with the complex realities of modern society as it is' (McClelland, 1976). In the tradition of Seebohm Rowntree and other notable members of the Society of Friends, McClelland excelled in combining commerce with philanthropy and working for social reform (Maclean, Shaw, Harvey, & Booth, 2020). McClelland, by virtue of his moral authority and symbolic power, had the authority to convene assemblies within the North East field of power. His cultural and symbolic capitals enabled him to persuade others of the justice of the cause, and hence the success of the CFTWN in meeting the CAF-Mott endowment challenge. Essentially, he brought members of the regional power elite to convert economic capital into social and symbolic capital, legitimizing and consolidating their positions within the field of power. It is telling that:

> 'At a grand dinner at the Gosforth Park Hotel where Viscount Whitelaw was the speaker… The matching money was found quite quickly… We realised that the North East might not be the wealthiest region in the country, but it had a long tradition of philanthropy going back to Victorian times' (CFTWN, 2009, p. 3).

McClelland tapped into the feeling amongst the region's political and economic elites that 'London does not help, we have got to pull our socks up, we have got to look after our own'. Paradoxically, 'the distance from London, the distance from the capital', enabled 'a stronger, more independent feel' (Interview Former CEO CFTWN, 2018).

What appealed most was the idea of creating a fresh coalition within the field of power of elites dedicated to socioeconomic renewal within the region. A US community foundation practitioner, conducting an evaluation of the CFTWN for the CAF-Mott challenge grant programme, found its board to be 'peopled with individuals of stature in the area' (CFTWN, 2010). Their involvement was the trump card during the organization's early stage of development, strategically raising its profile and endorsing its capabilities:

> 'People would support the foundation because lots of people famous in the region were already involved. They could see it was well run, that it was an effective means of handling philanthropy' (Interview Former CEO CFTWN, 2018).

McClelland's industry breathed life into what at the time was a novel philanthropic practice. He applied extensive reserves of social and symbolic capital to kick-start the CFTWN and stimulate an upward spiral of fundraising. As the first CEO put it: 'Grigor put his name and reputation behind an untried, untested project and made it great'. Without his personal distinction, it would have been difficult for the CFTWN to gain access to elite networks or convince potential donors to support projects and initiatives designed to overcome socioeconomic inequalities. McClelland displayed 'strategic habitus' – a feel for the game in terms of bringing people together and making it work. He facilitated bonding across networks with individuals who shared common values, bringing together elites from the business world, third sector, and local authorities, 'deliberately bringing together donors, beneficiaries, and supporters' (Interview CEO CFTWN, 2018). In this, the founders, who had considerable experience of regeneration coalitions composed of elites from different fields,

followed the logic of partnership rather than the more elementary logic expressed in the saying ‘he who pays the piper calls the tune.’ Their promotion of the community foundation model as a source of social renewal, when traditional industries were in their death throes, resonated with regional strategic elites, insinuating the CFTWN as a player within the local field of power.

5.5 Embedding the community foundation model

The CFTWN continued to adapt and evolve following its acceptance within the North East philanthropic field. The organization worked hard at raising its endowment, which had reached £12 million by 1996. It was at this point that the CFTWN’s former CEO experienced his ‘second road to Damascus’ following the visit to Newcastle of ‘another US consultant from San Francisco’ (CFTWN, 2009, p. 6). Robert Fisher drilled home the necessity for community foundations to take a fully professional approach to donor services. What Fisher advised was that the foundation should focus on developing the capabilities needed to add value to the philanthropists’ experience of philanthropy. In other words, the organization must understand the world from the perspective of wealthy donors, especially what motivates them and the satisfactions and rewards they derive from philanthropy. The lesson, as later related, was that:

> ‘A community foundation has to meet its donors’ “psychic rewards” … these are not necessarily related to the beneficiary of the gift. A donor might, for example, be seeking acceptance into an elite social circle, or even, in the UK, be pursuing a Knighthood… Managing the donor fund became paramount… causing more work, but it was a way of soliciting subsequent donations… It was not for us to rank different forms of philanthropic motivation as much as to understand it in each individual case… We re-tooled the foundation as a donor services agency’ (CFTWN, 2009, p. 6).

The idea, stated simply, was that when advising businesses or wealthy individuals and families, community foundation fund advisors should display the same professionalism as

lawyers and accountants, serving as a *guide* to donors as they travel on their philanthropic journeys (Maclean, Harvey, Gordon, & Shaw, 2015). As one major donor recalled:

> 'We had started giving but weren't being strategic about it and didn't really know what to do or how to think about it. Then, through a mutual friend we met [CEO] and from that developed a conversation that opened our eyes and really helped us, and of course his own organization' (Interview Major Donor CFTWN, 2019).

The elevation of donor services effectively recognized that while the CFTWN aspires to be a democratic, inclusive organization, with members drawn from multiple constituencies and a stakeholder representative board, the balance of power in philanthropic relationships ultimately resides with donors, not beneficiaries (Harvey, Gordon, & Maclean, 2020). It is for this reason that the CFTWN by custom appoints its Chair from the ranks of major donors. Inclusivity thus confers legitimacy without compromising the natural order of power relations implicit in the community foundation model of philanthropy.

6. Discussion and conclusion

To the fore in this article is consideration of how the theoretical ideas of Pierre Bourdieu might be deployed more widely in strategy research. We argue that, with notable exceptions (e.g. Oakes et al., 1998; Pratap & Saha, 2018; Tsoukas, 1996), few scholars have embraced the full implications of Bourdieusian theory as a radically different way of thinking about strategy. In contrast to the mainstream, Bourdieu puts power, in all its guises, centre stage. In his world, strategic actors are interdependent, and habitus, history and practices all matter. Not only is strategy about organizations, whether dominant or subordinate, battling for status and resources, it is also about how strategic actors and practices fashion society. The purpose of our historical case study is both to demonstrate the value of Bourdieu's ideas, and to enable fresh theorization about how new organizational models successfully diffuse.

We reflect in what follows first on our contribution to translation theory, and then on the potential of the field of power construct to enrich strategy research.

6.1 Cross-national translation of organizational models

The idea that ideas and models are translated – changed, modified and adapted – through interactions between actors as they pass through time and space is anchored in actor-network theory (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005; Latour, 2005). It has been recognized, however, that translation theory, as presently constituted, is limited by its failure to identify the operation of causal mechanisms within what Fligstein and McAdam (2012) call strategic action fields (Elder-Vass, 2008; Sayes, 2017). In other words, translation theory tells us little about the motivations and *modus operandi* of the strategic actors involved in the process of translation (Whittle & Mueller, 2010). Here, we propose that organizational models are diffused, adapted and (re)embedded within local contexts through mobilization of resources and support within the field of power. This extension to translation theory explains how strategic actors of different hues form coalitions to gain the authority needed to enact translations and accommodate the interests of elites who otherwise might stand in opposition.

The CFTWN depended at its inception more on the application of symbolic power to bring about institutional change than on ready availability of economic capital, as, intuitively, might be supposed in a philanthropic context. Translation in practice represented far more than an economic or transactional exercise. Its accomplishment crucially depended on the power of those who had ‘obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition’ (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). Thus, the translation process repositioned and restructured historical and institutional forces within the philanthropic field. To gain acceptance, strategic actors had to depart from the standard US practice of donor-led

governance, instead devising a stakeholder model in which subscribers and board members represent different interests within the field of power.

Establishing the CFTWN depended on mobilizing the capitals of numerous elite actors; the wealthy who invested economic capital, and others who variously invested cultural, social, and symbolic capital. The first Chair played a pivotal role. As a bridging actor connected to different fractions within the field of power, he forged the alliance that created and institutionally embedded the CFTWN. Symbolic power worked to accommodate interests that were themselves 'the product of domination' (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 5), such that the 'order of things' came to seem natural, self-evident, and legitimate, paving the way for later changes. Most importantly, once the foundation had begun to motor, the voice of the region's economic elite grew louder, leading to the foundation's emergence as a donor services agency. In restoring normal order – the hegemony of the economic elite – possession of economic capital ultimately outweighed the equalizing effects of stakeholder governance, which, by maintaining the illusion of equality, facilitated the conversion of economic to symbolic capital; 'with all the forms of legitimating redistribution … financing "disinterested foundations", donations to hospitals, academic and cultural institutions, etc. … through which dominant groups secure a capital of "credit" which seems to owe nothing to the logic of exploitation' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 133).

6.2 Potential value of the field of power construct to strategy research

The field of power is a meso-level construct whose value resides in analysing how strategic elites working in concert accomplish profound changes in societal arrangements within the bounds of existing social structures and relations (Maclean & Harvey, 2019). Strategic elites in effect are institutional workers whose activities extend beyond the confines of organizational boundaries (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2011). They are people who have ascended to the top of fields before acceding to the field of power where they regularly

interact with actors of similar status in formal and informal settings. They are recognized playmakers with enough social and symbolic capital to lead coalitions of powerful actors in pursuit of game-changing objectives like legal and regulatory changes that benefit themselves and those they serve (Maclean et al., 2014). Elite strategic actors active are drawn from all quarters, including business, government, finance, politics, the charitable sector, public administration, medicine, academia, organized religion, military, media, and the law (Maclean, Harvey, & Kling, 2017). Some fields are more heavily represented than others. Coalitions may span one or more fields. The possibilities are legion, and at times alliances are hard to discern because some actors remain in the shadows, content to let others take the lead (Maclean & Harvey, 2016).

Our illustrative case study focused on strategic elites operating within the North East England field of power. Fields of power exist in nested configurations at the international, national, regional and local levels, each corresponding to specific institutional arrangements rooted in specific histories and cultures (Maclean et al., 2017). In our case, the coalition that came together to embed an initially alien organizational model within the philanthropic field was comprised of strategic elites from business, the voluntary sector and local administration. These actors had the strategic intent of tapping new wealth to provide funding for cash-strapped charities in the name of social renewal.

Numerous other opportunities exist to deploy the field of power construct. In research on corporate governance, for example, it has been used to examine how change is enacted by actors responsive to failings but unwilling to compromise the prevailing logic of practice (Harvey, Maclean, & Price, 2020; Price, Harvey, Maclean, & Campbell, 2018). We propose that institutional work of this kind, defined by Lawrence et al. (2011, p. 52) as ‘the practices of individual and collective actors aimed at creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions’ is conducted by elite actors within the field of power. New avenues for research, might be

opened up, therefore, by elaborating more precisely the settings in which institutional work is performed and who is involved. The same applies to the field of non-market strategy, conceived by Baron (1995, p. 47) as 'a concerted pattern of actions taken in the nonmarket environment to create value by improving [a firm's] overall performance.' In this case, as Doh et al. (2012, p. 37) recognize, 'the challenge ahead is for researchers', in interrogating behaviours like coalition building and lobbying, to extend 'understanding of firms and managers as intermediaries to shape and be shaped by institutional environments.' Bourdieu's construct of the field of power, we propose, might help in meeting this challenge, enriching this branch of strategy research.

6.3 Limitations and future research

The strengths and corresponding limitations of our research stem from our research design. In focusing on a single case, we sacrificed breadth for depth, limiting the generalizability of findings on the translation of the community foundation model of philanthropy. We did so to take advantage of the opportunity to infuse history with theory, putting Bourdieu's ideas to work in illustrating the constitution and *modus operandi* of the field of power in a particular setting. In taking this approach, we were able to gain access to documents and oral history testimonies that enabled the reconstruction of events at a critical time in the disruption and reformulation of the philanthropic field. In future research, we intend to observe and chronicle in real time strategic elites at work within the field of power.

6.4 Conclusion

What Bourdieu brings to the study of strategy is a deep understanding of the dynamics of power in organizations, fields and society, and a conceptual arsenal that enables power effects to be identified and subject to the critical gaze. Each of his main constructs is of proven analytical value in its own right, spawning many studies based on single concepts like social capital and symbolic power. The argument we make here is that together is better.

When Bourdieu's concepts are applied in tandem rather than in isolation, the full implications of his conception of strategy emerge. The as yet largely unrealized potential of the field of power construct is large, but, we hold, it cannot be tapped if decoupled from Bourdieu's more familiar theories of capital, habitus and field.

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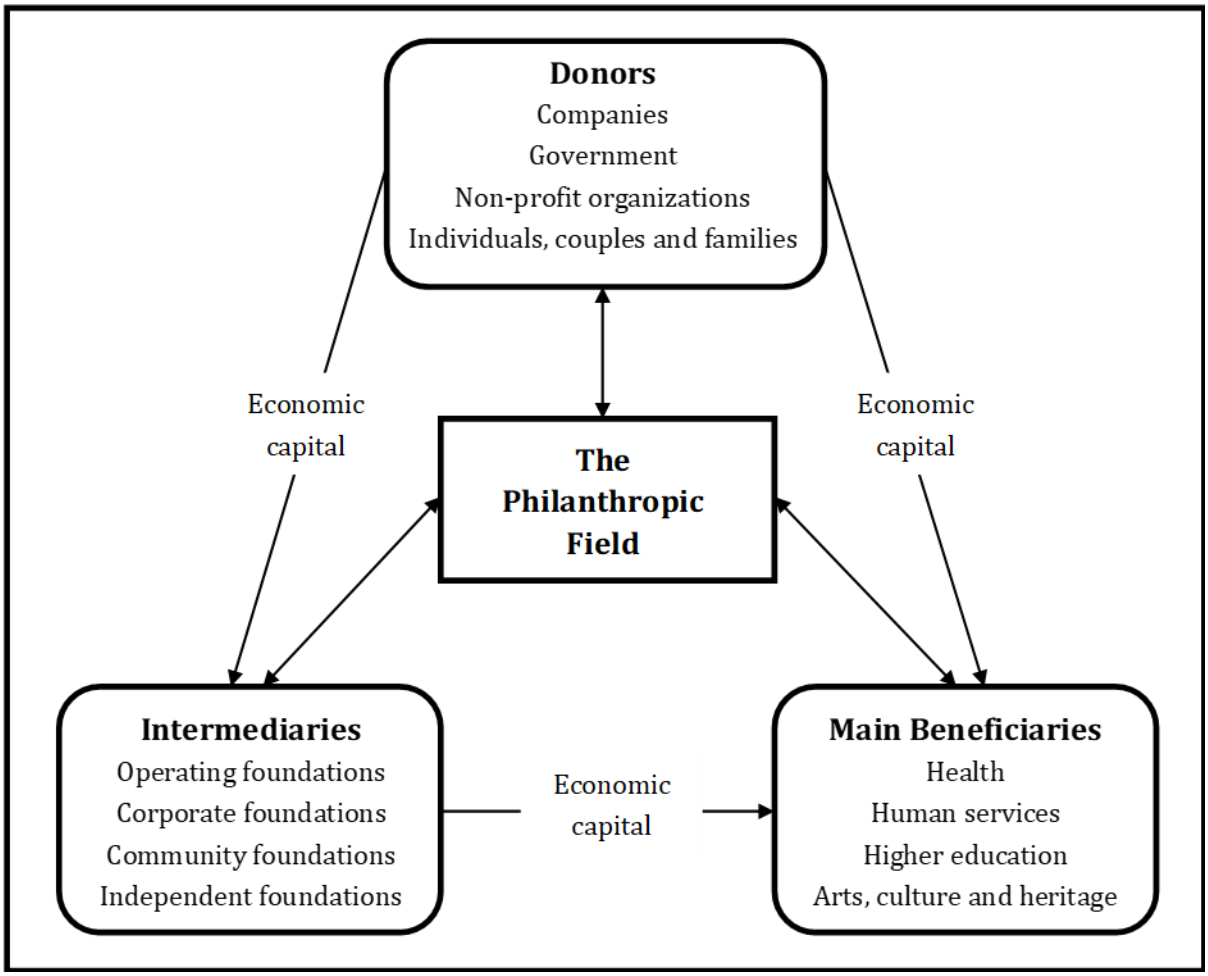
Table 1. Oral history testimonies

Role	**Organization**	**Period in role**	**Year of interview**
Field study – 10 interviews			
Former CEO	CAF	1982-2002	2018
CEO	UKCF	2015-	2018
Former Chair	WINGS	1999-2008	2019
Former Program Officer	Mott Foundation	1998-2005	2019
Former CEO	CF A	2002-2018	2018
Former CEO	CF B	2016-2019	2018
CEO	CF C	2018-	2018
CEO	CF D	2015-	2019
CEO	CF E	2014-	2019
CEO	CF F	2004-	2019
Case study – 9 interviews			
Former Project Officer	CFTWN	1987-1988	2019
Former CEO	CFTWN	1988-2009	2018
CEO	CFTWN	2009-	2018
Former Board Member A	CFTWN	1988-1995	2020
Former Board Member B	CFTWN	1995-2001	2020
Former Board Member C	CFTWN	2002-2011	2019
Former Board Member D	CFTWN	2014-2019	2019
Chair	CFTWN	2018-	2018
Major Donor	CFTWN	1994-	2019

CEO: Chief Executive Officer; CF: Community Foundation; CAF: Charities Aid Foundation; UKCF: UK Community Foundations; WINGS: Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support; CFTWN: Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland.

Figure 1. The philanthropic field



[i] Biographical note on Cookson and Leech