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The Limits of Neoliberalism: How Writers and Editors Use Digital Technologies in the Literary Field

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# THE LIMITS OF NEOLIBERALISM: HOW WRITERS AND EDITORS USE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN THE LITERARY FIELD

Matthew Clair

## ABSTRACT

*Purpose – Given the increasing use of social media and other digital technologies, critical theorists argue that social life has become increasingly structured by neoliberal market logics. Little research has empirically tested these claims.*

*Methodology/approach – This study is the first to examine whether the use of digital technologies in the avant-garde literary field is accompanied by neoliberal logics. Developing a cultural logics approach to neoliberalism, which allows for the identification of the independent logics of entrepreneurship, market-faith, profit-maximization, efficiency, and individualism, I draw on archival data and interviews with editors and writers to explore the relationship between digital technologies and neoliberalism.*

*Findings – Editors and writers legitimate some neoliberal logics and reject others. Entrepreneurship and efficiency are strongly legitimated.*

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*Profit-maximization is generally rejected. Market-faith and individualism are legitimated differently by editors and writers who occupy different positions within the field, drawing attention to the importance of field position, organizational affiliation, and career exhaustion in the use of digital technologies in the avant-garde literary world. Many of these findings are surprising given the historically non-economic orientation of the field.*

Research implications – *Future research should explore neoliberal logics in other aspects of literary production and in other social domains.*

Originality/value – *This study provides a novel approach to the study of neoliberal logics as well as their relationship to digital technologies. Such an approach complements recent agendas in economic sociology and contributes to debates about the relationship between new technologies and capitalism.*

**Keywords:** Neoliberalism; capitalism; cultural logics; digital technology; social media; literary field

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, social theorists have debated whether – and to what extent – social life has become dominated by the logics of the market. Harrowing assessments of “the network society,” “post-industrial capitalism,” and “neoliberalism” paint a grim portrait of the impending eclipse of non-economic spheres of social life. According to many critics, formerly autonomous spheres – from the welfare state to family life – have fallen victim to the rationalities of the market (Brown, 2015). In the United States and Europe, identities have become more fragmented (Giddens, 1991), communities have declined (Rose, 1996), and everyday behaviors and decisions have become driven by economization and entrepreneurship (Mirowski, 2013).

Aside from dynamic and interdisciplinary theoretical literature, relatively little empirical research has considered whether historically non-economic spheres of social life have increasingly succumbed to the rationalities of the market. In this study, I develop a novel cultural logics approach to neoliberalism that allows researchers to empirically assess whether, and

to what extent, certain logics of neoliberal market rationality structure particular domains of social life. Drawing on both Foucauldian (e.g., [Brown, 2015](#); [Mirowski, 2013](#)) and neo-Marxist (e.g., [Harvey, 2005](#)) interpretations, this approach considers neoliberalism as a set of decoupled prescriptions – entrepreneurship, market-faith, profit-maximization, efficiency, and individualism – about the role of everyday social actors with respect to the free market.

I illustrate the utility of this approach through an empirical assessment of neoliberal logics in the use of digital technologies among writers and editors in the avant-garde literary field. My empirical analysis centers on writers' and editors' uses of, and discourses surrounding, digital technologies.<sup>1</sup> I consider editors/writers' discourses as expressed in semi-structured in-depth interviews and in the 2013 and 2014 conference programs of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), a well-known American writer's conference. This rarefied context offers insight into the extent to which historically non-economic fields of cultural production ([Bourdieu, 1983, 1985](#)) have become structured by the logics of the market as well as the conditions that make social domains (un)favorable to neoliberalization. Moreover, while social theorists have debated the role of digital technologies in legitimating contemporary forms of capitalism for over a decade ([Fisher, 2010a](#)), this analysis is among the few to empirically assess if digital technologies are a mechanism for the dissemination of market logics in everyday discourse.

I find a complicated relationship between neoliberal logics and digital technologies in the avant-garde literary field. Some logics are legitimated by editors/writers and in the AWP conference program, while other logics are strongly rejected. Specifically, editors/writers – in both the interviews and through the conference program – legitimate the logics of entrepreneurship and efficiency. While the conference program reveals ambivalent support for the logic of profit-maximization, everyday editors/writers express unambiguous disdain for the accrual of profit in interviews. The logics of market-faith and individualism are legitimated differently by younger editors/writers and their more established counterparts, whose disparate social positions influence their cultural dispositions. Moreover, the logic of market-faith is strongly legitimated in the conference program but largely resisted in interviews.

These findings have a few implications for the study of neoliberal capitalism, new technologies, and the literary field. First, these findings underscore the notion that everyday neoliberalism has its limits (see [Clarke, 2004](#)). Although some neoliberal logics are accepted as legitimate within

the avant-garde literary field, others are resisted. Digital technologies can be used to resist, rather than simply pave the way for, certain logics of neoliberal rationality (Clair, 2015). Second, these findings reveal the importance of paying attention to the particular institutions, structures, and positions in which new technologies and new ideologies come to be embedded (Grazian, 2005; Taylor, 2014). Doing so allows us to understand the different legitimation of the logics of market-faith and individualism among established editors/writers as compared with younger editors/writers. Third, as I detail in the findings, the institutional discourse (as represented in the AWP program) differs, in some respects, from the everyday discourse of editors/writers (as represented in interviews). I suggest that future empirical research on the relationship between digital technologies and neoliberalism should better theorize the distance between institutional and everyday discourses. Such theorization will be critical to recent agendas in economic sociology to investigate public understandings of the economy and market society (Bandelj, Spillman, & Wherry, 2015; Fourcade & Healy, 2007).

## NEW FORMS OF CAPITALISM

As the West has shifted from an industrial to a post-industrial economy (Bell, 1976), social theorists have considered the relationship between changes in the structure of capitalism and changes in social life (Castells, 2000). In the social sciences, for example, there has been an emphasis on the implications of changes in economic production for identity formation (Giddens, 1991; Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005), new styles of consumption (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010; Zukin & Maguire, 2004), and new mechanisms of reproducing social inequality (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001; Hall & Lamont, 2013; Lamont, Beljean, & Clair, 2014). For example, Giddens (1991) argues that the changing nature of work and production, the decline in working-class factory jobs, and the rise of new knowledge-intensive jobs have conspired to reshape individuals' identities in the "late modern age." It has been argued that contemporary, knowledge-intensive economic production requires workers who are flexible and creative in their work processes and workplace identities (Adler, 2001; Florida, 2012). Moreover, in literary criticism and cultural studies, there has been a similar emphasis in theories of the field of cultural production, where theoretical debates center on not so much whether capitalism has

encroached on formerly autonomous fields of cultural production but rather to what extent and to what effect (e.g., [Hallin, 2008](#); [Harney, 2010](#); [Jameson, 1993](#)). In each of these accounts and perspectives, new economic forms of capitalism are associated with new social arrangements and new cultural beliefs and practices.

I situate my interpretation of new capitalism within the literature on neoliberalism. Neoliberalism can be defined as an ideology about the beneficence of the free market, the market's requisite role in maintaining individual freedoms, and the government's role in supporting the free market.<sup>2</sup> Neoliberalism constitutes the cultural practices and economic policies associated with new forms of capitalism. Although the literature on neoliberalism is diffuse, its conceptual plurality allows for the identification of various logics that sustain new capitalistic modes of production, cultural norms, and political-economic policies. Consequently, interpreting new capitalism through the lens of neoliberalism allows scholars to understand the role of the state in furthering new capitalism as well as the imagined role of citizens and subjects ([Brown, 2015](#)). Moreover, because the literature on neoliberalism focuses on the motivations and implications of new capitalism from both political-economic and cultural perspectives,<sup>3</sup> this interpretation allows for the identification of the specific cultural logics that legitimate beliefs and practices from both the macro/elite perspective and the micro/everyday perspective (see [Clair, 2015](#)).

## THE CULTURAL LOGICS OF NEOLIBERALISM

Before detailing the cultural logics of neoliberalism and how this approach could assist in empirical analyses of new capitalism, I first clarify what I mean by a "cultural logic" – a construct that has been used by many but defined by few. I define a cultural logic as a shared and collectively-imagined prescription for individual or collective social action that is justified through some account of reason or some extant body of legitimated knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Cultural logics can be studied as discourse (i.e., articulated prescriptions about human behavior) or as practice (i.e., behaviors or habits that are justified by discourses) (see [Bourdieu, 1990](#)).<sup>5</sup> Cultural logics are intersubjective, which means that they take into account shared understandings of the social world and are oriented toward other social actors (see [Lamont et al., 2014](#); [Weber, 1978](#)). Following [Sewell \(1992\)](#), I argue that cultural logics reproduce and reshape social structures – such as capitalism – by

driving (and being driven by) the allocation of resources. Cultural logics, emanating from various spheres of social life, often contradict one another. Consequently, cultural logics constitute one of the many tools that social actors draw on to justify their actions as well as bring about change.

Importantly, cultural logics should not be conflated with institutional logics, which are bounded within organizational and field contexts (Alford & Friedland, 1985) and encompass a much larger range of cultural forms than the concept of cultural logics does. At root, cultural logics are logically justified prescriptions and their associated practices. Institutional logics, on the other hand, encompass “material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules” (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804). Following Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) concept of justifications, I understand cultural logics as “higher common principles” that are not tied to specific organizational contexts or even to specific individuals. They are prescriptions and practices picked up and used by individuals in varying circumstances and contexts. But unlike Boltanski and Thevenot, I define cultural logics as often incoherent and overlapping despite being able to be theoretically disaggregated into independent categories.<sup>6</sup>

In defining the cultural logics of neoliberalism, in particular, I draw on the interdisciplinary literature on neoliberalism. This literature offers numerous definitions of the concept of neoliberalism – from interpreting neoliberalism as a set of economic policies to interpreting it as a government rationality, a state form, or a hegemonic ideology. My aim is to be conceptually inclusive and normatively agnostic in my interpretation. In order to gain a broad understanding of the various conceptualizations of neoliberal prescriptions, I have drawn on reviews of the literature on neoliberalism (see England & Ward, 2007; Evans & Sewell, 2013; Hilgers, 2010; Larner, 2000; Wacquant, 2010) as well as influential articles and books within anthropology, sociology, and political theory. Through my read of the literature, I have concatenated the numerous beliefs and practices understood to be definitive of neoliberalism into five categories of independent, yet often interacting, cultural logics. Table 1 provides a typology of these five cultural logics as well as the references on which they depend.

The five cultural logics of neoliberalism are: entrepreneurship, market-faith, profit-maximization, efficiency, and individualism.

*Entrepreneurship* is a logic that values the freedom and liberty of the individual in the marketplace. It specifically values the freedom of the individual to work when, how, and to what extent he/she prefers for his/her own material gain. This logic undergirds almost all interpretations of neoliberalism. For example, Ren (2005) notes that as a necessary result of

**Table 1.** Neoliberal Cultural Logics in the Interdisciplinary Literature on Neoliberalism.

Cultural Logic	Selected References
Entrepreneurship	Amable (2011), Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), Brown (2015), Comaroff and Comaroff (2000), Dardot and Laval (2014), Giroux (2004), Harvey (2005), Jessop (2002), Mirowski (2013), Ong (2006), Ren (2005), Rose (1996), Wacquant (2010).
Market-faith	Bourdieu (1998a), Brown (2003, 2015), Campbell and Pedersen (2001), Cerny (2010), Clarke (2004), Comaroff and Comaroff (2000), Giroux (2004), Hall and Lamont (2013), Harvey (2005), Mirowski (2013), Stiglitz (2008).
Profit-maximization	Bourdieu (1998b), Chomsky (1999), Giroux (2004), Harvey (1989, 2005, 2007).
Efficiency	Brown (2003, 2015), Clarke (2004), Gere (2002), Jessop (2002), Ong (2006).
Individualism	Amable (2011), Bourdieu (1998b), Cerny (2010), Dardot and Laval (2014), Harvey (2005), Peck (2010), Ren (2005), Rose (1996), Wacquant (2010).

privatization, neoliberal governments encourage entrepreneurialism among their citizens. Often, entrepreneurialism is posited as a virtue in an increasingly risky world in which everyday people as well as policymakers and businesses must adapt quickly and creatively to economic, political, and technological change. A cursory glance at texts coming from management studies suggests as much (see also Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

*Market-faith* is a logic that places faith in the economic market as a rational institution that allocates prices efficiently, often in relational opposition to the government, and as an entity whose demand should drive decision-making. Bourdieu (1998a) argues that through financial globalization, corporations are increasingly wary of, and adjusting to, the “exigencies of the market.” And as Hall and Lamont (2013) note, individuals increasingly value their time, human potential, and social worth in relation to the market; and, measures of worth external to the market are increasingly seen as invalid (see also Brown, 2015). Moreover, in uncertain times, faith in the market often translates into fear of the state of the market. As Giroux (2004, p. 105) reminds us, the market “thrives on a culture of cynicism, insecurity and despair” that gives us “little hope for” non-market institutions.

*Profit-maximization* is a logic that insists that any product (material or symbolic) should be placed in the marketplace and should be priced in such a way as to maximize the economic profit the seller receives from it. About neoliberalism as “creative destruction,” Harvey (2007, p. 35) argues that

“Its primary aim has been to open up new fields for capital accumulation in domains formerly regarded off-limits to the calculus of profitability.” Indeed, neo-Marxist articulations that view the phenomenon as a class-based ideology meant to justify the accumulation of wealth at the top similarly view the main logic of neoliberalism to be profit-maximization (e.g., Bourdieu, 1998b; Chomsky, 1999).

*Efficiency* is a logic that values the fastest and least expensive production and distribution of any product, as well as fast and inexpensive modes, technologies, and behaviors. This logic is concerned with balancing the quality of the product with the speed and cost of its production. Often, efficiency is depicted not just as a logic of for-profit producers of material goods but also as a tool of neoliberal governments in the cost-benefit distribution of social benefits (e.g., Somers & Block, 2005) and in the implementation of “best practices” (Brown, 2015). It should be noted that this logic is distinct from (and should not be confused with) market fundamentalist conceptions of market efficiency – or the efficiency of the market in allocating prices (e.g., Stiglitz, 2008) – as this mode of thought undergirds the market-faith logic discussed above.

*Individualism* is a logic that values the individual over the community. This logic values the accumulation of individual forms of capital, often at the expense of community or global concerns. Central to this logic is the notion that consumption – even at the expense of others – is only a positive act (see Schulz & Robinson, 2013). In his analysis of the moral and ethical considerations undergirding neoliberal thought, Amable (2011, p. 15) stresses the centrality of individual competition (see also Dardot & Laval, 2014) as well as individual responsibility, arguing that “neo-liberals reject the natural character of the market order but adopt the ethos of individual responsibility, i.e. the responsibility to be competitive in a world where the economic conditions are permanently changing. The individual must become a self-entrepreneur, responsible for his or her own existence.”

By defining neoliberalism as a set of distinct cultural logics, this approach to interpreting neoliberalism is agnostic about what constitutes an actually existing neoliberal capitalism. The interdependence of each cultural logic, or the degree to which these cultural logics “hang together,” is an empirical question that should contribute to theoretical debates about what should be understood as definitive of neoliberalism. For example, one could envision a social entity – be it an individual, an organization, or a government program – that operates under the cultural logic of entrepreneurship sans the other four logics. In the study of the cultural industries, for example, influential work has uncovered the various ways artists act as

cultural entrepreneurs, valuing the freedom and flexibility to produce their own work on their own time (e.g., [Caves, 2000](#); [Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006, 2007](#); [Hesmondalgh, 2007](#)). Would we consider this entrepreneurial logic to be definitive of neoliberalism if unaccompanied by an emphasis on efficiency, a faith in the market to price work appropriately, an individualistic and competitive sense of one's art-production, and a desire to maximize the profit received for one's work? If so, is this then a diluted form of neoliberalism, waiting to inevitably give way to a stronger embrace of the other logics? Answering these questions is a task for social theory, while identifying the existence of the presuppositions embedded in these questions is a task for empirical social science.

By detailing the extent to which each cultural logic independently (and mutually) structures the thoughts and actions of individuals and groups within various fields, this cultural logics approach to neoliberalism better enables empirical researchers to assess what logics matter, when, and why in our understandings of the reach of the market in contemporary society.

## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND NEOLIBERALISM IN THE LITERARY FIELD

Increasingly, critical theorists have suggested that new technologies have altered the structuration of the field of cultural production, introducing neoliberal logics into institutional and everyday cultural production processes. As early as the mid-twentieth century, social theorists warned of the intimacy between technological advancements, the mass production of cultural products, and the mass deceptions of capitalism ([Horkheimer & Adorno, 2006 \[1944\]](#)). Contemporary theorists have considered the role of Internet technologies and social media. For example, [Fuchs \(2014\)](#) argues that, despite proclamations to the contrary, social media is anything but democratizing or de-alienating. He reveals how the use of certain platforms is often controlled by corporations and how capitalists extract surplus value from laborers despite their subjective interpretations of de-alienation. Fuchs' work, similar to that of other critical theorists (e.g., [Mirowski, 2013](#); [Terranova, 2000](#)), is concerned with the realities of economic exploitation, largely irrespective of the subjective interpretations of individual cultural producers (see [Healy, 2002](#), p. 99).

Contrary to critical theorists, other theorists have interpreted the relationship between digital technologies and new capitalism to be more

nanced in the case of cultural production. [Ritzer and Jurgenson \(2010\)](#), for example, argue that the concept of exploitation with respect to user-generated content is not straightforward. They argue that while prosumers (individuals who both produce and consume online content) often enjoy the process of producing user-generated content for free, they may also be exploited for profit by large Internet conglomerates like Facebook and Amazon. [Jenkins \(2002\)](#), focusing on the new interactivity made possible by new Internet technologies, suggests that both consumers and media conglomerates gain in different ways. He argues that while large-scale media corporations pursue their economic interests, audiences still have new leverage and methods by which they can shape the flow of cultural ideas and images (see also [Robinson & Halle, 2002](#)). Moreover, [van Dijck \(2013\)](#) reminds us that different social media platforms – Facebook, Youtube, Twitter – have different logics that allow for different user experiences, interface constraints, and forms of exploitation.

Adjudicating between these theoretical perspectives, empirical research on the cultural industries has tended to focus on fields and organizations of large-scale cultural production ([Caves, 2000](#); [Harney, 2010](#); [Hesmondhalgh, 2007](#)). Much of this work has documented the increasing role of business managers and new technologies in the commercial cultural industries ([Harney, 2010](#)). Considering the case of public theatres in Germany, [Eikhof and Haunschild \(2007\)](#) show how economic logics are increasingly crowding out artistic logics with implications for the creation of theatrical work. In their work on new media workers, [Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin \(2005\)](#) explore the concept of entrepreneurial labor for producers in the cultural industries. In the commercial book publishing industry, [Greco \(2004\)](#) documents the role of new technologies in shaping marketing practices, while [Childress \(2012\)](#) reveals the implications of market-based data technologies on everyday practices of cultural intermediaries. In documenting change in the cultural industry, much of this work has critiqued the notion of technological determinism (see [Grazian, 2005](#), p. 211; [Price, 2012](#)). For example, [Hesmondhalgh \(2007\)](#) argues that while technological changes have altered the incentives, experiences, and working material of producers and consumers, such alterations are also the outcome of political, regulatory, and economic environments interacting with technologies. Largely absent from this empirical literature, however, is the analysis of the encroachment of market logics in historically autonomous fields of cultural production.

Within the literary field, [Bourdieu \(1983, 1985, 1993\)](#) theorizes that there are two poles of cultural production – a commercial, large-scale pole of

cultural production and a more autonomous, restricted pole of cultural production. This latter pole, which Bourdieu (1983, 1993) often refers to as “avant-garde,” is anti-economic in that social actors (writers, editors, poets, novelists) within this position eschew the accumulation of economic capital, view literary production as “art for art’s sake,” and, to varying degrees, focus on the accrual of symbolic capital, or prestige garnered from other writers (“intellectual audiences”) rather than readers (“bourgeois audiences”). This pole of the field consists of literary organizations, independent and university-based literary magazines, small publishing presses, and their writers and editors. As Hesmondhalgh (2006, p. 214) notes, Bourdieu viewed the autonomy of the avant-garde literary field as an historical accomplishment, not an inherent state, as the literary field is ultimately enconced within the larger field of economic power (Bourdieu, 1993) and its logics are susceptible to external political and economic changes (Bourdieu, 1983, pp. 337–338).<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the historical autonomy of the avant-garde literary field could be undone by changes in broader historical, technological, and socio-economic circumstances, such as the intensification of capitalism under neoliberalism or the altered opportunities for economic profit provided by digital technologies.

While the avant-garde literary field is structured in relation to the commercial literary field, social actors within the avant-garde field are also structured in relation to one another. Writers depend on literary critics and book reviewers to legitimate their work (Chong, 2013), while editors depend on the submission of quality writing and the cultivation of quality writers to support their magazines and small presses (Nash, 2013). According to Bourdieu, the main point of differentiation within the field is between established editors/writers and their younger counterparts. Each group seeks to acquire consecration and other forms of symbolic capital; however, their strategies, dispositions, and relative levels of current consecration differ. While the established struggle to maintain dominance and relevance, the young struggle to at once seek consecration from their elders and also redefine literature in ways that contest the aesthetics of the established (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 122). And so: “the history of the field arises from the struggle between the established figures and the young challengers” (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 339).

I am aware of only one academic study that has empirically analyzed the relationship between digital technologies and the structuration of the avant-garde literary field (Paling & Nilan, 2006). Assessing editors’ “value statements” with respect to their decisions to publish their literary magazines online or in print, Paling and Nilan find that, in general, both the editors of

print magazines and the editors of online magazines tend to support the values of symbolic capital and autonomy from the economic market. Moreover, the authors find that editors of online magazines show stronger disregard for financial gain and report eschewing the use of advertisements to generate revenue, suggesting that online technologies can intensify, rather than extinguish, extant *non-economic* values. These findings generally support Bourdieu's theoretical and historical conclusions that the avant-garde literary field is a non-economic sphere of cultural production.

Since Paling and Nilan's study, almost all literary magazines have come to have an online presence and to use newer, more interactive digital technologies (see Fuchs, 2008) and social media platforms (van Dijck, 2013) to create, promote, and distribute their magazines, while many editors/writers regularly use social media to promote their work. Most of these social networking sites and platforms did not exist at the time of Paling and Nilan's study.<sup>8</sup> Although the authors find that online magazines are no more interested in financial gain than print magazines, it is unclear how the nearly universal use of new interactive social media among editors and writers is associated with the logics of neoliberalism. Moreover, their study does not consider internal field dynamics, or the importance of social positions, in shaping the logics of established editors/writers as compared with their younger counterparts. Rather than simply compare print magazines to online magazines, I draw on in-depth interviews and field-level archival data to describe the coupling between digital technologies and neoliberal logics as interpreted by avant-garde literary editors and writers.

## METHODS

In order to assess the relationship between neoliberalism and digital technologies in the literary field, I inductively identify when and to what extent each cultural logic accompanies the discourse of digital technologies. My data consist of semi-structured in-depth interviews and the 2013 and 2014 conference programs of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs.

### *Data*

Interviews were conducted with 23 editors representing a total of 31 distinct literary magazines and small presses. All respondents were also

writers, and all but one lived and worked in the United States. I selected respondents by first randomly sampling literary magazines from the table of contents page of the 2008–2012 volumes of the *Best American Series*, which is an anthology of what are considered by many in the field to be among the best short stories written in the past year. In order to sample a broader range of magazine editors, I also sampled based on previous respondents' discussions of literary magazines and editors/writers whom they either admire or disdain. This purposive sampling strategy was ideal for gathering interpretations from a range of social actors in the field (see Weiss, 1994). Given the polar structuration of the avant-garde literary field (Bourdieu, 1983), my goal was to include established editors/writers who work for older, well-known literary magazines as well as editors/writers who recently established their own magazines and literary blogs (whom I term “start-up” editors). In addition, I sought to include editors/writers from magazines that were housed in and funded by universities and those that are institutionally independent journals (or, “indie”). I also sampled editors from small presses. Table A1 in the appendix provides details on the positions and literary affiliations of all respondents. The shortest interview lasted 36 minutes and the longest lasted 2 hours and 10 minutes. Interviews averaged 90 minutes.

Conducted between 2013 and 2014, these interviews asked respondents about their daily work as editors, their general views on the literary world, and their uses of, and beliefs about, various forms of digital technologies. With respect to questions about digital technology, I began by asking open-ended questions about whether digital technologies have presented any problems or opportunities for their magazines or for literary practice more broadly. I followed up with specific questions about how each editor/writer used specific technologies (e.g., online submissions managers and website traffic systems) and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) as editors of magazines as well as in their lives as writers. I also sought their perceptions of how other editors/writers were using digital technologies in order to elicit their evaluative judgements (Lamont, 2012) of alternative practices (see Asad & Bell, 2014) and their sense of the implications of digital technologies on the field. These questions allowed me to assess the cultural logics sustaining their subjective practices (see Chong, 2013, p. 269).

The AWP conference programs for 2013 and 2014 were downloaded from the AWP website. My data consist of the listings of the schedule of events for each program year. An annual conference attended by writers as well as editors who set up booths to promote their magazines and small

presses, AWP is the largest writer's conference in the United States. Despite its size, it attracts editors/writers who would consider themselves to be "indie," "avant-garde," or "literary" as opposed to editors/writers who would consider themselves to be popular commercial players in the broader literary field. Each year, the listings for the conference program are selected from members' submissions by a committee representing AWP's general membership. Therefore, the listings serve as an institutional representation of the interests and concerns of the American avant-garde literary field.

### *Analysis*

In analyzing both the interviews and the AWP conference program, I coded for instances in which the interview respondent or the program event listing mentioned digital technologies, such as social media, blogs, online journals, online submissions managers, and website traffic systems. I then coded how digital technologies were described – the value placed on them, their relevance for the creation, distribution, or promotion of literary magazines and/or individual writers' work, and the way neoliberal logics were employed, or rejected, as justifications for the use of digital technologies.

With respect to the AWP event listings, I first restricted the sample of listings to panels and readings, thereby excluding listings for the book fair, conference registration, and evening dance parties – listings which would not give a sense of the thematic interests of the editors/writers in attendance. This sample restriction resulted in 500 total event listings for AWP 2013 and 552 total event listings for AWP 2014. Second, I coded for event listings that mentioned the use of digital technologies in the editing of literary magazines and small presses, in everyday writing and publishing, or in the distribution of magazines or books. This excluded a few event listings from the analysis, such as events that mentioned digital technology use in the classroom. In total, I identified 27 event listings in AWP 2013 and 43 event listings in AWP 2014 that mentioned the use of digital technologies. I refer to these event listings as "digital events." Finally, among these digital events, I coded whether the digital event justified digital technologies by drawing positively ("in favor of") or negatively ("opposed to") on one or more of the five neoliberal logics – if at all. While there is a marked increase in the proportion of digital events from 2013 to 2014 (5.4 to 7.8 percent, respectively) as well as in the frequency with which neoliberal

logics are mentioned among these events, there is a consistent trend in how digital events draw on neoliberal logics across both years (see Table A2 in the [appendix](#)).

## FINDINGS

Analysis of the AWP conference program and the interviews reveals that avant-garde editors/writers have a complex relationship with neoliberal logics in their use of digital technologies. In general, the logics of profit-maximization and individualism are discredited in both the institutional discourse as well as the everyday discourse of the field. Both the conference program listings as well as everyday editors/writers view the naked pursuit of sales and profit through social media as anathema; moreover, both tend to portray digital technologies as a means of fostering authentic literary community rather than individualistic and zero-sum promotion (though established editors/writers are ambivalent with respect to individualism). The logics of entrepreneurship and efficiency, however, are employed strongly by editors/writers in their interpretations of digital technologies. The program listings and everyday editors/writers see digital technologies as efficient tools to produce literary magazines and literary work; moreover, they view various new technologies to be emblematic of a larger uncertainty in the publishing industry – an uncertainty that needs to be understood and managed in an entrepreneurial manner. Finally, the logic of market-faith is employed differently in the field-level institutional discourse as compared with the everyday discourse of editors/writers. In the AWP conference program, digital events tend to legitimate the logic of market-faith and the search for new audiences and readers, whereas in interviews, editors/writers (especially established ones) tend to discredit the logic, arguing that their literary output is not, and should never be, driven by the market. [Tables 2 and 3](#) preview these findings.

In what follows, I describe how the AWP conference program and everyday editors/writers express either support for, or opposition to, neoliberal logics in their discourses surrounding the use of digital technologies. I consider the level of support for each neoliberal logic in turn, first describing institutional discourses and then comparing these discourses to those found in the interviews. The last section of the findings describes how the logics of market-faith and individualism are employed to differing degrees by older, established editors/writers and younger, start-up editors/writers.

**Table 2.** Support for Neoliberal Logics in the 2013–2014 AWP Program.

	In Favor	Ambivalent	Opposed
Entrepreneurship	X		
Market-faith	X		
Profit-maximization		X	
Efficiency	X		
Individualism			X

**Table 3.** Support for Neoliberal Logics in Interviews with Editors/Writers.

	In Favor	Ambivalent	Opposed
Entrepreneurship	X		
Market-faith		X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>b</sup>
Profit-maximization			X
Efficiency	X		
Individualism		X <sup>b</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Denotes presence among younger, start-up editors/writers.

<sup>b</sup>Denotes presence among older, established editors/writers.

Consequently, I conclude with an explanation of the role of social positions, organizational affiliations, and career exhaustion in determining the legitimacy of neoliberal logics in the field.

### *Entrepreneurship*

For the most part, digital events in the AWP program employ the logic of entrepreneurship more positively than negatively. Event listings tend to legitimate the use of social media as a way for literary magazines to, in the words of a listing from 2013, “respond to changing readerships, budgetary constraints, evolving aesthetics, and limited staffing resources.” Being entrepreneurial – as both an editor and a writer – is framed as a positive virtue and skill necessary for operating in an increasingly risky and budget-tight world (see Neff et al., 2005). A listing from 2014 illustrates this framing well:

Publish it Forward: Creating the Future Together.

Innovations in technology and communication have made the written word more portable, accessible, and popular than ever. It is an exciting but challenging time for writers. With the NEA-funded Publish it Forward series, Grub Street has educated, inspired,

and dared writers to think creatively and optimistically about new opportunities and new models made possible by the digital age. Panelists will illustrate key lessons from the lecture series designed specifically for emerging writers.

Listings also encourage the use of digital technologies to help individual writers work on their own time for their own economic, as well as symbolic, gain. For example, a 2014 listing titled “Homesteading on the Digital Frontier: Writers’ Blogs” promises to “present strategies on how to start a blog, where to get material, how to publicize and blog and add readers and followers, and how to sustain it over time.”

In interviews, both start-up and established editors draw on the logic of entrepreneurship when discussing their use of digital technologies. One start-up editor of an indie magazine established in 2009 told me that he started an online journal because he “wanted to take a different approach” from extant literary magazines. He was not satisfied with the literary scene and felt that he could add something new or different. Another editor, drawing on an entrepreneurial logic of valuing the freedom and independence of working on his own time, told me that he started a small press as a way of establishing a “part-time job.” He explained that digital technologies, such as a professional website and other “small upgrades,” could help him make his part-time job move from a “labor of love” to something more “profitable.” Like start-up editors, established editors draw on the logic of entrepreneurship when discussing digital technologies, but often they do so with respect to their own writing rather than with respect to the direction of their already-established literary organizations. For example, when talking about her own writing, an editor of two indie magazines and a university magazine told me that it is important to “have an active online social media presence” so that one can “parlay that into a major press book deal.” Editors/writers see digital technology as a way to enable them to make a name for themselves as writers and gain (mostly symbolic) rewards within the avant-garde field, such as a book deal or more visibility among other writers. Moreover, start-up editors see digital technology as a way of reducing the barriers to entry in establishing their own small journal at little cost.

### *Market-Faith*

Digital event listings in AWP tend to draw positively on the logic of market-faith, though not as often as they draw on the logic of entrepreneurship. A 2013 listing, which argues that writers must become marketers

and seek an “increasing” audience, frames social media use as central to “marketing practices:”

Marketing vs. Writing with a Nod to the New Media

Must we writers become marketers (answer, yes!), and if we are to become marketers, how do we market most effectively? This panel explores how best to use new media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.) and yes, old media (that old-fashioned postcard ...). Once we are in communication with our (ever-increasing) audience, how can we best keep our focus on creating and honing work without becoming fragmented, disorganized, distracted? What are some tools to improve both our creative practices and our marketing practices?

While this listing draws on a logic of market-faith, particularly with respect to its insistence that accruing an audience matters, it also reveals a desire to protect the symbolic meaning of “creating and honing work” despite market pressures. Another listing from 2014 encourages market-faith among literary magazines, arguing that “online literary sites attract more traffic than many print journals, expand audiences for literary work beyond a small circle of subscribers, and are building virtual communities of readers and writers.” The latter part of this listing — the focus on building a literary community of readers and writers — is an anti-individualistic logic. Among digital listings, it is quite common for pro-market-faith logics to be coupled with logics against individualism. In the context of the literary field, the coupling of these two logics is not surprising, given that faith in a market of readers readily blurs into support for the cultivation of a reading community (or, the audience; Bourdieu, 1983). This coupling of one pro-neoliberal logic with another anti-neoliberal logic demonstrates the methodological value of considering neoliberal logics as independent prescriptions that can also hang together, or exist interdependently. Finally, a meaningful number of digital events frame the logic of market-faith negatively. These negative cases tend to view the cultivation of an audience, particularly through social media, as lacking in authenticity. For example, a listing from 2014 promises to teach writers “how being yourself [i.e., being authentic] online is your very best asset.”

In interviews, this notion of authenticity limits support for the logic of market-faith. Most respondents — both start-up and established — rarely draw on the logic of market-faith in their general discussion of digital technologies; however, in discussing the use of website analytics — or programs that enable them to measure how many readers read, share, or “like” certain pieces of literature or parts of their websites — some younger and start-up editors draw on this logic. Almost all editors use website analytics

to keep track of how many people are reading what parts of their journals. Among editors who focus mostly on their print subscriptions and publications, these editors still consider an online presence important and are interested in the traffic that blog posts and other online content receive. As an editor of a prestigious indie magazine established in the early 1900s told me, "I've been trying to [...] take this information and analytically dive into it and see, you know, who our subscribers are and where we can do better." Despite this editor's interest in using online data to learn who his subscribers are, this editor argues that the magazine would never tailor its content to its subscribers. He noted: "We'll never change the content no matter what ... we'll never allow numbers to change what we do."

While established editors do not let the demands of the market dictate the direction of their literary content, some younger editors are more ambivalent, arguing that keeping track of what types of content drive readership helps to inform future editorial decisions. As an editor of two indie magazines established in the 2000s told me:

You know, sometimes with the print journal you don't know what people think about what they read, but with the online technology stuff, you can see their responses. [...] We had a column in the first online issue that got 2,000 hits in like two weeks, you know. And we were like, "Wow. We're definitely asking her to write for us again." Putting your finger on the pulse of what your readers want and are interested in is a huge, huge benefit of online technologies. [...] I can run the numbers, I can post a new story from the online issue on Facebook and I can see how many people share it or how many people comment on it. [...] That tells you what kind of impact your work is having on your readership. And it helps you determine what they want to read and how you can make more informed editorial decisions in the future.

While this editor tailors her future editorial decisions to her readership, her faith in the market is in relation to the accrual of symbolic prestige and legitimation by readers rather than the accrual of economic capital from readers. As she noted earlier in the interview, readers do not pay for content in her journals.

### *Profit-Maximization*

The logic of profit-maximization is rarely mentioned in digital event listings. In the rare instances in which event listings explicitly discuss profit or sales, these mentions are just as likely to be negative as they are to be positive, revealing an ambivalent embrace of the logic of profit-maximization in

the institutional discourse. For example, one listing from 2014 critiques the notion of making literature for economic returns. This listing asks:

In a world that tends to value completed, marketable products – the success of which is measured in terms of sales figures, Amazon rankings, and the awarding of prestigious prizes, etc. – how do we view our own ongoing creative work? How do we maintain our affiliation to the less tangible incentives for writing, such as connecting with readers?

In its criticism of profit-maximization, this listing goes as far as to question the value of “prestigious prizes,” or symbolic recognition by one’s peers. Bourdieu (1983) would argue that such an aversion to recognition is characteristic of the most autonomous pole of the avant-garde literary field, where display of any form of capital (even in the form of honors and awards) can be considered crass.

In the interviews, only one editor in the sample draws on the logic of profit-maximization in describing his use of digital technology; all other respondents see the naked accrual of economic profit as anathema with respect to their literary organizations. The one editor who seeks to maximize profit is a start-up editor whose magazine is published exclusively in print. In the interview, he talks about using his journal’s website as a means of luring in subscribers in order to market the print journal. As he told me, “The blog is simply, as it were, an attempt to get people in the door [...] For us, it’s a kind of marketing tool, if you will. Blogging and posting to the Internet is a marketing tool.” While some other editors mention using digital technologies to accrue “profit,” pushing them to explain what they mean by the term reveals their aversion to creating literary work for the accrual of monetary profit. Most recognize that the literary “business” is a small one. For example, one online editor for a magazine told me that the purpose of Facebook and Twitter posts is simply to get the right people in the literary community to read the magazine. While she acknowledges that she is also interested in selling copies of the magazine, she said: “it’s not like we have editors [in positions above us] breathing down our necks” to get people to purchase copies. Another editor completely dismisses the idea of making money from literary magazines, telling me that the literary world is “so niche anyway.”

### *Efficiency*

Though not drawn on as strongly as the logics of entrepreneurship and market-faith, the logic of efficiency is generally employed positively in digital event listings in the AWP program. With respect to the production of

literary magazines, in which information, writing, and submissions are shared among editors, digital technologies are often cited for their efficiency. For example, a listing from 2013 about Master of Fine Arts programs states that “this panel [...] provides inside information on how Facebook shaped the experience of applying, sharing information about programs, swapping work, and even negotiating offers.” Often the logic of efficiency is employed when framing digital technologies as streamlined and inexpensive tools to produce extant forms of literary work, to “generate more visibility for less,” and to produce new forms of literary work characteristic of the digital age (e.g., Twitter fiction). There are some negative cases, however, of listings that contradict the logic of efficiency. For example, a listing from 2014 titled “The Re-Emergence of Book Arts” compares the pros and cons of “publishing a handmade book versus an e-book,” contesting the dominant narrative of efficiency.

In interviews, most editors draw on the logic of efficiency with respect to using digital technologies in the production and distribution processes of magazines and presses. Online platforms, website analytics, online submissions managing systems, and social media all make the submission, editing, and dissemination of literary work quicker and less costly. Some editors use digital technologies to cut costs in the production of literary work. For example, one editor notes that he uses Twitter to recruit readers of the “slush pile” – the unsolicited submissions the magazine receives on a daily basis. He told me that by “asking for volunteers on our Twitter feed,” he is able to “hire” readers who are willing to work for free, thinking that perhaps by helping the magazine to read submissions they may have a better chance of getting their own future writing published. From their position as writers, respondents also draw on the logic of efficiency. A start-up editor of a small press told me that through social media he has been able to make connections for his writing career. He recounted, “It’s often easier to work in a social media environment [...] I’ve made so many connections between authors and friends and so forth using, you know Gmail chat and Facebook.” Indeed, this same editor told me that because his editorial staff lives in different parts of the country, using video chat has made the discussion of submissions and business decisions possible.

### *Individualism*

In the AWP program, the logic of individualism is strongly rejected as an appropriate logic with respect to the use of digital technologies. Indeed, all

mentions of individualism are mentions that critiqued the idea of using social media or other technologies for an individual's or a literary magazine's own aggrandizement, recognition, or readership. There was a strong discourse advocating for the importance of a strong literary community. A minority of this discourse presents digital technologies as possible disruptions to the community-life of the literary world. For example, a listing from 2013 on "Cooperative Publishing and the Future of the Small Press" frames "new developments in media and technology" as potential threats to the cooperative model of publishing. Consequently, the panel explores how "various cooperative models help reimagine ways for the 21st century small press to thrive [and] sustain literary communities," ostensibly in the face of technological changes. However, most digital events that oppose the logic of individualism frame digital technologies as enabling the formation of community in many ways. For example, listings often mention strategies for how to "build thriving virtual writing communities" or "engag[e] the online community at large not only for the benefit of their organization but for poetry as a whole."

Among the interview respondents in my sample, younger editors/writers reject the logic of individualism, while established editors/writers appear to somewhat embrace the logic with respect to their management of digital technologies and, in particular, of social media. On the one hand, respondents report the many ways that digital technologies allow for the creation of a community of readers, especially for up-and-coming magazines that do not have the institutional and historical legitimacy of established magazines centered in major cities like New York (see [Childress, 2015](#)). On the other hand, as writers and editors become more established, they often use blogs and Twitter to promote their individual writing and individual contributions to the literary community rather than to try to develop and nurture a community of readers and writers. An editor of two independent magazines and an increasingly well-known writer in a particular genre of the avant-garde literary world provides a case in point. This editor started out by blogging and engaging with an online community of writers whom he thought matched his aesthetic tastes. Eventually, he created a journal among this literary community. He told me that he initially enjoyed engaging through social media with this community of readers and writers because they were not "New York City people [and magazines]." But as he continued engaging in the community and becoming more well-known, his perspective on social media changed. He found interacting with people in online comments sections and over Twitter to be too time-consuming. People began asking him to "blurb" their books or write short pieces for

their magazines. Now, he finds it “too overwhelming to interact with people online anymore. That sounds like a diva thing to say, but I just don’t have the time.”

*Field Dynamics: Positions, Organizations, and Exhaustion*

Editors/writers occupying different social positions within the field differ, to an extent, with respect to their support for certain logics. In particular, I have found that established editors/writers in my interview sample are more likely to embrace the logic of individualism and less likely to embrace the logic of market-faith than younger editors/writers in my sample. I offer three explanations that may account for these within-field differences: social position (and the goals associated with one’s position), organizational affiliation, and career exhaustion.

First, social position matters because of the differing goals fundamental to each position. Confirming Bourdieu (1983, 1996), I find that the dispositions and strategic goals of younger editors/writers are geared toward gaining consecration, while the dispositions and strategic goals of established editors/writers are geared toward maintaining their current levels of consecration. Consequently, younger editors/writers are fearful of dismissing readership demand, as they view an audience as necessary to legitimate their writing styles and literary tastes. This audience, contrary to what Bourdieu might predict, is not just an audience of intellectual peers, but often a young bourgeois audience of ordinary readers. More than one young editor mentioned constantly getting submissions from unpublished “teens and twentysomethings” who faithfully read their journals. It appears that this reach toward an external audience is symptomatic of the broader reach made possible by digital technologies. Importantly, younger editors/writers, in striving to make a name for their genre, are more in favor of nurturing a literary community around their literary tastes, unlike established editors/writers who are striving simply to maintain a name for their individual selves.

Second, organizational literary affiliation seems to matter. Established editors/writers in my sample tend to work at and write for more established literary magazines and presses than younger editors/writers. Indeed, most younger editors founded their own magazines, forcing them to be more inclined to “follow the market,” as one editor put it, in order to stay afloat in the beginning. The importance of organizational affiliation is well illustrated by the case of a young writer who is affiliated with a prestigious

literary magazine and two obscure, start-up indie magazines. In describing her work for the start-up magazines, she told me that she was “always like really obsessing about web traffic” as if such numbers represented a “solitary popularity contest.” In her role as an online editor for the established magazine, however, her superiors suggest that she should be less concerned about readership and more concerned about the quality of the published work. Indeed, with respect to one of her start-up magazines, which has begun to make a name for itself, she has come to find that as “you start to become – not established – but people start to know about your work,” other literary organizations and readers begin to “approach you” for “partnerships and collaborations.” Thus, being an editor at an established magazine means you do not have to worry about the market; the market comes to you.

Third, simple exhaustion matters. Literary careers are long, and editors/writers often hold multiple jobs in addition to writing (Ekelund & Börjesson, 2002; Kingston & Cole, 1986). Several more-established respondents recounted stories of initial exuberance and feelings of pressure in the beginning of their careers, which translated into a constant worry about audience – of peers and of ordinary readers. As one editor/writer told me, “My first book came out 10 years ago. So, at the beginning I felt a lot of pressure – probably for the first like five years.” But “after I got more credible and had more things published,” this respondent told me, “I didn’t really [feel the pressure]. They [literary magazines] just came to me.” Established editors/writers are at once exhausted in the later stages of their careers and also – among those who make it, by some measure of internal recognition – relatively complacent. Their exhaustion and complacency contributes to their disinterest in the market and their greater willingness to adopt a logic of individualism. It is not just that they do not want to be bothered to “blurb” a book, as I note in the previous section, but it is also that they begin to believe in the narrative of their own individualistic success story. In explaining her success, one editor/writer told me quite bluntly: “Um, I worked my ass off.”

## DISCUSSION

This study is the first to examine whether – and to what extent – the use of digital technologies in the avant-garde literary field is accompanied by neoliberal logics. While theorists have suggested that social life has become increasingly structured by market logics, particularly given the increasing

use of digital technologies, little empirical scholarship has tested these claims. This study offers a cultural logics approach to neoliberalism, which allows for the identification of the independent logics of entrepreneurship, market-faith, profit-maximization, efficiency, and individualism in any social field. Drawing on interviews with editors/writers and content analysis of the AWP conference program, I employ this neoliberal logics approach and find that, with respect to digital technologies: editors/writers tend to support the logics of entrepreneurship and efficiency; profit-maximization is largely viewed with disdain; and, market-faith and individualism are legitimated differently by editors/writers occupying different positions within the field, drawing attention to the importance of social position, organizational affiliation, and career exhaustion in understanding the role of digital technologies in the literary world.

The substantive findings of this study add complexity to our understanding of the relationship between digital technologies and neoliberalism in historically autonomous fields of cultural production. On one hand, it is the case that the avant-garde field appears to have succumbed to the neoliberal logics of efficiency and entrepreneurship, supporting critical theorists' concerns about the intimacy between capitalism and digital technologies (Fisher, 2010a). On the other hand, digital technologies also seem to not only resist economic forms of valuation, but even *embolden* certain non-economic logics (see Clair, 2015; Paling & Nilan, 2006). In particular, digital technologies tend to allow for greater investment in, and concern for, the larger literary community as well as a general aversion to accumulation in the form of economic profit. The logics of market-faith and anti-individualism appear, initially, as strange bedfellows, but their coupling can be understood as indicative of the larger symbolic (as opposed to economic) goals of editors and writers seeking literary recognition. Moreover, a look at internal field heterogeneity suggests that the neoliberalization of the field varies by one's social position within the field. Consequently, the existence of certain neoliberal logics may reflect a classic cycle of artistic generations differentiating themselves from one another (Bourdieu, 1996) rather than a new general state of the field.

Relatedly, these findings confirm that technology is not deterministic but instead dependent on the particular institutions, structures, and positions in which new technologies and new ideologies come to be embedded (Grazian, 2005). As Taylor (2014, p. 215) notes, "the digital has not rendered all previously existing institutions obsolete." Viewing technological change from this perspective enables the identification of alternative models for using digital technologies in responsible, sustainable ways that do not

reinforce broader systems of exploitation and accumulation (Clair, 2015; Taylor, 2014). The case of the avant-garde literary field reveals the potential for social media to develop communities of writers attempting to sustain their creative labor. To be sure, competition between older and younger editors/writers appears to be further enabled by social media, as younger editors/writers seek to garner higher numbers of followers and likes; and, all magazines (young or established) feed on an entrepreneurial ethos. Yet, all of this jockeying, ultimately, is not for economic profit.

This study also highlights the need to pay careful attention to the distinction between institutional discourse and everyday discourse. Some of the most influential critical perspectives on the relationship between digital technologies and new capitalism draw their conclusions from text-based analyses of institutional discourse (e.g., Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Fisher, 2010b). Yet, I find a meaningful discrepancy between the logics supported in the AWP program (institutional discourse) and those supported in the interviews (everyday discourse) (compare Tables 2 and 3). This discrepancy reveals the limitations of empirical research on representations in institutional discourse. In addition to interpreting institutional discourse as represented in texts, scholars should consider how the everyday discourses and practices of social actors contest, contradict, or add nuance to institutional discourse. The cultural logics approach to neoliberalism developed here could assist in this effort by enabling empirical researchers to systematically compare the same logics across myriad forms of representation.

Focusing on the case of the avant-garde literary field, this study has documented the legitimations of, and resistances to, neoliberalism in a field of cultural production historically averse to market logics. In order to fully understand the reach of market logics in social life more broadly, future research should consider the extent to which neoliberal logics have come to structure other fields and whether digital technologies are entangled with these logics. Such empirical research is fundamental to recent agendas in economic sociology that aim to document public understandings of economic processes (Bandelj et al., 2015) and interrogate how the market is employed as a moral project (Fourcade & Healy, 2007). Moreover, such empirical research is fundamental to recurring debates about the relationship between technological change and economic change (Bell, 1976; Fisher, 2010a). As this study illustrates, a cultural logics approach provides a framework for interpreting the implications of, and resistances to, neoliberal discourses across fields and with respect to different technologies.

## NOTES

1. This study considers the use of new interactive digital technologies, such as social media, online platforms and hosting systems, and online communication mediums. See [Fuchs \(2008\)](#) on the distinction between Web 1.0 and 2.0 technologies, the latter of which include social media and other online technologies that allow users to interact with and modify online content and communications systems ([van Dijck, 2013](#)).

2. For various definitions of neoliberalism, see [Harvey \(2007\)](#), [Dardot and Laval \(2014\)](#), and [Brown \(2015\)](#).

3. For Foucauldian interpretations of neoliberalism, see [Larner \(2000\)](#) and [Mirowski \(2013\)](#).

4. Cultural logics are distinct from “norms” in that norms are not necessarily based in a body of legitimated social or scientific knowledge. Cultural logics, on the other hand, depend on legitimated knowledge for their legitimacy as prescriptions.

5. This cultural logics approach assumes that logics are not merely justifications of action but also relate meaningfully – if not, imprecisely – to observed action. Bourdieu (1990) articulates the distinction between these two forms of culture – between justifications/ideologies (which he termed “logics”) and actions/practices (which he termed “practical logics”). While Bourdieu argued that the connection between logics and practical logics was indeterminate and could not be discerned by the social analyst, recent scholars have differed on this point, arguing that the relationship between beliefs and practice can be assessed empirically ([Vaisey, 2009](#); see also [Patterson, 2014](#), p. 9). A full account of culture would interrogate both aspects, leaving it up to empirical analysis and theory to determine when and to what extent beliefs and practice overlap. My approach to cultural logics incorporates both aspects of culture, attempting to identify how cultural logics exist as both thought and action.

6. While Boltanski and Thevenot’s justificatory regime model allows us to see how logics operate across contexts, their model is still bounded conceptually by the idea of “worlds” that are exclusive of one another and have fairly stable sets of “coherent” operating logics. For example, the authors describe the market world as containing market and network logics ([Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006](#)); however, a cultural logics approach to neoliberalism further deconstructs what we mean by “market” and “network,” revealing the contradictions within even seemingly stable “regimes of worth.” Where for Boltanski and Thevenot the symbolic world and the market world are distinct, here the logics of these worlds can overlap and recombine in seemingly contradictory ways. The point of a cultural logics approach is to explicitly identify independent logics that exist to various degrees in various contexts and mutually constitute, complement, or contradict one another.

7. For example, [Bourdieu \(1996, p. 114\)](#) notes that in the seventeenth century, the best poets and scientists were rewarded with high amounts of economic capital. The literary field’s current autonomy from the economic field emerged in the late nineteenth century.

8. Their study does not consider more recent digital technologies that have expanded since 2006. For example, Youtube was invented in 2005, Twitter was invented in 2006, and Facebook accelerated in 2008 (see [van Dijck, 2013](#)). Their study considers only the use of websites, but not the use of these more interactive social media.

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## APPENDIX

*Table A1.* Interview Respondents, by Literary Affiliations.

Respondent	Mag/Press	Type of Mag/Press	Type of Editor
1	Mag, Press	Indie	Start-up
2	Mag, Anthology	Indie	Managing editor
3	Mag	Indie	Digital editor
	Mag	Indie	Blog and media editor
4	Mag	Indie	Start-up
5	Press	Indie	Start-up
6	Mag	Indie	Editor
	Mag	Indie	Editor
7	Mag	Indie	Online editor
	Mag	Indie	Start-up
	Mag, Collective	Indie	Start-up
8	Mag	Indie	Essays editor
	Mag	Indie, University	Start-up
	Mag	University	Fiction editor
9	Mag	Indie	Start-up
10	Mag	Indie	Online editor
	Mag	Indie	Senior editor
11	Mag	Indie	Start-up
12	Mag	Indie	Editor
13	Mag	University	Editor
	Mag	University	Editor
14	Mag	University	Editor
15	Mag	University	Start-up
16	Mag	University	Editor
	Mag	University	Editor
17	Mag, Press	Indie	Deputy editor
18	Mag, Press	Indie	Start-up
19	Mag	University	Editor
20	Mag	University	Editor
21	Mag	University	Editor
22	Mag	University	Editor
23	Mag	Indie	Start-up

**Table A2.** Number of Mentions of Neoliberal Logics among AWP Digital Event Listings, by Year.

	2013	2014	Both Years
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>			
In favor of	5	11	16
Opposed to	0	1	1
<i>Market-faith</i>			
In favor of	6	14	20
Opposed to	1	2	3
<i>Profit-maximization</i>			
In favor of	0	3	3
Opposed to	0	3	3
<i>Efficiency</i>			
In favor of	1	7	8
Opposed to	1	3	4
<i>Individualism</i>			
In favor of	0	0	0
Opposed to	7	8	15