Fritzsche, Bettina

How to study what people do. Praxeological ways to analyse doing music

Buchborn, Thade [Hrsg.]; De Baets, Thomas [Hrsg.]; Brunner, Georg [Hrsg.]; Schmid, Silke [Hrsg.]: Music is what people do. Rum / Innsbruck : HELBLING 2022, S. 237-244. - (European perspectives on music education; 11)

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:

https://www.helbling.com

Table of Contents

Bettina Fritzsche

How to Study What People Do
Praxeological Ways to Analyse Doing Music

Introduction

When we try to understand music as something that people do, this eventually means grasping the concept of music as a practice or as a set of practices. In this contribution, I would like to discuss the volume's topic from a viewpoint external to music education and to introduce practice theory, as received in educational studies and its methodological consequences in relation to a study of doing music. I will also go into the connection between the variety of practices of doing music with other sets of practices like doing culture and doing youth culture and reflect their meaning for children and young people.

In relation to music education, such a focus on practices also involves not only the question of how to relate to the practices of doing music and doing youth culture in educational contexts, but also increases the awareness of the practical level of education, in other words, for practices of doing pedagogy (Earl, 2016).

What are the consequences for music educational research of the assumption that music is what people do, culture is what people do and education is what people do? Which methods are suitable for an educational analysis of practices of doing music, doing youth culture and doing pedagogy as well as the entanglement of these practices? Those questions will be the corner stones of my paper.

For a start, I will give a short insight in the central assumptions of practice theories, a theoretical approach which assumes that central features of human life are embedded in human practices. As I will further elaborate, the question of how the logic of those practices can be grasped methodically in empirical studies has been widely discussed in the field of qualitative research. I will hint at some central arguments in this debate and then discuss opportunities and challenges of an empirical study of practices in relation to a research

example on girls' fan-culture. Finally, I will conclude with some hypothesises in relation to praxeological educational research about doing music.

Assumptions in Practice Theories

Theodore Schatzki (2001, p. 3) defines the social as "a field of embodied, materially inter-woven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings". Practice theories assume that the locus of the social is not a collective mind, a consensus of norms, or a conglomerate of texts; but rather that the social world is composed of individual and simultaneously intertwined practices. It seems more appropriate to speak of practice theories rather than practice theory, because the social aspect of practices is not covered by a monolithic body of theory, but rather by a *facettenreiches Bündel von Analyseansätzen* (multifaceted bundle of analytical approaches, Reckwitz, 2003, p. 282). This could also include pragmatism, Bourdieu's ideas about the logic of practice or post-structuralists conceptions regarding the performativity of language. Attempts to systemize practice theories have been undertaken by Schatzki (2012) and Andreas Reckwitz (2003).

Despite the many differences between approaches – which can be subsumed under the label practice theories – Schatzki (2012, pp. 13f.) hints at significant commonalities among those theories: first, the idea that important features of human life must be understood as forms of or as rooted in human activity; second the understanding of a practice as an organised constellation of different people's activities and third, an interest in the physical, material dimension of practices.

Also, in early reflections on the methodology of qualitative research, the importance of grasping the practical level of the social world has been emphasized. Ground breaking in this realm were considerations by ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel, who pleaded for an understanding of "the objective reality of social facts as an ongoing accomplishment of the concerted activities of daily life, with the ordinary, artful ways of that accomplishment being by members known, used, and taken for granted" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. vii).

The idea that phenomena which we easily regard as facts, can be looked at as results of our practices, has also been adopted in regard to social identities. Very influential in this aspect was Candace Wests and Don H. Zimmerman's paper on doing gender from 1987, in which they describe gender as an ongoing interactive achievement. The expression doing gender emphasises the role of everyday interactions in establishing and maintaining gender roles. In this constructionist approach, gender is not understood to be a fixed feature, but an outcome of daily activities. In a paper from 1995, Candance West – together with Sarah Fenstermaker – presented the concept of doing gender by arguing that the everyday constructions of gender were always linked to simultaneously performed constructions of other differences based, for example, on class and ethnicity.

In the last 20 years, the concept of social memberships as not naturally given, but performed in everyday practices, has influenced many educational studies; not only on the topic of doing gender (Faulstich-Wieland et al., 2004), but also e. g. on doing ethnicity (Buchborn et al., in this volume), doing adolescence (Breitenbach, 2000), doing pupil (Kampshoff, 2000), and so on. An increasing interest can be diagnosed in the performative dimension, not only of memberships and identities, but also of educational fields of action like doing pedagogy (Earl, 2016).

An important aim of praxeological approaches is therefore learning about the performative dimension of identities and the social. However, with regard to different theories focussing on practices, an analysis of practices in their relationality also allows conclusions on the maintenance and subversion of social orders. Schatzki (2001, p. 43) argues, that also social orders are generated through the relationship of social practices. In this aspect Reh, Rabenstein and Idel (2011) aim to examine pedagogical orders in classrooms. And in his conception of habitus, Pierre Bourdieu (1993) explains the reproduction of society's structures through incorporated dispositions, which originate in practices and simultaneously organise practices and the perception of practices. This means that empirical reconstructions of social practices allow implications which go beyond particular human activities, but are able to grasp characteristics of larger social orders and rules.

With regard to the practices of doing music or doing music education, this theoretical focus emphasises the performative dimension of producing music and pedagogical activities in relation to music or, as Bisshop-Boele puts it in this volume, recognizes that music is "action and agency" (p. 17, in this volume). As he also argues, it enables us to grasp the meaning of doing music for people's "musical subjectification" (p. 22ff., in this volume) and their connection to the word. In the field of music education, a focus on practices allows Herbert, Clarke & Clarke (2019) to analyse music as a corporeal and culturally embedded practice and Falkenberg (2016) to interpret bodily practices of pupils during their music class. Moreover, praxeological approaches aim at conclusions in relation to the analysed practices' function in specific social orders (like a music lesson), respectively in relation to society's structures. In this way, Buchborn et al. (in this volume) can point out that with a praxeological approach to music education, doing ethnicity has a productive function and that teachers' and learners' practices reproduce (and sometimes shift) dominant discourses in relation to ethnicity and belonging.

But how can those practices be grasped empirically? In the next section I will discuss the methodological conclusions of practice theories' conception of the social.

Understanding the Logic of Practices

According to Pierre Bourdieu (1972), there is a certain logic which underlies our practices, and he encourages scientific research, which aims to discover the logic of those practices which differs from what he calls "logic of logic" (Bourdieu, 1993, pp. 172, translated by the author). The already mentioned ethnomethodology is an approach which already in the 1960s focused the logic of practice.

Crucially influenced by ethnomethodology's interest in everyday practices is the research strategy of ethnography, with its core method of participant observation in the course of long running field work. This approach proves very suitable for analysis of the logic of practices and their meaning for the actors. Ethnographical projects undertaken in cultures which are familiar to the researchers require that they gain new insights through methodically "making the familiar strange" (Breidenstein et al., 2013, pp. 13, translated by the author). In connection with the application of video recordings, ethnography (resp. videography) offers the possibility of grasping practices in their materiality, detailedness and everyday occurences (Dinkelaker & Herrle, 2009).

Another methodological field which is inspired by both ethnomethodology and by Bourdieus praxeology is the documentary method of interpretation (Bohnsack, 2008). Inspired by Bourdieu's focus on the logic of practices and their modus operandi, this approach focusses on how practices relate to each other and explores the implicit knowledge underlying those practices. A core assumption is that the way people narrate their experiences provides clues as to their practices as well as the implicit knowledge and pattern (modus operandi) which structure those practices. Thus the documentary interpretation is suitable for analysis of verbal data like interviews and group discussions, and it can also be used in the context of video and picture analysis (Bohnsack et al., 2014).

Two contributors to this publication make clear how the documentary method can be applied in research on music education: Buchborn, Tralle and Völker introduce a reconstruction of teachers' and learners' implicit knowledge in relation to ethnic differences in intercultural music education and Bons, Borchert, Buchborn and Lessing offer insights into the connection between music and sociability in amateur wind orchestras (*Musikvereine*).

In the next section I will shortly introduce a study of my own on the subject of doing youth culture.

Reconstructions of Doing Fan Culture

The research project "Pop-Fans. Study of a Girl Culture" (Fritzsche, 2011, translated by the author) was undertaken from 1999 to 2002. It focused on female fans of boy bands like the *Backstreet Boys*, and *Caught in the Act* as well as girl bands like the *Spice Girls*; all pop groups

which were famous at the turn of the millennium. The majority of these bands' fans were female and mostly aged between 10 to 12. The starting point of the study was the idea that an enthusiasm for gender-homogeneous bands must have something to do with the fans' own transition from girlhood to womanhood and corresponding challenges. Thus, the female pop-fans' culture was analysed as a field of negotiating society's expectations in relation to their gender identity. All in all, 19 interviews and three group discussions with female fans of boy bands and girl bands aged between 10 to 18 years were interpreted using the documentary method.

The results of the research project made clear that, although the activities of fans were inspired by the stars' media representations, they included numerous practices that took place beyond media reception. Far more important than a preoccupation with the chosen stars was collective fans' practices, which were pursued within a gender homogeneous peer group. This means that the analysed practices have rather to be regarded as practices of doing youth culture, than as practices of doing music or as practices of doing media reception; although, of course, they were strongly connected with media and music reception and practices like singing and dancing.

Within the peer-group, fan culture offered a forum for bodily practices that allow playful performances of one's own sex, but also of the opposite sex; and, therefore, to find one's own style of self-presentation. Fans of girl bands used the stereotype representations of femininity presented by the bands in order to playfully explore different forms of female identity; for example, by first identifying with Baby Spice and later with Scary Spice. Those performatively enacted identifications were also possible with reference to boy-band stars: for example, my sample included a group of girls who performed as Backstreet Girls and were rather successful at local street festivals. They had faithful female fans themselves who, for example, shouted *'I love you'* during their performances.

Fans who choose male stars as their first object of desire experienced a comparatively risk-free acquaintance with the subject position of a heterosexually active femininity, which could also be playfully parodied within the framework of fan culture.

In this respect, fan culture also helps in the negotiation of uncertainties, which is one reason why its practices sometimes take place on a spontaneous, non-purposeful and self-dynamic level. It can be exactly the experimental and dynamic character of fan practices that allow normative expectations to be subverted. This becomes apparent in the interview with 15-year old Julia, who retrospectively reflects on her time being a fan of the boy band *Caught in the Act*:

> Julia: '*Well, during Caught in the Act, I still had my best friend, who also was a fan. I honestly have to confess that at that time I was still playing Barbie (laughs). Well, and then we played with the Barbies, too, somehow. We had just the Kens, that, we had four Kens, that, were then just the guys of the band, and then they had wives, and blah (…)*'

> I: *'And what did they do, the Kens and the Barbies?'*
>
> Julia: *'Mh, (2) actually not much (2) we just somehow, the wives – of course – changed their clothes fifty times per day, of course, normal, the Kens, they constantly performed, the wives sat at home with the children, something like that, (1) actually, that consisted largely of, of performances and arguments, so in our game they argued a lot.'*

In remembering her former practices, Julia makes clear that nowadays she feels embarrassed about the childishness of her fan practices. During her fandom, her dealing with the boy band was interwoven with the childlike play with Barbie and Ken dolls together with her best friend, so it was very much rooted in this peer relationship. Within the girls' play, the band members – represented by the Ken dolls and the idea of a partnership with them – were not at all idealised, but rather used in order to negotiate challenges and pitfalls of heterosexual womanhood, like a housewife's syndrome. The stars and their imagined partners were not at all objects of identification, but rather of disidentification and, as such, important for negotiations of gendered expectations in a transitional phase of age.

The implicit knowledge, which structures Julia's experience of her own former fandom and which can be analysed with the method of documentary interpretation, hints at the meaningfulness of fan cultural practices for the actors themselves and makes it possible to analyse those in their autonomy beyond media references. Thus, the function of youth cultural practices in relation to important negotiations in the transitional phase between childhood and youth moves into focus – and also their potential to parody and subvert dominant discourses.

Conclusions

In my chapter, I have tried to show a research approach to what people do. It focusses on daily practices in their relationality and aims to gain insights into the performative dimension of the social and to retrace the construction of social identities and social orders. Analysing the realm of doing music involves an understanding of doing music as a set of rather different practices, connected with an occupation with music and encouraging an analysis of the intertwinement of those practices with cultural practices and their function for children and youth. As also Bisschop-Boele makes clear in his contribution to this volume, doing music includes many different practices – like also stealing a CD from a music shop or, in my example, playing with Barbie dolls. The attempt to analyse the interconnectedness of doing music with doing youth could mean looking into new developments in the area of presentation and the marketization of music and music stars, which are closely connected with the increasing importance of digital media. Nowadays, it is rather influencers – who are sometimes equally musicians, like rapper and singer Shirin David – who represent

important templates for young people's negotiations through normative expectations and the challenges of leaving childhood. Research in this field could involve a closer look at practices connected with social media – like the app TikTok – which enable young people to directly embody music they like via TikTok-dances.[1]

Praxeological educational research, which examines the connection between doing music and doing education, can focus on the maintenance, and/or subversion of the pedagogical order in classrooms with an awareness for micro-practices (Reh et al., 2011). Other approaches – which are also applied in some of the studies introduced in this volume – interpret teachers' and learners' implicit knowledge and its meaning for the maintenance and subversion of dominant orders.

Thus, the phrase "music is what people do" is potentially connected to a vital and developing field of study which allows us to explore music education's role in relation to children and young people's negotiations of identity and its relationship with society's orders and normative expectations.

References

Bohnsack, R. (2008). *Rekonstruktive Sozialforschung – Einführung in qualitative Methoden* [Reconstructive social science. Introduction to qualitative research]. Opladen & Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich Verlag.

Bohnsack, R., Fritzsche, B. & Wagner-Willi, M. (eds.) (2014). *Dokumentarische Video- und Filminterpretation* [Documentary video and film interpretation]. Wiesbaden: Barbara Budrich Verlag.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *Sozialer Sinn: Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft* [The logic of practice]. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Breidenstein, G., Stefan, H., Kalthoff, H. & Nieswand, B. (2013). *Ethnografie: die Praxis der Feldforschung* [Ethnography: practice of field research]. Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft.

Breitenbach, E. (2000). *Mädchenfreundschaften in der Adoleszenz. Eine fallrekonstruktive Untersuchung von Gleichaltrigengruppen* [Friendships of girls in the adolescence. A case-reconstructive study of peer-groups]. Opladen: Leske & Budrich.

Dinkelaker, J. & Herrle, M. (2009). *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Videographie. Eine Einführung* [Videography in educational science. An introduction]. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Earl, C. (2016). Doing Pedagogy Publicly: Asserting the Right to the City to Rethink the University. In *Open Library of Humanities* 2 (2), p. e3.

---

[1]   https://www.thecut.com/2020/03/tiktok-dances-to-learn.html

Falkenberg, M. (2016). *Stumme Praktiken: Die Schweigsamkeit des Schulischen* [Tacit practices: the reticence of the academic]. Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius.

Faulstich-Wieland, H., Weber, M. & Willems, K. (2004). *Doing Gender im heutigen Schulalltag. Empirische Studien zur sozialen Konstruktion von Geschlecht in schulischen Interaktionen* [Doing gender in today's school toutine. Empirical studies on the social construction of gender in school-based interactions]. Weinheim: Juventa.

Fritzsche, B. (2011). *Pop-Fans. Studie einer Mädchenkultur* [Pop-fans. A study of a girls' culture]. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology.* Englewood Cliff, N. J.: Prentice Hall.

Herbert, R., Clarke, E. & Clarke, D. (eds.) (2019). *Music and Consciousness 2: Worlds, Practices, Modalities.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kampshoff, Marita (2000). Doing gender und doing pupil: erste Annäherungen an einen komplexen Zusammenhang [Doing gender and doing pupil: first approaches to a complex relationship]. In *Lesarten des Geschlechts: zur De-Konstruktionsdebatte in der erziehungswissenschaftlichen Geschlechterforschung* [Conjectures of gender: on the debate on de-construction in gender studies in educational studies]. Opladen: Leske & Budrich, pp. 189–204.

Reckwitz, A. (2003). Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken: Eine sozialtheoretische Perspektive [Basic elements of a theory of social practices]. In *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 32 (4), pp. 282–301.

Reh, S., Rabenstein, K. & Idel, T.-S. (2011). Unterricht als pädagogische Ordnung. Eine praxistheoretische Perspektive [Schooling as an eduactional order. A perspective from praxis theory]. In W. Meseth, M. Proske & F.-O. Radtke (eds.), *Unterrichtstheorien in Forschung und Lehre* [Educational theory in research and teaching]. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, p. 209–222.

Schatzki, T. R. (2001). Practice minded orders. In T. R. Schatzki, K. Knorr Cetina & E. v. Savigny (eds.), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory.* London & New York: Routledge, pp. 42–55.

Schatzki, T. R. (2012). A Primer on Practices: Theory and Research. In J. Higgs, R. Barnett, S. Billett, M. Hutchings & F. Trede (eds.), *Practice-based Education: Perspectives and Strategies.* Rotterdam: Trede, pp. 13–26.

West, C. & Fenstermaker, S. (1995). Doing Difference. In *Gender & Society* 9 (1), pp. 8–37.

West, C. & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing Gender. In *Gender & Society* 11, pp. 125–151.