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Abstract

Bourdieu's rich conceptual tools of habitus, capital and field continue to be useful in multiple areas of sociological research; however, his tools take many shapes within his own writing and different disciplines. In this article, we reflect on our use of Bourdieu's tools in order to enhance our understanding of how Bourdieu's notion of 'practice' can be applied to *practices of learning* in sociological studies on music. Through comparisons of three separate studies (a secondary school, a conservatoire and an industry), we employ a comparative method of analytic induction where we think critically about how we used Bourdieu's tools in overlapping but analytically distinct ways. After exploring the extent to which Bourdieu's tools proved productive, or not, to think with, we end with a concluding synthesis, which highlights the challenges associated with representing forms of Bourdieu's 'practice' as they relate to and inhere in *practices of learning*.

Keywords

Practice of learning; Bourdieusian sociology of music, education, industry; nexus of habitus, field, capital, comparative analytic induction

Introduction: using Bourdieu's sociology

In an effort to straddle antinomies in social science while maintaining close ties between theory and empirical research, Bourdieu claimed never to theorise for the sake of it, preferring his tools to be applied to data (Grenfell 2008: 15). Furthermore, as an empiricist, Bourdieu refused to 'establish sharp demarcations between the external and internal, the conscious and the unconscious, the bodily and the discursive' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 19). This article responds to Noble's (2017) call for Bourdieusian sociology to be enriched by foregrounding (and interrogating) the 'collective enterprise of inculcation through a conceptually elaborated, empirical program which explores the ensemble of pedagogic relations, setting, mode, space and the temporality of teaching and learning' (p. 13). Specifically, we focus on Bourdieu's 'practice' as it relates to and inheres in *practices of learning*. This article presents an analysis of Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus and a comparison of the ways in which we operationalised Bourdieusian tools 'in concert' in three different sites of pedagogic relations. By critiquing our own use of his concepts, we identify forms of practice that are inherent in learning.

In a 2015 special issue of *Cultural Sociology* entitled 'The Social Spaces of Music', the editors Crossley and Bottero cite three interconnected themes that run through sociological investigations of music practices: 1) *music as an activity*, or rather an inter-activity involving interaction between artists and audiences; 2) *music as 'inter-action'*, which suggests that 'musicking' is collective action and 3) *music as delineated styles and cultures*, that is, distinct enclaves or 'social spaces' that are constituted within the wider social body. Crossley and Bottero (2015) argue that four conceptual lenses are commonly operationalised within the sociology of music: scene, field, world and network. These lenses are often framed as competing as well as overlapping, with the capacity to enhance one another in practices of learning music. In this article we consider how practices of learning music reside in action as lived by musicians. These musicians are characterised by their practices of learning, which

are bounded by multiple logics of capital: cultural, economic, human and social. These in turn structure their experiences with education and learning in unique ways.

Music and music education are fields of engagement in which students, teachers, administrators and policy makers are ‘players’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 98). We know *fields are sites* of the distribution and acquisition of cultural capital in the forms of knowledge and ‘practice’ that lend themselves to manifestations of power or agency; however, they are also *sites of learning*, privileging ‘modes of inculcation’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: 46). In this article we theorise *practices of learning* in sites that inhere in fields which are constituted through symbolic capital, where ‘social agents endowed with the categories of perception and appreciation permitting them to perceive, know and recognize it, becomes symbolically efficient, like a veritable *magical power*’ (Bourdieu 1998: 102, emphasis original). Therefore, *practices of learning* are constituted in sites where such practices are *socially* recognised and validated within a specific field (Bourdieu 1986). As a result, practices of learning are tied to the struggle for symbolic capital as, in a Bourdieusian reading, ‘pedagogy’ is always linked to power, capital accrual and symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: 11). Along with others (Noble 2017; Stahl 2015; Watkins et al. 2015) we use Bourdieu’s tools to address the role power plays in practices of learning. More specifically, through a comparative method of analytical induction across three sites (a school, higher education and industry), our intent is to reflect critically on how we employ Bourdieu’s tools in different ways and how this deployment may be used to delineate a wide spectrum of practices of (musical) learning.

For Bourdieu, social space is always inherently competitive; a field is a ‘network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions’ (Bourdieu, quoted in Wacquant 1989: 39), or a network that is ‘composed of institutions or individuals who are competing for the same stake’ (Eagleton 2007: 157). Music education, as a field of struggle, generally values achievement-focused behaviour, performances and public celebrations that can promote hierarchies. Within formal music education, competitive behaviour can become a form of

symbolic capital, which, for Bourdieu, is not distinct from cultural and social capital. However, in informal music education this competitive behaviour is not always present (Stahl and Dale 2013). Through the three case studies we draw upon, we interrogate the assumptions about forms of ‘practice’ that inhere in practices of learning which go unchallenged, often appearing natural and justified.

We acknowledge that sociologists such as Giddens, Lyotard and Schatzki have attempted to capture the dynamic nature of how practices emerge, develop and change (cf. Warde 2005 for further analysis). We are also aware that an increasing number of sociologists have looked to Bourdieu’s scholarship for guidance in how to employ his tools of analysis, leading to contentious debate (Tooley and Darby 1998; Robbins 2000b; Nash 2003; Abrahams and Ingram 2013). We found Bourdieu’s theoretical lens illuminating when applied to our empirical research, particularly when understanding the relationship between experiences, dispositions and social contexts in practices of learning. In this article we will explore how we used Bourdieu’s tools, and how this varied with the researcher and the case study. As Adkins Brosnan and Threadgold (2017, p. ii) write “his work should not be blindly appropriated, but actively interpreted.’ A Bourdieusian lens – where dispositions are generated through the internalisation of structures (fostered through capitals, habitus and fields working ‘in concert’) – informed our analysis in each case study, but there were nuanced differences in our approaches in the study of ‘the ensemble of pedagogic relations, setting, mode, space and the temporality of teaching and learning’ (Noble 2017, p. 13). Our guiding questions are:

- How do we use Bourdieu’s tools (field, habitus and capitals) to enhance our understanding of the study of practices of learning in schools, higher education and industry?
- In studying (musical) practices of learning, how are Bourdieu’s conceptual tools productive to think with, and when are they not productive?

- Using a comparative method of analytic induction and drawing on three separate case studies (across a trajectory from school to higher education to industry), how do our approaches differ and what does this mean?

In the following section, we briefly recount Bourdieu's tools and theory of practice with a focus on the different ways these tools have been implemented by different scholars. We then relay our methodology of analytic induction before recounting the findings of our three case studies and how we applied Bourdieu's tools to study practices of learning. The article concludes with an extended cross-analysis of the different ways in which we used Bourdieu's tools.

Using Bourdieu's conceptual tools

Field

Fields, as 'designated bundles of relations', are where 'agents and institutions constantly struggle according to the regularities and the rules constitutive of this space of play' and where there exists a set of 'logics' particular to that field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 16, 102). As Grenfell and James (1998) note: 'All "products" and actions within a field therefore have value: but this value is not a neutral, passive feature of the field. It is value which buys other products of the field. It therefore has power. It is capital' (p. 20). While agents possess capitals that can be operationalised in the field, capitals cannot always be operationalised with equal ease. The game that occurs in these fields, according to Bourdieu, is always competitive, where the accumulation of capitals (and status) is always at stake (Costa 2006). Each field, whether it is economic, social or educational has 'distinctions' which are symbolically valued and contribute to formations of hierarchies. Distinction can become a key focus for symbolic struggles in which agents attempt to establish superiority, and – through distinction – differences and ultimately inequalities 'appear natural and thus both inevitable

and just' (Grenfell 2008: 96). In the 'social spaces of music', *practices of learning* and thus become embodied in various sites as habituated in uniquely different fields, and valued within the habitus of the musician, thus structuring their actions, relations and dispositions.

Habitus

Habitus is a central conceptual tool in Bourdieu's overall theory of practice. It can be defined as modes of thought, opinion and behaviour which are the internalisation of experience built up over a lifetime (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Habitus not only allows for agency and choice, but also recognises that choices are limited – restricted by socio-economic positioning, for example – and that habitus predisposes individuals towards certain ways of behaving. For Bourdieu, habitus posits that 'the cognitive structures which social agents implement in their practical knowledge of the social world are internalised, "embodied" social structures of almost any kind' (Nash 2003: 48). Not fully determined by structure, and incorporating agency, habitus represents a constant interaction between structure and agency. Bourdieu sought to use theoretical tools to break down the dichotomy between structure and agency, arguing that agency and structure both reside within the habitus, mutually shaping one another. Agency, in this case the strategic moves the players make, is therefore not reducible to structures; it is not determined by experience, but it is constrained by it. Habitus captures 'the intentionality without intention, the knowledge without cognitive intent, the pre-reflective, infra-conscious mastery that agents acquire in the social world' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 19). Habitus, as a conceptual tool, allows social researchers to see the relational structure where the habitus is constituted in relation to the fields and vice versa (Grenfell 2008: 53, 61). However, habitus took many forms within Bourdieu's own writing where, it has been noted, there are more 'elastic interpretations' (Bennett 2007: 203).

Capital

Capital can be thought of as the resources and rewards available in any social space (Vryonides 2007). These resources are accrued by people (Portes 2000) and are operationalised in particular fields where ‘social spaces are shaped, defined, and delimited by possession of, and access to, various forms of capital’ (Veenstra 2010: 86). For Bourdieu, capital describes ‘the social products of a field or system of relations through which individuals carry out social intercourse ... [where] capital is not readily available to everyone on the same basis: scarcity of social resource is the lubricant of social systems’ (Grenfell and James 1998: 18–19). This raises interesting questions regarding capital accrual and exclusivity regarding capitals. In Bourdieu’s (1986) words, capital ‘is what makes the games of society ... something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle’ (p. 46). In other words, some people will accrue more (and different) capital to other people and – using these resources – will ‘play’ the ‘games of society’ differently; capitals are ‘types of assets that bring social and cultural advantage or disadvantage’ (Moore 2008: 104).

Thinking relationally: operationalising Bourdieu’s tools and the theory of practice

To understand musicians’ relationships with social practices around music making and the embodied nature of music in the everyday, we will engage in methodological reflexivity where our intent is to make a contribution to the sociology of music through comparative analytic induction. As Bourdieusian scholars have repeatedly noted (Reay 1995; France 2015), it is important that Bourdieu’s tools are used relationally, as the three tools defined above are taken to be intrinsically interlinked so that *practice* = [(*habitus*) (*capital*)] + *field* (Bourdieu 1979: 101). Drawing on what France (2015) refers to as the relationship between habitus, reflexivity and the ecology of social practice, our aim is to put Bourdieu’s tools to use with an emphasis on using the tools ‘in concert’. Habitus involves one’s perceptions and

conceptions being conditioned by the structures of the environment in which they are engendered. As a set of durable and transposable dispositions, the habitus is not 'set' but evolving as the field too is in constant flux. Habitus and field operate in two ways:

On one side, it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field (or of a set of intersecting fields, the extent of their intersection or discrepancy being at the root of the divided or even torn habitus). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction. Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and value, in which it is worth investing one's energy. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127)

For Bourdieu, habitus allows for the research of various practices and ways of using or operationalising cultural and social capital. The theory of habitus highlights for researchers that individuals do not regulate their present actions by reference to any future goal, as their 'actions are not purposeful but, rather, continuously adaptive' (Robbins 2000a: 29). The practices of individuals within fields, in relation to their habitus, is guided by a practical sense, by what Bourdieu (1988) calls a 'feel for the game'. Thinking relationally, we invest ourselves in the game, where each player has

a pile of tokens of different colours, each colour corresponding to a given species of capital she holds, so that her relative force in the game, her position in the space of play, and also her strategic orientation toward the game ... the moves she makes, more or less risky or cautious, subversive or conservative, depend both on the total number of tokens and on the composition of the piles of tokens she retains, that is, on the volume and structure of her capital. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 99)

For Bourdieusians, the analogy of a game helps researchers to understand the dialectical relationship between the ‘nexus of habitus, capital and field’ (Wacquant 2011: 86). The strategies of the player operate in relation to the volume and structure of his or her capital and in relation to the logic of the field and that informs how the game is played.

Bourdieu’s tools in the study of practices of learning

In *Pascalian Meditations* (2000), Bourdieu revisits the concept of *practices of learning* in greater detail, calling attention to how learning is spatially situated, the embodied nature of learning as well as the emotional dimensions of learning. We must consider how the habitus of the learner is oriented within specific practices of learning. The research in the separate case studies is focused on the practices through which musicians learn in what can be termed learning cultures (James and Biesta 2007). To facilitate this enquiry, we draw upon Bourdieu’s argument that practice can only be understood through the application of the three ‘thinking tools’ (Wacquant 1989). Each of the three tools, therefore, has an integral role to play in furthering our understanding of the practices of learning in different music education contexts; however, how each of the tools are operationalised can vary considerably, we find. This means that a process of methodological reflexivity is required, which, according to Bourdieu, ensures that our ‘findings’ and ‘claims of truth’ are robust.

Methodology

Our focus is on how we put Bourdieu’s tools to use ‘in concert’ in order to understand three different sets of practices within three different fields of music. In the case studies that follow, we deploy each domain of practice – habitus, capital and field – in order to critique how we used these tools through a comparative analytical induction. As Noble (2017) writes, the ‘first thing that we need in thinking about processes of acquisition is to focus on the pedagogical setting’ and consider the ‘specificities of institutional context, whether it be the home, the

school, the workplace, the street, the shop, and so on' (p. 25). Furthermore, within these sites of learning, practices must 'be analysed and explained as taking place within the framework of relationships between positions and interests in conflict' (Costa 2006: 876). However, Bourdieu's tools can be applied in different ways. For example, there are nuanced differences (and different wordings) in how the tool of habitus has been operationalised and used as a theoretical tool in empirical work on identity. Archer and Francis (2006; Francis and Archer 2005) focus on 'narratives' in the habitus (personal and collective narratives which are historically constituted). Furthermore, Archer et al. (2007) analyse 'components', 'elements' and 'performances'. Skeggs (2004) emphasises the generative capacity of the habitus and how it seeks to accrue value and also symbolic power. Lareau (1987; Lareau and Horvat 1999) examines cultural capital and educational expectations as an integral part of habitus, while Reay uses the terminology of 'dispositions' and accounts for the permeability of habitus (2004) and institutional habitus (1998a), as well as adapting the concept of habitus to focus on individual subjectivities and social positioning (Reay 1998b).

As Stake (2009) notes, case studies are 'usually more suited to expansionist than reductionist pursuits' (p. 24) and are frequently used by scholars who seek to build theory. Building on Hammersley, Gomm and Foster (2009), we utilise a comparative method of analytical induction in relation to Bourdieu's tools, looking first at what theory highlights about practice and second for similarities and dissimilarities in application. Comparative analytic induction is open-ended; it goes beyond testing a hypothesis or identifying causal relationships. The purpose of each case study is not to detail empirical findings, reported elsewhere, but rather to elucidate the *ways* in which Bourdieu's tools were used in analysis in order to shed light on musical practices. First, we examine young working-class male MCs/DJs, whose practices of learning significantly influence their habitus and masculine identity. Second, we look at higher education, specifically a conservatoire of music, where collective practices of learning shape what it means, and can mean, to learn to be a professional musician. Thirdly, we

explore the music industry, specifically around unique employment, human capital creativities and professional practices of learning.

Case study 1. Secondary education: Bourdieu applied to peer-led learning cultures

It is well documented that boys, particularly working-class boys, view music as a ‘feminised’ subject and opt out of a musical education, when, actually, music arguably ‘provides an ideal medium through which dominant forms of masculinity can be problematised’ (McGregor and Mills 2006: 222). Within the masculinity and anti-school literature,¹ it has been argued that educators must equip boys with the necessary capacities to interrogate gender binaries and how they construct their masculinities (Mac an Ghail 1994: 59). Building on this theoretical work, in this case study, which was conducted in a north-eastern city in England, the researcher intended to access the identity negotiations of young males when actively engaged with the field of extra-curricular peer-led music production. Twelve working-class Year 11 boys were interviewed in May 2011 at a school site with an ACORN² National Percentile Rank of 97, with 78.8 per cent of learners’ family households falling within the ACORN categories typified as ‘struggling, burdened singles or high-rise hardship’. These young men – who were labelled as ‘disinterested learners’ from formal schooling – demonstrated tremendous dedication in a sub-field away from their formal education, their peer-led learning cultures. Drawing upon Bourdieu’s theoretical tools, within this space the boys operationalised capitals in order to cultivate their practices of learning concerning the development of their music skills as MCs and DJs. DJing, the mixing of music on decks, requires tremendous skill and extensive hours of practice to create new musical moments where the DJ both creates and subverts the syncing of beats to create a form of rhythmic confusion. Interlinked with the practices of DJing, MCing involves the use of repeated raps spoken by the boys layered over synchronous and asynchronous beats.

In order to explore the identity work around practices of learning within this learning culture, three key access points were utilised: (1) daily skill-based practices of young DJs/MCs and how these practices were validated within the learning culture; (2) performance and identity in the practices of individual participants – constructed through their habitus and capital in relation to the learning culture; and (3) the practices within the learning culture (sub-field) and their contrast to the field of formal schooling (main field). Analysis across all three access points drew on qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews and observations. In accessing the boys' conception of a 'successful learner', careful attention was paid to how the boys' habitus was significantly altered in relation to peer-led practices of learning in the sub-field. As Grenfell and James (1998) note, 'each subfield will have its own orthodoxy, its own way of doing things, rules, assumptions and beliefs: in sum, its own legitimate means' (p. 20).

Complete details of how the learning cultures functioned in relation to the boys' identity work (and vice versa) are presented in Stahl and Dale (2012, 2013), but can be summarised into three points: (1) When formal education that is hierarchical and focused on high-stakes testing is not a part of the learning culture of music, the 'bad boy' identity enacted in the formal schooling loses much of its potency, as the peer-led learning culture of MCing and DJing was a cathartic and caring social process. (2) Throughout the research it was clear that the boys worked to improve their craft and persevere in the face of failures and frustrations, often teaching each other certain skills. (3) Amongst the boys, creating a powerful musical moment was perceived as symbolic capital, but overall the music making (and learning) appeared to be much more about the practice than the product. In arriving at these key findings, there were certain conceptual challenges, as peer-led learning cultures are complex social spaces of practices through which people learn, and such learning is constructed upon a complex interconnection of field, capital and habitus. In observing the boys as MCs and DJs, Stahl and Dale (2012, 2013) were witness to a variety of behaviours and identities; elements of the peer group were conflated with the learning environment where the boys taught each other demarcated skills.

Through observation it was clear that, as the boys felt successful in the informal learning culture of music production, the ‘bad boy’ identity within the habitus that was present in the formal schooling receded. Within their formal schooling, the working-class boys’ habitus felt disjuncture with this particular field; they did not have what Bourdieu calls an unconscious ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu 1988: 782). However, within the peer-led learning culture the game was altogether different. Within these informal practices of learning, the participants could operationalise capitals and this indicated the boys were at ease with this field. They could operationalise their capitals within this sub-field because the rules, regularities and logics of the learning culture reflected their working-class habitus (Stahl and Dale 2013). Figure 1 illustrates how the learning culture acted as a ‘prism’ through which learners became equipped with different capitals and how the habitus within the learning culture fostered this process.

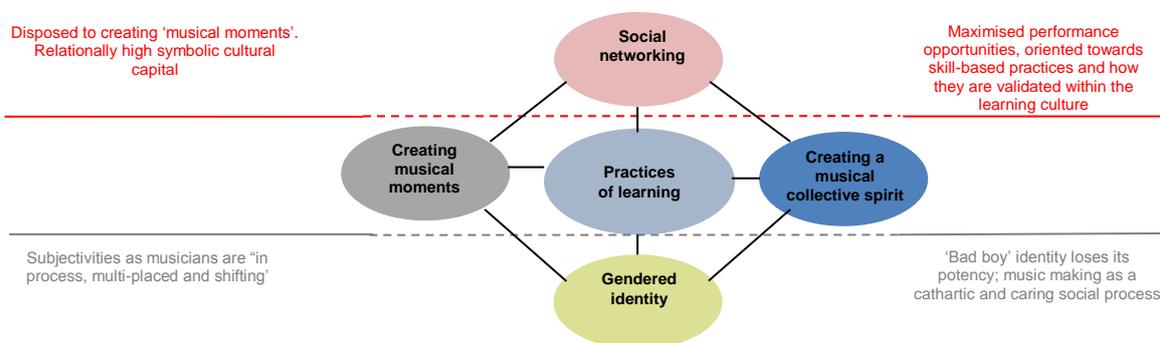


Figure 1. How practices of learning inhere in the site of schools (as evidenced by individual learners/MCs/DJs)

Within the field of peer-led learning culture, there are conceptions of ‘success’; however the research considered these constructions alongside the development of boys’ music skills as valued capitals as they sought to create what the boys called ‘musical moments’. Overwhelmingly, the data showed that the boys considered MCing, and particularly DJing, to be a craft with varying levels of skill that can be developed over time. The creation of quality

music within the field had become a symbolic capital which influenced the boys' habitus.³ While, through a Bourdieusian lens, all products and actions within the field have value and therefore power (Grenfell and James 1998: 20), for the boys accruing power (via awards) was not the ultimate goal as the learning culture was non-hierarchical and the 'musical moments' were temporal and fleeting. The peer-led teaching and learning of the skills of DJing and MCing within the learning culture made conceptions of success manifest in unique ways, and these practices of learning affected the boys' masculine identity.

Thinking relationally using the concepts of habitus, field and capital, the research illustrates how the tools reveal the ways in which individuals become agentic within fields where they feel they have value (Stahl and Dale 2012, 2013). Within the formal institution of the school, the participants completely shut down when they had no interest in a particular aspect of the curriculum. Within the sub-field of MCing/DJing, with its own logic separate from formal schooling, the boys became agentic, their habitus was influenced, and their view of their skill level (as capital) became a learning practice that could be developed.⁴

Case study 2. Higher education: Bourdieu applied to conservatoire practices of learning

Conservatoires of music, particularly in relation to their educational practices, have received relatively little attention in research on music education. This case study sought to understand how practices of learning construct, and are constructed by, individual learners and their positions vis-à-vis the conservatoire. Bourdieu's tools were used to understand practices of learning as an interaction between structure and agency, foregrounding the significance of power relationships and hegemonies that have hitherto been largely unreported. In this short analysis of the study, the ways in which Bourdieu's tools were used in order to inform understanding is summarised with reference to the study's key findings.

In order to understand the practices of learning at the conservatoire, three access points were developed to allow for an empirical understanding to emerge: (1) practices of the institutional field (including organisation, use of space and curricula), as well as the wider fields in which the institution is situated (including higher education and classical music); (2) day-to-day practices of students, teachers and non-teaching staff within this particular conservatoire field; and (3) practices of individual students, constructed through their habitus and capital in relation to the conservatoire field, as they participated in and learned from the conservatoire. Analysis across all three access points, based on qualitative data collected from interviews, observations, participant diaries and documents, resulted in Perkins identifying four intertwined key practices of learning in the conservatoire.

Full details of each of these practices is presented in Perkins (2013a), but they can be summarised as: (1) practices of learning that privilege the capital of specialist performance skills; (2) practices of learning that position social capital, acquired through social networking, as an essential part of learning to be a professional musician; (3) practices of learning that position musical hierarchies as an accepted part of life, with limited spaces for musical stars embodying certain forms of symbolic capital; and (4) practices of learning that construct vocational positioning, orienting different students towards different vocational paths depending on their positions (defined by habitus and capital) within the conservatoire.

In arriving at these four key features, a conceptual challenge came into view: the dilemma of grasping ‘practice’ sufficiently without stripping away the complexity that is at its core. Indeed, one of the conceptual problems – and great possibilities – of working with the notion of learning cultures, or practices of learning, is that they are not an easily observable phenomenon. There is no one entity, behaviour or structure that *is* a particular set of practices of learning, yet the notion of an institution having a learning culture is generally accepted. Learning cultures are not a *single* concept, and nor are they *reified*: ‘learning cultures, like creativities, have many different manifestations and can exist at many different levels’ (James

and Biesta 2007: 39). This makes a learning culture very ‘slippery’ to work with, bringing with it a need for *relational* thinking and detailed theoretical as well as evidence-based enquiry. The four key features that arose from the research, then, are necessarily reductionist summaries of a complex social practice; they are experienced differently for each participant, shift and change over time, and come into focus with different levels of strength at different times and for different people.

It is here, in particular, that Bourdieu’s tools opened up new analytical possibilities. By using habitus and capital to understand how individual students were positioned in relation to the conservatoire field, it became possible to understand the conservatoire’s practices of learning as more relational than static (see also Perkins 2013b). Figure 2 illustrates how the key practices of learning act as a prism through which different learners, with different capital and habitus, interact in different ways.

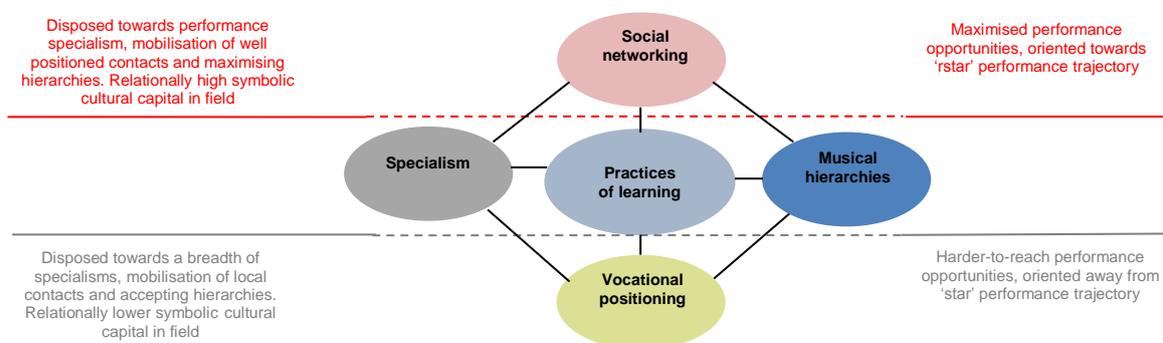


Figure 2. How practices of learning inhere in the site of the conservatoire (as evidenced by individual learners)

Naturally, this figure presents a further reduced account of social reality. Yet, its purpose is to demonstrate that the conservatoire’s practices of learning do not operate in a vacuum. Rather, as Bourdieu (1979) explains, an agent’s capital and habitus will always interact with any field in order to produce practice. As exemplars, the different pathways indicated in Figure 2

represent notional learners as they participate in (and construct) the conservatoire's practices of learning, demonstrating that their habitus and capital (and thus positioning) serve to construct potentially different learning experiences within a set of core institutional practices. There will, of course, be many other possible interactions, but the point is that practices of learning can be said to transform, or potentially transform, learners in different ways, depending at least in part on their position in relation to the field of the conservatoire.

In this particular case study, such transformation appears to centre on the process of becoming a musician. Mindful that the notion of habitus 'includes individual aspects of identity, as well as collective predispositions or habits' (Colley et al. 2003: 487), we can see both the individual and the collective captured in Figure 2. There are a number of possibilities that could be added to the figure, each of which would capture different individuals' capitals and habitus, and each of which would take a different route through the prism of the practices of learning. Nonetheless, there are also collective dispositions that construct notions of the 'right person' for a job in music (or vocational habitus; see Colley et al. 2003) as defined by the practices at play in this conservatoire at the time of fieldwork. These dispositions appeared to include a focus on the development of performing specialism, the mobilisation of 'select' contact networks, and the demonstration of high levels of particular forms of symbolic cultural capital (Perkins 2013a). Learners with these dispositions seemed to have some dominance within the practices of learning, 'fitting' with the logic of the conservatoire field and orienting towards vocational positions endowed with symbolic cultural capital. Bourdieu's tools facilitated analysis of this dance between individual and collective, allowing for an understanding of the conservatoire field that illuminated how institutional practices can impact upon and construct individual learning practices.

Case study 3. Industry education: Bourdieu applied to professional practices of learning

The ‘real world’ situations and practices of people working in the music industry and their employment and professional learning cultures, as evidenced in the creative industries, have been well documented (Hartley 2005; McKinlay and Smith 2009). However, whether cultural practitioners such as musicians position themselves in the field as games sound designers, contemporary music art composers, DJs or popular singer-songwriters, the social practices through which different types of musical creativities are recognised and communicated (that is, understood within the professional learning cultures) remain under-researched. The research (Burnard 2012) sought to understand: (1) the taken-for-granted internalised dispositions that operate in the personal histories (habitus) and social scripting/positioning (capital) of professional musicians; (2) the plurality of practices and market positioning in the subjective vocations they present; and (3) how the practices are manifested in the social institutions, industry markets and industry (field) spaces of potential and active forces of professional learning (Reay 1995: 369).

In order to operationalise or ‘put to use’ the concept of practice as a form of capital, as played out in fields of struggle, with pluralities inscribed by creativities in music and their orientations in diverse professional practices of learning (such as the fields of power, social spaces and values associated with a dance club, a commercial video game corporation or a contemporary fine arts institution), a qualitative methodology involving semi-structured interviews was employed. Fifty industry-based practitioners/musicians were interviewed 2–3 times over a period of six months. Three ‘access points’ were developed to allow for an empirical understanding to emerge: (1) practices that characterise wider and overlapping fields of the creative industry; (2) practices that characterise success in the field; and (3) practices that are integral to identity or that identify and shape day-to-day positions held by professional musicians in their struggle to accumulate and monopolise different kinds of capital.

The musicians were aged between 22 and 62 years and have reputations as being successful and creative in their respective industries. The sampling criteria included: (1) being employed as professionals in corporate settings, or cultural or higher degree institutions; (2) acceptance and recognition (20 of them have their music performed regularly); and (3) negotiating multiple selves that shift between creator, performer and musician.

This study involved a diversity of professional dispositions within specific fields and field practices. The musicians maximised their potential and strength by drawing on institutional specialisation, making use of a potent mix of cultural capitals as performance artists, authors, entrepreneurs, managers, designers, cultural producers, musicologists, culture bearers, academics and teachers; they also made use of their positional status. Within the music industry there are distinctive yet overlapping musical networks within which music is created, performed and recorded. These networks include the army of stakeholders and brokers that work in the record industry with producers, sound engineers, recording companies, managers, lawyers and the like.⁵

A key finding in this study, and what Toynbee (2000) describes as ‘the most salient characteristic of the music industry’ (p. 3) concerns the accumulation of capital (Burnard 2012). For an originals band, for example, it was found that cultural capital encompasses a broad array of participation in high-status activities: building a ‘catalogue’ of widely distributed innovative albums, acquiring status through high-volume record sales, successful world tours, and entrepreneurship in image building – a form of collective creativity.

The notion of ‘practice’ is particularly relevant here. Bourdieu looked at institutionalised social practices like marriage and education before he turned his attention to creative practices. His interest in what he calls ‘the field of cultural production’ led him to analyse the relationship between ways of understanding the world, the principles behind creative works

that are made in a particular place and time and the meanings people attach to what he calls ‘practices of distinction’. Figure 3 illustrates how the key features of professional musicians’ practices can be simultaneously positioned in multiple fields – with different capital and habitus – to include a plurality of differently valued and newly recognised creativities in different ways.

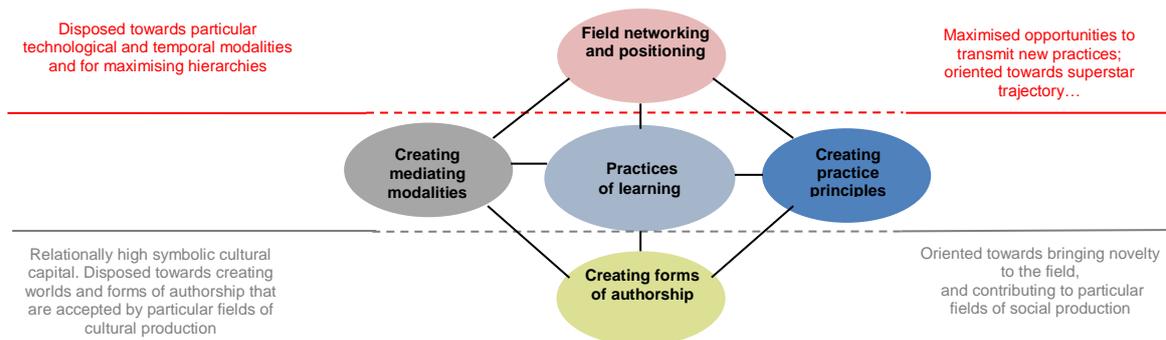


Figure 3. How practices of learning inhere in sites of the music industry (as evidenced by individual professionals)

Full details of these and other features are presented in Burnard (2012) and can be summarised in three points: (1) A myriad of dimensions are expressed in the characterisations of musical creativity. (2) All of the practitioners engage in practices that exploit entrepreneurial opportunities and principles of innovation as cultural capital. (3) A plurality of creativities are inscribed in the practices of musicians – constructed through their habitus, capital and field. These include: improvisation and compositional modalities of creativity; entrepreneurial, collaborative and collective creativities; forms of user creativities that are valued for the social attribution of meaning given by consumers; and the creative power of collaboration.

Discussion

We have focused on how we separately put Bourdieu’s conceptual tools and logic of practice

‘to work’ in order to empirically understand practices of learning in three different musical sites. In our research Bourdieu’s tools preserve the fundamental unity in understanding human practice. In keeping with Bourdieu, we consider the interconnectedness of his concepts, which underpins our analysis and forces us to think relationally. In considering the ‘ensemble of pedagogic relations, setting, mode, space’ (Noble 2017: 13) and how this influenced practices of learning, the tools sensitise us to the role power plays in ‘modes of inculcation’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: 46) and how our agents, the musicians, come to represent themselves. Before we present a meta-analysis of Bourdieu’s tools in use, we present a synthesis of our main findings. Practices of learning:

- exist in diverse forms characteristic of differences and similarities across sites.
- are always in flux and depend on the habitus of the musicians.
- reside in schooling and higher education and act as habituations and routine depending on the habitus of the musicians.
- inhere in the music industry as repertoires that are boundary making and boundary defining such as forms of authorship, each with their own set and sense of capitals and encounters within networks.

Having provided an account of our findings regarding practices of learning in each case study, we now turn our attention to reflecting upon and critiquing our use of Bourdieu’s tools. In doing so, we do not regard practice and theorising as separate activities; as researchers we attempt to understand the meaning or nature of particular human experience within the practices of music and music education. Specifically, through the discussion we address how using Bourdieu’s tools (1) extended our understanding of the central notion of practices of learning, and (2) proved productive, or not, to think with.

Using Bourdieu’s tools to extend our understanding of practices of learning

Through comparisons between the case studies using Bourdieu's tools, we see how practice emerged as a complex intersection which allowed multiple identities to be treated as fluid rather than fixed. Musicians must negotiate site-specific practices, which may or may not require them also to take up new identities or bring different dispositions in the habitus to the fore. Crucially, in theorising practice – as a modality – we see how it speaks to the debate about structure and agency. In our research, we found that some practices produce and perpetuate structure in ways that treat power as unilateral and absolute rather than relational whilst others favour and foreground agency. In Case Study 1, the site of secondary education, practices of learning were observed and analysed as collective and non-hierarchical. The learning culture altered the boys' conception of their learner identity, which, in turn, altered the field of masculinity which reworked the boys' habitus. Therefore, arguably, the learning cultures of MCs/DJs provided a space where two overlapping fields (music production and masculinity) were influenced. However, in the conservatoire practices of learning can be viewed as a complex intersection between field, habitus and capital, where Burnard emphasises that practices of learning are not static, but are constructed differently according to individual (and collective) learners' positions in the conservatoire field. Whereas, in Case Study 3, the industry, we see practices of learning as a proliferation of forms of authorship, involving diverse temporal and technological modalities.

Through a comparative inductive analytical approach, we also see that fields are often where struggles or manoeuvres are enacted to secure specific resources or stakes (such as the legitimacy and status of record sales, creating a musical moment, awards or gigs). Such struggles give habitus a dynamic quality within the social conditions of each case study; however, this is more apparent in some practices than others, as habitus is formed in a variety of relations that intersect in and extend to other parts of the social field. The position in the field, which defines practices of learning in relation to habitus, and which enables a set of dispositions to be viewed in certain ways, arises from the adjustment of the individual to

social positioning. Therefore, in our analysis of practice, Bourdieu's tools enable us to think critically how certain values, tastes and consumption patterns are rewarded within the educational system and industry. Furthermore, how aspirations are exercised in practice and how success is manifested, defined and coded is essential to our understanding of how appropriate relationships and discourses within the field render practices as actions that are consistent with one another and replicable in new situations. Practice, used in each case study, is therefore a rich and generative conceptual tool, used to scrutinise musical sites in which musicians both shape and are shaped by complex social and cultural milieus. It assists us in the analysis as it keeps our focus on action while also attempting to fully account for the power relations that enable and constrain what musicians can and cannot do in their respective sites. In thinking with Bourdieu, practice cannot, therefore, be discussed as separate from cultural and social immersion in a particular musical site.

Critiquing our use of Bourdieu's tools

One of the most problematic methodological dilemmas that emerged across the studies was the difficulty that comes from reductive categories for distinguishing one individual from another. As with other work on music making as a cultural practice (Bennett 2001), attempting to understand musicians' learning as individualistic, or one thing or another, is as problematic as simply labelling Duke Ellington's practice as 'composing' and labelling him 'a composer' – a Western tradition which promotes the office of the composer – as he was also a first-rate jazz pianist, a performer and a big band and orchestral leader. To label him a 'composer' suggests qualitatively distinct and irrelevant connotations. Interestingly, the Bourdieusian concept of practice assists in tackling this dilemma to some extent. What we found particularly helpful was how Bourdieu helped us focus on the way individuals developed certain dispositions through practices that embodied what was so often accepted as the norms/structures/hegemonies of the wider discourses in which they were situated. Bourdieu's 'tools for thinking' supply an ontological framing that establishes social existence

as never singular, but rather that every individual belongs simultaneously to multiple categories that shift over time. This makes drawing conclusions based on ‘practice’ potentially problematic, as we are dealing with dynamics which are constantly changing.

A crucial point across the case studies was the need for an openness to engage not just with tools which acknowledge ‘structures’ but those that recognise and identify important intersections and offer analyses which are relational, relevant and analytically sound. In our exploration of practice, and how we operationalised the tools in different ways, we recognise the need for an approach in which Bourdieu’s tools are seen as mutually constructing one another rather than simply co-existing and socially constructed in similar ways. However, when we take each tool on its own, we can see how the tool highlighted different aspects of the learning culture and practices of learning.

Field: In Case Study 1, field was used as a tool to determine how music production allowed for the manifestation of diverse musical creativities and new masculine identities as it was a field of success and self-worth. This contrasted greatly with Case Study 2, where the use of field captured the inherently hierarchical structure of the conservatoire and brought into view the dominant positions within the institution’s practices of learning. For Case Study 3, Burnard drew on field to determine how multiple forms of musical creativities are rendered and to enable an understanding of their distinctive features as manifestations of practice.

Habitus: In the first case study, Stahl used habitus as a tool to understand how the young musicians’ identities were influenced by the learning culture, which valued certain capitals, and how identity is reshaped by field. In contrast, in Case Study 2, the music conservatoire, Perkins used habitus to understand how individual learners were positioned in the conservatoire field, and therefore their dispositions towards learning. This contrasted greatly with Burnard who, through operationalising habitus, showed how the disposition of being a professional musician is constructed differently in diverse settings. Habitus also allowed

Burnard to identify the point at which habitus intersects with and is reshaped by the particular field(s) to which professional musicians belong or aspire to or are highly committed to and in which the pluralities comprising success are integral to successful careers.

Capital: Capital, as a tool, was employed in different ways based on each of our conceptions of Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus. In Case Study 1, the configuration of capitals was important but there was a lack of attention to symbolic value. The field, as theorised by Stahl, worked to establish capitals that were focused on the practice of music making and skill building. Whereas, in Case Study 2, Perkins used capital to show the configuration of capitals in order to elicit how some practices are privileged as symbolic within the conservatoire and to bring into view the importance of demonstrable musical 'stardom'. In Case Study 3, Burnard demonstrated how capitals were essential to various critical turning points in professional musicians' careers. The space of possibilities as perceived and valued determined how and when they felt self-worth by having cultural and creative resources, which were exchangeable for and/or seen as capital.

While we have sought to make a contribution, it should be acknowledged that in our comparison of three case studies we applied a top-down (theory-effect) approach using pre-identified categories. It can be argued that such an approach worked well to explain social practice in relation to familiar patterns and structures, but was limited in rendering unknown phenomena visible. As much as we are convinced that Bourdieu's theoretical toolset constitutes an appropriate framework for exploring practice, there are still challenges in its application. Indeed, it should also be acknowledged that Bourdieusian studies have tended to over-rely on the tools of field, habitus and capital while leaving out his many other tools (illusio, doxa, misrecognition, social gravity, social homology/distance, etc) (Adkins, Brosnan, Threadgold 2017). Certainly our own work could be critiqued on the same grounds, and drawing on these underutilised tools would certainly influence how we operationalise dimensions of 'practice' and is worthy of further exploration.

Critical reflections and conclusion

The original questions we posed in this article concerned the use of Bourdieu's tools to enhance our understanding of practices of learning and also the implications of comparative analysis of dimensions of 'practice' across three musical sites, a secondary school, a conservatoire and an industry. Working across three case studies, we have attempted to show how we employed Bourdieu's tools differently. We draw attention to how the application of tools can differ according to the researcher and the research site. The contribution that a comparative approach makes to our work on cultures of music and practices of learning is centred upon our meta-analysis of how Bourdieu's tools are beneficial for academic researchers in reference to their own specific discourse interests (Burnard et al. 2016). We found that there were challenges associated with representations of 'practice.' Such challenges played a pivotal role in our endeavour to understand and document ways of knowing how musicians learn to use their art form to develop human capital, creativities and modes of distinction (Burnard 2016).

We recognise that the 'products of social research can be surprisingly independent of the specific theoretical position that generated them' (Nash 2003: 57). Across each case study, the use of Bourdieu's tools allowed us to see layers of embodied experience within the habitus, but also, through placing the studies beside each other, we could see that we operationalised Bourdieu in different ways. As our participants held onto former aspects of self as new ones were gained through experience with each field, we see that Bourdieu's conception of practice is a rich and generative conceptual tool for soliciting an understanding of how being a musician is premised and understood, and by whom, and what happens as a result. Through the comparative work, we find that practices cannot be seen as somehow separate from the cultural and social immersion in 'the ensemble of pedagogic relations' (Noble 2017: 13) We found that, practices act/function as agents, which are continually modified through their habitus and the capitals they possess and the fields they experience. Furthermore, in order to

understand how individuals are positioned within these learning cultures, we find when Bourdieu's tools are used in concert to explore the intersections and layers we, as researchers, can develop nuanced understanding of musicians' practice.

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Endnotes

¹ 'Anti-school literature' refers to types of literature within the wider 'boys and schooling' discourse which often incorporates a focus on elements of machismo masculinity, laddish behaviour, non-attendance, etc.

² ACORN is the most widely applied geodemographic classification in the UK public sector. Central government departments, including the DfES, Home Office and DCLG, employ ACORN to gain a greater understanding of communities to ensure policies, resources and communications are appropriately targeted. For most local authorities, ACORN delivers an effective means by which to characterise their customers and how they engage with council services.

³ Almost every secondary school participant in the case study regarded the decks as extremely challenging and requiring a high degree of attention to perfect one's individual craft.

⁴ It is in this process, we argue, that the transformative potential of this pedagogy is most apparent. If these boys can be perceived by their peers as successful in an activity that requires perseverance, skill and verbal/linguistic dexterity, perhaps there is an opportunity to re-engage the disaffected in positive ways.

⁵ This is one of a multiplicity of musical networks in which industry-engaged musicians move and which are crucial in rendering musical creativities. Six areas within the field of the music

industry – as dimensions of practice – are described: creating in original bands; creating as singer-songwriters; creating as DJs; composing music; creating live improvised music; and creating interactive audio designs within the gaming environment.

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