

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MUSIC INVOLVEMENT

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Background and Aims

The sociology of music is the study of the role of music in various cultures, and in today's societies many cultures exist side-by-side. The sociology of music applies and develops sociological theories and methodologies to investigate musical behavior and attitudes as social action. This happens in interdisciplinary dialogue with musicology and music education. Since the field is still characterized by confusion and lack of agreement on such basic questions as subject matter and methodology, this symposium will not provide an overview of the sociology of music. Rather, this symposium focuses on sociological perspectives of music referring to ongoing sociological debates about the role of culture and media in modern societies. The maintenance versus the dissolving of traditional social boundaries is addressed. As a result of such debate, music as a cultural activity appears in a new light: Is music just a means of reproducing social inequality in a "class society"? Or is music a means to overstep social boundaries in an "individualized society" where individuals make their choice between sociocultural contexts to which they want to belong or from which they wish to be set apart? Thus the symposium is theoretically and empirically concerned with people's music involvement in social and cultural contexts of mass media, concert hall, and youth cultures.

Main Contribution

The first step will be to shed some light on contemporary sociological perspectives and the implications for research questions of the sociology of music. Music sociological approaches such as Bourdieu's view of culture, Schulze's idea of the new consumer society, the cultural studies approach and the sociology of popular music, the theory of musical self-socialization and identity construction, and the theory of symbolic exclusion are covered theoretically and accompanied by examples of research studies. One main focus will be the social role of music related to the individuals' appropriation of audio visual symbol systems. Appropriate research methods to investigate music involvement are discussed. Thus a framework will be provided within which the contributions of the symposium are located.

Conclusions

The contributions of the symposium are characterized by the twofold perspective that in modern societies the social use of music may serve as both a means of reproduction of social inequality and a means to overstep social boundaries.