

Group survival factors

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Motivation

WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT WOULD ACCOUNT FOR THE SURVIVAL OR PERSISTENCE OF A MUSIC GROUP?

→ relative to the kind of group under investigation

FUNCTIONALIST CONCEPTION (GUALA, 2016)
→ persist as long as they fulfill their function

CONSTITUTIVE RULES (SEARLE, 1995)
→ persistence depends on the satisfaction of their constitutive rules / having "essential origins" and can survive complete turnovers in membership and long periods of inactivity

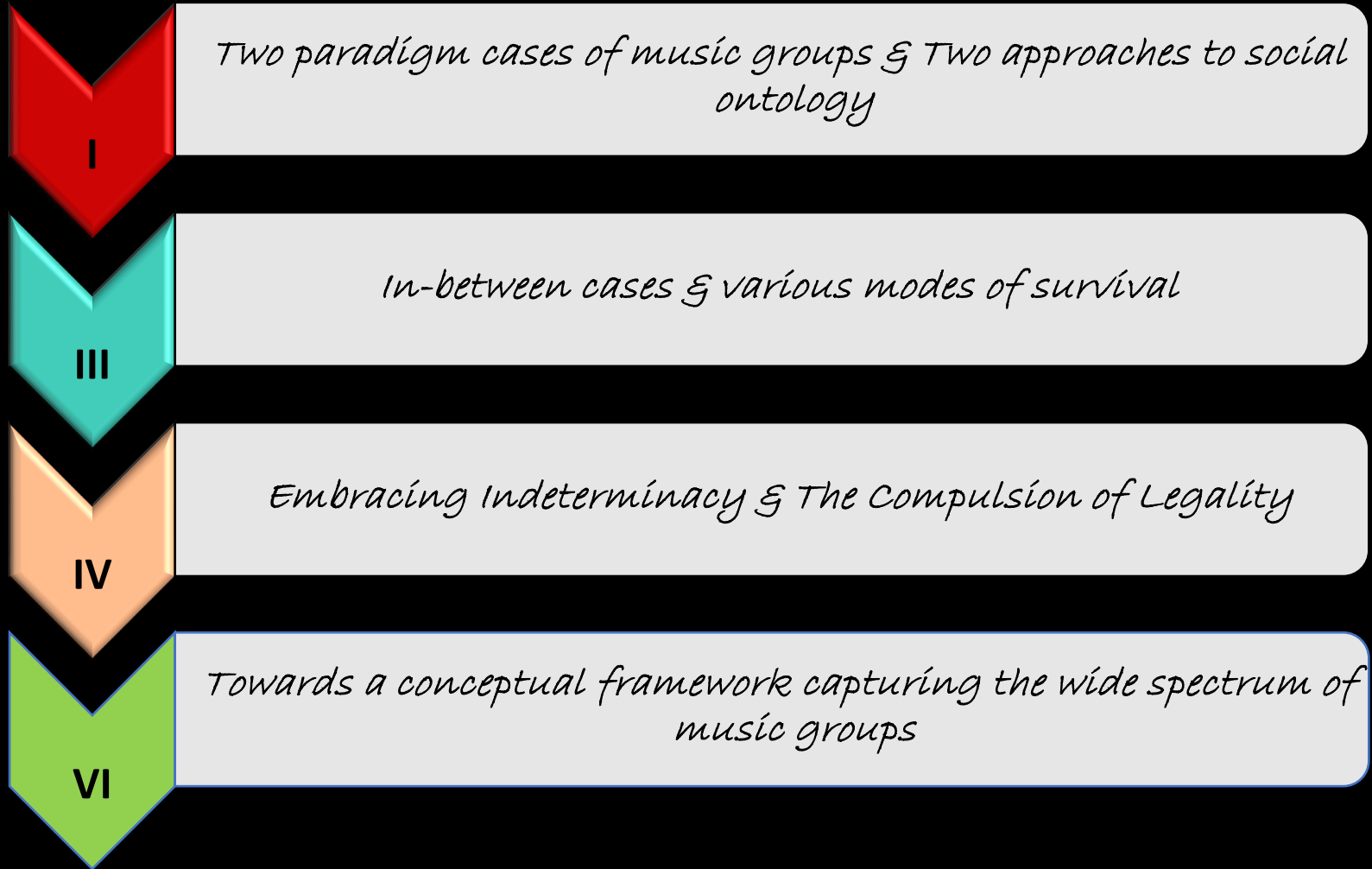
→ THE TWO APPROACHES ARE NOT ENOUGH ←

MAIN CLAIMS

- (1) MODALITIES OF SURVIVAL RESIST BEING SHOEHORND INTO EITHER ONE OF THESE EXEMPLARY CASES
- (2) SOME GROUPS CAN SURVIVE THE TRANSITION FROM ONE KIND OF GROUP TO ANOTHER
- (3) THERE ARE CASES WHERE THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF A GROUP IS INDETERMINATE

*Discuss interesting in-between cases,
we aim providing a taxonomy of music groups that is able to capture a whole spectrum instead of only two idealized cases and show how factors decisive to persistence can vary.*

Overview



slides can be downloaded at

<https://www.denkwerkstatt.berlin/ANNA-STRASSER/TALKS>

INTRO

UNCONTROVERSIAL

- ✓ existence of music groups
- ✓ music-making collectives = music groups
- ✓ members act jointly
- ✓ describe music groups as social or institutional facts

MANY QUESTIONS

- What factors make a music group stable as a group, i.e., ensure its survival?
- How it is possible for music groups to survive the addition, loss, and replacement of members?
- How can we describe the relationship between group members and their group?
- What are the necessary conditions for a music group to emerge and guarantee a group's continued existence?

AIMS

- demonstrate variability regarding constitution conditions, their stability, and also concerning apparently essential features
- explore survival factors & issues concerning the right to use an established group name & legitimate claims about a group's origin

Two paradigm cases of music groups

"K-groups"

- ❖ **K1 Group of street musicians.**
- ❖ **K2 Tufts University faculty committee.**
- ❖ K3 capitalist social classes / K4 middle-income people

GROUP OF STREET MUSICIANS

A group of kind K1 is formed when musicians gather together on the street, standing or sitting relatively close to one another, and start playing. Players can join the group or leave the group, with membership dependent on their being in close proximity to the others, joining in, and being responded to appropriately. A group of this kind terminates when it stops playing for more than a few minutes.



Such informal groups have

- no formal entry or exit conditions— come into existence quite spontaneously
- Such groups “have their members essentially” (Epstein, 2019, p. 4904) in the sense that they cannot persist through profound changes in membership
- And such groups are defined functionally, in the sense that they are performing poised to perform

Epstein, B. (2019)

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Two paradigm cases of music groups



Epstein, B. (2019)

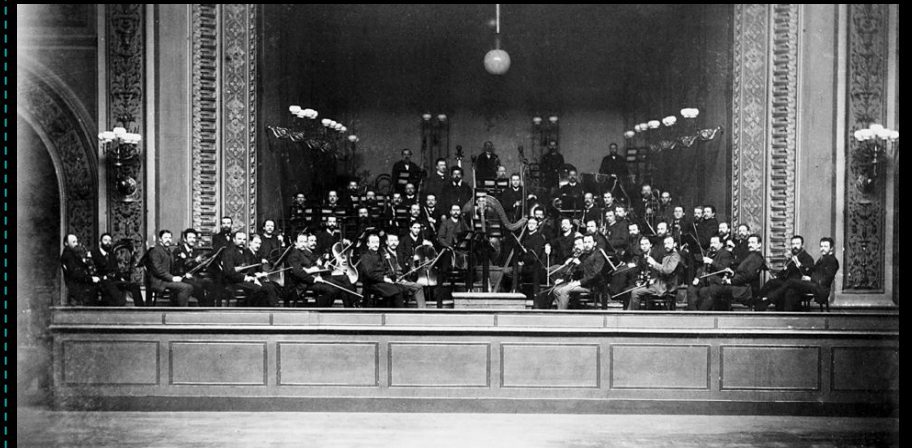
Tufts University elected standing faculty committees.

There are about 15 actual committees instantiating kind K2. Groups of this kind are created by a process of voting and setup by the faculty, with members nominated and voted on by the faculty. The terms are staggered so that each year only a fraction of the members rotate out and are replaced; replacements are nominated by the faculty and voted in by the faculty. The structure and functions of the committees are dynamic over time, with proposed changes made by the dean or faculty members and voted on by the faculty. Sometimes committees perform their intended functions, and sometimes the members are at odds with one another for long stretches of time.

Berliner Philharmoniker. The German orchestra *Berliner Philharmoniker* is a music group instantiating kind K2. Groups of this kind are created by an act of establishment by the founding members, with further orchestra members and conductors hired on. Members are hired through an established process. The structure and functions of the *Berliner Philharmoniker* are dynamic over time, with proposed changes in a rule-governed way. Most of the time, the *Berliner Philharmoniker* perform their intended functions, but sometimes, e.g., due to Covid, they do not give concerts.

Such groups

- have essential origins origins (Epstein, 2019, p. 4904) in the sense that such groups are necessarily formed by an (official) act of establishment specified by constitutive rules/frame principles
- Can survive complete turnovers in membership and long periods of inactivity
- Can survive relatively profound changes in function



Two approaches to social ontology

These two paradigms—street musicians and the Berlin Philharmonic—can be seen as exemplars of two approaches to the characterization of social facts in social ontology: the functionalist approach and the rules-based approach.

Because the rules-based approach sees an institutional fact grounded in those facts that a specified by constitutive rules, something can continue to count as Y even when it no longer perform a function (e.g., Deutsche Mark)

“the equilibrium model will support a functional explanation of the form: ‘the rules exist because they help people solve a coordination problem.’” (2016, 30)

Constitutive rules have the form “X counts as Y in context C” where the X term specifies the conditions something needs to satisfy in order to count as an instance of the social kind Y in a social context C.

We don’t regard these approaches as competing nor do we see them as the ingredients of single, more comprehensive theory. Our view is that the different kinds of social facts are grounded in distinct ways. The functional approach better describes groups like the street musicians and the rules-based approach better describe groups like the Berlin Philharmonic.



Guala, 2016,



Searle, 1995

In-between cases & various modes of survival

group of street musicians



captured by a functionalist conception

Garage bands

- survive periods of inactivity
- not legally incorporated

symphony orchestra



described by constitutive rules

THERE ARE MUSICAL GROUPS THAT DO NOT FIT NEATLY INTO THIS DISTINCTION

→ FUNCTIONS & CONSTITUTIVE RULES DO NOT EXHAUST THE FACTORS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO A GROUP'S SURVIVAL

THERE ARE OTHER FACTORS RELEVANT TO DETERMINING A GROUP'S IDENTITY OVER TIME

OTHER SURVIVAL FACTORS

- (1) self- and other-attribution
- (2) structure
- (3) changes in line-up
- (4) performance characteristics

SELF-ATTRIBUTION

BY THE RELEVANT PERFORMERS IS FACTOR OF WHETHER OR NOT TWO GROUPS, X AT T1 AND Y AT T2, QUALIFY AS THE SAME GROUP

Do the performers see themselves as an enduring group?

- can capture cases a functionalist conception cannot capture
 - seeing themselves as a part of something that continues to exist even when they stop playing
- can capture cases where other factors, such as performance & line-up might have changed dramatically
 - many bands can look back on a long history, even if they don't sound like they did in their early days or even if their members change in dramatic ways
- might license mutual obligations
 - might give reasons to expect each other to attend regularly and may also entitle them to rebuke each other when that expectation is violated

NAMING

- an important indication that performers see themselves as the same group over time
- but by no means necessary
 - e.g., the members of the *Rolling Stones* saw themselves as a band before they had named themselves

self-attribution is not always the decisive factor

→ external attribution

groups that are formed by casting

- *Back Street Boys & Take That* were created (casted) by a record company
- *No Angels* resulted from a casting show in which a jury and public co-determined its composition.

ATTRIBUTIONS MAY BE A HIGHLY RELEVANT SURVIVAL FACTORS COMPARED TO OTHER FACTORS

STRUCTURE

FACTOR OF WHETHER OR NOT TWO GROUPS, X AT T1 AND Y AT T2, QUALIFY AS THE SAME GROUP

- roles certain members are assigned to
 - lyric writer, songwriter, vocalist, lead guitarist, rhythm guitarist, bassist, drummer

→ Katherine Ritchie (2013, 2020)

- describes a class of groups (namely, „Type 1“ or organized groups) as characterized in terms of a network of relations connecting positions or roles (nodes)

closely associated with but distinguishable from its constitutive rules

- characterized by rights & obligations

- satisfying formal or codified conditions

- constitutive rules describe conditions when a band is legally recognized as an LLC

- BUT not all role ascriptions are associated with constitutive rules (no formal conditions)

- no formal procedures to become a band member

closely related to but distinguishable from function

- typically guided by a sense of the group's function

BUT a group can

- have the same function while changing its structure (companies reorganize)
- maintain its structure while changing its function (a faculty committee can be given a new charge)

example

Continuity of structure → group's persistence

If the *Berliner Philharmoniker* = orchestra (a large instrumental ensemble), THEN a “reorganization” to the size of a quartet = “termination”.

STRUCTURE MAY BE THE LEAST SIGNIFICANT SURVIVAL FACTOR COMPARED TO OTHER FACTORS

Changes in membership or line-up

PERSISTENCE OF A MUSIC GROUP MAY HAVE A CLOSE RELATION TO THE PERSISTENCE OF ITS MEMBERS

ideal case: all members are continuously part of the group

BUT IDEAL CASE IS HARDLY MET WHEN IT COMES TO BANDS

Revolving Door

- practice of partial exchanges of members

OFTEN

- a single band member serves as a persistent axis around which the music group evolves
 - e.g., Robert Smith & *The Cure* / Trent Reznor & *Nine Inch Nail* / Mani Neumeier & *Guru Guru*

sometimes captured in the name of a music groups

- *Sun Ra Arkestra*, *Ringo Starr and the All-Starr Band*, *Dio*, and *Mike + the Mechanics*.

can lead to difficult situations

- change of the name of the Queen to *Queen + Adam Lambert* after Freddie Mercury's death
 - Apparently, *Queen* can be *Queen* without Mercury, but not with Lambert

EXTREME CASES

- absence of any continuous member since a band's founding.
 - *Yes*'s current line-up includes none of the band's founders, following bassist Chris Squire's death in 2015
 - *Little River Band* has replaced all of its members multiple times.
 - *Iron Butterfly* (cycled through an astonishing 59 changes in membership), *Napalm Death*, *Christian Death*, *Underoath*

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP OR LINE-UP MAY ONLY DESCRIBE HARDLY EXISTING IDEAL CASES

When music groups split

CONTINUITY ACROSS MEMBERSHIP CHANGES IS OFTEN EXPLAINED BY SATISFACTION OF LEGALLY RECOGNIZED CONSTITUTIVE RULES

- most professional bands become LLCs
- rendering it possible for the band to persist across changes in membership or across long periods of inactivity

BUT IS NOT ALWAYS CLEAR WHICH SUCCESSOR OF SPLITTING BANDS HAS THE RIGHT TO SEE ITSELF AS THE CONTINUATION OF THE ORIGINAL BAND.

often

- band member who served as a persistent axis around which the music group evolved is seen as the designated bandleader who may have a privileged right to claim the continuation of the original band
- other decisive factors concerning the formal state of affairs can overwrite this
 - existence of contracts can have an influence on which of the two groups at t2 will qualify as a continuation of the original band

Extremely difficult

- cases where the music group had gone through a complete change of membership
- mind-blowing case of the Little River Band

Performance characteristics

often this factor does not play a role

- e.g., *Beastie Boys* started off as a hardcore punk band & evolved into a rap group

BUT PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS CAN BE AN EXPLICIT PART OF THE IDENTITY OF A MUSIC GROUP

- changes in characteristics can then be grounds for thinking that the band has ceased to persist or would only continue to exist “in name only”
 - e.g., *Partch*: an ensemble that specializes in recreating music and instruments in the very special style of the American maverick composer Harry Partch (1901 – 1974)

What does this mean for cover bands (e.g., revival bands, tribute bands)?

tribute bands – a weak continuation?

- aim for the most authentic musical performance possible
 - try to create the illusion in the audience that they are attending a concert of the original band
- Tribute bands meet conditions that indicate that they could be considered a weak continuation of the original group.

other subtypes of cover bands stand in an interesting relation to the covered groups

- performance of pieces by other bands is usually subject to remuneration

new form of revival bands constituted by AI-powered software

- “new” songs by Nirvana (Grow 2021) & Amy Winehouse (Daly 2021)
 - completing Beethoven’s unfinished 10th symphony (Elgammal 2021)
 - composing chorales in the style of Bach (Hadjeres et al. 2017)
- One might ask oneself whether the artists, had they been alive today, would have grounds to claim ownership of these AI-enabled creations.

Résumé

ADDITIONAL SURVIVAL FACTORS

- (1) self- and other-attribution
- (2) structure
- (3) changes in line-up
- (4) performance characteristics

PLAY A ROLE

because a dichotomic distinction
between functional and constitutive
groups cannot capture all cases

Using a broader set of other survival factors can be helpful in coming to a decision concerning the determination of group identity over time.

Embracing Indeterminacy

Lesson 1: social facts exhibit genuine indeterminacy. There may not always be a fact of the matter as X at t1 and Y at t2 are different instances of a social kind or merely different stages of the same instance of a social kind.

This is a Parfitian thought: “It is not true,” Parfit writes, “that our identity is always determinate” (Parfit, 1986, p. 217). Parfit’s club analogy:

Are two clubs that have identical missions, rules, and members, but are separated by an extended period of inactivity the very same club or exactly similar instances of two clubs?

There would then be no answer to our question. The claim “This is the same club” would be neither true nor false. Though there is no answer to our question, there may be nothing that we do not know. ... This is why we would not be puzzled when we cannot answer the question, “Is this the very same club?” We would not be puzzled because, even without answering this question, we can know everything about what happened. If this is true of some question, I call this question empty. ... When an empty question has no answer, we can decide to give it an answer. (Parfit, 1995, p. 214)



Embracing Indeterminacy

Examples of genuine indeterminacy:

Lady Macbeth speaks of the joy and tenderness of breastfeeding, there must be an answer to the question of how many children she has, despite the fact that this matter is not discussed in Shakespeare's text (Knights, 1947).

There might not be any fact of the matter as to whether bitcoin is legal tender or whether the use of copyrighted texts to train an LLM is an instance of copyright infringement prior to a judge's ruling that it is or is not.

Indeterminacy and music groups:

When Tom Morello, the guitarist from *Rage Against the Machine*, performs as member of the group *Prophets of Rage*, which performs songs that sound similar to those performed by *Rage Against the Machine*, it isn't obvious that the *Prophets of Rage* isn't sufficiently continuous with *Rage Against the Machine*.

Consider the relation between *Jefferson Airplane* (1965-1973), *Jefferson Starship* (1974-1984; Paul Kantner quit), *Starship* (1984-1992), and *Jefferson Starship: The Next Generation* (1992 (Kantner rejoined)-present).

About the transition from *Jefferson Airplane* to *Jefferson Starship*:

Grace Slick: „It was the end of Airplane,“

Paul Kantner: „I wouldn't so much call Jefferson Starship a spinoff as, perhaps, an evolution.“

The Compulsion of Legality

Lesson 2: we should not invariably privilege legalistic anchoring

Little River Band

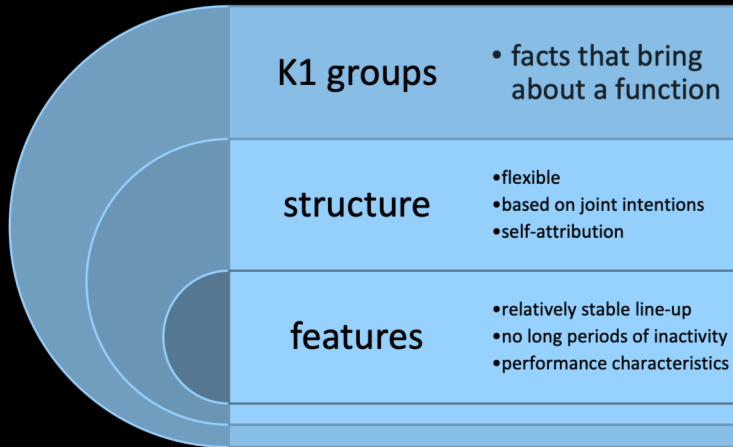


the legal anchoring scheme as authoritative. We also should be wary of this tendency and resist it when possible.

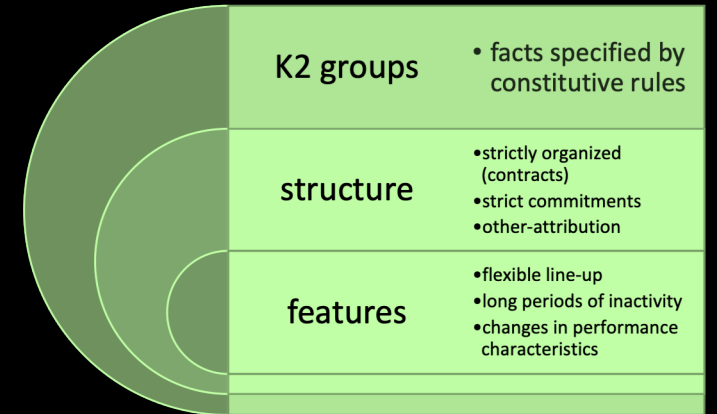
members. (www.littleriverband.com, 2022)

Towards a conceptual framework capturing the wide spectrum of music groups

sometimes
indeterminacy of whether a group at time t_2 should be considered a continuation of a group at time t_1 .



BUT
a taxonomy distinguishing only 2 different kinds of music groups is not sufficient to adequately characterize the large variability of music groups



Unless we expand our taxonomy
– by making it more fine-grained –
there will always be instances of music groups that fall through the conceptual net.

Dealing with in-between cases

Following our analysis of the many additional varieties of features, certain music groups became visible that cannot be described along this taxonomy as they have properties of both K1-groups and K2-groups.

If trade-offs regarding self- and other-attribution, structure, changes in the line-up, and performance characteristics also sum up to features that characterize music groups, many combinations of sets of conditions are conceivable.

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE	PERSISTENCE	ATTRIBUTION		STRUCTURE		MEMBERSHIP		PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS		INACTIVITY	
			self	other	flexible	strict	stable	flexible	stable	flexible	no	yes
idealized cases												
functionalist	Street musicians (K1)	ability to realize their functions	joint intentions		changes possible		relatively stable		relatively stable			
constitutive rules	Berliner Philharmoniker (K2)	satisfaction of constitutive rules		legally incorporated		liable contracts		changes possible		changes possible		
rough assignment of mixed features concerning discussed cases												
	<i>garage bands</i>											
	<i>most bands</i>											
	<i>Jam bands</i>											
	<i>Rolling Stones</i>											
	<i>Back Street Boys, Take That, No Angel</i>											
	<i>Type 1 (Ritchie)</i>								NA	NA		
	<i>Revolving Door Bands*</i>											
	<i>Revolving Door Bands (extreme cases)**</i>											
	<i>Beastie Boys</i>											
	<i>Partch (Just Strings)</i>											

*The Cure, Nine Inch Nail, Guru Guru, Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Noble Five, Sun Ra Arkestra, All-Starr Band, Dio, Mike + the Mechanics)

**Yes, Little River Band, Iron Butterfly, Napalm Death, Christian Death, Underoath

What can we do?

PROPOSING A DISJUNCTIVE CONCEPTUAL SCHEME THAT IS NOT REDUCED TO TWO POSSIBLE SETS OF CONDITIONS

→ capturing a wider spectrum of instances of music groups allowing different sets of qualificatory factors

What does it mean to apply a disjunctive conceptual scheme?

hypothetical conceptual schema capturing a family resemblance of several instances of a phenomenon

Questioning the necessity of co-occurring criteria,
each instance will at least fulfill one of the four criteria

→ represented by a tuple of 4 variables (C1, C2, C3, C4).

→ In order not to complicate the picture, I will not consider gradual changing criteria which would be represented by different weights.

That means in our simplified picture each variable can either have the value 1 or 0.

→ Consequently, the tuple (1,1,1,1) would represent the instance in which all criteria are fulfilled.

Let P^{disjunct} be the set of all tuples captured by a conceptual schema 'at least 1 of 4.' The number of elements of this set results from the possible permutations of the conceivable tuples. It amounts to 15 instances since at least one variable forming a tuple must be greater than 0, which excludes the tuple (0,0,0,0) from the possible permutations ($4^2-1=15$). Assuming that each variable can have different weights (let's say they could be weak, middle or strong) ... then we would have 255 instances.

DISJUNCTIVE CONCEPTUAL SCHEMA
ALLOWING VARYING DEGREES OF
THE CRITERIA

A picture of a disjunctive conceptual scheme

Imagine a dice filled with many little dices!

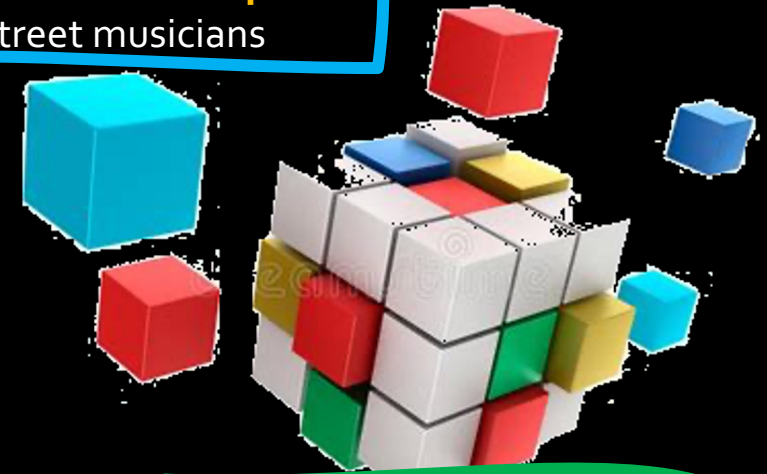
- K1 & K2 groups are each represented by a dice that captures a well-defined instance with a specific set of conditions
- other dices represent other combinations of the described factors
- all dices are connected by something like a family resemblance

→ multi-factorial account

- listing several factors with respect to functions, constitutive rules, self- and other-attributions, structures, changes in the line-up, and performance characteristics
- determining that the appearance of a combination of some of those factors are sufficient to call an observed phenomenon a music group

K1 functional conception

- street musicians



K2 – constitutive rules

- symphony orchestra

ADVANTAGE

- ❖ not all the factors we discussed are necessary conditions
- ❖ they can appear with different weights or degrees of salience

(Ramsey, 1998; Strasser, 2020, 2021)

Although such an approach makes it possible to reconcile seemingly contradictory features under the concept 'music groups,' one needs a minimal joint denominator that clearly demarcates all sets of conditions from that which does not fall under the notion of a music group. In future work, one would have to test which of the many conceivable permutations of sets of conditions should fall under the notion of a music group. A potential demarcation proposal could be to introduce one necessary condition namely that the members of a music group must at least have the disposition to act jointly with each other in such a way as to create something like music. This might be a strategy for how one can capture cases of music groups that undergo a period of not making music.

To clarify which of the many possible permutations of sets of conditions ultimately fall under the notion of music group would go too far in the context of this paper. Even though very different formations can qualify as music groups, we assume that the disposition to act jointly plays an important role. If the disposition to act jointly is relevant in order to determine musicians as group members, future elaborations on music groups could be informed by the debates on joint actions. Possibly, our fine-grained perspective on the varieties of music groups may present the opportunity to suggest a wider spectrum with respect to joint actions reconciling normative and non-normative approaches.

By following the strategy to reconcile appealingly irreconcilable approaches one could question whether normativity should be treated as an either-or question. And consider normativity a phenomenon that can vary in strengths. As the lowest common denominator that ensures that there is a joint action, it would be sufficient to find indications of minimal joint commitment. This would contradict a standard normative approach claiming that joint actions have to qualify themselves by full-fledged commitments throughout the whole course of the action, but it states that joint actions are not free of commitments. By distinguishing full-fledged from minimal commitment, we can, on the one side, do justice to normative approaches by claiming that full-fledged commitments play an essential role in constituting a joint action and consider non-normative intuitions by allowing that the full-fledged commitment may fade out throughout the course of a joint action. Roughly speaking, there are two competing approaches on the table: normative and non-normative approaches. Normative approaches consider the existence of a joint commitment as a necessity (Gilbert). Whereas following a non-normative approach, one can qualify interactions as joint actions, where the initiating joint intention is no longer supported by a joint commitment (Bratman).

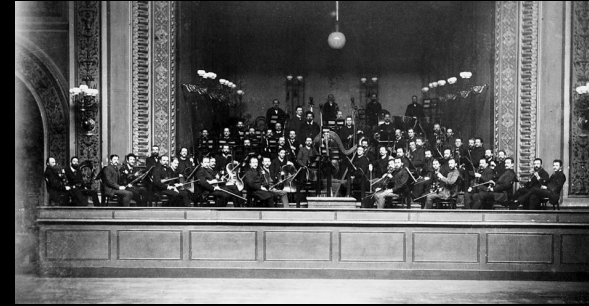
Conclusion

group of street musicians



TWO IDEALLY TYPICAL WAYS OF BEING A MUSIC GROUP

Berliner Philharmoniker



- fleeting & flickering music groups
- only existing when they are playing

- formally constituted & legally anchored music groups
- having “essential origins” and can survive complete turnovers in membership and long periods of inactivity



MANY BANDS WOULD SEEM TO OCCUPY A SPACE IN BETWEEN THESE EXTREME CASES.

- bands continue to exist whether or not they are playing even though existence conditions are not anchored in a legal order
 - different ways of being a music group
 - same groups can persist even across these ways of being a music group. The street musicians might begin to conceive of themselves as a persisting band and retrospectively locate the origins of that band in those jam sessions.

→ number of factors relevant to the determination of whether a music group at t1 and a music group at t2 is the same group,

→ several lessons

1. some music groups vividly illustrate the Parfitian point that not every identity question has an answer.
2. the case of the *Little River Band*, illustrates the dangers of “the compulsion to legality.”
3. a highly disjunctive conceptual scheme that is not reduced to only two possible sets of conditions. Thereby, one can capture a wider spectrum of the ways of being a music group and allow different sets of qualificatory conditions for music groups.