

2 What sort of a practice is eating?

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Introduction

The close of the 20th century witnessed a renewal of interest in theories of practice, an interest sufficient to make possible the rhetorical announcement of the birth of *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (Schatzki *et al.* 2001). The move has had some considerable significance, even if Omar Lizardo (2009: 714) may have overstated the case when proclaiming that ‘It can be said without much danger of exaggeration that practices now play as central a role in sociological thinking as values and normative patterns did during the functionalist period.’

Some foundations had been laid three decades earlier. In a widely cited article about trends in theory in anthropology, published in 1984, Sherry Ortner (1984: 127) observed that ‘a new key symbol of theoretical orientation is emerging, which may be labelled “practice” (or ‘action’ or ‘praxis’). She described its emergence from the intersection of theoretical schools in anthropology formed in the 1960s, and inter-disciplinary Marxism and political economy in the 1970s. The principal authors credited with the development were two sociologists, Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, the anthropologist, Marshall Sahlins and the social theorist, Michel Foucault. A primary common objective was to account for action in a manner that was complementary to the study of systems and structures (Ortner 1984: 147–8). In European sociology, the legacy of structuralism figured strongly in the intellectual context in which the problem of conceptualizing the relation between structure and agency was given priority. The concept of *Praxis* played a central role, and was conceived as a bridging device between equally flawed holist and individualist explanations. Nevertheless, holism was more comprehensively attacked than was individualism; discomfiture with a previously rampant structuralism always threatened that agency might be allowed to dissolve into personal autonomy, a temptation to which many succumbed. In the process, despite the positions adumbrated in works like *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu 1972) and *The Constitution of Society* (Giddens 1984) being seminal for social theory and inspiring empirical studies, the orientation towards the analysis of practice per se palled. It was left to a second generation of advocates to re-centre the concept of practices.

The most distinctive feature of the Second Coming of practice theory, most clearly articulated by Theodore Schatzki (1996, 2002), is its injunction to view practices as the fundamental unit of social scientific analysis.¹ Preferred to individual action – which has dominated economics, psychology and most of micro-sociology in neo-liberal times – practices are proposed as the central scientific object of study and as a means to avoid a collapse into methodological or ontological individualism. (A similar problem simultaneously inspired other innovative sociological approaches; for example, McFall *et al.* (2008) develop a culturalist interpretation of Weber and the works of Foucault and Elias; DeLanda (2006) approaches the issue by way of ‘assemblages’; and Fine (2010) via situated action).² However, how best to examine practices remains controversial. Agreement among advocates of the practice approach is limited (Schatzki *et al.* 2001:2, 2011), although in general all give precedence to practical activity as the means by which people secure their passages through the world thereby emphasising doing over thinking, practical competence over strategic reasoning, mutual intelligibility over personal motivation and body over mind.

In this paper, I want to explore a few of the implications of taking practices as the basic unit of sociological analysis. I am primarily concerned with the methodological issue of how to identify a practice which is to become the object of study, particularly its boundaries. To do so, however, raises ontological issues concerning the substantive characteristics of a practice. In addressing these issues, I draw to some degree on an earlier paper which provided a brief sketch of what difference it might make to the analysis of consumption if a practice-theoretical approach were adopted (Warde 2005). In this earlier article, my initial intention had been to present a schematic account (through a focus on the practice of eating) of the application of second-generation concepts, upon which topic I had conducted extensive empirical research in Britain. However, this proved to be insurmountably difficult, so instead I used the example of motoring, which provided a satisfactory means of illustrating the analytic potential of the theory. The current chapter is largely inspired by a wish to understand why eating proved to be such an intransigent case. The problem, I argue, is that it is a particularly complex type of practice, which I will call a *compound* practice. To develop the case, I return initially to my characterization of the practice of motoring, where I found it helpful to frame my account in terms of two distinctions to be found in the work of Schatzki (1996) and Reckwitz (2002): namely between *praktiken* (practices as entities) and performances, and between integrative and dispersed practices.

The nature of practice

Schatzki (1996) identifies two core features and two generic types of practice. First, he distinguishes practice as an organized nexus and practice as performance.

The first notion is of:

practice as a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings. Examples are cooking practices, voting practices, industrial practices, recreational practices, and correctional practices. To say that the doings and sayings forming a practice constitute a nexus is to say that they are linked in certain ways. Three major avenues of linkage are involved: (1) through understandings, for example, of what to say and do; (2) through explicit rules, principles, precepts and instructions; and (3) through what I will call ‘teleoaffective’ structures embracing ends, projects, tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions and moods.

(Schatzki 1996: 89)

Important to note here is that practices consist of both doing and sayings, suggesting that analysis must be concerned with both practical activity and its representations. Moreover we are given a helpful depiction of the components which form a ‘nexus’, the means through which doings and sayings hang together and can be said to be coordinated.

The second sense, practice as performance, refers to the carrying out of practices, the performing of the doings and sayings which ‘actualizes and sustains practices in the sense of nexuses’ (Schatzki 1996: 90). The reproduction of the nexus requires regular enactment. As Reckwitz describes it:

a practice represents a pattern which can be filled out by a multitude of single and often unique actions reproducing the practice. . . . The single individual – as a bodily and mental agent – then acts as the “carrier” (Träger) of a practice – and, in fact, of many different practices which need not be coordinated with one another. Thus, she or he is not only a carrier of patterns of bodily behaviour, but also of certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring. These conventionalized “mental” activities of understanding, knowing how and desiring are necessary elements and qualities of a practice in which the single individual participates, not qualities of the individual.

(2002: 249–50)

Reckwitz thus appears to offer a stronger interpretation of the organized nexus, implying that practices are in some way coordinated entities, since they require individual carriers to instigate the performances necessary for their existence. Performances presuppose a practice. As Giddens put it:

Human social activities . . . are recursive. That is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves *as* actors.

(1984: 2)

Schatzki also draws a distinction between dispersed practices and integrative practices. ‘Dispersed practices’ (1996: 91–2) appear in many sectors of social life, examples being describing, following rules, explaining and imagining. Their

performance primarily requires understanding; an explanation, for instance, entails understanding of how to carry out an appropriate act of ‘explaining’, an ability to identify explaining when doing it oneself or when someone else does it, and an ability to prompt or respond to an explanation. This is about ‘knowing how to’ do something, a capacity which presupposes a shared and collective practice involving performance in appropriate contexts and mastery of common understandings, which are the grounds for a particular act being recognizable as explaining.

‘Integrative practices’ are ‘the more complex practices found in and constitutive of particular domains of social life’ (1996: 98). Examples include farming practices, cooking practices and business practices. These include, sometimes in specialized forms, dispersed practices, which are part of the components of saying and doing and which allow the understanding of, say, cooking practice, along with the ability to follow the rules governing the practice and its particular ‘teleo-affective structure’. These are examples which, Schatzki suggests, will generally be of most interest to sociologists.

Schatzki (1996: 98–110) offers several criteria for recognizing the existence of integrative practices.³ For present purposes three claims are especially germane. The first is that performances can be read as correct and acceptable, even when innovative (1996: 101–2). The second is the proposition that ‘practices are social by virtue of exhibiting coexistence with indefinitely many other people’ (1996: 105). The third is that some entity exists which is not simply in the minds of individuals: ‘the organization of an integrative practice is out there in performances themselves not in the minds of actors’ (1996: 105). The first two apply to both dispersed and integrative practices, the last only to integrative practices.

Some close attention needs to be paid to what it means for a practice to be ‘organized’. For Schatzki, in the first instance, organization refers to the establishment of a ‘nexus of doing and saying’, comprising understanding, rules and teleo-affective structure, which can be seen to fit together when observed in competent performances. Organization seems primarily to be a matter of shared prescriptions for the coordination of specific performances. The performances are instances which confirm that ‘the organization of an integrative practice is out there in performances themselves’. However, it is not entirely clear what it is ‘out there’ that exhibits the practice’s ‘coexistence with indefinitely many other people’ and thereby allows sharing. Clarification, it seems to me, might come from subjecting the notion of organization to sociological analysis and examining how practices are socially coordinated.

Schatzki is very hesitant about the matter, but I side with Reckwitz in considering it as essential to a sociological version of the theory that we think of practices as *entities*. The distinction between a practice and its performances is especially important because every performance of ‘X’ is singular and particular, yet it is essential to be able to determine whether any such given performance truly belongs to the category of ‘X-ing’. That is not straight-forward, and scholars carrying out empirical investigations frequently find drawing the boundaries around ‘X-ing’ highly problematic.⁴

Performances are not inherently problematic phenomena for sociology. They are stock-in-trade objects of investigation for micro-sociologies of several different types. Practice theories say that they are necessary for the reproduction and development of a practice, that they are things that people and other agents do, that they are not done in the same way by everyone – they are in many instances individual, innovative, improvised, as well as being context-dependent. One felicitous characterization might be to say that while the majority of performances are improvisations within a practice, they are mostly still recognizable as unambiguous examples of that particular practice. More challenging, is the provision of a convincing account of the ontological and epistemological status of the practice that subtends the performances. Some of the things we might want to know include how practices should be characterized in terms of their elements and their arrangements, and also how they should be studied. This, I believe, requires explicit acknowledgement of the fact that practices are established, delimited, reproduced and organized through *social* processes of practical coordination. That, it seems to me, is fundamental to analysis of the nature of practices (*praktiken*).

Eating as a problematic case

Since I would like to develop a theory of eating, it is important to me to know whether it is helpful to understand eating as a practice. If so, is it an integrative or a dispersed practice, and if not how should it be characterized? At first glance eating is a physiological activity associated with ingestion, and in some languages this is its primary meaning. However, it is almost impossible to detach that facet from issues of what is eaten in which social circumstances. Consequently dictionaries describe it as both a physical and a mundane social activity. This may perhaps be a source of my own difficulty in accommodating it with practice theory.

First, maybe eating is too simple an activity to be amenable to analysis in practice theoretical terms. If equated with ingestion, it might be maintained either that it is not learned (since it is instinctive), or not learned consciously. However, eating is otherwise socially complex; it is an elaborate domain of everyday life, an activity not understandable without reference to its social embeddedness. It is hard to give an account of eating without referring to the selecting of foodstuffs, preparing dishes, making social arrangements for meals and aesthetic judgments about taste. Indeed, it is clear that even bodily techniques of food incorporation are culturally variable (e.g. Bourdieu 1984; Elias 1969; Tuan 2005). Coming to grips with that complexity suggests that the problem is not its simplicity.

A second possibility is to consider eating as a dispersed practice. The basic difference between a dispersed and an integrative practice is clear enough at the extremes. A dispersed practice operates in association with, and often through, other integrative practices. To recall, Schatzki's (1996: 91) examples of dispersed practices include 'describing, ordering, following rules, explaining, questioning,

reporting, examining, and imagining'.⁵ A dispersed practice finds its particularity or concreteness when incorporated into others. Most integrative practices will depend upon a great many other dispersed practices (e.g. explaining, describing, reporting, etc.). If explaining and reporting are dispersed practices, they find their particularity as, for instance, sociological explanation or research reporting. An integrative practice is more concrete and more substantial in the sense that it is constituted solely, or even primarily, by shared understandings. Examples of integrative practices are 'farming practices, cooking practices and business practices' (Schatzki 1996: 91). The implication is that their teleo-affective properties (especially shared purposes of engagement in the practice) are definitive and, in the examples offered, the activities involved are most often task-oriented, instrumental activities, which are readily subsumed under the framework. The central example in Schatzki's (2002) demonstration of the applicability of his ontological theory is how the Shaker community organized the production and distribution of herbal medicines. As an integrative practice it was complex, with each performance presupposing competence in several others besides the focal activity of distilling and bottling medicinal compounds. Nevertheless, the purpose or objective of performances was transparent, and success or failure was easy to determine with reference to chemical composition, purity and therapeutic efficacy – not to mention profitability.

Could eating be treated as a dispersed practice, as one which takes concrete form only in relation to other practices, such that eating is a part of medicine, a part of cooking and a part of socializing? It is certainly possible to learn about aspects of healthy eating or good taste indirectly from the disciplines and crafts of medicine, nutrition, etiquette and cookery. However, eating does not appear to be like other typical examples of a dispersed practice (such as describing, questioning or imagining), for it seems to have a bounded and substantial presence which, for instance, permits it to be recorded in time-use studies; one can unambiguously allocate episodes of eating to a period in the day, but one cannot readily do the same for episodes of questioning or imagining. Must eating then be, by default, an integrative practice? Eating as an activity has many of the characteristics of an ideal typical integrated practice: it is a major activity of daily life; it is performed very often; it involves doing and saying; it has a large vocabulary devoted to it; much is written about it; it is routine and habitual in several senses; it involves understandings, procedures, specialised equipment and purposes; and it is instantly recognizable when encountered. However, my doubts arise from making comparisons with both herb manufacture and motor-ing, for it would seem that eating is neither coordinated nor regulated in the same fashion. Most immediately, in Britain at present there exists no shared understanding of what it means to eat well. Something is amiss regarding the normative structuring of the practice, its standards and its subtending motivations. For while there is widespread practical understanding of what it means to eat, there are no shared *standards* governing the activity. Clarification, it seems to me, might come from subjecting the notion of organization to sociological analysis.

Integrative practices as socially coordinated entities

Social organization is a necessary condition of the existence of a practice; one which is accomplished by interested parties. One appeal of considering practices as entities is that processes involved in the social coordination required to steer and regulate performances can be brought to light. Performances become practices through explicit engagements and commitments to the normative specifications of appropriate performances. This is the nub of Schatzki's crucial and justifiable claim that performances of an integrative practice can always be subjected to judgements of correctness and acceptability. The implication is that standards are publically recognizable. One source of public recognition is the fact that criteria of acceptability are very often expressed in, and are core to, processes of explicit formalization and codification. Codification is a matter of specifying the objectives or purposes in view in a domain of activity, and the ways to go about attaining such goals. Nowadays, this is usually achieved through documentation of rules, procedures and standards. Codification of an integrative practice like farming or cooking typically involves many different institutional processes. Often formalization and regulation is the result of the activity of formal organizations. Associations (for example professions, governing bodies of sports, statutory regulatory state agencies, not to mention educational institutions, etc.) play central roles in coordination. They prescribe rules, prohibit or discourage particular forms of behaviour, teach acceptable conduct and present prizes for excellence etc. While these are formal and often authoritative agents and not all integrative practices are constituted or steered by such associations, they are an essential component of the ordering, or organization, of many practices. Indeed, one of the ways in which we might recognise a practice is through the existence of formalized processes, procedures or artefacts directed towards specifying adequate performances.

One common means of formalization, which may facilitate improvement of individual performances in the light of the standards of a practice, is to describe, record and release for public circulation, instructions about how to do something, how to do it better and how to do it well. I have in mind artefacts like rule books, teach yourself primers, instruction manuals for improving performances, guide books, etc. These are sociologically interesting phenomena. Practice manuals give us robust *prima facie* evidence of the existence of a practice. For practices only exist where performances can attain to some standard of excellence and thus, for most individuals, be improved. Manuals also seem to provide solid evidence of the facticity (and common recognition) of the existence of some underlying foundations to correct or acceptable performances of a complex and widely shared practice.

This suggests one operational criterion for deciding whether we are confronting an integrative practice. Though, on the surface perhaps, a trivial hypothesis, I submit that to pass as an integrative practice it should be possible (in principle) for an activity to be included in the 'Teach Yourself' series!⁶ Teach Yourself books have a number of defining characteristics:

- They usually offer a simple or preliminary account of content or relevant know-how, presented in terms of rules or facts, in a manner suitable for novices to fashion and improve performance.⁷ Note that the possibility of improvement indicates that performances can be changed and this implies that changing performances may contribute not only to the reproduction but also to the evolution of the practice.
- They outline the nature of and the means to acquire competence to deliver performances which would be recognized as adequate when relayed to a competent audience.
- They present the activity as *praktik*, that is, as a coordinated entity, with shared norms of performance.

The paradox of formalization

Exactly what it is that is ‘out there’ is critical to explaining how (some) practices are coordinated. It is interesting that this is not often observed in accounts which apply a theory of practice to micro-sociological analysis, perhaps because such a rule of thumb may initially appear paradoxical. The paradox of the process of codification is, of course, that competent practitioners do not perform ‘by the book’, by following rules, or by reference to a manual. Yet codification and formalization of a practice is normal, even routine. Collins (2010) astutely observes that the reason why tacit knowledge has attracted so much attention in recent years is that since the onset of modernity in Europe, societies have, through countless exercises in rationalization, attempted to make all knowledge explicit. Critically, though, this does not entail that performances will be uniform or correct imitations. The components (‘out there’) of the practice are evidence for particular activities having been developed into practices, but it cannot be assumed that manuals are much used in order to make decisions or plan courses of action or intervention. Codification of a practice may have relatively little *direct* effect on actual performances. That, however, does not render formalization irrelevant and, in the case of eating, it helps to pinpoint the nature of the practice.

Eating as a compound practice

Perhaps, therefore, a different formulation is required, which acknowledges that practices are shaped by the manner of their formalization; with consequences, especially, for the setting of standards of performance. Thus eating, except when viewed from the perspective of simple ingestion, might most plausibly be described not as part of another practice itself, but as drawing upon several integrative practices.⁸ Eating, as Britons currently know it, presupposes the intersection of at least four integrative practices: the supplying of food, cooking, the organization of meal occasions and aesthetic judgments of taste. These are formalized in terms of nutrition, cooking, etiquette and gastronomy. Eating might therefore be seen as an especially complex practice. Conceived as an entity, one

option would be to conceptualize it as emergent from a number of these other integrative practices. Even better, perhaps, would be to treat it as a composite or *compound* practice with multiple organizational underpinnings. Performances of eating are, in the latter view, a complex corollary of the intersection of four, relatively autonomous integrative practices.

The existence of four component practices probably makes eating difficult to coordinate at the level of both individual performance and collective institution. Consequently, eating performances have a tendency to be socially weakly organized, and even disorganized. Each of the component integrative practices has its own logic, and its own different coordinating agents. By comparison with motoring, eating is both weakly regulated and weakly coordinated. Regulations and organizations strongly define motoring, its standards, its justifications and its conditions for flourishing as a practice. Driving an automobile is founded upon an enforceable legal framework of acceptable behaviour. It is taught commercially in schools of motoring and competence is tested and licensed by the state. The infrastructure of road systems and traffic signs powerfully channels performance. Organizations of the state, in negotiation with the motoring lobby (automobile associations, guilds of truck drivers, etc.), produce a working consensus about acceptable parameters of the activity. Although there are different styles of driving, few motorists flout the norms of traffic management; norm and normality are in close alignment. Eating, by contrast, is more loosely framed; more a matter of convention than authoritative regulation, neither formally taught nor accredited, occurring mostly in private, not requiring constant and second-by-second coordination with strangers and not (despite social movements and consumer bodies) subject to direction and control by powerful organizations of practitioners or regulatory agencies. Although driving styles vary, there is a fair level of consensus about what it means to be a good driver. What it means to eat well is much less clear.

Arguably, the current disorganization of eating is historically specific. Its component integrative practices have evolved over many decades, even centuries, but have come together sufficiently for eating to be recognizable 'out there' in performances. In some circumstances, they come together to constitute an entity, which is socially coordinated in such a manner that an organized nexus can be identified. But at other times and in other places, coordination is weak. There are certainly historical and regional variations in the ways that these four integrative practices are put together. One instance of a high level of social coordination is the case of France, where until recently there were formal, institutional, intellectual and artefactual modes for specifying how these component activities should be organized and arranged in some authoritative manner; a combination of regional produce (*terroir*), French cuisine (cooking), the bourgeois family meal and an intellectual and sensual interest in eating and taste codified as gastronomy (Ferguson 2004; Trubek 2000; Warde 2009). By contrast, in the UK (now and in the past) eating is a weakly coordinated practice. For instance, food supply is mostly coordinated by supermarkets, with some government regulation, and some effects from contestation by social movements for

safe and healthy food. Supermarkets make for a fissiparous domain, driven by selling not eating; major suppliers do not care what people eat, but rather aim only to provide customers with choices. Meals have, in the past, provided a strong temporal and social structuring to eating; but while etiquette, manners and rules about companionship and regular mealtimes may once have held sway, they are currently often flexible and informal. Moreover, although elements of a system for the judgment of taste may have emerged recently as a function particularly of the expansion of eating out (Warde 2009), the terms for comparison of objectives and standards, never prominent in Britain, are not yet widely established. Only cooking, despite having several agencies at work affecting its formalization, *inter alia* recipe books, educational institutions and the celebrity chef system, is relatively highly coordinated as a practice. Generally speaking, however, because these integrative practices have developed at different speeds and in relation to different logics, they are weakly coordinated.

One corollary of these observations might be to investigate the effectiveness and configuration of agencies specifically seeking to promote co-ordination. There are few agencies operating in the UK that might accomplish what the literate tradition of gastronomy achieved in France (Ferguson 2004). Perhaps the Slow Food Movement could be taken as a latter day attempt to frame the constituent components into a coherent compound practice of eating. It seeks to influence the supply of materials, cooking techniques, temporal rhythms and convivial eating, in light of an intellectual justification for reform of the eating habits associated with fast food and industrial farming (Petrini 2001). A more prosaic and mundane form of coordination is orchestrated by the catering trades, which create a partly integrated system of supply, preparation, social format and aesthetic standards. This is institutionalised through restaurant guides, celebrity chefs, the wholesale trade and innovation in relation to the combination and presentation of food. As a consequence, eating out tends to have greater coherence (see Warde 2004) than domestic practice.

In Schatzki's terms, eating is not an integrative practice, though it may become so in certain circumstances. The current structure of eating, and other similar practices, suggests that another concept is needed. To be an integrative practice, an activity requires appropriate social supports and sustenance, social coordination and organization. An established practice is an historical product, even an achievement (*cf.* MacIntyre 1985). From one perspective, compound practices may be considered as failed, or not yet worked up, integrative practices. The several integrative practices that underpin eating are the effect of groups of practitioners usurping elements of what was once a more general field of activity and formalizing understanding, procedures and commitment to fashion a more specialized integrative practice. This leads towards a model of competition and contestation, and perhaps recommends the concept of social fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Martin 2011). Certainly, capturing the dynamics of the process will be difficult if the institutionalized properties associated with the social regulation and coordination of practices are neglected.

Conclusions

Eating in the UK and, possibly increasingly across the Western world, is a weakly organized and weakly regulated practice. It is subject to the vagaries of the process of competition between several better focused and more tightly organized practices, and it is vulnerable to disorganization. This may be taken as grounds for coining a new concept to better describe complex and heteronomous practices like eating. Interventions to socially coordinate practices may gel poorly with the organized nexus made manifest in performances of that practice. In line with the fundamental axiom that performances and practices stand in a recursive relationship to one another, it may therefore be best to consider contemporary eating as an example of a compound practice. That is to say, the practice is recognizable through its performances, but judgment of their correctness (their conformity with standards) cannot be made with reference to a single integrative practice. The normative forces governing eating are divergent in their injunctions, even mutually contradictory. It seems likely that other major domains of everyday life, such as those identified in time diaries (travelling, recreation, working, civic participation, etc.) for instance, will demonstrate similar properties when subjected to analysis from a practice-theoretic perspective.

Irrespective of whether the concept of compound practice has merit, it is important to stress that the organization of practices, in Schatzki's sense, is itself the outcome of contestation between social groups over the right to define the standards and procedures which prevail in a given period. The complicating feature of eating is that there are several integrative practices that claim jurisdiction over eating performances. The doctrine of modern nutrition proposes different standards to those of aesthetic and lifestyle movements concerned with taste, and also to those of advocates of the valuable affective qualities of the family meal. Thus, in the example of Britain, particularly because it lacks a tradition of gastronomy, the absence of binding formal rules or handbooks teaching the art of eating has tended to result in weakly coordinated performances.

Second, a better understanding of the nature of the intersections between practices is essential. By addressing a rather troublesome example, I have (in this chapter) merely scratched the surface. Mutual intersection is a vital part of the explanation of the dynamics of practices. The existence of compound practices is a function of the dynamics of practice formation. Practices are not given, but are fabricated and consolidated in cultural contexts. Forces at work operate to turn compound practices into integrative ones and vice versa. We should consider more carefully how practices are socially and purposefully coordinated and what difference that may make to their mutability.

Third, formalization and codification are important commonplace features of practices. They provide evidence for the existence of a practice and also valuable data for studying understanding, detecting innovation and identifying authority. Encyclopaedias, self-help, teach yourself, recipe and guide books, etc. are artefacts which play an important part in the way practices operate and are coordinated, and they should be understood in the context of extensive and diversified processes of

intermediation. As a consequence, practices are more or less tightly organized and coordinated. Strong coordination occurs in circumstances where instrumental production is involved, as with handicrafts or manufacture, and perhaps where there are clubs or professional associations of practitioners who recognize and covet the valuable resources (symbolic and material) at stake, especially if there are enforceable penalties for poor performance. *Per contra*, weak coordination is likely to occur in non-production and non-instrumental activities such as those associated with consumption, especially where activities are of low symbolic value or where component practices are themselves strongly but independently coordinated.

Notes

- 1 Postill (2010) identifies three phases in the development of the modern theory of practice, the first associated with Bourdieu and Giddens, a second with Schatzki, and the third with a range of attempts at the empirical application of the theory.
- 2 At the same time, there seems to have been a revival of interest in various forms of pragmatism, including pragmatist philosophy as a foundation for social science and sociological explanation (e.g. Kilpinen 2000; Baert 2005; Gross 2009; Martin 2011).
- 3 Few *definitions* of practices are directly helpful, but Schatzki (1996) offers a number of criteria by means of which we might identify such:
 - Performances can be read as correct, acceptable or innovative (pp. 101–2).
 - Performance ‘expresses components of that practice’s organization’ (p. 104).
 - People have, and share, words denoting the activity; practices (or performances?) are social by virtue of exhibiting ‘coexistence with indefinitely many other people’ (p. 105).
 - A practice is more than the sum of individual doings and sayings involved.
 - Some entity exists which is not simply in the minds of individuals: ‘the organization of an integrative practice is out there in performances themselves not in the minds of actors’ (p. 105).
 - Performances are mutually intelligible among people who are exposed to the same activity as part of the same culture.
- 4 For example, several presentations at the 2011 European Sociological Association Conference, Research Network 5 ‘Sociology of consumption’, Geneva, devoted considerable attention to this difficulty.
- 5 The dispersed practice of X-ing is a set of doings and sayings linked primarily, usually exclusively, by the understanding of X-ing. This understanding, in turn, normally has three components: (1) the ability to carry out acts of X-ing (e.g. describing, ordering, questioning), (2) the ability to identify and attribute X-ings, in both one’s own and other’s cases, and (3) the ability to prompt or respond to X-ings
(Schatzki 1996: 91).
- 6 ‘Teach Yourself’ books being sold by Amazon at 6 March 2009 include: Weight Control through Diet and Exercise, Public Speaking, Book Keeping, Planets (part of a series Teach Yourself Science), Gaelic, Arabic, New Era Shorthand, Poker, Microsoft Office 2007, Anthropology, Humanism, Handwriting; Language instruction has been the topic of the most popular and numerous of the books.
- 7 They tend to be linear and not to present alternative ways of doing or judging; advice is thus typically not open to contestation, though this may be truer of older manuals than contemporary ones.
- 8 Eating, of course, draws also on many dispersed practices like remembering, reporting, seeing, tasting, imagining, etc.

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