The social and applied psychology of engagement in music piracy

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Abstract

The chapter adopts a broad approach, situating music piracy in a wider context of how and why people listen to and engage with music, given that questions concerning music piracy engagement hinges on understanding why people listen to music in the first place. Technology has changed how we choose and listen to music, and recent music psychology research explores the cultural as well as commercial impact of the digital revolution on contemporary music listening practices. Working from a social psychological perspective, this chapter provides an overview of why individuals choose to engage in music piracy, encompassing a discussion concerning the personality and individual differences of so-called music pirates. Acknowledging the wide-reaching impact of the digital revolution and music piracy on music listening practices, this chapter discusses the impact on the live music sector as well as the emerging omnipresence of streaming services. Discussion follows which unpacks the different functions which particular music formats satisfy, working from recent empirical data; the implications of which pertain to why people choose one format over another, as well as whether they choose to pay for music or not. Lastly, the chapter concludes by proposing directions for future research based on the findings from recent empirical work.
Introduction

The only way to experience music in earlier centuries was to experience it live. However, the new technologies of the twenty-first century are influencing the ways in which people are able to experience and interact with music (Avdeeff, 2012; Nill & Geipel, 2010; North, Hargreaves, & Hargreaves, 2004; Sloboda, Lamont, & Greasley, 2009). The way individuals are able to access, acquire, and store music, has changed due to the popularity of digital music (Kibby, 2009). Consequently notions of “music consumption” have shifted (Molteni & Ordanini, 2003). One of the most striking changes is of course that music is now easily accessible for free, via a mixture of legal and illegal sources.

By empowering people to listen to more music than ever before, music piracy has given people more control over what they hear, and in different environments. In general, portable devices broaden when, where, and how people engage with music (Heye & Lamont, 2010; Juslin, Liljeström, Västfjäll, Barradas, & Silva, 2008; Sloboda et al., 2009). As Avdeeff (2012: 269) stated, “digital technology is the primary means by which most people consume music and, as such, it affects the relationship between music and listener”. Consuming music is not just about listening, but how it relates to both personal and social lives (O’Hara & Brown, 2006). Accordingly, an understanding of how individuals use music in the everyday context must account for technological advancements, including music piracy (Gaunt & Hallam, 2009).

Digital technological advancements have allowed for blurring between the consumption and production of music (Ebare, 2004; O’Hara & Brown, 2006; see also North, et al., 2004; Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002). A long held hierarchy which assigns the greatest amount of power with regard to music to the role of composer, a subordinate middle-tiered role to the performer, and the bottom position to the listeners as merely passive recipients of music is outdated (Cook, 1998; North & Hargreaves, 2008). With the advent of
digital technology, and with its strong influences on musical activities, technology is causing the boundaries of the old hierarchy to break down. North and Hargreaves (2008) press further by wondering whether the boundaries between the roles should be re-defined, or if any hierarchy should even be arranged. Indeed, in the digital era, music listeners are considered to be quite active consumers (Krause, North, & Hewitt, 2015; Sloboda et al., 2009) With most songs skipped on Spotify within the first five seconds, it is clear consumers are not simply listening to anything (Guardian Music, 2014).

**Why music psychology?**

Music is a social phenomenon, and the ubiquity of music in everyday life means that it is important to question how and why people experience it (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2007). People interact with music regardless of their level of proficiency with music—‘musicians’ and ‘non-musicians’ (however defined) alike experience and enjoy music. People develop friendships because of shared interests; gather to hear and talk about music; use music as a backdrop to many situations; use music in mood regulation; and even use it in constructing their identity. Working from a social and applied psychology of music perspective, we can understand the role music occupies in everyday modern life and the factors that explain our experiences of music. Thus, music piracy is not just a legal, criminological issue.

The psychology of music, as a discipline, has a long-standing history. It began its development as an independent discipline in the middle of the nineteenth century with preliminary research in the perception of sound (Thaut, 2009). It developed in the 1970s and 1980s into two clear sub-fields: cognitive psychology of music and developmental psychology of music. While not wholly independent of each other, these two sub-fields continued to grow, establishing an informal paradigm for music psychology (North & Hargreaves, 2008).
By the 1980s, researchers, including Vladimir Konečni and Dean Simonton, began questioning the utility of laboratory-based research to fully explain real responses to music (North & Hargreaves, 2008). Konečni (1982: 500) asserted that music is enjoyed, “in the stream of daily life”, prompting the argument that much of the laboratory research from the past fails to explain the modern-day reality of music listening (Juslin et al., 2008; Lamont & Greasley, 2009; North & Hargreaves, 2008; Sloboda et al., 2009). Thus, the most notable shift in the field of psychology of music since the mid-1980s has concerned a shift toward social factors, and the emergence of an identifiable social psychology of music (North & Hargreaves, 2008).

North and Hargreaves (2008) noted that within the social psychology of music there has also been a focus in applying research findings to the practical world. Importantly, North and Hargreaves open their book, The Social and Applied Psychology of Music, stating that “an approach based in social and applied psychology can explain the position of music in the modern world” (2008: vi). Given the strong interest in how research can be applied to “real world” problems and issues, the field has developed to emphasize research using real music and real contexts, with efforts to define the purpose of music in the modern, everyday world (North & Hargreaves, 2008). Importantly, topics of interest address people’s relationship to music as it is experienced in an attempt to determine why music matters (North & Hargreaves, 2008). There is an interest in how music is embedded in everyday life, with the fact that so many people now dedicate large amounts of their waking lives listening to music.

In the editorial of the 40th anniversary special issue of the journal Psychology of Music, then editor Raymond MacDonald reflected on the diversity of topics which have remained central throughout the lifespan of the journal: creativity, performance, emotion, communication, and meaning (2014). Such topics persist in the field, and the second edition
of the *Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* (Hallam, Cross & Thaut, 2016) provides a comprehensive overview of them, including a section on the role of music in everyday life.

Despite research in the field flourishing, the field employs a *topics-based* approach to research, which has the consequence of “little or no cross pollination between” closely related research topics (North & Hargreaves, 2008: 5). Consequently, related disciplines have tended to progress independently. For example, Music Information Retrieval (MIR) research occurs largely independent of the music psychology field; not to mention work concerning piracy with regard to law, copyright etc.

This chapter aims to draw together relevant theory and recent research findings in order to provide a detailed, psychological overview of why people engage in music piracy, by first taking into account research into why people listen to music. The authors of this chapter are particularly interested in the implications of how people access and select music to listen to (including the idea of unlimited access to music), given the volume of options available. It is against this backdrop, that this chapter is situated, adopting a psychological approach to understanding why individuals *do or do not* engage in music piracy. Music is specifically singled out due to the research interests of both authors.

Thus, this chapter also considers music piracy within a broader social psychological context, contextualising its outcomes, including those that are not commercial. In doing so, this chapter exposes the shortcomings of other disciplines that have focused solely on the negative consequences of music piracy. Put simply, this chapter will identify some of the far-reaching outcomes of widespread engagement in music piracy, including the impact on the live music sector, typically absent from any critical evaluation of music piracy, focusing solely on the recorded music sector.

**Why do people listen to music?**
People listen to music for many different reasons. Schäfer, Sedlmeier, Städtler, and Huron (2013) reduced an aggregated list of more than 500 functions to three underlying dimensions: to achieve self-awareness; to regulate arousal and mood; and as an expression of social relatedness. It is thought that it is the impact on mood which accounts for the positive effects of listening to music (Chanda & Levitin, 2013; MacDonald, Kreutz & Mitchell, 2012) and indeed one of the most often cited reasons for listening to music is for mood management (see Swaminathan & Schellenberg, 2015 for a review). Listeners may change, release, and match emotions just as they may be listening to enjoy, comfort, or de-stress themselves (Juslin & Sloboda, 2013). Individuals can regulate and attempt to enhance their moods and emotions with music (Juslin, 2009). Indeed, DeNora (2000) explained that almost all of her participants exhibited an awareness regarding the music they ‘needed’ in different contexts. This includes attempts to alter moods and states of feeling, as well as activity levels (relaxing or energizing). Additionally, the music might provide a virtual realm to vent or work through aggression or violence, as it can confine the feelings to a temporal space (DeNora, 2000). Part of the criteria for the ‘right’ music was how well it ‘fit, or was suitable for the purpose or situation they wished to achieve (DeNora, 2010).

This kind of ‘use of music’ by listeners involves goal achievement (Sloboda, 2010), and the growing literature on such uses (e.g., DeNora, 2000; Sloboda, et al., 2009) demonstrates how people choose music to accompany a range of daily activities (e.g., travel, exercise, physical work, intellectual work, mood management). What joins these different pairings of music and activities, Sloboda and Juslin (2010) explained, is that the listener’s intentions are principal to the causal process. The listeners are using music to help achieve some sort of goal, which can be related to emotions/moods.

The respondents in DeNora’s (2000) study made articulations between musical pieces and styles with desired modes of agency, using the music to inspire, elaborate, or remind
them of those modes of agency and the associated emotions (DeNora, 2010). These articulations were made on the basis of the individual’s perceptions—perceptions regarding what the music can afford, about previous associations between musical materials and biographical or situational occurrences, as well as their cultural and social notions of the emotional implications of different musical genres, styles, and devices (DeNora, 2010). Hargreaves and North’s (2010) research that indicates that people use music as a resource to achieve certain psychological states (and that different arousal states are considered appropriate to different situations). This then relates to arousal-state goals, which in their prior work was influential to preference, also mirrors mood goals as well. As a result, this then places music as a very active resource on which individuals can employ for emotional work (goal achievement, more broadly). Listeners are able to rely upon it to satisfy particular needs.

Research into music listening typically focuses on young people, the cohort principally engaged in and benefiting from musical engagement. For instance, adolescents have been the subject of the aforementioned ability of music to enhance mood (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007), and much research demonstrates how adolescents and young adults in particular use music preferences to reinforce how they view themselves, communicating to others (Saarikallio, 2012). As will be shown elsewhere, research into music piracy typically focuses on young people also and this is not a coincidence – we listen to more music during adolescence than in any other period of our lives, aiding self-definition and identity (Powell, 2016).

**The cultural and commercial impact of the digital revolution on contemporary music listening practices**

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the so-called digital revolution has changed the ways in which we now consume, enjoy, and pay for music. MacDonald, Kreutz,
and Mitchell (2012: 4) explained that: “The technological revolution that has taken place in terms of music listening means that we can now listen to our own musical choices 24 hours a day... We can, in effect, listen to our own music in virtually every context imaginable”. While younger generations may take this for granted, as scholars we must not. Music listening is becoming integrated into our personal and social lives (Krause & Hargreaves, 2013), and we must remain curious about such changes so we can trace them over time.

We shall not re-tell the whole story of Napster – that story has been told many times, including by David (2016) and elsewhere in this book. What we shall say is that though music piracy has existed for decades, it was not until Napster (and other peer-to-peer services in its wake), that music piracy occurred on a scale large enough to warrant intervention by the recording industry. Technology has long posed threats to the music business, as well as opportunities. To hone in solely on methods of reproduction, radio meant that curious teens were able to listen to music that parents might not have approved of. This brought black music to white listeners, and with it, spawned rock and roll. Music television shifted the focus away from the music altogether, focusing attention on visuals. This caused charismatic performers such as Michael Jackson and Madonna into the forefront of popular music, inspiring generations. The Internet brought threats to the very core driver of the business of music – that consumers pay for it – and the industry is still wrestling with this.

By some margin, the Internet has posed the biggest threat to music as an industry, leading to the upheaval alluded to above and elsewhere in this book. Scharf (2013) defined a holy trinity which triggered widespread digital piracy: the Internet; the mp3; and peer-to-peer technologies. The music industry has never looked back from these advancements, and it has no reason to. The music industry, as we now know it, is becoming increasingly more digital, or more specifically, more streaming-based. The latest industry reports emphasise that streaming now accounts for 59% of digital revenues (IFPI, 2017).
Music has now become a shared, communal resource (not always owned), something that could not have been said a generation ago. Wade and Powers (2015: 109) discussed how, “Streaming’s aquatic and luminous connotations also play on the notion of music and media as a kind of ‘utility’”, noting that discourse about the constant free-flowing access to music speaks of ideals concerning control. With ease, you can share what you are listening to with anyone, anywhere in the world. Naturally, people now do this – because they can. Oftentimes, this will involve sharing music illegally, but not always. Anderson (2014: 77) argues that, “What makes Spotify’s service exceptional is the emphasis it has placed on convenient sharing”, discussing its integration with ubiquitous social media platform Facebook (also noted by Wade & Powers, 2015). Yet, empirical investigation into sharing features on Spotify finds that most subscribers share music selectively (Hagen & Lüders, 2016) suggesting that music listened to demonstrates one’s identity (Levinson, 2014). Interestingly, personality accounts for not only preferred music (Greenberg et al., 2016), but wider music listening behaviours too – individuals open to experience report greater levels of browsing music by mood (Ferwerda et al., 2015). Who we are is reflected in our musical choices.

Technology has freed up the opportunity to listen to a wide variety of music (Waldfogel, 2014) and qualitative research supports the notion that people are listening to a wider range of music than before (Greasley, Lamont, & Sloboda, 2013). Yet, Ward, Goodman and Irwin (2014) found that although consumers state a preference to listen to unfamiliar music, familiarity with music positively predicts preference for songs, playlists, and radio stations. Wade et al (2014) argued that the need for familiarity is motivated by a desire for low levels of stimulation; this is certainly plausible, given music listening via mobile devices or on computers would be expected to be an accompaniment to other activities. Alternatively, choosing to listen to known music may be due to the paradox of
choice (see Dobelli, 2013), wherein the volume of options available simply leads to bewilderment and so consumers opt for the familiar (Bylin, 2014; Luck, 2016). By focusing briefly on streaming, we can already see contradictions between what appears to be the unique selling points of subscription services (ability to share and discover new music) and what research has found. The nature of streaming is not finalised; however, there exists one constant shared by all subscription services: the more media you consume, the cheaper the media.

We can, however, consider ownership relative to streaming from established psychological theory. Sinclair and Tinson (2017) argued that an enhanced feeling of psychological ownership will lead to long-term loyalty, greater word-of-mouth, customer empowerment and feelings of satisfaction. The authors cite Kirk et al. (2015) who have proposed that the use of new technologies which facilitate discovery, providing opportunities for control, are likely to experience enhanced feelings of psychological ownership. Pierce et al. (2013) explain that we can cultivate strong feelings of ownership both for material and immaterial possessions, and that ownership is not the same as legality. In terms of control, Sinclair and Tinson explain that streaming allows listeners to feel empowered by the ability to control music, create content, project identity and even control mood and manage daily routines.

It could be said that music streaming has or will enable consumers with the tools required to satisfy their needs, as well as perhaps creating entirely new ones; playlists are now seemingly used to creatively for courtship (Lang, 2017). To this end, the long-term ramifications of the emergence of playlists (see Fenby-Hulse, 2016) as a dominant mode of listening are worthy of scholarly investigation. As of May 2016, playlists accounted for almost one third of total listening time; this is almost 1.5 times that of album listening (Savage, 2016). Having created playlists people feel as though effort has been exerted and so
feel a sense of ownership (Pierce et al., 2003, cited in Sinclair & Tinson, 2017). Playlists are therefore likely to play a central role in the continued subscription to a particular streaming service. To switch between streaming services is to surrender all of the effort put in creating playlists Hagen (2015: 642) stated that, “The playlist represents what is unique to the individual in the context of a much larger, generic platform, and it demonstrates the persistence of the collector’s uniqueness despite the circumstances”.

It would appear that Spotify, in fact, encourages playlists as a dominant mode of listening with their 2016 yearend ad campaign providing a rundown of popular (and obscure) playlists listened to across the year (see Roberts, 2016). It also emphasised the social side of music listening by highlighting what other people have been listening to, with one billboard in UK reading: "Dear 3,749 people who streamed 'It's The End Of The World As We Know It' the day of UK's Brexit Vote. Hang in There." The campaign also underscored the application of big data, by sharing personal listening to wider audiences, anonymously. Musicians themselves have even started referring to albums as playlists (Petridis, 2017).

To return to the focal point of this book, Mulligan (2015) forecasted that streaming leads to ‘shallower engagement’ – that although more music is being listened to than ever before, people are not engaging with it in the same way. This, Mulligan argued, leads to more casual fan relationships, and will hit musicians in the live music sector with the future of live music being festivals and multiple act tours, resulting in artists receiving a smaller slice of revenues. Why spend, let’s say, £30 to see a band when you literally only know and like three songs you have on a playlist for driving to work in the morning? At £10 per song, that’s an expensive way to spend your disposable income – and in world in which people have less of it.
The ramifications of having unlimited access to music, literally at our fingertips, has widespread ramifications for society. Some are visible, others invisible. To hone in on one of the more visible outcomes, the live music sector provides a useful case study.

The changing relationship between the recorded and live music sector

It could be said that the ultimate outcome of the digital revolution, both from a cultural and commercial perspective, is the resulting changes in the live music sector. Increased access to recorded music, including via music piracy, appears to have boosted interest in the live music sector (Brown & Knox, 2016a).

The live music sector is thriving (Cloonan & Williamson, 2016), despite ticket prices having increased beyond the rate of inflation (Brennan & Webster, 2010; Holt, 2010). Ticket prices rose by some 39% on average between 2001 and 2010 (Houghton, 2012), indicative of a continued willingness to pay for live concerts – even beyond the retail price.) The “true” cost of a ticket has risen due to the emerging market of ticket scalping, facilitated by technological advancements (Black, Fox, & Kochanowski, 2007). An entire secondary ticketing industry (reselling concert tickets, often at exuberantly marked up prices) thrives on music fans’ willingness to pay to see their favourite artists, with the industry referring to the profits made via the secondary ticketing market as an example of the so-called ‘value gap’ (IFPI, 2016), wherein much of the money now made from music does not make its way back to content creators. And, Page (2013) finds an increase in music piracy immediately after music festivals. Live music cannot then be said as necessarily translating into recorded music sales, as would have been the case historically. Spotify has struck a deal with Ticketmaster, replacing previous partner Songkick – this has major implications for the live music sector, with plans to email subscribers with concert recommendations, etc. (Gumble, 2016).

What is it that makes live music performances so appealing? Unlike recorded music, live performances are scarce – this creates demand. The motivation to pay exuberant sums to
attend concerts and festivals contrasts with an apparent reluctance to pay anything for recorded music, at least if working from estimations of engagement in music piracy.

Research demonstrates that live music attendance is motivated by aspects concerning the ‘experience’ (Brown & Knox, 2016a; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011); indeed, Holt (2010) argued that live concerts remain unique experiences, measurable in their atmosphere, performance, and social interaction. There is something about being there, experiencing events as they unfold with likeminded others, which appeals to concertgoers. Notably, there are so many things which could interfere with having a good time, and research finds that sound quality and volume, amongst the most variable, were ranked the most important factors which determined audience satisfaction (Minor et al., 2004). With recorded music, no such speculative risk exists – you get exactly what you pay for, every time.

There is no question that it now costs more to stage events, but, importantly, the escalating cost also appears to be related to music piracy trends. For instance, Gayer and Shy (2006) found that demand for live performances is reduced when music piracy is prevented, and an awareness of smaller artists as a result of music piracy has been observed (Fer & Baarsma, 2016; Mortimer, Nosko & Sorensen, 2012). Jones (2015: 29) argued that, “As we discover more ways to consume music digitally, music consumers seem to be craving music in the live form”.

David (2016) explained that, “The most profound legacy of the copyright-infringing free sharing of music online has been in reinforcing the significance of live performance as a means for musicians to get paid” (p. 63). That the lasting outcome of music piracy has been to encourage live performances (David, 2016), is echoed Tschmuck (2016) who further explained that income streams for musicians with a sizeable fan base now predominantly come from live performances. Whilst musicians can expect to make far more from live performances than from sales or streams of recorded music, musicians may not make as
much as consumers might expect (Mulligan, 2015). Though Wikström (2011) optimistically notes that artists receive approximately 85% of the profits as compared to around 10% for recorded music, business practices vary considerably and it is unlikely most musicians earn anywhere near as much. Just 1% of musicians account for 77% of all recorded music revenue (Mulligan, 2014). It is these musicians, the 1%, who are, as they say, making a killing. Broadly speaking, though, musicians’ earnings have dropped. This is likely due to music piracy (Mulligan, 2014), and the secondary ticketing market exemplifies the current iteration of the longstanding trend in the music industry of unscrupulous entrepreneurs making money off the back of musicians.

The rise of the secondary ticketing market is not trivial. Seemingly always under parliamentary investigation in UK, it has been identified as a key example of the so-called ‘value gap’ in the music industry by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI, 2016). In effect, musicians and rights holders are being denied money they are entitled to. Though, there is a case to be made that the secondary ticketing market is evidence of ticketing prices not being high enough – concertgoers, and especially those who have dedicated more of their lives going to concerts, and who recognise how expensive it can now be to see live music events, are likely to disagree. However, it has been argued that some bands such as Pearl Jam have not charged as much as they could for their concerts, with many artists typically not maximising the potential revenue of seat differentiation (Courty & Pagilero, 2014).

It is important to note that the so-called music industry is, in reality, a series of interrelated industries. As far back as 2007, Williamson and Cloonan noted that the recorded music industry is in fact but one of the music industries which struggles to adapt with the new business environment, as a result of the digital revolution. The rhetoric of discussing the ‘music industry’ is misleading, and Cloonan and Williamson (2016) explained that the
recorded music sector is a mere blip on the timeline of ‘music’ which has predominantly been live. Recorded music now sells live music – not the other way around. This is a fundamental change in how musicians make a living, with the benefits ultimately passed onto the consumer as they now have more opportunity to see their favourite artists in the flesh. Changes such as this ought not to be ignored when evaluating the impact of music piracy on culture, especially when observing how the live music sector is, “No longer enjoying the economic boom period it experienced during the 2000s” (Brennan, 2015: 220). Accordingly, if musicians are aiming to counterbalance losses from recorded music (be it from music piracy or from free and paid-for streaming) then charging more for concert tickets might prove unsuccessful.

As a final word on live music, it is interesting that so-called ticket scalpers are generally found to be repulsive – they are only to be approached under desperate circumstances, and never to be thanked. Yet when engaging in music piracy, someone, somewhere, is profiting – and the profits can be substantial. And music piracy is not an activity reserved for desperate circumstances – music has never been cheaper at any point in history.

**Predictive factors of engagement in music piracy: Personality and individual differences**

Young males have been routinely singled out as the most likely cohort to engage in music piracy (see Watson et al., 2015). However, it is important to review any concise summary of predictive factors with regard to relevant psychological theory. In terms of gender, some possible reasons put forward by research include how females have higher risk perceptions and a willingness to pay for legal alternatives (Chiang & Assane, 2008), and that males and females react differently to perceptions of punishment severity (Morton & Koufteros, 2008). Males are more easily influenced by peers online (Miller & Morris, in
press). Such findings provide insight into the different decision-making processes of males and females, and why females may be more likely to pay for music. Elsewhere, tech savviness has been found to be predictive of engagement in piracy (Shanahan & Hyman, 2010), with young males known to engage with new technologies out of interest more than do females (Cox & Collins, 2014). Dated research finds that women viewed men as more able to understand the Internet, with females holding more negative attitudes towards computers and the Internet (Wasserman & Richmond-Abbott, 2005). There is little doubt that navigating your way around the Internet is now much easier, but it is wholly possible that a technical element remains to play a role as music piracy practices continue to change in the face of legal shifts, demanding greater technological competence. Research finds that fear of viruses is a deterrent against music piracy (Bachmann, 2011; Sheehan, Tsao & Pokrywcynski, 2012) and the whack-a-mole exercise of finding content from the myriad services providing access to music poses legitimate threats.

Findings concerning gender conform to stereotypes and of course criminology reminds us that gender is the strongest predictor of criminality overall (Brown et al., 2007), so perhaps it is no stereotype at all. From a psychological perspective, males would be expected to be less moral (see Brown, 2013, for a review of morality). Other findings propose that individuals favouring music piracy to be less fair (Brown & MacDonald, 2014). Lau and Yuen (2014) find that males are more likely to participate in immoral activities online – including piracy. It is possible however that gender trends centre on risk perceptions (as noted above) rather than proclivity towards deviance; individuals engaging in music piracy hold an optimism bias, believing they are at a lower risk of being of being caught than other populations (Akbulut, 2014; Nandedkar & Midha, 2012). This demonstrates further insight into the decision-making processes involved in music piracy engagement, as well as the consistent findings from criminological research into self-control.
Impulsivity is typically over-represented in criminal populations (Brown, 2015) and this applies to music piracy. A wealth of criminological research finds low self-control to be predictive of digital piracy engagement (Higgins et al., 2012; Hinduja, 2012, and elsewhere in this book) and psychological research finds individuals favouring music piracy specifically to demonstrate low levels of conscientiousness (Brown & MacDonald, 2014; Brown & Krause, under review), which incorporates aspects of self-discipline and is, therefore, cognate in many respects to self-control. The theory of planned behaviour model has been found to account for piracy, with the theory demonstrating how attitudes towards a behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control together shape behavioural intentions (See Fleming et al., 2017, for a meta-analysis on the theory of planned behaviour and digital piracy). Higgins and Marcum (2011: 37) explain that, “Low self-control explains all forms of crime, as crime is behaviour that pursues one’s own self-interest”. Indeed, Schwarz (2014) found that most people download music without uploading, suggesting a self-serving approach to engagement in music piracy. And what do pirates have to gain? Much research finds the importance of accessing content for free (see e.g. Cox & Collins, 2014). Related findings demonstrate other so-called utilitarian motives including convenience (Argan et al., 2013; Kinnally et al., 2008; Schwarz & Larsson, 2013; Wang & McClung, 2011). Such findings appear intuitive, but it may be that it is poor value for money which drives piracy – not simply wanting content for free (Brown, 2016; Brown & Knox, 2016b).

In terms of age, it is often cited that younger people are time-rich and cash-poor, whereas older populations are time-poor and cash-rich. Certainly, a negative relationship has been found between household income and digital piracy engagement (Chiang & Assane, 2009; Coyle et al., 2009) and on a larger scale low gross domestic product (GDP) and other financial indexes are often found to predict higher rates of piracy (Kigerl, 2013; Mostafa, 2011). Missing in this simple dichotomy, however, is that young people simply listen to more
music (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013), and so would be more inclined to seek it out. This might extend to seeking out new releases in an effort to maintain diverse collections, enhancing musical identities amongst likeminded peers. Notably, peer influence has been found to be a predictor of engagement in piracy especially amongst young people (Shanahan & Hyman, 2010). Young people listen to music for a variety of reasons, many of which are beneficial in terms of health and wellbeing. Williamson (2014: 75) summarises that, “Through emotional support, memory prompts, self-assurance and social facilitation the music of this period becomes an integral part of our lives”. This transitory period chapter is often thought to have not really existed at all until the rise of popular music in the 50s and 60s. That is, adolescence is socially constructed. Being young and listening to music go hand in hand (see Miranda et al., 2015) and this may now extend to accessing music illegally. Older populations tend to seek out the same music from when they were themselves young (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2017) and are, therefore, less motivated to seek out new music.

We would like to assert how much psychology has to offer into learning what motivates music piracy, despite the fact that such little attention has been paid to the topic in the discipline. Indeed, in his review of qualitative research into digital piracy as a whole, Brown (2017) found few psychological studies. Though we have reviewed some key findings in this section, perhaps the most transparent application of psychology in our collective understanding of music piracy can be found in Brown’s (2017) review of the myths surrounding music piracy, generously highlighting the overlaps between psychology and criminology, in particular with its reliance on criminological rationalisation theory. The work highlights how it is possible for people with different points of view on music piracy (being for or against it, and in both instances for various reasons) to reach opposite conclusions, based on the same information. It also asserts the social element of music piracy (Brown, 2014).
The online world is not the same as the offline world, with the sense of *anonymity* afforded online can free people from the typical social norms in the real, offline world, reducing personal disinhibitions (Hinduja, 2008; Joinson, 2007; Suler, 2004). Anonymity is one of at least four factors that set the online world apart from the offline world (the other three include the reduced importance of appearance, greater control and pace of interactions, and the ease with which we can find similar others – McKenna et al., 2002). Many of these clearly apply to music piracy and accordingly, the emerging sub-discipline of *cyberpsychology* is well-positioned to expand our understanding of music piracy and indeed other cybercrimes. Returning to age, Attrill (2015) explains that the Internet is not exclusively used by young people, but that younger and older populations use the Internet to meet specific goals, needs, and motivations.

**Why choose one format over another?**

It has long been assumed amongst industry bodies that so-called music pirates are only interested in obtaining music illegally – that they are thieves who want music for free. Yet, a substantial volume of research suggests that those who engage in music piracy not only pay for music legally, but spend *more money* on music legally than those who do not engage in music piracy (see Huygen et al., 2009; Karaganis & Renkema, 2013; Thun, 2009; Watson et al., 2014; and Zentner, 2006). One suggestion which may account for this is that music piracy helps consumers make more informed choices about which music to seek out legally (Peitz & Waelbroeck, 2006). Certainly, participants in empirical studies make the case that this is what drives their engagement in music piracy (Brown, 2015), and with those engaging in music piracy also buying music legally, it is clear that at the very least a substitution effect is not taking place.

Those same individuals engaging in music piracy also engage in other practices to listen to or access music. In industry terms, this is known as *multi-channelling*, or simply
mixing and matching between different music formats. Despite the apparent ‘advantages’ of digital music, both from the perspective of consumers (such as storage utility – Kinnally et al., 2008) and from industry (such as mass access to music at low cost – Curien & Moreau, 2009), most people still possess a physical music collection and actively listen to digital collections (Liikanen & Åman, 2015). Music listening now occurs across a range of delivery modes, with consumers empowered by the choice available in which to seek out and listen to music. But what is it that makes one format more appealing than other?

Uses and gratifications theory (Katz et al. 1973; Katz et al. 1974) is a framework used to study how people select and use new media (Rayburn & Palmgreen 1984; Ruggiero 2000; Stafford et al. 2004). According to the theory, people distinguish between types of media based on the needs they aim to satisfy as a result of media use (Katz et al. 1973), with media use considered goal-directed—that people are aware of their needs, and that people actively seek and use media. Thus, the theory views needs as, “The combined product of psychological dispositions, sociological factors, and environmental conditions” (Katz et al., 1973: 516–517) and gratifications, in turn, are the perceived fulfilment of needs as a result of a particular activity, including media use (Rayburn & Palmgreen 1984). Previously, this theory has been applied to the consideration of everyday music behaviours (e.g., reasons for listening to music – Lonsdale & North, 2011; reasons for using Facebook music listening applications – Krause, North, & Heritage, 2014). Accordingly, the theory is appropriate for researching why consumers choose one format over another, encompassing music piracy.

Sang et al. (2015) found that engagement in music piracy is predicted by utilitarian motives relating to cost and availability. Other studies considering music piracy, and digital music more broadly, identify gratifications including convenience (Argan et al., 2013; Schwarz & Larsson, 2013; Wang & McClung, 2011) and collection utility (Sheehan et al., 2012), as well as the ability to sample new content ahead of release (Cox & Collins, 2014).
Sheehan, Tsao and Yang (2010) also found that social utility (ability to increase social connections and peer interaction) was the most important reason for engaging in music piracy, followed by collection utility and economic utility; that is, financial motives were not as important as the ability to share songs with friends, seeing what they have in their collection, and the sheer volume of music available via illegal services, corroborated by Schwarz and Larsson (2013). In what Watson et al. (2015) refer to as ‘experiential utility’, digital piracy (more broadly) is noted as influenced by a desire to sample new content, access niche content, or build collections. Elsewhere, Mäntymäki and Islam (2015) find that enjoyment is the main reason for continuing to use Spotify, with premium users perceiving higher levels enjoyment; discovery of new music was the strongest predictor for continuing to use premium services.

Brown and Krause (2016) recently conducted research aimed at understanding why people might prefer and choose to listen to music using one format rather than another, electing to consider six predominant music formats: physical (i.e., CD, vinyl, cassette), digital file (i.e., mp3), free streaming, paid-for streaming, radio, and live music. As expected, differences with regard to age were found: in particular, being older was associated with preferring physical formats and the radio, whereas being younger was associated with digital formats, including free and paid-for streaming services. Importantly, however, beyond age, findings also demonstrated that music engagement was related to different format usage. Listening to more hours of music on average daily was positively associated with paid-for streaming and live music formats.

Further, Brown and Krause (2016) explored the uses and gratifications people experience in conjunction to their nominated format used most often to listen to music. An exploratory principal axis factor analysis identified eight uses and gratifications: usability and intention to use, discovery, functional utility, flexibility, connection, social norms, value for
money, and playback diversity. Linking preferred format usage and music piracy attitudes, individuals using digital files and paid-for streaming services were significantly more likely to endorse positive piracy attitudes than those using physical formats. Moreover, users of free streaming services were significantly more likely to endorse more favourable piracy attitudes than users of physical formats, digital files, and the radio (Brown & Krause, 2017). Moreover, when considering how the uses and gratifications associated with music listening formats mapped onto piracy attitudes, value for money was positively associated with more favorable piracy attitudes. Value for money has been argued elsewhere as independent from simply wanting something for free (Brown & Knox, 2016b), and perceptions of value are likely to take into account a variety of utilitarian factors such as those mentioned above. Further research employing Uses and gratifications theory (Katz et al., 1973; Katz et al., 1974) may be able to unpack exactly which ones. Certainly, with those engaging in music piracy also paying for music legally, it is clear that the driver is not simply about substituting paid music with unpaid music.

Therefore, it is clear that music listening, including music piracy, is not simply about getting music for free. By utilising Uses and gratifications theory terminology (Katz et al. 1973; Katz et al. 1974), the relative pros and cons of different music formats come into focus. And the more legal services incorporate the pros of illegal services, the more likely they will appeal to music listeners. As mentioned earlier, recent research by Sinclair and Tinson (2017) found that a dominant feature of music streaming services is, in fact, an enhanced sense of psychological ownership, encouraged principally by the control it offers users, leading to long-term loyalty. Elsewhere, it has been proposed that those technologies which provide opportunities for control are likely to experience enhanced feelings of psychological ownership (Kirk et al., 2015). In summary, streaming appears to be here to stay – they capture feelings of ownership without the burden of ownership. As Sun (2016) explains, in
her interviews with Spotify staff, Spotify provides an easy alternative to music piracy by eliminating the need for downloading altogether.

Discussion

Operating from a social psychological perspective, this chapter considered music piracy within the context of broader musical engagement. Centrally, the psychological research discussed concerning the personality and individual differences of those engaging in music piracy aids the broader understanding of consistent findings into demographics, wherein young people, and typically young males, are found to be principally engaged in music piracy. However, the contributions of other disciplines cited in this chapter provides a more in-depth overview of music piracy. Importantly, this chapter has asserted the importance of taking into consideration why people listen to music. While this point of view is immediately obvious to the authors as social psychologists, it appears all-but-absent in the broader scholarship concerning music piracy. By understanding why people listen to music as a foundation, more can be understood about why people do or do not choose to pay for music. Further by contextualising music piracy practices within the larger set of music engagement practices and preferences, the chapter makes three key contributions to the scholarship into music piracy.

Firstly, by drawing on the literature from music psychology and consumer psychology more broadly, the authors highlight one perspective which proposes that people engage in music piracy because music satisfies particular needs. Compounded with the convenience offered by digital services, both legal and illegal, it has been suggested that music is now relied upon as a sort of resource, and that access to music has become as much of a need as it is a want. Drawing predominantly from recent findings by Sinclair and Tinson (2017), it appears that legal streaming services may be able to satisfy consumer’s needs and even lead to a sense of ownership over their so-called music ‘collections’. Industry data such as that
from IFPI (2017) indeed confirms the shift towards streaming over downloading overall, and
signposts the likely future of music listening in a digital age.

Secondly, this chapter has highlighted the broader industry ramifications of music
piracy by giving due attention to the live music sector – it has been suggested that the decline
in revenues from recorded music have forced the industry to shift towards live music events,
with rising costs for tickets attributable to losses from music piracy. Consumers reeling from
the expense of concert tickets ought to reflect on how much money they have saved from
engaging in music piracy over the years – the majority of them will be ‘up’, remaining there
indefinitely.

Thirdly, the most prominent contribution of this chapter is the consideration of the
industry concern of so-called ‘multi-channelling’, including presenting initial quantitative
research by the authors. Using established psychological instruments and approaches, the
quantitative research confirmed the role of value for money in accounting for engagement in
music piracy. This was reasoned as different from simply getting music for free. More
importantly, the findings define relationships between music piracy and other, legal modes of
listening – those endorsing music piracy, with positive attitudes known to be predictors of
engagement, were more likely to use legal streaming services and download digital music
files legally. This complicates the common sense notion that legal services will appease the
preferences of those who engage in music piracy, converting them to legal alternatives,
instead suggesting that different music formats satisfy different needs. Thus, it is not a case of
choosing between one format or another; it is about mixing and matching between different
preferences under different circumstances. More research is needed to better understand the
dynamics at play, but one need only look to the ubiquity of e-readers, which have not
eliminated physical book sales, to gain an initial impression of what is going on. An e-reader
is perhaps convenient for all sorts of reasons: it is small; environmentally friendly; and means
that people don’t need to see what sort of trash you are reading when they come to your house. A hardback book is none of those things, but it does not mean you would not buy one. Again, a uses and gratifications approach (Katz et al. 1973; Katz et al. 1974) which has been highlighted in this chapter is appropriate to develop specific research questions to explore to gain a fuller understanding of how consumers now listen to, engage, and enjoy music – given the wealth of options available to them.

In terms of future directions, the implications of having unlimited and immediate access to music is an enticing research question, and one that the authors aim to explore. For instance, the omnipresence of playlist culture is worthy of scholarly investigation. Critically, playlist culture may change music listening practices in ways that no-one could have anticipated. Specifically, the rise of playlists has signalled a shift in the consumption of albums, calling into question the relevance of the format from the perspective of the consumer. By mixing and matching songs, playlists allow consumers to take control over their listening. This control allows listeners to shape their listening in terms of accompanying activities and broader situational contexts. Indeed, recent research highlights that playlist preferences are influenced by situational factors (Krause & North, 2014) and even macro-level influences including the time of year (Krause & North, 2017). Further, playlists give listeners more control regarding their moods – with emotional regulation noted previously as a major driver behind music listening overall. Accordingly, a surprising legacy of music piracy then, by influencing subscription services which allow unrivalled control over what is heard, might be that it has cultivated a scenario wherein people are able to utilise music as a resource for the purposes of aiding health and wellbeing. To this end, future social psychological research is well placed to consider the full capacity of music as a public health intervention.
Returning to the focus of this chapter, the scholarly community conducting research into digital piracy overall has benefited greatly from two meta-analyses published in early 2017 (Fleming, Watson, Patouris, Bartholomew & Zizzo, 2017; Lowry, Zhang & Wu, 2017). However, the fact remains that the research to date in this area is not of the highest quality. Lowry, Zhang and Wu explain that many studies in their meta-analysis did not contain standard correlation tables, averages, and standard deviations – and that when authors were approached for such outputs, many refused or noted it was unavailable. A separate investigation into qualitative research into digital piracy found very little detail on how data was coded, comparable to not reporting standard deviations, etc. (Brown, in press). Such practices do little to boost the credibility to a body of work marked by scepticism, given the controversial nature of the topic itself. Future research then must adhere to higher standards, if research is to be taken seriously.

Psychology has contributed much to our collective understanding of digital piracy as a whole. In their recent scoping review, Watson, Zizzo and Fleming (2015) found that around one third of studies in their scoping review used psychological models. Looking ahead, the authors hope that the emerging sub-discipline of cyberpsychology will further understanding of music-listening practices in digital environments. Currently, the potential for a new cyberpsychology section is under consideration in the British Psychological Society. Research which operates from a social psychological perspective while acknowledging human behaviour in online environments will enable the development of research questions which better account for the popularity of this ubiquitous cybercrime.

References


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