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Public Opinion on Intellectual Property

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PUBLIC OPINION ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

by

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ABSTRACT:

Several studies have tracked the rise in music piracy following the creation of Napster, analyzing the attitudes and behaviors associated. But new developments, such as streaming services and social media, have transformed the relationship between creators and users. This paper seeks to revisit the topic, reexamine past results, and evaluate public opinion in this current technological landscape. Understanding the new attitudes and behaviors associated with illegal music downloading through a questionnaire reveal important implications for the future of intellectual property legislation. These findings give some insight into the perceptions of ownership over intangible property to hopefully improve consumer and industry interactions.

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INTRODUCTION:

Just before Christmas 1998, the Walt Disney Company achieved a small but important victory in the U.S. Congress. Through the Copyright Term Extension Act, the company obtained an additional twenty years of ownership of Mickey Mouse and countless other intellectual property gems (Epstein, 1998). But even beyond increasing the value of their 1990s-era portfolio of cartoon rodents, waterfowl, and mer-people, the CTEA enabled Disney to unlock greater value from other intellectual properties by integrating them into a global producer of entertainment and tourism. Acquisitions of Pixar, Lucasfilm, 21st Century Fox, and Marvel have given Disney a huge market share in today's entertainment industry.

But outside of the benefits of these successful mergers and acquisitions is major public resistance. This resistance may even translate into digital piracy. Individual illegal downloads have always impacted the production of entertainment material, but it is now growing to numbers high enough to create major industry pressure. Piracy may be just one of the issues plaguing the world of intellectual property, but it is one of consequence.

As more aspects of commerce, art, and daily life move to digital platforms, the attitudes and behaviors involved in this unique form of property theft increase in importance. When the product stolen is intangible, it becomes difficult to rally the same protections in legislation or enforcement. The challenge then expands when attempting to take a law developed with an outdated technology in mind and apply it to a new institutional system or structure. The Congress that enacted the Copyright Law of 1976 could never have foreseen the advent of iTunes. But the evolution of entertainment technology is now well tracked, and an abundance of research has

been conducted on the beginnings of digital piracy. The problem is not with understanding the history, the current problem is with the speed of technology development. Advancements have outpaced analysis and without genuine reflection there is no way to establish appropriate policy. The topic of IP regulation seems, at first glance, niche and insignificant, but it holds implications for every major industry in the United States.

The questions raised in this study are linked: What are the current opinions towards digital piracy? And from where do those attitudes stem? Revisiting these questions is necessary to building a future path for successful consumer and industry interactions.

BACKGROUND:

According to the Institute for Policy Innovation, digital music theft results in an annual revenue loss of \$3.7 billion dollars for the U.S. music recording industry (Siwek, 2007). But an institutional impact of this magnitude did not occur overnight, music piracy has evolved over the past two decades. Prior to the invention of the world wide web, a type of computer software known as a bulletin board system allowed users to communicate messages, upload, and download data (Edwards, 2016). This method of software sharing started in the 1980s would eventually go mainstream in the 1990s with the launch of online file sharing services.. Early applications like Scour Inc. were initially intended as multimedia search engines but quickly became hosts for digital piracy, allowing users to search for and download media files made public to the web (Zilkha, 2009). But all of these websites existed on the periphery of conventional culture. Today's most well-known peer-to-peer file sharing website, Napster, brought illegal music downloading to the forefront of American society. Its swift rise in popularity influenced later file sharing websites like Gnutella and LimeWire, forever changing the average person's experience with music.

The massive impact Napster had on the collective fabric of American consumerism far outlasts its actual operating period. The original Napster platform only ran from June 1999 to July 2001 (Carlsson & Gustavsson, 2001). But in those two short years, the peer-to-peer file sharing service created by two college-age friends challenged an entire industry, sparking legitimate conversation about the effectiveness of old copyright laws in the face of new technology. This one website served as a catalyst for an entire consumer-driven movement in which regular people, armed with technology and high-speed connectivity, proved that they are

capable of disrupting major institutions, traditional hierarchies, and streamlined distribution systems.

Large record labels have historically attempted to maintain, constrain, and intermediate the relationships between consumers and their music. They accomplished this by ensuring that music distribution revolved solely around one item: a single full-length album on vinyl, cassette, or compact disc. Prior to the adoption of MP3 as the main audio format, physical CDs were the most common way to listen to music in the early 2000s. And for a period of approximately ten years, it was very difficult to experience music any other way (Fairchild, 2015). But the advent of the Internet created new access points and pathways for the acquisition of music, complicating the consumer's relationship to the product and loosening the industry's grip. It became apparent that they could no longer control the supply chain when illegal download websites like Napster were offering a free alternative to paying \$20 for the latest *NSYNC album. Distribution through MP3s began to grow in popularity and singles started to become the most common way to listen to music. Further, these peer-to-peer file sharing sites would allow one user to purchase a full-length album just to turn around and share it with thousands of strangers online for free. The internet provided a path for consumers to bypass the structural barriers implemented by the music industry; barriers established to create the revenue stream provided by physical music. Today, only 25% of all music revenue comes from physical music (Global Statistics, n.d.). Digital music, which includes streaming, now brings in 59% of all music revenue. The transition to digital platforms has irrevocably changed the music industry, and the creators of Napster can largely be credited with the initiation.

The music industry resisted the digital takeover, as it gave more power to the consumer and limited the industry's existing methods of marketing. Rather than responding through adaptation, large record labels held firm in their strategies and simply tried to eliminate the impact of illegal downloads. They aggressively targeted individuals who used stream ripping websites with the threat of lawsuits. Between 2003 and 2008, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) sued more than 18,000 people for illegally downloading and distributing music. Most cases were settled out of court, although the damages these individuals were forced to pay still reached upwards of \$11,000 (Holpuch, 2012). The labels' behavior was unprecedented and took regular users of stream ripping websites by surprise. Downloaders knew they were committing a crime, but a seemingly harmless one that some would consider undeserving of punishment. This choice of response by industry leaders, in both strategy and intensity, was completely up to their discretion. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act levied harsher fines for copyright infringement violated on the Internet (1988). But this particular law didn't designate a specific agency or process for enforcement, leaving it up to the copyright holders to pursue any and all claims. This legislation and type of enforcement may not have been well suited a new digital world where a single person could acquire thousands of individual infringement penalties. The result was an entire society unsure of what to make of this new form of piracy and an industry inappropriate in their response. Eventually, the RIAA reevaluated their methods in 2008 and they no longer pursue individual lawsuits. Once it was clear that streaming services were the new digital medium, their established strategy was a refusal to license their catalogues to third parties, working to assert legal control through lobbying efforts, and finding

new ways to maintain their own dominance in relation to the media, computer, and Internet industries (Fairchild, 2015).

Recording labels fought hard against the rising popularity of digital singles and streaming services, but the path forward was inevitable. Napster had initiated a shift in power directed towards the consumer that was impossible to reverse. The final result of this societal “napsterization” was an industry no longer solely concerned with the production and distribution of music, rather an industry mainly concerned with balancing intellectual property ownership. To maintain the viability of the music industry’s future, major labels have rearranged cost and royalty structures. The cost of licensing songs has become less flexible and more predictable, therefore less risky (Fairchild, 2015). But this rigidity has also manifested in more restrictive contracts with artists and newly motivated efforts to lobby for copyright law favorable to the few major recording labels rather than its multitude of artists. The medium of music has evolved rapidly in just the past two decades, moving an already intangible form of property into a sphere far removed from the physical. And yet, even in a time of affordable streaming subscriptions with unlimited and unrestricted choice, piracy prevails.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The economic and social aspects of digital piracy have attracted scholarly attention in a number of fields. Music piracy is not a new phenomenon. The multitude of motivations behind theft have always translated just as easily to intellectual property as they do physical property. And the beginning of the digital millennium, with its promises of exciting technological innovation and computer integration, did nothing to minimize the growing threat of music piracy. If anything, the Internet made music piracy easier, cheaper, and ultimately justifiable. Many sources have sought to probe the minds and makeup of the average music downloader, and successfully so. But despite an initial surge of research, there has been little recent study of this behavior in a new age of subscription services and social media.

There is a general consistency among the findings of past research, and many of the researchers were among the first to shed light on the behaviors and attitudes of downloaders and non-downloaders alike. Lenhart and Fox conducted a survey in 2000 revealing that 53% of Internet users did not believe that illegally downloading music was stealing. And among those who admitted to illegally downloading music themselves, an overwhelming 78% did not consider it to be stealing (Lenhart and Fox, 2000). This conclusion aligns with many other early studies including research published by Mary Madden of the Pew Research Center. The consensus was found to be that a majority of American internet users in the early 2000s did not view the of sharing of illegally downloaded music to be a real form of theft. In the mind of the public, this intellectual property theft simply did not hold the same significance as stealing physical property, no matter how hard the music industry worked to convince them otherwise. The other two major conclusions drawn across the field were that music piracy has continuously

increased since 2000 and the music industry's response to this information was retrospectively inappropriate and unsuccessful.

In the ever-changing realm of technology and commerce, digital music piracy still offers new challenges. Consumers and the music industry are venturing into new territory together and the questions asked ten years ago may present new answers today. The congruence among these particular intellectual property studies can be traced back to their congruence in theme. Many studies were seeking answers to the same questions. Researchers tasked themselves with examining a changing puzzle, asking the public questions that remain constant while the landscape they exist in continues to change. Collectively, researchers were, and remain, chiefly concerned with answering the following: Is digital music piracy increasing, decreasing, or stagnating? Why do people illegally download? And finally, who is illegally downloading? It provided a context for behavior and an exploration into the motives behind the action. But the more time that passes between these studies and the present date, the larger the gap in understanding grows.

A study conducted by Mary Madden with the Pew Research Center suggested that the largest concern for music consumers was cost (2009). It is clear that people are most focused on maximizing the amount of music they can access for the lowest cost. This would seem to explain the popularity of streaming services. Since their inception, platforms like Spotify and Apple Music have exponentially lowered the total cost associated with listening to music. Twenty-dollar CDs have been replaced by unlimited access for as low as five dollars a month. But these newly integrated platforms clearly did not eradicate the practice of piracy. MusicWatch reported in 2019 that the estimated number of illegal music downloaders had risen to 17 million in the

United States. An increase of two million from the previous year (Crupnick, 2019). Streaming services have transformed the music industry but not in a way demonstrable by a decrease in piracy. A cost as low as five dollars a month just does not seem to be low enough. In the year 2020, music piracy is at an all-time high, evidence that does not support past theories (Crupnick, 2019). The overall cost of music is an important factor in consumer decisions, but it is clearly not the determinant one. Committing the crime of music piracy is simple and easy, the only resource required is an internet connection. Access to the internet has expanded dramatically over the past twenty years, giving a vastly greater population the opportunity to commit piracy. Motives related to a lack of resources are not the driving force behind this illegal activity and past research suggesting as much did not have Spotify to consider. As a result, simply lowering the cost of music does not itself solve this multifaceted problem.

Analyzing why people steal music requires understanding who is stealing music. One study in particular provided a description of the average music downloader: young, white, affluent and highly educated (Lenhart and Fox, 2000). This aligns with Madden's research, which acknowledged that the younger segment of the population was most accepting of music piracy and seemed to imply that the more a person used technology, the more tolerant they were towards the illegal practice (2009). These conclusions were reported in 2000 and 2009 respectively, periods marked by a fast-expanding Internet but one still not integrated into everyday life or as universally understood. This profile of the average music downloader reflects a decade when Internet use was still viewed as a luxury, the number of computers in each household hovered closer to one and understanding how to exist online took practice. Today, the average person can access the web from multiple devices, keep up to date on all the latest

software developments, and knows that the Internet now functions as a necessity. In 2000, only 54% of Americans had access to a single household computer (Newburger, 2000). In 2017, 90% of American households contained at least one smartphone, desktop, or laptop and the typical household contains five of them (“A third of Americans”, 2017). With more and more people regularly accessing the Internet, this tolerance for music piracy could extend well beyond the 18-24 age range.

The most interesting characteristic of the original music downloader was confidence. Frequenters of stream ripping websites were unashamed of their behavior, protected by an initial lack of response from the music industry. Prior to the series of intense lawsuits, no real action was being taken to combat music theft between 2000 and 2003. This left users secure in their habits and their belief that downloading a few songs was not enough to warrant intervention from law enforcement or the courts. However, one study seems to contradict the consensus, rejecting the profile of the brazen criminal and even the general notion that music piracy is increasing. Reported in 2004, surveyors at the Pew Research Center found that 14% of online Americans say that at one time in their online lives they downloaded music files, but now they no longer do any downloading (Rainie, Mudd, Madden, and Hess, 2004). Further, the report directly implies that the RIAA’s series of lawsuits unilaterally motivated individuals to stop downloading. It claims that the legal method, though excessive and expensive, may have served as a slight deterrent for a short period of time. This study seems to contradict the established and congruent timeline of music evolution as well as the common downloader profile and factual piracy statistics. But it is very possible that this study provides two pieces of contextual evidence to support a different view. Firstly, it is plausible that the effects of the music industry’s actions

were real though minimal and brief; scare tactics that caused people to temporarily abandon the practice of music piracy. Reported exactly one year after the beginning of the copyright infringement lawsuits, the music industry's dramatic response could have jeopardized people's willingness to download and others' willingness to be transparent about their behavior. Secondly, what seems most likely is that piracy as a behavior today has become widespread among all ages, races, and genders rather than concentrated in one demographic pool. This would account for the number of previous music downloaders who no longer use stream ripping website. Music piracy seems to have become an activity that a large amount of people briefly partake in, rather than a smaller number of repeat users.

Above all else, intellectual property experts concern themselves with the motives behind copyright infringement. Attempting to understand why people choose to steal music rather than paying for it. According to the main core of research, the prevailing answer should be cost. Consumers also seemed to want portability, mobility, and choice in their daily listening (Madden, 2009). This answer was satisfactory in 2000 when the listening device of choice was a bulky iPod and you had to pay a dollar for each individual song. But now that Spotify provides unfettered access at affordable costs, this answer cannot properly explain why music piracy numbers are the highest they've ever been. This points to a motive based less on logic and suggests that people steal for reasons based more in cultural and social conditioning. The context of the actual music produced (the record label, the distribution platform, and the artists themselves) may have a greater effect than past research proposed. It is the attitudes of the consumer that lead them to steal music rather than the marketing of the music. Research thus far has painted a coherent, congruent, and plausible theory surrounding who is stealing and how

much. But understanding why people steal music requires acknowledging new variables and considering new explanations. The recent integration of social media into everyday life has changed the music industry's promotional marketing methods and may have changed consumers' overall perspective. Following and interacting with celebrities on platforms like Twitter and Instagram could affect the general perceived proximity towards artists. This could have an influence on attitudes towards artists which, in turn, could affect attitudes towards music piracy.

METHODOLOGY:

This study utilized a questionnaire as a gauge of public opinion. This method was chosen for its ease of distribution, relative familiarity among respondents, and resemblance to related research. It was distributed electronically to students registered at the University of Central Florida. Participants were chosen through their enrollment in a large, introductory general education course and contacted through their school email accounts. Participation was voluntary and participants were assured of all anonymity before consenting to take the survey. The sample size for this study included 104 participants with ages ranging between 18 and 41. Before distributing the questionnaire, the Institutional Review Board of UCF approved the study as exempt from regulation because of the minimal risk involved in participation. The questionnaire was facilitated through Qualtrics, exported into a protected Excel spreadsheet, then transferred to SPSS for statistical analysis.

The questionnaire itself, provided as Appendix, was modeled after research conducted by (Chiou, Huang, and Lee, 2005). Separated into six batteries, a majority of the questions were posed on similar five-point scales with response choices either ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree or extremely unlikely to extremely likely. Each battery considered possible factors involved in motivating attitudes associated towards music piracy: quality of art, singer/band idolization, perceived social consensus, perceived magnitude of consequences, and perceived persecution risk. The final battery considered the connections between internet service providers and content providers, their business dealings, and possible developments for the future. Although the themes of the batteries were influenced by the Chiou et. al study, the questions are original to this survey. The largest focus was concentrated on two of the factors: singer/band

idolization and perceived social consensus. These questions were directed at gauging how the participants emotional connection to artists and art would factor into their opinions on stealing music and how collective social views pressured the participants' own beliefs.

The sample skews younger because of source location, but this serves to highlight one aspect of the questionnaire. The singer/band idolization influence examines the perceived proximity that participants may feel towards their favorite artists and the way this translates their personal beliefs into their behaviors. Having a younger sample group maintains the integrity of this factor because younger consumers are more likely to interact with the intellectual property in a way that reflects devotion to an idol. This manifests in behavior like following artists on social media, purchasing merchandise and concert tickets, or becoming a part of online fan communities. The limitation in sampling allows for a focus on singer/band idolization and perceived social consensus, major themes of this research, while staying aware that the younger demographic have proven to be more tolerant of music piracy. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Perceived likelihood of personal consequences positively affects attitudes toward music piracy.

Consequences in the form of unwanted popups, computer viruses, vulnerability to hackers, fines, or even losing the respect of family or friends could have the effect of shifting attitudes in a negative direction. But a prevailing perception that these consequences are unlikely to occur could shift attitudes in the opposite direction.

H2: Perceived magnitude of public consequences positively affects attitudes toward music piracy.

Consequences for the music industry could have a neutral or even positive influence on the attitudes towards piracy. Sentiment towards record labels and the music industry as a whole are generally less favorable than sentiment towards individual artists. Participants most likely perceive negative public consequences towards the industry differently than negative personal consequences.

H3: Perceived personal connections to artists negatively effects attitudes toward music piracy.

The participants' perceived personal relationships to favorite artists could result in attitudes unfavorable towards music piracy. A vested interest in the financial wellbeing of particular artists could translate to a negative perception of stealing music from any artists.

H4: Perceived quality of art positively affects attitudes toward music piracy.

A less than favorable perception of the current quality of art, including movies and television, could influence the social acceptability of music piracy.

RESULTS:

This research collected 104 questionnaire results from students at the University of Central Florida, although not every participant answered every question from every section. The average age recorded was 22 years old with more than 67% of participants identifying as white or Caucasian. The most important question in the survey asked students to choose an answer choice consistent with their beliefs about music piracy. 24% of participants answered that they believe downloading is stealing, another 23% believe that downloaders aren't doing anything wrong, but 36% believe both of the statements above. It is difficult to directly compare the results of this particular question to previous research because of the framing, the question combines the view of legality with morality. Giving respondents the third option of "both" revealed that most respondents believe music piracy to be simultaneously illegal yet morally conscionable. They recognize that downloading music is breaking the law, but don't view downloaders as doing anything morally or ethically wrong. There seems to be a general disconnect between current legal boundaries and the moral perspective of this sample group, and possibly of the public at large. The second most significant question of the survey revealed more information regarding the morality of stealing in general. 35% of participants answered that stealing is never justified, but 62% of participants answered that stealing is sometimes justified. Another 3% believe that stealing is always justified. Past research focused on the more objective reasons why people who choose to steal music or tolerate music theft, reasons like opportunity and cost. But results from this study could point to answers framed within the collective social perspective on intellectual property.

Running bivariate correlations between variables revealed a few points of significance in testing hypotheses. There was a positive correlation between perceived personal consequences and attitudes towards music piracy. There was a small significance in the relationship between getting arrested or fined and attitudes toward music piracy ($r(102) = .18, p < .05$). There was a more statistically significant relationship between losing respect from friends or family and attitudes towards music piracy ($r(102) = .24, p < .01$). The five-point scale for this battery moved from extremely likely to extremely unlikely. Most participants responded that getting arrested or fined and losing the respect of family or friends was “unlikely”. This indicates a positive correlation between tolerance towards stealing music and the perception that the potential for personal consequences is small. While the data does not suggest a strong correlation, one does exist. Therefore, the data suggests that H1 is supported.

Next, the relationship between the perceived magnitude of public consequences and attitudes towards music piracy was examined. There was not a correlation between the perceived effects of music piracy on record labels and attitudes toward music piracy ($r(102) = .13, p < .16$). There was also not a correlation between the perceived effects of music piracy on the entire music industry and participants’ attitudes toward music piracy ($r(102) = .13, p < .18$). However, there was a stronger positive correlation between the perceived effects of music piracy on artists and participants’ attitudes toward music piracy ($r(102) = .347, p < .01$). H2 was not supported by the data. But these results may point to public consequences targeted directly at artists as an influence on public attitudes.

Looking at the connection between the participants perceived relationships to artists and their attitudes toward music piracy did not reveal a correlation of any significance. The results in

this category were underwhelming. Participants were asked to respond to the statement, “Following my favorite artists on social media makes me feel personally connected to them”. Over 9% strongly disagreed, 15% disagreed, 5% somewhat disagreed, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed, 30% somewhat agreed, 20% agreed, and 4% strongly agreed. The results were just as dispersed when participants were asked to respond to the statement, “I am more likely to pay for music from artists I follow on social media”. As a result, there was no correlation between attitudes and perceived personal connections from following artists on social media ($r(102) = .06, p < .50$) or purchasing music from artists the participants followed on social media ($r(102) = -.06, p < .48$). Therefore, H3 was not supported by the data.

Finally, there was not a correlation between the perceived quality of current art and attitudes toward music piracy. The category of music had the most participant ratings of “excellent”. When asked about the quality of current music, 45% described it as excellent and 37% described it as good. 12% described it as terrible, 4% described it as poor, and 2% described it as terrible. The second art form rated highest overall was the category of television shows released on streaming services. 40% of participants described the quality as excellent while 44% described it as good. The results for the current quality of all art forms trended towards positive, but the relationship between the quality of music and opinions on music piracy did not reveal a correlation of significance ($r(102) = .09, p < .34$). Repetitions with movies released in theaters, movies released on streaming services, television on cable, and television released on streaming services were insignificant as well. H4 was not supported.

Although there wasn't enough data to properly support most of the hypotheses in this study, a few findings are significant to the current trajectory of intellectual property regulation.

Considering that over half of all internet traffic volume originates from just two content distributors, YouTube and Netflix, consumer interactions with these websites have ramifications for all other media applications (Claffy and Clark, 2016). The number of illegal downloads will most likely not shrink anytime soon, but the ability to share subscription accounts has become a new major concern for companies. This study found that 78% of participants believe it is acceptable to share a password with family, friends, or coworkers. Participants did not view this as a problem for artists either. Over 51% of participants do not believe that sharing a password to a streaming service affects the creators of projects featured on the service. Web traffic on piracy sites is fairly easy to track, but it is almost impossible to accurately evaluate the number of streaming service accounts being shared for free. This establishes a problem difficult to demonstrate and a consumer base unreceptive to corrective action. There is no way to engage people to support regulation for something they don't view as problematic.

The final portion of the questionnaire asked participants to share their views on interactions between internet service providers and content providers. Though these did not directly serve the hypotheses, they added an additional gauge of public opinion. This could be useful in providing a context for participants' preferences regarding intellectual property regulation. These questions, combined with others related to digital content outside of music, frame participants' specific attitudes toward music piracy. There was a general desire for separation between internet service providers and content providers. Only 37% of participants believe that the two should be able to make deals to supply content faster, while over 62% of participants believe that all internet traffic should be treated the same. Most participants didn't

believe internet service providers and content providers should be able to merge, and a majority also believe that government intervention is necessary in these industry relationships.

DISCUSSION:

Only one hypothesis was supported by this data, but that does not prevent this study from raising valid points of interest to inform future research. The responses from this questionnaire support the hypothesis that the perceived likelihood of personal consequences positively affects attitudes toward music piracy. The participants perceived most personal consequences involved in stealing music, repercussions like legal fines or the loss of social respect, as unlikely. This paralleled a general acceptance for music piracy. The data contained in this study did not support the other three hypotheses, but one variable relationship did point to the influence of singer/band idolization on attitudes toward downloading music. There was a positive correlation between the perceived effects of music piracy on artists and attitudes toward music piracy. Participants rated the effects of piracy on artists as more intense and negative than they did for record labels or the music industry, as a whole. They responded that the harmful effects impact artists on a greater scale than record labels, revealing a sensitivity possibly based in support for their favorite artists. A more concentrated focus on this specific relationship could yield insight into the reasons consumers choose to pay for music rather than steal it. Although this study did not find concrete correlations between the all hypothesized variables, it seemed to reveal that aspects of perceived personal and public consequences are significant factors in influencing attitudes toward illegal music downloading.

A small portion of this study was devoted to the topic of net neutrality, content provider monopolies, and enhanced internet services. It was clear from these results that a majority of participants were not receptive to mergers between internet providers and content providers. Respondents preferred that all internet traffic be treated equally and believe that government

intervention is necessary to maintaining this net neutrality. This data implies a coherent preference for boundaries between internet providers and content providers through government regulation, something currently jeopardized by Disney's choice in acquisitions. From a policy standpoint, this research is useful. Gauging public opinion is crucial to predicting legislation as a maintenance of government responsiveness, even if only a narrow segment of the public is polled.

The limitations of this study, however, cannot be ignored. This study sampled a small group of participants, similar in age and education. It is possible that a larger, more diverse sample size could yield different results or points of significance. While in contrast, the questionnaire used to evaluate public opinion may have been too broad in scope. It covered multiple topics, taking a more superficial approach in order to examine several relationships in the attempt to find potential correlations. Not many solid statements can be extracted from these results, but further research could be shaped by the few variable relationships found to be significant. These questionnaire results suggested that attitudes on music piracy were influenced by two main factors: perceived magnitude of personal consequences and perceived magnitude of public consequences. An additional study, narrowing down the survey topic to solely explore the magnitude of personal consequences, for example, could reveal a legitimate motive behind music piracy. The questions contained in this survey may have been too broad, linking too many ideas. A future study, concerned with one specific influence, could tailor questions to explore all possible orientations of that relationship. It would have been beneficial to narrow down the research question to provide more constructive conclusions in understanding music piracy.

The landscape of technology and commerce continues to transform. Music piracy increases every year, but it has also begun to shift form. With more entertainment content moving to subscription sites, illegal downloads are not as necessary for applications like Netflix or Spotify. Sharing passwords with friends or family allows for unfiltered access and remains an illegal activity much more difficult to track. This has already become the current focus of the entertainment industry as they now struggle to combat multiple forms of illegal content sharing. The further removed the consumer is from the social construct of stealing, the less empathy they may have for the artists and copyright holders involved. The idea of stealing is rooted in the idea of physically taking property without properly compensating the distributor or creator. It is more socially constructed than one might think. Stealing a physical CD will always be perceived differently than illegally downloading a digital single, which is perceived differently than sharing a Spotify account. The more intangible the property becomes, the less sympathetic the consumer may feel towards the real victims of theft, the artists. Instant gratification and distancing from the creation process may have created music fans uneducated and unconcerned about the effects of music piracy. To possibly minimize the practice of password sharing and internet piracy, there would need to be a common and consistent messaging coming from companies, artists, and copyright holders. Rather than strictly relying on the enforcement of copyright infringement, educating listeners on the effects that music piracy has on their favorite artists could influence behavior. Cultivating an understanding of the impacts, both personal and public, could shift the average consumer's attitude towards stealing music.

APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

I am going to ask you about your opinions on the current quality of commercial art.

Think about the following artistic categories throughout the past five years and indicate the level of quality you believe to be appropriate:

- Movies released in theaters
- Movies released on streaming services
- TV Shows on cable
- TV Shows original to streaming services
- Music

I am going to ask you about your opinions on artists.

For each of the following statements, indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree:

- Musicians and artists have to work hard to be financially successful
- If too many people download music without paying for it, artists will provide fewer works of quality
- Artists and companies who complain about music piracy are greedy
- Paying for music is a way to support my favorite artist or artists
- If a song has been released for a long period of time, such as 40 or 50 years, people should be able to download and use it for free
- Even if people illegally download music, they still contribute to the artist's success in other ways (merchandise, concert tickets, etc.)
- Sharing a password with a friend on a streaming service affects the creators of projects featured on the service
- It is acceptable to share passwords on a streaming service with friends, family, or coworkers
- The average person doesn't illegally download music
- The negative effects of music piracy don't have anything to do with me

For each of the following, indicate the type of effect you perceive illegal downloads to have on the group mentioned.

With the scale being—largely negative, somewhat negative, no effect, somewhat positive, largely positive:

- Artists
- Record Labels
- Music Industry

Now I'm going to ask you about assumptions regarding downloading music.

For each of the following, indicate the likelihood that each potential risk would arise while illegally downloading music. With 1 = very unlikely, 2 = somewhat unlikely, 3 = somewhat likely, and 4 = very likely:

- Getting a computer virus
- Getting hacked
- Getting unwanted pop-ups
- Getting arrested or fined
- Losing respect from your friends and family

Please choose the statement that comes closer to your views:

- People who download music off the Internet are stealing
- People who download music aren't doing anything wrong
- Both
- Neither
- Not sure

Please choose the statement that comes closer to your views:

- Stealing is never justified
- Stealing is sometimes justified
- Stealing is always justified

For the next few questions, consider the following two groups:

Content providers, such as: Netflix, Disney, NBC, etc.

Service providers, such as: AT&T, Verizon, Spectrum, etc.

Please choose the statement that comes closest to your views:

- Service providers should be able to make deals with content providers to supply their content faster
- All internet traffic should be treated the same

Please choose the statement that comes closest to your views:

- Service providers should be allowed to merge with content providers
- Service providers shouldn't be allowed to merge with content providers

Please choose the statement that comes closest to your views:

- It is necessary for the government to step in to prevent too many mergers between content providers
- It is not necessary for the government to step in to prevent too many mergers between content providers

Which situation do you find preferable:

- Multiple small content providers with limited entertainment options but the freedom of individual subscriptions
- Fewer large content providers with many entertainment options but some of which you don't care for

As of 2019, the copyright protection of Mickey Mouse is set to expire in 2024. This would allow anyone to use the character in art, movies, or merchandise.

For the following statement, indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree:

Mickey Mouse is so closely associated with Disney, it shouldn't belong to or be used by anyone else.

Do you currently have a paid membership to a music application such as Spotify, Apple Music, Soundcloud, or Tidal?

- Yes
- No
- I have a free membership to one or more of these applications

How often do you use the music applications?

- Everyday
- A few times a week
- A few times a month
- Not sure

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Please specify your age. _____

Please specify your ethnicity.

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African-American
- Native American or Indian American
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Mixed race
- Other

What year did you graduate from high school? _____

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