

Girls consuming music at home

Gender and the exchange of music through new media

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ABSTRACT During the past decades media technologies for producing and consuming popular music have gone through major changes. The digitalization of older media and so-called new media has transformed the landscape for music use. Technological developments in radio, television, the internet, computers, mobile phones and mp3 players shape the ways in which popular music is consumed today. This article examines two intersecting aspects of how today's media landscapes are interwoven into and shape teenage girls' uses of popular music. First, it argues that media technologies shape the girls' uses of music in the context of their everyday lives and the spaces they inhabit. Second, media technologies take part in the girls' practices of gender. For example, through their relations with their brothers and new media technology in the home, the girls are negotiating how to be 'girls', 'daughters' and 'sisters'.

KEYWORDS *gender, music, new media*

Introduction

The production, distribution and consumption of music have been affected by major technological changes during recent decades, mainly through the digitalization of music and the growing use of the internet for music transfer (Connell and Gibson, 2002; Hannerz, 1992; Mitchell, 2000). Not only has music distribution over the internet resulted in new laws and debates, but the practices of music storing and listening are changing in the new digital era (Bull, 2000, 2007). The connection between young people and popular music has been established in popular music studies (Grossberg, 1992; Huq, 2006), and young people are often skilled users of new digital media devices (Livingstone, 2002) which can be used for music listening. This article is based on a study of teenage girls' everyday uses of music in Sweden: the music consumption they participated in was



combined with everyday use of new media technologies. Their media use was interwoven with discovering, purchasing and listening to popular music. Thus the everyday use of new media for music consumption took part in shaping and reshaping the girls' music culture and their social relations around music. The way in which new media, for example broadband, interplays with social and cultural life is often a mundane but significant part of everyday life at home (Petersen, 2007). The media practices in which the girls were engaged are seen as the result of both social entanglements and technological change. Nick Couldry (2004) has argued that the meaning of media is created always through media practices: not people's interpretations, the media content or technical possibilities, but rather what people do with media must be studied to understand the media. One of the social relations negotiated in media practices is gender relations within the home. As David Morley (1986) has shown, media use conducted in the home is interwoven with social relations constructed by, for example, family and gender norms. In his argument, these relations are enacted and reproduced around television consumption. In a more recent study, similar connections between articulated class identity and the practices of watching television of a certain format (reality television) have been established (Skeggs et al., 2008). Identity categories such as gender and class are integral to media practices, and these categories are constructed through such practices, among many others (Butler, 1990). Here, music use through new media is seen as a series of repeated practices involving media technology and enacting social and cultural power relations.

Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (1976) argue that the home and the bedroom are central to girls' consumption of media: this includes musical activities such as listening to music and dancing. From a feminist cultural studies point of view, these practices are as active and meaningful as the music and style culture performed by young men in the streets (Baker, 2004). In her study of pre-teen girls' popular music use, Sarah Baker (2004) has concluded that girls' 'play' is a kind of work: testing boundaries and making sense of identity. This work takes place within the home and requires technological tools such as compact disc (CD) players or tape recorders.

This article investigates how music use and new media technologies intersect with the construction of gender and, to some extent, age and class in the home environment. It is argued that the new media shapes the ways that people listen to music, while its users are limited in certain ways by gendered social relations in the home and ideas about gender and technology. The starting point for this investigation is feminist studies of science and technology, where gendered identity is regarded as something that people do, rather than something people are, and thus gender dimensions are inseparable from technology practices (Cockburn and Ormond, 1993).

270 Neither the technological devices in themselves, nor people's social contexts



or gender identities, determine the uses of technology (Idhe, 1993). Discourses on gender and technology have real effects: traditionally, men have been associated with the use of technological devices such as large machines, and women have been seen as less skilled in activities regarded as technologically advanced (Berg, 1994). These ideas about technology and gender have an impact on people's lived experiences. Even though some working-class women always have handled heavy machinery, often women are perceived (by others and themselves) as less machine 'savvy' than men. This example also illustrates that gender is never separated from other axes of power; constructions of gender intersect with those of class, sexuality and ethnicity (Collins, 1998). There are many categories of possible importance for girls' music use in the home: the focus in this article is gender, and to some extent, intersections with class and age.

Girls, media and music

The study of 23 teenage girls' uses of music in everyday life consisted of both focus group and individual interviews, and participant observation at their schools and in their homes. The research was conducted over a period of eight months between November 2005 and June 2006. At the time of the study, the girls, aged 14 to 16, lived in a medium-sized Swedish town, came from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds and attended two local state junior high schools. Based on a cultural studies approach to culture as 'a whole way of life', consisting of practices of meaning-making embedded in social everyday life (Morley, 1986), all dimensions of the participants' uses of music were investigated. The overall aim of the study was to investigate uses of music: what music the girls liked, how they consumed music, how they interpreted it, the kind of activities of which music was a part, and how music use participated in identity practices and the formations of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class among the girls. The majority of girls in this study listened to music through computers and mp3 players for several hours every day, sometimes alone but often simultaneously, as they engaged in different forms of social interaction online and in their homes. Music was widely discussed among their peers, interwoven in social identity formation processes, but also used as a way of escaping into an individual's interior world.

The girls discovered new music mainly through advice from friends or when watching music television: either the Swedish version of MTV, or ZTV, a competing local Swedish channel with similar programming. Thus sometimes the process of discovering new music was mediated through television and, more specifically, the music television format. Even more often, when music discoveries were aided by friends, the exchange of new music was mediated through mp3 players or computers, where girls traded or played songs to each other. These processes joined (often) global music and local friend groups, exemplifying how music and



media use is both interconnected with the world and located in place-specific cultural patterns (Miller and Slater, 2000). The possible ways to mediate music have changed during the past decades: from cassettes and radios to music television, computers and mp3 files. These changes affect consumption as well as production: for example, music television's moving images have made artists instantly visual. Simon Frith (1986) has studied technology's impact on sound: as an example he analyses how the introduction of microphone technology made it possible to sing in a low intimate way yet still be heard at the back of the concert hall. Thus the microphone changed singing techniques and experiences of hearing in public; this shows how media technologies not only convey or transmit music but also reshape sound. While technological developments in music production and consumption may seem straightforward – a story of 'progress' – one must not forget the devices that never really caught on: for example, short-lived inventions such as the Mini-disc. They illustrate how the story of music and technology is never linear: inventions in demand today may be forgotten tomorrow.

In this study, new music was often sent using the instant messaging (IM) program MSN Messenger (now called Windows Live Messenger), broadband and a computer. As one girl, Tess, said, she 'just gets most of the music on the computer', which indicated that the preferred format for music in this group was mp3 files rather than CDs. All but one of the girls interviewed logged into MSN Messenger almost daily after school, and more devoted users were often online in the morning before school as well. MSN Messenger was popular because it was free to use and could be opened simultaneously as the girls participated in other activities in front of their computers: schoolwork, listening to music, talking to family members in the home area or browsing the internet. However, most importantly, most friends from school were online on MSN and therefore the program was a very practical social tool.

When logged into MSN Messenger the girls could chat to each other and use status updates to display their moods, feelings and activities (they wrote things such as: 'Going out soon', 'Happy' and 'In love with Jonas'). In the interface individuals also uploaded pictures of themselves, created profiles and sent mp3 and other files back and forth. The latter function was central to their music consumption. As Malin Sveningsson Elm (2007) has shown, young people's pictures, profiles and comments online can be read as identity work, and the exchange of music holds an important place in the identity work on MSN Messenger. The most common way to receive and listen to a new song among the girls was to have it sent through MSN Messenger by a friend: this could happen many times during the same day. The mp3 files were copied from MSN Messenger onto the girls' own computers, and could be listened to immediately. Most of the girls used the basic functions in Windows Media Player for listening to music on their computers; they built playlists of



their favourite songs of the moment. If they liked the song which had been sent to them, they would keep it on their current playlist in Windows Media Player and possibly transfer it to their mp3 players, making the new song mobile so it could be carried with them everywhere. If the new song was not appreciated they would delete it, or lose track of it somewhere on their hard drives, while continuing their search for new music. These practices required long periods of time spent in front of the computer and thus influenced the girls' everyday lives. Two individuals in front of their computers could share and comment on each other's favourite songs from a distance.

The music exchange was extensive: despite swapping new mp3 files every day, the girls did not create ever-growing catalogues of music because most of them did not save their music once they were tired of it, sort the mp3 files or create back-ups for the musical material saved on their computers. The majority of the girls did not collect music. Often, collecting and ordering records as an identity-forming practice is connected to (white middle-class) men (Straw, 1997). Will Straw sees masculine record collecting as a performance of power or knowledge through collections, a refuge from the social world and a source of enjoyment (Straw, 1997). Even though the absence of music collecting among the girls in this study seemed to support Straw's gendering of music-collecting practices, the new mp3 format was also significant for the lack of collecting and ordering. The girls saw no need to save songs that they could retrace within a couple of minutes on the internet. Thus their music consisted of ever-changing playlists rather than accumulative systems, which also may be true for many boys of their age. With mp3 files the object of collection has no independent shape, it is always contained within the computer or media player, but it is still possible to collect mp3 files: people do collect digital music files, and this type of collector seem to resemble the record collector (Anderton, 2006; Jones, 2000).

The girls in this study were not collectors of music or huge fans of any particular artist. They did not idolize stars in the way traditionally associated with teenage girls: posters on their walls, crushes on boy bands or hysterical fits during concerts (Ehrenreich et al., 1992). Some of them ascribed this type of fandom to younger girls, but did not value this behaviour highly and considered themselves too mature to be fans. Thus their music use was constructed by them as better than the stereotypical idea of girls as fans. They disassociated themselves from a type of girl culture which has been scorned, and instead associated themselves with general (not feminine) music use.

Filesharing

Contemporary debates around the mp3 file, filesharing and the peer-to-peer (P2P) programs which were used most often for filesharing during



the time of fieldwork all play on the same fear of piracy, crime and uncontrollable contamination which was debated when cassette technology was introduced (Connell and Gibson, 2002). The bootleg debate goes even further back in time, proving that fear of uncontrolled musical transfer is nothing new (Anderton, 2006). However, with the internet the amount and speed of these types of transfers have increased, changing music cultures (McLeod, 2005; Rodman and Vanderdonckt, 2006). All of these debates have drawn upon public perceptions of gender and technology; in popular music debates young men have been constructed as culprits of piracy, experts on new technology and collectors of music. However, in the present fieldwork, some of the girls were very skilled users of P2P programs and a range of different devices used for filesharing and transferring music. Thus according to Swedish law, they were criminals.¹

For the songs (in the format of mp3 files) to circulate among friends on MSN Messenger they had to enter the system somehow: the girls normally downloaded them from a P2P filesharing program or transferred them to the computer from a CD. Even though filesharing on P2P programs was a common practice, not all of the girls dared or knew how to use a P2P program, and very few of them ever bought records. However, the use of MSN Messenger was an activity in which all the girls took part. Not everyone uploaded music for circulation, so the exchange of music was not symmetrical; some girls had more music on their hard drives than others, and some sent a lot of songs to their friends while others mainly received songs. The girls who did not use P2P programs had fewer songs than those who did, but the most popular songs were owned and listened to by everyone in the same group of friends. Thus the media-savvy and brave girls had more (and a greater knowledge of) music than the others, which also had a positive impact on social status.² This was one example of how the technological side of media practices took part in shaping social patterns where girls 'in the know' about music and technology, who were able to supply the others with new songs, were considered cool. As P2P programs have key users (Jones, 2000), so the girls' network also had key persons. Being a skilled filesharer could improve an individual's status in gendered family interaction at home, as will be explored in the next section.

The girls who participated in filesharing mainly used LimeWire and DC++, free programs catering to many users around the world with easy to navigate interfaces. P2P programs such as these build communities of music consumers and create the possibility for a new era of music consumption without geographical borders (Jones, 2000). Despite this, the girls mainly listened to the same music as their schoolfriends: rock, hip-hop and R&B songs that were played on Swedish music television. They treated the P2P programs as databases, choosing to download mainly music and artists they already knew, and opting not to interact with unknown users. This behaviour was related to ongoing media debates about strangers preying on young girls online: the girls claimed not to have contact with strangers



on the internet (but some of them did) because it was not considered to be safe. Thus the gendered idea about (sexual) safety also framed their music use.

The P2P programs and the internet had taken over the role of music stores in the girls' consumption of music; very few of them ever bought a CD in a store or an mp3 file online, and thus the acquisition of music no longer involved money. However, the devices (computers and mp3 players) and connectivity (broadband) needed to uphold circulation of free music did cost money, so music use had not necessarily become cheaper as a whole for these persons. Even though MSN Messenger and P2P programs were free, sufficient broadband access, computers and mp3 players were not. To sustain the giving and receiving of new music, the media that the girls used needed to be compatible, thus users needed to upgrade hardware and software constantly when other people in their social networks began to use new devices or programs.

The legal and ethical issues of filesharing were important for the girls, and these dilemmas were factors in their favouring MSN Messenger over P2P programs. While filesharing from a P2P program was perceived as illegal by the girls, even though it was still a widely adopted practice, sending and receiving music on MSN Messenger was perceived as legal. This was an important reason for their use of MSN Messenger, together with the social advantages of having all their friends there, and the fact that the program was free, easy and fast. Whether their perceptions of the legal implications were based on fact is not the point: public debates on piracy in Sweden specified P2P programs as a threat during this period and this made them dangerous in the girls' eyes. The girls also worried about the moral aspects of robbing the artists of their royalties, which was a commonly used argument against filesharing in the public debates. They all agreed that filesharing was morally wrong: they were stealing from the artists. Moreover, they were scared of viruses entering their computers from the P2P programs. They considered filesharing through P2P programs to be risky on several different levels: the last being social, as their parents might not like it. The ongoing debate had made the girls nervous, and their parents even more so. Many parents banned filesharing in their homes and some of the girls complied, while others logged on to P2P programs anyway. The technological competence required for successful use of P2P programs was an additional threshold for some participants in the study. So was the language barrier, since all the P2P programs, legal sites such as YouTube (www.youtube.com), where they could listen and watch, and similar sites are in English, a language the girls had studied only for a few years. The language barrier was the reason given by the girls for not using international sites frequently, which also concerned music-oriented sites such as MySpace (www.myspace.com), which they did not use at all. (Recently, legal issues around YouTube's broadcasting of music videos have made it more difficult to view official music videos on the site, due to record companies breaking their contracts



with YouTube. This was not the case during the fieldwork for the present study.) Social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook (www.facebook.com) are important for young people (boyd, 2008); however, the girls in this study felt that they did not have the necessary knowledge of English to use the sites.³ However, despite all the legal, moral, parental, technical and language issues, about half of the girls still practised filesharing on P2P programs regularly, some as often as every day, and everyone had tried it at least a couple of times.

Computers and mp3 players

As has been mentioned previously, music was played on the computer when the girls were at home. Their listening to music could then be combined with other activities such as chatting on MSN Messenger or doing homework. Music use was interwoven with other media practices and as Nick Couldry (2004) has argued, this is often how media is used, embedded in other social and cultural activities. Music proved to be particularly compatible with other types of computer use because one did not have to watch the music, just listen. A small number of participants in the study had a basic stereo device in their room instead of a computer, which they used to play burned CDs when they did not have access to the family computer.⁴

Mobile technological devices, mp3 players or mobile phones with built-in mp3 players were used to carry music to school or in public places such as buses and streets. According to Michael Bull (2000, 2007), listening devices such as personal stereos and iPods create a private space within the public for their users. These devices are small and portable, and Bull's analysis shows how they help people to micromanage, as a type of controlling behaviour, their time and space in the public realm. The individual sound protects them from, for example, other unwanted sounds or contact with (strange) others. Bull mainly describes the individual uses of portable media players but, among the participants in this study, mp3 players were also socially significant. By listening together, for example by sharing headphones in the classroom, tight social bonds and intimacy were created for some girls, while others were excluded. Sometimes they carried their headphones around their neck in school so everyone could hear the music to which they were listening. Natalie explained this: 'Then I can hear what people say in the hall and so on, but still hear my music too.' Through the transference functions on mobile phones with mp3 players, music could be shared between peers instantly using Bluetooth, thus music was not only shared through its sound but actually transferred between mp3 players. By sending mp3 files between mobile phones the girls also shared a certain social interaction, creating social bonds between those with compatible technology. These are some examples of how mp3 players shaped social interaction while excluding some individuals



depending on the context and the ways in which the devices were managed. The mp3 players' main effect on music use was to allow music to be mobile in tiny devices: most of the girls' players could hold at least 50 songs and were small enough to carry around the neck.

The different media used by the girls in their shared music consumption created a media network in which they circulated musical gifts (Giesler, 2006) among themselves. The network required a range of media to supply the girls with the technical framework needed for their type of music use. Access to television and the internet at home was necessary, as were devices such as computers and mp3 players. To the girls, MSN Messenger and P2P programs held central places in the network of media and media devices.

Music use in the home

Gendered uses of media, technology and music are dependent on material constraints and discursive ideas concerning other power axes. In the UK, researchers have identified a digital divide between those who have access to digital media in the home and those who do not (Lee, 2005; Livingstone and Helsper, 2007). This divide is structured by class, possibly reinforcing class boundaries when the younger generation in 'have not' homes do not develop the same digital media skills (Lee, 2005). There is no doubt that a high family income makes it more likely that a household will contain a large number of technological devices (Livingstone, 2002). However, the relation between digital devices and class are not always so straightforward. In a Norwegian study of mobile phones, Berit Skog discovered that boys from a working-class background held the most advanced mobile technology and that the monetary value of the devices bought them status in their groups of young people from low-income homes (Skog, 2002). Thus advanced mobile technology is a style and taste marker, not only connected to economy but also to cultural values (Bourdieu, 1984).

No clear digital divide shaped the media use of the girls who participated in this study: they all had access to computers, mp3 players, television, the internet and mobile phones in their homes, and this access was provided by their parents or older siblings. None of the girls had a part-time job: they were too young, which meant they had no money of their own except for what their parents gave them. The parents had a range of occupations, their incomes, type of work and living conditions varied, and about one-third of the parents had immigrated to Sweden from the Middle East, Somalia, Turkey or the former Yugoslavia. Differences in class and ethnic backgrounds did not directly affect access to digital media and music in the home, but the quality and quantity of access did differ between the girls, depending on the parents' income and type of work. However, this was not the main social factor shaping music use through



technology in everyday life. During an interview, Isabella explained why her mp3 player was an old model, and not to her liking:

Isabella: I have a new one but my brother took it.

Interviewer: Mean [of him].

Isabella: [ironic] Mmm, cause he's older and should have the best.

According to Isabella, her older brothers regularly appropriated the best media technology in the home. Their dominance affected her ability to listen to music: her (old) mp3 player had a malfunctioning display and could only store a small number of songs. The broken display in particular made it difficult for Isabella to find the songs she wanted to hear. She could not read the names of the songs on the display and this interrupted her listening flow, because it took her longer to find a particular song. As seen in this case, the mp3 player was not a neutral device supplying the means to micro-manage everyday life through private time and space (Bull, 2007). Depending on the function that the media player had in practice (not everyone owns an iPod and not every iPod functions satisfactorily), different experiences were created for Isabella and her social relations played into these experiences. She felt annoyed and disrupted in her time-space continuum when her mp3 player malfunctioned, and this disruption was blamed on social relations in the home; the anger she felt was directed towards the brother who had taken the new mp3 player their parents had bought her. The most obvious finding among the girls was that brothers, especially older brothers, limited their access to media technologies in the home, and with the blessing of parents. Fatma reflected on the placement of another important device for music use, the computer, in her home:

Cause it's like this: the computer [in the living room] is like, slow ... My brother has the [good] computer [with internet access] in his room ... It's, you know, a little weird ... We fight about the computer sometimes, about why he should have it.

Fatma, like Isabella, had unlimited access to the older media technology in the home but her brother controlled the newer devices. This was true for all the girls with older brothers, and for some with younger brothers, new technology was given to the boys in the family. During the time of the study Fatma could use the internet only when her brother was not at home or when he allowed her to be in his room, where the good computer was placed. Thus he limited her use of MSN Messenger and P2P programs by limiting her access to the internet. This in turn affected her acquiring and listening to music through the computer. In her room she could listen to her mp3 player instead and this device held far fewer songs than the computer, which narrowed her musical range and immediate access to new music online. Isabella's and Fatma's experiences were



not unique: all the girls with brothers in the study were limited in their access to media technology in ways that affected their listening to music. This limitation did not exist in the homes of girls with sisters; they said that most often they had full access to the technology or shared equally with other family members.

When asked why her brother had the good computer and broadband connection in his room, Fatma explained that it was because he was older and more skilled with computers – this argument was made by the brother as well as the girls and the parents. Even though Fatma agreed that her brother was older and more skilled than her, she did not consider this social order in the home to be fair, and repeatedly contested it.

Gender was made invisible by the way in which the girls talked about their brothers, framing the problem with age and expertise and contesting it with ideals of equality between all siblings. However, gender seemed to be a very important factor in the creation of the ‘expert’, even though this was not addressed openly. Siblings did compete over technological devices in the study, but the brothers were considered most often by the girls to be the winners and experts in these battles. The linking of technology to boys and men in social interactions at home is not surprising: it has been discussed by many feminist researchers (Berg, 1994; Cockburn and Ormond, 1993; Turkle, 1995). For example, Sonia Livingstone (2002) has shown that families with sons place the computers in their rooms more often, whereas families with only daughters are more likely to place the computer in a common area. This was consistent with the location of computers and the ownership of all technological devices in this study. However, if a family had several computers, the daughter may have one in her own room, but then it was rarely the most advanced computer in the home.

Regarding the idea of boys and men as technological experts, Nina Wakeford (1999) has shown, in her study of an internet cafe in London, that often women are considered to be less skilled with computers than men. In her study, female staff experienced customers asking them to help with easier tasks, and asking male staff for advanced technical help. This was contested by both female and male staff: they sometimes employed strategies to work around their gendering by customers, since the female ‘cyberhosts’ at the cafe had been employed longer and had a higher level of expertise in solving technical problems than the men (Wakeford, 1999). This did not change how the gendered pattern affected the social interaction at the cafe, constructing the men as experts regardless of their efforts to make it an equal workplace. A similar pattern emerged between the girls and their brothers: even if a girl was more skilled than her brother in using computers and he acknowledged this, she was not perceived as the expert in the social milieu of the home. Fatma reflected on how her skills with P2P programs were appreciated by her brother:



Fatma: All of these [songs] ... I downloaded them. Yes. He [the brother] says to me, like: 'Fatma, I found a good song that you could like too, it's like...' so he writes me a note and I download it ...

Interviewer: Okay, so he has the computer but you do the downloading?

Fatma: Yes.

Interviewer: Why?

Fatma: I don't know [laughs]. He can't find them. I'm always the one that has to download.

Fatma's media knowledge did not change her brother's role as expert or his primary access to the computer, but it allowed her to use it when he also needed new music, and in this way her skills helped her to gain access to the technology. In Tess's home, her younger brother took a similar place to Fatma's brother. In this case, Tess claimed he was actually much better than her with computers, which seemed to override the age order of access in the home. However, as we have already seen, expertise did not help Fatma much in her access. The intersection of ideas about the (masculine) expert, age and the technology available was not self-evident. First, ideas about expertise and age concealed the fact that technological access in the home was highly dependent on gender; second, the limitation in access was not absolute: girls with brothers did have access to a lot of technology and music, although not always the best technology. The fact that the presence of young men in the home was consistent with increasing technology ownership meant that some of the girls who did not have brothers had better devices, but girls with brothers had access to more devices. Tina was the only child in a middle-class home and had unlimited access to her own computer with broadband and an expensive mobile phone with a mp3 player, but these were the only two music-use devices she owned. There were a handful of girls in the same situation as Tina. On the one hand, Isabella and Julia, who showed me a drawer of older mp3 players and mobile phones her brother stored in his room, were given hand-me-downs from their brothers and had a lot of devices at hand. On the other hand, one might ask what the purpose of having many mp3 players would be: listening to music is best served by one device that functions well.

To conclude the argument about access to media technology for music consumption in the home: social relations, of mainly gender and age, shaped the girls' media use and thus their music listening. Girls in middle-class homes who were the only child had the best access to good technology and could micro-manage their own music listening: they were more likely to spend a lot of time online and have advanced media technology. However, girls from homes with brothers had as many or more media devices (of older lower quality); they also had as much or more music than the others because there were more people in the household who collected music.



In addition, their acquisition of new music was not affected as much by the lack of access as their listening.

Conclusion

The idea of technological convergence (i.e. all media technology converging into one device) was popular throughout the 1990s, together with the idea of users' convergence (i.e. users converging their uses of different media into a democratization process; Jenkins, 2006). However, the number of incompatible new media, or media that do not work for different reasons, suggests that convergence is an alluring theoretical idea rather than an actual trend in media culture (Fagerjord and Storsul, 2007). The manifold media – hardware and software – used by girls to discover, receive and listen to music indicated a multiplicity rather than a convergence of media. Among the teenage girls in this study, many devices were needed to keep up the social exchange and use of music, and nothing in their media practices indicated convergence of these devices. Instead, they constantly needed to negotiate and upgrade diverse media technology, proving that today's media practices are complex, multiple and contradictory. Nonetheless, the multiplicity of media uses shaped their music use: music television made it visual, MSN Messenger made transfers between friends free and instant, P2P programs made most music accessible and mp3 players made it possible to listen to music anywhere.

The network of media changed the musical experience for the young people in this study, mainly by enabling music mobility on several levels. The rapid movement of music between the girls, the P2P programs' huge musical content, the updates of what was new on music television and the way music could be carried everywhere, made music accessible all the time and on the move. Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry (2006) argue that society today is increasingly cosmopolitan and mobile on three levels: people travel more and are physically and bodily more mobile; imaginative travel through media such as television allows us to know other places without travelling there; and there is the possibility of virtual travel that transcends space between people, such as social interaction on the internet (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006). Music use can be applied to all these levels: often, music is listened to when travelling and moving in public space and music travels and moves easier with digital technologies; it provides a window to places far away, and can be sent to others over small or large distances as a social communication tool.

Media practices also intersected with ideas about gender and social practices of power and identity in the home. Moreover, the girls' positions within social power dynamics interacted with the media system and music use. The idea that power shapes the kind of mobility that people experience, or how mobile they can be, has been discussed by Szerszynski and Urry. Cosmopolitanism, as it has been described, is class-specific and



positions of class and gender are connected with mobility: working-class women are the least mobile, according to Szerszynskis and Urry's (2006) research. Despite the possibilities of new media, gendered discourse on technology and music prevailed among the girls and circumvented their access to mobile technology and music. Changes of technology and music use do not necessarily bring change in power structures. The brothers' material control over technology at home and their position as perceived experts had a negative influence on the mobility and quality of their sisters' music use.

Finally, even though P2P programs provided 'free music', the music consumption of these girls was separate neither from global capitalism nor from power relations in the family: many commercially sold devices were purchased by the girls' parents. There was a persistence of traditional views on ownership in the interviews; filesharing was not condoned, but it was practised. Thus ideas of consumption were in no way under threat for these girls: they were merely relocating it to other consumer goods. To conclude, the mediated uses of music for these young people were interwoven with structures of power and ideas of identity and consumption. The use of media for music consumption was an articulation of both the changing media landscape and existing power structures. Together, the two shaped the everyday discovery, listening to and circulation of music.

Notes

1. The aim here is not to decide if filesharing is possible to defend morally. I merely wish to discuss what the girls did and how they talked about their actions. I conclude that these musical practices have a history that precedes digitalization.
2. It was difficult to determine what came first, but there were connections between technical skills and musical expertise.
3. Many of them had been users of a Swedish social networking site, Lunarstorm (www.lunarstorm.se), but considered this a bit childish, something they had outgrown.
4. Some of them even had both a computer and a stereo, but most often used the computer to play music.

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