

Conflict and Compromise: Drama in Marketplace Evolution

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How do markets change? Findings from a 7-year longitudinal processual investigation of consumer performances in the war on music downloading suggest that markets in the cultural creative sphere (those organizing the exchange of intellectual goods such as music, movies, software, and the written word) evolve through stages of perpetual structural instability. Each stage addresses an enduring cultural tension between countervailing utilitarian and possessive ideals. Grounded in anthropology and consumer behavior, I illustrate this historical dynamic through the process of marketplace drama, a fourfold sequence of performed conflict among opposing groups of consumers and producers. Implications for theorizing on market system dynamics and the consumption of performance are offered.

What record companies don't really understand is that [music downloading] is just one illustration of the growing frustration over how much the record companies control what music people get to hear, over how the air waves, record labels and record stores, which are now all part of this "system" that recording companies have pretty much succeeded in establishing, are becoming increasingly dominated by musical "products" to the detriment of real music. Why should the record company have such control over how he, the music lover, wants to experience the music? From the point of view of the real music lover, what's currently going on can only be viewed as an exciting new development in the history of music. And, fortunately for him, there does not seem to be anything the old record companies can do about preventing this evolution from happening. (Prince 2001; spelled-out version)

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Musical artist Prince's epic speech is a scene from one of the great market stories of our time. The war on music downloading is a tale of triumph and tragedy; a saga of heroes, villains and victims; and an allegory of conflict and reconciliation. Driven by the central question of what defines an appropriate economic and cultural use of music in the digital age, the war on music downloading has taken us all the way from the rise and fall of Napster's original community of sharing to the triumph of Apple's iTunes Music Store—and beyond.

How do markets change? There can be little doubt that the process of market evolution is central to marketing, and yet it is surprising to find such a paucity of empirical research addressing it. Perhaps this hesitancy stems from the fact that the processual understanding of how markets change requires the analysis of complex socioeconomic systems over time. As the war on music downloading indicates, market evolution is a result of many interacting historical forces, including changes through technological innovation, competitive pressures, and the legitimational struggles among opposing groups of consumers and producers. Like Prince, these stakeholders not only do things but also show themselves and others dramatically what they are doing and have done. They exemplify Deighton's (1992) foundational argument that markets are theatrical "stages" on which market "actors" present themselves and their actions in such a manner as to fashion desired "impressions" before an "audience." When consumption is performance, market evolution may be understood as a drama. It may be through the historical process of performed cultural conflict among divergent market stakeholders that new products emerge, old ones disappear, and market structure evolves.

The idea of cultural change as drama has sparked considerable theoretical interest outside of marketing. Anthro-

pologist Victor Turner (1988) has used the metaphor of social drama to explain how processes of cultural change are dealt with. These processes occur in all social systems—from state to family. They arise out of conflict situations (e.g., a region rises up against the state, a husband beats his wife) and always proceed to their denouement over four dramatic acts. In the first act, a breach is made visible by the infraction of social norms. The second act is a crisis or extension of the breach, during which antagonists take a more radical stance toward the other side and the breach widens publicly. The response inaugurates the third act, the application of redressive mechanisms to restore normalcy. If they succeed, the breach is healed (reintegration). If they fail, it is accepted as incapable of remedy, and things fall apart into various sorts of unhappy endings (e.g., a village falls into lasting factions, a couple divorces).

The goal of this article is to present a conceptualization that explains how markets change. I develop the construct of marketplace drama, which builds on Turner's fundamental process of social drama. I define a marketplace drama as a fourfold sequence of antagonistic performances among opposing groups of consumers and producers through which their divergent ideological goals are attained and the economic and competitive characteristics of specific market structures are transformed. This formulation offers a useful mechanism for examining how a market system's ideals, norms, and values are historically institutionalized in a dramatic market narrative that provides the dynamic meaning system in which various market calculations about price-value relationships historically unfold.

To reveal the process of marketplace drama, I analyze the war on music downloading on two mutually constituted dramatic levels. Next, I explain how tacit understandings regarding the appropriate use of music as a cultural resource are historically institutionalized in a canonical market narrative that provides the overarching meaning system in which music market evolution unfolds. After that, I show how individual consumers have dramatically acted on and interpreted this narrative to legitimate their personal downloading practices. The concluding section synthesizes the findings from these two analysis modes to a model of market evolution in the cultural creative sphere and provides implications for future research on market system dynamics and the consumption of performance.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Before undertaking a more in-depth analysis of consumer performances in the war on music downloading, it is necessary to review the larger cultural context in which they are embedded. The music market is a system of cultural and economic practice within the cultural creative sphere, the larger field of forces and social relations that determines the appropriate cultural and commercial value of music, movies, the written word, software, fashion, and other creative ideas. Overview studies in this area (Hull 2004; May and Sell 2005; Vogel 1998) consistently distinguish between two competing cultural creative ideals: one accentuating the pub-

lic access to creative ideas, social exchange, and cultural interests and the other emphasizing the private ownership of creative ideas, economic exchange, and authorial interests. Next, I review these salient ideals—they are described herein as social utilitarianism and possessive individualism. After that, I show how the contradictions between them have been resolved in a historically institutionalized narrative of intellectual property.

Social Utilitarianism

One ideal prominently encountered in the cultural creative sphere is that of social utilitarianism. In its most basic philosophical form, social utilitarianism is a theory of ethics that postulates the maximization of good consequences for all members of a society (Bentham 1789/1984; Condorcet 1776/1979; Cornman 1992; Mill 1861/2005). Hence, in its music market application, social utilitarianism emphasizes that music as a cultural resource is the fruit of a collective process of discovery that must be equally and simultaneously accessed and experienced by all (Vogel 1998). While the modern conception of social utilitarianism is steeped in an objectivist tradition of thought whereby the human mind and its creations are universal properties of nature, the ideal of social utilitarianism is rooted in pre-modern constructions of God (or the gods) as the source of all knowledge (Cornman 1992). In Judeo-Christian tradition, Moses received the law from Yahweh and freely transmitted it to the people chosen to hear it.

In the utilitarian perspective, all individual actions are judged by their ability to maximize the collective good. Put to its extremes, any loss to the individual creator can always be justified by a greater gain to the public (Bentham 1789/1984). This purist interpretation is deeply rooted in a modern libertarian philosophical tradition. In his essay *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill (1861/2005, 7) made the central point that utilitarianism requires political arrangements to satisfy the liberty principle, according to which “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.” Since ideas are discovered and not created, its sharing is seen as a service to the interpreter. Conversely, creators cannot have inviolable rights to their ideas. This utilitarian principle has given ideological traction to progressive, antiauthoritarian, and anticapitalist cultural agendas promoting forms of creative collectivism and generous sharing as legitimate vehicles of cultural experience and learning against profit-driven, capitalist, and conservative agendas promoting the privatization and protection of creative ideas and the surveillance of their consumption.

Possessive Individualism

Another salient cultural creative ideal is that of possessive individualism. In its most basic form, possessive individualism refers to a legacy of Enlightenment philosophies promoting the possessive autonomy of the intellectual subject (Descartes 1641/1996; Fichte 1796/1998; Locke 1690/2002).

In its music market application, possessive individualism emphasizes that intellectual labor gives a musician a natural right of property in what he produces (Locke 1690/2002; Vogel 1998). So, in contrast to the ideal of social utilitarianism, where music is constructed as a universal collective property (Condorcet 1776/1979), possessive individualists claim that a musical composition can only be owned by its originator. For proponents of possessive individualism, the creator not only does work upon nature but also produces something from himself that bears the indelible stamp of a unique personality. A corollary idea is that, while ideas in general belong to all (Attali 1985), the singular form of their expression remains the sole property of its interpreter (Fichte 1796/1998). Even ideas that are “in the air” become a personal property through the unique way in which an artist expresses them.

In the possessive individualism model, all actions are judged by their ability to maximize the individual good of the creator (Lessig 2001). Put to its extremes, any loss to the public can always be justified by the creator’s right to maintain originality. Consequently, proponents of possessive individualism deny that culture has inviolable rights to creative ideas. Cultural meanings arising from the tradition of possessive individualism have facilitated the construction of the creator as “author,” defined as the individual who can authorize his or her work for public consumption. The author as an impervious cultural role has also given ideological traction to profit-oriented, conservative, and capitalist agendas positioning the privatization of creative ideas and far-reaching forms of surveillance of creative consumption as appropriate measures against unlimited forms of the sharing of ideas. The blending of creative and commercial considerations has also driven the popular idea of “trying to make the offspring of one’s imagination as profitable as possible” (Tawani 2005, 7).

The Narrative of Intellectual Property

Social utilitarians and possessive individualists endorse contradictory creative ideals, and the trade-offs inherent to their position have precluded either camp from gaining a clear cultural advantage over the other (May and Sell 2005). Social utilitarians lack a clear rationale for managing the economic incentives for generating creative ideas, while possessive individualists find it difficult to integrate the economic interests of creators with the interest of society. The apparatus that is commonly presented in the cultural creative sphere as the solution to this puzzle is a modern copyright law that prescribes a limited ownership and use of creative ideas (Vogel 1998). For a limited time, this law grants authors a right to own their creations and license their use to consumers. After that, the creations fall into the public domain.

However, this legal solution is a placeholder for an ongoing societal debate over the best means to balance the social utilitarian and possessive individualist positions, both of which present resonate cultural and societal arguments. On the one hand, the governing institutions of modern society must guarantee the sufficient distribution of creative ideas for the purpose of cultural education and development. On the

other hand, these institutional forces must also acknowledge the commercial viability of creative ideas as the necessary precondition for all cultural development. Over time, the fissures in this legal solution have enabled a discursive system that frames these cultural debates in terms of an often impassioned and ideologically charged narrative of intellectual property (Hesse 2002). This narrative emphasizes compromises between the utilitarian and the possessive in order to mitigate the negative societal implications of each ideal.

In the mid-nineteenth century, for example, one narrative articulation of intellectual property assisted in the legitimization of the new publishing class, a group of commercial stakeholders poised to manage and profit from the rapidly expanding economic interface between the cultural and the possessive dimensions of artistic production (May and Sell 2005). At the time, commercial printers of unauthorized literary and musical works had been heralded as champions of the public good. However, publishers debunked free printing as a form of zealous mercantilism that ignored the author’s natural ownership rights. By demonizing printers as a pirate class who were “abusing” technology to do harm and who were violating the principles of intellectual property, publishers conquered important socioeconomic territory and laid the institutional cornerstone for the global publishing industry of the twentieth century.

As this vignette exemplifies, the narrative of intellectual property is not monolithic. Rather, the countervailing utilitarian and possessive ideals reproduce cultural contradictions linked to competing economic and cultural interests. They provide ideological instabilities that set the stage for alternative narrative dramatizations based on different utilitarian and authorial configurations that imbue market interests with existential and moral significance. The narrative of intellectual property formulates a mandate for a compromise between sharing and owning through market practice. Yet it leaves as an open question exactly what constitutes the right blending. This dynamic sets the stage for music market evolution through performed cultural conflict.

For instance, the contemporary music market presents a tenuous compromise between countervailing utilitarian and possessive considerations, one which leans considerably toward the possessive side. This state of affairs has provoked consumers to admonish greater fidelity to utilitarian ideals. They contend that the music industry poses a threat to artistic originality, that it is treating music as a commodity and selling it overpriced, and that managers’ zealous lobbying to buttress the legal apparatus (Digital Millennium Copyright Act 1998) is an effort to curb important consumer freedoms (see Denegri-Knott [2004], and Eshun [1998] for a discussion of these main critiques). Conversely, a music consumption practice that radically sheers out of line toward the utilitarian extreme will drive critics on the industry side to admonish greater fidelity to possessive ideals. Hence, the tensions between utilitarian and possessive ideals will set a marketplace drama in motion that pushes conflicting stakeholder groups toward a tenuous new compromise, thereby shifting particular music market structures. To illustrate how this narrative-perfor-

mance dynamic has operated in the war on music downloading, I will now turn to the analysis of downloaders' self-dramatizations between 1999 and 2006.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Based on the cultural innovation of the decentralized sharing of music as a free gift (Giesler 2006), music downloading is a utilitarian consumption style that presents an overt deviation from traditional centralized music consumption routines and, as such, an invitation to cultural legitimation through dramatic performance. Hence, the war on music downloading can be conceptualized in terms of downloaders' recurring attempts to sustain legitimacy for their countercultural music consumption style against redressive music industry maneuvers (Kates 2002). On the performance level, this dynamic evokes Holt and Thompson's (2004) theory of mundane drama, according to which individual consumer performances are motivated by internal contradictions between tacit ideological appeals and personal experiences. These performances will provoke redressive corporate maneuvers that, in turn, will set the stage for new legitimational enactments. Thus, a longitudinal processual analysis of music downloaders' self-dramatizations should illustrate marketplace drama in a historical perspective.

Data Collection and Analysis

My immersion into the cultural context of music downloading began parallel to an ongoing 10-year career as a label owner and music producer. Around 1999, I was managing a record label and music production firm in Germany and was writing and publishing my own music. My first encounter with music downloading was, like that of many recording industry executives, rather traumatic. In November 1999, I discovered dozens of my own copyrighted songs on Napster, among them a fair share of unpublished material that had made its way online through a leak in the studios. This discovery stimulated my interest in better understanding the impact of downloading on the future of the music market. It also marked the beginning of my data collection. The following year, I was invited to join Northwestern University's marketing department as a visiting scholar, bringing me closer to students' on-campus music downloading. Simultaneous experiential participation in recording industry circles and student downloading culture permitted me to observe and understand contrasting perspectives in action and provided valuable interpretive tensions throughout the entire research process.

The third experiential dimension that played a fundamental role in this project concerned downloader interchanges occurring through netnographic research channels (Kozinets 1997), including all major music downloading platforms, and also downloading newsgroups, chat forums, related websites, personal e-mail correspondence, and correspondence through a research project Web site (<http://www.napsterresearch.com>).

Couched within this combination of online and offline

fieldwork, I conducted in-depth interviews (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989) with 20 self-proclaimed downloaders (aged 16–30, $M = 21$, 60% male). Up to six interviews ($M = 3$) were conducted over time with each informant (face-to-face, via phone, or online), eliciting, in an exploratory fashion, their personal downloading and other music consumption experiences and thoughts. I also collected historical material, including court documents, press releases, newspaper articles, and activism and public relations material. Data collection was finished after 7 years in June 2006, a time at which additional data were unlikely to alter emergent interpretations.

Following a mesolevel research tradition in Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) that studies consumption as a practice of ideological reproduction and resistance (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 873), I analyzed the verbatim quotes using the part-whole process of hermeneutic analysis (Thompson 1997). First, I conducted an intratextual analysis treating each interview as a separate ego drama. Next, in an intertextual analysis, I developed thematic commonalities among contemporaneous interview cases. Here, I sought to unpack the most recurrent themes of dramatic meanings that contextualized these individual dramas and to summarize them into overarching "hero models" (Holt and Thompson 2004). Finally, I conducted an intertemporal analysis to link these models to different stages of a chronological process.

The marketplace drama process that culminated from my hermeneutic analysis is presented in figure 1 (informed by Holt's [2002] branding/consumer-culture dialectic). The historical progression of the war on music downloading between 1999 and 2006 is represented in terms of four consecutive hero models employed by downloaders and contextualized in relation to music industry maneuvers: hacker, sonic warrior, sonic pacifist, and cyberpunk. Each model represents a particular heroic deed, a heroic image, and a corporate villain. In the following, I use music downloader excerpts and historical inferences to explain and support each act of this marketplace drama.

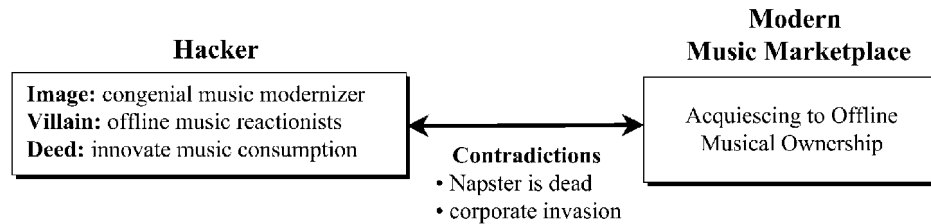
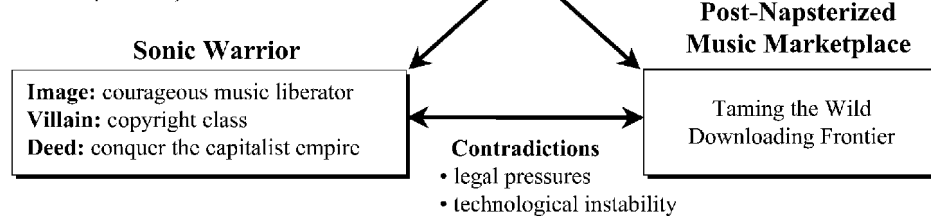
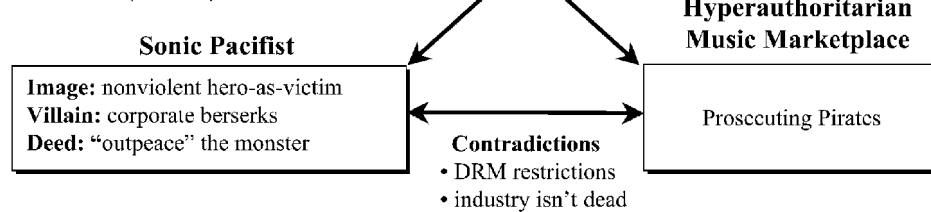
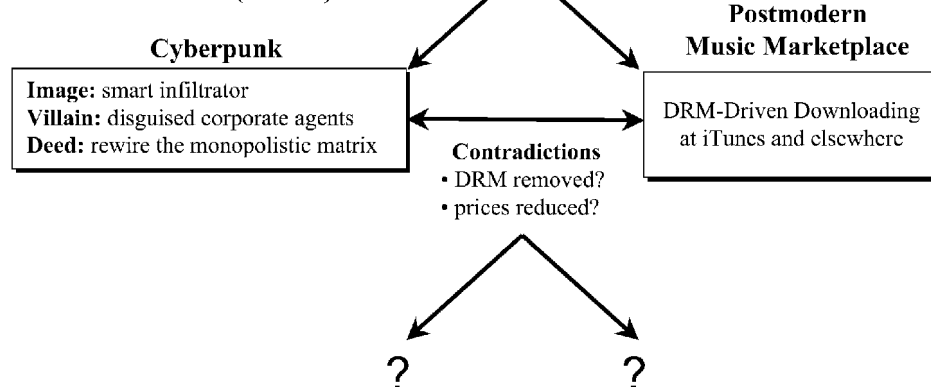
The Hacker: Creative Pioneering during the Breach (1999–2001)

Social dramas begin with a breach of norm-governed social relations, "a publicly visible infraction of routines ordinarily held to be binding" (Turner 1988, 34). Such a transgression of norms was also evident in the war on music downloading. The breach occurred in the fall of 1999 with the emergence of Napster, the first example of a new music consumption style referred to as peer-to-peer file sharing. I begin my analysis with the symbolic legitimation of Christian, a first-generation downloader. In his interview, Christian provides myriad reasons why downloading is a noble consumption style:

So I'm into old music, you know, the kind of stuff you don't find in the stores. I found a way to transfer my vinyl to Napster using WaveLab [a music editing software] and an MP3 encoder. This is a lot of work, but it's also a lot of fun.

FIGURE 1

THE WAR ON MUSIC DOWNLOADING, 1999–2006

BREACH (1999–2001):**CRISIS (2001–3):****REDRESS (2003–5):****REINTEGRATION (2005→):**

So I spend entire weekends transferring and cataloguing all the old cuts. Then I transfer my song lists on the message board and let other people know what I have uploaded. They can download my songs, and I’m happy when someone else does similar things. . . . And there is a ton of old music available here at Napster. . . . So, as I said before, I’m a lot more active and creative in contributing to music culture as a whole and helping to promote good music in particular. . . . It’s important that Napster is not just a way of getting

music for free. It’s a great new way of doing more with your music.

Christian exemplifies hacker heroism. He is a “musical creative” of the downloading age, spending endless hours selecting, converting, editing, and uploading rare music, giving more than taking, and, above all, tirelessly contributing to a movement of music cultural pioneers that have set out to futurize the music market. Christian is an active and

creative cultural producer, a generous helper, and a selfless innovator. For Christian and many other downloaders of the first generation, Napster presented an archivist's delight, rather than a leech's dream—a music community, an expert forum for sonic connoisseurs, a treasure trove for rare cuts, a support network for small artists, in short, the utopian future of music consumption. While the recording industry managers could innovate the music market by promoting a new medium such as the DVD, they would never be able to fully replicate the powers of egalitarian technology, grassroots cultural production, rare-track music sharing, and the genuine feelings of the online musical community.

To understand the roots of the hacker hero, meet 19-year-old Shawn Fanning, the quiet college dropout who programmed the Napster software as an antidote to the boring offline music landscape at the time. As a *Time* magazine article (Greenfeld and Taro 2000, 61) portrayed him, "He didn't need friends, family, financing—he almost went without food. He was self-sufficient, gaining sustenance and strength from the work, as if by his hands he was creating his own manna. And if the idea could nourish him, he reasoned, then how many others could feed on it as well?" When, as Belk and Tumbat (2005) suggest, there is a spiritual foundation myth in every consumer cult, then this vignette introduces music downloaders' foundation myth. The media discourse of the late 1990s was used to cast the notorious Web mavericks of the time and their inventions in a supernatural light. Now stories on music downloading spun Shawn Fanning's innovative music consumption style together with dramatic elements of teen-driven cultural creativity and pioneering that emphasized that little things can make a big difference and that ordinary people can do great things.

Fanning played to a populist strain of the hacker myth holding that real genius is not a question of degrees, money, and other bogus criteria but one of real creativity, improvisation, and a passion for improving things (Himanen and Torvalds 2001). Consequently, during the breach act, the heroic framing of the hacker as a grassroots cultural pioneer readily transferred to musical youth, embellishing their interest in free online music with a cool mantle centering on downloaders as an ingenious and unselfish community of cultural producers. A good example of how early downloaders leveraged this pioneer narrative to position their consumption style is that of Nick. Consider how the hacker heroism assists in his downloader self-legitimation:

When label people think about music, all they think about are the CDs. That's the way it works for them. Ask your average label guy about this and that song, and he will start talking about chart entries, production costs, marketing, that sort of thing, you know? But this is not what music is all about. When you ask me about a song I come up with, let's say, that party last year, the girl from high school, this and that experience, you know? So I think in terms of relationships here, and that goes far beyond [the industry's] focus. But that's exactly the revolutionary aspect of Napster, I mean, the relationships. You can go into a room of strangers and ask them if they know Nirvana. And suddenly they have

something in common. You have that Nirvana song, someone else has a bootleg you didn't know before, and so on. So that's the innovative concept behind Napster. The value is not in the CD but in the relationships that people establish.

Like Christian, Nick draws on Napster's potential to stimulate positive cultural behaviors of sharing and caring. The hacker had no problems leveraging the most compelling contribution of Napster's downloading to music culture: its utilitarian potential. Yet, as shown in the narrative analysis, merely positioning downloaders in the utilitarian camp would set the stage for critics clamoring about a lack of possessive acquiescence. The solution to this ideological challenge lay in the immaturity of music downloading itself. Not only were cultural observers generally overwhelmed by this new music consumption style but downloaders also lionized the "hacker" as a pioneer and pioneers are themselves heroic figures because they take risks to open new, socially beneficial territories. The same subjective philosophy of the creative genius that accounts for the ideal of possessive individualism also grants the cultural pioneer a temporary license to override possessive conformity to advance the public good. Frank's expression vividly captures the rhetorical power of the pioneer's freedom to buck the rules of the establishment:

This is not the time to lose oneself in nitty-gritty discussions about who should get what piece of the big downloading pie. It's big enough to feed everyone, so why don't we just pause for a moment and celebrate this exciting new development? . . . This is a fantastic opportunity for everyone including, especially, artists and labels. Downloading will allow them to get closer to their fans and experience the music with them. So, for example, the labels can better understand what the new musical styles are that people want to hear and also discover new artists that are hot on the Web. This is also useful for small artists who can use Napster as a powerful distribution mechanism. Take Radio Head. If it wasn't for Napster, the band would not be that rich and famous by now.

Frank offers a vague possessive promise that hints at the potential of downloading to bring artists and fans closer. He refers to the opportunity for labels to use downloading as a research tool and for small artists to present their work to the cyberspace community. He even refers to the miraculous Napster story of the alternative band Radio Head. The huge commercial success of their minimalist album *Kid A* in 2000 had been generously attributed both to massive hype and to the early availability of all the songs on Napster.

Other hackers were even more abstract and esoteric in their descriptions, envisioning a Utopian future where the downloading platforms would become more than the sum of their parts and function as a cybernetic system that would unleash a creative revolution and break down the institutional boundaries between cultural producers and consumers. Less techno-utopian visions sketched musicians of the future as Internet-connected entrepreneurial one-man shows who, thanks to downloading's supernatural powers, would

be able to reach an audience of millions at the ease of a mouse click. Romantic interpretations envisioned downloaders as a community of notorious do-gooders who, once one-on-one with their musical idols, would bury them under a cornucopia of voluntary donations. In summary, the discourse of Christian, Nick, Frank, and the other interviewed downloaders downplayed possessive concerns by emphasizing downloaders' heroic grand tour efforts in ripping congealed music market routines apart and wrestling with unorthodox solutions. Another hacker brought this point home quite effectively: "Did Galileo have to lay out the next 400 years of astronomy only because he found that the earth is not a disc?"

The Sonic Warrior: Brave Resistance during the Crisis (2001–2003)

Following Turner (1988, 34), a breach can swell to a crisis when antagonists take a more radical stance toward the other side and intensify their dramatic tone. Such a crisis phase was also manifest in the war on music downloading, where, around 2001, downloaders' performance focus began to shift dramatically. To understand this shift and the historical developments that led to it, let us begin once again with Christian, the downloader who, in the previous section, gave us a powerful presentation of the hacker's pioneering noblesse circa 1999. In a follow-up interview that was conducted 2 years later, in 2001, Christian reports on a performative mode of downloading that is hardly hacker style:

Last fall when they executed Napster we thought it was time for some action. So we organized a "Music Must Be Free" week. We did a range of things, you know, we had banners, flyers, painting the Rock [a boulder on Northwestern University campus that serves as a canvas for public political expression]. . . . Some of us were dressed as slave-driving label managers, you know, men in black, with a whip and a megaphone. We had symbolic artists and consumers pull us around campus in shopping carts. . . . So every downloader who walked by was tied to the cart with a lacing cord. In the end, we had these huge 30-people clusters, living metaphors of music copyright slavery. . . . Usually students can't agree on anything, but this turned out to be one of the most unifying and powerful campaigns I have ever seen.

Christian's performance is pure activist drama (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Striking a combative pose, he promotes the idea that merely engaging in creative pioneering is no longer enough. Christian laments shameless capitalist oppression and greed beyond the veil of a music industry that claims loyalty to possessive ideals. Music managers are seen as slave drivers, and the time has come to liberate innocent artists and consumers from their stranglehold.

To understand the rise of this aggressive attitude, we must consider the countervailing maneuvers that Napster's noisy appearance had sparked. In 2000, an antidownloading coalition consisting mainly of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the rock band Metallica filed

suit against Napster for facilitating copyright infringement. In the subsequent marathon trial that resulted in Napster's ultimate shutdown in 2001, RIAA president Hillary Rosen left out no occasion to demonize Napster's community as a pirate nest that was responsible for declining music sales. Similarly, in his famous testimony before Congress, Metallica's drummer Lars Ulrich warned that Napster hijacked music without asking and that it was nothing else but old-fashioned trafficking in stolen goods. Furthermore, when, in October 2001, media giant Bertelsmann announced it would drop out of the RIAA lawsuit against Napster and instead turn it into a commercial downloading service, the front pages featured an odd couple: Bertelsmann's CEO Thomas Middelhoff shaking hands with alpha hacker Shawn Fanning.

At the same time, free downloading was on a meteoric rise. With each month of the ongoing legal conflict, the number of Napster users had tripled and finally peaked at over 37 million users. In addition, new and technologically advanced downloading platforms, including Kazaa, LimeWire, eDonkey, and Gnutella, emerged and rapidly expanded. Because these platforms were no longer coordinated by a system of central servers, as in Napster's case, intellectuals celebrated them as definite proof for the dawn of a "post-copyright music culture" (Lessig 2001, 163). Especially when cast in this critical light, the industry's aggressive campaign against Napster produced a very reactionary silhouette. Other critics saw a looming threat of capitalism's dominance over authorial freedoms. These observers, among them the artists Prince, Courtney Love, and Bob Dylan, jumped on the downloading bandwagon to accuse the recording industry of exploiting possessive ideals to justify "profane" capitalist agendas that, in turn, accelerated the decline of "real" music and fostered the systematic alienation of fans (Prince [2001], quoted at the beginning of this article).

Fueled by these and other populist resources, the hero model that sprang up to fend off the legitimization threat to downloaders centered on a new rebel figure, the sonic warrior. As Christian's quote demonstrates, this new hero allowed downloaders to rhetorically dismiss the commercial push against free downloading as a form of capitalist oppression. Downloading was seen as a legitimate form of civil disobedience against a capitalist hegemony that had come to enslave consumers and artists alike.

Consider next how downloaders used sonic warrior heroism during the crisis phase to sustain legitimacy for their countercultural consumption style. Downloaders were activists, and activists are cast by some as cultural heroes because they courageously fight against and diminish the destructive influence of malevolent capitalist elites on the general social good (Touraine 1981). In other words, the warrior emphasized that the equilibrium between sharing and owning as a whole was threatened by an overarching capitalist evil. By endorsing the activist's heroic defense of both authorial and cultural interests against unbounded corporate arbitrariness and superstar greed, downloaders rhetorically inverted the stigma of

possessive disrespect thrown at them by the industry. Consider, in this context, the following three warrior vignettes:

Jeffrey: Why doesn't someone tell these industry big shots that we don't give three pieces of crap about their latest teen sensation? We don't care about your latest album of the week. I and a lot of similar people . . . actually boosted the sales of rarer CDs, often by people who wrote their own songs, meaning more money went to those struggling artists. But when the man's million-zillion dollar teen slut might not make him the moolah he wants, they shut the shop up.

Anna: Who is infringing copyright laws here? Who is the pirate? The consumer? Really? In this day and age when big money is plundering culture, the consumers are the thieves? Yeah, right. There is nothing wrong with the idea of protecting artists. But when copyright becomes a weapon to accuse the small people and let the bad guys get away with it, then it is no longer the fair system it was originally intended to be. Maybe copyright is no longer needed. After all, downloading is really all we need.

Robert: [Downloading] is beneficial to all musicians except to the rich motherfuckers who don't even need their album to go five times platinum instead of four because of illegal piracy. . . . Fuck you, all you mainstream gold diggers who only care about corporate music and not actual appreciation for the music itself. Music is an art, not a clever marketing ploy. Unfortunately there are too many suckers in the world to realize that fact, that record companies control their lives and their perceptions. Corporate rock, . . . fuck you!

This flamboyant repertoire of sonic warrior rhetoric sheds a critical light on post-Napster music culture. For these commentators, the problem is an elite of money-driven managers who tantalize innocent artists with promises of big paydays and who lull their passive audience with the hypnotic dances of their "million-zillion dollar teen sluts." These superstar artists are seen as untalented puppets, while copyright is constructed as the mechanism through which obedience is maintained. The solution to this totalitarian reality is seen in downloaders who care and share, as well as "real" artists who respect their fans and who write their "own" songs. An industry that had betrayed artists and consumers justified the warrior mandate to civil disobedience through downloading. Hence, downloading was not a cultural transgression, as producers promoted, but rather a liberatory move away from aesthetic and cultural repression.

The Sonic Pacifist: Peaceful Endurance during the Redress (2003–2005)

Following Turner (1988, 34), a crisis phase is followed by a phase of redress in which representatives of order perform disciplinary actions aimed at reintegrating the defiant social group and limiting the crisis situation. By 2003, "The Year the Music Dies" (*WIRED* magazine), the war on music downloading moved into a historical phase of redress. With an average of 5 million global simultaneous downloaders

(Big Champagne 2006) and new peer-to-peer platforms still emerging (e.g., BitTorrent), music downloading had established itself as a ubiquitous music consumption style. Commercial music sales, however, went down in the fourth consecutive year since the emergence of Napster (Recording Industry Association of America 2004). Attempts to conquer downloading territory with legal services such as Pressplay and Musicnet had been met with moderate success. Whereas the free systems were easily accessible and bursting with music, unattractive payment models and structural problems pertaining to fragmented music ownership rights slowed the creation of competitive legal online music catalogs.

Once again, the recording industry adjusted managerial gears. A new turbocharged antidownloading ideology took hold, this one centering not just on the downloading platforms but also on the individual sharers. While space limitations preclude a detailed examination of this complex redressive maneuver (see Denegri-Knott [2004] for a detailed analysis), central to my investigation are the industry's legal activities. Between 2003 and 2005, for instance, the RIAA filed over 10 thousand lawsuits against individual downloaders. So-called John Doe suits were filed in bulk against anonymous sharers whose identity was retrieved through court orders from Internet service providers. From there, the RIAA offered downloaders a chance to settle the complaint or to go to court and fight it (Mamatas 2005).

These bulk lawsuits, while cheap for the industry, could be extremely costly for downloaders who had to expect settlement amounts between US\$3,000 and US\$7,000. In many cases, the anonymous John Does turned out to be minors, parents who had never downloaded music, tenants whose predecessors had downloaded music, families without Internet-connected computers, and even dead people (Woodworth 2004). The goal was to generate what performance scholar Richard Schechner (1988, 242) calls "crisis victims," inconspicuous enemy prototypes in common social group contexts (families, schools, companies, etc.) publicly denounced to show what would happen to everyone else if they failed to comply.

As the recording industry veered toward punitive extremes of dramatic warfare, the contradictions between the sonic warrior model and the realities of music downloading became acute. As one informant pointed out, "Of course it's easy to strike a rebel pose like that, . . . until you become just another John Doe." The empire's forceful counterstrike also took its toll on the quality of the music-sharing networks in general. In fear over prosecution, many downloaders, especially the heavy sharers, began to log out in flocks, causing many systems to temporarily collapse (Denegri-Knott 2004). Furthermore, rumors about RIAA spyware capable of finding unauthorized content on home computers through free downloading platforms further soured the warrior's activist adventures.

Once again, downloaders were seeking a dramatic way out of the tensions between the utilitarian and possessive ideals. The heroic model that crystallized to serve the need for legitimation became that of sonic pacifism, a derivative

of the sonic warfare model but without its combative edges. The sonic pacifist readily dismissed the recording industry's punitive extremes as a wrongheaded attempt by the old, desperate industry to push upstart innovators out of the marketplace rather than working with them. The lawsuits against individual downloaders, especially against those that were seen as "really innocent," provided valuable dramaturgical grist. Consider Tim's articulations:

This is very simple. The dwarfs are in the panicking mode. It's their death struggle. It's symptomatic for their inability to understand that the world around them has changed. They have missed the boat. What a pathetic expression of impotence is it to sue children, you know, children? Or caring mums or folks who don't even have a computer. Let's just lie to everyone. Let the lawyers throw out a zillion letters, and we'll see what keeps sticking. I mean, how low can you go?

Tim's promise of the industry's death as the ultimate return to a music market in which the utilitarian credo was ascendant is telling. For Tim and other sonic pacifists, the recording industry was a waning system committing its terminal crime against consumers. Downloaders, however, were peaceful activists who condemned any act of violence as perfidious evidence for the decline of music capitalism and the nearing dawn of the post-copyright age. The dramatic exercise of heroically "outpeacing" the industrial monster was also evident in the words of Julian, who promised salvation through passive downloader resistance:

I'm willing to acknowledge that things are not looking that good right now. But let's not forget that this is simply a matter of hanging in there and wait[ing] until the inescapable happens. Duck and cover. Duck and cover [*laughs*]. This may be ugly for another couple of months or maybe even years, but in the end we will arrive in the new age. All the great things downloading stands for, it's egalitarian philosophy, great music, fair music, you know, all of this will soon be reality. Hang in there, man. I tell you!

Julian's dramatization is noteworthy because, like most downloader quotes during the redress phase, his performance has moved away from proactively emphasizing new reasons why downloading is noble to reactively emphasizing old reasons why the recording industry is evil. The sonic pacifist was a passive sonic warrior, a *hero manqué* incapable of acting out on his heroic talent. What distinguished sonic pacifists from popular pacifist heroes such as Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King is that downloaders were no longer acting but rather reacting. As such, the sonic pacifist could be regarded as a flawed hero model from the beginning. Consider, in this context, Maria's confessions:

Since Napster first came out we've been cutting all kinds of ridiculous capers. Our freedoms are in danger, CDs are too expensive, labels are greedy, music is bad, Metallica sucks; you name it. Don't get me wrong! I still have an anticopyright sticker on my car! Maybe CDs are really too expensive,

copyright could be improved, and, yes, Metallica definitely sucks, but there is also no denying the fact that the kind of free downloading we are promoting since Napster is really a bit out of tune with the rest of the civilized world. I understand that a copy of a painting is a different thing than a painting, but we have also committed all kinds of crazy crimes to generate justifications for sharing when, after all, there must also be reciprocation. . . . Yes, p2p [peer to peer] is our discovery, and the music business was and is too stupid to recognize its potential. But exactly because it's our thing, we must stop bullshitting and bring more to the table than mere rebellion. If not, I predict we'll enter the history books as one of the most brainless youth movements in human history, right next to the stupid hippies. And that's by far more embarrassing than having to pay a buck or two for the latest tune.

Maria admits that the sonic pacifist is a rather untenable hero model that barely serves to address the tensions between utilitarian and possessive ideals. Now that the labels are throwing legal salvos not only over the sharing platforms but also over individual downloaders, Maria is ready to admit that downloaders' persistence on an extreme utilitarian position is nothing more than a naive dream. By emphasizing the need to move beyond "mere rebellion," Maria illustrates her implicit readiness to work on a compromise between sharing and owning that will prevent her and her fellow downloaders from losing cultural credibility.

The Cyberpunk: Subversive Agency beyond Reintegration (2005–Present)

A social drama comes full circle when the antagonists reach some resolution or working agreement to their conflict. The fourth act of the drama presents "a reintegration of the disturbed social group" (Turner 1988, 34), a development that was also evident in the war on downloading. To understand this evolution, we must briefly hark back to the crisis act. In 2001, the computer manufacturer Apple had used its famous "Rip. Mix. Burn" campaign to introduce the MP3 music software iTunes, the iPod MP3 player, and a CD-burner-equipped iMac computer. Following this move to invest its brand into the sonic warrior market, Apple had become a legitimate commercial player in the downloader movement, and its cool products, most notably the iPod and iTunes, had become essential tools within music downloaders' style arena. By 2003, iTunes had become the primary choice for organizing downloaders' enormous MP3 collections, and with a 78% market share, the iPod was also the most successful MP3 player (Nielsen 2006).

The crisis phase had shown that, downloaders' opportunistic rejection of the commercial notwithstanding, there was a huge demand for online music. So when, in 2003, producers began to crack down on individual sharers, thus provoking the sonic pacifist model, Apple stayed away from this corporate cleansing mission and added a commercial music downloading service to its existing iTunes/iPod product dyad. Charging a price of 99 cents per song, Apple's

service was technically not much different from the downloading platforms the industry had previously failed to establish, but the iTunes Store came from a trusted source, into a trusted product family, and at a time when downloaders began to look for a balanced alternative.

Apple promoted the iTunes Store as “easy, fair, and legal,” and its architecture catered to both utilitarian and possessive ideals. On the one hand, it was a regular online music store that guaranteed acquiescence to intellectual property law by protecting its songs with Digital Rights Management (DRM) software. On the other hand, customers could also copy the purchased MP3 file a certain number of times and burn it onto CDs. Furthermore, the store was a part of iTunes, which allowed consumers to “share,” that is, to listen to music from other iTunes users. And as the industry devotedly soured the free downloading experience by suing individual downloaders and campaigning against free downloading, legions of downloaders, looking for a less threatening downloading experience, embraced the iTunes Store as a cool refugee. Consider how Robbie dramatizes his decision to defect:

I have been a downloader from day one. But I also knew that Napster and BitTorrent and all the others were only temporary solutions until the market would pick up the concept and develop a fair system of its own. I purchased my first iPod in 2002, and I was always hoping that Apple would offer downloading. I mean it just makes a lot of sense. Apple has always understood the needs of downloaders, and they always had a thing for music and creativity. And a buck for a song, you know, that's actually not bad. I know that many downloaders are like, you know, sticking to the illegal platforms. I have to say though, at this point in time, that's not a very smart move. It's dangerous, and it's not fair. iTunes, on the other hand, is smart and fair.

In his dramatic legitimization, Robbie evokes Apple's credentials on the utilitarian side (“for music and creativity”) and, in the same breath, he legitimizes the possessive individualist ideal via the all-American trope of value for money (“a buck a song”). For Robbie, balancing between the possessive and the utilitarian is more than just legally justified. It is also cool, because it fairly places the downloader on the side of the struggling artist, a rhetorical framing that is entirely dependent upon Apple being regarded as ideological distinct from other corporations that are profiting on copyrighted music. Robbie's attribution that iTunes customers are smarter than free downloaders further reframes what is ultimately an act of copyright acquiescence as a more heroic form of music downloading in the specific sense that this act revitalizes and rejuvenates a social system that had been under siege (see Holt and Thompson 2004).

But where did all of this leave the downloading movement? The recording industry was not dead, as the pacifists had predicted. But neither was the potential for heroic counter-performance. The more popular iTunes became, the less equitable free downloading looked. But iTunes protected its music with proprietary DRM software whereby, for instance,

only one's own iPod (if one could afford to own one) and computer were able to play a song from the iTunes Store. Whereas the commercial platforms celebrated the new freedom of downloading (as in, free of prosecution), customers could also be viewed as locked into a DRM matrix of carefully crafted technological incompatibilities. The countercultural downloader model that sprang up to exploit these instabilities centered on a new hero, the cyberpunk. As famously portrayed in William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*, the cyberpunk is a dystopian hero, one who, after evil powers have taken over, seeks to “uncripple” and “rewire” the ubiquitous matrix of surveillance and to subversively mess up its hegemonic code.

Cyberpunks have reclaimed downloading by emphasizing how Apple has betrayed its customers, how official online music is overpriced, how iTunes is not fair to the artist, or how DRM “is taking away legitimate freedoms that enable consumers to do more with your music and hardware.” They dramatically retool the tales of free downloading as innovation (hacker) and civil disobedience (sonic warrior) to recruit for the battle against “the same old exploitative system.” For a long time, Apple had been a trusted partner, a brand that was as innovative, as fair, and as righteous as countercultural downloading itself. Even when Apple introduced the iTunes Music Store, many downloaders rewarded this pioneering effort with tolerance, given that Apple contrasted the recording industry's backward brutality with a commercial system that was “fair for the artist.” However, the more iTunes established itself as a cool downloading service, cyberpunks lamented, the more it looked like the old, capitalist music market superstructure it claimed to have transcended. Consider how a cyberpunk music activism Web site (<http://www.downhillbattle.org>) dramatizes iTunes's pricing structure and song quality for self-legitimational purposes:

Apple says many users are buying whole “albums” for \$8–\$12 each. That's less than the \$16 store price, but used CDs at Amazon or Ebay cost \$5, and those come with liner notes. If you don't care about liner notes, you can burn the CD from a friend for 25 cents and send the musician a buck. In both cases, you end up with a real CD, and you can always use iTunes to rip it onto your computer or mp3 player. And you don't have to deal with restrictions on how you use it. . . . iTunes is just a shiny new facade for the ugly, exploitative system that has managed music for the past 50 years. Thanks to peer-to-peer filesharing, we finally have a chance to break the major record label system—but every iTunes user who pays 90 cents on the dollar to middlemen props up the old regime and delays the day when corporations finally lose their stranglehold on music. Now that's something to feel guilty about.

For cyberpunks, Apple's iTunes may be the new downloading reality, but this reality is not real. iTunes is constructed as an illusion, a dangerous simulacrum, “a shiny new facade for the ugly exploitative system.” The heroic image underlying this critique is that of Neo from the *Matrix*, the hero who chose the red pill and unplugged himself from

the matrix to fight its totalitarianism. Cyberpunks are heroic because they refuse to swallow the blue pill offered to them by iTunes and instead show that iTunes is overpriced, sells bad-quality tracks, and is unfair to the artist. The nostalgic recourse on real CDs as having more value for the money than iTunes's lousy MP3s exemplifies this noble matrix refusal. Furthermore, the old do-gooder myth of downloaders as charitable patrons ("send the musician a buck") is mobilized to debunk iTunes as an unfair and unnecessary middlemen matrix and to cater to free downloaders' underdeveloped possessive side. These divergent constructions provide a powerful dramatic alibi that seeks to reestablish free downloaders as noble musical agents disproving the totalitarian music matrix.

One resource cyberpunks have used to heroically position free downloading against iTunes's "facelift for a corrupt industry" is iTunes's DRM structure. Apple has promoted its DRM system "Fair Play" as a beacon of fairness allowing a maximum of sharing (utilitarian) while guaranteeing the commercial viability and artistic integrity of downloading (possessive). However, cyberpunks rearticulated Fair Play and other DRM systems as being "defective by design" because they are "simply a prison in which users can be put to deprive them of the rights that the law would otherwise allow them" (<http://www.defectivebydesign.org>). To show how the demonic image of DRM serves as a legitimation platform for free downloading, I joined a so-called DRM elimination crew of cyberpunks dressed in laboratory gear (e.g., biohazard suits, masks, and hats) converging on Chicago's Apple store in June 2006 to label Apple products with DRM warning stickers. Consider how Jack enacts his DRM activism to legitimate free downloading:

Jack: [Customers] don't realize that Apple is selling them products that are broken on purpose. iPods, iTunes, songs from the store—it's all defective by design. We believe that people deserve to know what's actually going on inside an iPod or with these songs and how it restricts their rights. So when we go in there in our Hazmat suits and tag the products, most of them [customers] are surprised that Apple actually does all that. You know, they [Apple] still have this positive image of being impeccable, which is exactly why consumers get so easily infected.

Researcher: What do you recommend instead? Where should people get their music?

Jack: There are several alternatives. You can go with CDs. You can hack DRM if you know where to get the software. But of course, until they stop DRM, regular p2p is the way to go if you ask me.

Researcher: (Strategic pause.)

Jack: Honestly, I know that people say it's not better, but I have to say, if there isn't a good market solution, what choice do consumers have but to take action in order to get what they're entitled to?

In his statement, Jack paints a fearful picture of DRM as

a biohazard that befalls music culture's biological system. iTunes customers are implicated in the same critique as involuntary carriers of a disease that need to be cured. So, gladly, Jack "goes in there" and engages in cytostatic activism. Jack accepts the dominance of DRM, but this very acceptance provides the grist for countercultural heroism in the name of a healthier combination of sharing and owning. As such, his dramatic labor sheds a heroic light on his free downloading beyond downloading's market reintegration: "If there isn't a good market solution, what choice do consumers have but to take action in order to get what they're entitled to?" With this, the drama has come full circle with a tenuous new consensus underlying iTunes and other commercial downloading platforms. However, the empirical analysis closes on a classic cliffhanger: a tenuous narrative compromise (DRM based commercial downloading) has crystallized, but destabilizing forces (anti-DRM protest) loom on the horizon and the music market seems likely to be pushed into another cycle of discord and conflict. As Eric, another DRM activist from Chicago, correspondingly prophesized:

Well, the simple truth is this. As long as there is music, there will always be a war on downloading. We won't stop until the labels accept that music wants to be free. The labels have a history of being the bad guys in all of this. . . . For example, DRM, like all other excuses before, clearly does not protect the artist at all. Fair Play . . . stands for a failure to play fair because all it does it protect business dollars. But who protects musicians and consumers? Who protects culture? By now, you know, all existing DRM systems have been hacked, . . . and consumers discover what they can really do with music. This is the beauty of it. . . . There will always be some corporate party trying to screw us, but there will always also be the unstoppable power of freedom. It's the way of the world that man wants to improve his condition [smiles].

EPILOGUE

This dramatology found evidence for marketplace drama in the music market on both narrative and performance levels. In the narrative analysis, I have developed the market narrative of intellectual property that, by way of blending countervailing utilitarian and possessive ideals, dynamically structures market evolution in the cultural creative sphere. In the performance analysis, I have explored downloader performances over four dramatic acts of breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration to show how consumers have interpreted and acted on this narrative to sustain legitimacy for their downloading activities and how these dramatizations have systematically evolved through the moves and countermoves of music downloaders and the recording industry. My findings at the end of Act 4 (reintegration) further indicate that the marketplace drama process will replay itself, albeit as inflected through contemporary conditions (e.g., DRM-free downloading) until a revolutionary change

happens in institutional relations that organize the cultural and economic value of music.

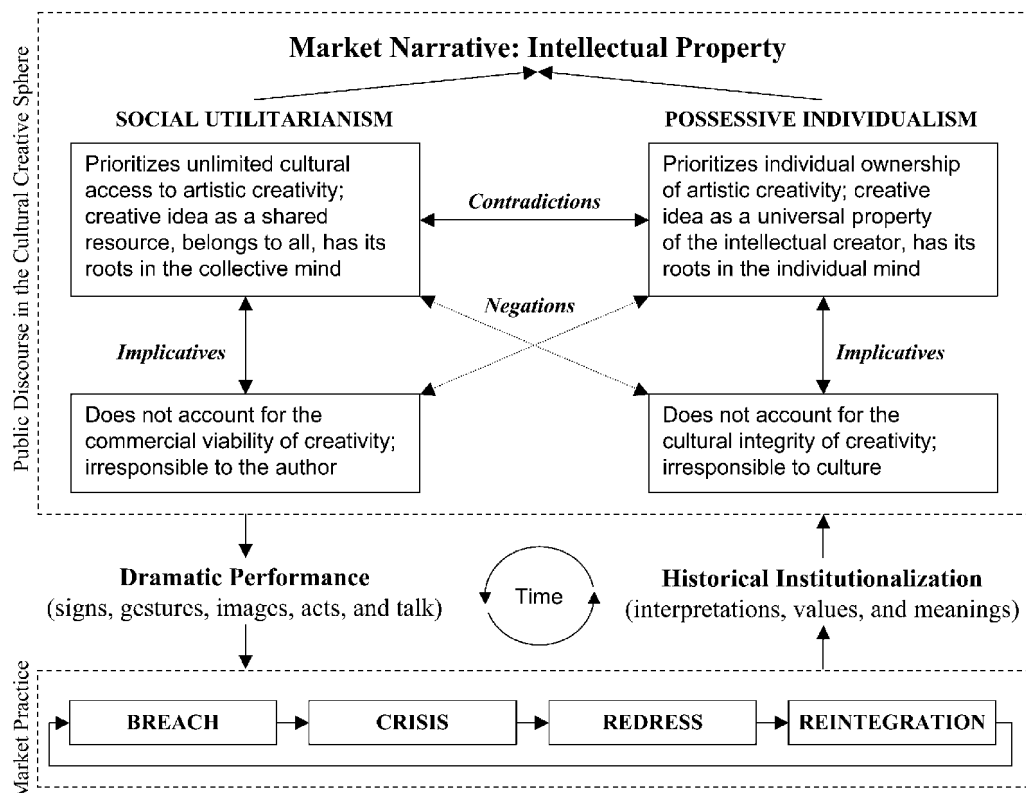
From the observed historical relationship between a narrative structure and a structural transformation in the music market, we can build a process model of market evolution in the cultural creative sphere (see fig. 2). The model explains how a market system in the cultural creative sphere moves through states of perpetual structural instability that drive new cultural expressions of the fundamental tension between the sharing and owning of creative goods. The top level represents the market narrative of intellectual property as informed by prior market history. The bottom level represents the sphere of performed marketplace conflict as informed by underlying possessive and utilitarian appeals. The observed historical dynamic between narrative and performance levels of market evolution is represented through the two oppositional arrows of “dramatic performance” and “historical institutionalization.” When new cultural developments breach the status quo, a fourfold self-regulatory process will be set in motion and a tenuous new narrative compromise will eventually be reached. However, new forms of consumer behavior, technology, or particular innovative market offerings will undermine the compromise between sharing and owning and throw the market into another drama. In summary, the model portrays markets in the

cultural creative sphere as compromises between sharing and owning of creative goods in historical transition. The perpetual historical return to the same underlying tension between utilitarian and possessive ideals ensures that “the [market] system remains a system even as systemness is challenged” (McCracken 1998).

Implications

These findings yield some novel theoretical insights for the study of market system dynamics. Holt (2002) has suggested that a parasitic relationship exists between the creative style production of a counterculture and the corporate quest for market-driving innovations in a market system. The gist of Holt’s argument is the “branding mill,” a historical mechanism that guarantees the rejuvenation of the capitalist market system through a parasitic meaning transfer from creative countercultures to the corporate mainstream. As Holt (2002) summarizes: “The market today thrives on . . . unruly bricoleurs who engage in non-conformist producerly consumption practices. Since the market feeds off of the constant production of difference, the most creative, unorthodox, singularizing consumer sovereignty practices are the most productive for the system” (88).

FIGURE 2
MARKET EVOLUTION IN THE CULTURAL CREATIVE SPHERE



In Holt's model, market evolution is constructed as a fundamentally parasitic process because countercultural consumption is held to merely reproduce the dominant logic of the postmodern market: constructing a sovereign consumer identity. However, this interpretation does not address that corporate encroachments can also create dynamism and change in the counterculture that is being treated as a commercial resource. For instance, I have shown that downloaders' transformation from sonic pacifists to cyberpunks is a direct response to Apple's initiative to launch commercial downloading through iTunes. Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007) have similarly documented that community-supported agriculture (CSA) emerged as a countercultural market system in response to the commercial cooptation of the organic food movement. The prospect that countercultures can adjust to corporate assimilation suggests a more complex process of market evolution.

Marketplace drama theory profiles market evolution as a symbiotic process of cultural performance. I illustrate that markets systematically evolve through the dramatic moves and countermoves of protagonists and the overarching frame of a dramatic narrative that organizes cultural debates over the proper blending between sharing and owning. I present markets as tenuous institutional compromises in historical transition, and I show that no inviolable identity of their origin (the quest for a sovereign consumer identity) but underlying historical tensions between commercial and cultural ideals and the process of dramatic poaching among competing stakeholder groups constitutes the mechanism that drives structural transformations in a market system. When this symbiotic process is reduced to a one-sided cultural parasitism, our attention is directed away from the coevolutionary relationship that exists between the performance of a dramatic market narrative and the institutionalization of a market structure. As I have demonstrated, marketplace drama drives historical shifts on both dimensions.

These findings also contribute to our understanding of the consumption of performance. According to John Deighton's (1992, 362) foundational discussion, marketing "scripts, produces, and directs performances for and with consumers and manages the motives consumers attribute to the decision to perform." Building on this idea, subsequent consumer drama researchers have predominantly examined the persuasive and experiential role of drama on the microscopic level of consumer ego dramas (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; Holt and Thompson 2004) and in dyadic advertising and service performances (Arnould and Price 1993; Escalas and Stern 2003; Grove and Fisk 1992; Stern 1994).

My analysis offers a different perspective on drama. Much like previous consumer drama researchers, I have investigated the performances of music downloaders as symbolic expressive behaviors involving consciously and unconsciously expressed signs, gestures, images, acts, and talk designed to influence key publics on behalf of the actor's goals and interests. However, the identification of these performances served as the starting point for analyzing the structuring role of drama on the market system level. I have

illustrated that marketplace dramas harbor powerful contradictions that are linked to diverse market interests. These contradictions provide points of ideological instability and conflict that motivate historical shifts in the market system's cultural and competitive structure. As such, the marketplace drama process highlights the point that performances not only can change individual attitudes and cement mutually beneficial exchange relationships but also change the normative pattern of social interaction under which these relationships can unfold. As the British theater critic Charles Morgan reminds us with respect to the drama proper, "The great impact [of drama] is neither a persuasion of the intellect nor a beguiling of the senses. . . . It is the enveloping movement of the whole drama on the soul of man. We surrender and are changed" (cited in Geertz 1980, 28).

Other important contributions to consumer drama theory emerge from an understanding of heroic orientations in consumer behavior. Holt and Thompson (2004) have profiled the role of ego drama in the presentation of self in everyday consumption. I have explored the longitudinal dynamic between consumers' ego drama and the historical process of market evolution. I have shown that ego drama is rooted in a market's cultural history, that individual behaviors converge to culturally shared "hero models," and that these models can change in relation to the political developments on the market stage. Furthermore, consumption does not only provide a resource for dramatic self-construction. As I have shown, consumer heroism also plays a formative role in directing the historical process of market evolution.

This dramaturgy further moves beyond the classic anthropological conception of social drama (Turner 1988). In this area, the prevailing theoretical view has long been that social dramas originate outside the economic, political, and structural process. However, their manifestations have an important revitalization function. Like a modern stage play, they challenge the wider social structure by offering social critique on, or even suggestions for, a possible reordering of the official order. However, this functionalist logic raises a disconcerting question: If social dramas are really all about the cementing of existing social structures, how are these structures ever going to evolve? I have built the alternative case that no social drama takes place outside of the discourses and practices that guide peoples' thoughts and actions in particular ideological directions. When there is no clear-cut distinction between where "the official social order" ends and the social drama begins, a performed cultural conflict does not merely have the restorative function of keeping change within the boundaries of tradition. By linking narrative historical and performative levels of conflict analysis to each other, I have developed a theory of social drama that illuminates processes of structural change.

Finally, my findings highlight the value of a longitudinal processual analysis method in exploring the performance of cultural evolution. This study suggests that systems of cultural and economic practice evolve through stages of perpetual instability that address tensions between countervailing cultural and economic ideals. This realization may

also be relevant to marketing as a system of practice. For example, it is widely acknowledged that market orientation is “the central concept in marketing” (Gebhardt, Carpenter, and Sherry 2006, 23; Kohli and Jaworski 1990). However, my findings suggest caution for researchers seeking to locate the essence of a system of practice in a single normative ideal. If the ideal of market orientation really equals marketing excellence, and many generations of MBA students have been initiated into its high art, the question remains why so many firms—the most market oriented among them—are still under such intense public scrutiny (Holt 2002).

What the honorable warriors of market orientation can never take for granted is that the most successful and celebrated firms (e.g., Apple, Starbucks, BMW) are neither market oriented nor operating on a purely resource-based logic. Instead, they draw from the best of both models to construct a synthetic narrative compromise. Hence, as we historically move to a service-based economy, marketers link consumer creations of values and meanings as inextricable from the firm’s commercial offerings (Vargo and Lush 2004). When our definitions of marketing excellence are so constantly updated in response to changes in the cultural and economic landscape, we need a theory of marketing excellence that explains this evolution. Future longitudinal drama research could historically unpack marketing’s ideological nexus and explore the multiple ways in which marketers, consumers, and researchers interpret and act on particular narrative appeals to (re)shape marketing as a system of practice. The outcome may be a more robust, evolutionary theory of marketing excellence.

In summary, conceptualizing markets as systems of monetary transactions is a useful but distancing fiction. It should not give us license to forget our cultural embeddedness in, and social responsibility for, the action in the market theater. This study has argued for more attention to the idea that markets are staged compromises between sharing and owning. Research is beginning to suggest that this fundamental dialectic is important in understanding a broad array of consumer behaviors and market system dynamics (Humphreys and Giesler 2007). Second, my findings call for more attention to the underlying dramatic scripts in examining the process of commercial co-optation. The observed social drama pattern is evident in the war on music downloading and can be easily mapped to other cases of market evolution as well (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007). The profound implication here is that marketplace dramas can take place in every market—from music to organic food. The cast changes every time, but the story is more or less the same. These findings not only can be used to understand and predict other instances of market evolution; they also reveal the stuff that heroes are made of and the reasons why some of them fail. Thus a relevant area for future drama research concerns the management of marketplace evolution. For managers and public policy makers, influencing the action on the stage is critical and pervasive. When does a particular drama stage begin and end? When is the appropriate moment

to enter the market stage and to leave it again? What are the societal costs of marketplace drama? May these and other questions be the stuff of future research dramas. Curtain.

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