ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Music Mentors of the Streaming Era: from Algorithms to Influential Figures

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Abstract

The streaming era has cast aside some of the common influential figures in the music field, somewhat replaced by the algorithms behind music apps. This study describes the music mentors of the era—influential figures recommending new content—and their relationship to their teenage music consumer mentees. Thirty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with teenagers (ages 14–18), exploring their daily use of music, their socializing, the forming and presenting of their identity through music, and their search for new content using algorithmic and social networks. Results suggest that peers act as prominent music mentors for their group members, through exposure to new content, co-listening, sending links via social media, and discussing music by creating interpretive communities. Within families, fathers were pointed to as the most meaningful mentors, highly in charge of their offspring's musical taste. Though algorithms are frequently used as mentors, guiding the users with their recommendations, most teenagers prefer not relying solely on them, turning to their social circles for guidance. Further research is needed to expand understandings of the social effects of music consumption, with a particular focus on exploring different age groups, cultural, and socio-economic properties.

Keywords Music Mentors · Streaming Era · Music Listening · Parental Influence · Peers' Musical Taste · Algorithmic Mediation

Introduction

The streaming era has brought forth changes in the music industry and highly affected musical consumption. These changes can be traced back to the launch of YouTube in 2005 (Arthurs et al. 2018; Cayari 2011). Perhaps the three most significant characteristics of the streaming era for the average music consumer are the

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musical abundance offered, the ability to choose almost anything from it, and the option of listening anywhere and at any time. Any description of the way music affects listeners must be integrated with the nature of music consumption, the characteristics of knowledge acquisition, and the expansion of musical taste, i.e., exposure to new content.

This study describes a certain type of teenagers' musical relationships, referred to here as mentorships, which are characterized in light of the streaming era. A music mentor is the influential figure, the mediator, and sometimes an agent of meaning (Regev 2011) through whom the mentee is exposed to new musical content. The streaming era has introduced a new music mentor—the algorithm—which generates suggestions for the consumer and, in this paper, will be addressed mainly as a mediator in a mentoring relationship. Several types of mentoring relationships, as well as a reflection on the natural social surroundings of the listener and the availability of the recommending algorithm, will be discussed. The fact that the streaming era emerged less than two decades ago makes teenagers, born into the era, a social group representing the musical consumption of the time. If teenagers' encounters with music are related to their technological environment (DeNora 2003), the two should be explored together. While common sense and the studies that support it gradually shifted from parental, peer, and professional cultural influence (Bourdieu 1996, 2012), to algorithms as shapers of taste (Hesmondhalgh 2022), this paper focuses on the ongoing significance of peers and parents as music mentors in an algorithmic era.

Given that this paper focuses on teenagers as music consumers of the streaming era, the paper responds to the literature from several disciplines. It explores consumerism and communication in the streaming era, psychological aspects of identity and family relations, and sociological aspects of communication and socialization around music. It is part of a wider study of music listening habits of teenagers (Vaizman 2022). Due to drawing on literature from a range of disciplines, the paper uses the terms "teenagers" and "youth." These terms are intended to make relatively interchangeable reference to a specific stage in the life course.

Music Listening in the Streaming Era

Prior to the streaming era, popular music was mainly mediated to consumers through influential figures with some credentials, such as radio broadcasters, music editors, and salespeople in music stores (Seroussi and Regev 2004). These figures and others shaped the public musical space and provided recognition and legitimacy to styles, songs, and singers, thus creating a hierarchy in the field of popular music (ibid.). Due to streaming options, the above-mentioned producers of meaning have lost much of their value, occasionally replaced by YouTubers (Nowak 2016), and young listeners have lost authorized mediating agents which filtered musical abundance. There are no more gatekeepers or "what is good goes in and what is not good goes out," so there is a huge supply of content, claimed Vinnie Colaiuta, one of

the top drummers in the world.[1] Although TV shows like "X Factor" and "American Idol" and their judge-panels allowed the music industry some control over the exposure of music to a broad population, functioning as music-filters, the shows are mainly based on popularity and profit (Atsu Amegashie 2009). This means that the exposure is limited to certain genres and might even narrow variety due to similarity in musical arrangement styles.

Personal interaction with music and the attaching of meaning to it has also changed in the streaming era, shifting much of the responsibility for meaning making from the artist and the mediator to the consumer. Consumption since Napster has become mainly song-based, with the consumer picking preferences, not necessarily feeling a full connection to the genre and not always interested in the full package as released by the artist (Jones and Lenhart 2004). The lack of the physical grasp of the product (a vinyl single, for example) enables some distance between the consumer and the artist.

In the first decade of the 2000s, private consumption was still studied around iPods and mp3 players as "cultural objects" (Sterne 2006), describing the way mobility and sound change scenery and space around the user (Bull 2007; Simun 2009). Since then, the limited music library in the listener's pocket was replaced by an unlimited abundance (Hagen 2015), and mobility has spread to almost listening devices, such as phone speakers and portable speakers. Even conscious choice has shifted from deciding to use a device to the decision not to use it, to disconnect it, and notice one's environment (Prior 2018).

The technological abundance also allows consumers to choose their means of operation and/or listening according to the musical style (Nowak 2016), practical circumstances, and/or economic possibility (Nowak 2014). Music is more accessible than before, Nowak explains, but beyond that, the technology allows the way music is played to be adapted to what the consumer is listening to (streaming software for current hits, vinyl records for hip-hop, etc.) (ibid.). Music's accessibility in the streaming era might affect the process of judgment and evaluation of music to the point of erosion, reducing it from a social discourse to a private act emersed in defensiveness against the outside world (Hanrahan 2018).

The spread of algorithmically controlled apps and programs has evoked the term "algorithmic culture" (Striphas 2015), describing a super-culture gradually replacing the social one we know. The tension between culture and technology is not shared by all, and some argue that any recommending algorithm, basically designed by humans, is a reflection of human intentions (Seaver 2017). This approach can be reinforced through social cognition theories, according to which there is no difference between social structures and human agents. People create social systems which, in turn, organize and influence individual lives (Bandura 2006).

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[1] The Session Panel, (2017). VINNIE COLAIUTA—Session Drummer (Frank Zappa, Sting, Joni Mitchell). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxOirev4Nqk (July, 2020).

Music Mentors of the Streaming Era

The music we choose to listen to is a form of consumer goods[2] and is marketed primarily through digital means (Airoldi et al. 2016). It is someone's intellectual property being offered to a user, it is competitive, it is based on a system of preferences, and it is mediated (Werner 2020). In every action of consumption, there is an intermediary between the consumer and the product. Bourdieu (1996, 2012) called these factors "cultural mediators," referring to critics and cultural figures, and believed that the mediator's position is accepted thanks to social communication networks, values, and shared life experience. Songs or musical pieces also reach the listener through an intermediary.

Streaming software are different types of mediators, basing their recommendation system on the user's experience and recent choices, and drawing from previous users' choices (Airoldi et al. 2016). The better the software gets to know the user, the more content it can offer them (Gillespie 2014), occasionally even changing recommendations based on the country the user lives in (Ferwerda et al. 2016). Precisely because of this, the impact of these recommendations means perpetuating the existing taste rather than expanding and diversifying it, earning these technologies the nickname "intimate experts," which is a kind of technological extension of the self (Karakayali et al. 2018), functioning differently from a recommending mentor with the knowledge and motivation to expand their mentee's world.

Although new Spotify users have reported expanding their consumed artists and genres (Datta et al. 2018), studies on the subject have targeted mostly adult users rather than teenagers who might approach music somewhat differently (e.g., not categorizing music by genres). Given that musical taste is a major part of the socialization process and a representation of the self (Powell & Menendian 2016; Treitler 2011), it is reasonable to assume that recommendations relying on mutual acquaintances or a social motivation would differ from those of a mechanism designed to "know" the user.

In this study, therefore, recommending figures will be explored while separating human mentors from algorithmic ones. While some teenage listeners do lean solely on algorithmic recommendations (Vaizman 2022), this study explores mentoring relationships that harness the music apps' algorithms, using them as a tool, rather than as an influential figure. By studying teenagers' use of the properties of the era they were born into as means of communicating with one another and with older generations, one can overlook possible danger in the nature of the relationship between music and society in our day (Hesmondhalgh 2022) and observe the social networks (on and offline) created through and despite it.

The streaming era has not only discounted the value of cultural mediators but presented a challenge for those wishing to mentor others or musically introduce themselves. On the one hand, there are no limits to music playing in terms of content

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[2] Data on the number of premium users on Spotify since 2015. https://www.statista.com/statistics/244995/number-of-paying-spotify-subscribers/

Disc sales data in the US from 1983 to 2019. https://www.statista.com/chart/12950/cd-sales-in-the-us//

or devices. On the other hand, the option of getting more of the same, of gradually expanding musical taste without risking the discomfort of new and different content, makes the job of the influential figure slightly harder. In this paper, two music mentors will be addressed, both from the immediate social circle: peers and family members.

Teenage Peers as Agents of Meaning

Music plays an important part in the socialization process of teenagers. Adolescents use music, among other things, because their musical preferences tell others who they are: what their opinions are and what their values are (Hargreaves and North 1999). The question, "What do you like listening to?" is part of a basic "getting to know you" conversation and can produce the cultural-ethnic-social connection to the person one seeks to know (Ratner 2015). Devoted music consumers believe that their character is reflected in their musical taste and that others' musical tastes can reveal a lot about them, giving an indication as to the groups to which they belong (Rentfrow et al. 2009; Rentfrow and McDonald 2010). In fact, deciding on belonging to a group is sometimes based on the characteristics of its shared musical consumption (Mozgot 2014; Tanner et al. 2008). Musical compatibility can produce friendships and, correspondingly, musical mismatch can produce distance between people (Bleich et al. 1991).

Musical technology, availability, and abundance have allowed teenagers not only diverse and comfortable consumption but also a step forward as musical agents of meaning for themselves. The alleged vacuum left by influential figures from music's peripheral field (broadcasters, editors, critics, salespeople) is a potential space for teenagers to create meaning and share it with their environment. Youth functions as an interpretive community (Regev 2011), sometimes listening together, sharing space and time, and sometimes through social networks, sharing musical content and opinions.

Listening with peers allows meaning to be created in a way that is unique to those participating in a certain moment. Professional agents of meaning, addressed in previous research, discussed genre and sometimes the social phenomena that characterize the audience or consumers of music (Walser 1993; Wallach et al. 2011). Agents discussed a song, an album, or an artist and dealt with their characteristics (Macan and Macan 1997; Lewis 2012). Young listeners of today have the option to produce meaning "in real time," occasionally by connecting a particular style to a particular group or by broadly labeling content, e.g., "music for fun." In the playlist culture, the artist is often insignificant, and the album is a thing of the past for some consumers (Hagen 2015). The song stands on its own and it provides an experience.

In their independent consumption, teenagers can act as critics for themselves (Vaizman 2022). This can be seen as a disadvantage but also as a strength. On the one hand, teenagers are laypeople who have taken on the role of a professional and knowledgeable figure. On the other hand, the need to filter may stimulate informed judgment which was previously underdeveloped in youth. Although teenagers are drawn to those who are like them and generally like similar things while growing up (Berndt 1982), in every group there are those who take the mentor position and those who act mainly as mentees (Vaizman 2022).

An important effect of the streaming era is related to social groups of the time. Musical taste no longer strictly represents a region, origin, status, or counter-culture (Bennett 2004). Online networks of the era minimize geographical distance, and youth can channel music for their needs regardless of the original orientation of music. As a result of the music being occasionally mediated by an algorithm rather than by an agent of meaning, the meaning is created "while in motion" and part of it is understood only in retrospect, in the connection of the content to the circumstances of listening, as part of a process of recollection (Vaizman 2022).

Music and Imparting of Taste

Although young people often spend significant amounts of time with their peers, in most cases, exposure to music begins at home. Parents have the ability to share with, or even dictate, their personal or social taste to their children, to the point of their influence being more significant than formal education in conveying socialization norms (Katz-Gerro 2003; Mohr and Dimggio 1995; Van Eijck 1997, 1999). Musical taste can be passed on to children through parental fostering, whether by playing music in the common space or attending concerts and performances (Ter Bogt et al. 2011). Through acculturation, children absorb not only the musical content but also the use of music in the social system. Early exposure to musical activities, such as listening and singing, is significant for long-term musical development (Browning 2017).

Culture and taste are not the only transferable attributes between parents and their children; objectified cultural capital is also transmitted (Kraaykamp and Van Eijck 2010). Property and objects that represent culture and are consumed by the parents are passed on to the next generation, either materially or metaphorically, by passing on the desire to consume them. However, imparting taste or cultural habitus is just a part of parent–child relations. When it comes to teenagers, rebellion and detachment are a stage (Pickhardt 2009), and musical choices also play a part in the process of defiance and rebellion against parents and the desire to belong to the peer group (Frith 1996; Solberg 1994). Then again, Gembris and Davidson (2002) explicitly point to parents—along with peer groups—as the main causes of musical influence on children and youth.

The streaming era might make the imparting of taste by parents a bit difficult. Considering the replacement of CDs and stereo systems with personal portable phones, and open rebelliousness through loudspeakers with isolation and detachment from others via earbuds, some parents might not even know their children's taste. Moreover, if the algorithm stands between the parent and the child—who is the mediator?

The issue of "Who is really a cultural mediator?" has hovered over the sociocultural discourse ever since it was provoked by theories from the field of economics (Callon et al. 2002), asking, who are the new cultural mediators? what are they threatening? (Negus 2002) and are we all cultural mediators? (Maguire & Matthews 2012). Parents and peers are key figures whose impact on the musical consumption of youth was examined in this research, but in a technologically developed environment, they are not the only ones.

The Research Questions

Although the approach to the research included wide and open questions constructing a picture of the way teenage consumers in the streaming era listen to music, this paper has a certain framework. The research questions focused on the way participants explored and/or were exposed to new content:

– Who are the main music mentors (influential mediating figures) exposing the listener to new content?
– What kind of mentoring relationship do they have?
– What characterizes the listeners' and mentors' use of the algorithmic mediator?
– How active are the teenage listeners in their search for new content?

The paper, therefore, presents an original view of relationships around music—human-human, human-algorithm—and offers a pallet of mentoring relationships extracted from the data collected. It focuses on mentoring within the family, peer groups, and on the use of the algorithm as a facilitator of both suggestions and content offered by others.

Method

Participants

The research was conducted in the northern part of the Sharon area in Israel, characterized by agricultural settlements, attached houses, and middle to upper-middle class families. Since affordability affects personal choice of devices and access to steaming apps and content, there was value in limiting study participants to similar backgrounds and status. Although gender was not a key factor examined in this study, the sample strived for balance. Thirty-eight participants (female—21; male—17) were recruited using snowball sampling (Goodman 1961), beginning with community WhatsApp groups and references. All participants were Israeli middle school or high school students between the ages of 14 and 18, 8th graders or higher who listened to music on a daily basis. For research purposes outside of this paper, half of the participants had a music learning background (over 2 years) and half had none but they are regarded as one data corpus in this paper (Table 1).

Other characteristics were also taken into consideration. For example, participants studied in regional schools around the residential area, which meant that most of them commuted to school via shuttle busses or family cars. This was a significant listening time for most, affected also by COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns.

Semi-structured interviews based on a qualitative approach were conducted for data collection. The qualitative approach places the researcher within the social context of their subjects. Being a member of the same community or type of community

Table 1 Participants' characteristics

Corpus A: musical background					Corpus B: no musical background			
Participant no	Name (altered)	Male/female	Age	Instrument played	Participant no	Name (altered)	Male/female	Age
1	Tammy	F	15	Piano	20	Danit	F	16
2	Orel	M	17	Piano	21	Aiden	M	16
3	Tziki	M	17	Cello, piano	22	Gad	M	16
4	Nofar	F	16	Guitar, violin	23	Nora	F	16
5	Shane	F	17	Piano	24	Orit	F	17
6	Nadine	F	15	Saxophone	25	Tillie	F	17
7	Uriel	M	17	Vocal, violin	26	Nash	M	17
8	Johnny	M	16	Guitar	27	Oleg	M	17
9	Benn	M	17	Guitar	28	Amram	M	18
10	Adar	F	16	Vocal	29	Offira	F	16
11	Shirley	F	17	Piano	30	Razi	F	16
12	Benjamin	M	17	Trumpet	31	Ethan	M	17
13	Nona	F	17	Piano	32	Asa	M	14
14	Nicole	F	14	Drums	33	Eddie	M	14
15	Darla	F	15	Piano, vocal	34	Ruth	F	15
16	Mickey	F	14	Guitar	35	Mona	F	15
17	Dalia	F	14	Guitar	36	Goldie	F	16
18	Yovel	M	16	Guitar	37	Baruch	M	18
19	Gill	M	15	Guitar	38	Nirit	F	15

Mean age—16.4

as the subjects and familiar with the schools' atmosphere, space, and peer culture, I approached the position of the interviewer with a base of contextual knowledge (Shalsky and Alpert 2007).

The qualitative approach focuses on the subjects and relies on the researcher's intuition but demands skepticism and caution (Shkedi 2011). The narrative approach offers certain freedom to the participants in leading the discussion toward a comfortable place for them (Bruner 1996). The semi-structured interview allowed me to maintain the discourse within certain borders and to steer it, when necessary, to relevant issues (Bauer and Gaskell 2000).

Participants were asked about their daily use of music, when, and how they choose to listen: devices, apps, locations, actions during, and company. We discussed their influences and social conduct over music, sharing, and music's place in choices of social groups. Participants reported a personal playlist representing their common weekly musical consumption.

Prior to the interviews, participants and their parents (if under 18) signed a consent form and were given an explanation as to the purpose and nature of the interview. The Ethics Committee of the University of Haifa approved the study and its method (April 2022).

Data were collected between March and June of 2020, immediately after the first COVID-19 lockdown in Israel. Restrictions meant the shutdown of schools and the transition to online learning, including music programs, in formal education, music schools, and universities (Habe et al. 2021). Changes affected participants' listening habits, especially in the social sense, and are discussed and analyzed within a wider scope (Vaizman 2022).

All interviews but one were conducted face-to-face and lasted between 30 and 60 min. Locations included my personal office, my class at school (permission was granted), and locations chosen by participants, such as personal rooms, the family dining room, or a back yard. One interview was held on Zoom during mobility restrictions.

The analysis of the transcriptions was done after repeated reading of the materials and extraction of relevant parts which were highlighted according to units of meaning (Bazeley 2013). Analysis was done while "reading between the lines," taking into consideration body language, tone, attitude, contradictions, rephrasing, and pausing (Gill 2000). The approach was especially relevant when participants referred to their peers, their socialization, and choice of company (or not) while listening to music. Specific phrasing allowed for the determining of levels of control, activeness vs. passiveness, and overall satisfaction with the situation (Lieblich et al. 2010).

Results

The interviews with the teenage participants revealed a lot about listening habits and the nature of music mentorship. While some occasionally use their computer or even a turntable, the personal phone is the most common device. Headphones are mostly preferred for private listening, mainly for reasons of convenience, and a portable JBL was common for social gatherings. Streaming is overwhelmingly the common option, with Spotify being the app preferred by most. The key elements explored here, however, are the characteristics of mentorship.

I found that the mentor–mentee relationship can be based on a deep acquaintance, such as between a parent and their child or between close friends. It can be based on a partial acquaintance, such as between a teacher and a student. The acquaintance triggers recommendations that are close to the consumer's taste (enabling it) or, alternatively, expands their taste based on the taste of the recommender. It can be based on a partial and one-sided acquaintance of the mentor by the mentee. This acquaintance is based on the professional status of the mentor and characterizes broadcasters or program editors and their listeners, critics, cultural figures, and even music retailers.

In the case of algorithms, which are at the core of streaming software, the relationship can be based on an ongoing process of getting to know the consumer—by trial and error and via data collection. This is an example of a one-way acquaintance with the consumer by their appointed or unappointed mentor.

A mentor–mentee relationship can last for many years, as in the case of maturing among peers during a journey of mutual exposure to music. On the other hand, it can be a short-term and even "straight to the point" relationship. A mentoring relationship could be restricted to an album or a playlist but the effect would still be meaningful, leaving an impact on one's musical taste.

During the conversations with the participants, different mentoring relationships were revealed and a variety of musical communications unfolded. For most, the prominent music mentor was either a friend or their peer group.

Peer Mentoring

Being teenagers who go to school and spend most of their leisure time with each other, the participants had the best chance of encountering new musical content through peer listening. Besides their semi-private listening time on the bus shuttle to and from school, most of their time is spent in common places, with others. Living in a rural area, unless you are old enough to drive, own a car, and allowed to drive others, you create your own "hanging out" niches. Adar (16) explains: "We are at the beach a lot; we are together in many different situations and we're always playing the music we like."

The habitual playing of songs during peer group gatherings can reveal the more creative and dominant figures—who usually serve as mentors—and the more passive figures who have the opportunity to benefit as mentees. Music can help define the group as well as the individual within it. It may assist in adjusting mood, forming physical appearances, self-perception, perception of others, and perceptions of situations (DeNora 2000; Batt-Rawden and DeNora 2005). Every group member has the potential to take the position of the "soundtrack manager" or DJ, participate as a passive consumer, or take turns manning the DJ position—conduct which, according to the interviews, affects group dynamics. Either way, there is something about the background music that binds the individuals together.

Shirley (17) is often the DJ among her friends and is very aware of the musical needs of the group: "When it's with friends, music that everyone likes! It's more for the sake of… lifting the mood. Less… 'emotional.' You know? Add a little to the

atmosphere, so it's a good atmosphere." Being aware of the social responsibility, she puts the group's musical needs first: "I will adjust it, to elevate the mood. I will not play depressing songs. I don't care what they think of me. It's more important to me to adapt it to the situation, so it'll be possible to enjoy the music and it won't be a burden." Being in charge of the music in most gatherings makes her more of a mentor to others than a mentee. Respectively, it allows the passive ones to benefit more from peer mentoring.

Passive Consumers

Being around friends allows some of the participants to expand their musical taste to music they find "OK," meaning that they probably would not listen to it by themselves but appreciate its social value. Nirit (15) says about her friends: "Most of the time during school recess, they play music that I also really like but I don't listen to during the day." Shane (17) is mostly a passive consumer of new musical content. She does not feel the need to explore the network or ask her friends for new suggestions but is nourished by her surroundings: "Music at recess, with friends… actually through the Scouts, I was exposed to a lot of music because at summer camp, there's music in the background."

For those with natural curiosity, passive listening can lead to active music searching. If Nash (17) comes across a random song on the bus, during recess, when a friend is listening and he likes it, he looks for more material from the same artist. Describing his passion for Louis Armstrong, he said: "I heard one Blues song then… 30 songs later." Oleg (17), however, pointed to a specific friend and to a unique experience of infatuation by music:

> I have a friend who introduced me to the world of rock. I would talk to him through the computer and he would play stuff in the background - all kinds of songs - and I got hooked. Until then, I didn't listen to Iron Maiden, metal, things like that. It opened me up. After that, I would listen more on my own.

Oleg found interest in a new musical genre which he currently listens to regularly, following passive listening to music playing in a space in which he had not been present. Although he had heard the music through a computerized conversation—which distorts the sound signals—it struck a clear enough chord to keep him interested.

The passive consumer is often aware, occasionally engages in collecting music, and sometimes shows activity in the organization process. Offira (16) distinguishes between musical content and the sources of exposure to it. New materials are encountered through social situations and she encounters music she calls "old" through her brother whose musical taste greatly affects her: "New songs… I'm exposed to them in the school yard or in gatherings with friends… all the songs are really new. New songs for me (Ofira emphasized 'me') but old ones—that's [through] my brother."

Passive listeners are not necessarily indifferent to the music and some even discover new musical worlds and the social niches that come with them. Razi (16) was new to the Korean pop scene and was drawn to it because the social group

interested in it seemed nice to her. Being open-minded, she relied on her peers: "Every time new songs come out, my friends make me playlists full of good songs and then I download them to my phone." She realized that the Korean pop scene was an acquired taste: "I'm more attached to songs I already know. When a new song comes through my headphones, I listen, and even if I didn't like it at first, in the end it gets stuck in my head and I do quite like it." Music for Razi is a means of entry into a social circle and her friends are her prominent music mentors.

The Active Search for Agents

Some of the participants set exposure to new musical content as a goal and wished to find a suitable environment for that purpose. Occasionally, this meant adapting the genre and the discourse to the mentor and their expertise. Orel (17) has a certain friend in the field of classical music with whom he is engaged in an exchange of music and discourse. In other fields, there are characters or "agents," as he calls them, almost scholarly, who form a bridge to new musical materials. About his friends from the youth movement, he said: "They introduced me to Steely Dan, for example. They told me '*Aja*, 'you must listen to *Aja*', so I did and it blew my mind."

Tziki (17), who is a cellist, is very active when it comes to exposure. He asks, requests, and invests time in the recommendations of others: "When I get tired of the songs I listen to, and I want to renew, I go to someone [and say] 'Send me five albums.'" But he has certain criteria. He prefers to make sure that the recommender has a taste similar to his own or has an understanding of the genre he is trying to get to know: "I establish that we're of the same mind and enjoy the same music. If I see that we enjoy listening to the same pieces, our direction is similar then, most likely, what they listen to and I don't, can interest me."

Tziki's active approach led to the establishing of a network of mentors which keeps expanding. For him, the very ability of that person to open him up to a new world or expand his world is enough: "It really is every month a different friend and, very quickly, it became dozens of friends. This one gives me jazz, this one rock, this one exposes me to classical pieces I didn't know. It can come from any direction."

These active searchers benefit greatly from the streaming era. They can create meaningful relationships quickly, through the exchange of musical taste, easily and quickly tested. They do not need to be really close with someone to get "their music" because it is not a material object like a CD and sharing it costs nothing. They do not need to limit the acquaintance to certain music at a specific time but can "collect" at any possibility.

A special form of active searching involved passive and indirect mentoring. It was also the only gender-based conduct differentiating males and females among the participants. Adar (female) described exposure to new music as a process that required a lot of motivation. As a new student in the high school music department, among experienced (male) rock and rap fans, she and her female friend needed to fit in and impress the boys. Getting acquainted with their musical taste was the way: "Boys our age love rap. So, it turns out that we [the girls] also listen to that kind of music so that we have more to listen to together, music which they like." This was a calculated move, due to the place of music in the group: "Music is a very big deal

with us, so we learn, listen to what others do. If we go over to this particular bunch, we know they love rap, Six Nine, Eminem and that, so we play that."

Adar saw music as a social tool, which can be used strategically and in a pre-planned way. She learned that boys in the social circle she was interested in had a certain musical taste and realized that a basic mastery of this music would allow her a comfortable entry into the circle. She would be able to enjoy the music in their environment more if she got to know it first and would also be able to offer listening suggestions and have conversations about the textual and musical content. But this strategy required quite an effort: "At first, I had a hard time giving up my regular playlist, the same Taylor Swift playlist… It requires […thinking] not guts but getting out of my comfort zone in order to accept a new song, something you are less familiar with and listen." This effort was not reported by any male participants and, at least within the social groups, the boys were more often considered more knowledgeable and dominant. Adar's male friends acted unknowingly as music mentors to her and her female friends, not only while listening together but by instilling the drive to expand musical taste outside of the circle.

Social Media and Sharing

One of the significant changes in music consumption in the age of smartphones and streaming software is the ability to share anything and to do so instantly. Sometimes sending links is even a personal diary of musical consumption and a reminder of exposure times. Establishing "sharing" channels of communication through social networks like WhatsApp and Instagram and using apps like YouTube, Spotify, Apple Music, and Shazam produce an interpretive community within the peer group.

It also allows an expansion of worldwide interpretive communities. It offers members new musical horizons, as described by Mona (15): "I was on a certain social network, wanting to talk about a certain band and, along the way, I heard people talking about more bands. I had recommendations on all sorts of other bands." Mona especially likes using Twitter to follow people with mutual taste: "Say I'm following a guy who loves the band I love and more bands and then he does a re-tweet related to another band so, all of a sudden, like, 'Wait! Who are these?'" Not only does social media expand social circles and interpretive communities but it also expands the meaning of "peers." In "the real world," Mona's peers are fellow students, teenagers. On social media, her peers could be fans of the same music, whoever they are.

The most immediate social media conduct among the teenage participants and their friends is the sharing of new content they discover through WhatsApp. For some participants, sharing was a real need and they were very enthusiastic about it, saying things like "I immediately send it" (Adar), "I must let him know it exists" (Gad), or "It's instantaneous! I love telling" (Ethan). Nadine (15) described a special relationship with a friend, with whom sharing music is not necessarily immediate but essential: "I have to tell my friend. She has to tell me. It might take a while until I get to know the singer and then, I'm like 'you have to listen to him!'".

Sharing means that the sides perform as mentors to one another. Some give little thought to the matter but others think carefully before sharing, considering it might reflect on them, especially if the content is not appreciated by the receiver. Orel says:

"When I suggest music to others, [I want to make sure] there's really some quality here, that I don't sell them damaged goods." Sometimes it is just a matter of consideration, as Asa (14) explains: "I don't necessarily hurry to send to other people. First, I try to understand the song, [collect] background on the band, the singer and, if I think it'll interest the person, then I send them."

In some cases, it depends on how profound the initial experience was for the listener. Tziki used the words, "blew my mind." Since usually he is in no hurry to share and prefers taking a couple of weeks making sure the music is worth sharing, "If it was so mind blowing for me… I got a real musical experience here, so I probably don't need these two weeks [before sharing]." Others, like Ethan (17), consider sharing according to the meaning of the music to them and their friends: "My friends and I like to talk about the music and songs we knew, so if I find a song that I really liked or changed everything for me, then I straight away introduce it to a friend."

Due to the portability of the music and the devices needed to play it, sharing is everywhere. Besides social gatherings, some working environments include music, especially agricultural work, popular in the area. Nicole (14) shares music while "I clean eggs on the farm." Nadine volunteers helping farmers: "I go there from Saturday to Thursday. And there we are on the ramp, me and my friends, playing songs like… loud volume and we just have fun, picking, or whatever we do, just having fun."

Music is, for the participants, the social atmosphere of anything from hanging out to labor. It is a social commodity, transferred both via mutual listening and via social media. Anyone involved in the transaction is either a mentor, a mentee, or both, but it is almost impossible for a teenager to be neither among their peers.

Family Mentoring

Though less obvious than peer-mentoring, mentoring within the family was still reported as highly significant for many. Participants who talked about parental influence on their taste mentioned exposure to popular music, from 1960 and 1970s rock through Israeli music from all periods to the music of the 2000s. While the influence of figures like broadcasters and salespeople has gradually declined in the streaming era,[3] parental influence has sustained and, in a way, as in peer relations, harnessed the algorithm to the process.

The father was singled out as the main mentor, over shadowing all other family members (mothers were rarely mentioned). As articulated by Ethan: "Family… mostly Dad. All the rest don't have much of a taste, but Dad… Dad knows everything." It was in this part of the discussions with participants that different types of mentoring relationships were revealed.

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[3] The Global "Tower Records" chain, a retailer of music albums that owned a number of branches in Israel (ownership by "Hed Artzi" since the late 1990s), went bankrupt in 2006 and the last branch in Israel closed in 2015. https://towerrecords.com/pages/about

Analyzing the interviews, I came across several types of mentors and named them according to their characteristics. The "initiative mentor" seeks to widen the mentee's exposure to music, even if not particularly asked to take that position, most often wishing to impart quality, value or bring themselves into the relationship. An "involved mentor" offers recommendations and even listens along in a common space, such as in a car. A "recommending mentor" presents and offers music but does not necessarily monitor its consumption. A "supervising mentor" monitors the consumer's consumption habits and serves as a critic from the position of a supervisor, not necessarily by invitation. An "enabling mentor" invites the consumer into their musical world and allows them to wander in it as they please and gather impressions if they wish. And then there's the unique "approving mentor" who simply gives thumbs up or down, serving as a "quality stamp" for the mentee who plays them a song and asks for an opinion.

Fathers functioned as mentors of all the above-mentioned types. Their characteristics as mentors are not their only significant qualities but what is important is also the perception of the parent by the second generation. Is his taste appreciated? Is he "forcing" his music or offering it? Is he being influential while being indifferent? Thus, for example, when asked who or what the main source of influence on exposure to new music in her life is, Nadine described her father as having very fine taste: "My musical inspiration is my father, of course. He has amazing taste in music. He knows all the songs of his period but refuses to become acquainted with any of the new ones. I would love to know that many songs one day." Nadine's father inspired her both in quality and quantity of musical knowledge. She greatly appreciated his taste but, no less, the fact that he had broad knowledge of various musical styles, provided they belonged to "his period." Listening with his daughter, he functioned both as an initiating and an involved mentor.

Orit's (13) story reveals another musical relationship with an active father who sends her links suggesting she listen to things he appreciates, functioning as an initiating and recommending mentor, without necessarily listening to music with her: "My dad listens to a lot of music I don't know, always sending me all sorts of things… a song he really likes, the name of a band I need to know, and I just dive into it and listen." The phrase "need to know" indicates care and responsibility on her father's part as well as Orit's acknowledgment of that.

Nora (16) also described her father's certain kind of "responsibility" for her taste, not only in the positive recommending sense but also in the negative sense: avoiding what should not be consumed. Nora's father was responsible for her "quality taste" (her words) and believed that some content is superior to other content and some is unsuitable. His opinion on current music is firm. It is as if he was telling his daughter, "Don't eat that candy," while handing her an apple instead: "He made sure I didn't listen to what kids my age listen to. It's my dad on weekends, saying something like 'listen here, something new, you might like it'… I pretty much trust his taste in music."

Nora's description shows a double responsibility on the part of the father as a mentor. On the one hand, he is a supervising mentor and tries to dissuade his daughter from listening to content he believes has no value. On the other hand, he is also an

involved mentor who, in his little time together with his daughter (especially on a Friday morning[4]), tries to expand her taste, based on his own, as part of joint listening. The word "trust" aimed at her father holds a deep meaning. It indicates that Nora considers her father to be an authority and that his knowledge is a necessary commodity. It also means that molding a personal musical taste may require a sort of subordination to a person of power and that there is a risk of damage if that person is not worthy.

Adar did not single out either parent as a mentor and she claims her friends represent the main source of new music. However, Adar's parents were divorced and a description of her father's house nonetheless revealed an influential musical environment and pointed to her father as being an enabling mentor: "Dad always listens to music. There's no way I'm with him with no music playing in the background. We have a ton of Beatles posters at his place. He plays piano and he sometimes teaches me. Music is a pretty big deal." Adar was consistent in referring to her father's house as "his place," distancing herself from the property but when it came to musical paraphernalia, such as posters and audio, she "slipped" and treated it as a place of joint ownership, indicating the value of this aspect in their relationship.

Nirit described her father as being active in exposing his daughters to music, not only through intended references to musical materials but in providing background and context. An initiating and involved mentor, he offered content along with stimulating information which allowed his daughters to follow their awakened interest: "Whether it's while cooking or just sitting outside drinking coffee, my dad plays many songs. Then he tells us about when they were written and who wrote them… that's how we're exposed to more songs. Most of the songs I know are that way."

Some pointed to the musical relationship with the father as a path through their childhood. In some cases, such as Mickey's, it stuck: "Since my childhood, Dad has introduced a lot of songs to me. I have the same taste in music as he does." Asa: "Ever since I was born, my dad listens to a certain kind of music that I always hear. I enjoy hearing it. I'm used to it." These descriptions involve listening together to music that both parties enjoy, with the father being responsible for introducing the content, usually by controlling the common sound area. An actual imparting of parental taste, the music still represents the teenagers' favored songs.

The approving mentor was revealed by Tammy's (15) relationship with her father who has no musical experience and rarely chooses to listen to music himself. However, his position as a significant figure in his daughter's musical direction was highly influential. Tammy mentioned her father and his significance even when I asked her about sharing music as a social product: "It all comes back to Dad. I really like exchanging my music with him."

No friends, or even one close friend, came up in Tammy's answer. She was quick to mention her father even before I completed the question. She seemed to be interested in such closeness with her mother but her mother was "limited" in taste and did not allow her daughter to share English-speaking music with her, especially in the car, where the two spent more time together than elsewhere. Expressing some naivete, Tammy did not realize her father's actual influence on her:

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[4] In Israel, Friday is sometimes the beginning of the weekend and is a day-off for many.

I just love listening to music with my dad. I don't know if it affects [my taste] because I'm the one bringing the music. There are songs that I heard and as soon as I saw that my father liked them very much, I explored them more and started to like them much more.

Tammy presented her father with a wide musical selection and his validation gave her the urge to continue exploring. This approving, more passive music mentor, does not expose his protégé proactively but rather lets them seek out the music and points them in the direction that seems appropriate to him/her. Of course, such a mentor, like the enabling mentor, can only exist alongside an active person who has a natural tendency to seek and the desire to know.

Conclusions

The social space of youth contains diversity which requires musically broad and inclusive definitions as well as a redefinition of space and society. The availability of all music at any time or place allows youth of the streaming era to socialize around music almost constantly. The diversity and availability also make the peer group a potentially great mentoring environment. Indeed, participants report their peer group to be the prominent mentoring network through which they encounter new (to them) music.

Whether using shuffle modes on apps or personal playlists, whether listening together or sending links via social media, the user of the streaming era is not obligated to "own" full albums and the teenage listener is not limited by the taste and collection of former generations. The musical shelf is unlimited and a single playlist can contain dozens of songs in one style or in mixed styles. Using music in social gatherings as a mood-setter, according to musical characteristics like "uplifting" or "fun," allows passive consumers in the group better exposure to new content rather than focusing on a specific artist or genre.

The streaming era has not eliminated socializing through or discussing music. In fact, sometimes quite the opposite. The teenagers enjoy the discussion, both one-on-one and in groups, acting as agents of meaning to themselves, again raising the questions: "Is music receding into the background now?" (Hesmondhalgh 2022) and "Does it really have less value to people than is assumed?" (Marshall 2019). A generation born into social media uses its surroundings to maintain what is possibly a basic need: connecting and presenting the self. Music is still a major instrument in that process. It starts with the personal effect it has on the listener and continues with the need to share that experience, either with a close friend or with a group. While algorithms may be a technological extension of the self (Karakayali et al. 2018), that self is presented, mediated, shared, and even evolves using them. The common teenage need to use music as an identity card or as evidence of personal development makes the peer group a perfect mentoring network, able to flourish in the streaming era.

The personal effect music has on the listener resonates over decades, and sharing is therefore reflected in the parental need to impart musical taste. Here as well, the streaming era has not been an obstacle but rather an aid. The ability to use Alexa

in the common space, send links, or focus on specific songs and their origin has allowed the parental mentor flexibility, and the chance to communicate using the tools of the younger generation, all the while considering the possibility of just a short, focused, mentoring recommendation. The streaming era has also expanded the option of being an involved mentor outside the usual common spaces, such as the car or the living room.

While criticism over current music by (mainly) parental supervising mentors arose from the reports, no judgment was reported over listening properties or devices. Though some parents may have advocated vinyl or the value of an album, especially since they grew up while those were at their peak, parental mentoring was focused on content. The availability of songs through music apps might even have made the mentor's job easier, approaching the mentee in ways they could not dismiss due to discomfort, hassle, or a general dismissive attitude toward hardware.

The different types of mentoring relationships either allow parental influence to co-exist with the streaming era or perhaps characterize it. Though parental mentors could easily enable the independent teenage listener to reach any content by simply allowing them the devices, most still care about their children's taste and perhaps consider music mentoring a part of parental responsibility. At the very least, it is a way of communicating with the next generation and expressing dominance, pride, and some control over a field of knowledge.

Especially interesting is the father's position as music mentor, reflected from the data as over shadowing other family members, including the mother. A comparison to former studies by Savage (2015) and Grácio (2016) might illuminate gender differences within the home. While Savage addressed the motherly care for musical exposure, the possible mentees were young children and music was considered by mothers as aid in areas of development (physical, emotional, cognitive). This is not the case for teenagers and parental exposure during times of identity formation and socialization. The difference might point to possible parental roles or a mind-set at different stages of the child's upbringing, with music being a niche related to development at one stage and to character at another. It might also point to the figure that youth possibly looks up to at different stages. Grácio, in her study, targeted mothers and daughters with an affection to rock and explored their behavior around music. In the present study, fathers were not targeted, nor was their mentorship. That information emerged from the data as one of the prominent findings.

The fathers' mentoring role might be related to the tendency toward music collecting, especially regarding vinyl, being male dominant (Maalsen and McLean 2018; Mall 2021; Milano 2003). However, being a collector might be related to knowledge and expertise in some fields but it does not automatically make someone a mentor, or mean that they have any interest in imparting that knowledge. Also not explained is the teenage participants' tendency to adopt the fathers' taste which, in some ways, negates the teenage tendency to antagonize their parents and develop a separate self (Solberg 1994). My hope is that further research on music mentorship in the family can shed light on this issue and on youth's musical relationship with identity and parents.

Several issues arose from the study, some of which, like the effects of COVID-19, musical background, algorithmic mentoring, playlist reports by participants, approach toward timbre, and choices of devices on music consumption and "musical nutrition" (Vaizman

2022) are dealt with in other papers based on the data. Others, like gender differences in musical consumption and social conduct (K-pop consumed mainly by females; Disney songs being male guilty pleasures), were revealed but need further exploration.

Effects of socio-economic status on listening habits should be further explored, due to the homogeneous nature of the study's data sampling. No noteworthy differences were found between age groups within the participants but a similar study of young adults might offer comparative data. Perhaps entering the streaming era at different points in life has an effect on the creation of one's mentoring network and on the dependence on algorithms and the way they are used.

Data Availability Data supporting the research statements are available from the author.

Declarations

Competing Interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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