

# THE INTELLECT HANDBOOK OF



## *Popular Music Methodologies*

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# Introduction

## Mapping the Field: Explorations in the Study of Popular Music

Shara Rambarran, Mike Dines and Gareth Dylan Smith

Popular music studies is a transdisciplinary territory, with research methods and methodologies merging, emerging and being imagined and reimaged in tandem with a field whose scholars strive to arrive at approaches to match the pace and contours of change in such a vibrant and relentlessly current field of multimedia practice and theory. While books in popular music studies frequently contain writing that describes and advocates for particular ways of undertaking research, which often and ably justify the approaches taken to specific studies, this book is unique in that it presents an eclectic collection of chapters in which authors focus on their own and others' ways-and-means of conducting scholarly research in, and pertaining to, popular music. As a book about research *methodologies*, the focus herein is not only on what methods we and our peers are using, i.e. not just on how research is being done, but on the rationales for, affordances of, and challenges and opportunities inherent in, and deriving from, the approaches people take to trying to understand, explain and do popular music.

This volume follows in the footsteps of previous volumes on methodological approaches to popular music. On the one hand, there have been valuable overviews of popular music, such as those from Middleton (1990, 2006), Frith and Goodwin (1990), Negus (1996), Redhead (1997), Bennett (2001), Hawkins (2002), Wall, (2013), Bennett and Waksman (2015), Shuker (2022) and Krüger and Sweers (forthcoming). On the other, there are works that concentrate on specific fields

within popular music. Again, to name but a few, one could draw upon those that look at the role of popular music and virtuality (Whiteley and Rambarran 2016), religion (Partridge and Moberg 2019), history and heritage (Baker et al. 2023), popular music education (Smith et al. 2017), video games (Fritsch and Summers 2021), music production (Burgess 2013; Frith and Zagorski-Thomas 2012), audio engineering (Greene and Porcello 2010) and gender and sexuality (Whiteley 2000a, 2000b, 2013; Hawkins 2015). With regards to specific music styles, one may turn to those that focus on electronic music (Collins and d'Escrivan 2017; Emmerson 2018), jazz (Kirchner 2005; Gebhardt et al. 2019), rock (Moore and Carr 2022), hip hop (Krimms 2000; Williams 2015; Graves and Kelly 2024), punk (McKay and Arnold 2025) and so on.

With this volume, the editors agree that it draws particular inspiration from Derek B. Scott's *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology* (2009), where Scott notes how the purpose of his work lay in 'rethinking popular musicology', with contributors being asked to 'write something original, whilst at the same time trying to provide an instructive example of a particular way of working and thinking' (Scott 2009: 1, original emphasis). He adds that the book is aimed 'primarily at research students and scholars who need to familiarize themselves with the work of cutting-edge researchers, rather than to study textbooks that cover tried and tested methodologies from the past', noting how the book's content is there 'to help graduate students with research methodology and the application of relevant theoretical models appropriate to popular musicology in the twenty-first century' (Scott 2009: 1). In some respects, this mirrors the scope of the current collections of essays, although the editors would contend that this volume also extends to the undergraduate, not least in the editors' decision to include chapters on interviewing and tips around ethnography.

As many colleagues will have experienced, the teaching of popular music is in constant flux, with undergraduate students often having a firmer grasp of current trends and musical styles. Whilst we as pedagogues, practitioners and academics can teach the 'tools' of the musicological 'trade', it is often the undergraduate (and with many, soon to be postgraduate) students who are able to bring with them the richness and uniqueness of personal experience. Therefore, the editors have done their best to make this volume as accessible to all levels of academia and university-level education, with the reader using the tools contained within each chapter for their own purposes. As this will become apparent, each author therefore signposts the reader towards ways of using their chapter outside of their given remit, whilst also including a case study to show how they have used their choice of methodology/method(s).

While Scott acknowledges that the *Research Companion* 'does not cover everything, or even most things' (2009: 4), this statement is a poignant reminder of the growing field of popular music studies and methodologies: and the reader should be aware that the present work does not (and cannot) provide a complete overview of either the breadth of popular music analytical methods, or the wide interdisciplinary field that usually constitutes popular music studies. Those experienced in editing a volume

of this length and breadth will understand the complex logistics in collating various fields of research: an undertaking exemplified through the precarities of ordering chapters into specific sections. Indeed, it has been a jigsaw of huge proportions, especially when content matter, methodologies and ideas overlap. Consequently, the editors are confident that, whilst on the one hand readers will find the current work a valuable addition to their bookcases, reading lists and libraries; on the other, they will excuse the editors for any oversight that one may find in the pages below.

We were particularly keen for this volume to be inclusive and diverse as much as possible, and provide a space for new, emerging writers and academics. The illustrious list of academics above shows a rich tradition of academic rigour, many of whom have laid firm foundations for a volume such as this. The editors therefore made a conscious decision to include authors who may be either at the beginning of their academic career, or indeed, have yet to complete Ph.D. studies. As such, there are some 'big' names attached to the volume (we will not embarrass individual authors by naming them), alongside Ph.D. students, early career researchers and, importantly professionals and practitioners (so-called non-academics) who do not hold tenure or the like.

Part One, 'Foundational Approaches Towards a Musicology of Popular Music' opens up the conversation for the book's subsequent parts by providing a foundation for more specific methodological discussions. This critical section provides essential context and identifies research gaps and trends in popular music research methods. It begins with Liu and Schwartz's chapter titled, 'Critical Popular Music Studies: Interrogating the Methodological Meanings and Discursive Politics of "Critical" and "Popular"'. They propose 'critical popular music studies' (CPMS) as a research methodology, arguing that 'it is an emerging methodology that applies a series of critically informed approaches to examining popular music as a transdisciplinary and post-structuralist project that decentres canonical ways of knowing' (this volume, 21). They discuss the emergence of CPMS courses across various disciplines while emphasizing the need for thorough investigations into CPMS, proposing a tripartite pathway for refocusing the interdisciplinary debates in critical popular music studies.

This is followed by Kahr and Zaddach's 'Artistic Research as a New Research Paradigm in Popular Music Studies' (Chapter 2), where, in a practical context, they argue the importance of building a methodological framework in artistic research, mainly, where materialized musical things are created by humans. The authors note how artistic music research should embrace 'concrete individual processes of experience, decision-making and interpretation of meaning in performing, creating and designing, composing and arranging, communicating and making of music and sound' (37) resulting in 'new and enhancing approaches of and in artistic practices' (37) that can be established and invite more research opportunities. Focusing on the musicological aspect of music practice research, in Chapter 3, Zagorski-Thomas discusses the categories of practice research and questions how negotiations between the individual and socially constructed aesthetics produce implications for practitioners, exploring the development of aesthetics through creative practice and its implications

for ‘doing music better’ (56). The author stresses that researchers must question ‘the importance of effectiveness of a musical feature, [and] think about what it is doing rather than what it is’ (56) and argue on ‘why, how and what it is contributing to our interpretation of the music?’ (56).

By combining communication, media and popular music studies, Govari and Amaral introduce ‘Biographical Method and Interview as Techniques in Brazilian Communication and Music studies’ (Chapter 4). Through the use of biographical method and interview techniques the authors argue the importance of the researcher’s role in understanding artists’ careers and creative choices, including ‘music scenes, identities, life stories and narratives’ (68). We then turn to contemporary musical theatre (Chapter 5), where Braae ‘find[s] it striking that analytical tools from popular music studies have not been brought to bear on the musical theatre repertoire’ (83) when analysing theatre shows and repertoire, including characters’ settings and emotional states. To bridge this gap, Braae suggests implementing the persona–environment method when researching theatre shows and repertoire, with a particular focus on the musical *Dogfight* (2012) as an example.

When focusing upon the cultural aspects of popular music, Zenerian looks at the cultural imagination when analysing and researching on music culture(s) (Chapter 6). He illustrates the concept of cultural imagination, and how to apply it in research. He argues how popular music researchers and their cultural imagination ‘will allow them to connect better with their research participants [...] and [to] critically reflect on the type of knowledge they produce’ (97) when researching and critiquing music culture(s). Following this, Inglis opens the discussion on ‘Semiotics as a Mode of Popular Music Analysis and Interpretation’ (Chapter 7), where he illustrates ‘how certain semiotic methods may be used in the service of popular music analysis and interpretation’ (109). To demonstrate this, he offers a structural music analysis, identifying the sonic codings of British music through the examination of the works of Sandi Thom, the Divine Comedy and the Feeling. Bestley continues the discussion on decoding music, but this time centres the argument on visuals in ‘Form and Function: Deconstructing Music Graphics’ (Chapter 8). He emphasizes the importance of exploring the relationship between visual style and musical genre by introducing a ‘critical framework relating to visual theory, graphic design practice and print reproduction’ (131), with a particular focus on the UK punk and post-punk scenes.

Part Two navigates the reader through the complex layers of artefacts, archaeology, archive and heritage in popular music. ‘Back to the Future: Artefacts, Archaeology, Archive and Heritage’ illustrates how popular music is shaped by cultures and vice versa, and through interdisciplinary perspectives and methodologies; and thus offering compelling approaches to understanding the past, present and future of popular music. Artefacts, for instance, serve as essential gateways to the musical past. With mediums such as vinyl records, vintage instruments, memorabilia, etc. (see Bratus 2019; Osborne 2016; Rambarran 2021b; Osborne 2016; Whiteley and Rambarran

2016) these artefacts provide connections to nostalgic (Jameson 1991; Garrido and Davidson 2019), lived (see Heidegger 1962; Cohen et al. 2014), or indeed, spectre-like (see Derrida 2012; Fisher 2014; Rambarran 2021b) experiences of musicians and audiences, allowing researchers to discover and unpack layers of meaning and insight of musical artefacts. This ties in with archaeology, where researchers uncover evolutionary roots and routes of genres and the influences of diverse cultures, including subcultures and music scenes that shape popular music (see O’Keeffe 2013; Ryzewski 2021; Graves-Brown et al. 2013; Whiteley et al. 2004).

Indeed, archives are valuable sources that serve and preserve rich information on music history. From catalogued recordings to personal correspondence, archives offer valuable materials for researchers. It should be noted, however, that archives also expose challenges of access, preservation and interpretation, which alerts researchers to navigate, through methodology, the complications of conducting research with care and diligence (The Irish Traditional Music Archive 1994; Bennett and Rogers 2016; Cuervo 2015). Heritage embodies the collective memory of music communities, etc. and celebrates and preserves musical–cultural identities and collectives. As a form of research methodology, researchers should explore representation, authenticity and the challenges of preserving musical heritage (Baker 2015; Baker et al. 2018, 2023; Cohen et al. 2014; Maloney and Schofield 2021).

While there is a blend of approaches when researching popular music’s preservation and its historical layers, Part Two begins with inspiring methodological approaches when researching popular music heritage. The opening chapter, ‘Do-It-Together: Punk Methodologies for Researching the Heritage of Popular Music’ (Chapter 9), is presented by a collective of music heritage researchers (Baker et al.), who invite readers to apply their ‘suite of methodologies’ (149) when researching. The chapter is uniquely presented in the form of an album tracklist, and explores, or rather, virtually journeys through, ‘the cultural significance of places and traditions that have shaped popular music’s heritage’ (149) and beyond. This is followed with a close inspection of ‘Records, Subjects and Agents: Exploring Archives of Popular Music through Critical Archival Studies’ (Chapter 10), where Fife discusses the ‘emergent theories of critical archival studies’ (162), arguing why such studies should be considered when researching popular music heritage.

In Chapter 11, DeVlieger explores forensic musicology, a research method utilized when examining copyright infringement, and argues why it is ‘the most visible form of public music analysis in contemporary culture’ (179), and how future copyright litigation cases should allow opportunities ‘for popular music scholars to engage in forensic musicological work’ (179). Upton dives deeper into the conservation of researching popular music and history in Chapter 12, with a focus on ‘The Cover–Version Spectrum: Reframing the Relationship between Imitation and Transformation in Pop-Punk Cover-Versions’. Upton argues that ‘there is a correlation between the interpretation of imitation/transformation and the classification of cover/version’ (195) and offers a ‘working methodology’ (195) when analysing

music and performances, with a particular focus on *Punk Goes ...*, a series of albums where punk-rock artists perform covers from other genres.

In 'Digging in the Takes: Using Archaeological Approaches to Study Popular Music History' (Chapter 13), Thompson and McKay introduce 'archaeological approaches and experimental methods that can be used to further mine the history of popular music' (219). Focusing on the 'experimental archaeological methods' (219) in recording a *charanga* ensemble, the authors demonstrate how 'archaeological approaches can be used to gain new insights into the historical context of recorded music' (219). This is followed with a discussion on 'Focused Musical Artefact Analysis' (Chapter 14), in which Wernicke and Ahlers raise the question of how 'current artefacts that are created or used in the context of popular music cultures [can] be adequately analysed' (239). Here, the authors introduce various methods to aid the researcher 'when researching manifest musical objects whose usage scenarios are not clear at the start of research' (239).

We now turn to applying research methodology in 'Exploring Ethnographic Approaches in Popular Music Studies' (Part Three), which involves studying people, cultures, music scenes, communities and movements worldwide in popular music (Nettl 1985; Manuel 1988). Researchers will often immerse themselves in participant observation as a form of field study to gain first-hand insights into the lived musical experiences of people (e.g. creatives, composers, musicians, fans, audiences, etc.). As Slobin argues, ethnomusicologists in particular 'study "what's popular" – meaning not only what's currently fashionable, or produced by the recording industry cartel, but also what people most commonly or passionately choose as the basis for dancing, listening, identifying with and remembering' (Slobin 2003: 73). Various methods, other than participant observation, in research are considered, such as interviews (see also Chapter 4 and Chapter 23), oral histories (see Chapter 34), fieldwork, analysis of artefacts (see Part Two), text and music, etc.

The study of music genre in cultures is often 'socially situated and contingent; they exist only within the context of human interaction, not as fixed and culturally transcendent categories' (Fast 2009: 173). While the study of people is a significant feature when attempting to understand the cultural significance of music and, with genres being one of the primary areas of research (Holt 2007), location, place and space again become a prominent focus in ethnography (Whiteley et al. 2004), or indeed ethnomusicology (Scott 2009). Furthermore, researchers must consider virtual spaces as well (Whiteley and Rambarran 2016), especially the internet where it 'is now part of the "field" in ethnomusicology [where] a deep immersion in the field must now be accompanied by a study of artists' web pages, blogs, CD iconography and reviews in the popular press' (Dawe 2009: 247), as well as conducting 'virtual' fieldwork and research online (Berger and Stone 2019). Applying methodologies when researching ethnography, in the globalization, glocalization or localization of popular music, enables a deeper understanding of its cultural significance including its role in shaping socio-identities, communities and societies, cultures, and politics

(Clifford and Marcus 1986; Bloustein 2003; Nettl 2005; Post 2013; Titon and Pettan 2015).

The opening chapter for Part Three sees Heesch and Suer exploring ‘Adele Clarke’s Situational Analysis and Its Potential for Popular Music Studies’ (Chapter 15). They observe Clarke’s take on Situational Analysis as an ‘innovative methodological approach’ (256) when ‘interpreting relations in social situations or [...] in analysing popular music in a situated manner’ (256). To put their arguments and the methodology into perspective, they use a music event in Germany as an observational case study. Next, and focusing in on flamenco, Martin explores ‘Cosmopolitan Hubs: Glocalization and Non-Native Culture Brokers in the Globalization of Popular Music Cultures’ (Chapter 16). Drawing upon a ‘methodological perspective anchored in glocalization and individual agency’, Martin notes how her chapter ‘provides an informative example of how popular musicologists might make sense of how music cultures travel and re-emerge transnationally’ (277), and proposes the term ‘cosmopolitan hubs’ as a means of interrogating ‘non-native culture brokers who perpetuate glocalized scenes’ (277). In Chapter 17, Gareth Dylan Smith’s autoethnographic writing explores playing drum kit solos in an art gallery, theorizing this practice with Boyce-Tillman’s (2011, 2020) model of spirituality and Zagorski-Thomas’ (2022) Practical Musicology framework, before settling on the challenging notion that perhaps research methods are antithetical to engaging in ethical artistic practice at all (Kallio 2023). Campos Valverde offers a comprehensible guide in designing and conducting a mixed-method digital ethnography of online musical cultures and popular music (Chapter 18). She notes how, since the COVID-19 pandemic, popular music researchers – and specifically ethnographers – have had to ‘migrate their projects to online settings and conduct research remotely via social media and streaming platforms’ (311). Campos Valverde therefore raises key questions in this area, not least how, ‘if music is increasingly distributed, consumed and experienced online, what does that mean for the study of popular music in its cultural context, namely, a digital context?’ (311) Findlay-Walsh concludes the section with ‘Internet Pop Reception as Sonic Autoethnography: Circulating Music, Story and Self Online’ (Chapter 19), where the author ‘seeks to consider and to position examples of such internet music reception activity as autoethnographic’ (327). Here, Findlay-Walsh examines online music reception practices and sonic autoethnography, raising questions on how music is consumed online and how these practices can be ‘understood and valued as critically engaged, creative acts of fans’ socially situated self-narrativization that may lead to shared insights and learning’ (327).

The interplay of social constructs like ‘Sexuality, Race and Intersectionality in the Study of Popular Music’ (Part Four) in popular music remains an essential area of academic research, where conventional boundaries and norms in culture and identities must continuously be researched, challenged, unpacked and discussed (hooks 1992; Ramsey 2004; Whiteley 2003; Edwards and Esposito 2019). When talking about gender and sexuality in popular music, for example, Whiteley argues, ‘being gendered

itself is a restriction, and gendered roles are constrained' (Whiteley 2009: 205), which limits individuals' creative expression and freedom, and thus lacks a reflection of the diverse experiences and identities of artists and audiences. However, we are also made aware that gender and sexuality 'shifts with the cultural norms surrounding sexuality, sometimes bounded by, sometimes transcending, both class and ethnicity' (Whiteley 2009: 205). Therefore, it is essential to understand how sexuality shapes musical expression and to understand the intersections between identities, including gender, class and race (see Whiteley 2000a, 2000b, 2009; Whiteley and Rycenga 2006; Scott 2010; Hawkins 2017; Hansen 2022; Yousman et al. 2020; Fairclough et al. 2023; Wiseman-Trowse 2008).

Hochman-Ruiz begins Part Four by noting the importance of ongoing research in sexuality and gender by focusing on trans studies in 'Is it Drag?: Trans Perspectives on Queering Popular Music Research' (Chapter 20). Here, Hochman-Ruiz begins by providing an informative overview of trans studies, via an ethnographic study of San Diego's drag community. This is followed by Lambe, who applies autoethnography when researching queer open mic events in 'Staying in the Field: Emotional Labour and Trauma in Popular Music Ethnography' (Chapter 21). Specifically, Lambe notes how he uses autoethnography as a means of narrating stories 'I tell myself about emotion in fieldwork' and how this becomes a way of expressing a 'sense of self that is true to the ways traumatized fieldworkers and fieldworkers working with traumatized populations must navigate vulnerability' (359). Li's chapter, 'Representing Power through China Wind Music: The Soft and Hard Masculinities of the Nation' is next. Drawing upon ethnography, reception theory and textual and visual analysis, Li seeks to uncover the meaning of the 'Chinese style' (Chapter 22), looking specifically at the audience's reception to Chinese popular music. Here, the Li raises questions over how 'Chinese audiences have continually shown a strong willingness to express their own voices of national identity and power in relation to their interpretations of "Chinese style"' (372). Furthermore, Li's research urges the researcher to 'rethink the structure and meaning of both the concept of (Chinese) style and (gender) identity in popular music' (373).

Chapter 23 sees Boon exploring the conferralist framework when conducting music research in 'The Conferralist Framework: Method and Application in Popular Music Studies'. Boon begins by providing an overview of the conferralist framework, noting how the framework lies at the intersection of feminist theory, social ontology, philosophy and metaphysics. To illustrate his ideas further, he draws upon the music of various artists, not least Damon Albarn and Taylor Swift. Alvarez-Cueva concludes the section by addressing the challenges in popular music research, particularly concerning representation and sexualization, in 'When "Up for It" Is Not for Everyone: From Content Analysis to the Music Analysis of Sexualization Model (MAS-Model): An Approximation of Contemporary Music From a Decolonial Lens' (Chapter 24). Here, Alvarez-Cueva uses content analysis to explore 'contemporary music representations regarding sexualization', specifically to 'theorize about the differences between

subject and object, considering sensual and sexual characteristics and problematizing them by a moderation due to racial phenotype bias.' Alvarez-Cueva's chapter is not only useful with regards content but is also valuable for illuminating the process of coding in this instance.

Part Five opens the discussion on research methodologies in 'Approaches Towards a Popular Music Pedagogy'. Popular music is a vibrant and growing area of music education scholarship (Green 2001; Powell et al. 2015; Smith 2014; Smith et al. 2017, 2018), and it becomes increasingly evident that traditional research methods alone (see Froehlich et al. 2012) need to be consistently redefined and adapted, resulting in researchers modifying their methods to effectively explore the diverse scopes of popular music learning and teaching (Froehlich and Smith 2017; Moir et al. 2019; Parkinson and Smith 2015). An unavoidable example would be how technology has challenged and transformed music learning, composition, production and performance, resulting in exciting, inclusive and accessible music-making methods. Indeed, as the editors prepared this manuscript for publication, the popular music education landscape has become increasingly involved in the vigorous conversation around artificial intelligence and how educators and researchers might ethically and constructively work with AI whilst also seeking to help students incorporate AI into their work. The editors are aware of the omission of this topic in the current book, especially on chapters that discuss, or whose authors wrote collaboratively and intentionally with AI, but we anticipate this as being a highly dynamic area of the field of popular music studies in the near future.

Research methodologies in popular music education must also consider digital tools and platforms, acknowledging the range of roles of technology in shaping popular musical practices and pedagogies. Another significant topic in music education research is gender, essential for furthering inclusivity, by understanding student experiences, and offering approaches in supporting equality within the field. Timonen opens the section with 'Person-Centred Popular Music Education: Negotiating Gender, Community and Industry Expectations' (Chapter 25), where the author researches gender and student experiences in a UK-based postgraduate popular music course, and argues why a 'person-centred approach' in music education 'has real benefits for both students and lecturers' (427). To support this notion, the author focuses on the experiences of female, female-identifying and transgender students, aiming to demonstrate the effectiveness of person-centred education. Powell then offers an overview of 'Popular Music Education Methodologies in the United States' (Chapter 26), highlighting gaps in research methodologies and approaches in current popular music education. Powell therefore proposes newer research methods, not least those drawing upon 'historical, qualitative, quantitative, descriptive and mixed-methods research' (440–441).

This is followed by Whiting's chapter entitled 'Process-Based Pedagogies for Creative Practice Studies' (Chapter 27). Drawing upon the delivery of creative practice (performance and songwriting), Whiting focuses in on the importance of

reflective practice through a 'full cycle of introspection, critical reflection and reflexivity' (456). This approach encourages students to engage deeply in reflective practice, allowing them to gain insightful insights into their creativities, and enhance both their skills and understanding of their work. Alethea de Villiers' chapter follows, exploring the application of contemporary piano pedagogy in 'Reflective Piano Pedagogy: Improvisation and Composition in Classical and Contemporary Repertoires' (Chapter 28). Interestingly, de Villiers looks at 'the application of contemporary piano pedagogy to a selection of piano repertoire from the Baroque, Classical and Romantic eras' (472). Underpinning this chapter is a reflective approach to music pedagogy and, specifically, the correlation between popular and classical piano techniques and pedagogical approaches. O'Grady concludes this section by focusing on music production and offers 'a contemporary methodology for studying music production that reflects different ways music is now made' (489). In 'Popular Music Production: Rethinking Recording Studio Labels' (Chapter 29), O'Grady argues for a comprehensive approach to understanding music production practices by considering the themes of space, technology, economic capital and cultural capital. Furthermore, he stresses the need to refine and address key research areas in music production concerning scholarship, music and digital technological developments, and political economy, to gain a better understanding of these evolving music production practices.

Popular music occupies a significant and dynamic role in human experience, which stretches beyond entertainment, education and a way of living (Levitin 2019; DeNora 2000; Gamble 2021). While music can connect deeply with our emotions (Small 1998; Juslin and Sloboda 2011; Juslin 2019), memories (Cohen et al. 2022) and identities (Whiteley 2000a, 2000b; Hawkins 2002; Scott 2009; MacDonald et al. 2017), primarily through personal choice and habits, it can be served as a reflection of our lifestyles (Bennett 2001; Krims 2009) including well-being (DeNora 2016), spirituality (Dines and Gregory 2021; Partridge and Moberg 2019; Rambarran 2021a; Smith 2022) and recovery (Warwick and Adrian 2016; Fast and Pegley 2012; Finley 2020; Webb 2021). Part Six, 'Popular Music and Connectedness: Recovery Studies, Music Audiences and Spirituality', highlights the multiple roles in which music shapes lives, both individually and collectively. The authors display methodologies and ethical considerations when researching and understanding how popular music connects with various aspects of daily life, whether it is a form of leisure, collective or social participation, or individual therapeutic practice.

The section begins with Chapter 30, which looks at the emergence of the online DIY music scene, Vaporwave. In 'Exploring Post-Subcultural Participation through a Practice-Centred Approach: The Case of the Vaporwave (Virtual) Scene', authors Tosini and Ricotti move away from the traditional 'canon of cultural artefacts' (508) approach when analysing cultural practices in organic and in real-life scenes, and instead, propose a mixture of online cultural practices in research. This allowed the authors to illuminate the fluidity of creativity in the vaporwave scene, specifically around its 'production, curation, distribution and consumption' (519). This is

followed by Goldwyn, who explores ‘Recovery Studies and Pop Musicology: The Twelve Steps as Lyrical, Visual and Sonic Rhetoric’ (Chapter 31). This advocates for a wider discussion on the development of the field of ‘recovery studies’, where one might interrogate how popular music reflects and embodies ‘the recurring aesthetic, structural and referential principles’ (525) of recovery studies. For Goldwyn, ‘the principal methodology for developing a recovery studies for popular music is critical multimodal discourse analysis’ (525), which he employs in this chapter, specifically looking at the relationship between representations of recovery in a variety of contexts, including music videos and lyrical content. Haynes and Nowak discuss music reception in ‘When Is a Music Audience? The Challenges of a Sociological Perspective of Music Audiences in the Platform Age’ (Chapter 32), where they note how ‘the sociology of music audiences finds itself at an impasse’ (538) regarding the mapping of audiences listening habits, and the ‘debates about streaming platforms and attempts to understand the cultural ramifications of algorithms’ (538). The authors therefore advocate for a rethink in the way in which one realizes the empirical and epistemological complexities in approaching this subject, and thus presenting a rigorous case for empirical research when exploring music audience and consumption. In ‘Studying Religion and Popular Music’ (Chapter 33) Moberg and Partridge offer new researchers an ‘overview of [the] main approaches to studying the relationship between religion and popular music and outlines the most commonly employed methods in the field’ (551). Here, they present a survey of the primary approaches to examining the interplay between religion and popular music, elucidating established methodologies employed in this field. Their aim is to furnish emerging researchers with essential perspectives and methodological tools. Dines concludes Part Six in his chapter ‘In Search of Krishna: Narrative Enquiry and the Trajectory of the Spiritual in Krishnacore’ (Chapter 34). Here, Dines explores the use of narrative enquiry as a means of teasing out the spiritual/religious experiences of participants within Krishnacore, a punk sub-genre that grew out of the relationship between the Krishna Consciousness Movement and American hardcore punk in New York in the 1990s. Dines begins by examining the multidisciplinary nature narrative enquiry, signposting the reader to its use within (amongst others) postmodernism, literary theory, pedagogy and psychology. Dines then illustrates his use of narrative enquiry via the lens of reflective practice, showing how it has facilitated his ongoing research on Krishnacore.

The final section of the volume, ‘Thinking Ahead: Emerging Methodologies in Popular Music Studies’ explores the latest trends in popular music research, including ecomusicology, zoömusicology and the manipulation of music through digital technologies. Although these topics, such as ecomusicology (Pedelty 2012; Reid and Petocz 2021; Titon 2020; Størvold 2023), zoömusicology (Martinelli 2009, 2010) and digital technology (Théberge 1997, 2015; Prior 2018; Hepworth-Sawyer et al. 2019; Rambarran 2021b) have been previously discussed within the field, it is important to recognize their relevance in the context of the current era, illustrated by rapid

environmental shifts, and advancements in digital technology. As such, these timely dialogues are essential for advancing the future discourse in popular music research.

Størvold initiates Part Seven, interrogating environmental humanities concerning sonic and audio-visual mediations, focusing on the climate crisis. In 'Confronting Climate Change in Popular Music Texts: Nostalgia, Apocalypse, Utopia' (Chapter 35), Størvold suggests a methodological framework on ecocritical analysis in popular music texts, using Björk, Aurora and Anohni as case studies. This ecological theme resonates further in Brooks' 'Do Meat-Eaters Dream of Vengeful Sheep? Towards a Methodology for Animal-Oriented Music Criticism' (Chapter 36), where the author advocates for an exploration of animal-oriented music criticism (AMC), exemplified by the analysis of Pink Floyd's 'Sheep' from their album *Animals* (1977). As a relatively new field, Brooks first provides a valuable overview of human-animal studies (HAS), noting how scholars have posed ontological and epistemological questions over the human-animal relationship. Brooks then looks at the notion of zoömusicology, raising questions of what an animal-oriented music criticism might entail: after which he commences his analysis of Pink Floyd. Next, Perevedentseva introduces 'An Ecosemiotic Approach for the Analysis of Timbre' (Chapter 37), aiming to decipher musical meaning within popular music and its connection to the broader lived environment. Drawing upon the Detroit-based duo Drexciya, Perevedentseva 'surveys the state of the field of timbre scholarship, identifying lingering problem areas, and introduces an ecosemiotic approach for the analysis of timbre' (624).

Transitioning to music creativity and technology, including performance and production, Hermes presents 'Research Methods in Live Electronic Music and Audio-Visual Performance' (Chapter 38). Here, Hermes 'explores ways in which live visual parameters can support the performance of electronic music' (638), with a focus on the synchronicities between sound and image. After an overview of the technologies that musicians can draw upon to create moving pictures for performances, she then delves into a discussion on emerging AI technologies. This is followed by an exploration of how visuals can be integrated in face-to-face live performances and an overview of virtual performance. In the latter half of her chapter, Hermes then draws upon her interviews with Robert Kenke (founder of Ableton) and her own practice in form of Nyokee, a singer, violinist and music producer.

Next, Yang and Yik-Man explore suitable research methodologies in the creativity of Cantopop through their work, 'Technology, Creativity and Pop Music Production: The Case of Cantopop' (Chapter 39). Using Cantopop as a case study, the authors explore ways in which production and music consumption impact upon local music industries. Furthermore, they note how 'ethnography as a method can reveal creative actors' experiences with technology, extending the sonic geography and scholarly orbit of researchers and students, and addressing issues paramount to Asian and minority studies' (656). The section concludes with a focus on music consumption, specifically regarding streaming and esports. Gandini and Corbella discuss 'Studying Playlist Cultures with Qualitative Digital Methods' (Chapter 40), noting how the

emergence 'requires researchers to extend their existing methodological array beyond conventional quantitative and qualitative techniques of streaming platforms', specifically as a means of accounting for 'the (epistemological and technical) specificity of researching platforms' (670). Pulling upon digital ethnographic research, Febrer-Coll finishes the volume by exploring 'Popular Music in Esports, On and Beyond the Stage' (Chapter 41). Highlighting the scarcity of academic research in this area, the author notes how the chapter seeks to offer 'a glimpse of a rapidly developing ecosystem in which, popular music has become a key defining feature for games, as well as a look into why we need new insights on the role of music in esports that go beyond what happens at a graphic and mechanical level' (688).

Importantly, the topics discussed across the seven sections in this volume serve both as a *foundation* and *invitation* for further discussion in research methods and methodologies, not least in the related, existing and emerging interdisciplinary fields that could not be fully explored in the chapters in this book. For instance, exploring research methodologies in political and social activism in music reveals how music serves as a powerful vehicle for political expression and activism with movements and campaigns such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), #MeToo, climate change, advocacy, social justice, human rights and resistance against extremism and far-right ideologies. In addition, it is crucial to continue to apply methodologies when researching cultural variations in emotion and well-being by examining how music reflects and influences cultural differences in experiencing and expressing emotions related to loss, grief, ageing, health, etc., and thus offering insights into the human condition across diverse societies and cultures.

Equally significant is applying research methods in examining the role of music across diverse races, ethnicities and nationalities. This inclusive approach involves exploring migration, forced migration, displacement, belonging and social class distinctions and differentiations. It contributes to a more comprehensive understanding to other relevant research disciplines such as ethnomusicology and cultural studies. Furthermore, ongoing research into inclusive music practices is just as important. These practices, which promote accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusivity within the music industry and education, ensure that all voices, of all abilities, are heard and valued.

From a creativity standpoint, it is essential to observe research methods in innovations in transmedia that also include sound and music creation. This also involves trends in producing sound and music for the creative industries such as fashion, film, television, advertising, video games, radio and other audio-visuals. Additionally, innovative methods of independent music creation within domestic spaces need further exploration so as to understand how home and personal environments and spaces influence creativity and music. Also, the study of musical devices, machines and instruments, particularly in research disciplines such as organology, requires continuous research to comprehend their history, musical traditions and cultural implications. This also involves preserving musical heritage and encouraging the innovation

of future instruments. Moreover, the sustainability of music ecosystems, including festivals, local music industries, grassroots venues and in general, live music industries, demands ongoing research to maintain a vibrant music culture.

The creative processes and careers of musicians and music creatives (e.g. composers, songwriters, producers) are important and should not be overlooked. Investigating personal accounts from musicians, etc., including autobiographies, interviews and observational accounts such as biographies, provides valuable insights into how their musical creations are interpreted by fans and audiences. A final example for now (though certainly not the last), would concern data and analytics. Although not a new concept or research area in music, it is a growing research area in *popular* music studies particularly in the digital era. Here, an area where precise research methods would be most welcome might be the organization, storage and utilization of music metadata, as well as the applications of music information retrieval (MIR) and artificial intelligence (AI), and their impact on multiple online music platforms, the music industry and, more significantly, popular music.

In conclusion, therefore, popular music studies embraces a diverse range of topics and disciplines, including but not limited, to culture(s), authenticity, composition/creation, production, performance, style/genre, reception, society, education, identity, globalization, visual communication, audio/sound studies, critical theory, media, technology and digital cultures, etc. With this in mind, and in addition to the interdisciplinary nature of the field, the editors have been attentive in collating and organizing the topics above: with the blurred lines of methodologies being testament to the field of popular music studies. The editors assert that this current work will appeal to all readers in demonstrating the strengths and limitations of different research methods, and how they can be applied to researching popular music effectively.

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