

SPEA UNDERGRADUATE HONORS THESIS

Creativity in the Music Industry

How Does Perception of Musical Creativity Align
with Popularity

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Abstract

Based on various definitions and theories on creativity as well as personal perception, the thesis for this project is that levels of popularity in music do not necessarily align with levels of creativity. Research methods included literature review, Billboard charts analysis, and surveys on perceived level of creativity in popular music. The survey questions were created to determine which popular artists are considered creative, why certain artists and music are considered more creative than others, what sources are used to find new music, and what causes attraction to new music and artists. Respondents ranked leading artists from popular music charts based on their level of creativity. The results were discussed according to theories of creativity and personal perception. It was concluded that perceived levels of creativity are highly subjective as well as influenced by popular media promotions.

According to psychologist Dean Keith Simonton, "You can't be creative unless you come up with something that hasn't been done before," (Kerstin, 2017). To discuss the scientific basis behind creativity, "Finke et al. (1992) proposed that a particular class of mental structures, called pre-inventive structures, play an important role in creative exploration and discovery," (192). "Examples of pre-inventive structures include verbal combinations that give rise to new associations and insights (Mednick, 1962)," (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Sonia Simone also believes that creativity is about experimenting and discovering (Wilson, 2017). These theories and findings show that creativity is a skill of connecting the dots in a new way. Making something creative can result from exploration, discovery, and eventually doing something that hasn't been done before during the creative process, as described in the theories and concepts above. For example, a creative piece of music can feature a combination of other genres that create the only music of its type. The previous theories and findings also influence my personal opinion that creative music is music that hasn't been done before. Popular music often uses interchangeable formulas, melodies, and harmonies that sound immediately familiar and according to the theories above might not be considered as creative. According to the survey findings, the perception of creativity in popular music and artists is open to interpretation and might or might not align with its popularity.

Due to varying definitions the creativity of artists can be difficult to measure accurately, but other sources rank the success of artists based on various factors. Billboard magazine measures the top one hundred artists each week based on "radio airplay, sales data, streaming data, and social 50 activity," (Billboard, 2017). Social 50 can be defined as "a ranking of the most active artists on the world's leading social

networking sites,” (Billboard, 2017). Professionals supporting Billboard also construct the charts based on “nominations by peers, colleagues, and superiors,” (Billboard, 2018). Billboard’s top 100 charts have a strong influence on the public and consumer behavior. This is proven based on “social media impressions and radio and TV audiences reached” (Billboard, 2018). Artists from Billboard’s top 100 charts including Drake, Beyoncé, and Kendrick Lamar were incorporated in the survey section of the project to study different perceptions of the creativity of these popular artists. These artists were selected due to their strong name recognition in addition to being on the top 100 charts. I consider Kendrick Lamar creative because of his unique voice and rap instrumentals that draw from the jazz style without repeating any prior recordings or jazz repertoire that I know of. I consider Beyoncé creative due to her songs that feature chord progressions I haven’t heard before. Drake can be considered creative due to some of his lyrics being the first of their kind. Meanwhile, many of the chord progressions in Drake’s music sound immediately familiar, which can be a reason that his music might not be considered creative.

To create a survey, I began by brainstorming questions on a website used to create surveys that would help me better understand how perception of musical creativity aligns with popularity. These questions were discussed with Dr. Herzig, my thesis supervisor and professor, and eventually, each question was either confirmed or revised. After making the final decisions about which questions would be included on the survey, the survey was sent to family, friends, and students in the arts management program at Indiana University. First, those taking the survey were asked to name five popular music artists that they consider creative. In addition to finding which artists are commonly

considered creative, this question was chosen so the findings of artist preferences could be compared to other information and survey results. Next, they were asked to mark from a set of options why they chose the artists they did. The options included, their music has a unique quality, they are very prolific and produce music of high quality, their music is unique and stands out against others, and other. They were allowed to pick more than one option. If they selected the last option, they were instructed to explain in their own words what made their chosen artists creative. Asking this question to those taking the survey would help identify common perceptions of creative artists.

The third question asked subjects how they find new music. The possibilities given included “I explore online sources (i.e. YouTube, Spotify, Streaming),” friend’s recommendations, playlists, radio, and other. Each of these answers was provided with the options of choosing a lot, sometimes, rarely, and never. For example, somebody could have indicated that they never find new music using radio but that they find a lot of new music using friend’s recommendations. It was determined that asking subjects how they find new music might indicate where popular artists are commonly located. The fourth question asked subjects what attracts them to music. One or more answers could have been chosen from good production quality, creative songwriting, themes, musical styles, and other. The fifth question asked what makes them consider an artist or piece of music creative. One or several options could have been chosen from unique use of musical elements, unique combo of styles, unique lyrics, and other. Including this question on the survey would help determine some specific aspects of music that are commonly assessed to form opinions about creative artists. The last question asked subjects how they would rank a list of artists on a scale of one to ten, one being the most creative. The artists listed

were Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, Kanye West, Lady Gaga, Luke Bryan, Justin Bieber, Bruno Mars, U2, and Kendrick Lamar. These artists were selected from charts of the highest ranked popular artists. Including this question would help determine which common popular artists are often considered creative and which are not.

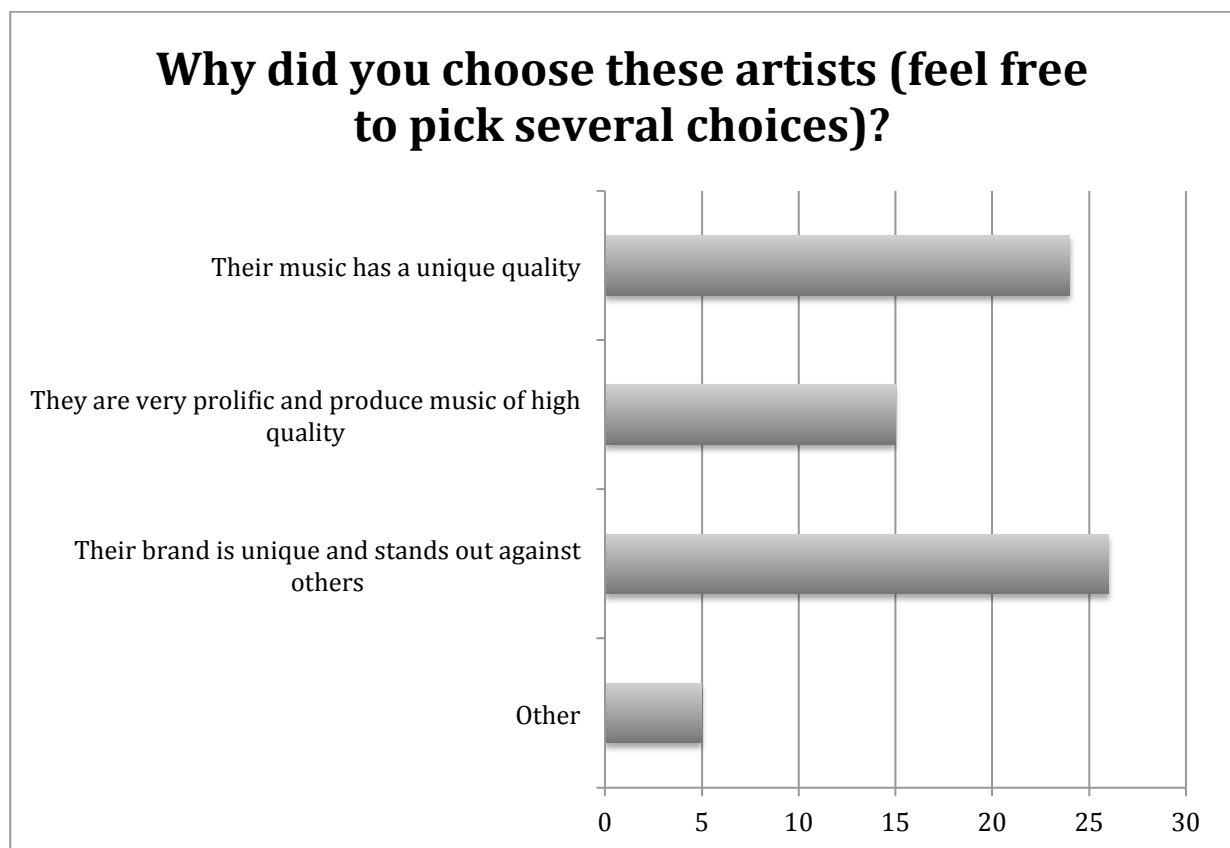
The results of the survey indicated that, for the first question, there were many different popular music artists that people who filled out the survey considered creative. Out of 28 responses to the survey, there were multiple overlapping responses. The overlapping responses were Sia, Lady Gaga, Queen, David Bowie, Ed Sheeran, Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar, Chance the Rapper, Taylor Swift, Prince, Justin Timberlake, Bruno Mars, Adele, Kanye West, Vampire Weekend, Anderson Paak, Radiohead, Vulfpeck, Sufjan Stevens, Childish Gambino, Bon Iver, Glass Animals, HAIM, Florence and the Machine, BORNS, and The Beatles. For the artists with overlapping responses, Lady Gaga had six responses, David Bowie had three, Ed Sheeran had six, Beyoncé had six, Kendrick Lamar had seven, Chance the Rapper had four, Justin Timberlake had four, Bruno Mars had five, Kanye West had five, and Childish Gambino had three.

David Bowie	Prince	George Michael	Lady Gaga	Sia
Elton John	Bruce Springsteen	Queen	Electric Light Orchestra	Kanye West
Kendrick Lamar	Sia	Owl City	Black Eyed Peas	Rihanna
Lady Gaga	Lorde	Bob Iver	Toro y Moi	
Ed Sheeran	Chance the Rapper	Taylor Swift	Beyoncé	Jon Beillon
Lady Gaga	Miley Cyrus	Queen	David Bowie	Ed Sheeran
Beyoncé	SZA	Kendrick Lamar	Vampire Weekend	Anderson Paak
Kendrick Lamar	Chance the Rapper	Kanye West	Daft Punk	The Main Squeeze

Tom Petty	The Indigo Girls	Radiohead	Amy Winehouse	Beyonce
Florence and the machine	Banks	haim	justin timberlake	ed sheeran
Radiohead	Lady Gaga	LCD Soundsystem	Vulfpeck	The 1975
MF DOOM	Rufus Wainwright	Sufjan Stevens	St. Vincent	Madlib
Chance the Rapper	Adele	Lady Gaga	Pentatonix	Panic! At the Disco
Taylor Swift	Bruno Mars	Justin Timberlake	Ed Sheeran	Selena Gomez
Prince	Bruno Mars	Michael Jackson	Stevie Wonder	Chaka Khan
Chance the Rapper	Ed Sheeran	Adele	Kanye	Bruno Mars
Sam Amidon	Punch Brothers	Alabama Shakes	Beyonce	
Kendrick Lamar	Anderson. Paak	Lady Gaga	Beyoncé	Childish Gambino
Grimes	Björk	RuPaul	CupcakKe	& M.I.A.
Bon Iver	Sufjan Stevens	Alt-J	Glass Animals	Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros
HAIM	Florence and the Machine	Justin Timberlake	Timberland	BORNS
the beatles	tame impala	kendrick lamar	mumford and sons	pink floyd
Frank Ocean	Kendrick Lamar	J. Cole	Mac Demarco	James Blake
Kanye West	Flying Lotus	Childish Gambino	Esperanza Spalding	Paramore
Kendrick Lamar	Childish Gambino	David Bowie	Glass Animals	Sigma
Bruno Mars	John Mayer	Justin Timberlake	Beyonce	Vulfpeck
The Lumineers	BORNS	Bon Iver	Ed Sheeran	Vampire Weekend
Travis Scott	The Beatles	Bruno Mars	Bryson Tiller	Kanye West

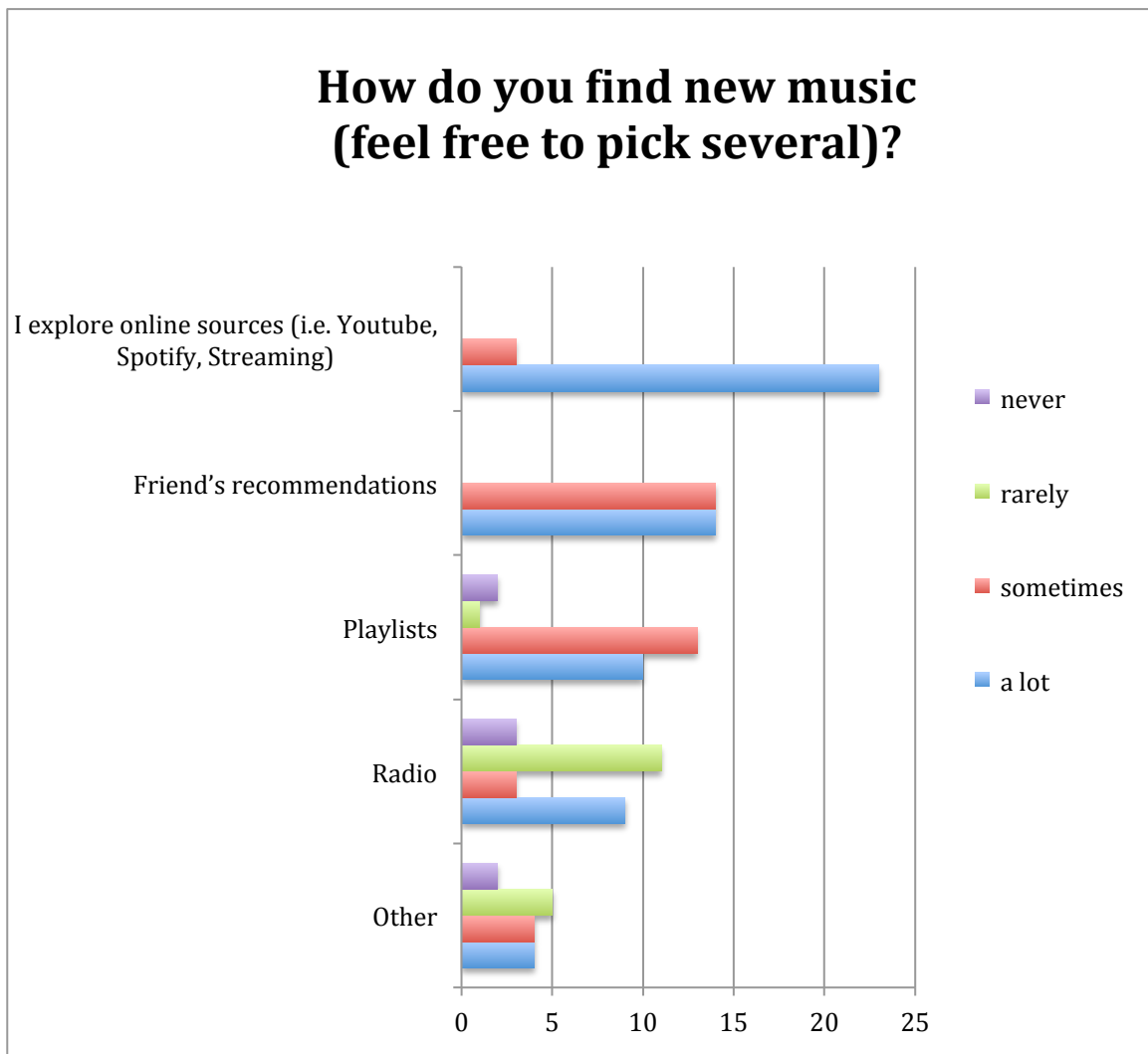
To the second question that asked why they choose these artists, 92.9 percent chose their brand is unique and stands out against others, 85.7 percent chose their music

has a unique quality, 53.6 percent chose they are very prolific and produce music of high quality, and 14.4 percent chose other. One subject who chose other put down that they believed their chosen artists are creative due to “diverse sound, can execute multiple styles, all songs sound mostly different.” Another subject who chose other put down “they created and genuinely became a unique persona reflecting their music.” The last three subjects who chose other put down “They’re not afraid to change their style or feel of their music,” “visual art coupled with musical presentation,” and “they have found ways to breach the stigma of popular music as “lesser.”

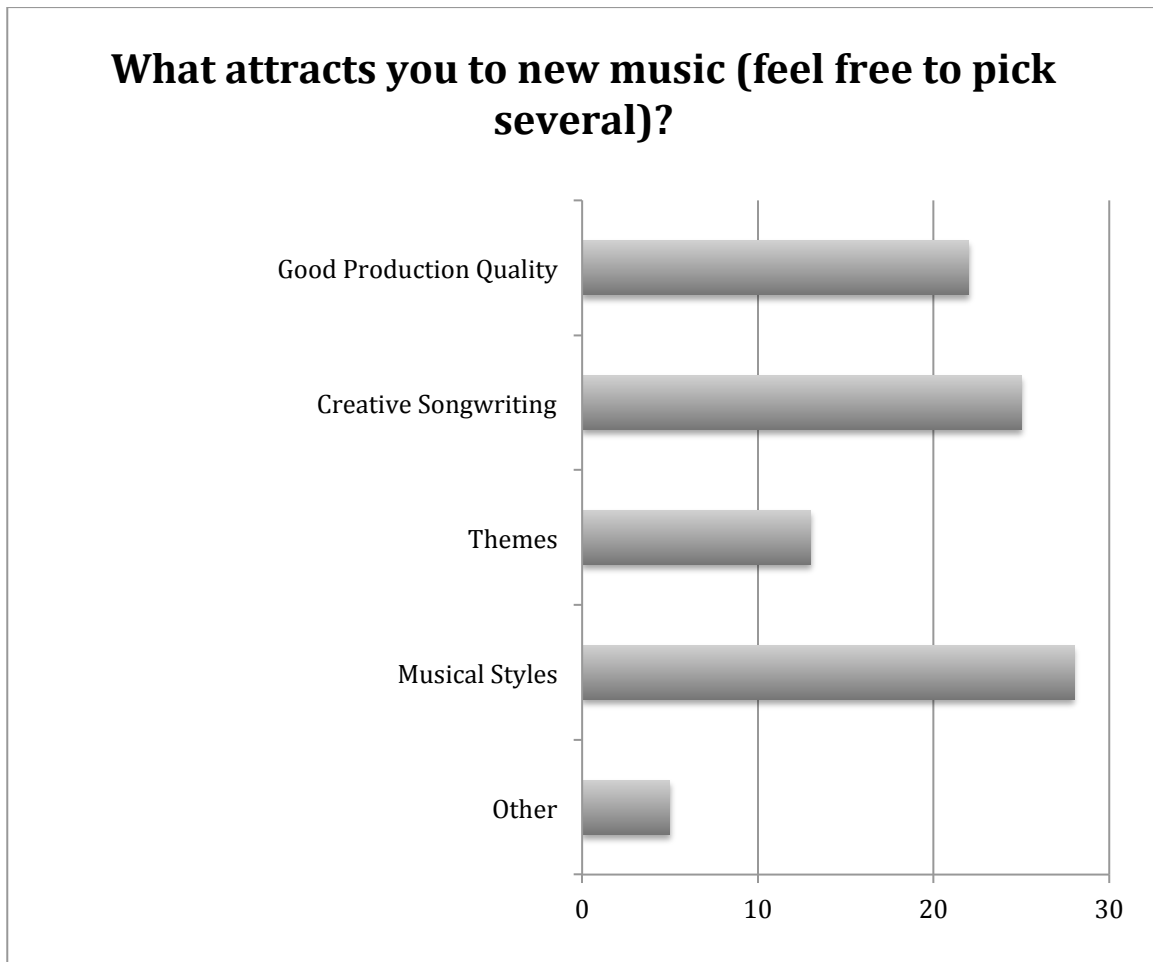


To answer the third question asking how they find new music, 23 answered that they explore online sources a lot and three that they sometimes explore online sources. 14 answered that they use friend’s recommendations a lot and 14 that they sometimes use

friend's recommendations. 13 answered that they sometimes use playlists, ten answered that they use playlists a lot, two that they never use playlists, and one that they rarely use playlists. 11 answered that they rarely use radio, nine answered that they use radio a lot, three that they sometimes use radio, and three that they never use radio. Five answered that they rarely use other sources, four answered that they use other sources a lot, four that they sometimes use other sources, and two that they never use other sources.

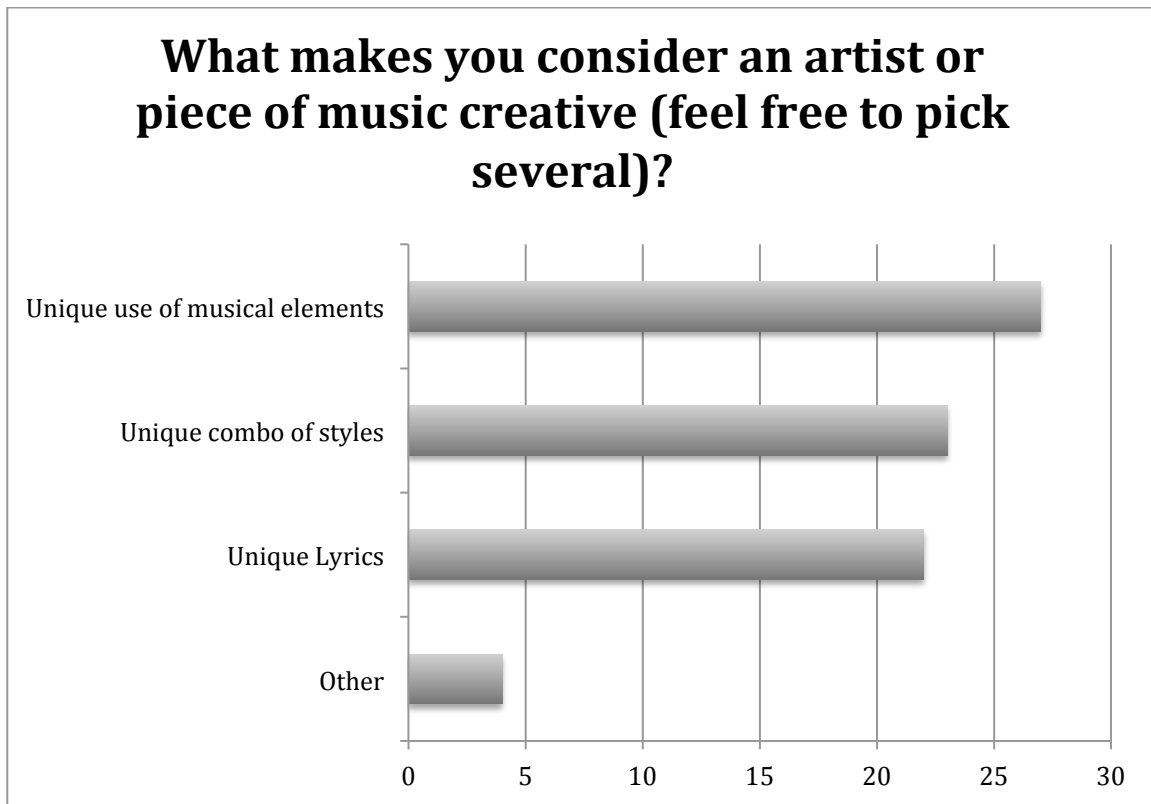


To answer the question about what attracts them to new music, 28 people or 100 percent chose musical styles, 25 people or 89.3 percent chose creative songwriting, 22 people or 78.6 percent chose good production quality, 13 people or 46.4 percent chose themes, and five people or 18 percent chose other. One of the people who chose other answered, “the individual.” The other people who chose other answered, “Fits a specific mood or memory I have,” “Rhythms, artistry, visuals, music video/auditory interpretation,” “Album artwork,” and “uniqueness.”



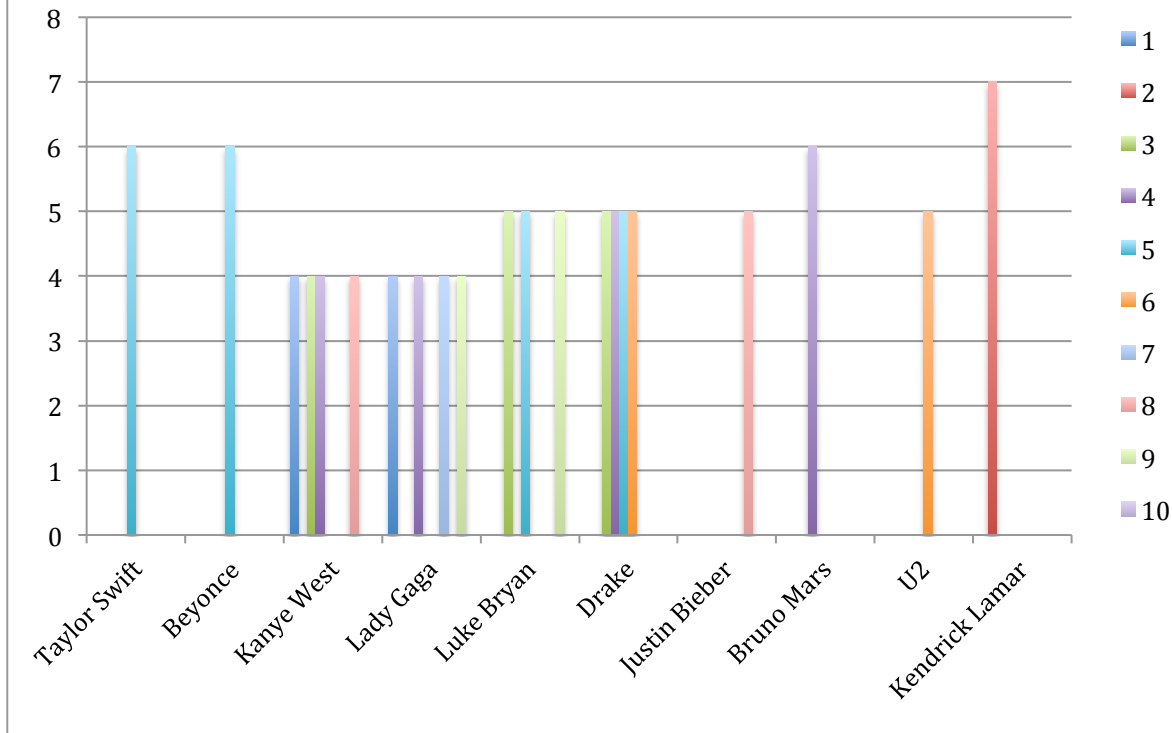
To answer the question about what makes them consider an artist or piece of music creative, 27 people or 96.4 percent chose unique use of musical elements, 23

people or 82.1 percent chose unique combo of styles, 22 people or 78.6 percent chose unique lyrics, and four people or 14.4 percent chose other. One person that chose other answered, “Stage presence.” Another answered, “The music tells a story, and is something that you could sing along to and feel like the song is about your life too.” The other people that chose other answered, “Innovation, lack of dependence on clichés” and “Visuals (music videos, photos, album pamphlets).”



For the last question, each of the ten artists listed in the chart below received a ranking from one to ten by each person that took the survey. The information gives the most common ranking for each artist. Each artist also received other rankings from one to ten, but again, the information gives the most common rankings.

How would you rank the following artists on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the most creative)?



Many different results for the first question support the claim that the creativity of popular artists is open to interpretation and perceived differently by different individuals. “There are so many approaches to listening to music, and music has been designed in so many ways to meet these approaches, that some ethnomusicologists have declared that there is no universal phenomenon of music,” (Jourdain, 1997). It is likely that many different interpretations of creativity come from many different approaches to listening to music. It is also likely that different interpretations of creativity come from different values, experiences, and upbringings. From their unique experiences, values, upbringings, and approaches to listening to music, some people might believe an artist is creative if they just make something, while others might disagree and believe that to be

creative an artist has to make something that hasn't been made before. According to some, "any sound can be a source of enjoyment if attended to properly. In fact, as the Yaqui sorcerer taught the anthropologist Carlos Castaneda, even the intervals of silence between sounds, if listened to closely, can be exhilarating," (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). It is also possible that, if people have been told different definitions and concepts of creativity, they have made up their own interpretation of the term that combines portions of what they have heard.

In addition to people having their own interpretation of creativity, people differ based on their creative abilities. It is possible to measure individual creativity. The most common way is with the Torrance Tests of Creativity that look at two factors of divergence and convergence of ideas. "Qualities of creative individuals were identified by the American educational psychologist E. Paul Torrance. They include fluency, or the ability to think of many ideas rapidly; flexibility, the capacity to use ideas and tools in unusual ways; and originality, the capacity to think of novel ideas and products. In 1966 Torrance and his colleagues developed the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT), that accounts for all of these skills," (Kerr 2016). The findings of the assessment could be applied with trying to objectively measure creativity in music if, while creating music, the artists are tested to determine their levels of fluency, flexibility, and originality. Due to the subjectivity of most music, even people with the same interpretation of creativity might disagree on which songs and artists are creative.

Even if opinions of which artists are creative don't align my own, they are not necessarily wrong. Examples of artists listed by people for the first question that align with my own beliefs include Kendrick Lamar, Electric Light Orchestra, Vulfpeck, Kanye

West, The Beatles, and MF Doom, among others. I consider Kendrick Lamar creative for his unique voice and rap instrumentals that draw from the jazz style without repeating any prior recordings or jazz repertoire that I know of. Vulfpeck's music strikes me as creative for their unique chord progressions and their saxophonist's one-of-kind style. In my opinion, Electric Light Orchestra's track "Mr. Blue Sky" is creative for its eight chords arranged in an innovative sequence. I consider Kanye West creative due to his especially unique vocabulary and rap instrumentals. The music of The Beatles strikes me as creative in part due to its unique harmonies, chord progressions, and song titles. In my opinion, MF Doom's song "Rhymes Like Dymes" is creative due to its sampled sounds and lyrics that draw from a wide range and original set of sources.

I wonder what has made people consider their chosen artists popular. Those that took the survey most likely believe the artists they listed are popular, instead of checking to see whether the artist meets a more formal reason, like being part of the top 100. Of course, the choices are influenced by emotional connections and how the music speaks to specific populations. This being said, multiple artists that were listed for question one do exist on the top 100 charts. Some of these artists include Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, Kanye West, Lady Gaga, Drake, Bruno Mars, and Kendrick Lamar. It is possible that a strong reputation encourages listeners to believe in an artist's creativity, or perhaps, an artist's creativity may be responsible for earning the artist a spot on the charts.

The results to question two demonstrate the value of uniqueness in music. Almost all of the responses to this questions stress the importance of uniqueness among popular artists in deciding why certain popular artists are considered creative. For example, the two most common options were that their brand is unique and stands out against others

and their music has a unique quality. The value of uniqueness in music has become apparent across many contexts. “Even a village dance band, let alone a symphonic orchestra, was a visible reminder of the mysterious skill involved in producing harmonious sounds. One approached the event with heightened expectations, with the awareness that one had to pay close attention because the performance was unique and not to be repeated again,” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). As explained, the uniqueness of live events is capable of drawing particularly close attention to music and artists.

The survey might specifically show that uniqueness among recorded music creates close attention to music and the artists that have recorded this music. It could be the “mysterious skill involved in producing harmonious sounds” that creates this attention and support from listeners, (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). These mysterious skills can be considered even more mysterious when they are used to create music that is the first of its kind. If they are impressed by the music they hear, listeners might be tempted to ask what skills the artist has to help them create their music and how they gained these skills. Uniqueness as an attraction to music is also represented in the results question five, which show that most people considered an artist or piece of music creative based on a unique combo of musical elements.

The results to question two indicate that an artist’s music isn’t the only reason they can be considered creative. As previously mentioned, the highest number of people indicated that they chose the artists they did because their brand is unique and stands out against others. An artist’s brand might encompass more than just their music. It can encompass their logos, fashion, and artist team. It is interesting that artists are judged as creative for reasons besides just their music. Pop culture and its values play an important

role in the enjoyment and following of many artists and perhaps the perception of these artists as creative.

The results to question four indicate that most people are attracted to new music by musical style. Since creative songwriting wasn't the most common choice, creativity might not be the initial attraction to new music, but recognition of a preferred musical style might be. For question five, 27 out the 28 that responded to the survey believed that a unique combo of musical styles makes an artist or piece of music creative. This statistic also represents the importance of musical style as a determinant of creativity.

During the past three years, data on number one hits and artists has, at times, aligned with results of the survey. Number one artists beginning from 2016 that have aligned with the survey's findings of listed artists are Justin Bieber, Drake, Ed Sheeran, Chance the Rapper, Taylor Swift, and Rihanna (Official Charts 2018). There were more artists over the past three years with number one hits that didn't show up in the lists of popular artists believed to be creative. These artists included Shawn Mendes, Zayn, Lukas Graham, Mike Posner, Major Lazer, Wizkid, Kyla, The Chainsmokers, Halsey, James Arthur, Little Mix, Clean Bandit, Harry Styles, Zarra Larson, DJ Khaled, Quavo, Lil Wayne, Luis Fonsi, Daddy Yankee, Bryson Tiller, Katy Perry, Big Sean, Dua Lipa, Sam Smith, Post Malone, 21 Savage, Camila Cabello, Young Thug, and Eminem (Official Charts 2018). More artists with number one hits over the past three years that didn't show up in the survey's results can mean a number of points. Perhaps, the small sample size played a role in why many artists with number one hits didn't show up in the results. Perhaps, the music of the artists with number one hits that weren't chosen is less creative than that of the artists with number one hits that were chosen. After researching

how many of the artists mentioned for the first survey question ever had number one hits on Billboard, it was determined that 52 percent had at least one number one hit at one point in time,” (Billboard, 2018).

David T. Tough studied production trends of hit songs in 2015. From the list of hits songs in 2015, he identified a number of observations including “repeating/chopped vocal samples, repeating saxophone riff, pitch shifted vocals either up or down, intentionally sloppy auto-tuning, overabundance of sampled claps in songs, minimalist drum beats or no drums in a song, and bad songwriting,” (Tough, 2017). The list does not feature creativity or any phrases that use the term “creative,” although it may have been more difficult to measure creativity or creative aspects than other parts of the recording mix like auto-tuning and saxophone. Perhaps due to his opinion about hit songs in 2015 having bad songwriting, he would consider little creativity to be another characteristic of hit songs in 2015. His opinion would depend heavily on his personal perception of what makes music creative.

“A group of record collectors have managed an online spreadsheet of 37,000 songs. Andy Baio analyzed the data in the spreadsheet and found that the mode of song length for songs in each decade of popular music since 1950, in general, were getting longer,” (Tough, 2017). There are a number of possibilities for why songs have become longer. Artists might have noticed audiences becoming more engaged or involved in longer songs. Longer song length since 1950 might be associated with a transition to more modern genres. According to the perception of creativity as “just making something,” longer song lengths mean more creativity since more music has been made. Longer song lengths also mean more time and opportunity for variation and

experimentation. Longer song length was also due to new radio formats and new technology that allowed for recording music longer than the 3.5 minute limitations. Longer songs might mean more repetition of old, previously existing music and ideas, which can go against the idea that longer songs create more room for creativity.

Various methods of listening to music take place when interpreting and forming opinions about pieces of music. “The most complex stage of music listening is the analytic one. In this mode attention shifts to the structural elements of music, instead of the sensory or narrative ones,” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). “Listening skills at this level involve the ability to recognize the order underlying the work, and the means by which the harmony was achieved.” (Csikszentmihalyi). The order underlying the work, the structure and forms of popular music, listed on the survey vary greatly, although repetition was a common trend.

Some examples of artists listed that have incorporated repetition in their music are the first three artists listed for question 1, David Bowie, Prince, and George Michael. David Bowie’s track, “Let’s Dance” features a repeating four-chord progression. Prince’s track “Let’s Dance” consists of an introduction with a repeating five chord phrase. George Michael’s “Careless Whisper” has a repeating saxophone phrase. “Given the importance of repetition in popular music, it is no surprise that there are not many songs in the popular sphere that are through-composed or that follow a theme and variations form,” (Music Crash Courses, 2016). Repetition in the forms of popular songs can mean a lack of creativity under the interpretation that repeating old ideas lacks uniqueness. Meanwhile, repeating unique phrases, ideas, and elements can do the opposite and enhance the creative impact of phrases, ideas, and elements if they are unique to begin

with. There is certainly truth to the statement that popular music commonly contains repetition and simplicity. These characteristics might contribute to how catchy a song is for listeners. A simple, repetitive piece of music probably sticks with listeners more effectively than a long, complex piece of music. The goal in popular music is to find just the right balance of introducing new musical elements but provide the right amount of repetition and familiarity to draw in mainstream listeners. It is important for artists to find this balance and include an appropriate amount of repetition for fans to appreciate their work.

Music plays a strong role in influencing the actions and emotions of members in various communities. Findings of the survey align with the role music has played in the actions and emotions of many. The leaders of the pygmies, a tribe in South Africa, would use sacred horns “in an attempt to wake up the forest, thus restoring the good times,” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). These horns may not have awakened the trees, but their familiar sound must have reassured the pygmies that help was on the way, so they were able to confront the future with confidence,” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The pygmies’ use of sacred horns relates to an individual’s survey answer that they are attracted to new music because it fits a specific mood or memory they have. The Pygmies were also attracted to horn music because it fit specific moods and memories they had, memories of confidence. Also, the survey response that an individual is attracted to new music when the music tells a story and can be applied to their own life aligns with the pygmies’ attraction to horn music. The Pygmies were also attracted to horn music because it was associated with stories, stories of confidence, and because it made them feel like it was about confidence in their own lives.

Another example of a community that uses music for creative purposes in their own lives is teenagers. “Teenagers who swing from one threat in their fragile evolving personhood to another in quick succession throughout the day especially depend on soothing patterns of sound to restore order in their consciousness,” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). For these teenagers, their use of music relates to the same comments in the survey’s findings. The individual’s survey answer that they are attracted to new music because it fits a specific mood or memory they have can be applied to these teenagers, who fit music to moods and memories of order, relaxation, and routine. The comment that an individual is attracted to new music when the music tells a story and can be applied to their own life relates to teenagers that associate music with stories of order and relaxation. These teenagers apply music to relaxation and order in their own lives.

Individuals who have taken the survey have been drawn to music that creates meaning for them. The importance of personal meaning in music is demonstrated by the same survey comment that an individual is drawn to new music that tells a story and is something they could sing along to and feel like the song is about their life too. “Meaning can also be metaphorical, as when someone says, “He’s a real tiger,” an expression in which meaning is further conditioned by context. Meaning can even be derived from the mere fact the speaker has chosen to mention a tiger (say, at a conference on species extinction)” (Jourdain, 1997). When interpreting the meaning of music, individuals can interpret a metaphorical meaning of the music or derive meaning from the fact the musical speaker has chosen to mention something. In this case of the individual who commented above, meaning is derived when they feel like the song is about their life too.

Meaning and mood in music have been identified as important reasons for creating enjoyment. “One of the most ancient and perhaps the most popular functions of music is to focus the listener’s attention on patterns appropriate to a desired mood,” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). There is a good chance that this is why the individual commented that they are drawn to music that fits a specific mood or memory they have, along with the communities previously described: teenagers and tribes. “As trumpeter Henry “Red” Allen put it, “It’s like somebody making your lip speak, making it say things he thinks.” Such possession is most evidence when a piece seems to take hold of our bodies and make us move,” (Jourdain, 1997). Here, Henry Red describes the affect certain music plays on his mood to dance along with music and also his attraction to music. The impact of music on these people represents that the level of creativity in popular music somewhat aligns with the level of creativity measured in the overall population, meaning mainstream audiences with mainstream approaches to creativity are attracted to mainstream music with moderate levels of creativity and the music fits its purpose.

In addition to being a crucial component of music, rhythm plays the role of creating attraction to music for individuals. “Rhythm is often described as music’s most essential trait, since music unfolds across time, and time is rhythm’s domain. Rhythm can exist without melody, and so rhythm must precede melody in our experience,” (Jourdain, 1997). In one survey comment, it was expressed that a person was attracted to new music based on “rhythms, artistry, visuals, and music video/auditory interpretation.” It would be interesting to find out if this individual, as well as the individuals taking the survey also believe that rhythm is music’s most essential trait. Additionally, it would be interesting to

find out this individual believes rhythm plays a role in how creative music is. Since creativity in music does not necessarily align with popularity, this individual might only be attracted to rhythm but not believe rhythm makes music creative.

The willingness to make mistakes has been cited as an important determinant of what makes something creative. “Creativity, which is rarely cultivated in a state of fear, judgment or intimidation, requires a willingness to make mistakes. Beethoven might go through over 50 variations of a musical idea before choosing the one he liked and, despite his numerous failures in trying to create the light bulb, Thomas Edison is commonly believed to have said, “I never failed once. It just happened to be a 2,000-step process,” (Fitzpatrick 2013). The idea of not being afraid to mistakes aligns with some of the survey’s responses. To answer why they chose the popular artists they did, one survey respondent answered that they’re not afraid to change the style or feel of their music. This response suggests that creative artists possess a certain amount of boldness and bravery that non-creative artists do not possess and the willingness to make mistakes during the process of creating music. To answer the question about what makes them consider an artist or piece of music creative, one respondent answered “Innovation, lack of dependence on clichés.” This response also suggests that creative artists possess boldness and bravery that non-creative artists possess and likely a willingness to make mistakes as they create their music. In a piece of music, boldness and bravery can exist and be interpreted in the lyrics and structure. In study of songs about bravery, many songs with a theme of fighting were suggested (Brown, 2012). The same study is described a brave piece of music as an “inspirational fanfare that creates courage in the listener by sheer force,” (Brown, 2012).

Rankings of the most creative artists have been put together in the past. Among these rankings, the following artists have been listed: Freddie Mercury, Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Wonder, David Bowie, Kurt Cobain, Dimebag Darrell, Eddie Van Halen, Roger Waters, Pete Townshend, Jimmy “The Rev” Sullivan, John Lennon, Les Claypool, Richard Wright, Corey Taylor, Lindsay Buckingham, Elton John, Ginger Baker, David Gilmour, Nicki Minaj, Adrian Borland, Brian May, Toby “Radiation” Fox, Kanye West, Chuck Schuldiner, Kieth Moon, Ritchie Blackmore, Kate Bush, and Dan Reynolds, (Most Creative Musicians, 2018). Artists from these rankings that have shown up in the survey’s results include Stevie Wonder, David Bowie, Elton John, and Kanye West. This small amount of overlapping artists can be explained by different interpretations of creativity and creativity in music. Meanwhile, the artists that show up in both lists: Steve Wonder, David Bowie, Elton John, and Kanye West are agreed to possess a high level of creativity. For many people from different sources to agree that certain artists are creative can mean that these artists are effective at influencing the opinion of their music as creative among large-scale audiences.

Among another set of information, the following artists have been listed for their high level of creativity: The Staves, Pale Honey, Farao, Jeen, OOFJ, Django Django, and Tony Allen. Among this set of artists, there are no artists that exists in the survey’s findings. This disagreement between creative artists can also be explained by different interpretations of creativity and creativity in music that exist, although people from either sources might also think artists besides those they have listed are creative.

The many different popular artists that people considered creative helped prove the thesis that the creativity of popular music is open to interpretation and thought of

differently by different people. Meanwhile, overlapping artists that respondents considered creative, like Kendrick Lamar, disprove the thesis by showing that creativity in music does exist in commonly considered popular artists. Many reasons for why people chose their creative artists and for why they consider an artist or piece of music creative prove that that creativity in popular music is open to interpretation. Meanwhile, lots of overlapping opinions, like creative music having a unique quality, disprove the thesis and show that there are common perceptions of where creativity exists in popular music. What can be taken away is that it is difficult, if not impossible, for a popular artist to win the approval from everyone that this artist's music is creative. What should also be taken away is that creativity in popular music does certainly exist since respondents were able to think of creative popular artists to begin with.

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