

# Free essay on analyzing pop music charts

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Ellen Koskoff (1987) provided two questions in her book *Women and Music in Cross-cultural Perspective* that can be applied in analyzing pop music. The first question regards how a society's gender ideology and the resulting gender linked behaviors influence its musical thought and practice. In the contemporary society, women are playing increasing roles in the music industry, and especially in pop music. In the 1950s and 60s, women were a minority in pop music, but by 1990s, they were equally represented just like men (Starr & Waterman, 2007). This can be linked to a society's changing genders attitudes. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and feminine movements played a significant role in altering society's ideology. In the analysis of the pop chart, it is clear that women have a higher representation than men. The pop chart is made up of songs by solo artists, but the percentage of women is 58.33 percent, while that of men is 41.67 percent. When compared to the Rock and Roll of the 1950s when men dominated the music industry, these statistics show that women are equally represented if not more in pop music as exemplified by women such as Rihanna who are currently dominating pop music. As this trend continues, more women will take active roles in pop music as more young women emulate their older role models. The view by society that pop music is a form of teen rebellion is changing as the industry is becoming a high paying one. The lifestyles displayed by these female pop artists will motivate other women to join the genre. This is due to the fact that when young girls see the success of other women in pop it will be normal for them to enter the genre (Koskoff, 1987). This trend is attributable to the demise of Rock and Roll and the entry of girl groups and single artists into popular music.

Additionally, race, socio-economic indicators and age are other factors that are influenced by society's ideology, which in turn influence musical practice. When age is considered in the pop chart, musicians below 25 years are 41.7% while those above 25 years are 58.3 percent. This statistic shows that most pop musicians are older as it takes time for one to be established in the music industry. Musicians who are below 25 years are those who were successful in launching successful singles or albums that helped them capture the imagination of the society. Despite the fact that there is a higher percentage of older musicians in pop music, most of them are in their 30s, which means that most of them started at a younger age and now they are established pop musicians.

Race is another factor that Koskoff outlined as determining society's ideology towards music. For many years, music genres such as Rock were dominated by Caucasians and it was seldom to see people of other races entering this genre of music (Starr & Waterman, 2007). This is still the trend that has continued even up to the present. From the pop chart, it is evident that majority of the artists, 75 percent, are Native Americans. Despite most of these musicians having Native American heritage, they usually identify themselves as black due to a world that sees racial differences in terms of white and black. Furthermore, the equal representation of all genders in the pop chart is because in Native American music, all genders participated. Musicians such as Drake, Jason Derulo, Bruno Mars and Mariah Carey identify themselves as black, while others such as Selena Gomez, Avril Lavigne and Demi Lovato identify themselves as white because of fear of being discriminated against in the music industry. Native American music is

dominant in the pop chart compared to other music genres considering the number of American musicians represented in the chart. This shows that Native American music has influenced and contributed to popular music. Most of this music tells a story to the world, which is one characteristic of Native America music.

Music is useful in conveying messages about social issues, and this makes socio-economic indicators a factor that influences society's ideology towards music and its practice. Most of the musicians in the pop chart were brought up in underprivileged neighborhoods, but have succeeded in the music industry to the point where they have become role models to others. The view of the society that pop music is a form of rebellion is gradually changing and it is becoming evident that socio-economic indicators no longer influential in society's attitude towards pop music. It is clear from the pop chart that all the songs are singles. This statistic reveals that musicians are concentrating more on releasing selling singles instead of an entire album that may not sell as expected. It also reinforces the view that society is more interested with single songs than albums as they can collect different singles to make a collection of their favorite music.

Social or historical contexts impacts society's interpretation of a song and can vary from an individual to individual. Most of the songs in the pop chart are by musicians who bring out the Beverly Hills diva culture into light. Most of them represent escapism and resistance, which are features that have been adopted by today's teens since most of them look up to these musicians as role models (Batchelor, 2009). Musicians such as Taylor swift, Rihanna and Ciara have influenced young girls as their music, music videos

and behaviors promote sensationalism and materialism. These are features that promote superficiality as most of the lyrics of these songs lack a concrete message that touches on political and socio-economic issues. Although some of the songs by male artists in the chart promote sensationalism, some of them attempt to pass a social message or it is form of resistance. An example of this is Mirrors by Justin Timberlake. Some musicians have also used pop music to make political protests or convey their messages about their historical past. This is the case for musicians who identify themselves as black as they have used music as a form of resistance against the establishment, which they view as responsible for their exploitation in the past and is responsible for racial discrimination (Attrep, 2008). Even though it appeals to a majority of its listeners, most of these songs do not miss a connection to American racial politics.

## References

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