

Musical preferences, hours spent listening to music and ethnic differences

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Introduction

Previous research has studied music preferences and personality. Music preferences have been found to correlate with some aspects of personality (Schäfer & Mehlhorn, 2017) and cognitive style (Greenberg et al., 2015). North (2010), however, found that other factors (e.g., age, sex and income) related to music preferences as well. There remain many other factors to study in relation to music preferences, including differences between number of friends, amount of time spent listening to music and ethnicity.

Method

Participants

Participants were 181 undergraduate students. The most preferred musical genre analyses focused on the three most preferred musical genres, including Rap/Hip-Hop, Country and Rhythm and Blues. The ethnic differences analyses focused on three ethnicities (N = 143), including 64 African Americans, 23 Native Americans and 56 Caucasians.

Recruitment

Participants were enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at UNCP. Participants were recruited on SONA (an online participant management system). Participants completed the surveys online through the SONA system.

Measures

- Demographics (age, ethnicity, self-reported GPA, musical preference questions, studying and music listening habits questions and musical experience questions).

Results

Ethnicity Comparisons

The most common ethnicity in this study was African Americans (N = 64). The second most common ethnicity was Caucasians (N = 56). The third most common ethnicity was Native Americans (N = 23). The differences between these ethnic groups are reported below.

African Americans and Caucasians.

There were three statistically significant differences between African American participants and Caucasian participants.

- What is your cumulative GPA [$t(118) = 4.16, p < .001$].
African American ($M = 2.61, SD = 0.66$)
Caucasian ($M = 3.11, SD = 0.65$)
- Number of friends [$t(92) = -2.06, p < .05$].
African American ($M = 4.40, SD = 3.7$)
Caucasian ($M = 6.15, SD = 3.74$)
- Number of hours of music listened to each weekday [$t(92) = 2.77, p < .01$].
African American ($M = 2.27$ hours, $SD = 1.24$)
Caucasian ($M = 1.52$ hours, $SD = 1.05$)

African Americans and Native Americans.

Next, there were two statistically significant differences between African American participants and Native American participants.

- Number of friends [$t(85) = -2.69, p < .01$].
African American ($M = 3.22, SD = 3.21$)
Native American ($M = 5.43, SD = 3.86$)
- Number of hours of music listened to each week [$t(63.48) = 2.64, p < .05$].
African American ($M = 4.02$ hours, $SD = 2.79$)
Native American ($M = 2.7$ hours, $SD = 1.72$)

Native Americans and Caucasians.

Last, there was one significant difference between Native American participants and Caucasian participants.

- Number of hours of music listened to each week [$t(64.99) = 2.07, p < .05$].
Native American ($M = 2.7$ hours, $SD = 1.72$)
Caucasian ($M = 3.77$ hours, $SD = 2.79$)

Musical Genre Comparisons

The most preferred musical genre by far was Rap/Hip-Hop. A total of 67 participants (38 females and 29 males), including 32 African Americans, 15 Caucasians, 7 Native Americans, 7 Latin Americans, 5 Multi-ethnic and 1 other, chose it as their favorite musical genre. The second most preferred musical genre was Country. A total of 27 participants (19 females and 8 males), including 19 Caucasians, 7 Native Americans and 1 Multi-ethnic participant chose it as their favorite musical genre. The third most preferred musical genre was Rhythm & Blues. A total of 22 participants (18 females and 4 males), including 15 African Americans, 5 Multi-ethnic, 1 Native American and 1 Latin American chose it as their favorite musical genre.

Rap/Hip-Hop versus Country.

There were four statistically significant differences between participants whose most preferred musical genre was Rap/Hip-Hop versus those whose most preferred musical genre was Country.

- Number of friends [$t(92) = -2.06, p < .05$].
Rap/Hip-Hop ($M = 4.40, SD = 3.7$)
Country music ($M = 6.15, SD = 3.74$)
- Number of hours of music listened to each weekday [$t(92) = 2.77, p < .01$].
Rap/Hip-Hop ($M = 2.27$ hours, $SD = 1.24$)
Country ($M = 1.52$ hours, $SD = 1.05$)
- Number of hours of music listened to each weekend [$t(65.47) = 2.83, p < .05$].
Rap/Hip-Hop ($M = 3.93$ hours, $SD = 2.67$)
Country ($M = 2.52$ hours, $SD = 1.95$)
- Number of hours of music listened to each week [$t(77.53) = 2.94, p < .01$].
Rap/Hip-Hop ($M = 4.25$ hours, $SD = 2.89$)
Country ($M = 2.81$ hours, $SD = 1.76$)

Rhythm & Blues versus Country.

Next, there were two statistically significant differences between participants whose most preferred musical genre was Rhythm and Blues versus those participants whose most preferred musical genre was Country.

- Number of friends [$t(46.81) = -3.1, p < .01$].
Rhythm & Blues ($M = 3.23, SD = 2.84$)
Country ($M = 6.15, SD = 3.74$)
- Number of hours of music listened to each weekday [$t(38.13) = -2.59, p < .05$].
Rhythm & Blues ($M = 2.45$ hours, $SD = 1.41$)
Country ($M = 1.52$ hours, $SD = 1.05$)

Rhythm & Blues versus Rap/Hip-Hop.

Last, there were no significant differences between participants whose most preferred musical genre was Rhythm and Blues versus those participants whose most preferred musical genre was Rap/Hip-Hop.

Discussion

The most preferred musical genre was Rap/Hip-Hop. This finding is consistent with Collier (2009) who also found Rap/Hip-Hop to be the most preferred musical genre. Participants whose most preferred musical genres were either Rap/Hip-Hop or Rhythm & Blues reported having fewer friends than participants whose favorite musical genre was Country. This difference may be related to ethnicity, because African American participants reported having fewer friends than Caucasian or Native American participants. Almost half (47.8%) the participants that selected Rap/Hip-Hop as their most preferred musical genre were African Americans and 68.2% of the participants that selected Rhythm & Blues as their most preferred musical genre were African American. Furthermore, 70.4% of participants that selected Country as their most preferred musical genre were Caucasian and another 25.9% of participants that selected Country as their most preferred musical genre were Native American. No African Americans participants selected Country as their favorite musical genre.

Participants that preferred Country listened to fewer hours of music each weekday than those that preferred Rap/Hip-Hop or Rhythm & Blues. This is also reflected in the finding that Caucasians listened to fewer hours of music each weekday than African Americans. In addition, compared to those that preferred Country music, those whose favorite musical genre was Rap/Hip-Hop reported listening to more hours of music each weekend and each week. African Americans reported listening to more hours of music each week than Native Americans. There were no differences between those whose preferred musical genre was Rap/Hip-Hop versus Rhythm & Blues. This lack of differences may be related to the majority of participants that preferred those musical genres being from the same ethnic group (i.e., African Americans). In this study, the findings regarding differences between preferred musical genres seem to clearly be related to ethnic differences.

The self-reported GPA for African American participants was lower than the self-reported GPA for Caucasian participants. If participants were accurate in self-reporting their GPA, then this may reflect a difference in actual GPA between the African American and Caucasian participants. This finding is consistent with previous research on actual GPAs for first-time bachelor's degree graduating college students (Woo, Green & Matthews, 2012). However, previous research (Caskie, Sutton & Eckhardt, 2014; Talento-Miller & Peyton, 2006; Kuncel, Credé & Thomas, 2005) suggests that self-reported GPA can often be inaccurate. So, perhaps the self-reported GPA in this study is not accurate of participants' actual GPA. If there is really no difference in GPA between the groups, then it could be that African American participants underreported their GPA, or alternatively Caucasians could have overreported their GPA. So, the observed differences here could reflect ethnic differences in the academic self-confidence of the participants. Further research is needed to follow up on this possible ethnic difference in academic self-confidence.

This study suggests that any differences between people that prefer different musical genres may be related to ethnicity. Future studies should consider this possibility and attempt to further substantiate these findings. There continue to be many important areas of research in relation to music preferences, including ethnicity. Future research should study more ethnically diverse populations. Perhaps, what is known about the relationship between music preference and personality may vary depending on ethnicity. Future research should continue to examine the many variables associated with music preference.

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