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Music as a mirror?: Popular music lyrics and the covid-19 health pandemic

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Research on the relationship between significant global, socioeconomic developments and lyrical themes in pop music have indicated that deteriorating conditions are associated with an increase in negative emotional content and reproductive themes. The present research considers the presence of lyrical themes in charting pop music during the COVID-19 pandemic. We hypothesise that top-ranked weekly singles on the USA, UK and Australian charts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic would contain more negatively valenced lyrics than the charting songs during corresponding periods in previous years. Diction 7.0 software, a text analysis program designed to analyse content of a wide variety of social discourse, was used to analyse the song lyrics. A dataset was created based on the song lyrics of the top 5 weekly songs in the USA, UK and Australia from March-August 2020 and the songs charting between March-August of 2015-2019. Results from statistical analyses that consider the hypotheses will be discussed in the presentation. The findings are expected to broaden our understanding of the relationship between significant global events (i.e., health pandemics) and trends in popular music. Moreover, implications concerning how people use music as a comforting tool will be considered.