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# The Correlation of Music Preference and Personality

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The Correlation of Music Preference and Personality

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## **ABSTRACT**

Music is a universal phenomenon that is seen throughout every culture across the world. People have manifested individual interests in music based on their environment, culture, and distinct discernments. Music is easily accessible currently due to the media age that has dominated across the world; therefore individuality has never been so independent and universal at the same time. With that being said, an iPod can reveal a good amount of personal information about a person with the different types of musical genres they have acquired. The distinguishing factors of music can subsequently determine certain behaviors and traits the person can potentially possess. Research has determined that with certain music, there are collective traits the person is more disposed too. Therefore, there is a definite relationship between one's music preference and personality. The theories, dimensions, research, arguments, and how to test the relationship will be exposed from this paper.

## **THEORIES**

Raymond Cattell was a trait theorist with the intent to study personality to predict how a person would behave in a certain situation (Schultz & Schultz, 2013). It was his belief that people had universal traits that were shared with everyone; however each person ranked differently in the traits than others. He was the predecessor for a statistical procedure called the factor analysis. This test consists of a correlation of a relationship between a pair of measurements to determine common factors. Factor analysis led to the 16 PF (Personality Factor) Test where an individual would be tested on 16 major traits (Schultz & Schultz, 2013). The results of high and low points were then correlated to determine specific aspects of personality. These methods were used as a gateway to be expanded upon by another trait theorist named Hans Eysenck.

Like Cattell, Eysenck was also interested in the measurement of personality. Utilizing Cattell's methodology of composited traits using the 16 PF Test, Eysenck expanded upon the method in an effort to improve the structure of the assessment (Schultz & Schultz, 2013). He thought that the research was too ambiguous and prone to potential subjectivity. Eysenck and his wife then developed many tests and questionnaires to use in their research to determine personality more accurately. They created the Eysenck Personality Inventory, which was based on three dimensions of personality: extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism (Schultz & Schultz, 2013). These dimensions will be fully explained later in the paper. As for now, this created the basis that many further researchers used to determine personality factors in a much more detailed explanation.

Robert McCrae and Paul Costa used the Eysenck Personality Inventory to develop an even more extensive, complex personality assessment. McCrae and Costa established The Five-Factor Model, which they believed analyzed the most important personality traits in a person (Schultz & Schultz, 2013). These factors include neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (will also be explained further on in the paper). These five factors distinguish significant aspects of the personality. Today's most noted personality test, that is still used today, is the NEO Personality Inventory; derived from the first three initials of the factors from The Five-Factor Model (Schultz & Schultz, 2013). This analysis exhibits the assessment that is used for the majority of my research, using the personality elements to correlate to the musical preferences and vice versa.

Although there are different variations of the NEO Personality Inventory, this was the original basis to all the research done to predict certain behavioral traits that are recognized from musical preference. All of these personality assessments are parallel to create the universal dimensions that are exposed by everyone.

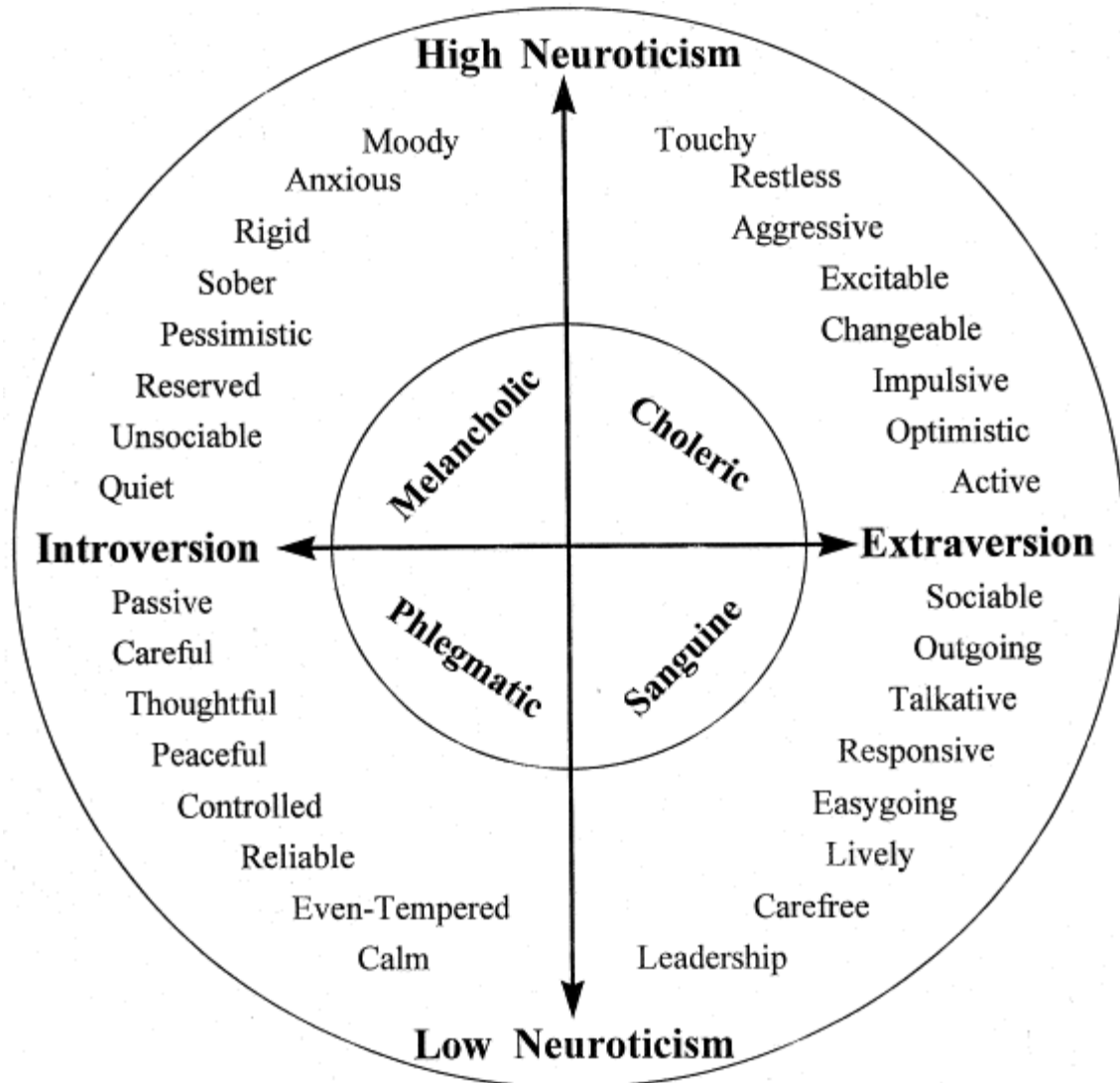
## DIMENSIONS

Raymond Cattell started with source traits that were standard in everyone. This developed into the dimensions of personality that we exhibit. Eysenck believed these standards had been basic elements of personality since the ancient times of Greek philosophers (Schultz & Schultz, 2013). Eysenck incorporated the dimensions of personality as being extraversion/introversion, neuroticism/emotional stability, and psychoticism/impulse control. To fully explicate what each one consists of, here is a chart of what each would be like if a person was classified for being E, N, and P. A person exhibiting the forms of Extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism most likely experience the following aspects of personality.

### TRAITS OF EYSENCK'S PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS

<u>EXTRAVERSION/INTROVERSION</u>	<u>NEUROTICISM/EMOTIONAL STABILITY</u>	<u>PSYCHOTICISM/IMPULSE CONTROL</u>
Sociable	Anxious	Aggressive
Lively	Depressed	Cold
Active	Guilt Feelings	Egocentric
Assertive	Low Self-Esteem	Impersonal
Sensation Seeking	Tense	Impulsive
Carefree	Irrational	Antisocial
Dominant	Shy	Creative
Venturesome	Moody	Tough-Minded

(Chart from Schultz & Schultz, 2013).



(<http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/hans-jurgen-eysenck>)

**Extraversion:** A person that portrays extraversion is more oriented assured towards the outside world (Delsing, et al., 2008). They tend to like the company of people and are very sociable. In that aspect, people with this trait are assertive, active, irresponsible, and are focused on finding new sensations. They are expressive and do not reflect upon themselves, seeing everything in a more positive manner.

**Neuroticism:** Neuroticism is characterized as being anxious, uptight, and nervous (Delsing, et al., 2008). Neurotics have emotional instability and low self-esteem. Along with increased anxiety, people high in neuroticism have greater activity in the brain areas that control the autonomic nervous system, which controls the body's alarm system (Schultz & Schultz, 2013).

**Psychoticism:** Aggressiveness, antisocialness, and egocentrism are key elements of the psychoticism dimension (Delsing, et al., 2008). Being manipulative and unsympathetic, a psychotic person can be very creative with how they view the world and people around them.

Cattell's factors were too many and Eysenck's dimensions were too few. Contemporary work is built upon the both of these theories, which McCrae and Costa yielded. The Big Five Personality factors created a combined version of the traits and dimensions that the two trait theorists created. The factors and descriptions of the traits are:

**Neuroticism:** worried, insecure, nervous, high- strung

**Extraversion:** sociable, talkative, fun-loving, affectionate

**Openness:** original, independent, creative, daring

**Agreeableness:** good-natured, softhearted, trusting, courteous

**Conscientiousness:** careful, reliable, hardworking, organized

(Schultz & Schultz, 2013).

Now that there is a general background to the universal personality traits and their respective spectrums, I can now begin the assessment of correlating musical preference to certain behavioral aspects.



## **RESEARCH**

Music is a way in which people can express their inner thoughts, emotions, and political ideas as well as using the source to provide a reinforcement behind alleviating a task or getting through an emotional state. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, Ph.D., a professor of business psychology and behavioral preferences, believes music was created to fulfill three psychological functions. The reasons are to improve performance on certain tasks, stimulate intellectual curiosity, and to manipulate or influence people's emotional states to achieve a desired mood (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2011). In another sense, people listen to music based on their drive for social identity. Humans listen to certain types of music to achieve a natural sense of characterization. Listening to certain types of music, in theory, produces universally common traits.

In this paper, I would like to define four different musical proportions. These four dimensions include complex, intense and rebellious, upbeat and conventional, and lastly energetic and rhythmic categories (Delsing, et al., 2008).

**Complex**: Blues, Jazz, Classical, folk

**Intense & Rebellious**: Rock, Alternative, Heavy Metal

**Conventional**: Country, Religious, Pop

**Energetic and Rhythmic**: Rap, Hip-Hop, Funk, Electronic, Dance

(Delsing, et al., 2008)

In regards to the four musical proportions to differentiate the prevalent musical genres, assumptions and research need to be discussed about the majority of people's personality traits that correlate to the four categories.

For the complex grouping, people tend to be extraverted with high self-esteem (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003). For blues and jazz, research says that people are at ease and creative (Collingwood, 2008).

The intense & rebellious classification consists of the majority of people being gentle, creative, introverted, and have low self-esteem (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003).

As for upbeat & conventional, people tend to exhibit extraversion, emotional stability, and high self-esteem (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003).

Lastly, the energetic and rhythmic arrangement exhibits high self-esteem, extraversion, and assertiveness (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003).

Each of these groupings exhibit different spectrums on the Five Factor Model portrays a personality contrast for each type of music. Here is an example to go along with these theories are provided. (NOTE: The NEO Personality Inventory was the basis behind this concept.

## RENFROW AND GOSLING

Table 5. Correlations between Big-Five personality factors and music-preference dimensions in Rentfrow and Gosling's (2003) Study 2 sample and in our less-restrictive model

	Rentfrow and Gosling (2003)				Less-restrictive model			
	Intense and rebellious	Reflective and complex	Energetic and rhythmic	Upbeat and conventional	Rock	Elite	Urban	Pop/Dance
Extraversion	.00	.01	.22*	.24*			.18*	.22*
Agreeableness	-.04	.01	.08*	.23*			.11*	.22*
Conscientiousness	-.04	-.02	.00	.15*				.05
Emotional stability	-.01	.08*	.01	-.07		-.16*		
Openness	.18*	.44*	.03	-.14*	.33*	.22*		-.02

Note:  $N = 1044$ ; Blanks represent the parameters that were fixed to zero.

\* $p \leq .05$ .

(Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003)

**Interpretation:** The basic interpretation of this, with the negative numbers being less correlated and the positive numbers being more correlated is:

Intense and rebellious music has a neutral correlation for extraversion; a negative correlation for agreeableness; a negative correlation for conscientiousness; and a positive correlation for openness.

Reflective and complex music illustrates a positive correlation to extraversion; a positive correlation to agreeableness; a negative correlation to conscientiousness; a positive correlation to emotional stability; and a strong positive correlation for openness.

Energetic and rhythmic music portrays a positive correlation to extraversion; a positive correlation to agreeableness; a neutral correlation to conscientiousness; a positive correlation to emotional stability; and a positive correlation to openness.

Upbeat and conventional show a positive correlation to extraversion; a positive correlation to agreeableness; a positive correlation to conscientiousness; a negative correlation to emotional stability; and a negative correlation to openness.

As one can see, the previous research correlates directly to the personalities that are linked to music preference. This is just one model; there are many that subsidize the correlation of music preference and personality.

## **COUNTER ARGUMENTS**

Of course, these are all assumptions that have been researched upon and intensely studied for years. Now this being the majority of people's general personality traits exhibited through music preference, it is NOT the overall assumption.

Culture is a huge influence as to how one personally views music. Social characteristics are widespread and differentiate between each region throughout the world. Although music can portray individual aspects, it is certainly not agreeable to every individual throughout the personality assessment.

In all reality, music preference is just a small facet to determine one's distinct personality. Age, sex, and socio-economic status are more relevant than personality when it comes to explaining any genre-based preferences (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2011).

## **CONCLUSION**

It is possible to predict certain traits and behaviors that one could have from their preference to music. However, there are many flaws to this assumption. To fully determine one's personality, an intensive personality assessment is needed as well as age, gender, and cultural characteristics. Characterizing people with their music preference may lead to false pretenses, and not correctly assessing them because everyone is unique in that matter.

In the future, it may be possible to accurately determine personality with enough background information. "Future research can build on this foundation by including a wider array of music from various genres and exploring music preferences across generations, cultures, and social contexts. Such work will serve to inform our understanding of the nature of music preferences and its importance in people's lives" (Rentfrow & Goldberg & Levitin, 2012).

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