

Ethnographic Study on Expression and Affect: “21st Century Anglo-American Women and Their Pop Songs”

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Abstract:

Anglo-American pop music is commercial in nature and focuses on recording. It is often oriented towards a youth market and the singles music chart. It utilizes the genre of the love song. My paper aims to analyze the cultures and the reception of 21st century Anglo-American pop made and often consumed by women, by examining how this music is received in the popular press, in academia, and within fan circles. Therefore, I intend to examine diverse opinions, ethnographic and autoethnographic studies and closely analyze select singer-songwriters such as Adele, Taylor Swift and Beyoncé. Consequently, I hope to shed some light on how these musicians have influenced each other and have interacted with modern feminist discourses.

My research on emotion in popular music focuses on affect produced by music. I will also focus on the roles that these icons take up and perform and how that connects to the affect produced.

My location is that of a semiprofessional singer-songwriter, music composer and producer. I have been lucky to get the opportunity to conduct fieldwork at Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Rome, Dublin, Limerick, Cork, Cardiff, Birmingham and London in 2018 and 2019 and I will be using this European context. I interviewed many diverse students and investigated how affect encoded in songs leads to change in emotions. I find myself under pressure to perform my "authentic" South Asian identity in order to find recognition from an Anglo American or European market that is unaccommodating to artists of colour. My analysis is therefore located in this unique postcolonial condition.

Keywords: ethnography, feminism, singer-songwriter, popular songs, Anglo-American.

Female performers in 21st Century Anglo-American popular music is known for a variety of perspectives regarding their contributions to female empowerment and feminist ideals in their works that impact girls and young women. The success of many female artists from this era has a particularly strong point of view and acknowledge their power as women in what remains a largely male-dominated societal perspective. Their music, lyrics, and performances reflect the modernity of feminist ideals and the desire of women to exhibit strength and courage that enable them to be effective role models for young girls and women around the world. Top-selling female artists such as Adele, Beyonce, and Taylor Swift have dominated the pop music field well over a decade and are true trendsetters in this field; however, their most prolific power may be in the example they set for many others as role models and as arbiters of feminism and female empowerment. Females in popular music are well-received by females in different cultures around the world, thereby creating a wave of popularity and solidarity among many females that remains strong. The success of these artists reflects their value to women and how they represent freedom of expression and the desire to remain true to oneself. An ethnographic study focuses on the effects of feminism and expression among female participants who are affected by the music of several global female artists who are highly influential around the world.

Women in popular Anglo-American music have grown in popularity over the past several decades across different genres. Female solo artists and groups such Diana Ross and the Supremes, Dolly Parton, Aretha Franklin, Madonna, Lady Gaga, and many others established a fanbase around the world within their respective genres, including many girls and women who admire these artists for inspiration, strength, and empowerment. Female pop artists in the Anglo-American world have set a tone for women around the world who buy into their messages of love, independence, femininity, strength, and sexuality on many levels. For instance, Tina Turner began her successful career in the 1960s and demonstrated a level of fierceness and strength that exhibited not only her powerful vocals but also her ability to overcome a difficult marriage and to gain her independence (Moore 71). Women such as Tina Turner may be labeled as divas; however, perhaps one of their most endearing qualities is fierceness because it “allows its users to fabricate a new sense of self that radiates a defiant sense ownership through aesthetics, and in this way, fierceness becomes a social, political, and aesthetic intervention” (Moore 72). Women who exhibit a unique type of fierceness are often recognized for their artistic contributions, but they are also recognized for their ability to impact girls and women through the example they provide. In this sense, female

pop artists have a longstanding effect through their ability to exhibit strength and power while also showcasing their femininity and sexuality.

In 21st Century popular music, women continue to dominate the airwaves with their messages of self-discovery and heartache while also creating a major sensation among young and older fans alike. Artists such as Beyonce represent the power of a Black female who is determined to make the most of the opportunities given to her and to empower others to do the same; in some ways, it may be perceived by the public as the behavior of a diva, but in reality, her actions reflect the desire of a woman to use her platform to be an example to millions of other women around the world (Kooijman 7). The success of Beyonce is not attributed to a single idea or characteristic, as a combination of factors are influential, including her physical appearance, clothing, performances, and actions in public. Each of these attributes play a role in shaping her influence on the masses, and how she chooses to convey her image is largely feminine yet powerful and indicative of a woman with a strong point of view. Beyonce is representative of a woman who has defied many stereotypes and understands how to use her influence as her greatest advantage.

Despite the popularity of many female pop stars, there are factors to consider that impact how they are perceived by the masses versus their true fans. Specifically, many artists, including some of the most popular choices such as Beyonce, are imperfect and have numerous flaws; their actions may reflect poor decision-making or bad judgment that may lead to setbacks in their career path (Cantu 1). On the other hand, some pop stars appear to be genuine and authentic in their words and actions, thereby reflecting an important set of priorities that affect how they respond and manage their careers (Cantu 2). Their overall effectiveness as pop stars is larger than the number of records that they sell or the number of awards that they win; rather, the reasons why they are popular require further evaluation to determine the effects of their artistry on their fans (Cantu 2). The success of a female pop star such as Taylor Swift, for instance, is largely based upon strong songwriting skills and personal stories woven into her lyrics; at the same time, she serves as a key role model for many teens with her actions and decisions (Cantu 2). Despite these benefits, however, there have been controversies which have affected her fans and were cause for concern. Understanding the responses of her fans to her personal choices, such as those related to Kanye West, for example, are worthy of further discussion and may contradict some of the other messages provided in her lyrics and her stance on feminism or political issues. Through the information provided from study participants, it is possible to better understand the risks that artists take to

keep their loyal fans and when their actions are too much to bear that could cause significant harm to a longstanding reputation through the loss of fans.

Beyonce is an example of a popular female artist who has a significant following around the world and who serves as an idol to many female fans, including many teens and younger women. Female fans of Beyonce look to her for a variety of reasons, including her musical talents, her fashion and personal style, and the messages that she shares to inspire others to be the best version of themselves. Her fans may have different reasons for supporting her, but they often share in the same desire to follow her career and to purchase her music (Anderson 239). Regardless of the age group, fans of Beyonce may have different reasons for supporting her, but they share in the desire to follow her career, including her actions offstage. Fandom is a unique type of study because it reflects the importance of following those that provide inspiration and also provide pure entertainment; in this context, many females, for instance, may become fans of an artist at a young age and follow a career for many years (Anderson 240). In this context, the continued success of the artist is largely dependent on a loyal fanbase of teens and young adults who support the artist and her work across all areas (Anderson 240). Some fans may fall off and lose interest while others remain true to their passion and support the work of the artist as it is released (Anderson 240).

For many female artists, their fans are their most loyal supporters and it is likely that some of their work is to thank them for their interest and engagement. Artists such as Beyonce offer a gift to many teens and younger women because they provide a level of inspiration that may not be achieved in any other way in their lives. Much of this support is a testament of their artistry, including their lyrics, many of which cause a stir or familiarity in many females that enables them to feel closer to the artist and to relate to her words. When a female artist has a deeper message with her lyrics such as a failed relationship or a political message, these have an impact on fans in both positive and negative ways. In this context, female artists such as Adele may affect her fans on a spiritual level because they can relate to her messages of heartache and anger. In the context of these messages, many teens and young women may relate to the messages provided in the lyrics and may develop a stronger appreciation for the artist that must be considered.

Among female pop artists, feminism is a popular message observed in many lyrics and supported by their actions on stage or in videos. One of the most recognizable messages is “girl power,” which reflects a desire of women to fight back against discrimination and to take charge of their own lives (Simon 1). However, some of the pop stars who express these messages in their

music and lyrics may exhibit a different perspective on stage, particularly if she is personified in a highly sexual way, a visual that may cancel the messages shared in the lyrics (Simon 1). In this context, female fans of these artists may have an appreciation for the music or the artist but may not have the same response to their visual interpretations; the receiver of the message may not support the message that is shared (Simon 1). In these examples, the circumstances may have a negative impact on fans and create controversy. It is important for the artist to consider how her messages affect fans around the world, some of whom may have different reactions than others, depending on their culture and origins.

Messages involving politics and feminism in many female pop artist lyrics may not be well-received by all fans. In many ways, feminism is largely viewed in a negative context despite the messages of positivity that are often shared. Therefore, women may not be perceived positively if they express themselves freely as feminists, particularly in parts of the world where women largely lack freedom and independence (Coombs 1). Artists such as Taylor Swift may identify as feminists, but they may not fully understand the context of this term and how it is perceived in different countries (Coombs 2). Women with strong feminist points of view in their music and lyrics may not be well-received equally in all countries and furthermore, these perceptions may be limited by any suggestive actions, clothing, and other concerns exhibited on stage. In this context, the risk factors for females to derail their own messages of feminism may be high when they are oversexualized in various performances, thereby limiting their credibility under these circumstances. The success of female pop artists around the world, therefore, is a product of authenticity that is expressed in words as well as in performance. If these elements do not align, the global success of an artist may be in jeopardy.

Projections of feminism among various female pop stars is important in determining if fans have a specific response to these messages. In some cases, it is perceived by the artist and her fans that exhibiting feminist ideals through music are acceptable under some circumstances and are deemed “cool” by their fans (Keller and Ringrose 1). With younger teens, for example, it may be the case that feminism is perceived as a passing fad or an idea in a song without any real meaning or significance; however, it should be noted that “feminism should not be treated as a “fashion” that will eventually fall out of trend, but instead requiring longstanding commitment” (Keller and Ringrose 1). In these examples, it is likely that fans who are younger or do not have a clear understanding of what feminism entails may be supportive of the idea but do not take it seriously

(Keller and Ringrose 1). This may be problematic for artists who do not take the concepts related to feminism seriously and aim to project a message of strength to their fans; for these artists, the messages may not lead to the desired outcomes. Therefore, the messaging of some female artists should be refined and thoroughly examined to identify a clear intent before they are released to the public. This may make a significant difference in an artist having another wave of success or a message that is not well-received by others, thereby leading to a failure.

Relevant Data

The success of female artists around the world is different from one region or country to another, as some artists are more popular than others. For example, Beyonce has extreme popularity in the United States and Brazil, along with European nations such as France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Portugal (Chartmasters). In addition, she is popular in some parts of Africa, including South Africa, Kenya, and Cameroon; however, she is less popular in Asia overall, including Japan, where her popularity has declined in recent years (Chartmasters). She is also less popular in the Philippines, Singapore, and Hong Kong (Chartmasters). In Caribbean countries such as Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, her popularity is strong (Chartmasters). These indicators of Beyonce’s popularity in countries around the world demonstrate that her success is not universal on a global scale and that there are various factors that may be attributed to her limited success in Asia and parts of Europe. It is possible that her lack of support in these countries is due to the popularity of other artists, both global and regional, as well as the messages that she shares, as the latter may not be desirable nor effective in many markets. Therefore, it appears that Beyonce’s highest levels of success are in North America as well as parts of Africa and the Caribbean (Chartmasters).

Taylor Swift has a significant global presence in many countries around the world, including but not limited to the Asian countries (Chartmasters). Her popularity in Asia is significant, and her most prolific market is Vietnam, as she holds a 4-to-1 popularity over other similar artists (Chartmasters). Her success in Asia also includes strong popularity in Taiwan, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Singapore, and others; however, Japan is lower on the list at number 17, due in part to the popularity of other successful artists in the country (Chartmasters). Swift is also believed to be popular in China, but since the country does not permit the use of YouTube, this is not a measurable option that is available in other countries (Chartmasters). Despite her popularity

Asia, she is far less popular in Europe, with Germany as her most important market and others falling behind (Chartmasters). Her limited success in Europe is due to lack of successful charting songs and albums in these countries; she experiences a similar fate in Latin America, where she is most popular in Venezuela, but her sales are low (Chartmasters). Therefore, Taylor Swift has mixed popularity in some parts of the world, including Europe, and perhaps her most important audiences are located in Asian countries; these are even more important than those in the United States for a variety of reasons (Chartmasters).

Adele has experienced significant success over an 11-year period, despite only releasing three commercial albums; however, she has sold over 100 million records during that span (Chartmasters). She earned early success in her native United Kingdom as well as The Netherlands in 2009, but her greatest success began in 2011 with the album *21* (Chartmasters). The album went on to sell 30 million units worldwide, including 11.950 million units in the United States, 1.950 million units in Canada, 1.155 million units in Latin America, 12.650 million units across Europe, 5.225 million units in the United Kingdom, 1.750 million units in Germany, and 1.875 million units in France (Chartmasters). Her success worldwide is unique because of the release of only three albums as well as the extreme popularity of album sales, particularly in Europe and in North America (Chartmasters). It is likely that Adele's honesty with her lyrics combined with her unique voice created a fandom that continues today, despite not releasing a new album over the past few years.

The various successes of Beyonce, Taylor Swift, and Adele represent a unique set of characteristics that impact fan interest and enthusiasm. In each example, the portrayal of each artist reflects a set of personal characteristics, such as vocal talent, personal style, messaging, lyrics, and overall presentation that attract millions of fans from around the world. The actions taken by each artist to grow their respective fanbases are different and demonstrate a different set of priorities regarding feminism, messaging, and other objectives. Each artist may share some overlapping fans who prefer the music of all three artists; however, it is likely that the levels of fandom for each artist vary, based upon the music that is released at any given point in time along with other projects. Nonetheless, the expression of each artist in her own style is of critical importance in providing a framework for understanding the success of each artist and how all contribute to the pop genre with different musical styles.

Ethnographic Study

An ethnographic study offers a means of exploring the real-life situations of study participants regarding a specific topic or area of focus. Through observations and communication with each study participant, it is possible to develop a clearer understanding of the circumstances surrounding the subject and how the participant plays a role in shaping the outcomes. In this example, an ethnographic study is relevant because it provides additional information regarding a hypothesis that will determine if it can be proven. It is important that ethnographic research provides relevant data that may be used to determine the outcomes of the research study but also reflect a set of diverse perspectives of the issue or issues in question. The outcomes will include real-life examples or experiences affecting the study participants to determine the next steps and achieve theoretical premises.

Conducting an ethnographic study requires an understanding of the key elements in preparation for the study and to achieve the desired outcomes. Specifically, Blommaert and Dong (14) indicate that ethnography is known as an inductive science, whereby “it works from empirical evidence towards theory, not the other way around.” In this context, researchers collect data from study participants from which they draw conclusions and apply specific theories as appropriate (Blommaert and Dong 14). The data that is collected using ethnographic techniques provides the necessary background information to apply theories that are relevant to the data and the behaviors of the participants (Blommaert and Dong 14). Each participant plays a role in shaping the study and its overall direction with their responses, and in some cases, may surprise the researchers with the information that is shared. It is entirely possible that what was proposed at the start of the study is not what is observed in the aftermath of the study.

Data collection in conducting an ethnographic research study requires a method of conducting fieldwork that will lead to favorable results. Specifically, the fieldwork element of the research study involves work conducted in preparation for the fieldwork experience; the fieldwork activities; and a post-fieldwork approach (Blommaert and Dong 18). It is important for the researcher to identify a perspective that will be used throughout the research and will provide a framework to conduct the study with actual participants; it will be specific to the target research concerns and will include a specific population of participants who are selected to answer a set of basic questions regarding the area of focus that will lead to a variety of responses (Blommaert and Dong 18). The success of the study is contingent upon a preparation phase that is detailed, specific,

and will focus on a specific reality of the topic in question to examine the issues and experiences of the study population who will contribute to the study in providing critical data (Blommaert and Dong 18).

The development of an ethnographic research study should be based on a concept or idea that provides value to the research community and will lead to desirable research results; therefore, the strategies used should be grounded in the use of tools that will draw successful conclusions and will address the needs of the public effectively (Blommaert and Dong 24). The fieldwork phase of the research study requires an ability to be flexible throughout the process because the desired conclusions may not be reachable with the information provided from study participants; the data collected may lead to an entirely different set of assumptions regarding the study that take the researcher in a different direction (Blommaert and Dong 25). A successful fieldwork experience, therefore, is highly unpredictable and may not lead to the same conclusions as originally proposed, thereby enabling the researcher to examine other ideas and perhaps more unique or innovative concepts that will generate greater attention and focus (Blommaert and Dong 25).

An ethnographic study based on music provides a unique perspective of specific subsections of music that may lead to interest, controversy, and support for different artists and genres. Music is a uniting as well as polarizing to many people around the world. The same song or artist generates a variety of perspectives, some that are positive and others negative. The music industry represents significant differences among artists and genres, and those interested in music may adopt different perceptions of the same artist, depending on his or her personal interests. Popular music is particularly challenging to dissect because it may cause significant disdain among some fans and adoration in others. The success of a music artist in the pop music genre, therefore, relies on a unique group of fans and admirers from different parts of the world. Many artists who have diverse appeal and attract fans across different populations may sell many records and gain significant airplay in different markets. Nonetheless, not all artists are created equal and some may be more popular than others in different cities and countries. The success of music artist, therefore, is highly individualistic and the same artist may be successful with one release but fail with the next, depending on market conditions, the surrounding social climate and culture, and world events at any given point in time.

A critical understanding of ethnographic approaches in much requires the development of a study that emphasizes a smaller area of focus to make assumptions and draw important

conclusions. The ethnographic study will likely be successful when a smaller set of questions are considered for which responses may be variable but from which conclusions may be drawn. The outcomes of the study will indicate if an artist or a group of artists are successful and effective in generating a set of key messages within their works that are appealing to different fans of music who have an appreciation for different genres. The information collected in the study should consider a small subset of questions and should not be too broad in scope because it may not lead to the desired conclusions. A smaller grouping will focus on specific areas of key artists to be examined in the study and will indicate how these artists affect different listeners who may or may not be admirers of their works.

Ethnographic Approaches as Applied to the Research Study

My experiences in the study of music include past attendance at several programs internationally to obtain a well-rounded perspective of different types of music and its effects on communities and cultures. These experiences offered new opportunities to study music using ethnographic research and to examine the key interests of different attendees and presenters at various lectures and conferences. The information obtained in each of these experiences provides further evidence of the diversity among music fans and admirers and how these perspectives largely drive public opinion among different population groups. The knowledge obtained offered new insights regarding critical music interests around the world that contribute to a growing sea of artists and labels. Some of the highlights of these experiences will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

In June 2018, I attended a summer school course entitled “Theory and Ethnography of Music Community” at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. This was an immersion experience on many levels because the course took place just over one week. During this course, I attended various lectures and gained ample exposure to the music scene in Prague affecting its smaller communities and neighborhoods throughout the city. I attended various music experiences at different venues in the area and examined one smaller music community using ethnographic research principles. Within the course, some of the lectures emphasized the following areas using case studies and other tools: communities, subcultures, social intimacy, scenes, social interactions taking place at music events that included audience participation, liquidity, activities leading to the creation of boundaries and subcultural capital, organizational elements, and the development

of youth cultures using community-building and sustaining activities. During this immersion course, I focused largely on methodologies and an examination of music as a key factor in the community to influence change and progress among residents. During this course, I also participated in various field trips, observed patrons at different music events, and conducted interviews with music participants at different venues. During this program, I interviewed a total of 30 participants who provided important and meaningful insights regarding their own music experiences that contribute to the success of Prague's music scene and community.

Based on the information that I collected during the course at Charles University, I presented my findings in a paper at the 2019 EUPOP Conference, held from July 16-18, 2019 and sponsored by the European Popular Culture Association (EPCA). This conference was held at Mary Immaculate College at the University of Limerick, Ireland. During this conference, I interviewed 40 participants with the same set of questions also asked during the course in Prague. As noted with the Charles University course, the responses to the questions were diverse due to the diverse population of participants that were interviewed who originated from different countries around the world. As with the prior experience in Prague, the conference in Limerick offered a unique set of perspectives regarding popular music among female artists and offered a different approach to understanding pop music as a critical component of popular culture around the world.

Finally, I attended another conference, the Innovation of Music 2019, that was held at the Ealing Campus of the University of West London from December 5-7, 2019. This conference offered a diverse array of educational sessions based on different components of music, including mixing, arranging, technology, digitization, design, and governance related to various aspects of the music industry. During this conference, I conducted an interview with the keynote speaker, Trevor Horn, known as "The Man Who Invented the Eighties." Mr. Horn's accomplishments began with the formation of The Buggles, a band who had a worldwide hit with "Video Killed the Radio Star" which became the first video ever to air on MTV in 1981. Mr. Horn also produced several classic songs from the 1980s, including "Lexicon of Love" by ABC; "Relax" by Frankie goes to Hollywood; and "Owner of a Lonely Heart" by Yes. At this conference, I interviewed 50 presenters who presented papers and who represented different elements of the music industry. These interviews included the same grouping of questions that were asked at the EUPOP conference and during the Charles University course.

Each of the interviews conducted at these events had a friendly and informal tone; they were primarily conducted during the breakfast or lunch sessions as well as during event tours and events. The information collected during the interviews was recorded and transcribed. For each of the interviews, prospective participants were asked to provide informed consent to ensure that they were aware of the reason for the study and its significance. There were no risks involved in the study, and participants could withdraw from the interviews if desired. It was important that all study participants understood the purpose of the study, and therefore, the reasons for conducting the study were explicitly stated. The interviews were a critical component of the study and were essential to conduct the ethnographic research project.

With my past experiences as an attendee of international programs, including a course and two conferences, I served as an active participant and in some cases, presented papers to other attendees. With this process, I conducted my own research regarding female popular music and specifically examined the works of Adele, Taylor Swift, and Beyonce. The desire to obtain relevant ethnographic information led to the following research questions for those attending these various programs:

- 1) What is your perception of the songs of Adele, Taylor Swift, and Beyonce?
- 2) Do you believe that one artist is more influential than the others?
- 3) What information do you use to judge the songs, music videos, and other musical performances of these artists? Do you believe that each of these works or performances offers any indicator of one or more social issues, such as feminism, gender, discrimination, love or betrayal, or war?
- 4) What is your perception of the artist’s clothing choices in each of these videos or performances? How are their clothing styles an indicator of their expression and their larger impact on the pop music industry and popular culture?

Responses to Questions

Regarding question one, the perceptions of Adele, Taylor Swift, and Beyonce were variable among participants. For instance, one female participant at the EUPOP conference indicated that “I like Adele’s voice and Beyonce’s style, but Taylor Swift is too simplistic for my taste.” Another female participant at the same conference noted that “Adele is a moody artist and it comes through clearly in her music. Sometimes I feel as if Taylor Swift is trying too hard to make a point and to

make herself relevant. Beyonce is ok but she appears to be far too issues-oriented in some of her songs.” A male participant in the Charles University Course stated that “I like Adele’s voice the best of all three. She has a magnetism and an anger that reminds me of Alanis Morrissette, but her delivery is more polished and beautiful. I think that Taylor Swift has good lyrics, but her voice leaves a lot to be desired. Beyonce can sing well, but I think she is too over the top in some of her videos and live performances. Her recorded songs are more appealing to me.”

Regarding the responses to question two, these are also variable, as most participants held different views of each artist. For instance, one male participant at the Innovation in Music conference stated the following: “The most influential is Beyonce by a mile because she represents the epitome of Black strength and courage.” Another male participant at the EUPOP Conference indicated that “Taylor Swift is the most influential because she has a stronghold on the tween and teen audiences, and they set the tone for the pop music industry.” A female participant in the Charles University Course indicated that “Adele is the most influential because she is an inspiration to many women who do not have perfect bodies and do not fit a certain mold that a pop star should be.” Finally, a fourth female participant indicated that “Although some may think Beyonce is the most influential, I tend to disagree because she is less spiritual than Adele and is arguably the most commercial artist. She does not dig deep into your soul like Adele can with her voice.”

Regarding question three, the responses were mixed and were largely based on specific performances. For instance, one male participant in the Charles University Course indicated that “I enjoy watching the awards shows and other events such as the Superbowl to see what the latest artists are up to. I do not take that much time to watch videos unless there are occasional clips on social media. I do not even know where videos air these days. Artists who try to send a message typically do so in a live or recorded performance for a single event anyways to draw the most attention.” A female participant at the EUPOP Conference stated that “I recognize that an artist such as Beyonce says so much with her performances, but sometimes, she is frustrating to watch because she always has a message to give the audience. Sometimes, we just want a music performance without a message to go with it. She is largely about feminism and free expression, but sometimes, it is too much to handle.” Another female participant at the Innovation in Music conference had a similar response: “Why does Beyonce always have something to say? Sometimes I just want a song that is pure fluff and is enjoyable to listen to without having a message to go

with it? It can be a real turnoff.” Finally, another male participant stated that “Taylor Swift’s primary appeal is with teens and tweens. She does not appeal to a large swath of adults. Ever since she became involved with the Kanye West controversy, it is difficult to take her seriously, even if she has a good message to share.”

Regarding question four, it is evident that the participants have different perspectives of fashion and its impact on the music industry. For instance, a male participant at the Innovation in Music conference stated that “I think Beyonce has great style and she is not afraid to show her body to the audience. Taylor Swift tries too hard to be something that she is not, which is sexy, and it is not appealing. Adele should just continue to be herself, as she makes the appropriate fashion choices for her style of music.” A second male participant at the EOPOP conference stated that “Adele should dress a little younger. She has a gorgeous voice and should modernize her wardrobe. No matter how hard I try, I have this perception of Taylor Swift as a teenager and it is difficult for me to escape this image. No matter what she wears, she does not appeal to me. Beyonce has a great look but I often wonder if it is too much work to make oneself look like that all the time. It is exhausting just watching her sometimes.” A female participant in the Charles University course stated the following: “Taylor Swift dresses too juvenile for my taste. Beyonce dresses her age, and Adele often dresses too old for her age. Although I do not believe that fashion is the key indicator of their popularity beyond their music, I do believe that many fans of these women find their style and fashion to be important in understanding their popularity within the music industry.”

Each of the responses was relevant to the study in determining patterns among the study participants. The responses indicated a diverse group of perspectives regarding each of the female pop stars that are the focus of the ethnographic study. Since the study population is international, the information provided represents different approaches to music and a variety of preferences, including some who may prefer other types of music over pop music. The makeup of the study population also demonstrates the importance of obtaining a unique cross-section of participants from different cultures and backgrounds. The responses also provide context regarding the relevance of Taylor Swift, Beyonce, and Adele across mainstream popular music around the world and the issues affecting women in popular music that impact their messaging for their fans and admirers. Some of the responses selected for inclusion in the study support the belief that popular music among female artists is polarizing for some listeners, depending on their personal interests.

The importance of diversity among the study participants is significant, along with their roles within the music industry. Specifically, some of the participants were key players on the supporting side of the industry, working directly with artists behind the scenes in composing and mixing their music. Others play a critical role as fans of different types of music, thereby supporting different artists, including the three female pop stars who are the focus of this thesis. Each study participant, therefore, has a specific purpose in the study and his or her responses demonstrate a critical set of indicators regarding the significance of music in their lives as fans and as industry players. In examining the contributions of the study participants, it is evident that capturing their perspectives in locations where music was the primary focus was essential to promoting an ethnographic-focused study on the music industry and fans of different artists and genres.

With the example of female pop stars Beyonce, Adele, and Taylor Swift, an ethnographic study can provide additional insight regarding how each set of fans is responsive to a specific set of characteristics that affect fans' interpretation and support of the music and the artist. With a strong ethnographic approach and extensive fieldwork, it is possible for the study to explore the impact of music on each participant as it affects his or her surroundings to obtain a more realistic view of the circumstances so that additional information may be generated that provides value to the study and its outcomes. With the diverse nature of the music industry, it is evident that individual fans and patrons of music are essential to the success of specific artists and the value that they provide. Their contributions are notable, and their perspectives are crucial in understanding the importance of music influences on popular culture. The messaging that artists bring to their music also generate great interest and enthusiasm as well as disdain and anger in some fans; therefore, their music polarizes some groups of fans for a variety of reasons.

The ethnographic study of fans of Adele, Beyonce, and Taylor Swift represents a clearer understanding how their songs, meanings, and interpretations are interpreted by the fans and how these affect their popularity in different countries around the world. Messaging that surrounds feminism or political issues may be problematic in some countries and more popular in others, depending on the location of the fanbase and the existing perception of the artist in that country. The popularity of each artist is a product of different factors and therefore, understanding the context of the fanbase is an important revelation to determine outcomes. The effectiveness of the ethnographic study in examining 21st Century female pop stars is important and reflects the need

to select study participants who have different perceptions of each artist to obtain greater diversity in responses. By conducting this type of study, observing a participant discussing and/or listening to a female pop star's record or watching a live performance or video are important indicators of the perceptions of each artist and if a participant is a fan.

The data generated from an ethnographic study is necessary to determine not only if the proposed hypothesis is valid, but to demonstrate the value that a study population provides in a real-life situation within familiar surroundings. As part of this process, fieldwork is required to gather critical information and to address some of the most significant issues affecting the listener's interpretation of the music and its impact on daily life. Study participants selected for inclusion offered additional insight regarding the behavior of fans and admirers of female pop stars. Their actions should reflect an understanding of the significance of fandoms for an artist such as Beyonce and how to address some of the key issues that affect her messaging related to feminism in her works. Study participants who are evaluated in their real-life situations will likely indicate patterns that will have an impact on study outcomes. Their responses regarding female pop stars, feminism, and other issues affecting artist expressions require further examination to draw important conclusions.

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