

Emotional Responses to Music Genres

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to see how different genres of music elicit positive or negative emotional responses, as well as whether listening to a preferred genre affects their emotional responses.

Genres that elicit positive emotional responses are blues, jazz, rap, hip-hop, soul, funk, electronica, and dance (Cook et al., 2017). Genres that elicit negative emotional responses are blue, jazz, classical, folk, alternative, soundtrack, soul, funk, and death metal (Cook et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2019).

Furthermore, when individuals listen to genres they prefer to listen to, they experience greater positive emotional responses than if they listened to a genre they weren't as fond of (Swaminathan & Schellenberg, 2015).

METHODS

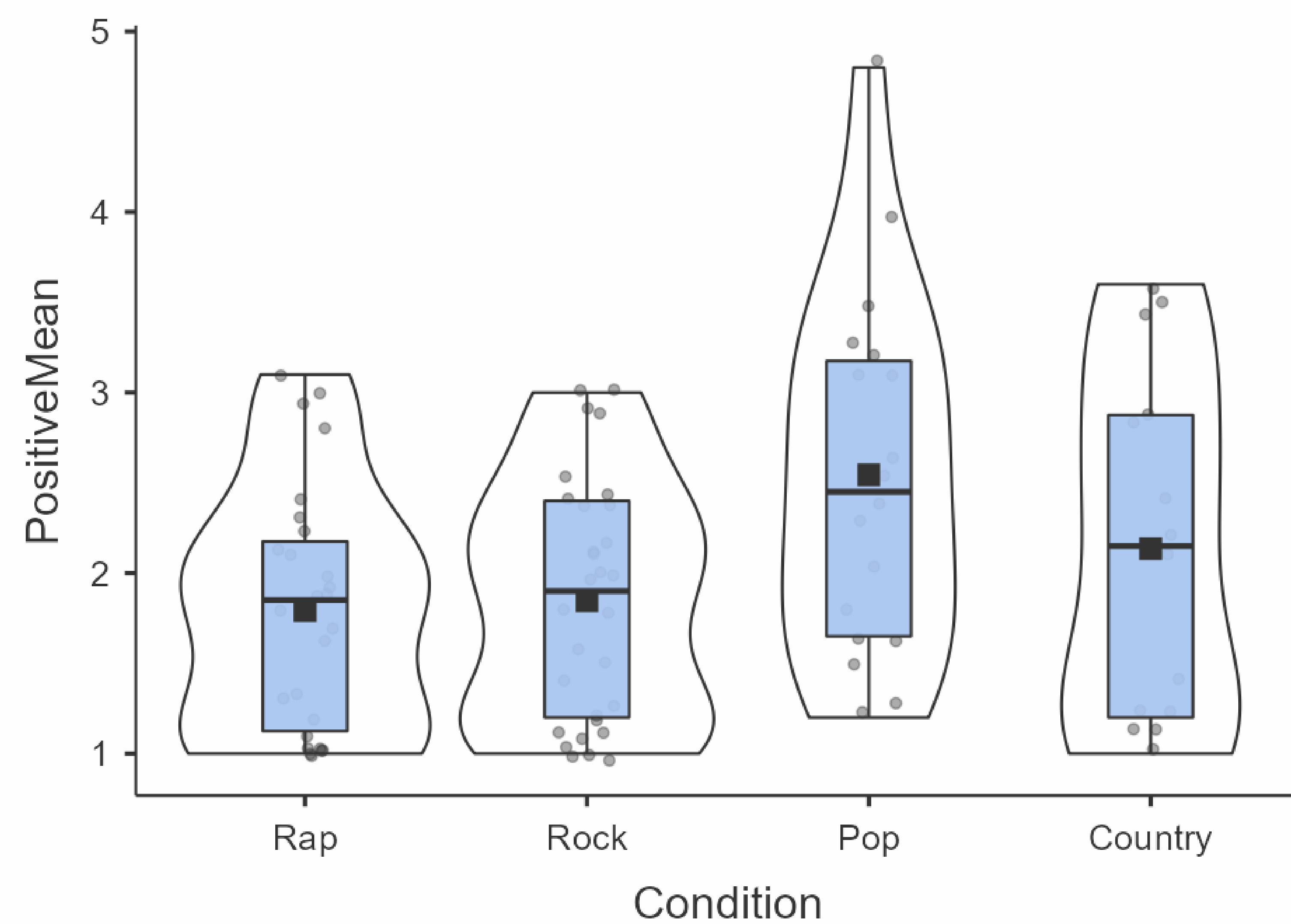
Undergraduate students participated in this online survey through Sona research participation in psychology courses. After the consent form, the survey entailed:

1. Participants were randomly assigned to listen to one song (with only lyrics, no music video) from one of the following genres: rock, pop, country, and rap.
2. Participants then filled out the Modified Differential Emotions Scale (MDES; Fredrickson, 2013), which has 10 items for positive feeling emotions and 10 for negative feeling emotions.
3. Participants then responded to demographic questions related to their preferred music genres, age, gender, and year in school.

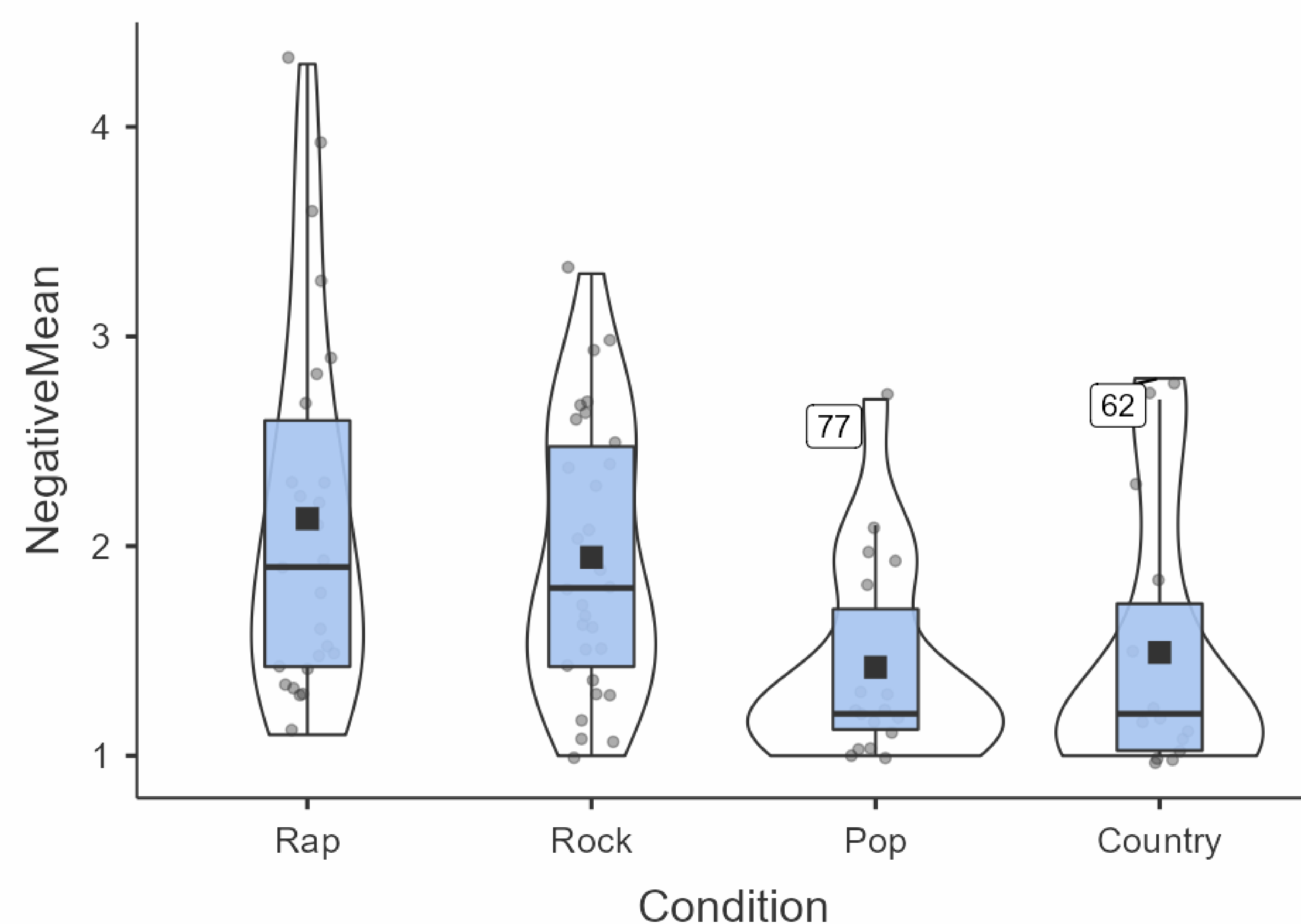
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FINDING #1: Listening to pop results in a higher positive emotional response compared to rap.



FINDING #2: Listening to rap results in a higher negative emotional response compared to pop or country and listening to rock results in a higher negative emotional response compared to pop.



FINDING #3: There was no significant difference in positive or negative emotional responses by whether participants listened to a genre they preferred or not.

RESULTS

Finding #1: Using a Kruskal-Wallis test because the assumption of normality was not met, there was a significant effect of genre on positive emotional responses, $\chi^2(3) = 8.82, p = .032, \epsilon^2 = .10$. Participants who listened to pop had a significantly higher positive emotional response compared to participants who listened to rap ($W = 3.70, p = .044$) and there were no other significant differences among conditions.

Finding #2: Using a Kruskal-Wallis test because the assumption of normality was not met, there was a significant effect of genre on negative emotional responses, $\chi^2(3) = 17.61, p < .001, \epsilon^2 = .20$. Participants who listened to rap had a significantly higher negative emotional response compared to participants who listened to pop ($W = 4.88, p = .003$) or country ($W = 4.02, p = .023$), participants who listened to rock had higher a higher negative emotional response compared to participants who listened to pop ($W = 4.17, p = .017$), and there were no other significant differences.

Finding #3: There was no significant difference in positive ($U = 889.50, p = .650$, rank biserial correlation = .06) or negative ($U = 887.00, p = .635$, rank biserial correlation = .06) emotional responses by whether participants listened to a genre they preferred or not.

DISCUSSION

Implications: This study gives insight to how genres of music can impact emotional responses. For example, people may choose to listen to pop music to have higher positive emotional responses and lower negative emotional responses.

Strengths & limitations: This study used four different types of genres to compare emotional responses, but there was a limited number of participants ($n = 87$) and there exist other genres we did not examine.

Future directions: Future studies could include a wider variety of genres and different songs within each genre. Another study could involve a within-subjects design to have participants listen to all of the genres and report their emotional responses after each one. A third design could involve the participants watching the music videos for the genre chosen for them and see how this affects the emotional response of the participant.