

Breaking Stereotypes:
Country Music

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Through experience and observation of the people in the world around me, I have drawn a conclusion. Country music is not the most adored genre of music; most people who do not love it...hate it. I do not know why this is, but I know a lot of stereotypes surround the genre. One stereotype being that all country singers are hillbillies that only sing about tractors and drinking beer. It is my *opinion* that most people who make these rationalizations do not actually listen to the genre. For this content analysis I have decided to find out exactly how many current country songs actually do mention or promote drinking beer. My exact research question is, "Do all of today's male country singers mention drinking in their songs?". My goal is to disprove *or* verify this particular stereotype.

My population includes the songs that are played on our local Cleveland country station, 99.5 WGAR. My sample consists of the songs played on March 19th, 2016 between the time of 9:30am and 10:30am. The sample songs include: Luke Bryan "Rain is a Good Thing", Keith Urban "Break on Me", Eric Church "Give me Back My Hometown", Michael Ray "Real Men Love Jesus", Sam Hunt "House Party", Florida Georgia Line "Confession", Kip Moore "Somethin Bout a Truck", Kenny Chesney "Save it for a Rainy Day", Brantley Gilbert "One Hell of an Amen", The Band Perry "If I Die Young", Dustin Lynch "Hell of a Night", Granger Smith "Backroad Song", Gary Allan "Every Storm (runs out of rain)", Cole Swindell "You Should Be Here", and Jason Aldean "Gonna Know We Were Here". While all the sample songs are noted on the coding sheet (below), I am particularly focusing on the songs sung by males (considering the stereotype is directed at male singers) and songs released within the last two years (so the analysis is current). Any songs sung by females or released later than two years ago are also analyzed below in order to compare and contrast the types of lyrics.

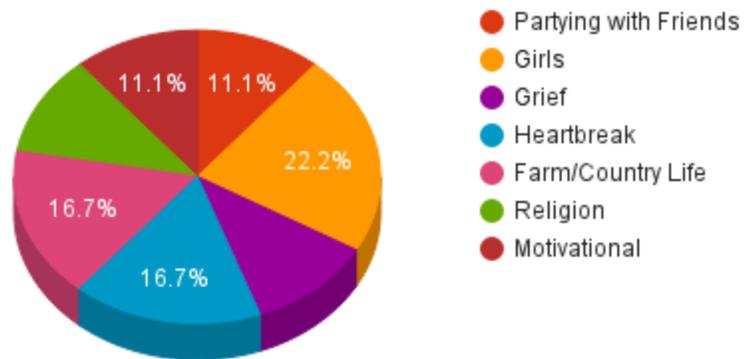
After listening to the songs and reading the lyrics, I derived a list of topics that were prominent in the songs. These topics and types of trends I noticed included: Reminiscing about different kinds of memories (including summer nights, hometowns, women, and love), partying or hanging out with friends, singing about a girl or girls, trucks, heartbreak, grief over a past love or lost loved ones, religion, self reflection, motivation, farm life/ country living (hard working lives), and of course, drinking. These **topics** are the first variables. I categorized the songs into the sections that described their predominant topics in a chart. After I researched how current each of the songs are, I made a second chart with the same categories but for songs released earlier than two years ago. The **currency** of the songs played is the second variable. Finally I made a third chart to specifically categorize the songs that were primarily about drinking versus the songs that at least mention drinking, contrasting current and older songs.

In conclusion I have drawn several realizations. First of all, unrelated to my research question, only one of the songs played within an hour was sung by a woman. This was an unforeseen realization that I was not expecting and I now realize that males seem to dominate the genre at this time. Another factor I noticed about this particular radio station is that it predominantly plays current country songs as opposed to classics. The number of songs that are older than two years definitely did not have a strong presence on the station. This made it a little harder to see if the stereotype has been constant throughout time or not. After listening to all the songs I immediately realized that there were way more song topics than drinking, already disproving the stereotype. In fact, none of the songs in the sample were solely about drinking at all. Drinking is not even a category on the pie charts because none of the songs mentioned drinking enough for it to be the *sole topic* of any song. While the songs were not all *about*

drinking, many of them did at least mention it. Out of the current songs, 60% of them at least mention drinking even though they are not primarily about it, while 40% do not. Of the songs analyzed older than two years, 33.3% do mention drinking while 66.7% do not mention drinking. By this analysis, it seems that the majority of current songs do mention drinking even though they are not primarily about drinking. Of the older songs that this station played, the majority of them did not mention drinking. Is singing about drinking a current trend or has it been present in country music in older songs as well? According to my results, drinking is a prevalent topic in country music in general, just because of the high percentage of songs that mention it. Whether or not it has been a prevalent topic in older songs as well is harder to conclude because of the lack of older songs on the analyzed station. Finally, I have decided the stereotype is not true at all. Drinking, while it is mentioned a lot of songs, is not the key focus of the majority of country songs. To answer my research question, no, not *all* of today's male country singers mention drinking in their songs (though many do). There was not even one song in the sample that is predominantly about drinking (or tractors for that matter). Lastly to address the stereotype once and for all, country music is NOT all about tractors and drinking beer, there are many song topics...just like any other genre.

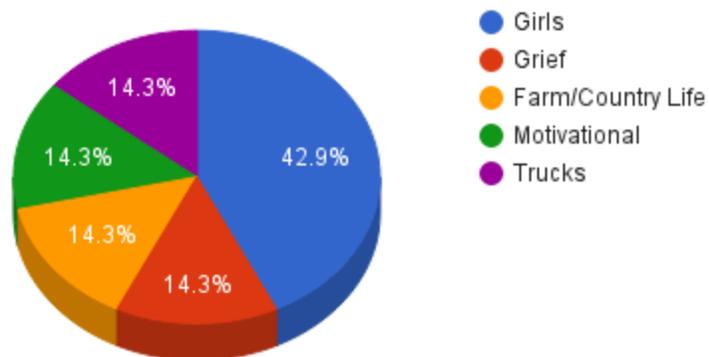
** Topics not on the pie graph include: memories, self reflection, trucks, and drinking
(These categories have no songs with strong emphasis in their categories) **

Current Songs



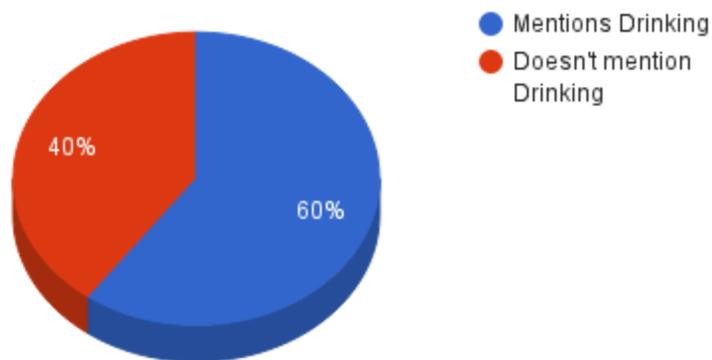
** Topics not on this graph: drinking, hanging with friends, religion, self reflection, memories, heartbreak. (There are no songs with strong emphasis in their categories).

Songs Older Than 2 Years

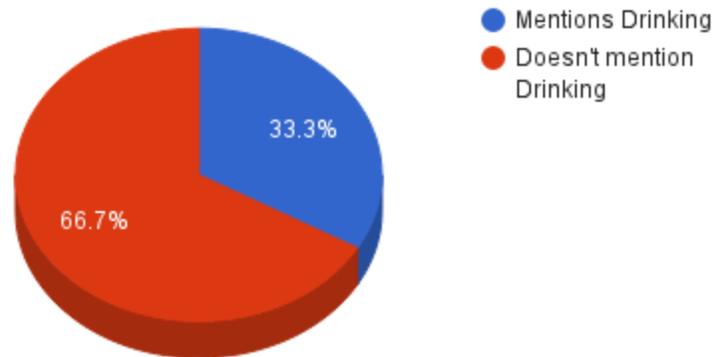


Though there are no songs that are ALL about drinking or have a strong emphasis on drinking, there were many current songs that did at least mention drinking.

Current Songs



Songs Older Than 2 Years



Of the older songs that this station played, none were primarily about drinking nor did the majority mention drinking.

Coding Sheet

Research Question: Most people unfamiliar with country music assume it is all a bunch of guys singing about beer. Is this stereotype accurate? Do all of today's male country singers mention drinking in their songs?

Medium: Radio

Unit of analysis: Song lyrics

Population: WGAR Cleveland Country station 99.5

Sample:

- Luke Bryan "Rain is a Good Thing"
- Keith Urban "Break on Me"
- Eric Church "Give me Back My Hometown"
- Michael Ray "Real Men Love Jesus"
- Sam Hunt "House Party"
- Florida Georgia Line "Confession"
- Kip Moore "Somethin Bout a Truck"
- Kenny Chesney "Save it for a Rainy Day"
- Brantley Gilbert "One Hell of an Amen"
- The Band Perry "If I Die Young"
- Dustin Lynch "Hell of a Night"
- Granger Smith "Backroad Song"
- Gary Allan "Every Storm (runs out of rain)"
- Cole Swindell "You Should Be Here"
- Jason Aldean "Gonna Know We Were Here"

Variable 1: Topic of Lyrics

Variable 2: Songs Played Older Than 2 Years

Current Songs

Songs in each category are placed there because their lyrics are mainly focused on that category

Variable 1: (operational definitions)

Memories of: ~ Summer Nights ~ Hometowns ~ Women/Love	Eric Church "Give me Back My Hometown"
Drinking	
Partying / Hanging out with Friends	Kenny Chesney "Save it for a Rainy Day" Jason Aldean "Gonna Know We Were Here"
About a Girl/ Girls	Keith Urban "Break on Me" Kenny Chesney "Save it for a Rainy Day" Dustin Lynch "Hell of a Night" Jason Aldean "Gonna Know We Were Here"
Trucks	
Grief over: ~ Past love ~ Someone passed away	Brantley Gilbert "One Hell of an Amen" Cole Swindell "You Should Be Here"
Heartbreak	Keith Urban "Breank on Me" Eric Church "Give me Back My Hometown" Kenny Chesney "Save it for a Rainy Day"
Farm Life / Hard Work / Country Living	Michael Ray "Real Men Love Jesus" Florida Georgia Line "Confession" Granger Smith "Backroad Song"
Religion	Michael Ray "Real Men Love Jesus" Brantley Gilbert "One Hell of an Amen"
Self Reflection	Florida Georgia Line "Confession" Kenny Chesney "Save it for a Rainy Day"
Motivational	

Songs Older Than 2 Years

Variable 2: (Operational Definitions)

Memories of: ~ Summer Nights ~ Hometowns ~ Women/Love	
Drinking	
Partying / Hanging Out With Friends	Luke Bryan “Rain is a Good Thing” (2010) Sam Hunt “House Party” (2013)
About a Girl / Girls	Luke Bryan “Rain is a Good Thing” (2010) Sam Hunt “House Party” (2013) Kip Moore “Somethin Bout a Truck” (2012)
Trucks	Kip Moore “Somethin Bout a Truck” (2012)
Grief over: ~ Past love ~ Someone passed away	The Band Perry “If I Die Young” (2010)
Farm Life / Hard Work / Country Living	Luke Bryan “Rain is a Good Thing” (2010)
Heartbreak	
Religion	
Self Reflection	
Motivational	Gary Allan “Every Storm (runs out of rain)” (2013)

Highlighted songs are not about drinking nor do they mention drinking.

		About Drinking	Mentions Drinking
Current Songs (Less Than 2 Years Old)	Keith Urban "Break on Me"		
	Eric Church "Give me Back My Hometown"		✓
	Michael Ray "Real Men Love Jesus"		✓
	Florida Georgia Line "Confession"		✓
	Kenny Chesney "Save it for a Rainy Day"		✓
	Brantley Gilbert "One Hell of an Amen"		
	Dustin Lynch "Hell of a Night"		✓
	Granger Smith "Backroad Song"		
	Cole Swindell "You Should Be Here"		✓
	Jason Aldean "Gonna Know We Were Here"		
	Songs Older Than 2 Years Old	Luke Bryan "Rain is a Good Thing"	
Sam Hunt "House Party"			
Kip Moore "Somethin Bout a Truck"			✓
The Band Perry "If I Die Young"			
Gary Allan "Every Storm (runs out of rain)"			