

GENDER, RACE/ETHNICITY, NATION AND GENRE ON SPOTIFY'S TOP PLAYLISTS

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The two most followed playlists on Spotify are *Today's top hits* (27 million followers) and *Top 50 Global* (16 million followers). The first playlist is presented as edited by human curators, the other is presented as the result of what listeners are streaming all over the world, and both are part of the algorithmic culture of Spotify. Algorithms govern not only what is recommended to listeners through *Discover weekly* on the music streaming service, they govern what is shown at the listeners first page, order of songs and images and the counting of streams. Therefore, there are no parts of Spotify that exist outside algorithmic culture (Galloway 2006, Striphas 2015), where computational processes are doing cultural work, the sorting, classifying and hierarchization of people, places, objects and ideas (Striphas 2015: 396). Algorithmic culture claims 'crowd wisdom' as the source of recommendation practices, hiding the choices made by the commercially motivated algorithms. Playlists (Prey 2020, 2021) are prized sequenced music consumption forms where songs are ordered. Playlist listening (Hagen 2015) is one innovation of streaming services, remediating top lists and cassette mixes in an algorithmic format to please listeners with a seamless flow of songs they like. The playlists on Spotify are constructed by editors and algorithms (Bonini & Gandini 2019).

This presentation investigates the two most popular playlists on Spotify (*Today's top hits* and *Top 50 Global*) at a given date asking what genders, race/ethnicities, nationalities and genres are presented there, and how these are sequenced. Algorithmic culture, it is argued, sorts, classifies and hierarchize gender, race/ethnicity and nation when it is presenting the most popular music of certain genres to listeners. Findings indicate that the two top playlists on Spotify to a large extent consist of the same songs on a given day. Pop and rap are the main genres of the lists and they are gendered and racialized differently, US artists dominate the playlists. The results point to an interesting area for further studies.