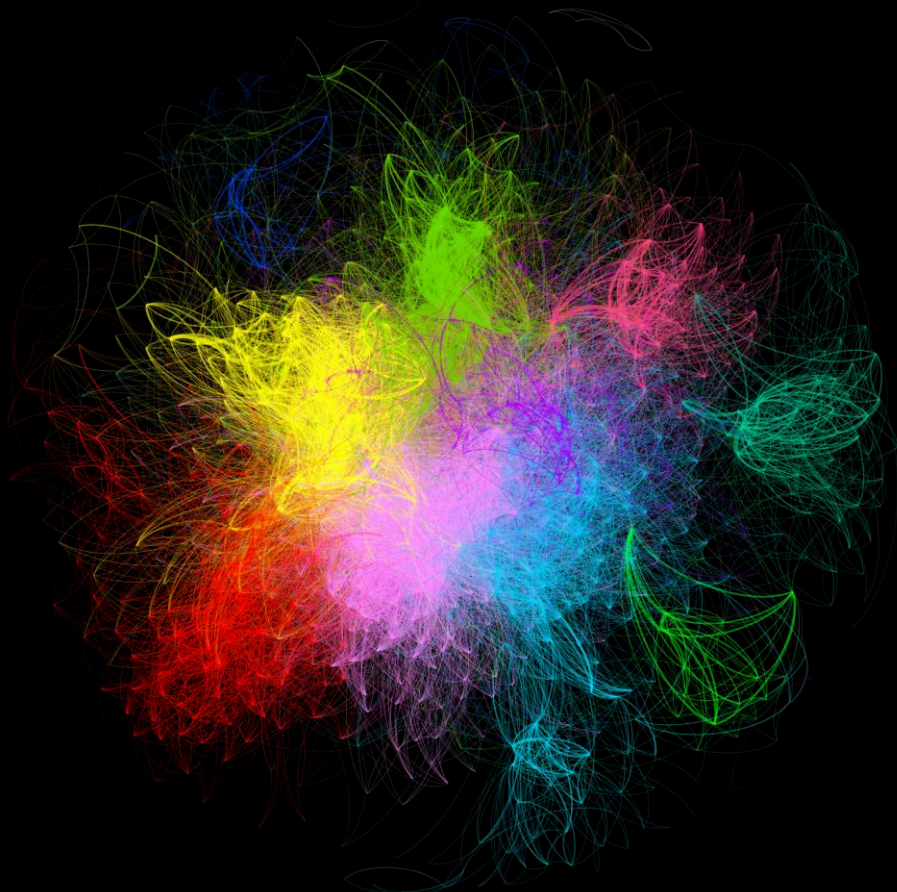


# #genre





Thomas Johnson

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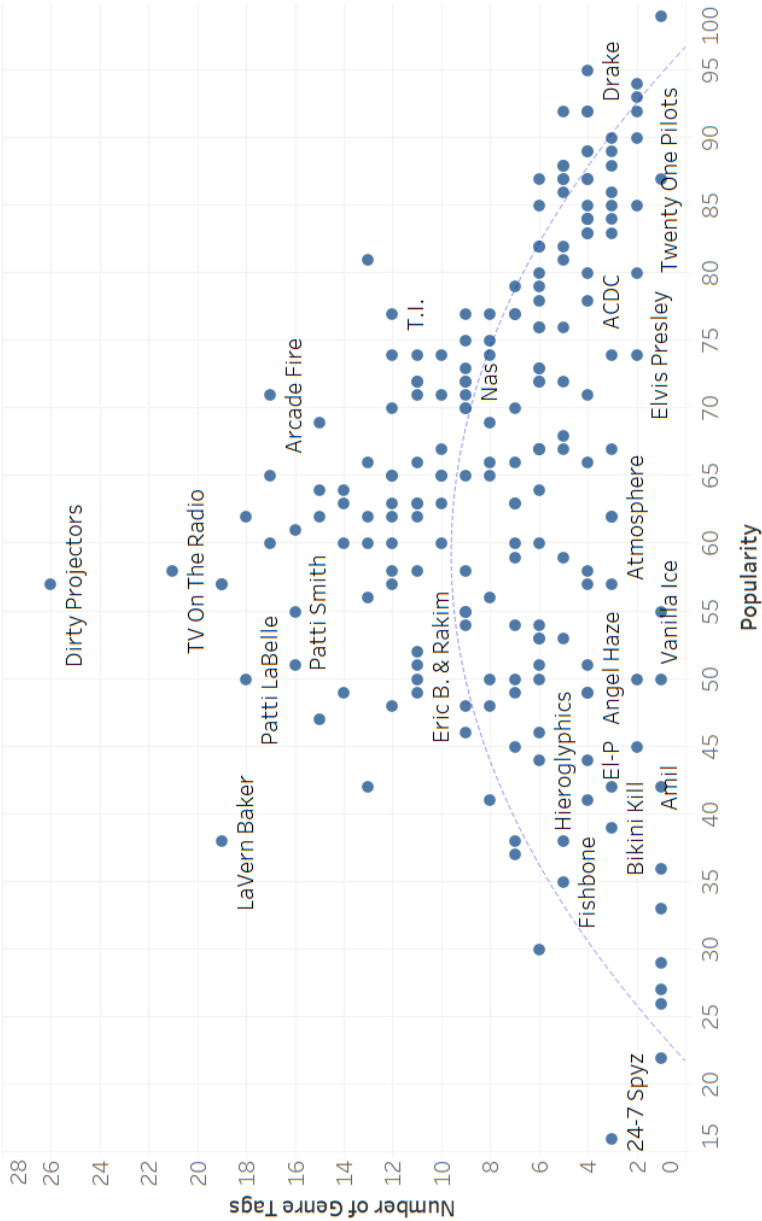
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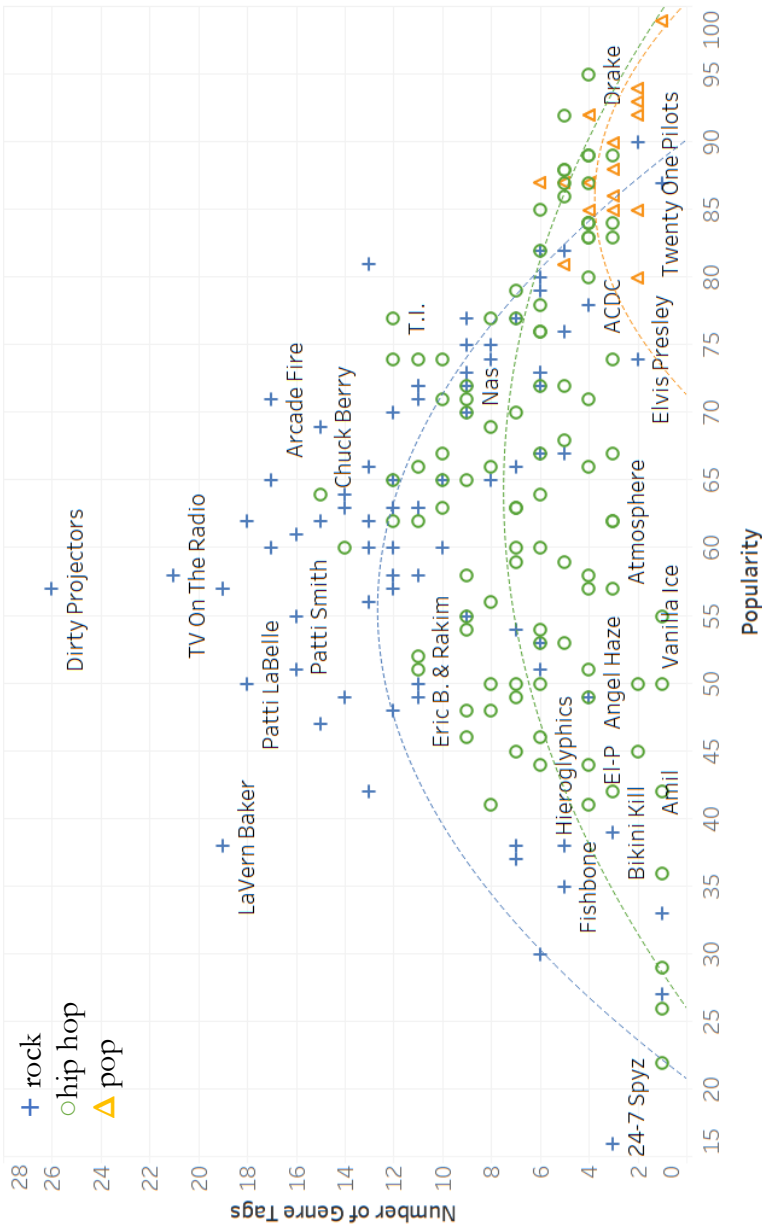
 @tgj505  • [tjohnson@gradcenter.cuny.edu](mailto:tjohnson@gradcenter.cuny.edu)

<https://tom-johnson.net/stuff/smt2017/>

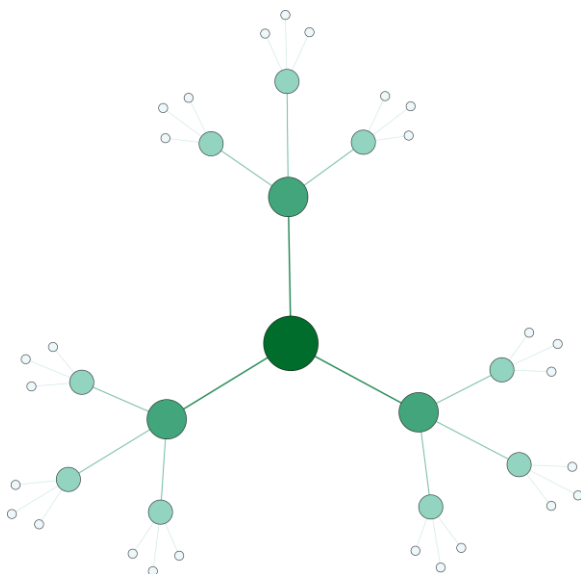




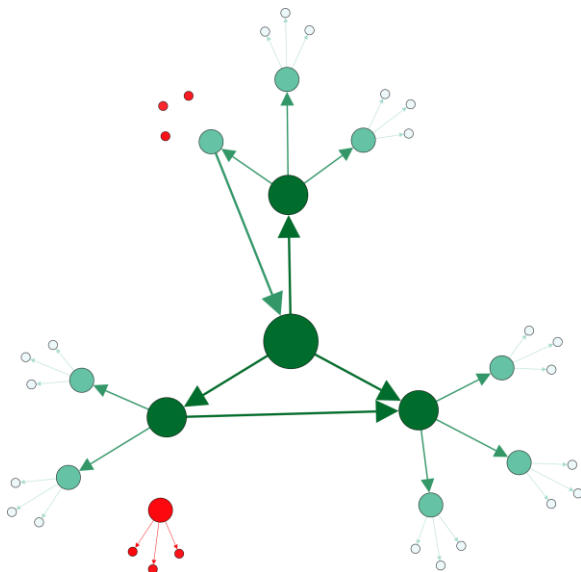
**EXAMPLE 1:** Genre tags compared to popularity.



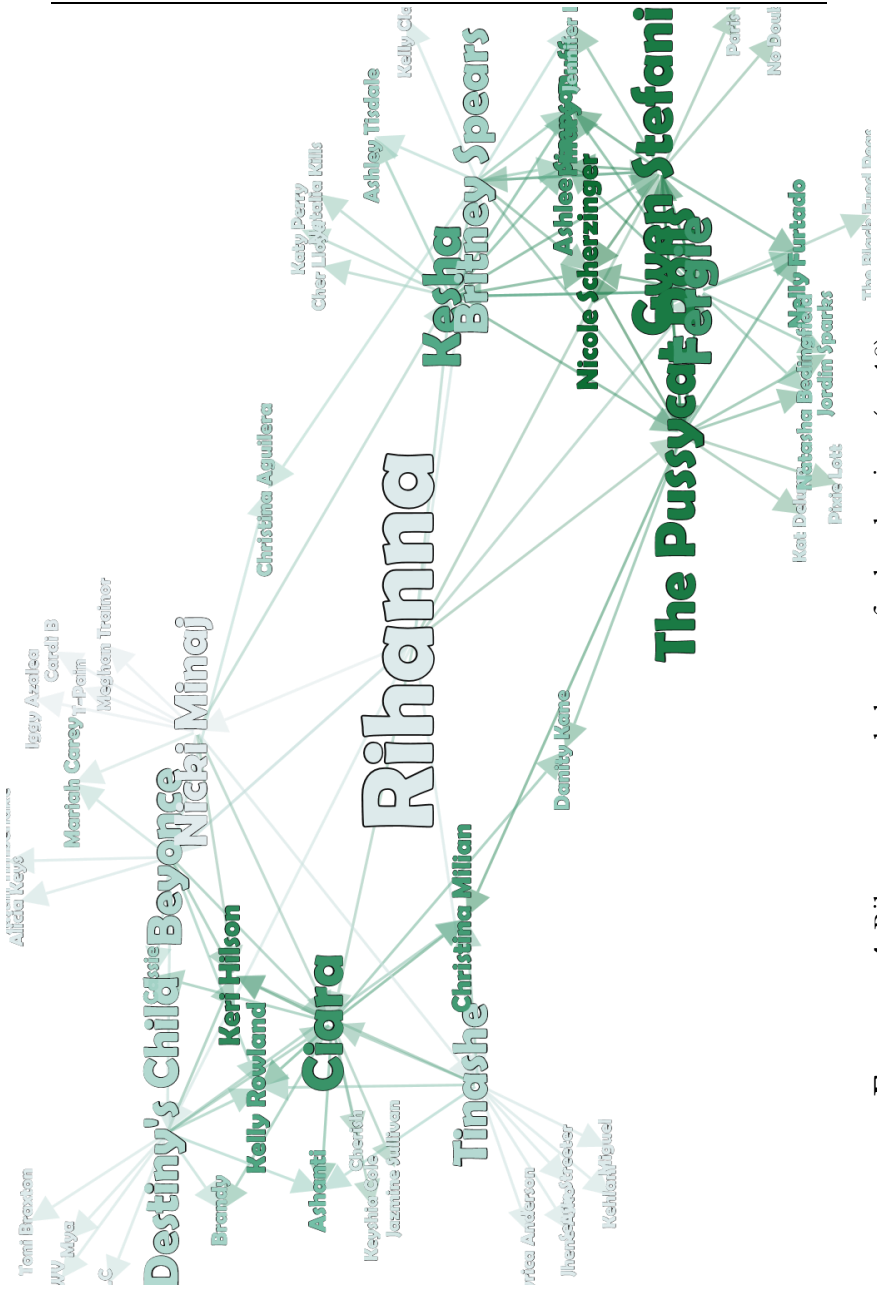
EXAMPLE 2: Genre tags compared to popularity, separated by meta-genre.



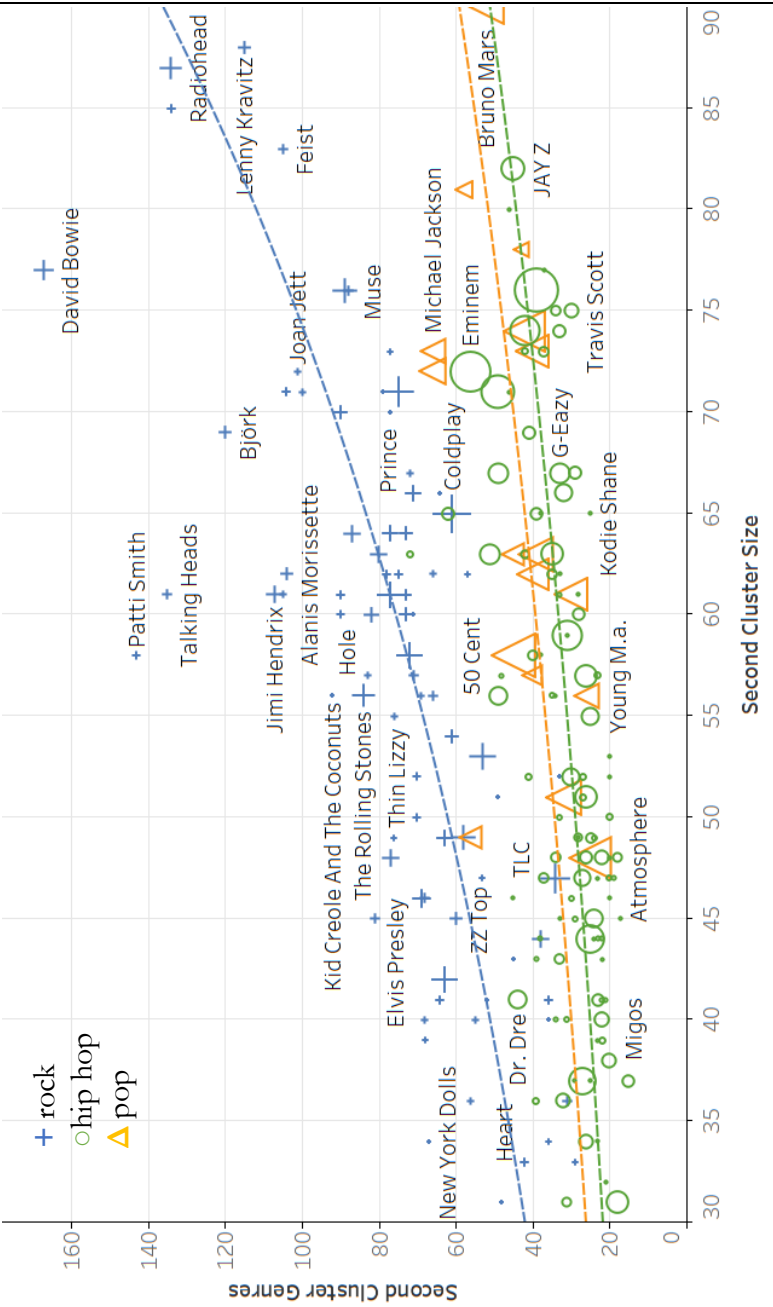
**EXAMPLE 3A:** Model first, second, and third clusters of related artists. ( $n=3$ )



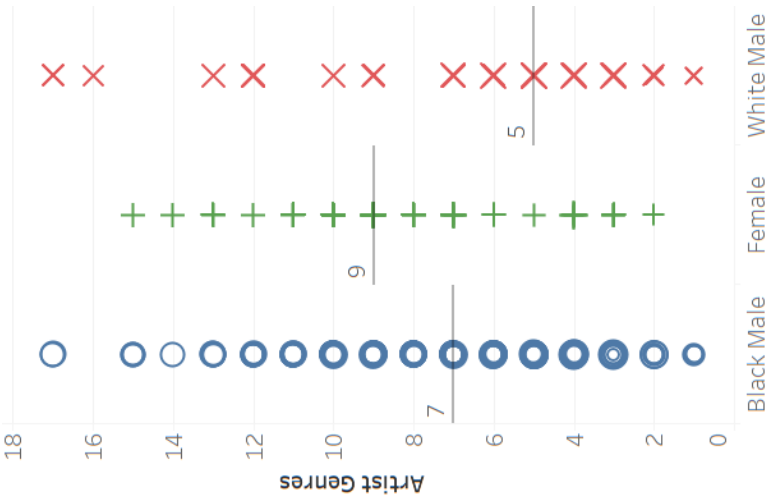
**EXAMPLE 3B:** Hypothetical potential clusters with related-artist overlap.



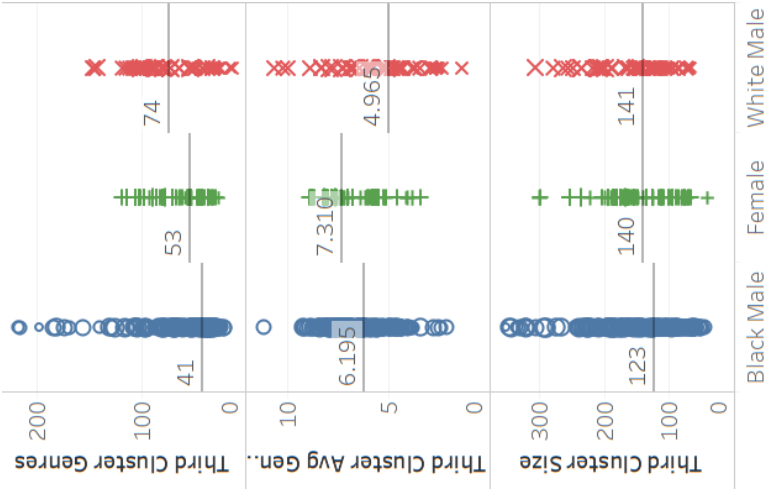
EXAMPLE 4: Rihaana second cluster of related artists. (n=10)



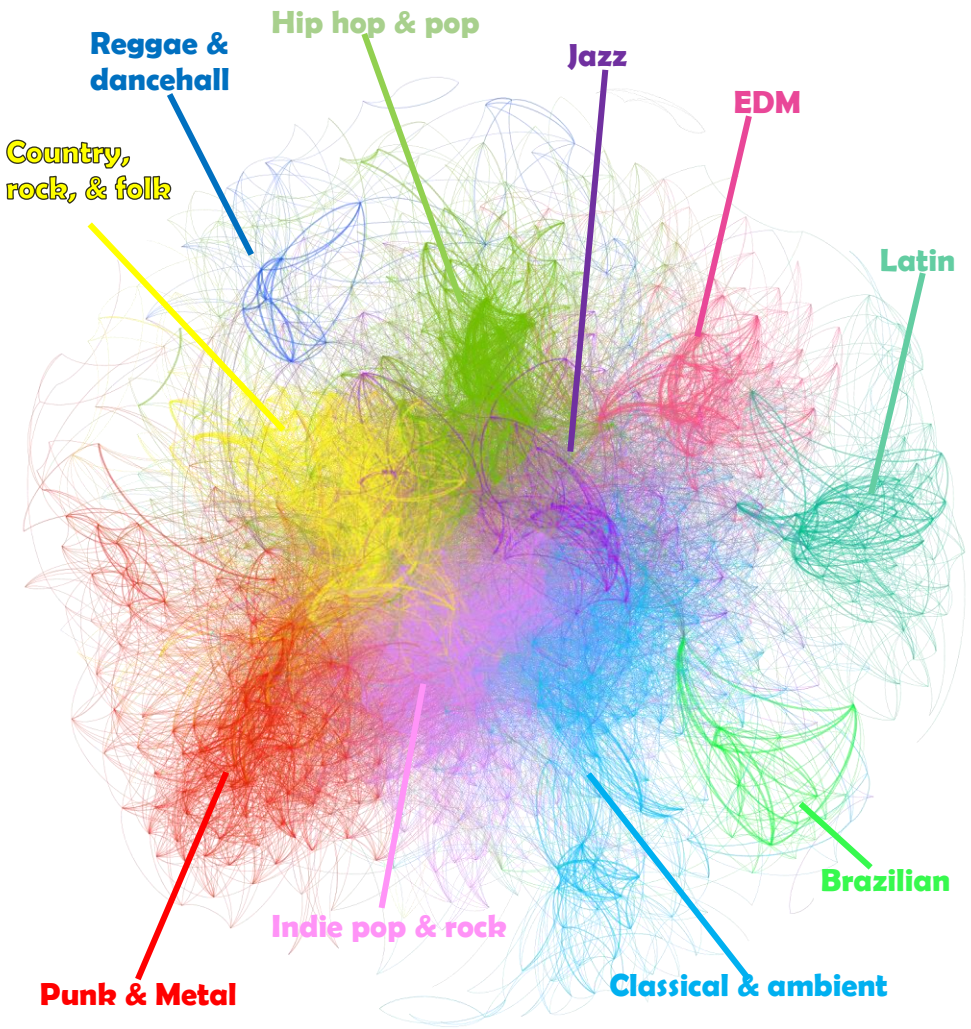
**EXAMPLE 5:** Second clusters of related artists, separated by meta-genre.



EXAMPLE 6A: Hip hop artist tags by demographics.

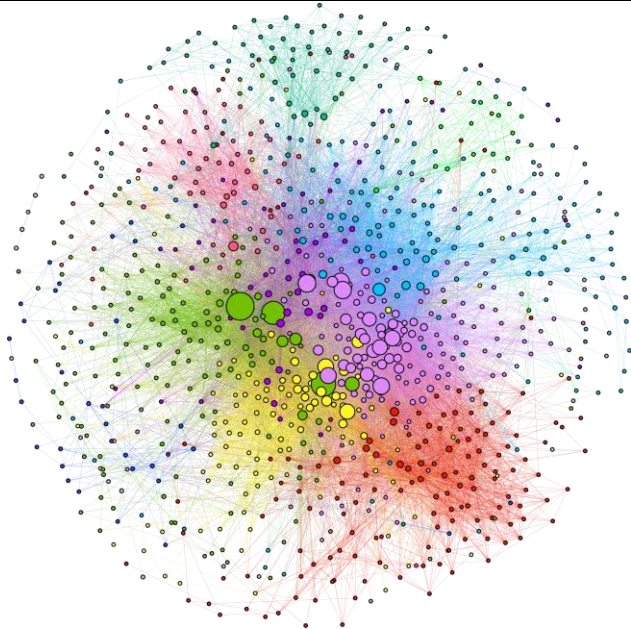
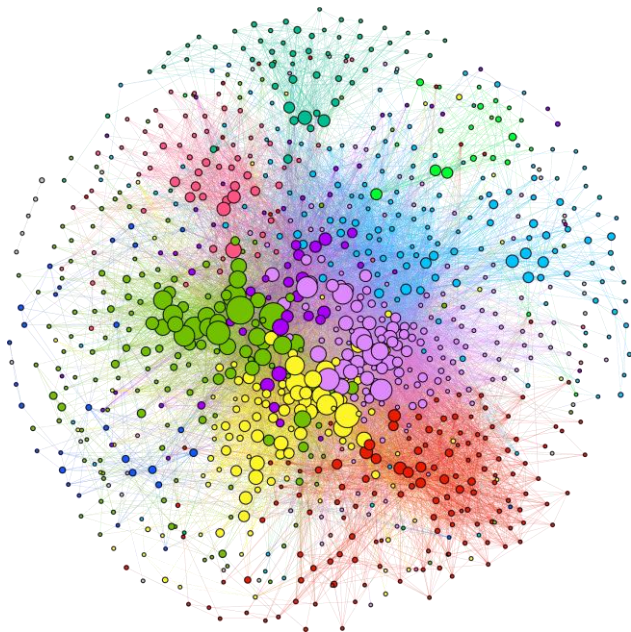


EXAMPLE 6B: Hip hop third cluster stats.



**EXAMPLE 7:** A map of 1005 genres that Spotify uses to describe 11553 artists in my corpus. Each node is a genre; nodes are connected if they are both used to describe a single artist. Colors present automatically generated communities based on network properties.



**EXAMPLE 8B:** Genre nodes sized by importance.**EXAMPLE 8A:** Genre nodes sized by frequency.



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## #genre

### ABSTRACT

“Genre is dead!” The sentiment resounds throughout current popular-music critic-fan and artist discourses, as developments like predictive algorithms, professional playlist curators, and ubiquitous access all throw wrenches into traditional machines of musical categorization. Recent sociological work on the increasing eclecticism of musical tastes appears to support this perspective, flattening conventional boundaries between kinds of music and classes of people.

But in this talk, I argue that such omnivorousness of musical proclivities doesn’t obviate popular music genres; instead, it hints at a deeper shift in genre ordering. To address this change, I explicitly theorize the work genre does in the smooth and striated spaces of popular music with a new concept I call “#genre.” Essentially, #genre captures the adjectival quality and in-between-ness of the seemingly-flattened stylistic world of popular music categories by exploring clusters of related artists, genre tags, and playlist constituency.

My methodology approaches this topological change by excavating the kinds of linear genre-fabric that Spotify weaves through its platform, investigating relational algorithms and proprietary metadata. To do so, I use original Python scripts to access and parse Spotify’s metadata, quantitatively assessing the various kinds of connections that the streaming service generates. I compare these results to demographic biases to problematize notions of a “post-genre” musical landscape, nudging genre discourses away from conventional phylogenetic cartographies or nested hierarchies and towards lateral and multiple models. My methodology and conception of #genre show how classification continues to guide all parts of the 21st-century popular music machine, demanding a renewed investigation.

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