Investigative Proposal

The music field is seemingly more diverse than literature. Song lyrics are to artists as poetry, articles, and novels are to authors. Lyrics can serve as a corpus that is deserving of further examination as music has increasingly evolved in the past century. However, it is a hypothesis that not all music is made equally. The song lyrics written by American and British artists must be analyzed to determine whether any similarities or differences in word choice or themes emerge. A theory to test is that modern mainstream “American” music tends to follow whatever is trendy like love, sex, partying, money and the like while the British music scene and some other world music is unique with more cryptic lyrics and unclear subject matter. The purpose of the investigation into various song lyrics is to compare and contrast them in order to see if the British and Americans share the same interests, value, ideas, and morals.

The intention is to create two corpuses with a total of at least one hundred four lyrics combined; one corpus per each national group. Each corpus will be comprised of at least fifty-two lyrics divided into parts, twenty-six male and twenty-six female artists’ lyrics. The main topic is to gain a better understanding of British and American people via the song lyrics they produce. A subtopic that can also be explored is whether males or females have a lot in common pertaining to lyrical content of their songs. To ascertain whether or not there are any notable differences between male and female artists the two have to be compared against each other. Furthermore, British female artists versus American female artists and British male artists versus American male artists have to be studied to see what themes are shared.
First on the agenda is to decide from which time periods or decade the music is to be selected. Second is to choose a music genre such as rap, hip-hop, R&B, pop, rock, alternative, etcetera from which the lyrics are to come from. Third, once the search for the lyrics is complete and the corpus for exploration is put together digital tools will be used to analyze them. Wordle can be used to find the Most Frequent Words in all of the lyrics, one by one, which would give a good starting point for investigating the question. If there is a pattern that becomes apparent or a word that reoccurs throughout the wordclouds for each song then a theme will have become evident. Once a theme is found Voyant can be used to chart, graph, or map the results by category (British female, American male, etc).

In the event that it is found through a MFW count that there is nothing shared between the groups then a specific theme such as love, sex, war, crime, drugs, death, partying, money will have to be searched for specially. After the results are made visual then inferences can be drawn easier about whether or not the music scenes of America and Britain are opposite or more or less are a match for each other. This topic deserves investigation because music is a form of creative self-expression and therefore is able to tell us a lot about different cultures and societies. Music in a sense is a reflection of reality as it can tell us a lot about the artists or nothing at all. In the instances where the artists are not truly representing reality this brings up another question: do Americans make music for the sake of sales, propaganda of “hot” lifestyles, and entertainment only while the British make music to be honest about their lives and what matters to them?

If any of these questions can be answered it will indicate that American and/or British society is in a manner false or else that one or both of these societies have some music model or standard that they have to follow. This is worth researching because it will most likely result in more questions than answers and be a foundation for further investigation.