

# Cantometrics Revisited

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## Poster Abstract

Cantometrics, literally “song measurements,” is a systematic music-analytical method to determine the styles of the world’s folk songs as characterized by musical and socio-cultural song features. Cantometrics was initially developed by Alan Lomax (1915-2002) and Victor Grauer (born 1937) during the 1960s. Statistical analyses of the folk song features were interpreted and related to the ethnographic atlas by George Murdock (1897-1985). Lomax’s Cantometrics project provided statistical evidence that the qualities embodied in folk songs are a reflection of everyday experiences, the division of labor, the status of women, child rearing, and the restrictiveness of sexual codes. The project confirmed geographic-historic traditions and their transplantations via migrations. Despite evidence of its reliability, some scholars have questioned parts of the methodology, such as the selection of the songs, the subjectivity in coding the songs, and the emphasis on performance style over song structure. Recent modifications of Cantometrics have either expanded the analyzed song style features or focused on the structural characteristics of songs; such attempts showed higher reliability and/or received positive reviews. Nevertheless, Cantometrics has nearly vanished in scholarly discussions as a fruitful analytical approach. This poster will inform about the Cantometrics approach, its features, and main research findings. This poster will also summarize recent modifications to Cantometrics that could make this approach a useful research tool for our current and next generation of scholars.

### References

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