

## Research Assessment # 7

**Date:** 10/29/2020

**Subject:** Frank Ocean's "Self Control"

**APA Citation:**

Frank Ocean. "Self Control." Frank Ocean, Los Angeles, California, 2016.

**Assessment:**

Frank Ocean's "Self Control" is an emotional account of Ocean's relationship and the trouble he is having getting over it. They both feel drawn to each other after the relationship has ended, so the name "Self Control" stems from their need to control themselves and stay separated. Ocean's repeated use of Major 7 and Minor 7 chords throughout the song elicits a feeling of uncertainty and loss, and the slow tempo makes listening to it a more intimate and emotional experience.

Self Control, which is played in the key of A-Flat, begins with only lyrics. This choice by Frank Ocean exposes the audience to the raw emotion of his singing, and allows them to experience the lyrics with no distraction. As the song progresses, Major and Minor 7 chords are strummed slowly on an acoustic guitar, meanwhile no drums or bass play in the background. Because of this, the song remains one dimensional, which usually is not a great idea. However, in this case it is a great choice. The simplicity of a guitar alongside a vocal track makes Ocean's listeners feel as if they are hearing him play it live, and the lack of clutter in the song creates a sense of sad intimacy, almost like he is playing the song entirely on his own. This feeling, however, is only made possible by Ocean's soulful and smooth voice, which is truly a gift for someone in the music world.

The guitar's chord progression during the majority of the song goes as follows: A-Flat Major 7, F Minor 7, B-Flat Minor 7, and finally E-Flat Major 7. This progression is played slowly and, in a sense, reluctantly. The strumming pattern sounds as if Ocean is forcing himself through the song. Perhaps this is because the emotions behind the song's subject matter

makes the song difficult for him to sing, like getting over this person isn't something he wants, but it is something he knows that he needs. The progression itself, which uses Major 7 and Minor 7 chords throughout, utilizes basic music theory principles to keep the listener hooked and bring about the intended emotion within them. The progression ends on the fifth chord of the A-Flat scale. In music, the fifth is often used to lead the ear into the first chord of the scale, which Frank Ocean does by following the fifth with the first, which in this case is A-Flat Major 7. This is an obvious example of applying theory principles into a musical context, and a successful one at that.

While the analysis of Frank Ocean's Self Control has helped me develop a new understanding of the use of the 7 chord as well as a solid example of using the fifth, I have come to the realization that his voice is something that I, unfortunately, do not have. I will have to compensate for this with hard work and making my lyrics impactful and music unique.