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Biased Perceptions of Women in the Music Industry



Samantha E. Matzerath & Saaid A. Mendoza, Ph.D. | Providence College

Introduction

Research Question

How are men and women's perceptions of a female musician biased by the gender of a formal critic?

Gender Bias in Music Industry

- Female musicians typically achieve less mainstream success and earn less money than men (Schmutz & Faupel, 2010)
- The USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2019) revealed a gender bias in music production credit for Top 100 Billboard songs:



Protecting the Status Quo

- Lack of Fit Model: Posits that performance expectations are biased by a perceived fit between one's attributes and their job requirements (Heilman, 2001)
- Given that the music industry is male dominated, women's abilities may be negatively stereotyped, hindering their potential for success
- Ambivalent Sexism: Proposes that hostile & benevolent feelings towards women produce sexism (Glick et al., 1997)
 - Hostile sexism characterizes women as inferior to legitimize men's social control
 - <u>Benevolent sexism</u> idealizes women in traditional female roles in a patronizing manner
 - Men in the music industry may be motivated to maintain their power and/or restrict women's paths to success in this realm

Study Overview & Hypotheses

- We examined how men and women would respond to a negative review of a female musician when the critic was male, female, or anonymous
 - H1: Participants would be more influenced by a negative review written by a male versus a female critic
 - H2: Men would respond more negatively to the female musician than women
 - H3: We expected participant gender to interact with the gender of the critic, such that men would respond most negatively to the musician after reading a male review

Methods

Participants & Design

- N = 133 participants (55% Female, 59% White, $M_{age} = 25.32$) participated online via Amazon's Mturk platform
- ❖ 3 (Critic Gender: Male v. Female v. Anonymous) x 2 (Participant Gender: Male v. Female) between-subjects factorial design

Procedure

- Participants listened to a pair of songs by female musician, Madison Cunningham
 - "Pin It Down"
 - "Song In My Head"
- After providing their first impression, participants read a negative review written by a male, female, or anonymous critic

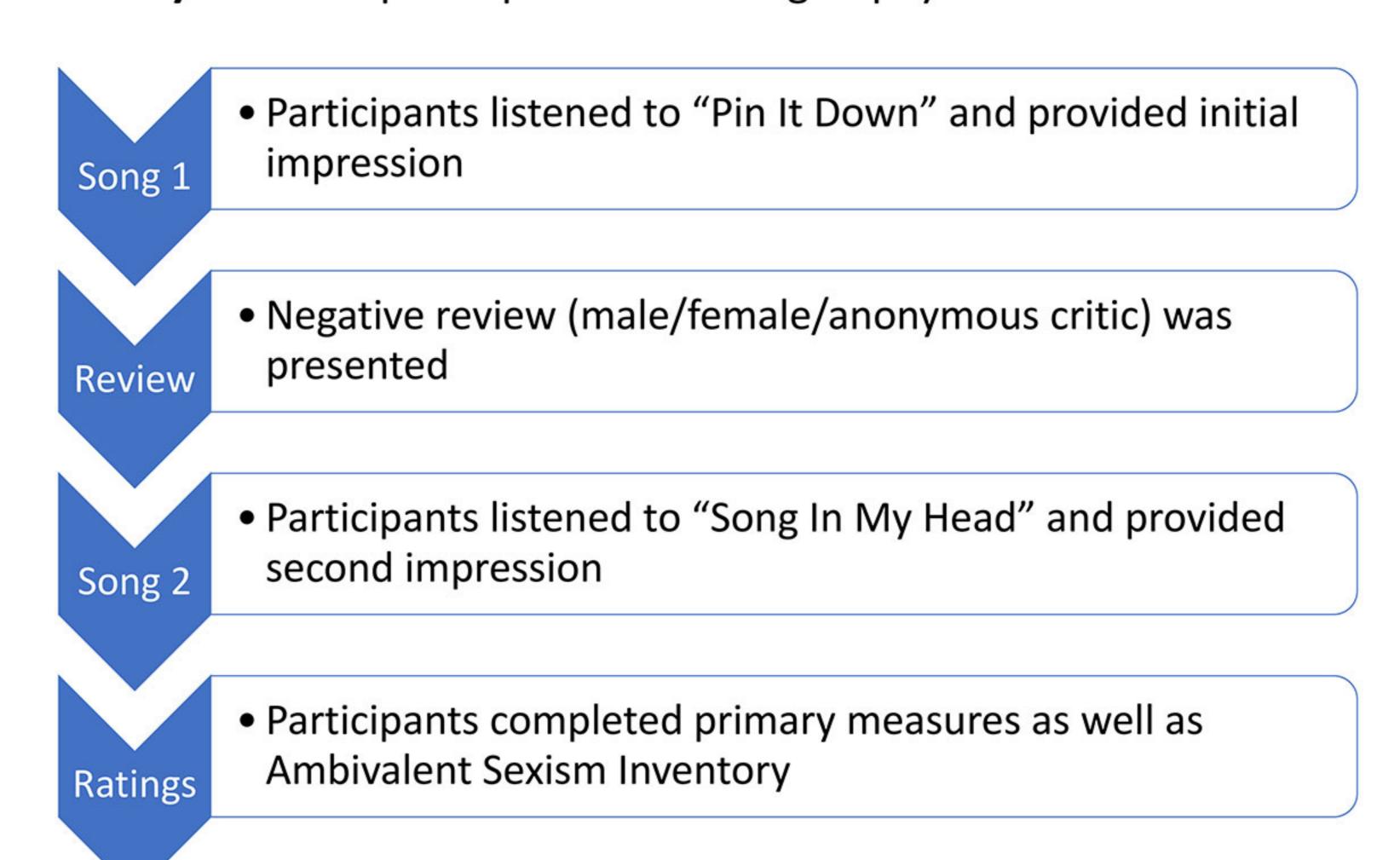
Music TV Movies Politics Culture Charts Pro Newsletters Sh By ANDREW GULDEN October 2, 2019 Madison Cunningham Misses the Mark on 'Who Are You Now' Though more prevalent with more years to their credit, neither talent nor wisdom can be exclusively tied to age. Sometimes artists come out of the gate fairly fully formed with enough of both to really make a statement. Fiona Apple certainly did, as well as Brandi Carlile. And now Madison Cunningham has attempted to do the same. At a brisk 22 years old, Cunningham boasts fairly average chops across the board — songwriting, singing, and playing. This is reasonable, considering she's only been playing guitar and writing songs for a few years. However, her mediocre talents do not merit overwhelming praise in any fashion. She has a soft, forgettable

Even on first listen, her album, Who Are You Now, feels instantly ordinary, from the repetitime signatures of "Pin It Down" to the unremarkable posturing of "Song In My Head." "Down", is a deceptively peppy tune about the familiar sense of deja vu that comes with too many failed relationships. Her vocals have undeservingly earned comparisons to Aimee N and there is a boring 90s alternative feel at the top of "Song In My Head", with the naked uncertainty and impatience of young adulthood to match. The song finishes with a guitar flurry that could use some practice.

Taken all together, the album is a wondrous let down, each block telling one part of the story that is this mediocre young artist's mundane life. Madison Cunningham is likely not worth the listen, as she lacks the courage a successful artist needs to push boundaries and make a true name for herself.

Primary Measures

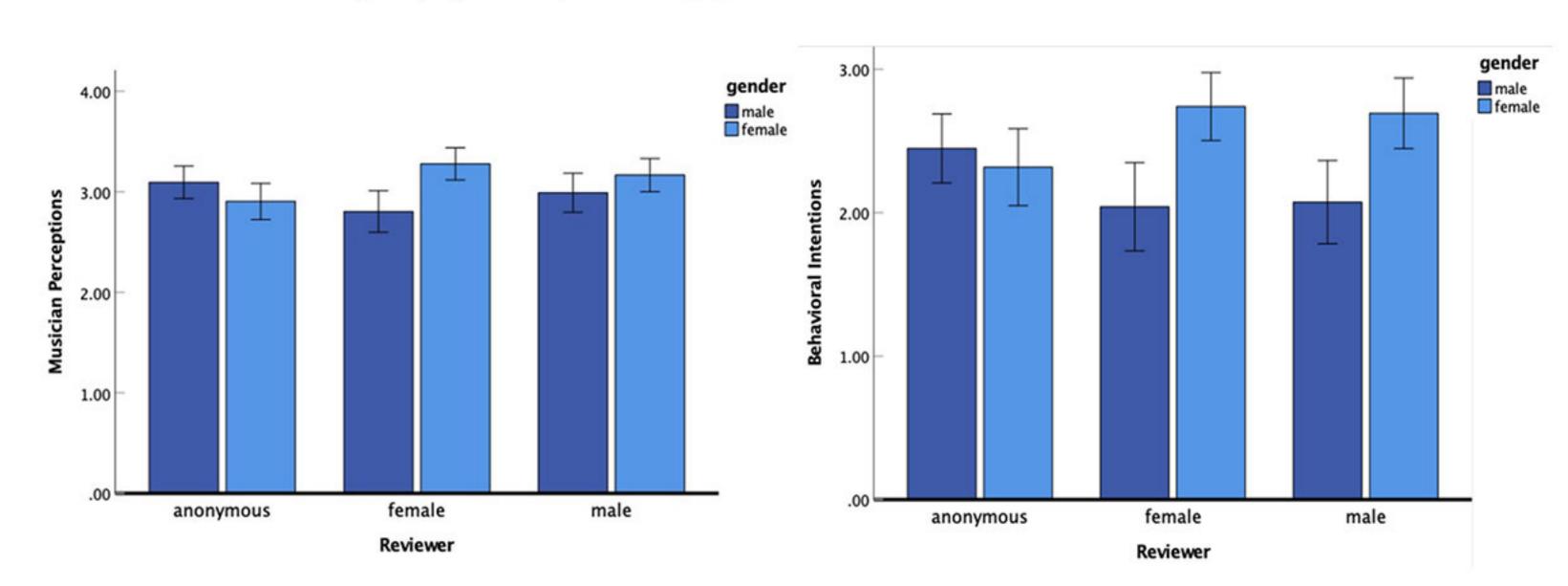
- ❖ Review influence: Difference score of Song 2 − Song 1 rating
- **Perceptions** (α = 0.89): Evaluations of musician's *songwriting*, *instrumentals*, and *voice* as well as her *talent* in these areas
- **Sehavioral** (α = 0.91): Likelihood of *listening to more songs by, recommending,* or attending a concert put on by this musician
- **Legitimacy** ($\alpha = 0.87$): Rated how worthy the musician was of respect, radio play, career success, and legitimacy
- ❖ Pay: Amount participant was willing to pay for a concert ticket



Results & Discussion

Primary Measures

- Review influence: No effects of gender or reviewer, Fs < 1.1, but a marginal interaction, F(2, 126) = 2.34, p = .10
 - Women were more susceptible to the negative reviews of the anonymous critic than men
- **Perceptions**: No effects of gender or reviewer, Fs < 1.1, nor interaction, F(2, 127) = 1.76, p = .18 (see Fig. 1)
- **Legitimacy:** No effects of gender or reviewer, Fs < 1.1, nor interaction, F(2, 127) = .71, p = .49



- **Behavioral:** Marginal effect of gender, F(1, 127) = 3.32, p = .07, but no effect of reviewer or interaction, Fs < 1.5 (see Fig. 2)
- **Pay**: Main effect of gender, F(1,127) = 7.02, p < .01, but no effect of reviewer, F < 1, or interaction, F(2, 127) = 2.16, p = .12

Correlations with Ambivalent Sexism

- Male participants: No correlations between the primary measures and hostile or benevolent sexism
- ❖ Female participants: All primary measures, except Review Influence, were positively correlated with hostile and benevolent sexism scores

** = p < .01	Benevolent	Perceptions	Legitimacy	Behavioral	Pay
Hostile	.70**	.44**	.42**	.55**	.52**
Benevolent	-	.64**	.60**	.60**	.65**

Implications & Future Directions

- Men and women may perceive female musicians similarly, but show different levels of engagement or support for them
- Women high on ambivalent sexism may have viewed the music genre or a career in entertainment as gender-typed
- Future studies might examine male typed music genres (e.g. rock or rap) to determine how women are perceived when violating gender norms