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Spring 4-29-2021

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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
 - Benevolent sexism 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

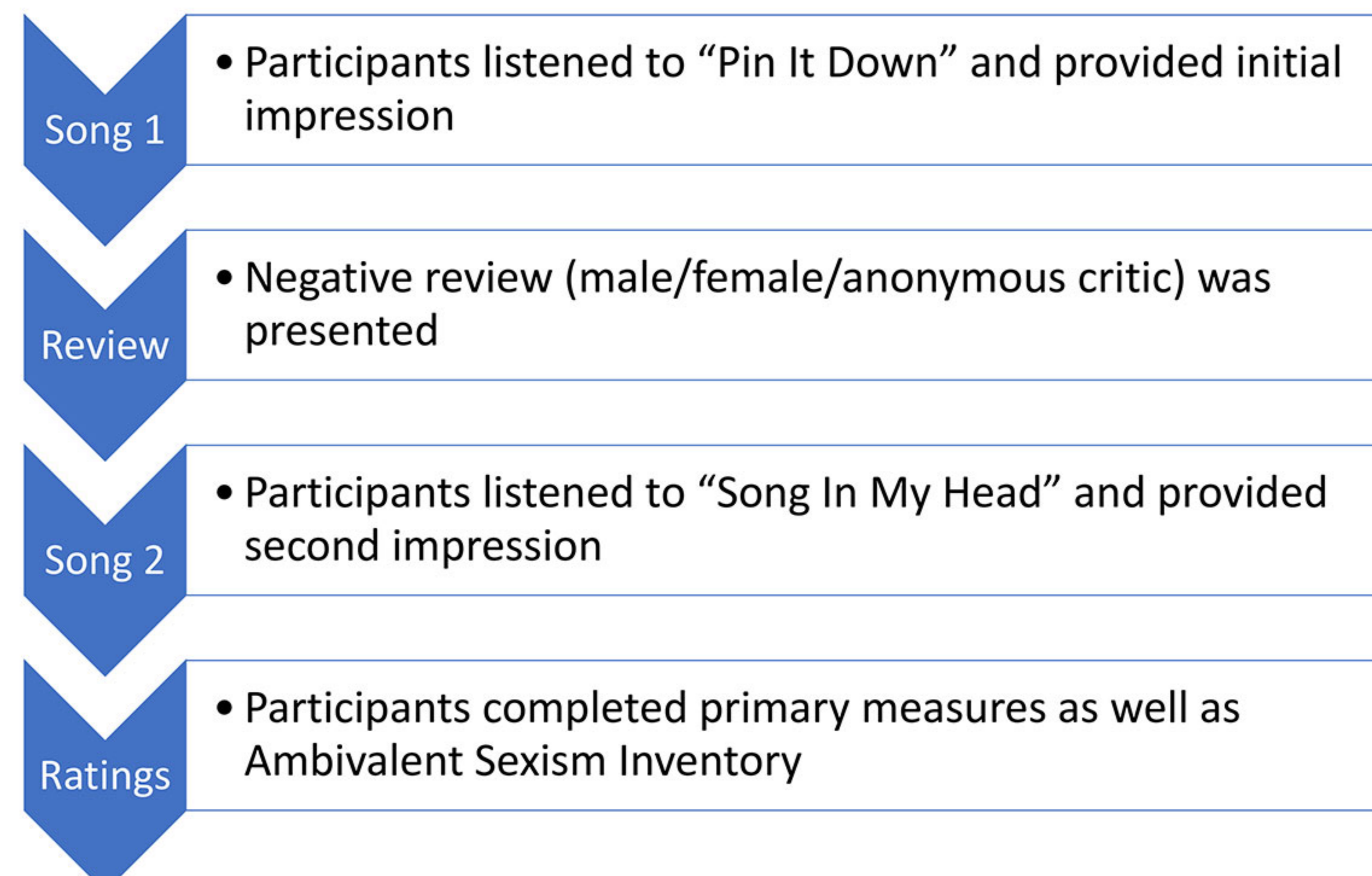
Procedure

- ❖ 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



Primary Measures

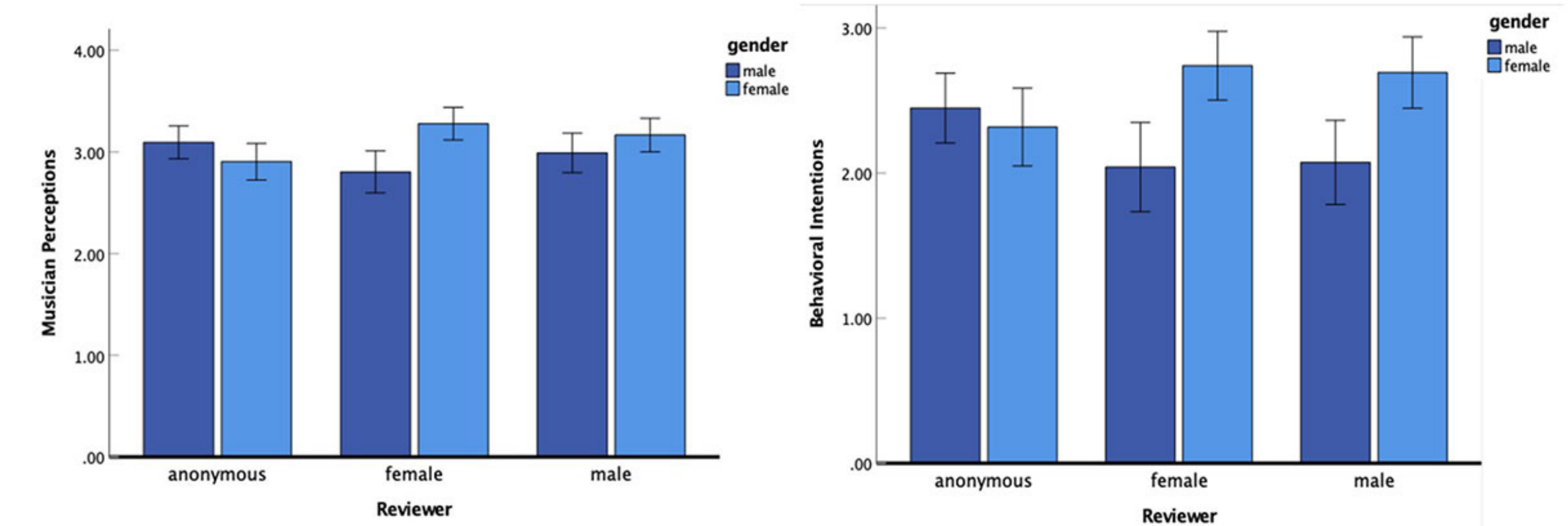
- ❖ **Review influence:** Difference score of *Song 2* – *Song 1* rating
- ❖ **Perceptions ($\alpha = 0.89$):** Evaluations of musician's *songwriting*, *instrumentals*, and *voice* as well as her *talent* in these areas
- ❖ **Behavioral ($\alpha = 0.91$):** Likelihood of *listening to more songs by*, *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, $F_s < 1.1$, 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, $F_s < 1.1$, nor interaction, $F(2, 127) = 1.76, p = .18$ (see Fig. 1)
- ❖ **Legitimacy:** No effects of gender or reviewer, $F_s < 1.1$, 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, $F_s < 1.5$ (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