

Ambivalent Sexism and Misogynistic Rap Music: Does Exposure to Eminem Increase Sexism?¹

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We evaluate the oft-repeated but typically untested claim that rap music encourages sexism. We randomly assigned participants to 1 of 3 conditions: no music, misogynistic rap music, and nonmisogynistic rap music. The first study (treated as a pilot; $N = 232$) weakly demonstrated the differential impact of exposure on male and female participants, but our measures of sexism were unreliable. We then conducted a second study ($N = 175$) employing well-validated (and more subtle) measures taken from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). While we replicated the weak differential impact of participants' sex, we also find that sexism increased after listening to nonmisogynistic rap music, especially among males. Implications for the debate about labeling and censoring rap music are discussed.

Past research has found that exposure to rap music promotes racial stereotyping (Rudman & Lee, 2002). Whites who watch violent rap videos, for example, generate more negative dispositional attributions of anonymous Black males' behaviors (Johnson, Trawalter, & Dovidio, 2000). Critics say rap music is harmful, however, not only because it promotes racial stereotyping, but also because it encourages males' anger and aggression toward women (Beatty, 2002; Keathley, 2002). The genre of "gangsta rap" in particular is blamed for normalizing misogynistic attitudes by celebrating the physical abuse of women (MacKinnon, 1993). Consequently, one explosive if unsubstantiated objection to rap is that "rape and rap just go together a little too well" (Brownsworth, 2001, p. 48; see also Hooks, 1993).

Our research asks a simple but important question: Does exposure to misogynistic rap music result in increased sexism among its listeners? At present, this question cannot be answered definitively. Certainly, there are strong but conflicting opinions among commentators. The outcry after the rapper Eminem was nominated for and subsequently awarded a Grammy in

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2001 for his album, *The Marshall Mathers LP*, for example, represents the position that rap music promotes models of masculinity that sustain and encourage misogyny (Armstrong, 2001; Beatty, 2002; Davis, 1998). More broadly, Keathley (2002) presented a normative critique of Eminem's music against the background of an assumed "entrenched institutionalized misogyny rather than as some phenomenon unique to Eminem or to rap as a genre" (p. 29). Opponents of censorship, on the other hand, find these accusations alarmist and question whether lyrics have a sinister linkage to behaviors (Dixon & Brooks, 2002). In their view, even rap that is potentially sexist might not have consequences beyond merely being offensive to some listeners (Dixon & Linz, 1997).

The handful of rigorous empirical studies in the literature are more helpful, but not all of them conclude that exposure to rap music causes an increase in sexism. Regardless, each of these empirical studies has important methodological limitations that require us to interpret their conclusions cautiously. Wester, Crown, Quatman, and Heesacker (1997), for example, failed to find that exposure to misogynistic rap results in significantly more negative attitudes toward women, although they did indicate that reading sexist lyrics increases males' beliefs that sexual relationships are exploitative. Yet, their sample was limited to 60 male undergraduates at a small, religious university, which also prevents them from studying in-group perceptions. Are women equally affected by exposure to misogynistic rap?

On the other hand, Barongan and Hall's (1995) data show that watching misogynistic rap videos increases males' sexually aggressive behavior; and Johnson, Adams, Ashburn, and Reed (1995) concluded that exposure to sexist but nonviolent rap leads young Black females to become more accepting of violence directed at them. Unfortunately, Barongan and Hall could not assess in-group perceptions because their study was limited to only 50 male participants, and it is unclear whether Johnson et al.'s findings apply to a broader audience because their study relied on a fairly small sample of African Americans. Finally, both of these latter studies produced significant exposure effects by manipulating visual, rather than auditory stimuli. Studies have indicated that visual stimuli produce different results than do auditory stimuli (Druckman, 2003).

Hypotheses

Despite the lack of consensus and the uncertain applicability of earlier studies, social cognitive theories of priming and stereotype activation strongly support the expectation that exposure to misogynistic lyrics increases sexist reactions (Devine, 1989; Dunning & Sherman, 1997; Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Past research, however, has warned against expecting to find a simple relationship between exposure to misogynistic rap music and listeners' levels of sexism. Instead, prominent models of information processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986) and studies on the potentially conditional nature of automatic stereotype activation (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991) have predicted that listeners' sex will mediate their reactions to sexist rap lyrics. Males will be more susceptible to priming effects of misogynistic rap because they will be less motivated than will women to thoughtfully process the content of the lyrics. It is possible, however, that the whole genre of rap is stereotyped and categorized in memory as sexist. This possibility, suggested by the cognitive theory of spreading activation (Anderson, 1983), would predict that exposure to even nonmisogynistic rap music affects levels of sexism.

Stereotype Priming and Category Activation

Hypothesis 1. Exposure to misogynistic music will result in greater levels of expressed sexism.

Stereotype priming refers to the process of administering some form of stimulus that activates group category information stored in memory. If theoretically associated concepts (e.g., negative racial stereotypes) are found to be more accessible following exposure to a member of that racial group, for instance, this is taken to be evidence that a mental representation of the prime (i.e., an African American) has been activated in memory. More importantly, priming effects are usually assumed to be evidence of not just what the person knows about the social category, but also what the person thinks about members of that social category (Kawakami, Dion, & Dovidio, 1998). Thus, mere exposure to a solitary member of a social category is enough to activate racial stereotypes about a target group (Bargh, 1997; Henderson-King & Nisbett, 1996), and bigoted Whites' recognition of negative adjectives such as "lazy" and "violent" is facilitated by exposure to a solo African American's face (Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995).

Some debate remains about whether stereotype activation is unavoidable (Blair & Banaji, 1996), but it appears that stereotype activation is very difficult to control, even among the most egalitarian (Bargh, 1999). Stereotype application is particularly likely to occur after activation without the motivation to inhibit it. Consequently, we predict that sexism will increase after exposure to misogynistic rap because sexism is widely endorsed and lyrical primes will make it more accessible in memory.

Spreading Activation

Hypothesis 2. Exposure to nonmisogynistic rap music will result in increased sexism.

We draw upon the theory of spreading activation and test whether exposure to nonmisogynistic rap will increase listeners' sexism. Theories of spreading activation are used to explain both the encoding and retrieval of information in memory (Anderson, 1983). According to the basic framework, memory is represented as interconnected concepts (or nodes) that vary in the strength of their associations. Activating one memory, therefore, results in the spreading activation of other related memories. Memories that are strongly related (e.g., "chocolate" and "ice cream") are both activated when another, related memory is primed (e.g., "dessert").

Spreading activation explains that if memories of rap music in general are associated with misogyny—and there is every reason to believe that this might occur since, objectively, rap is disproportionately violent and sexist (Armstrong, 2001)—then exposure to any rap song is capable of spontaneously activating sexism. In other words, implicitly or explicitly sexist language and imagery are not required for sexism to be activated after exposure to music so long as sexism and the type of music are already linked together in memory.

A relevant example of how this works in practice comes from a study conducted by St. Lawrence and Joyner (1991). They found that study participants reported holding more sexist attitudes after hearing Christian heavy-metal songs, despite their lack of misogynistic lyrics. Presumably, the genre of heavy metal was understood to be anti-female. Therefore, exposure to this type of music was able to prime cultural values associated with it, irrespective of actual lyrical content.

Studies on racial prejudice have suggested that the effects of spreading activation might be especially powerful when it comes to priming sexism. Ordinarily, people are aware that endorsing sexism might not be socially acceptable, yet when they are exposed to rap songs devoid of sexist lyrics, most listeners would be unaware of the need to control their public responses, since the particular lyrics are indeed not chauvinistic (for a parallel situation about the expression of racial attitudes, see Kuklinski & Cobb, 1998).

Participants' Sex as a Moderator of Attitude Change

Hypothesis 3. Exposure to misogynistic rap music will result in increased sexism for males and reduced sexism for females.

Past research has found a close relationship between stereotype activation and application, except when individuals are motivated to control their reactions to the stimuli (Devine, 1989), or when they have particular information-processing goals (e.g., accuracy) that interrupt the smooth transition from activation to application (Fiske, 1989). In situations in which individuals want

to maintain a nonsexist self-image, for example, sex stereotype application is more easily inhibited (Devine & Monteith, 1999). Although the motivation to control sex stereotype activation or application after exposure to misogynistic rap music is not expected to be great, the literature on information processing suggests that participants' sex will mediate reactions to misogynistic rap because women will be more motivated to control their sexist reactions.

The idea that sex will mediate exposure effects is clearly implied by anecdotal evidence identifying young males as especially vulnerable to the message content of rap. More importantly, it is derived from Petty and Cacioppo's (1981, 1986) distinction between central and peripheral information processing. According to their elaboration likelihood model of attitude change, some individuals attempt to understand incoming information more thoroughly, or centrally, while most people, most of the time, are less attentive and just peripherally engaged. The type of person and the context of the situation help predict which type of information processing mode will predominate and whether or not attitudes are expected to change. In situations in which motivation is high (or time is not scarce), individuals are expected to more carefully consider incoming information.

The implication of this model of attitude change is that males' sexism will increase, while females' will decrease after listening to misogynistic rap lyrics. Since males are more likely to process misogynistic lyrics peripherally, their endorsement of sexist attitudes is facilitated by exposure because lyrics prime their latent sexist attitudes unimpeded by the recognition that it is occurring or that it might be wrong. Lacking comparable motivation to process sexist lyrical content more rigorously, men are less likely (and less able) to counterargue against sexist beliefs activated automatically by exposure to the lyrics (Fazio et al., 1995). Women, however, are more likely to process the misogynistic lyrics centrally and to reject them because women are the targets of misogynistic rap lyrics. The process is to "just say no" to sexism (Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, & Russin, 2000).

Study 1: Pilot Study

Method

Participants

We initiated Study 1 in Fall 2001, collecting data on 232 undergraduate participants (125 male, 107 female). Students took part in the study in exchange for partial fulfillment of research participation requirements. Similar to the demographics of the campus population, a majority of the study participants were male (54%) and White (77%).

Design and Procedure

We conducted a between-subjects experimental design by randomly assigning participants to one of three conditions: (a) no music (control group); (b) nonmisogynistic rap; and (c) misogynistic rap. Participants entered a classroom and listened to music or no music, and afterward responded to questions that measured levels of sexism. After completing the survey, participants were debriefed and told the true purpose of the experiment.³

Materials

Exposure to misogynistic rap was administered by playing the song, *Kill You*, by rapper Eminem. To varying degrees throughout the song, Eminem describes and seemingly endorses hostility and violence toward women. For our nonmisogynistic rap, we used a Beastie Boys' song called *Sabotage*. This song was chosen because the rappers are male and White, like Eminem, and their song has an equally aggressive rhythm that is nevertheless devoid of overt sexism. In other words, the relevant characteristics of the two songs are nearly identical, with the sole exception of the presence or absence of sexist lyrics.⁴

Measures

To measure participants' levels of sexism, we asked them to evaluate five statements about gender-stereotypical or gender-atypical behaviors of women, such as "Women rather than men are most likely to stay home and raise children." Each statement evaluated the behaviors on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (*very bad thing*) to 10 (*very good thing*). The questions are presented in the Appendix.

Results

Measurement Reliability

Factor analysis indicates that we measured two dimensions of sexism. According to the theory of ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), our

³We were concerned that social desirability effects would bias responses, so immediately after listening (or not listening) to the music, participants were asked what they thought about potential government regulations and censorship. After participants completed this brief survey about censorship and turned it in, they were told that a new, unrelated study on decision-making skills would begin. This "second" study actually measured participants' levels of sexism.

⁴The lyrics to both songs are available upon request from the authors.

measures of sexism captured the distinction between hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). Two of our items loaded significantly on BS, and the other three loaded significantly on HS. Therefore, we created two additive scales measuring each dimension of sexism. Further analyses, however, indicate that both scales were only marginally reliable (BS: $M = 10.73$, $SD = 3.84$, $\alpha = .48$; HS: $M = 12.34$, $SD = 5.05$, $\alpha = .59$). Consequently, we do not delve too deeply into our findings from this study.

Exposure to Rap Music

We used 2×3 ANOVAs (Participant Sex \times Music Condition: control vs. Beastie Boys vs. Eminem) to test our hypotheses. According to the results, the music condition did not affect either type of sexism, but participants' sex significantly affected both BS and HS: BS, $F(1, 231) = 25.53$, $p < .01$; HS, $F(1, 231) = 18.89$, $p < .01$. An examination of the means for BS and HS reveal that, as would be expected, males' scores were significantly higher (BS: $M_s = 11.8$ vs. 9.49 ; HS: $M_s = 21.95$ vs. 19.15). The interaction between participant sex and exposure to rap (Hypothesis 3), however, was insignificant for both BS ($p = .24$) and HS ($p = .35$).

It is possible that the trichotomous coding of the music condition in the ANOVAs obscures more limited exposure effects that might become apparent if the two rap conditions were each compared directly to the control group or to each other. Therefore, we disaggregated the music treatment variable into all three possible dichotomous comparisons and conducted a series of 2×2 pairwise comparisons of participant sex: (a) Eminem versus the control group; (b) the Beastie Boys versus the control group; and (c) Eminem versus the Beastie Boys. The means for BS and HS in these comparisons (by sex) are presented in Table 1.

In all comparisons, we replicated the significant effects of participant sex on both BS and HS, but we failed to find significant main effects for rap music on sexism. However, we did find evidence that was weakly supportive of Hypothesis 3. When we compared exposure to misogynistic rap directly to the control group, the interaction between rap and participant sex was marginally significant for BS (control vs. Eminem: male $M_s = 11.10$ vs. 12.24 ; female $M_s = 9.89$ vs. 9.20), $F(1, 155) = 2.25$, $p = .13$, although it was insignificant for HS ($p = .75$). The interaction between participant sex and nonmisogynistic rap, however, was insignificant for both BS ($p < .20$) and HS ($p < .30$).

Finally, when the control group is excluded and the two kinds of rap are compared directly to each other, participant sex weakly mediated HS, $F(1, 148) = 2.01$, $p = .16$, but it no longer mediated BS ($p = .90$). According to the means shown in Table 1, the interaction was caused by males scoring higher

Table 1

BS and HS Scores by Experimental Condition and Participant Sex: Pilot Study

	Male				Female			
	BS		HS		BS		HS	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Control group	11.10	3.63	22.08	4.87	9.86	3.95	18.86	5.55
Nonmisogynistic rap	12.24	3.86	21.29	6.05	9.36	3.43	19.79	4.36
Misogynistic rap	12.23	3.95	22.33	4.34	9.20	3.17	18.60	3.91
Overall	11.80	3.81	21.95	5.03	9.49	3.52	19.15	4.66

Note. BS = benevolent sexism; HS = hostile sexism. Cell size range: $N = 30\text{--}48$.

on HS in the Eminem condition compared to the Beastie Boys condition ($M_s = 21.29$ vs. 22.33), while females' scores were lower in the Eminem condition ($M_s = 19.79$ vs. 18.60).

Discussion

Exposure to rap—whether it was misogynistic or nonmisogynistic—did not directly affect either BS or HS (Hypotheses 1 and 2). Instead, participant sex sometimes moderately mediated exposure effects (Hypothesis 3). Differential exposure effects were most powerful for BS, when Eminem was compared directly to the control group; and for HS, when Eminem was compared directly to the Beastie Boys. In both comparisons, males became more sexist and females became less sexist after exposure to misogynistic rap. These results, however, are also based on somewhat unreliable measures of sexism, so we prefer to emphasize our second study using validated measures of sexism.

Study 2

Method

Participants

Study 2 took place in Spring 2002. The participants agreed to take part in the study in exchange for partial fulfillment of research participation

requirements. We collected data on 175 undergraduates (93 male, 82 female) from the same school under identical experimental conditions. Most participants, as in the pilot study, were male (53%) and White (78%).

Design and Procedure

We replicated the research design and procedure as reported for Study 1, but we measured sexism more rigorously using validated measures of ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). According to Glick and Fiske (1996; Glick et al., 2000), sexism is ambivalent because it consists of two (positively correlated) dimensions: HS and BS. Hostile sexism is akin to prejudice that is traditionally understood as an antipathy (Allport, 1954). One HS measure, for example, asks about agreement/disagreement with the claim that “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.”

Conversely, BS is more like paternalism. According to Glick et al. (2000), BS is “a subjectively positive orientation of protection, idealization, and affection directed toward women” (p. 763). A sample measure of BS asks whether one agrees that “Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.” In sum, whereas HS ideologically justifies male superiority and targets women who threaten male dominance, BS combines objectively inferior treatment of women with overtly positive assessments of (most) women.

Materials

We used the same two songs, *Kill You* and *Sabotage*, as stimulus materials for misogynistic and nonmisogynistic rap. These songs vary in their levels of overt sexism, but are nearly identical in all other aspects regarding the performers and the music.

Measures

Participants in the main study responded to a recommended 22-item battery measuring ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Exactly half of the items measured BS, while the other half measured HS. Answers to each question were recorded on a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).⁵

⁵We also measured several demographic variables that are theoretically predictive of sexism scores, and planned to use them as covariates. However, their inclusion did not affect our substantive findings or contribute to our conclusions, so they were excluded.

Results

Measurement Reliability

Factor and reliability analyses of participants' responses confirm the reliable measurement of two dimensions of ambivalent sexism: BS and HS. Therefore, we combined the appropriate items into two additive indexes (HS: $M = 25.46$, $SD = 10.38$, $\alpha = .77$; BS: $M = 27.23$, $SD = 9.71$, $\alpha = .84$).⁶

Exposure to Rap Music

We used 2×3 ANOVAs (Participant Sex \times Music Condition: control vs. Beastie Boys vs. Eminem) to examine exposure effects. As we found in the pilot study, participant sex affected both BS, $F(1, 175) = 7.31$, $p < .01$; and HS, $F(1, 175) = 50.52$, $p < .01$. Unlike Study 1, however, we also find significant main effects for exposure to rap music on HS, $F(1, 175) = 2.84$, $p = .06$; and a marginally significant interaction effect between participant sex and exposure to rap for BS, $F(1, 175) = 2.23$, $p = .11$ (the interaction was insignificant for HS, $p < .50$). While the ANOVA for HS reveals a main effect for exposure to rap and the ANOVA for BS indicates that the difference between how males and females responded to exposure to rap approaches significance, the coding of the music condition in these analyses precludes us from identifying whether this effect was caused by Eminem or the Beastie Boys, or both.

We introduce these detailed analyses by presenting participants' mean BS and HS scores (by sex and experimental condition) in Table 2. As indicated previously, the data show significantly higher sexism scores in general for males than for females (BS: $M_s = 26.25$ vs. 22.38 , $p < .01$; HS: $M_s = 30.12$ vs. 20.18 , $p < .01$). More importantly, they reveal consistently higher sexism scores for males after exposure to both kinds of rap.

Conversely, females' sexism scores varied as a function of the type of rap and the measure of sexism. Females' sexism increased only when measured as BS and only if exposure to nonmisogynistic rap is considered. Otherwise, females' sexism declined or remained constant following exposure to rap. For clarity, we also present these effects visually in Figure 1. The figure illustrates the complex pattern of the results, as participants' reactions appear to be mediated by interactions between type of rap, type of sexism, and sex.

⁶Only one item measuring BS did not load significantly on either dimension of sexism, so it was excluded from the BS scale. Our results are unaffected by this coding decision.

Table 2

BS and HS Scores by Experimental Condition and Participant Sex: Study 2

	Male				Female			
	BS		HS		BS		HS	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Control group	23.46	8.72	27.17	7.55	21.97	9.86	21.30	10.54
Nonmisogynistic rap	27.90	7.73	32.92	8.49	25.31	8.98	21.32	8.17
Misogynistic rap	28.58	8.22	29.69	7.22	20.63	8.86	18.23	9.57
Overall	26.25	8.77	30.12	8.72	22.38	9.35	20.18	9.60

Note. BS = benevolent sexism; HS = hostile sexism. Cell size range: N = 22–33.

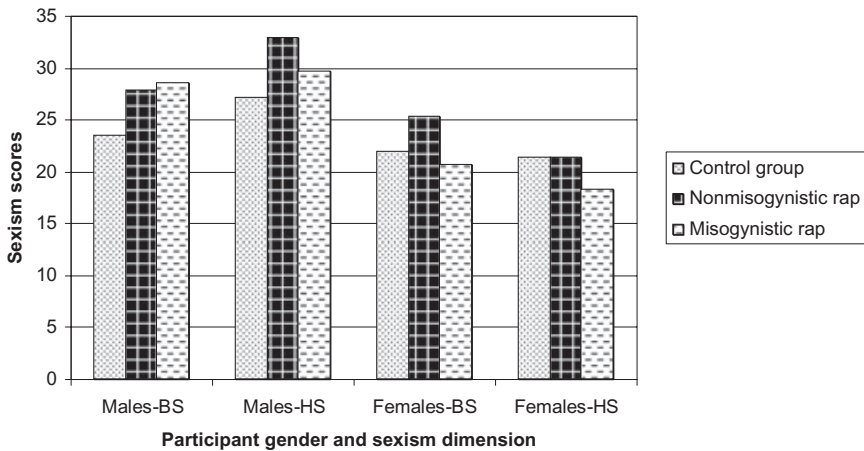


Figure 1. Exposure to misogynistic rap music and hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent (BS) sexism by gender.

Exposure Effects Revisited: Hypotheses 1 and 2

To test whether these exposure effects by condition and sex are significant, we conducted a series of 2 × 2 ANOVAs in which we disaggregated the music treatment variable into all three possible dichotomous comparisons: (a) Eminem versus the control group; (b) the Beastie Boys versus the control group; and (c) Eminem versus the Beastie Boys. Misogynistic rap did not

have a main effect on either BS or HS in comparison with the control group. However, nonmisogynistic rap was weakly significant in comparison to the control group for both kinds of sexism: BS, $F(1, 117) = 3.40, p < .10$; HS: $F(1, 117) = 3.01, p < .10$. In addition, the main effects of nonmisogynistic rap on HS (but not BS) were replicated when it was compared directly to misogynistic rap, $F(1, 113) = 5.71, p < .05$ ($M_s = 28.67$ vs. 23.33). We conclude that the main effect of exposure to rap music on HS in the original 2×3 ANOVA was a result of listening to nonmisogynistic rap, rather than Eminem.

Mediating Effects Revisited: Hypothesis 3

We identified three instances in which exposure was significantly mediated by participant sex. One time was for BS, when comparing Eminem to the control group, $F(1, 120) = 3.17, p = .08$ (male $M_s = 23.81$ vs. 28.29 ; female $M_s = 21.97$ vs. 20.63); another time was for HS, when comparing the Beastie Boys to the control group, $F(1, 117) = 2.98, p = .09$ (male $M_s = 27.72$ vs. 33.58 ; female $M_s = 21.30$ vs. 21.32); and a third time was for BS, when comparing Eminem to the Beastie Boys, $F(1, 113) = 3.72, p = .05$ (male $M_s = 26.79$ vs. 28.29 ; female $M_s = 25.32$ vs. 20.63). Overall, these findings indicate that participant sex most strongly mediated reactions to misogynistic rap, at least for BS, but also that sex mediated reactions to nonmisogynistic rap in the case of HS.

Discussion

Increased sexism was predicted to occur after exposure to misogynistic and perhaps nonmisogynistic rap. There was minimal evidence that misogynistic rap directly affected sexism, but participants' HS and BS significantly increased after exposure to nonmisogynistic rap, especially among males. Increased sexism after exposure to nonmisogynistic rap, but not misogynistic rap, is both surprising and troubling because the music that was encountered was actually devoid of sexist lyrics. Nevertheless, the main effect of exposure to the Beastie Boys on sexism appears to be driven primarily by the reactions of male participants. While males' BS and HS increased after exposure, only females' BS increased. This suggests the need to explore further the prevalence of different dimensions of sexism in the lyrical content of rap.

Evidence also emerged to support Hypothesis 3 about mediated exposure effects, although the bulk of it is based on the effects of exposure to misogynistic music and then only for BS. We find that males' BS increased after exposure to Eminem, for example, but that females' BS decreased. In fact, the

differential impact of misogynistic rap on the two sexes largely explains why we did not find a main effect for exposure to Eminem (compared to the control group). The mean for BS among the sample as a whole did not vary much across experimental conditions because the increase in males' sexism was partially canceled out by the decrease in females' sexism. Thus, we find little reason to celebrate the lack of main effects for exposure to misogynistic rap.

However normatively displeasing these findings may be as a whole, they require further context. One important contextual factor to consider is that the magnitudes of these effects were always rather marginal. We did not report the eta-squared statistic in the previously mentioned analyses, but it never surpassed .06 for any of the main effects of rap or for any of the interactions between rap and participant sex. In addition, we often relied on criteria for statistical significance that differs from the conventional one of $p < .05$. In other words, the overwhelming majority of participants' sexist attitudes cannot be explained by our measures of exposure to rap.

General Discussion

Implications for General Criticisms of Misogynistic Rap

The results of this research may be viewed as a partial victory for popular critics of misogynistic rap music. As many critics have suspected, misogynistic rap primes more sexist attitudes in males. Most interestingly, it also primes more defensive attitudes in females. Ironically, then, the response of our female participants to Eminem's *Kill You* provides some support for the argument that his lyrics are so absurd that his Slim Shady character essentially becomes a parody of unacceptable behavior (Doherty, 2000; Ross & Saxe, 2001). A caveat is that knowledgeable participants might have been influenced as much by the reputation of the rappers as they were by the content of the lyrics. The logic here is that criticism of a rapper as sexist becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Another noteworthy finding—that exposure to nonmisogynistic lyrics also produced greater sexist attitudes—raises more troubling questions. Perhaps an earlier Beastie Boys song (i.e., *Girls*) was known to study participants, and this past song is what primed participants' sexism. Perhaps aggressive-sounding beats and not the lyrics were responsible for males' greater endorsement of sexist attitudes. Or, as we suggested, the entire genre of rap might be categorized in memory as sexist. Perversely, this latter possibility could mean that nonsexist rap is actually more likely to affect listeners' sexism because latent sexism is automatically activated by exposure,

yet listeners are unaware of the need to self-monitor their reactions. This would explain why females' BS scores also increased after listening to non-misogynistic rap.

Implications for Government Censorship of Rap Music

Our finding that rap music can (at least temporarily) increase sexist attitudes is cause for concern, but this concern should not be mistaken as justification for an alarmist reaction. First, the magnitudes of the exposure effects on sexism in this study were modest, so perhaps, at worst, exposure to rap matters only on the margins. Second, exposure to misogynistic lyrics is not required to produce sexist reactions, so it is unclear which lyrics, songs, or artists would deserve greater scrutiny. Third, we think it makes more sense to view rap music as arising from a larger society and cultural norms that encourage and foster misogyny and other antisocial behaviors, rather than as a root cause of these behaviors (Richardson & Scott, 2002).

Priming latent sexism is not the same thing as causing it. At worst, we would conclude that rap music might exacerbate pre-existing tendencies, particularly among males, but so, too, can other genres of music (e.g., rock, country) and varied forms of entertainment (e.g., television, movies, sports). Finally, our research does not indicate that exposure to rap influences actual behaviors. That would be required before we would agree that censorship is a credible option.

Limitations of the Present Research and Future Directions

A logical research agenda to advance these findings would include experiments designed to isolate more carefully the effects of overtly misogynistic lyrics from their potential rival causes. Our study cannot conclusively determine whether merely rap or explicitly misogynistic rap is the root cause of the increased sexism. It is possible, for example, that any hard-driving and aggressive beats inherently prime sexist responses, particularly among males. This kind of rhythm, furthermore, is not unique to rap, but crosses multiple genres of music.

In addition, the males in our study were all quite young, so regardless of the cause, any explanation might apply only or primarily to younger males. Yet, while some studies are fairly criticized for their reliance on samples of convenience (Sears, 1986), the use of college-age participants is particularly desirable because they comprise the age group identified in popular critical theories of rap's effects. Nevertheless, future studies would benefit by including males of differing ages.

An additional limitation is that our sample was overwhelmingly White, so we were unable to assess potential differential reactions by participant race. While most rap music is largely a genre produced by Blacks but consumed by Whites, the music in the present study was, ironically, produced by Whites and heard by mostly Whites. Thus, we are unable to speculate whether exposure effects would vary by the race of the performer or the race of the listener. A large sample study that can vary these characteristics of rap and its audience would be most helpful.

A final limitation is that the discernible and differential effects of Eminem on male and female attitudes in the laboratory setting might not comfortably translate to a particularly coherent cumulative effect on society's collective attitudes toward women. We cannot conclude, for example, that these increases in sexist attitudes persist over time and have behavioral consequences. We need to gain a better understanding of whether single or repetitive exposure to misogynistic rap actually encourages violent acts against women. It is one thing to find a temporary increase in sexist attitudes among males that might only be a product of the greater momentary accessibility of sexism in working memory. It would be quite another to discover that males' sexist attitudes become chronic with repeated exposure and lead to pathological behaviors.

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Appendix

Pilot Study Sexism Measures

1. Women rather than men are most likely to stay home and raise children.
2. Men are increasingly likely to lose their jobs because of a woman's claim of sexual harassment.
3. Women are increasingly likely to identify themselves as "feminists."
4. Women who divorce their husbands, even after being unfaithful, are often awarded half of the couple's assets.
5. In the United States military, women are not allowed to serve in combat roles.

Note. Items 2, 3, and 4 were later reverse-scored so that higher values always indicate greater sexism.