Are women the tomatoes of the country music salad? Sexism in Country Music 1990 – 1992

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate sexism in country music by examining patterns of sexism in song lyrics. This study is an adaptation of previous work by Jada Watson (2018). This paper will also examine the divide in airplay between genders. The data collected spanned three years between 1990 to the end of 1992. The top 5 for every week of each year was included, totalling 222 songs. The lyrics were analysed using an adaptation of Watson's content analysis. Results showed that men were in the top 5 positions more often than women. Sexism did not statistically increase across the three years; however, men appeared to use sexist lyrics more often than women, with a result just outside of significance. Supplemental analyses showed that men used more implicitly sexist lyrics than women. This study lends further support to Watson's claim that Nashville-based country music is institutionally sexist and suggests male's' implicit sexism could be culturally influenced by the American South's hyper-masculine culture. This research concludes that country music is a diverse musical discipline that has potential to be more egalitarian as female artists make greater use of folk, americana and indie genres away from Nashville-based country music.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, a Twitter war started via a comment made by a broadcast consultant, Keith Hill, on air through Country Aircheck (Punned, 2015). Hill inferred that women in county music radio are second to men and suggested that women were the "tomatoes" in a country salad. Moreover, Hill said, "If you want to make ratings in country radio, take females out" (Punned, 2015). When listening to radio, the lack of women in country music is obvious. The ratio is unbalanced and the inequality is rife (Watson, 2018). There have been many papers written on gender imbalances throughout music and media, however, very few have a focus on country music and not enough has been done to create a fair and level playing field in the industry. Hill's views have reignited the debate by offending women with his comments. This was almost immediately tagged as #SaladGate over social media when he said "[Women are] just not the lettuce in our salad", and that country is "a principally male format" (Punned, 2015).

In order to understand the modern complexities of country music, it is important to have a grasp of where country music came from and to define the difference between 'folk' music, 'hillbilly', 'country and western', 'slave' music, 'chicano', and modern 'country' genres. Most American country music originated from a variety of areas internationally. Musical influences came from Anglo-Celtic immigrants that settled in North America in the early 1600s. These were mostly English immigrants, followed by Scottish, Irish and Welsh (Robert, 2013, pp. 27-31). This influence was collectively traditional Irish, Scottish, and English 'folk' music and lore, which reflected their experiences as poor, Christian, working-class people. The increasing population of new immigrants to America drove many of the Anglo-Celtic families out of the urban areas and villages into the hills of Appalachia due to poverty and economic inflation. However, they continued their musical tradition and this became known as 'hillbilly' music at first, and was later changed by the record labels of the time to 'country and western' due to hillbilly becoming a derogatory term around 1949 (Edwards, 2019, pp. 84–90).

An additional influential style of music came from the cultural appropriation of African rhythms and sounds in the indigenous music African slaves brought with them, from their home nations as they were brought to the USA. The rhythms of work could be heard in songs about oppression and slavery. For example, "Hoe Emma, Hoe" is a song using call and response, a rhythm and style often used to help maintain a steady pace of working (Annamma Mathew, 2018). The lyrics of this song have changed since its creation, estimated to be around 1700. For example:

> Caller: Emma, you from the country.
> Chorus: Hoe Emma Hoe, you turn around dig a hole in the ground, Hoe Emma Hoe.
> Caller: Emma help me to pull these weeds.
> Chorus: Hoe Emma Hoe, you turn around dig a hole in the ground, Hoe Emma Hoe.
> Caller: Emma work harder than two grown men.
> Chorus: Hoe Emma Hoe, you turn around dig a hole in the ground, Hoe Emma Hoe.
> (Annamma Mathew, 2018)

As most slavery was in remote rural areas – particularly in the southern USA – these sounds moved North, up the Appalachian trail and westward into what was then still Mexico (now, modern-day Texas) (Lewis, 1993).

Along with these two important influences into modern country music there was also a significant Mexican 'chicano' influence which is often forgotten in discussion (Lewis, 1993). Several styles like 'son', 'mariachi', 'ranchera', 'corrido', 'canto nuevo' (or 'nueva cancion'), and Mexican 'cumbia' are all mixes of original Aztec indigenous music, Spanish, and African slaves (Lewis, 1993; Béhague, 2019). For example, Danzas de la Conquista; "Dances of the Conquest" (Lewis, 1993), was a traditional southern Mexican song/dance that tells a story of the invasion of the Spanish into Guatemala and south Mexico. Also, Lindi Ortega's "The Comeback Kid" (Ortega, 2018) is a song about revenge with distinctive 'ranchera' and 'cumbia' influences from a US female country artist. Finally, Aaron Watsons "Clear Isabel" (Watson, 2017), is a US country artist with similar influences in musical style including 'mariachi' referencing a love interest, border crossings, and freedom into America.

Without these musical influences, 'country and western' music would have stayed a more folk-dominated genre. However, 'country and western' was shortened to 'country music' or just 'country' via casual conversation or radio presenters simply not saying the full name of the genre for brevity (Britannica, 2019). In modern variations of country music, the styles and influences of certain regions can still be noticed. For example, in the northern parts of North America around the Appalachian Mountains, there is a stronger influence of 'folk' to 'country' crossover. For example, in Dolly Parton's "Coat of Many Colors" (Parton, 1971) which tells a story of poverty, hardship, bullying, and a mother's love. However, if one travels to southern states, many more Afro-American musical influences can be heard (Malone & Laird, 2018). A more modern example of southern Afro-American country style is Lil Nas X's (Ft, Cardi B) "Rodeo" (Nas X, 2019) blending heavy bass beats from R'n'B styles, a rap emphasis on singing but a country rhythm and timbre underneath. With fans all over the world, the majority of listeners of country music in America are female, while the majority of country artists are males (Leight, 2015). Despite the greater proportion of female listeners, research suggests sexism persists in country music (Watson 2018).

Sexism is the discrimination and oppression of a person because of their gender which is aimed mostly towards women (Garza & Feagin, 2019). Mistreating and oppressing women has been happening for such a long time that people have become accustomed to the everyday sexist remarks towards women due to patriarchy. Patriarchy is the ideological theory that men hold power over women in society (Garza & Feagin, 2019). Watson (2018), wrote her paper in response to a comment made by Keith Hill, who professed that country radio stations have to stick to strict rules regarding the frequency of women being played on the radio. He openly dismissed female country artists by saying "the tomatoes of our [country music] salad are the females" (Punned, 2015).

> "If you want to make ratings in Country radio, take females out. The reason is mainstream Country radio generates more quarter hours from female listeners at a rate of 70% to 75%, and women like male artists. I'm basing that not only on music tests from over the years, but more than 300 client radio stations. The expectation is we're principally a male format with a smaller female component. I've got about 40 music databases in front of me and the percentage of females in the one with the most is 19%. Trust me, I play great female records and we've got some right now; they're just not the lettuce in our salad. The lettuce is Luke Bryan and Blake Shelton, Keith Urban and artists like that. The tomatoes of our salad are the females" (Punned, 2015).

Hill's comments have since inspired more papers to be written on sexism within the genre and Hill has gone on to be referenced in many other areas regarding gender equality (Watson, 2018; Keel, 2018; Moss, 2018). While Hill might have given voice to his personal opinion, gender stereotypes have long been studied in social psychology. Humans have a tendency to stereotype almost everything into a gender either through a social, psychological, or biological lens and, coincidentally for Hill's choice of words, food is no different. When Hill mentioned "salad-gate" on a radio broadcast, he was using a gender stereotype in order to make sense of the environment and social world (Hinton, 2017). Moreover, Hill used a stereotype of a salad to feminise the musical style of country (Rodrigues, Goméz-Corona & Valentin, 2020), and then went on to outright call women "the tomatoes" suggesting that they are flavourful, but should occur infrequently to compliment the majority of male artists.

Gender across all genres of music has been investigated for many years but at the start of the 90's, people took interest in how gender stereotypes and roles had occurred throughout country music and the ways they are practiced within the industry (McCusker, Pecknold & Wel, 2018, pp. 157-168). Women were treated as the back-up for the men in country and were forced into back-of-house administrative positions such as writing fan mail,

communicating tour information, and mostly had supporting roles during performances. In contrast, men took all the glory and starred in the band (McCusker, Pecknold & Wel, 2018, pp. 157-168). This interest in gender and fairness in the 1990s was a result of feminist pursuits for equal opportunities in the workplace, but additionally, widely available internet access opened up a greater audience for artists of country, thus creating more opportunities for women (Watson, 2018).

Research suggests there are many different types of sexism. Five types of interest are acts of violence, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, internalised oppression, and sexual objectification (Garza & Feagin, 2019). An act of violence towards a woman is anything that is physically harmful such as grabbing, slapping, punching, kicking, stabbing, shooting, or murdering a woman (Glick & Fiske, 2001). One of the most extreme examples of violence against women in the early 90's was a song by Garth Brooks. "Papa Loved Mama" (Brooks, 1991) is a song about how a father found his wife cheating, so he crashed an articulated lorry into a motel, killing the narrator's mother and her lover in the song:

> Well it was bound to happen and one night it did. Papa came home and it was just us kids.
> He had a dozen roses and a bottle of wine, if he was lookin' to surprise us he was doin' fine.
> I heard him cry for Mama up and down the hall. Then I heard a bottle break against the
>   bedroom wall.
> That old diesel engine made an eerie sound, when Papa fired it up and headed into town.
> Well, the picture in the paper showed the scene real well. Papa's rig was buried in the local
>   motel.
> The desk clerk said he saw it all real clear. He never hit the brakes and he was shifting gears.
>   (Brooks, 1991)

This is a clear example of violence, hostility, hatred, and misogyny towards women due to the very strong references to violence throughout the song.

Hostile sexism represents men's negative views of women (Dardenne, Dumont & Bollier, 2007). Usually, these are expressed as stereotyped expressions that men see women as inferior to themselves. For example, that women are easily offended and complain too much; that they manipulate situations to their advantage by nature, and are wilfully uncooperative; that females belong to a "weaker sex" (Szymanski et al., 2009; Dardenne et al., 2007). An example of hostile sexism could be a woman being told to be more masculine and "man-up" by way of being overly emotional or not direct and assertive enough (Pingree et al., 1976). These hostilities and prejudices are apparent in many songs around the world. For example, in a song by Paul Overstreet (1991), "Ball and Chain," he muses:

> They said you're too young to wear that ball and chain.
> If you are my jailer, darlin', throw away the key,
> Love don't feel like a ball and chain to me. (Overstreet, 1991).

These lyrics are directly hostile towards women which suggests that they are only useful for oppressing men and satisfying men's sexual gratification. The lyrics exemplify hostile sexism, by insulting women (either directly or indirectly) and although the objectification is of men, it treats women as property via stereotypical gender norms (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Taking a different turn, benevolent sexism posits that women are incapable of certain things that are seen as too masculine and that are not lady-like; benevolent sexism suggests that some tasks are too difficult for a woman to achieve because of her valued feminine qualities, this type of sexism also includes words like 'baby', 'sugar', and 'honey' (Glick & Fiske, 2001). For example Luke Bryan's "Country Girl (Shake it for Me)" mentions:

> Somebody's sweet little farmer's child, that got it in her blood to get a little wild.
> Pony-tail and a pretty smile, rope me in from a country mile.
> So come on over here and get in my arms, spin me around this big ole' barn.
> Tangle me up like grandma's yarn. (Bryan, 2011).

Bryan's lyrics mention that the woman is "sweet" and "little", which shows a cultural pressure for women to be those things, to conform to gender roles, and that she can't do things for herself. Although Glick & Fiske (2001), would argue that a man being chivalrous by opening a door for a woman or offering to carry heavy objects should not denote benevolent sexism, it can offend some women and can be viewed as a type of dismissive sexist

behaviour (Dardenne et al. 2007). It implies women cannot do these types of activities for themselves without the help of a man which can be detrimental for female confidence (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Internalised oppression is when women start to adopt the stereotypes and sexist views of patriarchal society that as women, they are inferior to men (Szymanski et al., 2009). Internalised oppression is also when women objectify themselves for the pleasure of men by accepting traditional gender roles. For example, Patty Loveless (1989) in "Chains", refers to her own oppression and being bound to chains held by a man:

> You never try to hold me 'til you see me walking out.
> I guess you'd rather be with me than ever be without.
> You call me back and kiss me and my heart begins to sink.
> When I know that all you're doing's
> Taking up another link in these.
>
> Chains, chains, shackles, and chains.
> No matter what it takes someday I'm gonna break these,
> Chains, chains, shackles, and chains.
> These love taking, heartbreaking,
> Cold, hard, lonely making chains. (Loveless, 1989).

These oppressive sexist views are damaging and have a negative effect on women which can cause psychological issues in being socially accepted (Neff, 2014).

Lastly, sexual objectification is when a woman's body has been treated as an object or treated as existing for the use of others either through being touched or being stared at. This can also be body parts including sexual functions. Examples of women being sexually objectified are visible on a large number of marketed items which normalises this sexist form in society (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). An example of lyrical sexual objectification is "Honky Tonk Badonkadonk" (Adkins, 2005), making female body parts sexual objects.

> Now Honey, you can't blame her
> For what her mama gave her.
> It ain't right to hate her
> For workin' that money-maker.
> Band shuts down at two
> But we're hangin' out 'til three.
> We hate to see her go
> But love to watch her leave. (Adkins, 2005)

Sexism has been researched many times across genres of music and media. However, country music has not had the same level of investigation as other genres like hip-hop, rap, alternative, indie, and dance (Neff, 2014). Watson (2018) argues that country music is male dominated and its song lyrics have referenced women many times in various negative ways, often by way of the male-gaze (Mulvey, 1975). The country genre has seen all varieties of hostility towards women including restrictive gender roles, violence, murder, objectification and sexual harassment (Rasmussen & Densley, 2016). This should be noted due to the impact that media has on society, culture, sex, and gender roles. Moreover, it has been observed how rigid sex stereotypes in media imagery has a greater impact on adolescents (Nathanson, 2015). Therefore, with over 50% of the population of the United States of America listening to country music, it has a strong hold on what it puts out to its listeners on a weekly basis (Insideradio.com, 2019).

2. AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS

The goal of this study is to investigate sexism in country music. The study posits that a majority of male-led country songs will contain some sort of sexism in the lyrical content more so that female singers and groups, also that there should be a gradual increase in sexism from 1990 to the end of 1992. Research indicates high amounts of benevolent sexism exists within country due to men holding the majority share of its music, radio airplay, and general sales (Rasmussen & Densley, 2016).

Of the research that has been examined with feminist critique, three hypotheses are investigated:

> H1: The numbers of male solo artist and groups positioned in the top five of the American Billboard Charts will be greater than female solo artists and groups.

H2: Male solo artists and groups will verbalise greater amounts of sexism within their lyrics than female solo artists.

H3: Levels of sexism will increase from 1990 through to the end of 1992.

3. METHODOLOGY

Sample. The data sampled in this investigation was between 1990 and 1992 due to the majority of country radio stations in that decade moving to FM rather than the static sounding AM frequencies for reasons of quality, popularity, and technological progression (Smethers, 2009). The top 5 positions were selected as they implicitly hold a greater impact on society when higher up the charts than others, with the average listener usually hearing the top five positions at least once per day via radio or digital download (Insideradio.com, 2019). All songs were included in the initial collection of data covering male, female, and male-female ensembles.

Design. This was a mixed methods research design meaning both a quantitative and qualitative approach was used. For this study, the mixed-method approach was a content analysis, whereby qualitative analysis of song lyrics were coded for quantitative frequency analysis (Robertson, 2020, p.54). The excluded songs in this study were any songs without lyrics, any songs that crossed over from the end of 1989 into 1990, and anything in a lower position than number 5 in the charts. The final amount of all the songs collected consisted of 222 songs which were all read and coded while observing the meanings of sexism from various referencing sources.

Materials. For the calculation of the data collected, SPSS v26 was used (Statistical Packaging for the Social Sciences; IBM Corp, 2017) which can perform many detailed tests to calculate statistical probabilities. The weekly song positions were taken from the Billboard charts (2019) archive.

For song lyric collection, in the first instance the majority of lyrics that were collected came from Insideradio.com (2019). Not all lyrics were available from this online archive so an alternative archive was used from azlyrics.com (2022). The lyrics were then transferred to a template which included the coding references and a total score table (see Table 1).

Table 1. Misogyny score calculation

	Frequency	Score
Acts of Violence Exp		
Acts of Violence Imp		
Hostile Sexism Exp		
Hostile Sexism Imp		
Benevolent Sexism Exp		
Benevolent Sexism Imp		
Internalised Opp. Exp		
Internalised Opp. Imp		
Sexual Object. Exp		
Sexual Object. Imp		
	Grand Total	

Every one of the 222 song lyrics were read through and coded using a similar system to Watson (2018). Country music groups, ensembles, solo artists, and duets were code numbered 1 to 17, and then a second coding using M for male, F for female, and M-F for male and female ensembles resulting in a simplified code for sex (see Table 2).

Table 2. Coding Table

Code Number	Code	Ensemble Type
1	M	Male solo artist
2	M	Male group
3	M	Male solo artist feat. Male artist
4	M	Male solo artist feat. Female artist
5	M	Male solo artist feat. Male-female ensemble
6	F	Female solo artist
7	F	Female group
8	F	Female solo artist feat. Female artist
9	F	Female solo artist feat. Male artist
10	F	Female solo artist feat. Male-female ensemble
11	M-F	Male-female ensemble
12	M-F	Male-female ensemble feat. Male artist
13	M-F	Male-female ensemble feat. Female artist
14	M-F	Male-female ensemble feat. Male-female ensemble
15	M-F	Male solo artist feat. Male group
16	M-F	Male group feat. Male solo
17	M-F	Female solo artist feat. Male group

When creating the code book, there were five types of sexism considered: acts of violence, benevolent, sexual objectification, internalised oppression, and hostile sexism. A further context code was then applied to investigate implicit and explicit types of sexism (Moore, 2017; see Table 3).

Table 3. Code-book guide

Type of Sexism		Context		Severity	
	Abbr.		Abbr.		Score
Acts of Violence	V			Casually Sexist	1
Hostile Sexism	H	Implicit	Imp.	Moderately Sexist	2
Benevolent Sexism	B			Very Sexist	3
Internalised Opp.	IO	Explicit	Exp.		
Sexual Object.	S			Extremely Sexist	4

The coding was shortened for each type of sexism in all sets of lyrics, for example, when there was benevolent sexism on a line, the code section would be written "BImp" (Benevolent sexism – Implicit). Finally, a further variable was added as the severity of sexism in the lyrics and given a scale of 1-4 (1 being casually sexist and 4 being extremely sexist).

Once the data from Billboard had been gathered each of the songs were read and coded. Then the scores were summed and entered into SPSS. The length of time that each song was in the charts was also added alongside the sexism coding as an added weight of severity because length of time in the charts would prolong exposure to sexist lyrics on the listener. By adding the numerical results of a song, there would be a raw sexism score; then, by multiplying this score with the number of weeks in the top 5, this created a weighted sexism score. Similarly the same weighted score was calculated for raw explicit and raw implicit scores. The tests that were chosen within SPSS were all tests of difference. The tests used were a Chi-Squared goodness-of-fit test, a Mann-Whitney U, and a Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

4. RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics. Sexism results for this sample were found to be non-parametric, therefore, non-parametric tests were used to test the hypothesis (see Table 4).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Weighted Sexism Score across Artists' Sex and Years

Scales	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Median (Inter-quartile Range)	Skewness (Standard Error)	Kurtosis (Standard Error)
Male Solo Artists & Groups	10.99 (29.14)	3.00 (10.00)	7.77 (.19)	78.58 (.37)
Female Solo Artists & Groups	9.80 (23.76)	0.00 (15.25)	4.39 (.35)	23.10 (.69)
1990	16.06 (43.48)	4.00 (15.00)	5.65 (.29)	37.30 (.56)
1991	8.13 (13.52)	3.00 (12.00)	3.21 (.29)	14.45 (.56)
1992	7.85 (16.96)	0.00 (6.00)	2.88 (.27)	7.97 (.53)

Tests of difference. A chi-squared goodness-of-fit test was used to identify sex differences in the top 5 positions in Billboard's country charts. The original sample had 222 samples with 172 males (77.5%), 46 females (20.7%), and 4 male-female ensembles (1.8%). An assumption of a chi-squared test is that a category must have at least 5 cases (Dancey & Reidy, 2011, p. 277). Therefore, as there were only 4 male-female songs, the category was removed prior the analysis. Results indicated that country music did show a significant difference in the sex of the artists, X^2 ($df = 1$, $N = 218$) $= 72.83$, $p < .001$, with a chance probability of 50%. The observed frequency for the top 5 charted positions in the chosen years showed that men were the favourite (78.9%; 28.9% > chance). Results showed that female country artists/groups were less popular than male artists/groups (21.1%; 28.9% < chance). This result supports Hypothesis 1.

A Mann-Whitney U test was used to investigate differences in male and female artists sexist lyrics. The results showed there was not a significant difference in sexism, $U = 3409.50$, $z = -1.53$, $p = .06$, (*1-tailed*) $r = .10$. This result is only 1% outside of the significance threshold of .05 and carries a small effect. Men's lyrical sexism ($N = 172$, *MeqnRank* = 112.68) was greater in comparison to women's ($N = 46$, *MeanRank* = 97.62). Although the hypothesis is not supported in accordance with the strict probability threshold of 5% because it is out by 1%, is seems reasonable to deduce than males were more sexist than females as the null hypothesis is shown to be supported with only a 6% probability, indicating the alternate hypothesis could be supported with 94% chance of probability. This result offers some support for Hypothesis 2.

Due the data being non-parametric, a Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA was used across the three years to determine that sexism increases proposed in Hypothesis 3. The median sexism score in 1990 was 4.00 (*IQR* = 15.00), in 1991 it was 3.00 (*IQR* = 12.00), and 1992 it was zero (*IQR* = 6.00). The Kruskal-Wallis test results showed X^2 (2) $= 3.92$, $p = .14$. These results did not support the hypothesis that sexism increased over time.

Pairwise comparisons for sexism were investigated across the years of 1990, 1991, 1992 using the Mann-Whitney U test combined with the Bonferroni correction (Kingsley & Robertson, 2020, p. 8). The Bonferroni correction allows for post-hoc comparisons across groups following a Kruskal-Wallis test by controlling for the family-wise error. This is done by taking the conventional p-value of .05 and dividing it by the number of comparisons made. Therefore, as this test made three comparisons, then .05 was divided by 3, which produced a *p*-value of .0167 (Dancey & Reidy, 2011, p. 236). Sexism in songs from 1990 ($N = 68$, *MeanRank* = 70.27) and 1991 ($N = 70$, *MeanRank* = 68.75) did not significantly differ in sexism, $U = 2327.50$, $z = .23$, $p = .41$, (*1-tailed*). Similarly, 1991 (*MeanRank* = 81.44) did not significantly differ from 1992 ($N = 80$, *MeanRank* = 70.30) $U = 2384.00$, $z = -1.67$, $p = 0.05$, (*1-tailed*). Last, 1990 (*MeanRank* = 80.65) and 1992 (*MeanRank* = 69.27) also did not significantly differ $U = 2301.50$, $z = -1.73$, $p = .04$, (*1-tailed*).

Supplemental analyses. While not hypothesised for, differences across the years for implicit and explicit sexism were also investigated. These yielded no significant results. Differences in implicit and explicit sexism were also investigated across males and females. Males ($N = 172$, *MeanRank* = 108.26) and females ($N = 46$, *MeanRank* =114.12) did not differ in explicit sexism, $U = 3743.50$, $z = -1.27$, $p = .20$, (*2-tailed*). However, males (*median* = 3.00, *MeanRank* = 114.53) showed greater implicit sexism in their lyrics in comparison to females (*median* = 0, *MeanRank* = 90.70), $U = 3091.00$, $z = -2.44$, $p = .02$, (*2-tailed*), $r = .17$, which is a small effect. This supports the claim that male country singers are more implicitly sexist in their lyrics than females between 1990 and 1992.

5. DISCUSSION

For this study there were three hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 assessed whether more male solo artists and groups were positioned in the top five of the American Billboard Charts than female solo artists and groups, which resulted in support for the hypothesis. Hypothesis 2 compared whether male solo artists and groups had greater amounts of sexism within the lyrics than female artists. This hypothesis was not outright supported but came very close to having a statistically significant difference. Hypothesis 3 was to determine if levels of sexism will increase over the 222 samples from 1990 through to the end of 1992, which was not supported in final testing. Furthermore, exploratory analysis showed that males had greater implicit sexism scores than females. In both pilot studies, there were similar results in being minutely outside the threshold of a significant result for weighted sexism comparing women to men. Both have been successful pilot studies for a possible larger research project investigating 30 years for 1990 to 2020.

In similar results to Watson (2018), this investigation showed there are more males than females in the country music charts. Her 2018 study and this study agreed that the number of males outweighed both females and male-female ensembles. Although this study is a small sample in comparison to Watson, it still shows that males dominate the country music charts and provides evidence that inequality and misogyny exists in country music.

This study also supports similar themes from Leonard (2007) which observes gender imbalance in the rock, punk, and indie genres. The primary focus of Leonard's text is on the indie-rock genre which resembles how country music is male-managed and dominated. This theme of masculine domination within music seems to generalise beyond pop, rock, and rap labels, extending to Nashville production companies, as well. Moreover, it highlights that men are more implicitly sexist towards women.

The difference in implicit sexism is supported by research from the humanities and social sciences. Gros (2010), argues that hyper-masculinity developed in the southern United States as a result of post-civil war reconstruction. Southern men took pride in their masculinity in the face of losing the American Civil War and losing land, slaves and wealth. Given that American southern culture is an influence on country music, it makes sense the genre would adopt some of these historical themes of identity. Furthermore, cross-cultural research has found that southern Americans are not more violent that northern Americans, but they are more likely to perceive hostility in novel situations (Gros, 2010). Therefore, if southern attitudes are more implicitly hostile and respond with implied hostility, it makes sense they are also implicitly sexist. As many male country singers come from confederacy-aligned states, implicit hostility and sexism may exist in their music as a product of their culture.

One limitation of this study is that it only investigated 3 years' worth of lyrics. If this study had been larger in size, there could have been more depth of data to fully test the hypotheses. Given that the result for the difference in sexism across men and women was marginally outside of significance, there is a likelihood that in a future investigation covering a period of 30-years top 5 positions could better test the hypotheses and yield meaningful results.

Study reliability is also a limitation to consider. Although the data collected is quantitative, the investigation into the sexist remarks within the lyrics is qualitative. Having just one person to evaluate what is and what is not sexist can be prone to researcher bias, even with references as a guide. An inter-rater reliability technique can be used to improve this method (Gwet, 2014). In the context of this study, inter-rater reliability would consist of independently using two or more individuals referred to as raters to also code the lyrics. If more raters were involved, preferably including female raters, there could have been a greater analysis of sexism and an analysis on severity of the remarks recorded. Reliability of the inter-rater coding could further be analysed using Cohen's or Fleiss', kappa (Kingsley & Robertson, 2020, p. 42). These methods will be adopted in future studies using inter-raters when lyrical examinations take place to hopefully gain an 80% or greater reliability. This could evidence a more reliable outcome in future works.

Two of the three hypotheses tested in this study were technically null-hypotheses, therefore, on a scientific level it is possible that the results could suggest sexist lyrics are no greater in males when compared to females in country music and that sexism has not increased over the time frame investigated. There is an evolutionary counter argument for interpreting the use of 'baby' as a benevolent sexist remark (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Research into human attraction mostly western cultures, posits the word 'baby' as being a term of endearment through a biological lens (Zebrowitz & Franklin, 2014). As many country songs are love songs then the use of 'baby' could refer more strongly to a human desire to nurture loved ones. Both male artists and female artists use this in their

song lyrics. For example, in a song by male group The Oakridge Boys "No Matter How High" (The Oak Ridge Boys, 1989) they sing "But baby, I got lucky when I met you that night", the context of this song is not sexual or threatening. Therefore, what this study interpreted as a benevolent sexist remark could be a term of affection instead. As an alternative example by a female solo artist, Tanya Tucker "Walking Shoes" (Tucker, 1990), she sings "I'm the best thing, baby that you ever had", the context of this song is not sexual but is used tongue-in-cheek. Ergo, the word 'baby' could be used as sounding sarcastic but still not sexist in relation to this investigation due to the comment coming from a female. Despite these critiques from the social constructionist perspective, the word 'baby' would be seen as a sexist word to use, inferring a person's inability of achieving a self-sufficient adult behaviour. The idea that 'baby' or any of the words deemed to be sexist or demeaning is a free will decision on the part of the speaker (or singer) and that 'baby' is still a sexist remark on a social level.

This study is an ongoing pilot in contemplation of a larger study of the same topic. To simplify any future investigations into sexism, some of the sexism coding may be removed due to the lack of calculable results found in this study. For example, internalised oppression and acts of violence scored very little compared to benevolent and hostile sexism, also by reducing the severity levels to just casual, moderate and high compared to having five levels of severity. However, the categories that had the least scores may still be used in a larger study due to the depth and breadth of the study increasing.

6. CONCLUSION

Raising issues of inequality in all musical formats should be made a priority so there can be potential improvements towards gender equality throughout the music industry and when making music. The country music industry for women is a difficult place to become successful, much like rock, pop, and rap. Fortunately, country music is evolving by adopting new styles of instruments and lyrical formats like heavy kicks, R'n'B drum sounds, rapping lyrics, and even a step backward in time such as a revival in folk music to widen the genres possibilities of creating newer accessible entry points for artists. With the country industry being heavily controlled, female artists have been almost forced out of the country charts and are now more comfortable being situated in the Americana category or genre due to the relaxed attitudes on personality, lifestyles, sexuality, race and gender (Bernstein, 2019). Country music is diverse in its roots and without a balance of fair and equal opportunities from the ground up, the genre could become more sex segregated on FM country formats. Thankfully, just as some people prefer an all-tomato salad, women in country can still exist as more than just a Nashville garnish.

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