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Gender Stability and Change: The Differential Characterization of Men and Women in Popular Country Music from 1944 through 2012

Clayton Cory Lowe

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GENDER STABILITY AND CHANGE: THE DIFFERENTIAL
CHARACTERIZATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN POPULAR COUNTRY
MUSIC FROM 1944 THROUGH 2012

by

C. Cory Lowe

(Under the Direction of Nancy L. Malcom)

ABSTRACT

This research is a longitudinal study of differential depictions of men and women in top country music from 1944 through 2012. The study attempts to understand the gender system as theorized by Ridgeway using the analytic heuristics of cognitive sociologists and the methods of ethnographic content analysts. Findings include the various axes upon which women and men are differentially characterized over time including men and women's behaviors within romantic relationships, involvement in deviance and crime, work and the use of economic capital, their bodies, and differences in cultural capital such as education.

INDEX WORDS: country music, gender, longitudinal, Ridgeway, gender system, cultural sociology, cognitive sociology, axes of differentiation, romantic relationships, cultural capital, deviance and crime, economic capital.

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C. CORY LOWE

A.A., Georgia Highlands College, 2010

B.S., Shorter University, 2011

M.A., Georgia Southern University, 2015

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C. CORY LOWE

Major Professor: Nancy L. Malcom
Committee: Peggy G. Hargis
Eric O. Silva
Bryan L. Miller

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Dedication

For my grandfather, Clayton Jackson Harris,

Who inspired me to push forward even in my darkest seasons,

Who raised me to appreciate signs and symbols,

Who inculcated the importance of using my liberties and faculties for the sake of even the most infinitesimal contribution to making the "world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition;"

And introduced me to the greatest lesson on equality and humanism – that we are all "travelling upon the Level of Time to that undiscover'd country from whose bourne no traveler returns."

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

It has been argued that the inequality that exists between men and women is the most pervasive and persistent throughout all parts of the world; there may be differences in the ways that men and women fare between races, socioeconomic categories, nationalities, etc., but within these groupings there is a consistent divide between men and women (Epstein, 2007). However, in the past century, there have been strides toward gender equality including the enfranchisement of women; a reduction in the gender wage gap; more equitable access to, and control over, medical procedures; greater parity for publicly funded programs and jobs for men and women; and basic legal protections in the workplace for all workers during and after childbirth. These changes, in addition to others, have led to positive outcomes in gender equality that can be objectively measured by prevailing standards. However, for us to understand changes in the gender system we need to also examine the ways that men and women have been characterized in American culture over time.

Griffin (1995, p.1248) has argued that the challenge for those of us who labor at the intersection of history and sociology "is to discern and explain how the creations of past human action – that is social structures and cultural arrangements – become human prisons, or, less frequently, a source of human liberation." This relationship between structure and culture has received increasing theoretical attention over the past 30 years (Giddens, 1984; Griswold, 2012; Sewell, 1992) and gender theorists have also begun to more precisely theorize the linkage of micro-social interactions and macro-social beliefs and attitudes (Ridgeway, 2006, 2011; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 2006). If structure and culture are linked

as theorized, then we should venture beyond examining changes in the material inequalities of the sexes to understand how changes in the cultural differentiation between men and women have taken place.

This study examines changes in the differential characterizations of men and women from 1944 through 2012 through the analysis of popular country music lyrics. While the historical fluidity of the gender differentiation is widely acknowledged, the scholarship on changes in cultural representations of gender difference up to the current time could be vastly improved. This study explores these changes by (1) drawing together pertinent scholarship on gender, culture, and historical sociology to serve as the foundation; (2) determining the limits of the utility and validity of country music as a socially representative cultural artifact; (3) utilizing Altheide's (1987) ethnographic content analysis, in conjunction with the analytic heuristics of cognitive sociologists, to establish which characteristics have been differentially associated with women and men; (4) determining how these characterizations have changed over time; and (5) concluding by clarifying the limitations of the study and suggesting future avenues for researching gender differentiation as a social process.

Theory

Culture is an example of what W.B. Gallie (1956, p. 169) refers to as an "essentially contested concept" whereby its usage "inevitably involves endless disputes." If we are to understand the process of gender differentiation, then we are going to need a clearer understanding of culture. The long established Thomas Theorem (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572) posits, "if men (sic) define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." Their proposition creates a link between definitions of situations and the structures and actions that

emerge from those definitions, and forms the basis for what Mohr (1998, p. 347) refers to as the “dialectical or dualistic relationship between cultural meanings and social structures” that has been of primary import to many social theorists.

Likewise, Geertz popularized a conceptualization of cultures as being systems of meaning that materialize in the behaviors and organization of peoples (Geertz, 1973, p. 17); Sewell builds on this conceptualization when he explains that,

Culture should be understood as a dialectic of system and practice, as a dimension of social life autonomous from other such dimensions both in its logic and its spatial configuration, and as a system of symbols possessing a real but thin coherence that is continually put at risk in practice and therefore subject to transformation. (Sewell Jr., 1999, p. 52)

Here meanings are not static, they are continually changing in space-time as they are constructed and reconstructed through interactions, in which meanings are the units of social connectivity and through which emergent systems, such as the gender system, may develop.

Dialectic and dualistic understandings of the relationship between meaning and reality are not unique to the theorizing of Geertz and Sewell, in fact, as Mohr (1998, p. 347) explains, this has been central to many other theories including those of Bauman (1973), Sahlins (1976), Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (1984), and Swidler (1986). Such arguments are also central to the theorizing of Berger and Luckmann (1966) in their seminal work *The Social Construction of Reality* wherein they emphasize the importance of language, arguing that it "is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of 'bringing back' these symbols and *presenting them as objectively real elements* [emphasis added]

in everyday life" (1966, p. 37). In other words, these intersubjective definitions constitute the foundation for the creation, and recreation, of objective realities.

As explained by Sewell (1999, p. 52), the system of symbols is continually at "risk in everyday practice and is, therefore, subject to transformation," and the tension between change and continuity are central to the continuing development of culture. The primary concern of this research is what persists and what is lost in the social construction of gender differentiation over time. To understand how social change occurs, one course of action is to utilize the cultural artifacts at our disposal, whether they are collective social representations developed by the negotiations of producers and their audience, or the collected expressions of immense numbers of individuals (e.g. Twitter posts, Facebook "likes," social media sharing, etc...).

We must then navigate a path of analyzing those cultural artifacts to derive theories of social change from the data. Griffin (1995, p. 1245) argues that "we should and can continue to deepen the discipline's 'historical turn' by more thoroughly historicizing how we conduct research, understand and use basic analytic concepts, and develop and test general social theories." Others have also noted the important role that historical sociology can play in the development and advancement of theory (Ragin, 2011; Stinchcombe, 1978). This historical approach would be especially useful in understanding gender change within the gender system theorized by Ridgeway (2011).

Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin (2006, p. 247) have summed up the analytical problem of gender system when they argue: "gender involves widely shared cultural beliefs and institutions at the macro-level, behaviors and expectations at the interactional level, and the self-conceptions and attitudes at the individual level of analysis." Ridgeway's theory (2006, 2011) builds on the

empirical success of generative theories of interpersonal behavior theories, such as *affect control* and *expectation states* to theorize the gender system.

Ridgeway's theory of the gender system, which continues to gain empirical support (See Ridgeway, Li, Erickson, Backor, & Tinkler, 2009; Ridgeway, 2006; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 2006), consists of multiple components that should be thought of as a process. The gender system involves (1) existing structures shaping interactions between members of society, (2) gender beliefs are constructed during these interactions, (3) gender beliefs are validated and "take hold" through interaction with third parties, and (4) widely shared gender beliefs, in turn, shape social structures (See Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000; Ridgeway, 2006, 2011). This theory of gender differentiation not only takes into consideration the dialectical relationship between structure and culture, but also paves a way for us to understand changes in gender differentiation over time. As a secondary source of socialization, country music lyrics may not only provide the validation for constructions of gender established in interactions, but, as will be argued later, reflect the widely shared beliefs about gender over time.

In the fullest explication of her theory of the gender system, Ridgeway (2011, p. 198) asserts, "change toward equality is likely to be an uneven process that proceeds in a two steps forward, one step backward fashion." Since she has argued for the modularity of ordering schemas we must wonder if this modularity makes gender differentiation something akin to a hydra, where once one head is removed, it grows back while society actors struggle to lop off another. These questions can be better understood by analyzing the ways widely shared beliefs about gender difference transform over time, which is why this study takes a longitudinal approach.

Extant Research

Only a few studies have examined country music lyrics as a way to better understand gender differentiation. Other analyses of country music only touched on gender as a peripheral issue as is the case in a study of aging where aging among men is typically depicted negatively, while among women it is often depicted positively (Aday & Austin, 2000). Another study that tangentially dealt with gender issues was on politics and ideology, which found in the years of 1965-1970 to be a "high point for songs expressing attitudes about gender relations" at which time female singers were producing songs about "gender equality, or at least the idea of more respectful treatment from men" (Van Sickle, 2005). Nevertheless, the literature, paltry as it may be, has proved to be helpful in guiding the current study.

Cooper (1985) completed a study on stereotypes of women in country music for the years 1946, 1956, 1966, and 1976. By developing a coding system based on a 10% sample of the songs, Cooper found that the characterization of women was different from decade to decade. For example, it was found that the depiction of women as "evil" generally increased while women were decreasingly depicted as "needing a man" from the first two decades through the last two. Three of the coded stereotypes didn't show any significant changes over time including women as "sex object," as a "possession of a man," or as "delicate." The remaining six stereotypes were found to have increased and decreased at various times. However, there was no full discussion of this nor was there any discernable pattern through time since only four years were actually examined instead of four decades. Unfortunately, the study did not include characterizations of men, so there is no way for us to know whether they were applied to both men and women or the contexts in which men and women were characterized.

George H. Lewis is one of the more prolific researchers of the country music genre, and has conducted research on interpersonal relations and the sex-role conflict (1989), tension, conflict and contradiction (1991), and a general synopsis of the lyrics of the country genre and lyrical production (1976). Consistent themes that are found throughout all of these works revolve around conflict, not only between the gendered characters within the songs but also among the values, behaviors, attitudes, etc. found within the songs. For example, Lewis (1989, 1991) highlights the development of conflict between males for romantic partners, and between males and females in, what was at the time, a trend toward songs about failed relationships and the consequences of those failed relationships. He even finds contradictory depictions within gendered depictions stating that women are supposed to be "free and sexual enough to attract a man before marriage" while also being "socially responsible enough" to be considered a candidate for marriage and raising a family. The same is true of men among whom there is a tension to settle down while at the same time lamenting a lack of freedom that is associated with marriage and family life (Lewis, 1989, 1991).

In her study of gender status and roles in country music lyrics, Saucier (1986) finds many interesting aspects of gender differentiation. Among these is her focus on the difference in the characteristics associated with men and women in how they deal with certain situations such as grief (1986, p. 157-158), and how men and women are differentiated in the ways they are discussed in relation to careers or their lack thereof (p. 157-158). By focusing specifically on men and women in relation to each other, Saucier (1986) illuminates many aspects of gender differences that cannot be discovered by focusing specifically on either men or women. She finds that women are characterized as being more emotionally resilient to the failure of relationships

while men are more prone to turn to alcohol as a response (Saucier, 1986, p. 158). For example, we can only know that women are unassociated with careers and occupations if we first know that this is an important association that is made with men, and this is why the inductive discovery of gender differentiation needs to be at the heart of any project on gender in cultural products. If country music is analyzed and it is found that men are characterized as untrustworthy and treacherous in relationships then we can discern that this is not one of the central axes of gender differentiation within the cultural context of country music. This may, however, point to the importance of the centrality and maintenance of relationships within the culture, or the fact that this is a common concern, but it would not be supportive of gender differentiation based on the treachery of one sex or another within relationship contexts.

This study attempts to answer the following questions: how have men and women been depicted in country music over time, what are the major themes in the characterizations of men and women, are there any characterizations that are stable over time, and are there any major changes that occur? It is differentiated from other scholarship on gender in country music in the methods of analysis, the data used, and the length of time being analyzed. However, before proceeding we must venture to answer why country music is an appropriate data source for examining changes in macrosocial patterns of gender differentiation?

Chapter 2:

The Utility and Validity of Using Country Music

Country music is an important part of the modern mix of popularly produced and consumed cultural products, but it has been chosen as the data source for this study because: (1) the stories it tells reflect the cultural beliefs, attitudes, and norms of its audience; (2) many of the characteristics of the country music audience have remained relatively stable; and (3) it has been produced for a significant amount of time and can therefore be used for longitudinal analyses. It must be stressed that an analysis of country music can only provide a *partial* understanding of gender differentiation in America. Since the country music audience is only a subset of Americans, this study only relates to the groups participating in this system of production; furthermore, country music does not address all of the possible concerns of the audience. Further studies must be done using other sets of collectively representative cultural data if we are to achieve a broader understanding of American beliefs about gender differences over time.

Country Music as Culturally Representative

Peterson and McLaurin (1992) argue that country music is a story tellers medium and that it is the central role of narrative that differentiates it from many other genres. However, whose narrative does country music tell?

Bill Malone, the leading Country music historian, notes the reflexive qualities of country music when he argued that it "mirrors the social mores of a broad spectrum of people, thus both reflecting and shaping their values" (Malone, 1968, p. 359). Malone and Neal have restated this in the most recent edition of *Country Music U.S.A.* arguing that the lyrics "encompass topics [...]"

that have perennially been central to country music's repertoire" (2010, p. xvi). Malone and Neal update Malone's earlier argument by stating, "the country fan base still finds tremendous resonance with the traditional values and specific themes embedded in the music's history. Thus, country music has preserved its unique identity not through its ever-changing sound, but rather through its cultural meaning." (Malone & Neal, 2010, p. 495)

These reflexive qualities of country music are further supported by George Lewis who argued that "successful country songs usually reflect, usually from an intimate sort of perspective, the everyday trials, troubles, hopes, fears, and dreams of their audience" (Lewis, 1991, p. 103). Also, DiMaggio, Peterson, and Esco's (1972, p. 50) study of country music audiences and song lyrics led them to argue that "there is a suggestive correspondence between the lyrical themes in country music and the life situation experienced by most of its fans." While addressing popular concerns about the commercialization of country music, Southern culture scholar and historian, James Cobb, has noted that "As time passed, the changes in country music have reflected the Americanization of Dixie just as its soaring popularity nationwide has documented the Southernization of America." (Cobb, 1999, p. 50) Here Cobb makes the important point that consistent structural and cultural changes have constantly shaped precisely what was, or could be, reflected in country music. Finally, Fox, an ethnographer of country music and country music audiences (Fox, 2004), has argued that, despite the "alienated nostalgia, false consciousness, or kitschy commodification [...] country music remains more overtly loyal to the experience, desires and language of a culture than almost any other major popular music genre" (Fox, 1992).

These arguments for the reflexivity of country music include statements from scholars spanning the last 46 years; however, there is a major problem with the extent to which country music reflects its audience. This is noted by Peterson and McLaurin (1992, p. 6) who, while concurring that "music is a mirror of the thoughts and feelings of a people and their time," qualify this by stating "music lyric sheets, whether country or another genre, do not accurately reflect all that is on people's minds, and thus cannot be read as a complete assessment of the collective consciousness of the country music audience." Peterson and McLaurin (1992, p. 6) argue that there are four ways in which the "mirror" of country music "distorts the culture it reflects;" these are (1) the contemporary conventions that "dictate the form a country song can take" such as how one can speak of wives, Texas, country life, cities, work, guns, the South, etc..."; (2) "conventions concerning how to deal with [...] taboos" such as issues surrounding race; (3) a singer will not sing a song that portrays them in a way that "does not fit the image he/she wants to project"; and (4) the music industry narrows the possibilities of what the audience will have the opportunity to turn into a hit, these decisions are made by a network of individual agents in the music industry with the aim of only releasing songs that they predict will be commercially successful (Peterson and McLaurin, 1992, p. 6-7). An example of this last factor, provided by the Peterson and McLaurin (1992, p. 7), includes industry refusals to produce songs "putting Texas in a negative light" because it would harm the commercial success of a song in large markets in Texas.

However, the existence of distortions does not mean that the mirror is defective or is the distorter of the reflection. The mirror is only the medium that reflects an image crafted by producers and demanded by consumers, at least in the case of popular country music. The mirror

is country music, but the topics, taboos, and other content that is kept out of country music are better likened to blemishes that are actively managed by the society in front of the mirror. If one has a basic understanding of the society from which a cultural form emerges then the blemishes and shortcomings that are actively managed may be as informative as the totality of the reflected image sans blemishes.

The final issues with using country music for its culturally reflective properties can be found in the scholarship of Richard Peterson, whose contributions to the study of country music and the production of culture are unmatched. His research provided key insights into the process by which country artists craft authenticity (Peterson, 1997, 2005) and the way in which the "nature and content of symbolic products are shaped by the social, legal, and economic milieu in which they are produced" (Peterson, 1982, p. 143; See also 1997, 2000; Peterson & Anand, 2004; Peterson & Berger, 1975). In his work on the manifold factors affecting the production of country music, he found that authentication of country music was made by the "end consumers of the music, the fans" (Peterson, 2005, p. 1091), although the process of crafting an authentic product was not as clean-cut. The concept of authentication refers to what is believed to be a true representation of what country music is or should be, and much like gender, this too is constantly being constructed. While noting that production decisions are made "ostensibly to satisfy the tastes of fans," in practice they are "made largely to satisfy the expectations of the next gatekeeper in the decision chain" of production, whether that was at the level of engineers and musicians or of executives (Peterson, 2005, p. 1091). However, the production of culture perspective, as stated by Peterson (1982, p. 143), "does not contradict the alternative orientations

that examine cultural products [...] as expressing the views of their consumers, or as reflecting the spirit of the society at large," rather it "complements and reinforces these other perspectives."

The distortions mentioned above certainly place boundaries on the extent to which country lyrics can be used for tracking trends in gender differentiation; however, there does seem to be a resounding consensus that the subset of the total concerns of the audience that are discussed in country music are reflective of the audience. The next question is who comprises this audience?

The Country Music Audience

The demographic profiling of country music audiences, like the studies proclaiming country music's social reflectivity, span decades. Until the 1980s, the profiles indicated that country music audiences were "mostly White, Southern, lower-middle-class adults, without a college education" (Grabe, 1997, p. 69). In 1972, DiMaggio, Peterson and Esco found that country was most popular among people living outside of New England, who were middle-aged, less educated, work in occupations with lower prestige, and belonged to the lower middle class. Grabe (1997), in a study profiling the country audience found that much was the same according to data she used covering a period from 1979-1992. She found the audience of country music to be "almost exclusively white [and that] few have a college education, upper-middle to upper class job, or middle to high income." She also found that the majority of fans live in suburban or rural areas in the South and Midwest. The only significant changes she noted over the time studied was that more listeners had graduated high school in 1992 than in 1979.

Grabe (1997) notes that, before DiMaggio, Peterson, and Esco's profile, little work had been done to establish the nature of the country music audience; however, I believe it is safe to

say that according to historical scholarship the listener base could be characterized as white and Southern (Malone, 1968, 2002; Malone & Neal, 2010). To construct a more recent profile of the country music audience, one must resort to a multitude of studies that each of which only a piece of the picture. Recently, research had shown that the age range of listeners has remained the same and that listeners were predominantly 25-54 years of age (Roland, 2011). Griffin (2006) determined that fans were predominantly white, and country music was preferred among white people no matter their geographic location.

Bass (2010), in his study of the distribution of country radio stations, argued that although Southerners and Midwesterners preferred country music it was a top radio format throughout the nation. Further, Bass (2010) argued that inhabitants of New England did not like country music as much as the rest of the nation. Whatever inferences are made on the distribution of radio stations, must take into consideration two other facts. First, three of the top five radio markets in 2007 had no country radio station at all including Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco (Tucker, 2007); this may indicate that there is not significant demand, relative to other genres, to merit a country station in these markets. Interestingly, New York and Los Angeles were the top two markets for country records in 2011(Weinberg, 2011). This can be misleading because, as Weinberg states, "New York owes its top spot more to population than popularity" and that " when looking at music sales by genre, the South and Midwest stayed true to their country roots" (Weinberg, 2011). Among the top ten markets by the percentage of country album sales, Southern markets held eight of those spots, and while New York and Los Angeles held the two top spots for sales volume Dallas-Ft. Worth was third and in total Southern markets comprised half of the top ten as well.

Although these studies help us to understand who comprises the country music audience, the literature is still lacking and needs to be updated. The lack of quality demographic profiles of country music is a real problem for the specific validity of this study, and future studies done by scholars with better access to proprietary market data could remedy this issue.

Chapter 3:

Data and Methods

Data

The data used in this study consist of lyrics from popular country songs from 1944 through 2012. The data set has been restricted to 1944 through 2012 because chart data is not available for years prior to 1944, and the 2013 charts had not yet been finalized at the time of data collection. Using the 1940s as a starting point is not only the result of chart availability, but "country music" as a genre was not recognized as such until the 1940s (Peterson, 1997, p. 9). The sample was developed using *Billboard* chart data from *Record Research Incorporated's Music Archive Vault*. *Record Research Incorporated* is a licensee of *Billboard Magazine* (Record Research Incorporated, 2013). Because of changes in the *Billboard* charting methodologies, the following charts have been used: Top Country Songs (1944-1989), Top Singles and Tracks (1990-1993), Hot Country Singles and Tracks (1994-2000), Hot Country Singles and Tracks Titles (2001-2004), and Hot Country Songs (2005-2012). Although changes in charting methodologies introduces inconsistency into the data, these charts are the standard in research on popular country music (Aday & Austin, 2000; Cooper, 1985; Saucier, 1986; Van Sickel, 2005).

Sampling Methodology

There is a total of 764 songs in the sampling of 69 years of *Billboard* ranked songs (Whitburn, 2013). It is both purposive and based on theoretical assumptions as outlined by Altheide (1987). The use of top songs is theoretically important and is based on the following logic: (1) at best, the songs achieving the greatest rankings contained messages that captured the

common sentiments of the audience; (2) at worst, the messages of the songs did not offend or conflict with the popular sentiments held by members of the country music audience. The changes in the charting methodology create a less than optimal sample; however, *Billboard* charts remain the best resource for determining the success of country songs within the country music system of production and have been the standard for studies where the popularity of songs must be operationalized. For most years the top ten songs have been used; however, during the 70s, 80s and 1990s there were many songs that tied for various ranks; this caused many of the yearly sets to exceed ten songs sometimes leading to the inclusion of as many as 18 songs in a set. Popularity of country songs, as operationalized in this research, refers to the songs that performed best according to the *Billboard* charts for every year with finalized chart figures according to a sampling process outlined below.

Inclusion Scheme
1) Select the top ten songs that achieved #1 position if ten and only ten achieved that rank. a) If a tie exists causing more than ten to be included in the set, then select the song(s) with the most weeks at the #1 position i) If a tie still exists select songs that spent the most weeks on the charts
2) If year end sample is not complete with songs that peaked at #1 then refer to songs that peaked at the #2 position a) If ties exist then select the songs that spent the most weeks at the number two position i) If a tie still exists select songs that spent the most weeks on the charts
3) If ties still persist among songs ranking #10 or below that causes the year-end set to exceed ten songs then all songs tied for that position are included in the year end sample. For example, if five songs held the top five spots and then there was a 6-way tie for the number six spot then all songs tying are included.

The inclusion of all ties is inconvenient; however, the sample could have included every song that ever achieved the number one position on the *Billboard* charts, which would have made this project untenable.

The lyrics were retrieved from lyricsvault.net, maxilyrics.com, cowboylyrics.com, azlyrics.com, metrolyrics.com, songlyrics.com, and lyrics.net. A substantial number of the lyrics available from these websites were incorrect or incomplete, so the lyrics were verified, transcribed, and corrected by using the digital music subscription service Spotify in conjunction with the Djay 2 app for iPad which allows listeners to increase and decrease song tempo, and normalize vocals, in order to more quickly and accurately verify and transcribe songs. Also, for the sake of public interest and future research, these playlists have been made publicly available to subscribers of the Spotify service.

Analytic Heuristics

This study makes substantial use of the analytic heuristics of cognitive sociologists and Altheide's Ethnographic Content Analysis. Brekhus (2007, p. 448) argues that Zerubavelian culturalist cognitive sociology "studies the sociomental conventions by which we perceive, attend to, and disattend to features of social reality, classify and categorize the world, create meaning, construct identity, remember events and comprehend time." This approach is based upon the work done earlier by Zerubavel (1997), Berger and Luckmann (1966) Goffman (1986), Mannheim (1991) and others (See Brekhus, 2007). Where this school excels is in directing researchers to attend to features that have not been attended to in the past (Brekhus, 2007).

Cognitivists, such as Brekhus (2008), have argued that studying the "unmarked" attributes of social categories should be as important in the analysis as the "marked" aspects. For

understanding gender differentiation this means not only focusing on women but also on men and how they are differentially characterized in relation to each other; this involves lumping and splitting (Zerubavel, 1996). According to Zerubavel "lumping involves creating a cluster of things [...] that are regarded as more similar to one another than anything outside the cluster" (1996, p. 422) and splitting "entails widening the perceived gaps between them, thereby reinforcing the mental gaps between them" (1996, p. 424). This project recognizes that humans categorize based on presumed characteristics, and these categories can be differentiated based on the unequal distribution of characteristics. This project seeks to expose the differential distribution of sex-linked characteristics over time and by doing so coming to understand the sociomental conventions by which men and women have been differentiated.

This project does not reify gender difference by splitting men and women; rather, it begins by lumping human beings together and then determining the themes that are of primary import to the characters mentioned in country music. This analytic heuristic was used in Brekhus' (1996) study on the construction and maintenance of sexual identity in the US. Brekhus (1996) differentiates between various sexualities by determining the axes along which sexualities are differentiated from each other (e.g. quantity of sex, timing of sex, degree of consent, etc.). Therefore the next step in the project is to inductively determine how the mental gaps between women and men have been widened by establishing specifically how and when characteristics, experiences, and attitudes have been differentially associated with men and women. In the same way that sexualities are differentiated by the aforementioned characteristics, men and women are likely to be differentiated by specific characteristics. For example, instead of finding explicit passages like "never trust a woman" in Tex Williams song of the same name, and then searching

for other instances of women characterized as untrustworthy, this project would begin with "trustworthiness" and then develop how men and women in country songs have been associated with, or characterized as, being trustworthy or untrustworthy and in which situations. Using this example, it may be the situational differences of untrustworthiness that actually form an axis of differentiation between men and women, and this may also allow us to determine which characterizations have been more important over time in the differentiation of women and men. As I have previously explained, one of the common features of studies on gender in country music is a particular focus on women or men, not men and women in relation to each other. This study attempts to rectify this issue.

The analytic heuristics of cognitive sociology are theoretically important because Ridgeway's theory of the gender system is based on affect control and expectation states theory at the micro level. *Affect control* and *expectation states* theories rely on the existence of cultural assumptions about gender difference that constrain or encourage certain behaviors during interaction. These sets of assumptions, known as "modular ordering schemas," can be explained as things "that always appear combined in some way in actual, material experience, such as identities, settings, and events" (Ridgeway, 2006, p. 8). For example, if women are constantly associated with the home or motherhood then this can become part of a modular ordering schema. However Ridgeway notes that, "If an individual's personal interpretive schema is to become an ordering schema with material structural consequences, that schema must be validated socially by the apparent support of others" (Ridgeway, 2006, p. 10). Once these interpretive schemas have been widely incorporated throughout society, there can be macrosocial consequences.

Utilizing the analytic heuristics of cognitive sociologists in conjunction with Altheide's (1987) method of ethnographic content analysis is therefore an appropriate way of illuminating how, when, and for what reason women and men have been differentially associated with various characteristics. Another example would be the themes of employment and responses to grief, which Saucier (1986) uncovered as axes of differentiation in country music. If Saucier (1986) had focused on men's use of alcohol as a response to grief then she might not have uncovered how women were contrastingly characterized as emotionally resilient and more capable of dealing with emotion.

Methods of Analysis

Altheide's (1987) Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) lends itself well to sociological historical analyses such as these because it allows for the development of knowledge through the analysis of narrative data. As previously mentioned, country songs are characterized by the narratives they contain. The research goals of ECA are discovery and verification, place emphasis on validity, and progress in a reflexive and circular manner between data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Altheide, 1987). This study proceeds along these lines, and the analysis involved a considerable amount of inductive development of codes and then, using data from preliminary data analysis, deductively expanding the coding.

Preliminary analyses of the lyrical texts included creating word frequencies for all words used in all country lyrics using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. This produced a data set of approximately 5343 stemmed words to serve as a starting point for analysis. To clarify, these stemmed word frequencies counted all occurrences of "know" and "knowing" together, instead of counting them separately; however, words like "knowin'" were counted

separately. These variations in spelling and word use were not a problem because the word frequencies could be easily searched for abbreviations and synonyms. The initial word frequencies allowed me to understand which topics were discussed the most in all of the songs; however, this did not provide an understanding of how they varied over time. The song lyrics were therefore coded into 23 three-year sets (1944-1946, 1947-1949...) and word frequencies were completed for these sets which allowed me to pin point which topics varied over time, for example, the words love, drinking, and trucks all directed me toward particularly important themes in country music including substance use, romantic relationships, and driving automobiles and travelling. These preliminary word frequencies also allowed cross-checking of codes that were inductively developed to ensure that all references were accurately accounted for. For example, brand names like Levi's (jeans) showed up in these word frequencies and allowed me to find these references that might not have otherwise been coded because they were mentioned briefly in passing.

After the songs had been organized according to the gender of the performer(s), year debuted, and organized by song topic according to inductive coding, the song lyrics were coded in a circular fashion. This process, which was completed using NVivo, involved preliminary coding based on the word frequencies, inductively developing codes for common themes, and then returning to the word frequencies to determine whether any potentially relevant references were missed.

Chapter 4:

Results and Discussion

During the initial stages the songs were coded according to the gender of the artists.

Songs with more than one vocalist of the same gender were coded as either male or female and songs with more than one singer of different genders were coded as heterogeneous.

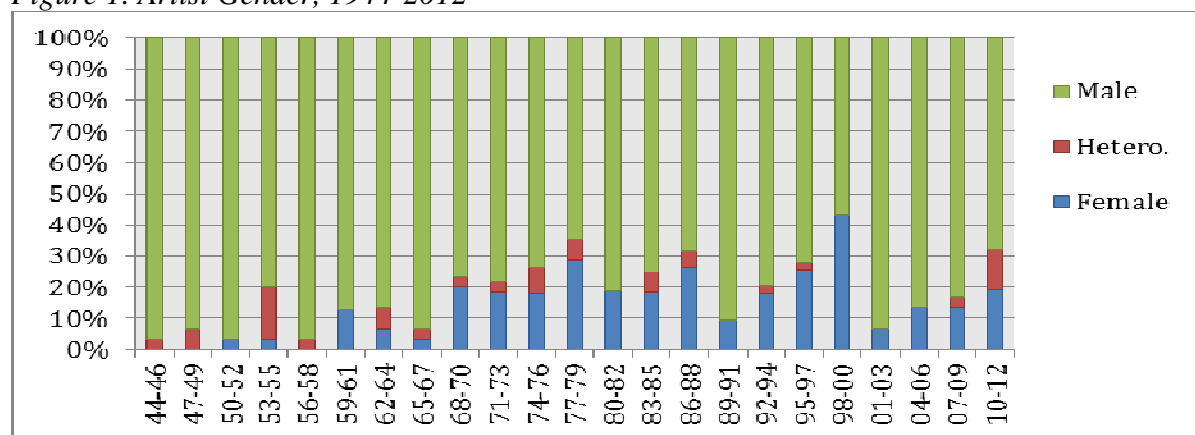
Table 1. Artist Gender

Gender	Number ^a	Percent ^b
Hetero.	30	3.9
Female	113	14.8
Male	621	81.3

^a N= 764

^b May not add up to 100% because of rounding

Figure 1. Artist Gender, 1944-2012



As the Table 1 and Figure 1 above show, the country charts are and always have been dominated by men, which means they have also been the primary conveyers of gender difference. The control of the country music charts is important because the messages are presented from a male point of view, and gives male audience members the opportunity to have their experiences validated by male country artists. Of course, this disproportionate number of

men, also diminishes the role of the female voice and the messages and concerns that are relevant to the experiences of women.

The songs were also coded according to their general subject matter. As Table 2 shows, eleven different general categories were found, although, these were further broken down into more specific sub-categories for the purposes of analysis.

Table 2. Song Topics

Topic	Number ^a	Percent ^b	Code Explanation
Romantic Rel.	601	78.66	Past, present, and potential romantic rel.
Life and Living	96	12.57	Way one should, has, or does live; joys of life
Work	12	1.57	Traditionally Paid Labor
Parent/Child Rel.	10	1.31	Relationship between a parent and child
Nation	9	1.18	Concerns the affairs of nations (e.g. war)
Thing or Phenomenon	9	1.18	Particular item or natural phenomenon
Crime and Deviance	6	.79	Acts of crime and deviance and the
Supernatural	6	.79	Religion and one about a Voodoo lady
Social Commentary	5	.65	General statements about social issues and
Travelling	5	.65	Songs about travelling
Other	5	.65	Novelty and Instrumental

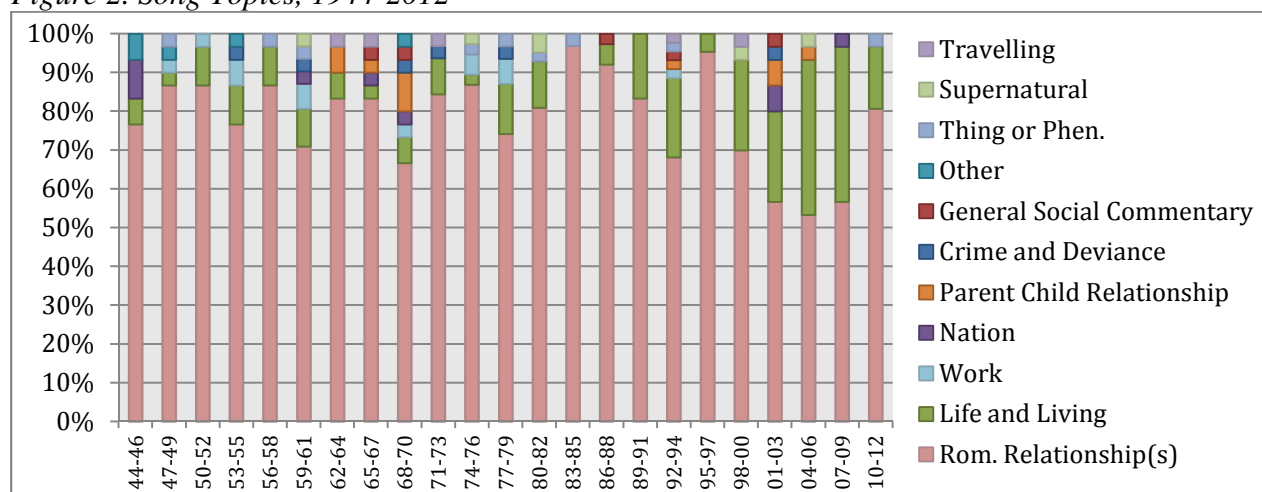
^a N=764

^b Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

Developing categories for the songs was one of the most troublesome aspects of this project, and songs were reconsidered and recoded throughout the project. The two most frequently occurring song topics were romantic relationships and life and living. Each of these primary themes had several subtopics; for romantic relationships, the subtopics included existing, past, and potential relationships, as well as songs about relationships generally and missed opportunities to develop a relationship. The overwhelming presence of songs about romantic relationships indicates that there is a great concern for the development and maintenance of romantic relationships among the country music audience. The subtopics for the “life and living” category included descriptions of oneself and others lives, recreation and relaxation, the progression or cycle of life, advice and lessons on life, hometown and home

region, joys of life, and difficult times in life. While songs about romantic relationships dominate the dataset, the topics of country songs have varied over time. The following figure depicts the variation in song topics by percentages of songs over the analyzed time frame.

Figure 2. Song Topics, 1944-2012



The Differential Characterizations of Men and Women

Analysis of the lyrics uncovered five primary axes along which men and women were differentiated. These five thematic groups include romantic relationships; the body; crime, deviance, and violence; work (traditionally paid labor); and cultural capital. These thematic groups allowed me to focus on the primary ways that men and women are differentiated in relation to these themes. These do not encapsulate all of the axes by which men and women are differentiated but they are significant enough by themselves to provide a fairly clear picture of gender differentiation over time.

Romantic Relationships

As was shown in *Table and Figure 2*, romantic relationships are the primary topic among the songs in the dataset. However, this category contains a number of other subtopics which can help us to understand changes in the depictions of relationships over time. Table 3 shows the

number of songs by romantic relationship subtopic, and figure 3 shows the romantic relationship subtopics from 1944 through 2012.

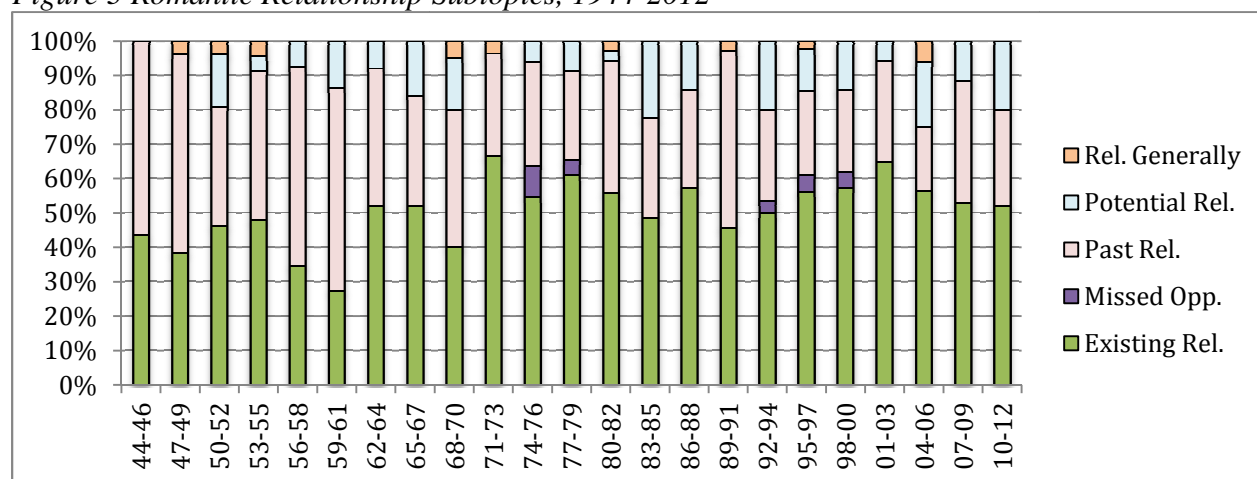
Table 3 Romantic Relationship Subtopics

Subtopics	Number ^a	Percent ^b
Existing	304	50.58
Past	219	36.43
Potential	61	10.15
General	9	1.4
Missed Opp.	8	1.3

^a N=601

^b Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

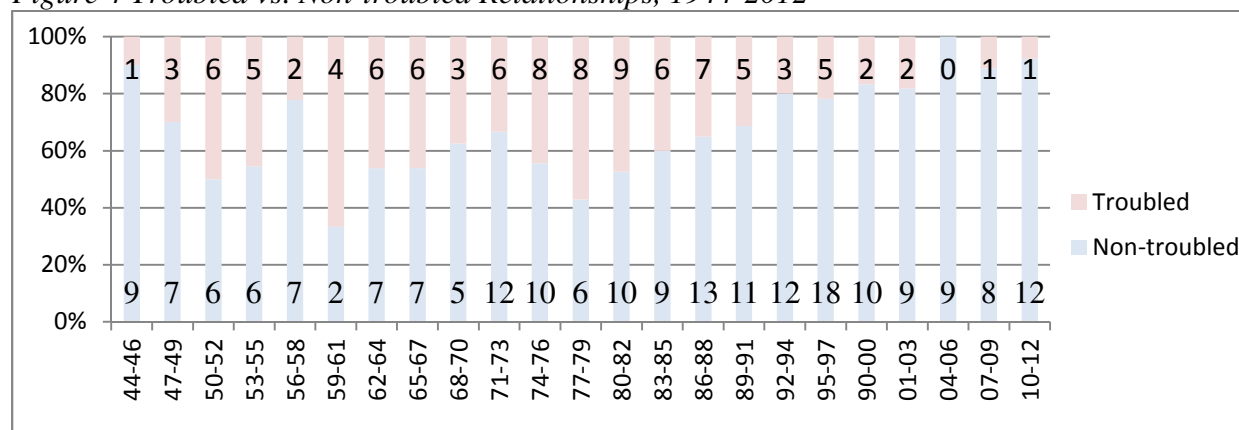
Figure 3 Romantic Relationship Subtopics, 1944-2012



The songs that were coded as “existing relationships” involved relationships that were depicted as still intact in the content of the songs; “past relationships” were those that indicated that the relationship was over; “potential relationships” were those in which one was attempting to establish a relationship; “relationships generally” referred to songs that discussed romantic relationships generally rather than a specific relationship; and “missed opportunities” referred to songs where there was no hope of the characters establishing a relationship.

This begins to give us a clearer picture of the content of the songs over time. The songs about past relationships were primarily about coping with failed relationships. However, that does not mean that the songs about existing relationships depicted successful relationships with satisfied partners, in fact a large percentage of these songs were about troubled relationships. “Troubled relationships” were conceptualized as those in which there was a stated criticism of a partner or concern about the relationship that was central to the song, or where one of the characters was being tempted to commit infidelity or was actively engaged in infidelity. Overall the relationships depicted in country music have been more successful and less troubled. In the chart below, the trend in troubled relationships as a percentage of songs about existing relationships can be clearly seen.

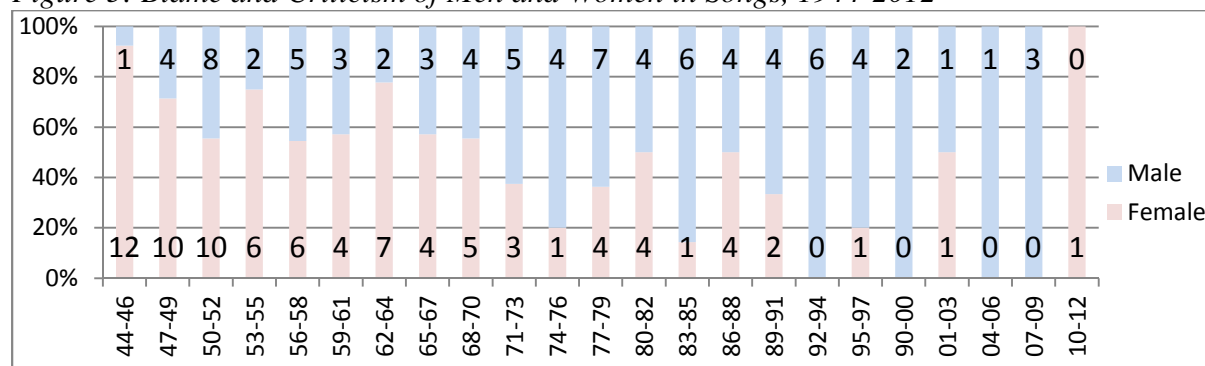
Figure 4 Troubled vs. Non-troubled Relationships, 1944-2012



The visible trend in the decrease of troubled relationships as a percentage of songs about romantic relationships is important because it indicates the depiction of more successful and satisfying relationships. However, what is more important are the periods where there are steady increases in the number of songs about troubled relationships which are found from 1944-1961 and from 1970-1979. Another interesting point is that women were more often held responsible for the troubles and failures depicted from 1944-1961 while men were primarily criticized for

troubles in the relationships from 1970-1979. The same pattern was true about the placement of blame and criticism for troubles in songs about existing relationships songs and for the failure of past relationships. Figure 5 below shows the blame and criticisms placed on men and women as a percentage of total blame and criticism coded in the sources.

Figure 5: Blame and Criticism of Men and Women in Songs, 1944-2012



Blame and criticism were coded in the songs where the male or female was blamed or criticized for troubles in the relationship, or for the failure of the relationship. However, the question that this study is attempting to answer is how are men and women differentiated in these songs over time?

Never, Never Trust a Woman

Analysis of the early years shows that women were most often blamed and criticized regarding the failure of, or troubles in, a relationship. Many of these criticisms are found in the song “Never, Never Trust a Woman” by Tex Williams (1947), the perennial misogynist of early country music, who also wrote the song “Don’t Telephone, Don’t Telegraph, Tell a Woman” (1948) which explains if you “tell a woman [something] she’ll tell the whole darn town.” Tex Williams lists a number of reasons that women should supposedly not be trusted, including the argument that women are after men's money stating that you “have to watch your dough or she’ll

cheat you blind.” This was not an isolated case and was, in fact, one of the primary criticisms of women during the early years. This sentiment of women taking a man’s money was repeated in nine other songs between 1944 and 1959 alone. Money and other resources were also depicted as ways that other men would attempt to “steal” or “lure” women away. For example, Webb Pierce (1952) begs his partner in “That Heart Belongs to Me” to refuse to allow other men “buy [her] love with riches.”

A related sentiment was also presented in Merle Travis’ (1946) “Divorce me C.O.D.” in which he argued that, once he is gone, his former partner is going to find that “she can’t pay her bills with a little ol’ I.O.U.” This refers to his opinion that she couldn’t pay her bills on her own, and that she needed him for financial support. A second type of post-relationship criticism comes from Faron Young (1958) who sings “Now you’ve gone and left me, you’re with somebody new; But I wonder if you told him I bought the clothes on you” and later in the song he asks whether she told him that her former partner “bought the shoes on her feet.” Only one song during the early years depicted a man as being interested in a woman’s money. This single reference is found when Lefty Frizzell (1950) sings “If you’ve got the money honey, I’ve got the time... but if you run short of money, I’ll run short of time.” By the early 1960’s women are no longer being accused of taking a man’s money as regularly even though men are depicted as having access to and spending money. This may be due to steady entrance of women into the labor force, a trend which shows a near doubling of the participation of women in the labor force between 1930 and 1965 (Goldin, 2015) which might have helped relieve some of this economic conflict within relationships. This is discussed further in the section on work and the access to and use of money and credit.

Another primary criticism of women during this time was their “fickle” and “untrue” hearts. Here women were depicted as cheating, changing partners capriciously, and breaking hearts. Louis Jordan (1944) in “Is You or Ain’t You My Baby,” states that “A woman is a creature that has always been strange, just when you’re sure of one you’ll find that she’s gone and made a change.” Infidelity and capriciousness was a consistent criticism of women in early country music and was coded in 18 sources out of 76 songs about troubled or failed relationships from 1944-1961. Two songs referred to women writing letters to their partners who were overseas in the military to inform them that they were dissolving the relationship. For example, Jean Shepard, in her spoken-word song with Ferlin Husky (1953) “Dear John,” informs her former partner that not only is she ending the relationship, but also that her new husband wants her picture back, and, with a twist, informs him that she is marrying his brother. Gene Autry (1945), upon learning that his partner wants to end the relationship in the song “At Mail Call Today,” states that he “slept in the foxhole amid shot and shell, I’m telling you now love it’s worse than all hell.” Both of these songs might have been particularly salient to men and might have helped to reinforce the idea of women as treacherous because both of these songs were hits at key times in American military conflicts. Gene Autry’s “At Mail Call Today” was released in 1945 and charted just before victory in Europe had been won during World War II, and remained on the charts until afterwards. Jean Shepard and Ferlin Husky’s “Dear John” was released in July 1953, the same month that the armistice was signed with North Korea.

The song “Dear John” also implicates John’s brother, Don, in the treachery, which isn’t a surprise because the men in many of these “cheating women” songs actively try to gain the affection of women that are known to be in relationships. Women in these songs are often treated

as property to be stolen as well, for example, in Eddy Arnold's (1949) "Don't Rob Another Man's Castle" he tells the listener not to "rob another man's castle, you'll break his heart don't you see; I robbed another man's castle, now someone just stole her from me." And, Carl Smith (1953) in "Hey Joe" sings that Joe's partner is a "honey, she's a sugar pie" and warns that he's going to try to steal her away.

It Wasn't God Who Made Honky-Tonk Angels

The first appearance of a solo female artist in the data was Kitty Wells, who, in 1952, responded to Hank Thompson and his Lost Bravos Boys "The Wild Side of Life" by singing "It wasn't God who made honky-tonk angels, as you wrote in the words of your song; too many times married men think they're still single that has caused many a' good girl to go wrong." This served as a symbolic response to the barrage of negative characterizations of women in early country music. It would be over a decade, however, before Wells' sentiments would consistently found in the lyrics of country music.

This second major period of negative characterizations occurred from the mid-1960s until the early-80s. This time, however, it would be the men who couldn't remain faithful and act as if they were in a committed relationship. If one refers back to *figure 1* it can be seen that there is a sudden uptick in the presence of women's voices. However, most of the time it wasn't the women who were characterizing men in this way, it was the male artists who seemed to regret their wild and free living, and some doing so while acknowledging the faithfulness of their partner. In Roger Miller's (1964) "Dang me" he laments that he has "spent the groceries and half the rent" while drinking with his buddies and that he should be hanged for this activity. Bill Anderson (1969) argues that he sleeps all day and runs all night and that he can throw his life

away if he wants to despite his partner's pleas for him to change. Throughout the 1970's there were many songs praising the women that remained with men despite the men's wild and free lifestyle. In Ray Price's (1972) "She's got to be a Saint," he explains all of the ways that he fails his partner in the relationship yet she stays with him. This theme is also played out in T.G. Sheppard's (1974) "Devil in the Bottle," Waylon Jennings' and Willie Nelson's (1975) "Good Hearted Woman," Waylon Jennings' (1979) "Amanda," and Kenny Roger's (1979) "She Believes in Me."

Cleaning this Gun

It was also found that families were more involved in the young women's lives than in young men's. Many of the country songs involve young people that are dating or beginning to date, and their families are often involved, but more so with young women than with young men. Table 4 shows the number of songs in which family members are involved in male's and female's romantic relationships.

Table 4 Family Involvement in Romantic Relationships

Number		Number	
Female's Relationships		Male's Relationships	
Father	14	Father	6
Mother	7	Mother	4
Brother	1	Brother	1

Not only are there quantitative differences in the amount of family involvement as depicted in country songs but there are real qualitative differences as well. With regards to the family involvement in females romantic relationships, there are even two songs which describe a cycle of family involvement. The first of these two songs are "She's in Love with the Boy" by Shania Twain (1991) in which the daughter and her partner come home late and the father sends her upstairs so that he and the boyfriend can have a discussion. At this point the mother busts in

and reminds the father of their experiences with her father when they were younger and pleads for him not to lose his temper. The other song which expresses this cycle of family involvement in female's relationships was "Cleaning this Gun" by Rodney Atkins (2007). In this song the boyfriend-to-be goes into the female's home and has a sit-down talk with her father which includes the words "She deserves respect, that's what she'll get, ain't it son?" and ends with "I'll see you when you get back, bet I'll be up all night still cleaning this gun." This is depicted as an ongoing tactic because the singer explains his experience with this tactic in the romantic relationships of his youth, and then claims that he will use the same tactic with his daughter's potential partners.

"Cleaning this Gun" (2007) is not the only song where there is a threat or use of violence to "protect" a daughter. In Tennessee Ernie Ford's (1950) song "Shotgun Boogie" the father meets the boyfriend-to-be and "cocked back the hammer right on the spot" and when the "gun went off" the potential boyfriend outran the shot. Claude King's (1962) "Wolverton Mountain" describes a father who protects his daughter on the mountain, and who might take a potential suitor's life if he wanders there. This "protection" seems less like protection of the daughters, and more like protection of the father's property, when we couple these with three other of the instances where fathers "give away" or present their daughters for marriage by walking them down the aisle and raising their veil. All of these instances may reinforce father's attitudes about being involved in their daughter's relationships, and the references are found throughout the history of country music from the 1950s through the 2000s.

Mothers are involved in their daughter's relationships in much more subtle ways. They critique things such as their daughters name tattooed on their boyfriend's arms, and inspect

potential partners. They are also concerned more with curfews, which is mentioned in three of the songs. This indicates that there is a different approach by men and women's involvement in their children's romantic relationships. The women are more interested in placing relatively sensible limits on their children's activities, while the men are not above using threats of physical violence to limit their children's activities with their partners. Finally, brothers are involved in the relationships in two songs, one involves a female and the other a male. In the Louvin Brothers (1956) "I don't believe you've met my baby" the brother lets a potential suitor know that his sister wants to marry. The reference to a brother's involvement in a male's relationship involves the brother marrying the male's former partner while he is away at war in "Dear John" (1953) as discussed earlier.

Family involvement in male's relationships are much different than females relationships. Here there is more concern from the mothers which involves worrying about their sons being out late and making sure their sons aren't up late talking on the phone. Mothers also play an assistive role in relationships in two of the songs; in Darryl Worley's (2004) "Awful, Beautiful Life" the mother sits between her son and daughter in law after they have a fight, and in Billy Currington's (2006) "Good Directions" the mother sends the girl of her son's dreams to him. Mothers and fathers are also referenced as trying to teach their son courtesy in Tim McGraw's (1995) "I Like It, I Love It," and the Bellamy Brothers (1979) follow their dad's advice in the song "If I said you had a Beautiful Body (Would you hold it against me)" by not making small talk and saying what is on their minds. Many of these instances of family involvement in male's relationships actually show assistance on the part of family members, which is in direct contrast to the protectionism of the family members of females. In other words, father's are more likely to

encourage the development of their sons romantic relationships by giving advice while they place restrictions and make threats concerning their daughter's involvement in relationships.

These differences in family involvement may all cause males and females to be given greater or lesser freedom to make their own decisions by reinforcing ideas about the gendered treatment of their children. The more violent aspects of the “protection” of females may also play a role in reinforcing the willingness among men to commit violence as a way to solve problems.

We Fogged up the Windows in my Old Chevy

On the other hand, there might be good reason to be protective of daughters, especially if the depictions of males in country music are accurate. They are almost always the ones driving (as in shown in *Table 5, Who drives on dates?*), often to a secluded area, and they always provide the alcohol when it is mentioned in the songs.

Table 5. Who Drives on Dates?

Gender	Number
Male	25
Female	3
Unclear	2

One example of how this combination is supposed to work is from Kenny Chesney's (2007) "Never Wanted Nothing More" where he sings "I took Katie down by the river with a six-dollar bottle of wine, just a fool tryin' to play it cool hopin' she'd let me cross the line." Alan Jackson (1993) sang about being out on the Chattahoochee River and that he and his partner "fogged up in the windows in my old Chevy, I was willing but she wasn't ready." If the father's desire to protect their daughters is true then why don't we see young women being given a car or encouraged and supported to get a car in these songs so that they can have greater control over their dates, where they go, etc.?

Other songs carried this narrative of driving, alcohol, and physical intimacy as well, Garth Brooks (1993) sings about a date that proceeds with "wine and dancing... hard romancing... truck is rocking..." Of course, this is a male's truck, because in country music women don't drive trucks, they drive Saturns, Beamers, Cadillacs and Lincolns (in songs at a time when Lincoln and Cadillac didn't make trucks), Hondas, and cars. When the characters in the songs go to drive-in movies, once again the male is the one driving and often there is physical intimacy. However, even though the male is the typical driver throughout the history of country music, this particular scenario males and females going to a secluded area and drinking has become prevalent since 1993. Prior to 1993, there were no songs about drinking with women in secluded areas, although the majority of the time that women were found drinking in songs prior to 1993 they were accompanied by men. In the songs where males and females drink together since 1993, 7 out of 10 involved going to a secluded area to do so.

Since male's vehicles are so important to relationships, it may not be a surprise that all three references to a female destroying property involve destroying a male's vehicle because he was caught cheating. This was true in Al Dexter's and Bing Crosby's (1944) "Pistol Packin' Mama" where the woman catches the male in a cabaret and "kicks out his windshield" and in Carrie Underwood's (2006) "Before he Cheats," the protagonist digs a key into the male's truck, carves her name into his leather seats, knocks out the lights with a Louisville Slugger, and slashes all four tires.

All differences in criticisms of men and women, as well as their roles in relationships, help to differentiate women and men in relation to each other, and as we can see these have changed over time. Not only are women depicted as needing to be protected, but we also see that

men are depicted as being the ones who have control over dates and transportation. Even the criticisms of men and women tend to track broader changes in society, as women are criticized less for their economic reliance on men, while it may be the economic advancement of women that enabled many of the men to act in irresponsible ways in later years.

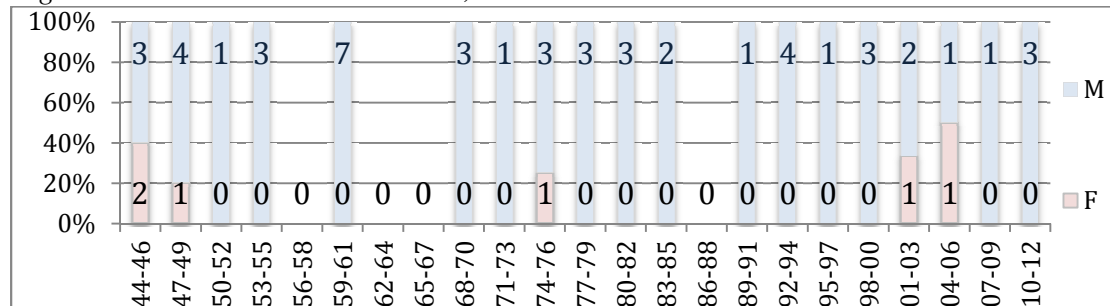
All My Rowdy Friends Have Settled Down

Even though there are a few examples of women destroying property, the vast majority of crimes depicted in country music are committed by males. There are also significant differences in the way that men and women are associated with crime, deviance, violence, and substance use. Table 6 shows the number of sources coded with types of crimes and references to incarceration that are associated with men and women in country songs, and Figure 6 shows the sources coded for male and female crimes from 1944 through 2012.

Table 6. Crime by Gender

Crime	Number	
	Male	Female
Violent	20	4
Vice	14	0
Property	11	3
Traffic	7	0
Incarceration	5	0
Unspecified	3	0
Contempt of Court	2	0

Figure 6. Male and Female Crimes, 1944-2012



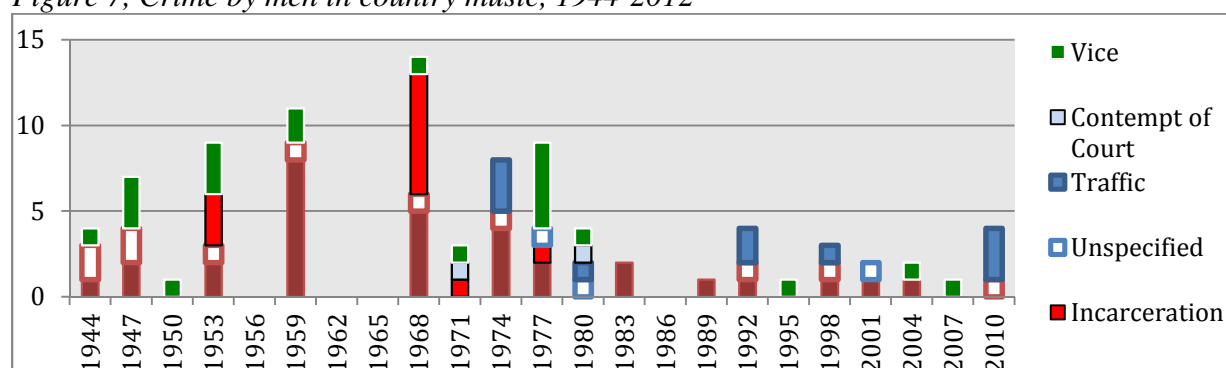
In this study, crime is conceptualized as any possibly criminal non-state sanctioned violence; destruction or illicit acquisition of property; and other commonly recognized crimes. For example, some governments have not formally criminalized fighting in school, while others have. Different governments in America and abroad also treat various vices differently. In this study, activities such as smoking marijuana and independently making alcohol have been considered as crimes.

Three of the only nine instances of females committing crimes were discussed earlier and involved the destruction of their partner's vehicle. The other three instances during the first half of the analyzed period involve shooting at revenueurs, one woman "letting [a man] have it" with a rolling pin when her partner comes home late from a poker game, and the other shooting a man for cheating. There were two versions of "Pistol Packin' Mama" and in Al Dexter's (1944) version of the woman ends up shooting and killing the man because he cheated. There were two other potential references to crime that were not included because of their nature: one involved a Voodoo queen vanquishing a man because he did not keep his promise to marry her after she did a spell to make him rich, while the second involved the passing use of the phrase "hookers" without reference to gender. It should be noted that the reference to "hooker" was in the context of singing about a bar that has "dancing girls and hookers." Although this word is often associated with female prostitution, it is not necessarily the word's only usage.

The activities of the men in these songs are much more concerning. These crimes of men include murder of other men and women, spousal abuse, theft, robbery, gambling, manufacturing of alcohol, and even gang-rape. However, as can be seen in *Figure 7, Crimes by men in country music over time*, the crimes committed by men in country songs have become less frequent and

less severe over time. Country music has moved from Johnny Cash (1968) depicting a man that would shoot another "just to watch him die" or when Stonewall Jackson (1959) sang about a man that took his partner's life because she was "untrue" to depicting men as driving in risky ways and having school house fights. In the same way, men have gone from being depicted as actually shooting at men from whom they were protecting their daughters, to simply sitting and cleaning their gun as a threat to resort to violence. However, the presence of the use of violence is disconcerting because it may normalize the use of violence among men, and may validate men's beliefs about the use of violence.

Figure 7, Crime by men in country music, 1944-2012



In four of the songs where men kill other men it is because of conflict over a woman. However, this is not the only times where one is willing to trade a human life for their partner. Three other songs involve a man asking god to take his life instead of his partner's or stating that he would "lay down [his] life for" a woman. This places a significant amount of importance on romantic relationships and the lives of women. In three of the cases where a man is killed over a woman there is no indication that the men involved are in a stable romantic relationship with the women. On the other hand there is one song in which a woman gives up her life because her partner dies. This is a song by Willie Nelson and Ray Charles (1984) titled "Seven Spanish

Angels," in which a woman picks up her lover's empty gun after he is shot and killed in a gunfight and points it at the men that had killed her partner so that she can also be killed because, allegedly, she "can't make it without her man."

Among the 20 songs coded for males committing violence, six included references to violence against females, four were unclear regarding the victims, and fifteen included violence against men. The reason that there are more than 20 victims coded is because many of the references involve a fight and the gender of the other participant isn't made clear, however, if the song was from a man's point of view then we could be sure of the gender of at least one of the participants in the violence. This pattern of violence among men and against men is not necessarily surprising because men are, and historically have been, the majority of perpetrators and victims of violence.

There was really no pattern to the violence against women. The six coded sources varied in the nature of the violence they contained, but it can be noted that females were killed by men in three of the songs. One was killed because she was "untrue," another was killed when a man was in a drunken rage, and the final was the death of the woman in "Seven Spanish Angels" where the woman commits suicide by pointing an empty gun at violent men. However, in "Seven Spanish Angels" it is unclear whether these violent men were agents of the state or not. In all three cases their partners died as well. One was executed by hanging, and the other killed himself after killing his partner. The remaining references to violence against women involved robbery and an implied gang rape. In Kenny Rogers' (1979) "Coward of the County" three brothers entered a woman's home and "took turns" at her, and in the next scene of the song her clothes are torn and she is crying with a "shattered look." This analysis of the lyrics was shared in the

music community, including in *Rolling Stone* (Hudak, 2015) and by other scholars (Gelfer, 2013). The primary argument of this song is that sometimes one “has to fight to be a man,” and begins by discussing a promise that the protagonist of the song made to his father, who died in prison, “not to do the things he’s done” and to “walk away from trouble” whenever possible. However, after finding his partner in such a state he takes his father’s picture down, cries, and seeks vengeance on the perpetrators of the crime stating that “sometimes you’ve got to fight to be a man.” Other instances of fighting include a son fighting at school (1991) – to which the boy's father responds quite positively when the boy gets home, singing "Daddies don't just love their children every now and then, it's a love without end." Men also fight in bars and over treatment by other men, as in the case in "A Boy Named Sue," (1969) when Sue would "bust [a] guy's head" for laughing at his name.

Soldier’s Last Letter

All of the violence committed thus far only refers to potentially criminal violence, not state sanctioned violence. The majority of all references to participation in violence involve state sanctioned violence, and it is the second most frequent cause of death among men in country songs. There is only one song, Toby Keith’s (2003) “American Soldier,” which mentions a female soldier, in which the American Soldier states “I’m and American Soldier [...] beside my brothers and my sisters I will proudly take a stand. When liberty’s in jeopardy I will always do what’s right...” The American soldier also notes that he has “counted up the costs” and “knows the sacrifice.” The sacrifice of male lives is depicted as the cost of freedom in several of the songs. For example, Merle Haggard in “The Fightin’ Side of Me” (1970) argues that if a person complains about war and are “runnin’ down his country” (criticizing US policies) then those

people, as he states, are “walking on the fightin’ side of me.” Of course this song was in reference to the conflict in Vietnam, where 58,212 US men and 8 American women lost their lives. According to Merle Haggard they “fought and died to keep” the way of life that others were criticizing. This same uncritical position of American policies is echoed in Darryl Worley’s (2003) “Have you Forgotten” where he criticizes those that are criticizing war, this song was released during the same month that invading Iraq was being mulled over by American leaders. Earlier in the conflict Johnny Wright (1965), in “Hello Vietnam,” sang:

“...America has trouble to be stopped. We must stop Communism in that land, or freedom will start slipping through our hand. I hope and pray that someday the world will learn, that fires we don’t put out will bigger burn. We must save freedom at any cost, or someday our own freedom will be lost.”

This was at a time when there was a mandatory draft for American males, which is likely one of the reasons that males comprise all of the deaths mentioned in war, and almost all references to soldiers. Similar sentiments were also stated during the time of the Second World War when Bob Wills (1945), in “Silver Dew on the Blue Grass Tonight” sings, “Stars of gold on the old flag tonight, while you fight for a cause that is right; you will keep that flag on high for those boys that had to die.” Ever since since the perennial US conflicts became less deadly for American soldiers and the draft was ended, there have been less references to the death of men in country songs because of war. The last mention of male death as a result of war came in Merle Haggard’s (1970) “Fightin’ Side of Me,” which was three years before the compulsory draft was ended. The first war related deaths in country music were in 1944, the year after the compulsory draft began, so unfortunately there isn’t enough data to examine how war deaths were discussed, nor was

there a war as catastrophic as World War I or World War II during which there was no compulsory draft with which to compare other periods.

“Soldier’s Last Letter” by Ernest Tubb (1944) is actually a song about a mother who receives an incomplete letter from her son, which is how she comes to realize that he had died in battle. This is the primary way that women are related to war in the dataset, as partners and family members of loved ones fighting and dying overseas. “Hello Vietnam” (1965) is actually a song about a man that “has heard the bugle call” and must now leave his loved one. Since the vast majority of songs are written with the male voice these dominate the concerns about war, unfortunately this means that the effects of the war on women are often not discussed.

Long-Neck Bottle, Let Go of my Hand...

One theme that was thoroughly discussed in relation to men and women was substance use such as the use of alcohol, tobacco, coffee, marijuana, etc. *Table 7* shows the differences in variety and frequency with which women and men are depicted as using substances.

Table 7. Substance Use by Gender

Substance	Number	
	Male	Female
Alcohol	84	41
Tobacco	11	1
Coffee	8	1
Marijuana	3	0
Pills	2	0
"Drugs"	0	1

Coffee was included because it is almost always referred to as being used in the morning, which tends to imply an instrumental use. Cokes, tea, and soda pop were also mentioned in the data but it was infrequent, although they were always discussed in relation to recreation and dating.

Marijuana is presumably mentioned three times, although colloquialisms are used in two of the references and tobacco is also much more frequently used by men in the songs.

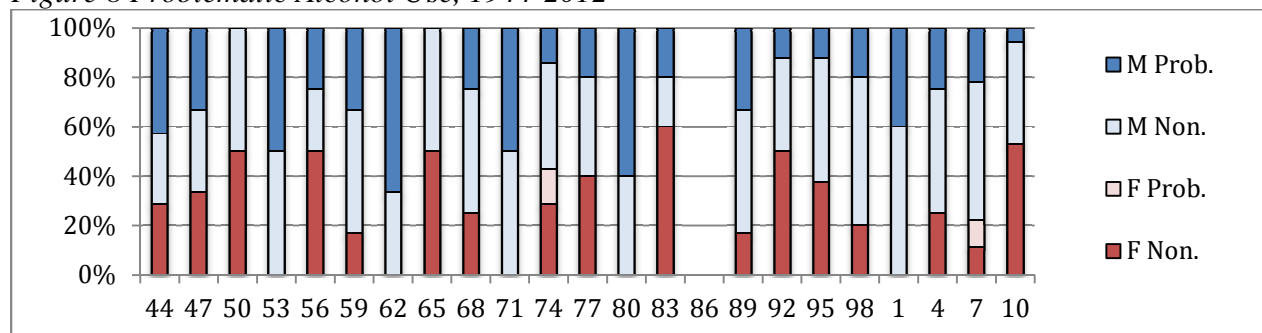
The only reference of women using tobacco is on a date in Tex Williams (1947) “Smoke, Smoke, Smoke! (That Cigarette)” where, according to the singer, his “smooching party was going’ real nice” with his partner when the female stopped and said “Tex, Excuse me please, but I just gotta have another cigarette.” Male use is much more varied, although the relationship to tobacco use changes over time. In the latter years smoking is referred to as something that harms health but men use anyways as is the case in Kenny Chesney’s (2005) song “Living in fast Forward” where he sings, “Greasy cheeseburgers and cheap cigarettes, one day they’ll get me if they ain’t got me yet.” In Billy Currington’s (2009) “People are Crazy,” an older gentleman lights a cigarette and claims “these things will kill me yet.” These two are a far cry from Tex Williams’ (1947) pre-surgeon general’s warning where he states that he “don’t reckon that it’ll hinder your health” and that he’s smoked them all his life and he ain’t dead yet. This indicates that despite the warnings that these men are willing to risk destroying their bodies, while tobacco is hardly used by women. This will be further discussed in the section on bodies.

Women are likewise never depicted as using marijuana which involves the risk of criminal prosecution. However, one of the references to marijuana is that it isn’t used in his town, nor do they “take [...] trips on LSD” but that “white lightning’s still the biggest thrill of all.” This is sung in Merle Haggard’s (1969) “Okie from Muskogee” and is used to contrast his town to behaviors of the “hippies out in San Franscisco.” The other two references occur in Tracy Lawrence’s (1996) “Time Marches On” and The Zac Brown Band’s (2010) “Toes.” The former mentions that the narrator’s brother is “wearing beads and he smokes a lot of dope,” which is in a song about time passing and growing older. This is obviously another reference to the 1960s counter culture, because the song soon after mentions Bob Dylan (1965) singing “Like

a Rolling Stone.” The final reference to marijuana is used when Zac Brown sings that he is going “to lay in the sun and roll a big fat one” on vacation; this is a colloquialism, and there are other things that could be rolled fat, but it is highly doubtful that he is referencing a burrito. The reference of a female using “drugs” involve John Michael Montgomery’s (2000) reference to a young girl’s daddy who “drank all day and mommy did drugs.” The father’s drinking in this song leads to him killing his wife and turning the gun on himself. The other drug use mentioned in the song involve pills, one of which is a reference to wild living in past where Hank Williams Jr. (1981) states in “All My Rowdy Friends have Settled Down” that “cornbread and ice tea’s took the place of pills and 90 proof” while the last reference to using pills is for treating a morning hangover.

Figure 8 shows the trend in problematic and non-problematic alcohol use over time. Problematic alcohol use is conceptualized as alcohol use that leads to problems in life, alcohol that is used while concurrently engaged in acts of crime and deviance, or the use of alcohol in response to problems in life. This grouping was done as a way to group references to alcohol usage so that the differences in usage between men and women could be easily shown. Non-problematic alcohol use refers to all other instances of use, which is typically in relationships or social settings.

Figure 8 Problematic Alcohol Use, 1944-2012



The most important aspect of *figure 8* is the difference in the men and women's relationship to alcohol. Men often use alcohol in ways that cause problems in their relationships, or it is used to cope with the problems of their lives, while women's use of alcohol is almost always in the context of a relationship or social setting. Overall men were depicted as engaging in problematic alcohol use in 31 sources, and non-problematic alcohol use in 57. Women were depicted as being engaged in problematic alcohol use in 2 songs versus 40 non-problematic.

Often times the alcohol use among women is seen as a problem for by men that were formerly their partners, because they are going out without them or going out with someone new. There were four subcategories that were included in the female non-problematic drinking category: "going out" (n=26), "drinking with male" (n=9), and "other" (n=6) which included disparate references to alcohol consumption. Going out included many references where the woman was out looking for a romantic relationship, but overall referred to women simply having a good time in bar and other settings. "Drinking with male" involved more intimate settings such as the home, or out in a secluded area. However there are two cases that could be considered problematic. Both instances involved a woman drinking alone, presumably at home, and wanting to be with a man. One of the songs involves a woman that is lonely and calls a male that otherwise, one would assume, she wouldn't call. This is a duet and the male in the song is singing the same lyrics along with her, so they are in the same boat of dealing with loneliness by drinking.

While the majority of depictions of males consuming alcohol were non-problematic and similar to the non-problematic drinking, the primary difference between men and women was within the problematic drinking category. Problematic drinking among men included three

subcategories including “drinking and engaged in crime” (n=9), “alcohol and family/relationship problems” (n=9), and “drinking to cope” (n=16). “Drinking and engaged in crime” involved making and drinking alcohol, celebrating posse executions, drinking and gambling, alcohol related violence, and a man getting other men drunk and robbing them. “Alcohol and family/relationship problems” involved wives being displeased with their husbands drinking because they came home drunk; men spending the grocery and rent money on alcohol; and drinking and neglecting their family. Finally drinking to cope involved men “drowning their sorrows” with alcohol, or being driven to drink because of the women that they are in relationships with.

However, problematic drinking among women and men has generally decreased just as crime and violence have also decreased overall. The images of men and women are much less deviant than they have been in the past, and the depictions of men and women are more similar than they ever have been, which may be a sign that some of the differentiation between men and women are beginning to break down, at least in terms of substance use and crime. This is the reason that the Hank Williams Jr. (1981) song titled "All My Rowdy Friends have Settled Down" is so appropriate for the sections discussing crime, violence, and substance use. It's debut year also approximately marks an overall changing of the thematic guard in country music.

If I Said You Had a Beautiful Body...

The way that bodies are discussed and depicted in country music provides one of the most interesting ways that men and women are differentiated. It is also the longest lasting axis of differentiation, which is likely due to physical sex differences being the foundations for

difference in a heteronormative system. Women are often referred to as beautiful with features that are appealing to men, and men's bodies are often depicted as run down, used or worn out.

Table 8 shows the references to bodies which had the most sources coded, and shows the differences in the references between men and women. The first thing that can be noticed are the differences in references to men and women being physically attractive. Physical attractiveness is given a significant amount of importance with regards to women (n=67) and references included women as beautiful, hot, cute, pretty, etc. while the majority of references to men being physically attractive (n=8) were summed up with “good looking” or referring to a man as “looking good.”

Table 8. References to Bodies

Reference to Body	Number		Difference
	Female	Male	
Physically Attractive	67	8	59
Hands	53	91	38
Hair	50	14	36
Face	164	132	32
Eyes	92	62	30
Head	18	48	30
Lips	45	22	23
Arms	31	49	18
Body Generally	31	19	12
Feet	21	32	11
Knees	1	10	9
Back	4	12	8
Fingers	6	14	8
Chest	10	18	8
Clothes/Acces.	69	69	=
Other	88	123	35
Total Sources Coded	320	348	28

Other parts of the female body are often referred to in relation to a male. But, as you can see the male hand is referenced much more often in country music. The female hand is often used to indicate some sort of relationship to another, and as a symbol of connection between two

parties. In relationships between a man and a woman, this is found in references to holding hands, a relationship being in their hands, daughter's hand in marriage, etc.; however, the majority of references to men's hands are similar.

The differentiation of men's and women's hands are found in the much more active use of men's hands, occur much less frequently among references to women. The male hands are often utilized in very active ways and are referenced in working (n=4), fighting (n=6), driving (n=6), or shaking other men's hands (n=5), and only driving was referenced with women's hands (n=2). Many of these indicate continuous use of one's agency in order to carry out a task, as opposed to holding hands where there is the implied opportunity to use one's agency to discontinue holding hands, but is nevertheless representative of a much more passive use of the hands. Their hands are often described in very different ways: men's hands are "big and calloused," "huge," "hard," "iron." On the other hand, (pun intended) women's hands are often referred to as "little" and "soft."

There were also differences in the clothes that men and women wore in the country songs, men were more likely to wear camouflage, blue jeans, or worn out clothes. Men had "old faded levi's," "hand-me-down overalls," "shoes with holes," and "old bandanas and blue jeans," and camouflage, by its nature, is meant to conceal bodies. Women and girls were more likely to be associated with the way they look in clothes ("a woman who turned head in her blue jeans," "looks good in cheap sunglasses", wearing revealing clothes (bikinis, cut-offs, lingerie, "killing" men in a miniskirt), and using accessories. The differences in the relationship to accessories between women and men were telling, because both had similar numbers of references to rings as symbolic of relationships, but beyond references to rings, women wore pearls, bracelets,

ribbons, and necklaces (all primarily used to enhance appearance), while the accessories used by men were more often for practical use such as belt buckles and billfolds/wallets.

However other body parts are referenced in different ways for men such as knees, these are not typically referred to as tough or strong rather they convey a man apologizing and begging, or “bring brought to his knees because of a relationship.” They are often also described as being “weak,” or “trembling” in the context of relationships. For example, in one song love has “got a hold” on a man and his knees are weak, while another’s knees tremble when he sees his soon-to-be wife walking down the aisle. There is only one reference to a woman’s knees which describes going through tough times “crawl[ing] on [her] knees through the valley of the shadow of death.”

One might think that the female body would have more references because there is so much focus on women’s body in society, however, when looking at the data there are more references to aspects of the male body generally. The general difference is not the quantity of references but the objectification of bodies relative to each other. Often times the female body is an object, so much so that women are often referred to by the color of their hair. For example, when at a bar, one character states that he tells the bartender that he wants a “shot of that redhead” who is also at the bar, while the Judds refer to a woman that a man is cheating with as a “little brunette.”

This word little was also a way that the male and female bodies were differentiated and there was a significant amount of emphasis placed on the diminutive size and youth of females. When “little” is used to refer to males it is almost always the case that one of the character’s children (a man’s “little boy”) is being referenced. However, “little,” when used to describe a

female is often used in terms of a relationship, including references to a “little maiden,” going on a date with “the cutest little girl in these 50 states,” going home to a man’s “little woman.” There is also a considerable amount of emphasis placed on the age of women in relationships, who are often referred to as young. Just briefly doing a search of coded material showed that there were 22 references of a man and girl, and only two references of a man and woman. There are also many songs where men have relationships overseas and in all of these cases the words used are references to young women including “fraulein” instead of “frau,” “senorita instead of senora,” “geisha girls,” and “little Filipino baby.” With men there is a focus on their size as well with men regularly being referred to as big, including a “big bad biker man,” “Big Ed,” “Big Sam,” “Big John,” and so on.

There were other references to men and women’s body’s and these references in themselves could be the data for another entire project, but it is important to recognize the ways that men and women’s bodies are constructed in these songs in such different ways, and even though the male body is referred to as being engaged in work and other activities, the activities that women are engaged in have begun to change over time.

Take this Job and Shove It...

Figure 9. Men and Women Engaged in Traditionally Paid Labor, 1944-2012

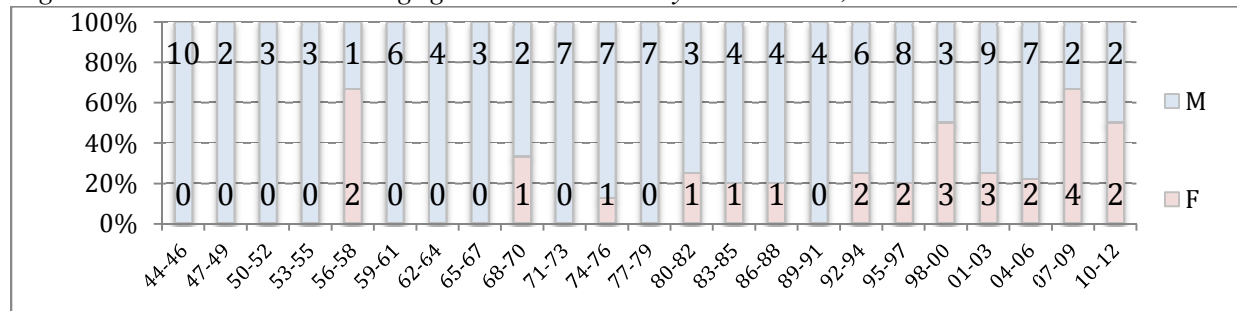


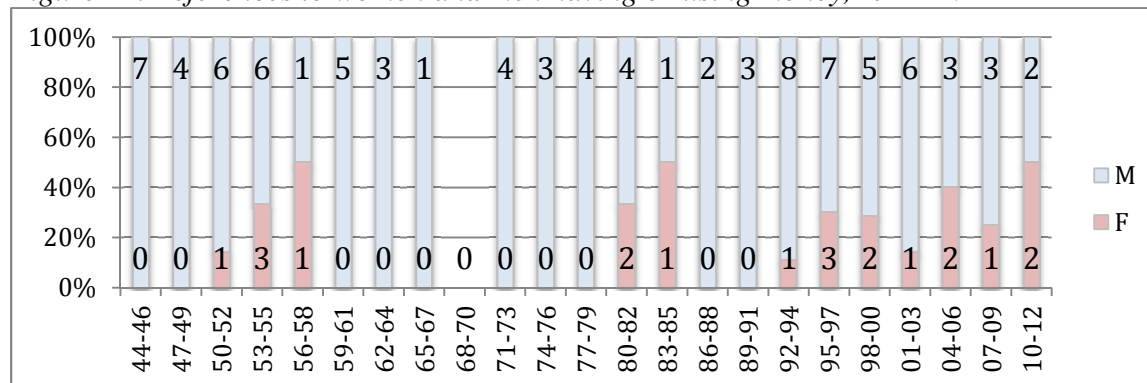
Figure 9 shows the changes in the depiction of women and men engaged in paid labor. Since 1968, there has been an increase in the depiction of working women. Although there is a slight lag, this follows broader trends in the real female participation in the workforce (Goldin, 2015). It must be noted that the criticisms of women involving financial and material resources wane as women are depicted as participating in the labor force. However, one of the more persistent differences in the depiction of men and women's labor can be found in the types of occupations in which they are engaged.

Table 9. Men and Women Engaged in Traditionally Paid Labor

Occupation	Number	
	Male	Female
Fish/Shrimp	2	0
Retail	2	0
Law Enf.	3	0
Lawyer	3	0
Teaching	0	3
Manu. Alcohol	3	0
Medical	4	0
Food/Beverage	5	5
Postal/Package	5	0
Mining	5	0
Manufacturing	7	0
Trucking/Trans.	8	0
Military	10	1
Other	11	0
Livestock/Agri.	13	0
Entertainment	13	4
Unspecified	25	10
Total	119	23

Table 9 shows the distribution of occupations of women and men as depicted in country music from 1944 through 2012. The most striking difference is the lack of working women, but second to that concern is the difference in the types of occupations. Men are much more likely to be depicted as being engaged in jobs that require manual labor, while women are depicted as being engaged in education, entertainment, and food and beverage services. Changes in the references to men and women having and spending money can be seen in *Figure 11*.

Figure 11. References to women and men having or using money, 1944-2012



The chart containing the trends in work and money indicate that there have been some improvements in the depiction of women participating in the labor force and economy. However, women's jobs are varied including food and beverage service, teaching, and entertainment, and two of these three jobs are not known for their stability or great pay. The entertainers that are mentioned are often doing small shows, and waitresses are known to be paid 2.13 per hour and rely on tips which can be very inconsistent. Men's jobs are incredibly varied, generally more detrimental to health, and their work is often depicted in very negative ways. For example, Tennessee Ernie Ford (1955), in "Sixteen Tons," sings "You load sixteen tons [of coal], what do you get? Another day older and deeper in debt. St. Peter don't call me 'cause I can't go, I owe my soul to the company store." This dissatisfaction with work is also found in Johnny Paycheck's (1977) "Take this Job and Shove It," where he sings "Take this job and shove it, I ain't working here no more, my woman done left and took all the reasons I was working for... I've seen a lot of good folks die who had a lot of bills to pay... The line boss is a fool... one of these days I'm gonna blow my top and that sucker, he's gonna pay." Finally, in 1961 Jimmy Dean sang "Big John":

"Then came the day at the bottom of the mine,
when a timber cracked and men started cryin';

Miners were prayin' and hearts beat fast,
 and everybody thought they had breathed their last – 'cept John.
 Through the dust and smoke of this man-made hell,
 Walked a giant of a man that the miners knew well;
 Grabbed a saggin' timber, gave out with a grown,
 and like a giant oak tree he just stood there alone...
 With jacks and timbers they started back down,
 Then came that rumble way down in the ground;
 and then smoke and gas belched out of that mine,
 Everybody knew it was the end of the line for Big John."

While the jobs that are associated with men are dangerous and unpleasant, there is a financial reward. Traditionally unpaid labor isn't being discussed because there simply wasn't enough references, and the references that did exist didn't show any great differentiation between men and women. This might be because country music is dominated by men and therefore from a man's perspective. It is good to see that women are more frequently associated with paid labor, although a greater variation in the occupations that women are engaged in would indicate greater gender equality.

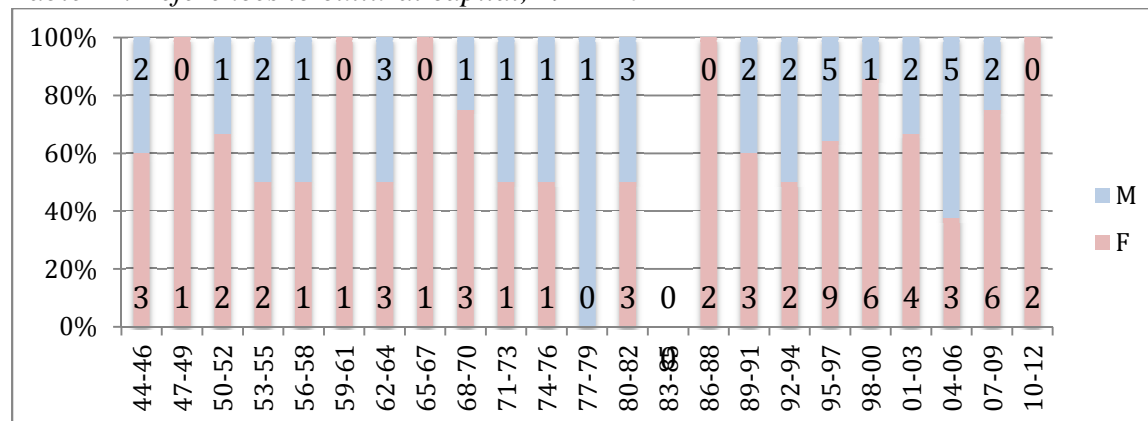
One other difference between men and women is that men are more often associated with capital and money services such as banking, having a mortgage, or using credit. They are also more often discussed in terms of saving money to invest in capital such as trucks. However, one place where women regularly are associated with something very important to the modern US economy is human capital and education.

When It Comes To Brains...

The most recent differentiation of men and women is concerns cultural capital and particularly the relative academic success of women. Women are more associated with education and academic success, while men's intellect is often discussed in terms of limitations. For example, women are described as "having straight-A's" and "being most likely to succeed,"

“Cum Laude,” “Valedictorian,” while men are described as “squeaking by” to “get a C” in algebra, as not “being a poet” and not using “five-dollar words,” or a male having forgotten “all the theories” that were “pounded in [his] head.” *Table 11* shows the trends in references to human capital and cultural capital.

Table 11. References to cultural capital, 1944-2012



Here human and cultural capital are references to the development and use of cultural capital whether, including learning (formal and informal), reading and writing, and watching TV. Many of the early references to reading and writing involved letters within romantic relationships, but there were some differences in the reading of men and women. Men were depicted as reading the Bible, (2), the newspaper (2), Hymns (1), and one reference to a young man owning a Playboy magazine that was hidden from his parents, although the amount of reading done is unspecified. The newspaper is important because men are more likely to mention television news (n=6), although two references involved turning the news off because none of it is good. This may indicate that there is an expectation for men to be up to date with current events. Men are also depicted as watching sports. There are no references to women watching TV without men, no references to women reading the newspaper, and no references to women watching sports.

Women in country songs are depicted as reading romance novels, “Better Homes and Gardens,” and “Brides” Magazine.

When it comes to schooling there are no references to men going to preschool and only one reference of men going to college, while women are depicted as being sent off for higher education and a law degree, men praise women with a college education, and young girls are dropped off at preschool by their reluctant fathers. Men’s relationship with school is much less serious and school is much more likely to be referenced in terms of the girls at the school than for the purposes of education. So with regards to education in country music, as is mentioned in Trisha Yearwood’s (1991) “She’s in Love with the Boy,” the boys really get the short end of the stick.

Although the earlier references to the use of cultural capital were fairly equally distributed and most references refer to the use of reading and writing for the purposes of letters between partners in a romantic relationship, more recently the educational divide between men and women in country music has become more apparent.

Chapter 5:

Conclusions and Recommendations

Men and women are differentiated in many ways throughout the history of country music, and this project has explored the ways that men and women have been differently depicted in relation to romantic relationships; traditionally paid labor; crime, violence, and substance use; cultural capital; and bodies.

One of the most interesting contributions to the scholarship from this study is the role that depictions the body plays in gender difference. The male body is more likely to be destroyed or deteriorated by other males in violence, work, or substance use, while the female body is to be preserved and even improved. Themes of women's physical beauty and fragility were found in Cooper's (1985) research on images of women in country music, however, this study builds on this finding by showing that the "mental gaps" between males and females is widened by not only focusing on delicacy and physical beauty of women but by also depicting the destruction, deterioration, strength, and uses of the male body. These depictions of the male body was found in relation to traditionally paid labor, violence, war and substance use. According to Ridgeway's (2011) theory of the gender system, this may not only validate the social exclusion of women's participation in more dangerous activities but also validate the nonchalant treatment of the male body by men and in the activities in which men are supposed to participate including war, manual labor, substance use, and the use of violence in conflict resolution. This differential depiction of bodies may be related to the wage gap that negatively affects women and the life expectancy gap where men live shorter lives. Research has shown men live shorter lives that are related to their lifestyles and are more prone to die from homicide, suicide, accidents, death in

the workplace (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), and preventable diseases including various cancers, heart disease, and liver disease (See Branney & White, 2007).

The body is closely related to money, because many of the characterizations of the male body are in relation to work, and work is related to the possession and use of money in country music. All three of these themes seem to be highly interrelated. Much of the paid labor that is mentioned in the songs involves manual labor, which is primarily associated with men. The songs also depict men as being in control of financial resources, possessing more expensive items such as automobiles, and buying items for women. These three together form a complex way in which men and women are differentiated.

Concerning romantic relationships, this study has found that there are major differences in the way that men and women have been characterized at different points in time. The relationships depicted in the sample have become increasingly more successful and fulfilling; however, there were periods in the past where patterns of unfavorable male and female behaviors were the focus of songs. For example, while George Lewis (1989, 1991) argued that men are often depicted as desiring freedom while also wanting to settle down, this tension was most prevalent during the 1970s when men were depicted as living as wild and free while also criticizing their own behaviors for neglecting their partners and families. On the other hand, the early years of the sample showed a higher number of negative characterizations of women; these themes included women attempting to manipulate men and being interested in money, being capricious, trifling, and treacherous. However, as mentioned, many of these patterns were more prominent in the past, and at the same time that these patterns of gendered characterizations have waned, the depictions of successful romantic relationships have increased, which may be because

of broader strides in society toward gender equality which may reduce conflict in romantic relationships.

Saucier (1986) had found that alcohol use as depicted in country music was different between men and women, but she focused on the different ways that men and women used alcohol to cope with the troubles of life. This was corroborated in this study but the gendered differences in the relationship of alcohol to coping with troubles deserves more attention than it has received here. Alcohol was more likely to be used problematically by men than women, however, the relationship between alcohol, emotion and coping need to be the focus of more specific studies on the differentiation of men and women. The differences in emotional responses to conflict and troubles alone will likely serve as the basis for a full-length study. However, this was not the only theme that could merit a full-length study, and further research on bodies, substance use, emotional responses and coping, violence, and romantic relationships will likely lead to several more projects on these particular themes.

There are many limitations of this research, for example the trends that have been found will need to be further studied using multiple coders to establish intercoder reliability. As Altheide (1987) has argued, the primary goal of Ethnographic Content Analysis is not necessarily reliability but validity; however, the particular themes found in the research merit a significantly more in-depth analysis with a greater emphasis on ensuring reliability in the analysis. While this study manages to capture a broad picture of gender differentiation in country music over time, it fails to discuss many of the themes in-depth. However, this study does update much of the research that has become rather dated since most of it was published in the 1980s and 90s. A significant amount of time and effort has been put into this project but there is still

much more work to be done not only in country music but in other forms of popular media where the relationship of producers and consumers can be understood.

Overall, this study does provide an initial understanding of the cultural component of the gender system with regards to popular country music over time. While there are limitations, the findings corroborate and extend previous findings while also raising a number of questions that can serve as the foundation for further research. Few prior studies of gender difference in country music took the passage of time and social change seriously, and analyzed a single year or years thereby neglecting the socio-temporal context of the songs. In some ways this study has succeeded in taking the passage of time seriously, which was primarily through the use of a sample spanning the entire history of country music; however, as previously mentioned more research needs to be done on the specific themes found in country music over time.

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