Red, White and Blue: American Foreign Policy in Country Music
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Discussions of American foreign policy most often revolve around the actions taken by the state on behalf of the American public. Thus, popular topics of debate have tended to revolve around two main themes. First, the isolationist versus interventionist nature of American foreign policy and second, the United States' unchecked role as the world's only remaining superpower or hegemonic force. While more recent studies have begun to ask questions surrounding the impact of various societal pressures on American foreign policy this is still an undervalued area of discussion. This is even more apparent when discussing the correlation of culture and more specifically popular culture with American foreign policy. This paper begins a preliminary analysis of how support for foreign policy is in part sold to the public through popular culture and more specifically through country music and country music video.

Setting the Context: American Foreign Policy After 9/11

The American response to the tragedy of 9/11 is well known beyond American foreign policy circles. The ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have garnered much media attention around the world and continue to be a source of debate in the public and academic circles. While much of the debate in the media has revolved around the infamous lack of weapons of mass destruction and the purported reasons for the War in Iraq, the academic debate goes beyond this and has revolved around several key themes. One avenue of discussion has been the "new world order" that the U. S. is facing and how the U. S. must now contend with non-conventional (i.e. non-state) threats to its security (see Stephen E. Miller's overview). This literature fits in well with the dominant debates within international relations theory and is usually fought between liberals and realists. Much of the focus is on the actions and policies the U. S. should take in order to better fend off these new types of threats.

Another theme has been the discussion that exists on whether or not the aftermath of 9/11 constitutes a revolutionary change or drastic departure in American foreign policy (Bolton; Parmar; Kaufman) or if its current actions are simply a continuation of its overall agenda (Haley; Leffler; Kinzer). Much of this discussion can be seen to revolve around the Bush Doctrine as exemplified in the *National Security Strategy of the United States* issued in September of 2002. This doctrine is said to be a departure from past foreign policy based on the fact that it states the U. S. "will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right to self-defense by acting preemptively" (National Security Strategy 6). Some scholars see the emphasis on acting unilaterally combined with use of pre-emptive force as a departure from past policy that was more multilateral in nature and attempted to use the United Nations and NATO to legitimize American use of force abroad. This of course is debated by many especially given the American government's history of intervention to prop up dictatorships around the world.

Another area of discussion that takes place in the literature revolves around trying to explain the reason the U. S. took the actions it did following 9/11. Here the literature debates the impact of varying forces in shaping American foreign policy (Jacobs and Page; Shannon and Keller; Mazarr). These forces can include but are not limited to political leaders, corporate leaders, public opinion and international pressures. One of the key influences that are discussed when it comes to the specific shaping of foreign policy

after 9/11 is the strength and preparedness of the neoconservative movement (Parmar; Gaan). Inderjeet Parmar in particular focuses on the neo-conservative movement's ability to capitalize on 9/11 to implement its preferred foreign policy program. He suggests that the neo-conservative movement is a "dense network of well-funded, overlapping and interconnected think tanks, publicity, lobbying and 'exposure' committees at the forefront of American political life" that is able to use television and newspaper coverage to place themselves as leading experts on issues of national interest (8 -10).

This was exemplified in the death threats and music boycotts that followed the criticism of George W. Bush by Natalie Maines of the Dixie Chicks in 2003. While in London, Maines stated that the Dixie Chicks were ashamed that Bush was from their state of Texas. That resulted in their song "Travellin' Soldier" – a song that depicts a young man traveling off to war and his ultimate death – dropping on the country charts. Country music stations across the United States took the Chicks off their playlists and there were boycotts of their American musical tour (Mainsfield 19 March 2003 D01). Moreover, the Dixie Chicks and more specifically Maines received death threats, resulting in the need for increased security for the trio (Kroft online at http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/05/11/60minutes/main1611424.shtml. Downloaded 03-May-2007).

One of the other forces discussed for its role in shaping foreign policy is public opinion (Knecht and Weatherford; Jacobs and Page). Within these works the debate centres on the actual impact of public opinion and whether or not public opinion should be a source of foreign policy construction. Voeten and Brewer suggest that democratically elected leaders have to be cognizant of public opinion when making foreign policy. This is not surprising given that foreign policy is part of the public policy process that requires feedback from the public to garner support. Voeten and Brewer go further in that they suggest that leaders rely on public support to initiate and maintain wars (810). These discussions are of importance, but for us, an equally interesting line of critique is the examination of how foreign policy decisions and actions are sold to the public through the use of popular culture. Given that the press regularly capitulates to government in times of war (Altheide and Grimes 619), the role of propaganda is a key interest in our discussion.

Obviously the role of propaganda in the events following 9/11 is something that has been debated in the field of international relations. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky in particular led the way in this discussion and really laid the groundwork for it years earlier in their seminal work *Manufacturing Consent*. In Chomsky's more recent work *Imperial Ambitions*, he attributes difference in public opinion between the U.S. and the rest of the world on the issue of Iraq to the role of propaganda in the U. S. (26). He suggests that the propaganda campaign to invade Iraq began with 9/11 and he marvels at the ability of the U. S. government to label Iraq an imminent threat: "Only in the United States do people fear Iraq. This is a real achievement in propaganda" (26). Much of the literature on the role of propaganda in the U. S. follows along the same lines of discussion that Chomsky started. In other words, most of the focus with respect to propaganda is on the

speeches made by Bush and the media coverage following 9/11. In fact there have been several studies aside from Chomsky's that have examined media framing and the war in Iraq (Anker; Smith; Altheide and Grimes; Chermak, Bailey, and Brown).

An interesting departure from some of the more mainstream assessments of media framing can be found in studies that examine the media from a more cultural perspective through the use of melodrama. In some respects, this use of melodrama for analysis implements Paul Saurette's suggestion that the impact of emotions should be included in foreign policy analysis (496). This is a departure from the behavioural movement in political science, which looks at foreign policy as a rational calculation of interest where emotions do not come into play. Rather, emotions are something that are to be avoided.

Two scholars that have incorporated the importance of emotions in foreign policy analysis through the use of melodrama are Craig Allen Smith and Elisabeth Anker. Anker uses the concept of melodrama to examine speeches and media coverage of 9/11 that laid the groundwork for the initiation of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Melodrama is the use of a "dramatic storyline of villainy, victimization, and retribution" that restages the "eternal battle between good and evil" (Anker 23). The use of melodrama has usually been found in film and literature, but Anker contends that it is also a "pervasive cultural mode that structures the presentation of political discourse and national identity in contemporary America." (Anker 23). Of particular importance in this discussion is the use of melodrama in the state rhetoric following 9/11. It is this melodramatic narrative that provides not only justification for the use of military power, but in fact "creates a moral obligation for state action" (Anker 23). Thus, the rhetoric after 9/11 casts the U. S. as the victim that will become the hero that must overcome evil for the good of all.

Craig Allen Smith also uses melodrama to examine the rhetoric used by Bush in the month following 9/11. He suggests that the President uses crisis rhetoric which differs from other declarations of war in that they are more emotional than thoughtful (Smith 33). Smith also demonstrates the melodrama created by Bush and the Christian morality that comes into play pitting the U. S. as the defender of human freedom blessed by God against the evil that seeks to destroy all that is good in the world (Smith 42). Examples of this in speeches Bush gave include:

> The world has produced enemies of human freedom. They have attacked America because we are freedom's home and defender. (Bush 14 September 2001)
>
> Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger, we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time, now depends on us. Our Nation – this generation – will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire; we will not falter; and we will not fail. (Bush 20 September 2001)

Clearly Bush has created melodramatic metaphors in his speeches that portray America as the only hope for the free world. This symbolism also comes through very clearly in the country music videos we analyzed and will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

In this paper we suggest that part of what Parmer calls the neo-conservative network is the country music industry that not only includes the music itself, but also a traditionally-oriented radio industry that uses its power to censor dissenting opinions. This works then, to shape public opinion and to help normalize the foreign policy decisions made by Bush following 9/11. We argue that country music and country music videos are both a form of hegemony and form of counter-hegemony. In other words, country music does appear to play a role in supporting the vision of George W. Bush, but this role is not homogeneous and is contested by voices of protest. To do this, we employ two different research methods: content analysis and semiotic analysis. First, we conducted a content analysis of all the country music songs that reached the number one position on the country charts following 9/11. More specifically, we coded for any overt references to war, 9/11, American politics or political leaders, patriotism, and Christianity. In addition to looking for these different references, each song was also assessed for images of justice, and the presence of a morality frame. Then, we utilized a semiotic analysis of the key videos from the same time frame. We conclude that while there are examples of anti-war protests in country music, overwhelmingly this musical genre can be viewed as playing a role in "resurrecting the 'warrior ideal' in American life" to which Parmer refers (5).

Music and Politics

Most of the analysis of music and politics can be found in the fields of sociology and cultural studies. It is only recently with an opening up of interdisciplinary analysis in the field of political science that we see more studies being done in this area. In this paper, we suggest that popular music is a social construction that has always been an extension of politics because as Rikard argues, "music has always been an important part of war" (129). Music and its lyrics "serve an important function as they reveal different attitudes toward and perceptions of war" (Rikard143). Rikard suggests that the issues surrounding WWI were "not a fight for patriotism, but a fight for the soldier's own life" (133). These growing concerns were borne out in songs like "Bloody War" and "I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier" (Rickard 133). World War II brought with it a new round of cynicism which was found in parodies of popular songs sung by soldiers overseas. Cleveland (in Rikard) states that soldiers changed the song titled "Bless 'Em All" to "Fuck 'Em All" as a way of "ridiculing the ideals of heroism and military propriety" (Cleveland in Rikard 136). Of course, protests against the Vietnam War appeared in folk and rock music, so much so that "the war exerted deep and lasting influences on the form and content of popular music" (Franklin in Rikard 137).

It becomes clear that music is seen often as having a protest or radical role in politics. Indeed, much of the work done on music and politics reflects on or looks at revolutionary or resistance movements (Judson; Street; Cushman; Willis; Wicke). Interestingly, this anti-war sentiment was not as prevalent in country music, because the country genre has

"always been more politically and socially conservative than folk and rock music" (Rikard 147). That is not to say that country stars themselves did not protest the American foreign policy response to 9/11. As Rudder points out, country artists like Roseanne Cash, Steve Earle, Emmylou Harris, Lucinda Williams and others are members of the protest group the Musicians United to Win Without War (Rudder 221-222). However, country music artists and their fans tend to be much more conservative overall (Rudder 208). It is for this reason that we chose country music to examine for the role music can have in reproducing or reinforcing hegemonic forces within a society and more specifically in reinforcing support for the War in Iraq.

In many circles (most notably academic) country music is denounced and has been sidelined as hillbilly music with a relatively small and specific audience that can be easily dismissed. This opinion does not take into account the present popularity and pervasiveness of country music in the United States and elsewhere. Country music as a genre is enjoying enormous success in both Canada and the United States. In 2005, country music radio stations remained the most dominant radio genre in the US with over 2-thousand stations playing country music (www.cmaworld.com downloaded 15 February 2007). The Country Music Association suggests that 45.5 million Americans tune into a country music station (www.cmaworld.com downloaded 15 February 2007) making it the radio format that reaches the most adults (25%) in the United States (www.cmaworld.com downloaded 15 February 2007). Additionally, the country music television station, CMT reaches 83 million households and has been on the air since March 1983. CMT is part of MTV Networks, a division of Viacom Inc and is in 84% of US households via cable, digital, and satellite platforms (www.cmtpress.com downloaded 14 February 2007. This suggests that country music is an important aspect of American popular culture.

While there have been studies done on the role of country music in representing traditional values (Meier, Van Sickel) and the relevance of country music to domestic politics in the U.S., the amount of literature in this area is relatively small. There are several studies that have looked at the role that country musicians have played as celebrities in supporting presidential campaigns or causes such as wars (Firestein, Van Sickel; Rossman, Willman; Wolfe and Akenson). However, there are only three main works that we found that attempted to study the lyrics of country music and its relevance to social issues with any kind of depth. Two of these studies found relatively little truth behind the suggestion that country music lyrics contain socially conservative values. Both Robert W. Van Sickel's study of number one songs from 1960 to 2000 and Smith and Rogers study of the top 50 songs from 1960 to 1999 suggested that the vast majority of songs in country music did not have political relevance. In fact Sickel suggests that although "country music has been a powerful force for the dissemination of political and social messages…I will argue in this study that most often this comes through the activities and statements of country artists rather than through the lyrics of their songs" (Van Sickel, 314).

Another study that included a content analysis of country songs is David J. Firestein's analysis of the "Honky Tonk Gap". This study examined the top 50 songs from the years

2000 to 2004 in an attempt to demonstrate the link between country music and Bush's presidential elections. This study had similar results to our own study and suggests that about twenty percent of the country hits each year contained references to the importance of traditional family bonds and thirty percent focused on religious experience or moral parables (Firestein 3-4). Firestein's study also examines the prevalence and growth of country music stations and overlaps this with the voting in the presidential elections and suggests that country music for the "tens of millions of listeners it reaches daily, has codified and popularized traditional American values such as family, patriotism and religious devotion" (Firestein, 5). While his analysis briefly mentions the theme of patriotism and the aftermath of 9/11, it does not go into detail on this link.

Thus, our study picks up on where these studies left off by performing a content analysis of the number one songs from 2000 to 2004 and applying the findings to the American foreign policy agenda. While we look for some of the same themes arising from the previous studies we delve more into the gendered nature of not only the lyrics but the industry itself. Additionally, we go beyond these themes and examine how country music can be viewed as a type of propaganda used to garner public support for the War on Terror and the War in Iraq. While this content analysis is a key part of our study we also felt it was necessary to analyze key country music videos for their content and the melodrama they convey to the American public.

Methodology

The findings presented here are the result of two different research methods. The first is a content analysis of all the country music songs that reached the number one position on the country charts between 2000 and 2004. We chose these songs as they encapsulate the most frequently heard songs on country music radio. The songs were gathered from the American Country Countdown website which lists the number one songs for each year. The dates we chose to examine were picked in order to get a brief glimpse at the content of songs before 9/11, after 9/11 and after the War in Iraq. The total number of songs gathered for analysis was 97. All of the lyrics were analyzed for different themes using the same coding sheet. More specifically, each song was assessed for basic data such as the type of song, sex of singer, sex of writer, and the number of weeks it held the number one position. From there we looked for any overt references to war, 9/11, American politics or political leaders, patriotism, Christianity and racism. These references needed to be obvious in order to be coded as being present. For example, a reference to 9/11 would usually be along the lines of "towers falling" and would not include references that might have included explosions but were not specific to 9/11. With respect to patriotism we looked for obvious references to American icons and symbols such as land of the free; the red, white and blue; the statue of liberty, etc. References to Christianity included references that are usually used in a Christian context. Thus, lyrics that used terms like God, praying, being blessed, heaven and hell were assessed as having Christian references.

The second focus for our analysis was to examine key videos from the same time frame. The videos were picked from the 97 songs chosen for content analysis. Only videos that dealt directly with war or 9/11 were chosen. Music videos came into existence in the

1980s with the debut of MTV and its sister station, CMT a year later. The 80s have been dubbed the "video decade" and much work has been done, particularly in the early years of its emergence in studying its import on popular culture. While there has been considerable analysis conducted on MTV and its visual style, little has been written about the country video. However, the stylistic qualities of rock music videos have been utilized in the making of country videos. Moreover, given country music's popularity, this would certainly suggest that this genre plays an important role in the manufacturing of political culture of American society, particularly in the states in which it is widely accepted. These would include the American south along with Michigan, Washington, Arizona, and Ohio (www.cmtpress.com downloaded 14 February 2007). Each of these states contains country radio stations, which are number one or number two in ratings in the cities in which they reside, according to the Country Music Association's Industry overview.

A semiotic analysis of the images found in country music videos combined with the language of the songs was employed. Simply put, semiology is "the study of signs in society" (Bignell 5). In analyzing videos, it becomes clear that "linguistic, visual and other kinds of signs are used not simply to denote something, but also to trigger a range of connotations attached to the sign" (Bignell 16). As Bignell suggests in his semiotic overview of television fiction

> images and sounds carry connotations which enable the viewer to gain much more meaning from then than simply a vision of an object, place, or person. The selection and combination of images and sounds, so that connotations relay together into mythic meanings affecting our understanding of society and culture, often depend on the codes and conventions which organize them. (Bignell 158)

Bignell's discussion involved television programs that are generally longer in length than music videos. Thus, the construction of meaning in videos occurs in a much narrower window – usually between two and six-minutes in length, unlike television which operates in 30 and 60-minute time frames. As a result, the story telling and the inherent myth-making or the propagandist tone that must occur in a music video has to be shorter and much more condensed.

Moreover, unlike television or film, in music videos, music is given primacy over other components like photography or acting (Gow 44). As Gow suggests, "visual imagery and other formal components (sound effects, for example) are used to enhance the musical soundtrack rather than the other way around" (Gow 45). This unique function of music videos means that there are two general styles of videos: the performance oriented visual and the conceptual video (Gow 45). These recurring formulas provide a "conventional system for structuring cultural products" (Cawelti in Gow 49). Similar to television genres like comedy or drama, country videos rely on formulas or codes that are signaled to the audience. Bignell writes that the "selection and combination of images and sounds, so that connotations relay together into mythic meanings affecting our understanding of society and culture, often depend on the codes and conventions which organize them" (Bignell 158). Thus, a semiotic analysis of music videos requires an

understanding of the various formulas or genres and the codes and conventions that recur in the shortened video format.

The formula of music videos provides a way of guiding an "audience's expectations and interpretations in a much more predictable pattern" (Gow 49), but unlike television, the function of music videos is not always to tell a story. Sometimes, it is also about performance. Gow determines that there are "two basic formal possibilities in music videos": performance and conceptual. Within those two basic formats exists six different formulas: the anti-performance piece, the pseudo-reflexive performance, the performance documentary, the special effects extravaganza, the song and dance number and the enhanced performance. The videos that we study in this analysis employ two of these techniques: the performance documentary and the enhanced performance. Both of these types of video rely on music and the performance of the music to drive the video.

Content Analysis of the Lyrics

In general the content analysis found that most country songs did not address overtly political or foreign policy issues. More specifically references to war and 9/11 appeared in less than 5% of the songs and political leaders were never mentioned. References to war were found in 4% on the songs. References to 9/11 were found in 3% of the songs. Interestingly the themes of justice and patriotism were found in a greater percentage of the songs for this period sitting at 9% and 12% of all the songs respectively. A good example of an overtly patriotic song was Brooks and Dunn's patriotic anthem from October 2001 "Only in America." This song held the number one spot for two weeks and was rated as the fifth top hit of 2001 by American Country Countdown (www.acctop40.com). Interestingly this song also became the Bush/Cheney campaign's official campaign theme in 2004 (Firestein 5). The chorus of the song aptly demonstrates the patriotic nature of the song and why it fit in well with the rhetoric Bush used throughout his campaign.

> Dreaming in red, white and blue
> Only in America
> Where we dream as big as we want to
> We all get a chance
> Everybody gets to dance
> Only in America (www.cowboylyrics.com downloaded 03 November 2006)

This reflects Bush's rhetoric on the American dream as demonstrated in his remarks to the United Latin American Citizens Annual Convention in 2004. In his speech, Bush stated that "in the United States, our aspirations matter more than our origins. And my administration is committed to this basic principle: El sueno Americano es para todos. And all deserve a chance to achieve the American dream" (Bush 08 July 2004).

Especially interesting is that the use of justice and patriotism in country music jumped significantly in the year that the U. S. invaded Iraq. In 2003, 22% of the songs had references to justice while 33% had patriotic references. While some of these songs dealt with both themes in tandem by demanding justice for 9/11 and overtly supporting the

War in Iraq (Darryl Worley's "Have You Forgotten"), others made political statements about justice without specifically referring to the war. A good example is Toby Keith's song "Beer For My Horses" which spent six weeks at number one in June of 2003. The chorus of the song is as follows:

> Justice is the one thing you should always find
> You got to saddle up your boys
> You got to draw a hard line
> When the gun smoke settles we'll sing a victory tune
> We'll all meet back at the local saloon
> We'll raise up our glasses against evil forces
> Singing whiskey for my men, beer for my horses.
> (www.cowboylyrics.com downloaded 03 November 2006)

This song demonstrates seeking justice against "evil forces" and falls in line with the Bush rhetoric of fighting evil. This is evident in Bush's response to the murder of American Paul Johnson, killed while working in Riyadh in 2004:

> The murder of Paul shows the evil nature of the enemy we face. These are barbaric people. There's no justification whatsoever of his murder and yet they killed him in cold blood. And it should remind us that we must pursue these people, and bring them to justice before they hurt other Americans. See, they're trying to intimidate American. They're trying to shake our will; they're trying to get us to retreat from the world. American will not retreat. American will not be intimidated by these kinds of extremist thugs. (Bush 18 June 2004)

While it can be suggested that these songs and Bush's speeches were simply reflecting the events of the time, it can also be argued that hearing patriotic songs and themes of justice on the radio on regular basis helps reinforce support for the war.

The other theme that became evident in the content analysis was the presence of a morality frame. As discussed earlier, this morality frame was obvious in the foreign policy rhetoric that Bush used in his speeches. It is also something that came through very strongly in the lyrics of the country music songs. While the largest number of songs could be found to be love songs (28.9%), songs specifically about the priorities of life or how to live life came in a close second making up 27.8% of the total songs. This is perhaps best exemplified by the lyrics of Tim McGraw's song "Live Like You Were Dying" which was number one on the country charts for seven weeks starting in July 2004. In this song, McGraw portrays a man who is faced with his imminent death by disease who made the decision to change the way he lived his life. This included becoming :

> …the husband,
> that most the time I wasn't.
> An' I became a friend a friend would like to have.
> And all of a sudden goin' fishin',

> wasn't such an imposition, and I went three times that year I lost my Dad.
> Well, I finally read the Good Book,
> and I took a good long hard look, at what I'd do if I could do it all again…(www.cowboylyrics.com downloaded 03 November 2006)

In addition to this, references to God or other Christian symbols were found in 45% of the songs and morality framing in 46% of the songs. Martina McBride's song "Blessed" clearly represents this type of song. "Blessed was number one on the country charts for two weeks in 2002. In this song, McBride signs that she has been blessed and she thanks God for all she's been given (www.cowboylyrics.com downloaded 03 November 2006). Another song that combines Christianity and morality is "Three Wooden Crosses" by Randy Travis. This song was number one for one week in May 2003. In this song, Travis talks about a "farmer and a teacher, a hooker and a preacher" who are hit by a semi while riding on a bus. The farmer, teacher and minister are all killed, but the hooker's life is saved. Travis sings:

> There are three wooden crosses on the right side of the highway,
> Why there's not four of them, Heaven only knows.
> I guess it's not what you take when you leave this world behind you,
> It's what you leave behind you when you go.
> (www.cowboylyrics.com downloaded 03 November 2006).

As the song progresses, it becomes clear that the prostitute goes on to find redemption. She is saved by God, goes on to raise a child who becomes a minister, who then spreads the message that you are evaluated by the impact you have on the world when you die.

Christian content and morality are a core component of country music programming. Moreover, this morality is a key part of the neo-conservative movement and is a key part of the rhetoric that Bush uses in his struggle against "evil" on the foreign policy front. Not only does Bush end most of his speeches in the 9/11 period with some variation of God Bless America but he also uses Christian metaphors throughout his speeches to further depict the good versus evil dichotomy. His address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People on September 20th, 2001 is a great demonstration of this:

> The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them. (Applause.) Fellow citizens, we'll meet violence with patient justice – assured of the rightness of our cause, and confident of the victories to come. In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America. (Bush, 20 September 2001)

Thus the content analysis of the 97 songs analyzed demonstrated some key findings. In particular we found that core neo-conservative values were being disseminated on a regular basis through country songs on country music radio. These values included moral prescriptions on what the important things in life should be and the centrality of God and Christianity in American life. All of these themes were also found in the rhetoric employed by Bush in his struggle against evil. Thus country music listeners received a daily dose of types of imagery that tend to reinforce support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Semiotic Analysis of the Music Videos

As indicated earlier, this paper also utilizes a semiotic analysis of music videos popular during the time frame under study. Six videos were selected from the time as having reached the number one spot on the country charts and containing images or lyrics that were overtly about war. Of those, two were considered performance documentary videos and five were enhanced performance videos.

Gow describes performance documentary videos as "videos almost exclusively devoted to the musical performance" (Gow 53). These videos create the impression that the performances have "not been staged for the camera; rather the video makers are merely documenting events which took place in the audience (even though live audio recordings from the same concerts are rarely used as soundtracks in the clips)" (Gow 53). While the actual concert performance has not been staged, it is rehearsed and the video shots are well determined ahead of time. Moreover, the performers are aware of the camera and thus can use the lens as an additional way of creating an intimacy with the viewer. Looking directly into the camera lens on key notes underline the importance of notes and lyrics and cannot be considered accidental. Allan Jackson's "Where Were You (when the world stopped turning)?" and the Dixie Chicks "Travelin' Soldier" both fall into the category of a performance documentary.

Jackson's "Where Were You?" was a song he wrote in reaction to the 9/11 tragedy. It reached the number one spot on the country music charts on December 29, 2001 and stayed there for five weeks placing it in the number ten spot overall for the year (www.acctop40.com). This was the "perhaps the most commercially successful song of the post 9/11 anthems" (Rudder 225). Jackson has been quoted in the media as saying that you have to trust political authorities to do the right thing: "That's why we vote and people in office. They're supposed to know how to handle that kind of stuff" (in Rudder 225). In the song, Jackson speaks about the routine of lives that was disrupted as a result of the attacks on the United States. It is laden with Christian and familial themes and like most of the videos under consideration in this analysis speaks of issues of patriotism.

This live video was recorded during an award show and it begins with a long shot of the stage, with Jackson centered in the middle supported by a dimly lit backup orchestra in the background. He is seated alone as the camera moves in from a wide shot of the stage to a medium shot of him as he begins to play his guitar. His guitar has a small American flag decal on it and Jackson is dressed causally in a dark suit jacket, open collar shirt, ripped blue jeans and a light color cowboy hat with cowboy boots. The camera continues

to move in one fluid shot to remain in a still close up of Jackson's face, and Jackson's gaze stays on the camera as he asks the question: "Where were you when the world stop turning?" As the shot continues, Jackson asks: "Did you just sit there and cry?" This suggests that inaction was not a reasonable response to the attacks in New York and Washington.

The second still close-up of Jackson occurs when he sings the lines: "Did you feel guilty 'cause you're a survivor/ In a crowded room did you feel alone? Did you call up your mother and tell her you love her/ Did you dust off your bible at home?" The close up of Jackson's face underscores the emotional significance of his lines. He is somber and restrained while he sings, and his lyrics suggest that now is not the time for people to isolate themselves. Instead, they should be reaching out to family and to God for reassurance on how to deal with this tragedy.

The third still close-up of Jackson occurs on the lines: "Did you go to a church and hold hands with some stranger/ Stand in line and give your own blood/ Did you just stay home and cling tight to your family/ Thank God you had somebody to love?" Again, the importance is on the family and the Church as a way of finding meaning and solace in the chaos.

When Jackson signs the chorus of his song, the camera begins a long pan that starts with a wide shot of the back of the stage and the backup band and singers. The stage lights illuminate the dark concert audience simulating stars in the sky. The camera then moves closer to Jackson singing and fades into a medium shot of Jackson from his front, which moves into a close-up. This is done over the lyrics: "I'm just a singer of simple songs/ I'm not a real political man/ I watch CNN but I 'm not sure I can tell you/ The difference in Iraq and Iran." Again, this is deliberately done to underscore the importance of the lyrics. Jackson is not suggesting that his opinions are informed by "knowledge" rather it is reflective of the common sense of a simple man, who believes as his next line indicates: "I know Jesus and I talk to God" and of all the things they provide, "the greatest is love." The video ends with long shot of Jackson strumming his guitar, with the backstage once again darkened. There is a close spotlight on Jackson's body only, illuminating him from above as if he is being given messages from the Almighty. As can be seen from this conclusion and the images throughout, this video reinforces the themes of Christianity and morality framing found in the content analysis of the previous section.

In contrast, the second performance video is a decidedly anti-war piece by the Dixie Chicks. The song, "Travelin' Soldier" was in the number one spot on the country music charts on March 22, 2003 but as described previously in this paper, it plummeted off of the top 40 two weeks later as the controversy over their anti-Bush comments began to heat up in the media. This song's theme is about a meeting between a young man who is waiting for his bus to report for service to Vietnam and a waitress. The soldier tells the waitress he has no one waiting for him at home and asks if he can send letters home to her. The solider dies while in Vietnam, a fact revealed to the waitress as she attends her high school's football game. There is a sense of innocence to this song complete with

instrumental rifts featuring traditional folk instruments like the fiddle and the dobro and a military tap cadence at the end of the song.

Unlike the Jackson video, this video is shot with hand-held cameras resulting in a less polished video experience. As Gow points out this straightforward video style places the "performance in the context of an earlier, and for many listeners a more romantic, musical era" (Gow 53). Indeed, the heart of the video story is a romance tinged in small-town nostalgia and melodrama. The waitress is a young girl "with a bow in her hair" and the solider is "a little shy". Also unlike the Jackson video which focuses on Jackson and his singing, "Travelin' Solider" pays much more attention to the music and performance of musical instruments. There are several breaks in which the camera closes in on the playing of the fiddle or dobro, taking the emphasis away from the lead singer, Natalie Maines and instead putting the spotlight on the music. The camera does pull into a medium close up of Maines who never looks directly into the camera repeatedly when she sings the line: "love of a travelin' soldier." This is deliberate and it suggests that the Dixie Chicks have an emotional attachment to the soldiers fighting in war. This video suggests images that are in direct contradiction to the comments made accusing the Dixie Chicks of being unpatriotic and not supporting the American soldiers. It is quite ironic that it was this empathetic war song that fell off the charts as a result of the backlash against their anti-Bush comments.

Four of the music videos chosen for a semiotic analysis can be considered enhanced performance videos. Enhanced performance videos are an "interaction between performance form and visuals which are tied together either through associational, narrative or abstract form" (Gow 62). As Gow points out

> videomakers believe that audiences want something more than a simple staged performance. Yet, as the more spectacular special effects extravaganzas illustrate, there is a possibility that by utilizing too many non-performance oriented images a videomaker might overshadow the artist(s) whose work is being showcased on the soundtrack. The way to overcome this somewhat paradoxical situation, then, is to blend performance and non-performance images together in a manner where the musical work of the artist(s) is kept at the forefront of the video. (Gow 62)

Darryl Worley's "Have You Forgotten?," "My List", "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue" and "American Soldier" all by Toby Keith, and the Dixie Chicks "Not Ready to Make Nice" can be considered enhanced performance videos.

"Have You Forgotten?" climbed to the top of the charts at the same time as the Dixie Chicks' "Travelin' Soldier" disappeared from the charts. "Have You Forgotten?" reached the number one spot on April 5, 2003 and stayed there for seven weeks making it the thirteenth most popular song of the year. This of course follows closely on the heels of the start of the War in Iraq in March of 2003. The overall theme of the song is that people should not forget the reasons why American soldiers continue to fight. Like many of the songs under study, it plays up the symbols of freedom, patriotism, and the reasons why the fight needs to continue. Worley's lyrics caution against complacency, urging the

audience to stay angry particularly with the enemy Osama Bin Laden. The video opens with a silhouette of Worley singing into microphone in studio, followed by several shots of guitars and keyboards. There are two distinct production sections to this video. One is the artificial in-studio setting of Worley, his band members and a music producer at a sound board. The second is news footage of live events. These two settings are dispersed throughout the video. The first shows a series of shots that are of an ongoing peace protest. It is news video from an actual protest. It has three short scenes that appear on the line "people saying we don't need this war." The video then cuts to a medium shot of Worley as he sings the line: "I say there are some things worth fighting for."

The next cut away from the studio is to real video footage of the September 11th attack in New York City. The first shot is of the twin towers falling; the second is of people running following the collapse followed by a medium shot of Worley. It continues with a shot of a cameraman running toward the camera, a shot of an ambulance, a shot of a baby being carried by a fireman and a final shot of fireman waking in dust. These shots are interspersed with close ups of a guitar player in studio and Worley singing: "they took all the footage off my tv/ said it's too disturbing for you and me/ It'll just breed anger, that's what they experts say/ If it was up to me, I'd show it everyday." What is remarkable about this is that the multiplicity of images available of the airplanes flying into the twin towers is never shown. Instead, it is the collapse of the towers and the panicked reactions of people fleeing following the collapse that is emphasized. This suggests that even to Worley who wants to remain angry, the vision of the planes crashing remains too much to take.

The next series of quick shots that alternate between the staged studio and the real footage begins with the medium close up of a profile of the face of a stoic African American woman. This is followed by a shot of the memorials for firemen and a wide shot of two women gazing at the memorial. One of the women wipes her face, as she cries openly. These images occur while Worley sings "Have you forgotten how it felt that day?/ to see your homeland under fire/ and her people blown away." The people blown away are the two women crying, the firemen who died and the stoic African American woman. Men are not featured crying, as it is clear that that is not their role to be the mourners. Instead, that is the role of women who are left behind to mourn. The next two intercuts swing between the safety of the studio and the "real" world of news footage is of a memorial to people killed in the attack on the twin towers followed by firemen hoisting an American flag, over the lyrics: "we had neighbours still inside going thru a living hell." The memorial is of course dedicated to those neighbours.

The instrumental rift of the song is paired with video of Worley performing the song to American military staff at various locations. Again, these shots are deliberately set up to appear as if they are natural and not staged and act to underscore Worley's dedication to the troops in action. These soldiers are in combat. They are dressed in the desert military garb, in tents and standing in cramped quarters as Worley plays the guitar for them. It becomes clear that this is a male domain with no women included in any of the military scenes. Instead, they are left at the sidelines, as demonstrated earlier in the video, mourning and as the next series indicates at home waiting for her soldier to return home.

Next, to the cadence of a military drum solo, the video cuts to soldiers marching. These video sequences follow soldiers as they kiss their loved ones goodbye. A soldier kisses a woman who is holding a baby as she cries, followed by a second shot of a solider kissing another woman, who steps back and wipes the tears from her face. Worley sings: "I've been there with the soldiers/ Who've gone away to war." A black soldier waving good-bye follows this and then the camera cuts to a toddler who is crying and then buries his face into his mother's leg. Worley continues: "and you bet that they remember/ Just what they're fighting for." Family, women, and children are the symbols of what these soldiers are fighting for and this must not be forgotten. Again though, it is clear that it is the men who are fighting and the women who are staying home to protect the family unit.

While Worley sings, "have you forgotten about our Pentagon," the video shows a giant American flag draped over the pentagon and then a wide shot of the Pentagon with the devastation created by the attacks. It moves to a shot of a woman crying while her daughter looks on, as Worley sings "all the loved ones that we lost and those left to carry on." The video then shows a hand made sign that reads: "Lenny, u-will always be our hero." Finally, a hand drawn American flag obviously done by a child and placed into a memorial is shown in a tight close up, that is cut in closer to focus on the words "don't give up", while Worley sings "don't tell me not to worry about bin Laden." This video leaves you with the impact that the war will not be over and the troops will not give up, until the enemy is killed.

The video wraps up with Worley repeating the words, "have you forgotten?" with shots of a person in a crowd at a memorial holding a bumper sticker that reads: "I still love New York," that then cuts to shots of a candlelight memorial, a man holding his head in front of candles lit at a memorial and finally a shot of the twin towers still erect, taken prior to the September 11th attack. This is the only male mourner featured in the video. Because it is not the norm for men to cry, according to our social conditioning, the depiction of his sorrow is even more poignant.

In total in this video, there are 15 American flags or replicas of American flags shown, 18 shots of American soldiers, 11 shots of memorials set up to eulogize the firefights and those killed inside the Twin Towers, 11 shots of the twin towers and news footage of the September 11th disaster and 9 shots of women and children. The flags appear both in the live footage and the studio footage, as in some of the studio shots Worley's t-shirts shows an American flag. As well, the shots of the American soldiers appear in the live footage and in the studio, with the video featuring a stylized photograph of a soldier, which is positioned on top of the engineering soundboard. Some of the studio shots depict Worley writing down the lyrics of the song, suggesting the creative process that he went through to produce the hit. The yellow sheets of paper are symbolically placed on top of the soldier's photograph to demonstrate that Worley has not forgotten the reason why he wrote this song – that the soldiers were first and foremost in his considerations. There is flash of gold light that shines every time this photo is in the studio scene. This is meant to project an aura of "heaven" – a halo effect that serves the dual purpose of symbolizing the explosions that occur as a natural outcome of war and conflict as well as the belief

that the American people are justified (and indeed working on the side of God) by fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Toby Keith's "My List" was the sixth most popular country song of 2002 and it held the number one spot on the charts for five weeks starting on April 20th. This video extends Worley's use of mixing staged musical performance with news videos with the augmentation of staged performances by actors. The gist of this song is that given the tragedies of the attacks on American soil, a person should make the family an important priority. It begins with a series of shots of a man and a woman sitting in their living room watching television. Both actors are minimally lit, resulting in their faces being darkened in steely gray shadow. The sound on the television makes it clear that the couple is watching news coverage of September 11th. The woman is looking to the man for reassurance, looking away from the TV screen as the man stares intently. She is so overcome by emotion that she buries her face into his neck, as he looks stoically onward. The music video then cuts to actual new video of the enormous dust cloud that followed the collapse of the tower. It cuts back to the couple. The woman continues to bury her face in the man's shoulder, while he looks onward. He is finally stirred to action as he gets up from the couch, but she stays inactive, frozen by what she has seen. This suggests then that there is a need for action – and for men of action. The audio that is played from the news footage is deliberately louder than the audio used in the staged performance scenes creating a jarring sound meant to symbolize the chaos created by the day and to emphasize the disorder. The quiet of the family living room has been disrupted by the noise created by the terrorists. Again, it is interesting that there is no image of the planes hitting the twin towers, despite their rather pervasive presence in the first hours of the news programming on September 11th. This suggests that to this day those images remain too difficult to view.

The video then cuts to Keith singing in the bright autumn sunlight from the front porch of an older home, set in a country setting. The house is replete with a large tree in the front yard and a child's tree house is in plain view. Keith is dressed somberly, wearing a black suit and a light colored cowboy hat. The sun is in stark contrast to the earlier scenes of both the actor's performance and the news videos, which were devoid of colour and appeared to be black and white. It suggests that Keith has seen the light, has chosen to come out of the darkness that followed the attacks and see his life illuminated, with clarity and crispness signified by the autumn scene created on the set.

The video continues to alternate between Keith singing on the veranda and the performance sequences of the couple that seem to live in that house. They are a young, white couple with two children: a girl and a boy. In short it is the iconic American family. The first scene is the father of the family standing in the darkness as he considers the work he has to do on his list: "go to the bank and the hardware store, put a new lock on the cellar door." Instead of acting on his list though, the father looks out a window, into a bright autumn day and smiles as his son jumps into a pile of leaves. The father then opens the screen wider, a shot that takes the point of view of the father, with the screen becoming an eye-lid, opening wider to envision the significant things in life. This is followed by a shot of his daughter and his son playing in the leaves.

The second sequence is of the father playing outside with his kids, then climbing up the porch steps to sit beside his wife. They kiss, and she looks at him stoically. She does not smile broadly but instead comes across as being serene and calm, a woman who has found her true fulfillment of a house and family. The characters are all dressed in clothing that has red, white and blue elements to them to subtly symbolize the American flag.

The third sequence of shots begins with a long shot of the father and his son throwing a football. In the forefront is a lawnmower that has been ignored as Keith sings "cutting grass just had to wait." Of course, football is America's game, particularly in the Southern States with its traditions of homecoming games, football heroes and lavish tournament Bowls. The message is clear that this is where the importance lays – in being with your son, playing America's game. By contrast, a series of shots features the wife pushing her daughter on a country swing, while the groceries she has just purchased sit on the hood of her vehicle. Next, the father and son build a tree house together while the daughter looks on. This cuts to a shot of the father and son rolling down a hill in the autumn leaves and roughhousing. Next, the camera fades into the husband and wife toasting their glasses of white wine with another couple (also white) as Keith sings "catch up on all the things I've always missed." It is remarkable that again, the female characters in this video have been relegated to relatively sedate and lady-like activities.

The video moves to a sequence in which the father and son unpack an American flag and then look upwards as they hoist it into the air. That is followed by a shot of the mother phoning her parents as Keith sings, "call up my folks just to chat." Next, the father is depicted in a medium shot, leaning over his wife who is sleeping in a white and blue bedroom. He kisses her as she lays, his sleeping beauty who fails to awaken with his kiss.

The final sequence features the same father driving away in his truck and then shows him sitting at work as a fireman. The alarm bell rings to signal a fire and as it does, the video cuts to the woman who awakens suddenly. There is fear in her eyes. The video cuts between her lying in bed, reaching out to his pillow and realizing he is not there, while he runs out of the fire hall, gets into his fire gear and rides in the fire truck to an emergency. The camera captures his face in a medium shot and his former cheery demeanor has been replaced with stoicism. He is clearly a man following a mission. The camera cuts back to the wife who is now out of bed and looking out the window. This shot is taken from behind and symbolizes the many women who wait at the window for their husbands to return home. The performance sequence concludes with a pan that begins with a darkened hallway with a close up of the household chore list, and then moves out the window into the light and a long shot of the two children playing catch in full sunlight.

This video employs the elements of melodrama. The woman's emotional state as she waits for her husband to come home is "hyperbolized" (Anker 23). Additionally, the anguish she experiences as she waits works to "encourage empathy for the victim" and in contrast, "anger toward the villain" (Anker 23). The villain or villains in this case are the

terrorists who force good men out of their homes and into danger. Moreover, there is also a sense of nobility in this video. The husband and wife are being noble by putting aside the minutiae of their lives to spend quality time with their children. They are doing the noble thing and taking care of what counts. Finally, there is a sense of nostalgia as well. There is no electronic gadgetry except for the brief use of a television at the beginning of the video. All the games that are being played with the parents and children are old fashioned and speak of an earlier, much more innocent time.

This video is also very gendered. The wives are pretty, slim, affectionate and stoic. They appear to react to their husbands but never take a leadership role. It is the husband who first gets up from the couch. He is the first to decide to spend time with his children. He is the parent who builds the tree house, while the wife takes care of the groceries and provides supper for her husband and friends on the porch. The girl is relegated to observer status as well. She is not given a role in the construction of the tree house and does not rough house with her father. The women are indeed secondary and shallow characters in this depiction who seem content to wait behind.

Keith's second enhanced performance video is "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue" and it reached the number one spot on the charts on July 20, 2002. This video lacks any subtlety in its message. This is a video that is meant to support the American military and the foreign policy decisions of Bush and it is pro-military propaganda. Unlike "My List," it does not attempt to provide a narrative to the music. Instead, the visuals provided are an image-associative montage, filled with symbols of the military and the United States. The video features a concert performance given to American soldiers mixed with Keith shooting guns, visiting wounded soldiers in the hospital, flying on a military transport and riding in a tank with soldiers. The portrait of the military recognizes the gendered nuance of the new military, as female soldiers are also integrated into the video shots. At several points in the performance video sequences, the soldiers jump to their feet and high five each other in reaction to the songs lyrics. This occurs on the lines "We lit up your world like the 4th of July" and "you'll be sorry that you messed with the U.S. of A". This is a video that is designed to inflame the viewer and shots of the short-haired men screaming adulation are reminiscent of skin head recruitment videos indicating the sense of nationalist and xenophobic pride seen through out the video.

The flag is a central part of this video as well. Keith wears it as a bandana on his head, his guitar is a flag and his stage is filled with flags. Soldiers scream and yell and wave the flag during concert segments. There are 32 shots with the American flag in it and there are 60 shots that feature the image of the American soldier. As Keith sings the lyrics: "justice will be served and the battle will rage" the video features a shot of American soldiers reaching through razor wire to touch the hands of four children on the other side of the fence. This suggests a kinder, more sensitive side to the military, standing in contrast to the battle metaphors. This is perhaps meant to emphasize that ultimately it is for children, who are innocent in times of war, which the military must fight for justice. It is clear that while the children are portrayed on the opposite side of the fence in this combat, the soldiers do not see them as the enemy.

Keith's third video that we studied is "American Soldier" which is also a enhanced performance video which spent four weeks at the number one spot in February of 2004. Like Keith's "My List", "American Soldier" features Keith singing on a set. This time, the set is a large aircraft hanger, which contains several aircraft. This video has a much stronger story line than Keith's "Angry American" and follows the tradition of "My List" featuring a white couple with two kids: a boy and a girl. It tells the story of an army reservist who gets the phone call to take him into action and the video follows him, as he gets ready to leave. It is mixed with staged performances to replicate the Civil war, WWI and WWII and Vietnam War soldiers leaving their families behind as well.

The video begins with a long shot of a bungalow situated on a quiet street in a good neighbourhood. It is early morning, and the sound of the bird's chirping is broken by the sound of a ringing phone. This plays on the idea no good news can be found in a phone call that comes early in the morning, and it becomes clear from the expression on the man's face that the news on the end of the line is not good. In fact, as the video progresses, we learn he is a reservist who has been called into action.

Christian themes abound in this video. One series of shots features a young boy playing with his plastic soldiers under the Christmas tree circa World War I. Another sequence has a First World War soldier kissing his cross before he grabs his gun and climbs out of the foxhole to go into battle. At several points throughout the video, Keith is seen singing with his arms stretched out, his palms facing up, creating the sign of the cross and also triggering the image of Christ dying on the cross in sacrifice. One sequence has the family in a car, passing a military graveyard as Keith sings: "I'll always do my duty, no matter what the price." The wife grabs her husbands hands and gives him a look that indicates her fears, while Keith sings: "I don't want to die for you, but if dying's asked of me/ I'll bear that cross in honor because freedom don't come free." Much like Christ who came to terms with His need to die on the cross, Keith's American solider too has come to terms with his need to sacrifice.

Similar to Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue" video, symbols of American military and the American flag are featured through out this video. There are two scenes in which we see an actual American flag in this video, but the airport hangar in which Keith performs is lit in such a way to suggest the stars on the American flag. Moreover, like the "List" video, the characters are clothed in red, white and blue that symbolizes the flag. The military is also featured quite solidly in the video. There are 61 shots of military men and again the emphasis is on the male soldier. Women and children are in 36 shots, particularly in the sequence when the father says good-bye to his family. In this sequence, the male soldiers hug their wives and girlfriends good-bye, similar to the farewell scenes in Worley's video.

This video very much relies on Anker's definition of melodrama, with "grandiose facial expressions, vivid bodily gestures, stirring musical accompaniment" (23). The video makes it clear that the hero is off to fight the good fight and perhaps more interestingly, his family is expected to support that good fight with stoicism. The boy in the picture does not cry or show emotion as his father walks onto the airplane. Instead, he responds

with a military gesture – a salute. This demonstrates a sense of what Anker calls "moral virtue" – of quiet pathos and suffering (23).

Additionally, the wife and mother in this video is pretty, young and also quietly stoic. Her demeanor along with the appearance of the children is meant to invoke empathy, another criterion of melodrama according to Anker (23). She gazes adoringly at her husband but also does not cry openly. Emotional responses are viewed as being private and must stay behind closed doors. Even the children do not cry and the young son valiantly salutes to his father as he climbs into the airplane. This is reminiscent of a young John F. Kennedy Junior saluting his father's corpse as it traveled past him during the President's funeral. It signifies respect toward the military and the potential outcome his father may face.

The final of the enhanced performance videos is again a protest piece by the Dixie Chicks called "Not Ready To Make Nice", which is the most stylistic of all the videos reviewed. This song never made it to number one on the country charts as much of country radio still refuses to play their songs. It did however spend 21 weeks on Billboard's Top 100 chart and received the Grammy for Song of the Year in 2007 (billboard.com). The video was also been nominated for Video of the Year by CMT Music Awards in 2007. This video underscores the Dixie Chicks singing and playing instruments with stylistic associational shots that do not follow a story line. The video is in response to the attempts made to castigate the Chicks for their stance against Bush and his invasion of Iraq and the video creates the sense of the women being treated as pariahs of the community. It begins with a shot of the arm of one of the Dixie Chicks being slathered in ink. The only part visible to the camera in this shot is the torso: the camera has chopped off the face of the singer. She has become faceless, an entity that is meant to be scorned. The dress the singer is wearing is a virginal-white old-fashioned dress that is ruined by the streaks of ink. It then cuts to a monastic looking priest gazing sternly into the camera. This continues with several shots of different members of the community – a woman, a man, an older woman all looking sternly into the camera as Martie McGuire and Emily Robison are plastered with ink. One shot reveals that it is main singer Natalie Maines who is throwing the paint on her band mates, suggesting that she has caused them to be "painted with the same brush" in the controversy.

The set for this part of the video has a red background. This suggests a number of things. First, the color of red of course represents blood and has multiple meanings in this context. It can either be menstrual blood or blood from a violent act. Later in the video, the women grab their mid-sections with their bloodied/inked hands in a way that suggests a rending of their womb and the ink that has been poured on their white gowns looks like dried blood. Second, the color red is also associated with anger. In this video, the ire or rage is supplemented by the stares of the solemn community members. Finally, red is also representational of the Catholic Church and its red-garbed Cardinals. Indeed, the video plays up on the images of the religious church with the community members wearing heavy crosses around their neck and at one point in the video, the sign of the cross are made over a hysterical Maines.

McGuire and Robison both restrain and support Maines at various parts of the video. In the first shot as Maines sings: "I paid my price and I'll keep paying," she is restrained after standing to her feet in anger. The video sequence features a long shot of the Chicks seated in front of a cartoon-like house that is black that stands in contrast to the red background. The three women sit in front of a white picket fence, while members of the community sit behind that fence, again in judgment. Another series of shots has Maines thrust in front of a blackboard, forced to write the line "to talk without thinking is to shoot without aiming" repeatedly. This suggests a need for her to have learned her lesson and it occurs while Maines sings: "I know you'll say, can't you just get over it." Again, it is Maines who is the target and her band mates are in the position of being witnesses to the humiliation, but not active participants.

In another segment of the video, McGuire and Robison restrain a frenzied Maines as she writhes on a stretcher. In a long shot, Maines struggles against the constraints of McGuire and Robison while to the left, medical doctors look on. Behind them are x-rays of spinal chords. This occurs while the chorus is being sung with the lyrics: "I'm not ready to make nice/ I'm not ready to back down/ Still made as hell and I don't have time to go round and round and round." Again, there are multiple meanings being produced here. First, the word hysteria is associated to women who act irrationally as a result of hormonal changes. Second, the x-rays suggest that Maines has a backbone to stand up to the dominant perspective that the group should have kept their personal politics quiet.

As suggested earlier this video is much more stylistic than any of the other videos under study and the use of idea-associated montage is used extensively to produce multiple meanings in their videos. "Not Ready to Make Nice" is full of ambiguity, contradictions, doubt, and complexity. While on the surface, it is made to look like a melodrama from the silent movie era of the depression, replete with a young virginal heroine, the heroine does not act in a way that suggests she is rescueable. She is angry, combative and violent – hardly a good victim. It moves beyond the easily definable good versus evil, to create a complex overview of the different responses to the idea of "making nice" that torpedoes the gender codes that suggest women should just be quiet. The Chicks deliberate use of ambiguous video maintains the viewers intrigue (Gow 64). These distributing images that are deliberately impenetrable allows the Chicks to call "attention to themselves" (Gow 64).

There are clear signs of myth-making and propaganda in several of the videos under study. In particular, Keith's and Worley's videos rely on the stereotypical assumptions about women's and men's behaviour. Their videos continue the myth that men must take action and women must support them. Moreover, women are not expected to be active, but instead passive. This has been the traditional role of women during war, and it ignores the modern military that now includes women on the battlefield. Additionally, the heavy symbolism of the American flag and Christian values used through out Worley and Keith's videos also suggests that the American people are doing God's work in protecting its people. Jackson's video, even with its limited imagery also reinforces these Christian values. The false dichotomy of good versus evil belies the complexity of the situation in the Middle East and enhances the melodramatic rhetoric of Bush's foreign

policy. On the other hand the Dixie Chicks' video calls into questions this focus on Christian values suggesting that they can also be a source of repression. The fact that their songs are still not being played on much of country radio demonstrates that dissenting opinions are still being silenced by the industry.

As well, there is clear melodrama utilized in several of the videos. Keith and Worley pull at our heartstrings with farewell scenes, both real and acted that show women and children crying over the loss of their patriarchs. However, the Dixie Chicks "Not Ready to Make Nice" also relies on melodrama, but in a far more self-reflexive manner. More importantly perhaps, in the Chick's case there is no hero riding up on his horse to rescue them, no proud army to march in and take control. Instead, the Chicks are left to take care of themselves, which they do proudly.

Conclusion

This paper provides an overview of the use of popular culture and in particular country music to support and contradict the American position following the September 11th attacks in New York City and Washington DC. Music has seldom been value free (Botstein 225). It has been used as both a site of rebellion and a site of propaganda particularly in times of war. As we have demonstrated, country music and country music videos that were popular between 2001 and 2004 play an important role in shaping the public's understanding of the debates surrounding the American actions in Iraq. The music provided social cues on how people are expected to act and how they are expected to live their lives and these cues were seeped in neo-conservative values. Moreover, some of the videos provided Americans with the opportunity to take pride in their military and to show their support for the men (and to a lesser degree women) who were going into battle. Finally, as is the case of the Dixie Chicks, it also allowed for the American public to seek a scapegoat for those who dared to question the actions of the President and his military. Unrepentant to the end, the Chicks video makes it clear that in a democracy, everyone has a right to her own opinion. For a country to be truly democratic, free speech must be free for everyone, not just those who support the hegemonic views of the state.

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