

**Southern (Re)Belles and Good Old Boys: Gender Norms, Country  
Music and the Iraq War**

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## **Introduction**

On March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1993, on the stage of the Shepherd's Bush Empire in London, the lead singer of the Dixie Chicks, Natalie Maines, stated "Just so you know we're on the good side with y'all. We do not want this war this violence. And we're ashamed that the President of the United States is from Texas" (Shut Up and Sing). Maines had no idea that these three sentences would set off a firestorm of protest and commercial backlash at home in the United States. Boycotts by most American country music stations prompted their song "Travelling Soldier" to plummet off the charts from the number one spot it held before the comments. They also faced radio sponsored events in which their CDs were burned or crushed by tractors. Websites and radio stations also encouraged fans to boycott the American leg of their "Top of the World" concert tour. Given the brevity of Maines' statement, the anger directed towards them on radio, talk shows and the internet was surprising. Even more astonishing were the death threats that caused the Dixie Chicks to introduce metal detector screening for their concerts. This event and its aftermath are recorded in the documentary "Shut Up & Sing." It shows how the Dixie Chicks moved through several phases in an attempt to process this backlash and respond to it. You see them shift from a half-hearted apology to whole-hearted defiance at their treatment by the music industry, right-wing talk shows and former fans. This defiance culminates in the release of their "therapy" CD "Taking the Long Way," which included two songs ("Not Ready to Make Nice" and "Taking the Long Way"). The new CD furthered the backlash on country radio because as the Chicks put it in their song, "Taking the Long Way," they refused to back down and "kiss all the asses they told me too" (Dixie Chicks). While the backlash succeeded in diminishing the size of their concert audiences their critical acclaim has grown.<sup>1</sup> Rather than putting these women in their "place" the backlash rallied them and allowed them to hear their voice in a new way as suggested by lyrics:

Well, I fought with a stranger and I met myself  
I opened my mouth and I heard myself  
It can get pretty lonely when you show yourself  
Guess I could have made it easier on myself  
But I, I could never follow  
No I, I could never follow (Dixie Chicks)

Thus, this story is not only one about the repression of female political speech, it is also about how this type of backlash can serve to empower.

While other artists had spoken out both in support of and against the war, Maines' own political statement became the source of debates over free speech and censorship. The Dixie Chicks unique position in the country music industry seemed to determine their fate, as this act of "disloyalty" was not acceptable in this genre of music and stood in direct contrast with their image as American "sweethearts." In this paper I examine this event as a clear illustration of gendered mediation of voice and legitimacy in the realm of foreign policy. Through a quantitative and qualitative assessment of select newspaper coverage of the anti-war stance taken by the Dixie Chicks, I illustrate that there are gendered differences in the way that political speech made by men and women is framed and that this is especially the case in the context of celebrities speaking out on foreign policy. These differences are indicated by attacks on the intelligence of female artists, references to violence in response to female speech, and the overall depiction of female speech in a negative light. This analysis is accomplished through a content and discourse analysis of the newspaper coverage of four country artists who were outspoken on the war. The comparison of the Dixie Chicks with three other male country artists (both supportive of and against the war) demonstrates the gendered nature of political speech.

## **Women and Political Speech**

While women have gained the right to vote and run for office, politics "is still very much constructed as male territory" (van Zoonen, 2006: 23). This is even more evident when it comes to the realm of international

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<sup>1</sup> This was clearly demonstrated at the 2007 Grammys, where the Dixie Chicks won five awards. Whether this new respect was due to a greater acceptance or the changing public opinion on the War in Iraq is up for debate.

relations. Feminist international relations scholars have noted that the realm of international politics has historically been seen as a man's domain and continues to be a male dominated endeavor (Enloe 2000, 6; Kantola 2007, 271; Parpart 1998, 203; Sjolander 2003, 62; Tickner 1999, 2; Youngs 2004, 76). Here the focus on war and security has left the field relatively masculine both in terms of those who work in the field and the concepts employed. Feminist international relations has worked to disrupt this hegemony in various ways including analyzing the gendered roles that men and women have historically played in war. In general men have been the main actors in war as this was seen as an opportunity to "prove their manliness, aggression and bravery" (Riley, 2005: 342). On the other hand women were expected to be stoic and send their husbands and sons off to war while they looked after the home front. The warrior/maiden model places men in active roles and women in passive roles (Youngs, 2006: 8). While the current operation in Iraq has placed women in more active roles, as soldiers, this does not dilute their more passive roles. In fact, Robin Riley suggests that it is actually symptomatic of the double role that women now play internationally, a double role that is similar to the one they play in the work world domestically. Thus, "new responsibilities were simply added to the old" and "women could be both soldier and mother, defender and defended, and white women should be advocate of war abroad and keeper of the peaceful at home" (Riley, 2005: 343). In her analysis of women involved in the protest movement against the first Gulf War, Riley contends that women were also expected to refrain from critiquing or protesting government policies (Riley, 2005: 343). In fact "women were implicitly told in media representations, through the social constructions of femininity and by friends, family and community, that their resistance was neither welcomed, appropriate nor appreciated" (Riley, 2005: 350). Many, like the Dixie Chicks, found themselves in a similar position to the female activists interviewed by Riley. In the case of the "War on Terror", Shepherd (2006) suggests that the creation of the good/evil binary discourse worked to essentially silence critical voices after 9/11 (27). Any critic was constructed as a "traitor, sinner, naïve, liberal, peacenik, whiner" who as a bonus evil usually "disrupted the family unit" (Shepherd, 2006: 27). The Dixie Chicks are certainly a good representation of this as they were constructed by the country music industry as un-American and traitorous.

The power to speak in society is a "key indicator of authority and status among people." (Gilmartin, 2001: 60) Women have faced more difficulty in speaking out and Jamieson would suggest that this is due to the double bind that women face in society. This bind has its roots in history where women have been identified as "bodies not minds, wombs not brains" (Jamieson, 1995: 53). While in the past the use of the ducking stool, public gagging or insane asylums<sup>2</sup> were ways of dealing with outspoken, unruly women, the effects can still be felt today (Jamieson, 1995: 80-81). Females still report more difficulty than males in expressing themselves in public and gaining either a hearing or respect for their ideas. Consistent with social sanctions against aggressive speech by women, they are also less likely than men to speak on controversial topics and are more likely to be interrupted and disregarded (Jamieson, 1995: 82; Gilmartin, 2001:60). Additionally, while there are few descriptors that characterize the maleness of male speech, there is an array of vocabulary that exists to condemn female speech. Jamieson suggests that words that characterize women as "scolds, nags, schrews, fishwives, harpies, viragos, bitches, harridans, and termagants," or describe their speech as shrieking, scolding, bitching or shrill condemns women who are expressive (Jamieson, 1995: 82). The result of this condemnation is that it enjoins other women into silence (Jamieson, 1995: 82). Given that the voices of women "have not been heard" in foreign policy arenas and that the "place of and for women is often secondary, if it exists at all, in foreign policy statements and policies," (Sjolander, 62) it is not surprising that this condemnation of women's speech continues. An example is found in the chapter by Randy Rudder in *Country Music Goes to War*. In this chapter he comments on several celebrities who have spoken out about the war. About Jennifer Aniston he says in her "erudite analysis" of the situation brewing in the Middle East, she pronounced the commander in chief a "[expletive] idiot." About the Pretenders lead singer, Chrissie Hynde, he says "in her best masochistic rant, she cried "we deserve to get bombed." Thus, we have Aniston's intelligence and knowledge brought into question and Hynde sexualized and depicted as ranting. Compare this to Danny Glover "informing" us that Bush is a

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly in the Dixie Chick's video for "Not Ready to Make Nice" they play up the theme of hysteria by showing Natalie Maines being restrained by her band mates and medical staff.

racist or the fact that Steve Earle “wrote a song...” (Rudder, 2005: 208). While all of these celebrities were outspoken opponents of the war, only the women are characterized as unintelligent and out of control.

The concept of gendered mediation is key to the analysis performed in this paper. Gendered mediation suggests that the way in which politics is reported is significantly determined by a male-oriented agenda that privileges the practice of politics as an essentially male pursuit. The image and language of mediated politics, therefore, supports the status quo (male as norm).” (Sreberny and van Zoonen, 93) In other words the news plays “an active role in perpetuating a stereotypically masculine conception of politics and politicians,” which in turn “subtly serves to reinforce the perception that women do not really belong in politics” (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003b: 21-211). When women do vie for political positions they face a double bind as the use of aggressive tactics demonstrates that they “belong” in the realm of politics; however, it can provoke negative reactions as this combative behaviour “contravenes deeply rooted and often unconscious notions of how women are supposed to behave” (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003a). In fact, Gidengil and Everitt (2003b) found that the speech of female candidates in elections was usually more negatively framed and the aggressiveness of their speech was overemphasized (215). Thus, they found that female candidates were more likely to be seen as “blasting” or “attacking” (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003b). This created a more negative impression of the female candidates in the view of the audience. To date most studies of gendered mediation have examined the news coverage of female politicians (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003a,b; Sreberny and van Zoonen; Sampert and Trimble, 2003). This study takes this discussion further by looking at female celebrities who are stepping further out of their traditional roles by speaking about politics.

Even though the link between politics and entertainment has been objected to in much of the literature on politics, the presence and relevance of the role of entertainment in politics has intensified (Van Zoonen, 2005: 2). While political speech made by female politicians is often highly publicized and scrutinized, female celebrities face even more difficulty in speaking out as their celebrity status remains “built primarily on the appearance of the body” (van Zoonen, 2006: 292). As a result female celebrities are not usually known for their intelligence and political positions. This is evident in the fact that men can more easily make the transition between celebrity and politician (i.e. Reagan, Schwarzenegger) than can their female counterparts. While many might question the voice of celebrity in politics, I would suggest that this is a key area of investigation and part of the larger political and public sphere that poststructuralist discourse analysts suggest “foreign policy decision-makers are situated within” (Hansen, 2006: 7). A key part of understanding the discourse on foreign policy is examining whether or not the official discourse is supported or criticized by other discourses (Hansen, 2006: 30). A great deal of work has been done on how popular culture has provided a counter-discourse to foreign policy (i.e. folk music and the Vietnam War); however, little has been done to examine discourses within popular culture that support official foreign policy decisions. The backlash against the Dixie Chicks is an important event to analyze as it demonstrates the attempt by the country music industry to silence counter-discourses in the lead-up to the war in Iraq. Essentially this picks up from post-structuralist discourse analysis that, as Torfing suggests, should examine the rules surrounding what is said and by whom (Torfing, 2005:7). In other words it is not enough to examine the discourse surrounding a certain policy, one also needs to analyze who gets to speak and on which issues.

### **Methodology**

Given that the media “help to establish the parameters and limits that structure our knowledge and thinking about the social world,” (Ross and Sreberny, 2000: 1993) I chose to analyze the media coverage of four country music artists who were outspoken on the war in Iraq. This study employs both content and discourse analysis in order to examine the newspaper coverage of these artists. According to Neuman (2000), content analysis includes systematically “counting and recording” elements of a text in order to “produce a quantitative description of the symbolic content in a text.” (293) Aside from looking at the amount and prominence of coverage I used discourse analysis to look for characterizations of speech, references to intelligence, references to bad or good manners, the mention of violence or boycotts against the artists and the overall tone of the articles. These were the key variables that I thought would tell a story

about not only the response to the political statement made by the Dixie Chicks and other artists but also how it was portrayed in the media.

### **Selection of Artists**

The country music industry has a long history of providing support for American wars and can even be linked back to the American Civil War. (Smith and Akenson, 2005) In fact the first gold record in country music was a song designed to conjure up wartime audiences pride in America during World War Two (Hatchett and MacNeil, 2005: 34). "There's a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere" emphasized martyrdom and heroism as all of the men in the song give their lives in service to their country. More recently, this link was demonstrated by two songs that were largely viewed as supporting the war in Iraq. "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue" by Toby Keith reached the number one spot on the charts in July of 2002 and while this song was written with respect to the operation in Afghanistan it was also largely viewed as an endorsement of the war in Iraq. The second song, "Have You Forgotten?" hit the number one spot on the charts in April of 2003 and stayed there for seven weeks. In this song by Darryl Worley we see similar themes of retribution arise. Given the historical links and the popularity of these songs the "stereotype that country music has become the house genre of the GOP isn't easily or persuasively disproven" (Willman, 2005: 7). Additionally, this demonstrates a discourse within popular culture that was supportive with the official foreign policy discourse, a discourse in which there seemed little room for disagreement as suggested by the backlash against the Dixie Chicks.

The other element I examined in order to shed further light on this discussion is the gendered nature of the country music industry. Since there are several very popular female country music artists (Dixie Chicks, Shania Twain and Faith Hill to name a few) that have gained popularity not only on the country music charts but also on the pop charts the gendered nature of the industry might not be evident at first glance. However, when we look at the artists who sang the top songs from 2000 to 2004, only 12% of the artists were female and only 2% of the songs were written solely by women.<sup>3</sup> This in itself presents a picture of an industry that is very male oriented and tends to represent the male point of view. What is interesting is that this is not the case with respect to those listening to the songs. Here there is close to an equal split with women making up slightly more than half the listeners at 53% of the audience ([www.cmaworld.com](http://www.cmaworld.com) downloaded 15 February 2007). When we add to this equation the fact that 42% of the songs that reached the number one spot on the charts between 2000 and 2004 contain stereotypical gender roles for women, what emerges is a traditional view of women being told mainly by men to a mixed audience.<sup>4</sup> Obviously not all of the songs in country music represent women as the weaker sex, even a few of the songs recognize that they can be soldiers (Toby Keith's American Soldier), yet songs with untypical imagery only make up 3% of the total songs. Of course the representation of men also fits into this discussion and here we find that the percentages are even a bit stronger with 48% of the songs having stereotypical roles for men and only 2% showing them in an untypical light. An overt example of this 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:

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<sup>3</sup> The corresponding numbers for men were 86% and 79%, with the rest being co-sung or co-authored.

<sup>4</sup> Data found through a content analysis of all the country music songs that reached the number one position on the country charts between 2000 and 2004. The dates I 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 commencement of the War in Iraq. The total number of songs gathered for analysis was 97. 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. In addition I looked for the presence of gendered imagery in each song. This included the presence of both stereotypical and untypical gender roles. Stereotypical gender roles were defined as roles that were traditionally seen as being feminine or masculine in nature. Thus, songs that characterized women as victims or weak or placed them in traditional roles such as child-rearing and cooking were considered as representations of traditional or stereotypically gendered imagery. Additionally, images of women as strong or as soldiers or leaders were coded as untypical representations of gender. I also coded in the opposite manner for representations of men in the songs.

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](http://www.cowboylyrics.com) downloaded 03 November 2006)

A more subtle example can be found in Kenney Chesney's song "The Good Stuff" which spent seven weeks in the number one spot in July of 2002:

Eatin' burnt suppers the whole first year  
and askin for seconds to keep her from tearin' up  
Yeah man, that's the good stuff ([www.kennychesney.com](http://www.kennychesney.com) )

Thus, we have a style of music that provides clear guidelines of what roles women and men should play. This is an important element to combine with the Dixie Chicks' incident, which clearly demonstrates that country music will not tolerate its women speaking out against the war or the president. While this incident on its own provides important insights, it is also important to compare the response to the Dixie Chicks with other country artists who were outspoken both against and in support of the war in Iraq. Given that I listen to country radio on a daily basis it was easy to pick out the artists who were on the supportive side of this equation. As mentioned above, Toby Keith and Darryl Worley both had pro-war songs out at the time of the commencement of the American invasion into Iraq. While there were several other artists who could have been used on the pro side these two tended to be the two most mentioned artists in the literature.

Toby Keith is one of the most successful male artists in the mainstream country music industry. This puts him on an equal footing with the Dixie Chicks in terms of publicity and "star power." He is well known for being disgruntled with his treatment by the country music industry and for several controversial (yet highly popular) songs that are viewed as being condescending towards women. He is also known for several hits that dealt with the aftermath of 9/11. The first and most controversial ("Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue") became a hit in the lead up to the war in Iraq and included the lyrics:

Now this nation that I love is fallin' under attack.  
A mighty sucker-punch came flying in from somewhere in the back.  
Soon as we could see clearly through our big black eye,  
Man, we lit up your world like the fourth of July.

Hey, Uncle Sam put your name at the top of his list,  
And the Statue of Liberty started shaking her fist.  
And the eagle will fly and it's gonna be hell,  
When you hear Mother Freedom start ringing her bell.  
And it'll feel like the whole wide world is raining down on you.  
Ah, brought to you, courtesy of the red, white and blue. (cowboylyrics.com)

Keith was also part of a highly publicized feud with the Dixie Chicks over their differing perspectives on the war. In fact, at concerts he is known for using his big screen to put up a picture of Natalie Maines being hugged by Saddam Hussein as he sings the line "We'll put a boot in your ass" from "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue." Maines responded to this by wearing a t-shirt that had the initials FUTK, which stood for F\*\*k You Toby Keith. Given all of the bravado that Keith displayed against the Dixie Chicks and in support of the troops, it is interesting that there is some debate as to whether or not Keith was actually supportive of the war. This discussion seems to have surfaced more recently (as the popularity of the war has waned) as Keith, himself, has pointed out that in an interview early on he stated that the "math (on the war in Iraq)

hasn't worked out for me yet." (Willman, 2005: 63) Yet this little publicized statement was overshadowed by his feud with the Dixie Chicks, his overtly vengeance-seeking number one song and comments like the dedication of his CMT award in April of 2003 to "Mr. Rumsfeld and Tommy Franks and all the people putting it down for us over there ... God bless the USA, baby." (Willman, 2005: 37) While Keith may now be having a change of heart, best demonstrated by his 2008 hit that had him praying for "peace on earth" and asking us to "hate me if you want to, but love if you can," he was perceived as one of the most vocal supporters of the war at the time of its initiation. Keith is therefore, a key artist to include in my analysis.

The other pro-war artist I chose for this analysis is Darryl Worley. As discussed above, Worley released a song that was seen as supportive of the war in Iraq. In fact his song "Have You Forgotten" can be viewed as one of the most popular songs that dealt with retribution for 9/11 as it held the number one spot on the country charts for 7 weeks. The lyrics of this song chastise anti-war protestors for forgetting about the pain of 9/11 :

I hear people saying we don't need this war  
But, I say there's some things worth fighting for  
What about our freedom and this piece of ground  
We didn't get to keep 'em by backing down  
They say we don't realize the mess we're getting in  
Before you start your preaching let me ask you this my friend

Have you forgotten how it felt that day?  
To see your homeland under fire  
And her people blown away  
Have you forgotten when those towers fell?  
We had neighbors still inside going thru a living hell  
And you say we shouldn't worry 'bout bin Laden  
Have you forgotten? (cowboylitics.com)

Given that this song references bin Laden, but was popular during the commencement of the war in Iraq, it has been criticized for conflating bin Laden and Iraq. Worley has pointed out that he wrote this song after visiting troops in Afghanistan and thus was actually writing about Afghanistan. However, this clarification was more to silence criticism of his knowledge rather than a suggestion that he did not support the war in Iraq. While, Worley is a popular artist within country music he is not a name someone from outside of the country genre would have been familiar with before this song became a hit. In other words he does not have the same star status as the Dixie Chicks or Toby Keith. However, given the popularity of this song and the clear political statement it makes about justice for 9/11, I determined that he was another key artist to look at in this analysis.

While choosing artists to examine who were supportive of the war was fairly easy, finding artists who were outspoken against the war was a much more difficult endeavor. This fact in itself is quite telling, but even more ominous is the fact that artists who seemed to have empathy for the plight of the Dixie Chicks were compelled to clarify their position on the war in order to ward off retributions (Willman, 2005: 37). Thus, finding another artist in the country mainstream was not plausible and I had to go outside the bounds of mainstream country music to the alternative or Americana genre to find anyone who had voiced their opposition to the war. This genre of country music can be seen as a mixture of alternative country, blue grass and blues-rock (Fox, 170). Essentially this genre is not closely associated with the mainstream country industry based in Nashville which includes the other artists discussed in this paper. Americana is seen as more politically progressive format and for the most part does not have as large of a fan base. The key artist who came up in this genre is Steve Earle. He is viewed as one of the most virulent opponents to the war as he not only has several songs that make statements about the war, but was also a member of Musicians United to Win Without War (Rudder, 2005: 223). Earle is a politically active artist who is known for his activism against the death penalty and he conveys many of his political positions in his songs. Much like Worley, Earle does not have the same level of notoriety as the Dixie Chicks and Toby Keith, but was the

only other comparator that I could find. Given the differences between the two genres and their level of publicity I am not entirely happy with this selection but I felt that it was necessary to have a comparator for the Dixie Chicks on the same side of the debate.

Given that I also wanted to examine gender as a factor in this analysis, I wanted to include other women in the study. While I attempted to gather articles on two other female artists there was insufficient news coverage to perform a comparison with the other artists. The artists I attempted to include in the study are Roseanne Cash and Chely Wright. Again there was no female artist within mainstream country that was outspoken against the war so I tried to use someone from Americana (Roseanne Cash). What is interesting on the pro-war side is that although there were several male artists I could have used for my analysis, it was hard to find any women speaking out on either side of the issue. While there were female artists who helped with Bush's presidential campaigns they were not overtly supportive of the war. I finally settled on Chely Wright, who released a song that defended having a bumper sticker expressing support for the troops. Once again neither of these women were ideal comparators as one was not in the country mainstream and the other was not an overt "cheerleader" of the war. This of course became a moot point as both were dropped from the final analysis due to the absence of articles on them.

### **Newspaper Selection and Coding**

For this analysis I have compiled articles from USA Today, Washington Post, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Houston Chronicle, Nashville Tennessean and Country Weekly. These papers were selected based on both circulation and location. I chose USA Today due to the fact that is the largest circulation daily in the United States. The New York Times was chosen based on it being the third largest daily and its location in the city that was the site of 9/11. I selected the Los Angeles Times because it is at the heart of the entertainment industry and the fourth largest daily. Similarly, I chose the Washington Post because it was in the political capital of the United States and fifth largest daily. Both the Houston Chronicle and the Nashville Tennessean were chosen based on their location with Houston as the capital of Texas and Nashville the heart of the country music industry. I searched for the articles on Factiva and Lexis Nexis and cross-referenced the results in an attempt to ensure no articles were missed. I searched for all articles that mentioned the artist in the headline or lead paragraph as this showed them being a prominent focus of the story. I then removed articles that did not reference the artists' position on the U.S. response to 9/11 and where the artist was not the focus of at least 50% of the story. This ensured that I was analyzing articles that significantly discussed the artist and discussed them with respect to their political speech.

Once the articles were gathered I coded all of them using a coding frame that examined some identifying variables and addressed some of the key elements I wanted to examine. The main variables that will be discussed in this paper include visibility, speech, intelligence, manners, anger/boycotts/violence and tone. Given the backlash over this speech act I determined it was important to examine how the speech of the Dixie Chicks was depicted and how much publicity (visibility) this event received. Given that the literature on gendered mediation suggests that combative female speech receives unwarranted attention due to its "unexpectedness" or "surprisingness," (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003a: 562) it was important to look at the visibility of the event. I also picked up some of these themes from the "Shut Up & Sing" documentary. In the documentary there were several clips that demonstrated the anger directed towards the Dixie Chicks and how this anger also attacked the intelligence of the Dixie Chicks. For example, one clip showed Bill O'Reilly calling them "callow, foolish women who deserve to be slapped around." (Shut Up & Sing) Thus, I wanted to investigate these two themes (intelligence and violence) further to see if this depiction was pervasive in the coverage they received. The presence of these themes was not surprising given the literature on female speech cited earlier. Another theme that arose from the documentary was whether or not the Dixie Chicks were displaying bad manners. I thought that this was an interesting depiction and wondered if it arose in the rest of the coverage and whether or not male artists were subjected to the same framing. The overall tone of the story was also an element I examined as the literature on gendered mediation suggests that women who step out of non-traditional roles are reported in more negative terms. I performed both a content and discourse analysis of these themes, coding for first their presence and then examining the context in which they were mentioned.



## **Visibility**

The first indicator that I wanted to examine with respect to the coverage of country artists and their outspokenness on the War on Terror was visibility. In other words I looked for who received the most stories and where these stories appeared in the paper. As I suspected there were significantly more articles (134) for the Dixie Chicks than for any of the other artists. Toby Keith had one third of the total number of articles with 44. I found 19 for Steve Earle and 13 for Darryl Worley. The two other women I looked at in this survey only had two articles each. While I still coded the articles for Roseanne Cash and Chely Wright I have excluded them from the rest of the analysis due to the extremely low number of articles. The visibility difference between the Dixie Chicks and the other two female artists can be mostly attributed to their overall popularity. The Dixie Chicks were at the height of their success at the time of the “incident” while Cash and Wright were lesser known artists. This is also the case when it comes to Steve Earle and to some extent Darryl Worley. However, the fact that it is so difficult to find popular country artists that took an overt position on the war (especially against it) is significant. In fact in order to find anyone else in the industry I had to include artists from the alternative country scene (Steve Earle and Roseanne Cash), as the Dixie Chicks were the only mainstream artists to voice an opinion against the war. Thus, not only were the Dixie Chicks at the height of popularity but they took a stance in direct contradiction to the majority of the industry. This made them and their comments highly visible as is demonstrated by the larger number of articles gathered. Another factor in this increased visibility is the fact that they Dixie Chicks didn’t speak through a song as Toby Keith and Darryl Worley did. In fact it was a common sentiment that they should put their views in a song rather than speaking out. Somehow political opinions in country music are more tolerable when they are sung rather than spoken.

The higher visibility of the Dixie Chicks is also demonstrated through an examination of the article headlines and location of articles. The Dixie Chicks were named in 87.3% of the article headlines compared with 61.4% for Toby Keith, 57.9% for Steve Earle and 30.8% for Darryl Worley. While other celebrities were sometimes mentioned in these headlines, George Bush was only mentioned in headlines (4.5%) in the articles about the Dixie Chicks. Given that the comments made by the Dixie Chicks directly referenced Bush this is not surprising. With respect to the location of the stories, the Chicks were the only artists to appear on the front page of the newspapers (6.7% of stories). They also appeared in 29.1% of the front sections of the papers versus 20.5% for Keith, none for Earle and 30.8% for Worley. However, Worley was only in the front section of the Houston and Nashville papers, not any of the bigger circulation papers, while the Dixie Chicks appeared in the front sections of all of the papers except USA today. Thus, the overall finding with respect to visibility is that the Dixie Chicks were by far the most visible with three times the number of stories as the next most visible artist (Keith) and, were the only artists to be placed on the front page of a paper.

**Table 1: Visibility**

	<b>Dixie Chicks</b>	<b>Toby Keith</b>	<b>Steve Earle</b>	<b>Darryl Worley</b>
<b>Total Articles</b>	134	44	19	13
<b>Number of articles in which artist is in the headline</b>	117 (87.3%)	27 (61.4%)	11 (57.9%)	4 (30.8%)
<b>Number of articles in which artist is in the front section</b>	39 (29.1%)	9 (20.5%)	0	4 (30.8%)

## **Speech**

Following from the literature on the double bind I thought it important to examine how the speech of the artists was represented in the articles. In his study of racism in the press, Teun van Dijk (1991) noted that it is important to look at “who is speaking and how often” as being able to speak on your own behalf is an important indicator of your prominence and credibility as an actor (151). Thus, I looked for whether or not

the artists were quoted which demonstrates whether or not the artists were allowed to speak for themselves. Additionally, I looked for any reference that characterized or evaluated their speech. For example, I coded words like “quip” or “chided” as characterizations of speech while terms like “said” and “spoke” were not coded. In addition to this I noted if the artists’ speech was evaluated with in any manner, such as a remark being deemed “disrespectful.”

The Dixie Chicks were actually quoted in a higher percentage of articles than were other artists; 63.4% versus Keith at 52.3%, Earle at 52.6% and Worley at 46.2%. This suggests that the Dixie Chicks were allowed to speak for themselves more often than the men. However, closer evaluation of the articles in which the artists were quoted demonstrates that there is a discrepancy in how often the artists are quoted in each article. The male artists were quoted more frequently than the Dixie Chicks. Of the articles quoting the Dixie Chicks, 55.3% contained only one or two quotes. Further, these quotes were often the very statements that Natalie Maines spoke on stage in London that started the backlash against them. The male artists on the other hand had fewer articles containing one or two quotes. Darryl Worley was the closest with 50% of his articles having only one or two quotes, followed by Toby Keith at 39.1% and Steve Earle at 30%. Even more interesting is that the bulk of the Dixie Chicks articles (85.9%) contained five or fewer quotes which means that only 14.1% of the articles had six or more quotes. This contrasts significantly with the male artists as the percentage of articles in which they were quoted six or more times was 43.5% for Keith, 40% for Earle and 33.3% for Worley. What this suggests then is that although the men were quoted in fewer articles overall, the articles that did quote them tended to quote them much more often than the Dixie Chicks.

In this part of the analysis I also examined whether or not other artists or industry representatives were quoted in the articles. Representatives from the music industry were quoted in 30.6% of the articles on the Dixie Chicks, compared with 18.2% of the articles on Keith and only one article each for Earle and Worley. In other words industry representatives were given a fairly substantial voice in the articles on the Dixie Chicks. This is further substantiated by the fact that of the articles in which industry representatives were quoted, 37.5% of the Dixie Chicks articles contained six or more quotes compared to 12.5% for Keith. So not only is the music industry quoted in a greater number of articles on the Dixie Chicks, but they are also quoted more often within each article. In fact there were actually more articles that quoted industry representatives six or more times (18) than quoted the Dixie Chicks six or more times (12). Thus, industry representatives were given a more substantial voice in the articles on the Dixie Chicks than in any of the articles on the other artists. This was also the case in respect to the quotes made by other celebrities. In this case 30.6% of Dixie Chicks articles contained quotes by other celebrities, compared to Keith at 20.5% and Earle and Worley with one article each.

**Table 2: Articles that Quoted Artists, Industry Representatives and Celebrities**

	<b>Dixie Chicks</b>	<b>Toby Keith</b>	<b>Steve Earle</b>	<b>Darryl Worley</b>
<b>Artist Quoted</b>	85 (63.4%)	23 (52.3%)	10 (52.6%)	6 (46.2%)
<b>Quoted 1 or 2 times*</b>	47 (55.3%)	9 (39.1%)	3 (30%)	3 (50%)
<b>Quoted more than 5 times*</b>	12 (14.1%)	10 (43.5%)	4 (40%)	2 (33.3%)
<b>Industry quoted</b>	48 (30.6)%	8 (18.2%)	1(5.3%)	1 (7.7)
<b>Industry quoted more than five times*</b>	18 (37.5%)	1 (12.5%)	N/A	N/A
<b>Celebrities quoted</b>	41 (30.6%)	9 (20.5)%	1 (5.3%)	1 (5.3)

\* Calculated as a percentage of articles that quoted the artist or industry representative.

The other variable I examined with respect to speech is whether or not the artists’ speech was characterized or evaluated in any way. The literature on the double bind suggests that women’s speech is characterized more often than men’s. This was in fact what I found in my analysis of the articles. The speech of the Dixie Chicks was evaluated or characterized in 53.7% of the articles examined. Compare this with 20.5% of

Keith's articles, 10.5% of Earle's articles and none of Worley's. What is also interesting is that most of the articles on Keith and Earle only had one speech characterization, while the articles on the Chicks often had two, three or more characterizations of their speech. In fact overall there were 120 speech characterizations for the Dixie Chicks versus 11 for Keith and 3 for Earle. The number of descriptions of speech is only part of the story as the actual characterizations are also quite different in between the men and the Dixie Chicks. Overall the speech of the Dixie Chicks is placed in a more negative light than the speech of the two men. Steve Earle's speech is the least colorful as he is deemed to be the "most outspoken critic on President Bush"<sup>5</sup> and depicted as "fencing with cable-news anchor." Toby Keith, on the other had has both negative and positive characterizations of speech. He was called a "blowhard" twice but for the most part journalists complimented him on "speaking with surprisingly quiet intensity" and having answers that are "purposeful." Interestingly there was also reference to him ending his part of the "quarreling" with the Dixie Chicks.

The speech characterizations of the Dixie Chicks are even more colorful than those for Toby Keith. There are four main groups that these depictions fit into. The first and most numerous is the suggestion that Maines' comments were "inappropriate" or "disrespectful". Much of this discussion comes from Dixie Chicks own words as Maines tried to quiet the storm by suggesting her remark was disrespectful. This is something that the media seemed to quote more often than the statement itself. Also included in this category is the depiction of her remark as "offhand", "off-the-cuff", and "misguided." This tends to discredit her remark as something she did not really contemplate thoroughly and seems to question whether she actually meant it as a political statement.

Another key theme that came up in the depictions of their speech was the use of the game frame to characterize the statement. This is the second most numerous category and includes descriptions such as "Bush-bashing", "Dubya-knocking", "attacking", "jabbing" and "blasting." There was also the use of a more feminized attack with Maines taking a "slap at President Bush." However, the slapping depiction was only used twice and for the most part more masculine forms of attack were employed like "detonating a career bomb on a concert stage." The use of this terminology by the writers escalates Maines' statement from political speech to an attack against the president. This only served to further inflame the backlash. The presence of this phrasing is not surprising given that Gidengil and Everitt (2003b) suggest that media coverage tends to play "up the combativeness of female candidates" (227). This type of coverage is also significant as it tend to "diminish, not enhance" the appeal of female politicians (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003b: 228). While the Dixie Chicks are not female political candidates it is not a stretch to say that this characterization of their speech also diminished their appeal.

The next category is the portrayal of the band as "outspoken" or having a "big mouth." What is interesting about this category is that it contains the most flattering as well as the most negative portrayals of their speech. Thus, we have them being "outspoken" and "fearlessly speaking their minds" and saying the "boldest thing anyone in the entertainment industry has said since the war flap began." On the other hand we have one article that suggests Natalie "has a big mouth" and is a "spectacular blowhard" and "loudmouthed" and "blabbering away at meetings without a serious thought in her head, no impulse control anywhere in sight." Other articles suggested that she "still can't keep her mouth shut" and that she was a "gale force wind" that was "rarely reluctant to toss verbal gasoline on the fire." In other words Maines is depicted as not being thoughtful about her speech, but simply blurting out whatever pops into her head. Thus, both her intelligence and speech are put into question in this category.

The last main grouping of speech characterizations is the suggestion that the Dixie Chicks need to "shut up and sing." In a few of these cases, authors quoted the *lyrics of "Not Ready to Make Nice"* as this song responds to the death threat the Dixie Chicks received that demanded that they "shut up and sing." I went back and forth on the decision of whether to count these instances or not as the journalist was not explicitly

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<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all quotations included in this paper are from the news articles analyzed for our study.

evaluating their speech. In the end I decided to include it as the lyrics of the song are dealing with how their speech was evaluated. In terms of my overall article count this made a difference of only two articles as most of the time these lyrics were quoted other speech characterizations were also present. However, the song lyrics were not the only quotes that employed the term “shut up and sing” as it was a common notion that “these nitwits have still not gotten the lesson that people want to hear music and not their political agenda.” In addition to these four main groupings there were other portrayals of speech such as “chided”, “quipped”, “bray”, “vent” and the quote by Reba McEntire that if the “Dixie Chicks can sing with their foot in their mouths” she can surely host the Country Music Awards. Overall the characterizations of the Dixie Chicks’ speech served to discredit them.

Another interesting discussion under the topic of speech is the depiction of political songs in the articles. I found these references difficult to code as in many cases it was hard to determine whether or not evaluations were being made of the song or if they were simply reflecting what was in the song. In the case of Keith, Worley and Earle there were many more comments on their political songs than on their speech. For Keith, 40.9% of the articles characterized his songs with terms like “ignorant”, “belligerent”, “reactionary”, or as a “patriotic tirade.” Worley’s song was similarly characterized in 30.8% of the articles. For example, *Have You Forgotten* was deemed to be an “overzealous call to arms” and a “polarizing piece of work.” Earle actually had the highest percentage (63.2%) of articles evaluating his songs. Some of the portrayals included “defiant”, “scathing”, and an “amped-up spewing of Earle’s political ideals.” Remarkably, this is the one variable where the Dixie Chicks had the lowest percentage of articles with only 20.1% of them making characterizations of their song “Not Ready to Make Nice.” This contrasts significantly with characterizations of their speech in which they were 33 percentage points higher than the next closest artist. It is telling that it is the songs of the men that are being characterized and not their actual speech. This allows the journalists to be critical of the songs, without necessarily criticizing the artists directly. The opposite is true for the Dixie Chicks, as it is their direct speech that is criticized more than their songs, which serves to personalize the critique.

**Table 3: Speech Versus Songs Characterizations**

	<b>Dixie Chicks</b>	<b>Toby Keith</b>	<b>Steve Earle</b>	<b>Darryl Worley</b>
<b>Speech Characterized</b>	72 (53.7%)	9 (20.5%)	2 (10.5%)	0
<b>Song Characterized</b>	27 (20.1%)	18 (40.9%)	12 (63.2%)	4 (30.8%)

### **Intelligence**

In order to examine the presence or lack of the double bind that suggests women are “bodies, not minds” (Jamieson, 1995: 53), I examined not only how the speech of each singer was depicted but also whether or not the intelligence/knowledge of the artists was mentioned. In this case I looked for remarks that either demonstrated intelligence/knowledge or suggested a lack of it. The results are interesting as two of the artists were depicted as more intelligent than the other two. While one might guess that these two artists would have the same view on the war, this was not the case. Rather, Steve Earle and Toby Keith were both depicted as more intelligent than the Dixie Chicks and Darryl Worley. This is demonstrated in both descriptions of the artists as intelligent or unintelligent. Toby Keith came off as the most intelligent with 31.8% of the stories depicting him as someone who knew what he was doing and only 4.5% questioning his intelligence. Compare this to the Dixie Chicks who were only depicted as bright in 1.5% of the articles examined and were depicted as unintelligent in 9% of the articles studied. Obviously there is a difference in the depiction of two of the most outspoken country artists with respect to the war. However, is this difference a result of their differing viewpoints on the war? In other words were artists who spoke out against the war more likely to be labeled as uninformed? This does not appear to be the case as 15.8% (3) of the articles on Steve Earle, who can be viewed as being even more outspoken against the war than the Dixie Chicks, depicted him as intelligent and only one article (5.3%) questioned his intelligence in respect to his song lyrics. Thus, it can be concluded that gender is a factor in the way outspoken celebrities are portrayed. The fact that the Chicks were portrayed as less intelligent than both Steve Earle and Toby Keith

speaks to the double bind governing women's speech. However, there is a snag in this analysis as there is still the issue of Darryl Worley. Surprisingly Worley was actually portrayed as less intelligent than were the Dixie Chicks with none of his stories suggesting he was clever and 15.4% of his stories throwing his intelligence into question. Part of this can be explained by the fact the Worley's sample size was the smallest (13 articles in total versus 134 for the Chicks) but the percentage is still seen as statistically significant. Given this result, there would seem to be no case for gender bias in the representation of these artists. This would more than likely be the end of the discussion in a project that simply performed a quantitative content analysis of these articles; however, in this study the application of discourse analysis explains this discrepancy and demonstrates that the intelligence of female speech is in fact more prone to bias.

In order to assess what was going on in these articles I examined each reference to intelligence in each of the articles. In this assessment I looked at what the description of intelligence referred to. For example, was it in reference to a song, a statement, business savvy, education, etc. Interestingly the depictions of intelligence for Keith and Earle were related to their songs and in Keith's case his sharpness with respect to knowing what sells in the country music setting. With respect to their songs, Keith has "clever choruses" and "smart string arrangements" while Earle is "capable of fathoming impressive lyrical depths." However, for Toby Keith it is his prowess as a business man that is most often profiled in a good light. Thus, Keith is referred to as a "professor" of the country music industry who is "very, very intelligent," "a radio-minded whiz" who "knows exactly what he's doing." In contrast the two mentions of intelligence for the Dixie Chicks are somewhat questionable. The first states that they are a "brilliant and stubborn pop group," leaving me to wonder whether their stubbornness hinders their brilliance. The second quote also does not provide unequivocal support for their intelligence as the reporter comments that she is glad the Chicks are "bright enough to think about current events at all." Thus, while Keith received over the top accolades for his brilliance, the Dixie Chicks' only two compliments were half-hearted if not back-handed.

The other half of the story with respect to this variable is whether or not the artists' intelligence was negatively framed. In other words, were the artists depicted as unintelligent in any way? Here again the Dixie Chicks are framed as less intelligent than Toby Keith with 9% of the articles depicting them as unintelligent and 4.5% depicting Keith as unintelligent. In the qualitative analysis what came through was that the negative assessments of the Dixie Chicks was mainly based on their speech and the decision to refuse to "make nice" after the fact. So we see quotes about Maines' famous comment that depict it as "misguided" or "offhand" which suggest that little thought went into it. There were also quotes that were very gendered in their depiction of these women as unintelligent. This includes Natalie "blabbering away at meetings without a serious thought in her head" or her statement being characterized as a "loose-lipped bit of banter followed by a giggle." The terms "nitwits" and "bimbos" also appeared in articles but were within quotes not made directly by the writer. One additional theme in this frame was the notion that they had not learnt from their mistakes and continued to speak out in a manner that was unintelligent. While the male artists were not immune from negative statements on their intelligence, they were usually made in respect to their music. For example, the two statements about Keith suggested that his album was "short on geopolitical sophistication" and the second referred to his "egregious displays of reactionary folderol" during his more militaristic songs at a concert. The one negative comment on Earle is that his song about being in love with Condoleezza Rice "veers into absurdity." Worley's comments were a bit more complex as they were based on the fact that his song "Have You Forgotten" appeared to conflate Iraq and Bin Laden which was viewed in one article as a "leap of logic that I don't think any informed people outside the White House can make." This was also the source of Worley being framed as a "breast beating dolt" in the other article that attacked his intelligence.

**Table 4: Intelligence Assessed**

	<b>Dixie Chicks</b>	<b>Toby Keith</b>	<b>Steve Earle</b>	<b>Darryl Worley</b>
<b>Intelligent</b>	2 (1.5%)	14 (31.8%)	3 (15.8%)	0
<b>Unintelligent</b>	12 (9%)	2 (4.5%)	1 (5.3%)	2 (15.4%)

**Manners**

In viewing the “*Shut Up and Sing*” documentary one of the comments that was interesting and I thought merited further investigation was the framing of the Maines’ statement as employing “bad manners.” For this reason I decided to see if this was a theme that also arose in the newspaper coverage and whether or not this issue arose with the other artists. In general the term “manners” was only directly mentioned in one article. However, I also looked for depictions of politeness, disrespectfulness or poor behavior as indications of good or bad manners. Overall, the Dixie Chicks had the most inferences to bad manners with 26.1% of stories depicting them as “disrespectful”, “defiantly unapologetic”, “not ready to make nice”, “or “not prim”. Toby Keith came in a close second with 22.7% of the articles suggesting that he was “roguish”, “petty”, “ornery” or “obstreperous.” Earle only had one article that suggested he was “roguish”, while Worley had no stories that discussed his manners.

I also looked for whether good manners were ever represented in these articles. This was even less often with neither Earle nor Worley having any articles depicting this. Interestingly Keith had one article which gave him a higher percentage (2.3%) of good manners than the Dixie Chicks at 1.5%. This also happened to be the one article that mentioned manners directly by saying that “pop country puts a high premium on manners and modesty, and Keith is perfectly capable of both.” The Dixie Chicks on the other hand were “excessively polite” at the Grammys and were at some point “ready to make nice.” Overall though this frame did not seem to be prominent in the discussion, although there does seem to be a gendered difference in how the manners are represented with the male artists being depicted as “bad boys” and the Dixie Chicks as mainly being disrespectful or not nice.

**Table 5: Good/Bad Manners**

	<b>Dixie Chicks</b>	<b>Toby Keith</b>	<b>Steve Earle</b>	<b>Darryl Worley</b>
<b>Good Manners</b>	2 (1.5%)	1 (2.3%)	0	0
<b>Bad Manners</b>	35 (26.1%)	10 (22.7%)	01 (5.3%)	0

**Anger/Boycott/Violence**

The backlash against the Dixie Chicks included not only the pulling of their songs from the radio but also CD crushings and death threats. For this reason I wanted to look at whether other artists received similar levels of response to their political positions. The first variable I looked for was the expression of anger against the artists. This is the one variable where the artists’ position on the war seemed to make a difference, as both Steve Earle and the Dixie Chicks had a significantly higher percentage of stories that mentioned anger towards them. However, the percentage of articles talking about anger against the Dixie Chicks (54.5%) was still much higher than Earle at 36.8%. The findings for the two artists supporting the war were significantly lower as only 9.1% of the articles on Keith and 7.7% of the articles on Worley discussed anger towards them. Thus, not surprisingly being outspoken against the war seemed to garner a greater degree of anger than being outspoken in support of the war.

One of the results of the political position taken by the Dixie Chicks is that most of the country radio stations boycotted their songs. The extensiveness of this boycott is demonstrated by the fact that 71.6% of the articles on the Dixie Chicks mentioned it. Steve Earle on the other hand only had one story mention a possible boycott which represented 5.3% of his articles. The story with Toby Keith is quite interesting as 22.7% of his articles mentioned that he had been “booted” from the ABC Fourth of July TV special because they did not want him to sing “Courtesy of the Red White and Blue.” Given that this was viewed as a form of boycott I counted it as such. However, what is really interesting about this event is the response of the country radio stations, which started a campaign that prompted listeners to send cowboy boots to the show’s host, Peter Jennings, in protest. In other words radio stations rallied around Keith in support of his statement on the war (his song), while on the other hand they boycotted the Dixie Chicks for their statement against the war. I also looked at whether or not the articles attempted to justify the boycott or dispute it. Most of the articles did not demonstrate support or disapproval of the boycott. However, 14.2% gave some reasons justifying the Dixie Chicks boycott (usually based on listener response) and 7.5% suggested it was not justified. With Keith only one article justified not having him on the show and there were no articles suggesting it was not deserved.

I also examined one additional variable under this heading which was whether or not violence was reported against the artist. The Dixie Chicks were also the only artists who were reported to have any violence committed or threatened against them or their merchandise. A total of 38.1% of the articles mentioned threats or violence against the Dixie Chicks. Of this total, 16.4% discussed violence against Dixie Chicks' merchandise, 8.2% discussed death threats or other violent behavior towards the Dixie Chicks personally and 13.4% discussed both. Given the fact that CD crushings were held and death threats were made against the group this is not a surprising finding. What is surprising is that even though there were significant levels of anger towards both Earle and Keith, this did not result in violence against them. For example, there was no reporting of a morning show host like Glen Beck (broadcast on 115 stations) wishing out loud that "Maines would be pushed into an airplane propeller." Given that Earle's stance on the war was even more outspoken and virulent it is telling that there was no similar violence depicted towards him. This suggests a very gendered understanding of who is allowed to have political opinions and state them.

**Table 6: Violence**

	<b>Dixie Chicks</b>	<b>Toby Keith</b>	<b>Steve Earle</b>	<b>Darryl Worley</b>
<b>Anger</b>	73 (54.5%)	4 (9.1%)	7 (36.8%)	1 (7.7%)
<b>Violence</b>	51 (38.1%)	0	0	0
<b>Boycott</b>	96 (71.6%)	10 (22.7%)	1 (5.3%)	0

### Tone

The last variable I coded for in this analysis was the tone of the story. In her analysis of the coverage of Hillary Clinton's transition to Senator Scharrer (2002) found that "hostility in press coverage can result from the challenges to traditional roles" and that when first ladies endeavoured to move into the realm of political activity they were "often covered prominently and with a negative tone" (393-394). For the Dixie Chicks this event was an obvious contrast to their "traditional" role as American "sweethearts," and the often mentioned fact that they were not viewed as a political band. This stepping out of their traditional role seemed to be a key aspect of the backlash against them. That there were many people unhappy with their statement is well known, but whether or not this translated into negative tones in the news coverage was something that I wanted to further investigate. For this variable I assessed the overall tone of the author and determined whether it was positive, negative or neutral/balanced. With respect to the Dixie Chicks 52.2% of the stories were neutral or balanced in their reporting while 29.9% were positive and 17.9% were negative. Thus, overall the coverage was quite positive. However, when compared to the other artists we see that the coverage of the male artists was significantly more positive than that of the Dixie Chicks. Interestingly Steve Earle had the most positive stories with 68.4% of his stories having a positive tone and only 5.3% being negative. This suggests that tone was not dependent on the position that artists took on the war. The tone for Toby Keith was also more positive than the Dixie Chicks with 56.8% of the articles being positive and only 4.5% of the stories being negative. One gets the sense from reading these articles that even though the authors do not agree with his politics, they can not help but like him. In fact it seems most of the writers "expect Toby Keith to enter a room talking loud and with a cocky swagger," but find that he "speaks with surprisingly quiet intensity" and has the persona of "velvet-covered steel." In contrast, the Dixie Chicks in many cases do not come across as being as likeable. This is also the case with Darryl Worley who actually had the lowest percentage of positive articles with 30.8% but he also had no negative articles with most of his articles falling in the neutral/balanced category (69.2%). Essentially most of the articles did not love him or hate him. Thus, the findings here suggest that while the Dixie Chicks coverage was more positive than negative, it was not as positive as the coverage of the other artists examined.

**Table 7: Tone of Article**

	<b>Dixie Chicks</b>	<b>Toby Keith</b>	<b>Steve Earle</b>	<b>Darryl Worley</b>
<b>Positive</b>	40 (29.9%)	25 (56.8%)	13 (68.4%)	4 (30.8%)
<b>Negative</b>	24 (17.9%)	2 (4.5%)	1 (5.3%)	0
<b>Neutral</b>	70 (52.2%)	17 (38.6%)	5 (26.3%)	9 (69.2%)

Another interesting element I found in this variable is how the tone of the coverage of the Dixie Chicks changed over time. In 2003, the year of the “incident”, the coverage of the Dixie Chicks was actually more negative (24.1%) than positive (14.8%). In 2006 we see these numbers change with the release of their new album as 36.5% of the stories were positive and 15.9% negative. Then in 2007, the year they won five Grammys, this increases to 57.1% positive and 7.1% negative. Over time and with the lessening popularity of the war in Iraq the positive tone of the articles increases significantly. The variations for the other artists are a bit difficult to map as there are fewer articles so it skews the results when there are only one or two articles in a year. When looking at Toby Keith his most positive articles (77.8%) were printed during 2002, which is the year that “Courtesy of the Red White and Blue” hit the number one spot on the country charts. The tone then becomes less positive (50%) in 2003 but also less negative at 6.3%. The years following this have no negative stories but steadily increase in the percentage of positive stories until 2007. Although given that most of the stories are from 2002 and 2003 these are the most important numbers to analyze. What we can see from this analysis is that the statement made by the Dixie Chicks was received much more negatively than the release of Keith’s pro-war song. Due to the low overall article count for Earle and Worley, it was very difficult to discuss any trends over time. The one interesting point of comparison with Earle is that his one negative article was not about his most debated song “John Walker Blues”, but actually on the silliness of his love song about Condeleeza Rice. This was really more a comment on a bad song than on his politics.

**Table 8: Tone By Year Dixie Chicks**

	2003	2004	2006	2007
<b>Positive</b>	8 (14.8%)	1 (33.3%)	23 (36.5%)	8 (57.1%)
<b>Negative</b>	13 (24.1%)	0	10 (15.9%)	1 (7.1%)
<b>Neutral</b>	33 (61.1%)	2 (66.7%)	30 (47.6%)	5 (35.7%)
<b>Total Articles</b>	54	3	63	14

**Table 9: Tone By Year Toby Keith**

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Positive</b>	7 (77.8%)	8 (50%)	0	3 (50%)	3 (75%)	3 (100%)
<b>Negative</b>	1 (11.1%)	1 (6.3%)	0	0	0	0
<b>Neutral</b>	1 (1.1%)	7 (43.8%)	5 (100%)	3 (50%)	1 (25%)	0
<b>Total Articles</b>	9	16	5	6	4	3

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The overall findings of this analysis are that the political speech of the Dixie Chicks was for the most part discredited. While they were the most visible story within the country music industry they were also the most criticized and ostracized. Their speech was framed as unintelligent and characterized negatively in a majority of the articles surveyed. This is even more obvious when compared to the results of the other artists included in this study. The other element that adds to this analysis is the overall depiction of the artists through the newspaper coverage. Thus, the general picture painted of the male artists is much more uniform and less controversial than the Dixie Chicks as is illustrated in the discussion below.

Darryl Worley was depicted as a “good ol’ boy” who is patriotic and spends a good deal of time entertaining the troops overseas and at the Pentagon. While a couple of articles criticized his song “Have You Forgotten” as being “polarizing,” they were more concerned with the fact that this one song had created a false image of Worley. One journalist who openly admitted that he did not like the song said that Worley is a “salty, serious traditional country singer of the type Nashville needs to bolster its legacy of real-deal music of rural birth and plain speaking.” Thus, the overall depiction was positive. Even writers who disagreed with



Worley's position, and were not inclined to like his song, still liked him and tried to show him in a favourable light.

The picture that emerges from the coverage of Steve Earle is that he is a loved "rebel" whose political activism is either tolerated or appreciated. One article berated Earle for his song about Condoleezza Rice and suggested that he had been transformed from a "respected alternative-country icon to a right-wing fundraising tool;" however, this was not the image that was conveyed in the majority of the articles. Rather, most of the articles depicted him as an "intense, socially committed poet whose bad turns in life have only made his art today more powerful." In other words he is respected for his political activism and is in many cases praised for it. Given that Earle is on the same side of the debate as the Dixie Chicks it is interesting that they are depicted with dramatically different imagery.

Coverage of Toby Keith falls into one of two categories; writers either loved him or found it impossible to stop themselves from liking him. According to one journalist Keith is a "vexing character" whose "knee-jerk nativism, casual sexism and obstreperous personality often seem cartoonish." Yet this same writer said it was "downright disarming to have him remind us, like some liberation theologian, that God sides with sinners and outcasts." Keith was also portrayed as a man with "blue-collar cred to burn" and a particularly shrewd businessman who knows what sells to the country music audience. Much was made of his past as a farm boy, semi-pro football player and oil field worker, who has worked hard for his current success. He was also portrayed as an artist who successfully battled the country music industry to produce his own brand of music. Overall, writers who were unhappy with his politics concluded that it would be easier to dismiss this "burly Oklahoman" if "he weren't so talented" and likeable.

While the coverage of the male artists fell for the most part under the category "you can't help but like them," the coverage of the Dixie Chicks was much more diverse. There were three main categories of news stories with respect to the Dixie Chicks. The first category included stories that did not take an overt position on the issue and attempted to simply report the "facts." However, while the writers might not have stated their own opinions they often included negative quotations from the music industry, fans and other artists. Teun van Dijk (1991) suggests that the use of quotations allows writers to insert "subjective interpretations, explanations, or opinions about current news events, without breaking the ideological rule that requires the separation of facts from opinion" (152). Thus, while journalists may not have made negative statements themselves, their decision to include quotations that placed the Dixie Chicks in a negative light had the same effect.

The second category included stories that supported the Dixie Chicks and criticized the treatment that they received. These articles usually depicted the Dixie Chicks as a "gutsy group" who decided "they aren't going to be pushed around by a bunch of bullies." One article even took on the gendered nature of the fight and articulated how "Country radio is still run chiefly by men, a mob of whom are bent on bullying the three women for exercising their First Amendment right to question the authority of other men." In other words there were several articles that took up the cause of the Dixie Chicks and portrayed them in a positive light as strong female artists who became activists. While some writers may not have agreed with their position they acknowledged that "those who shun the Dixie Chicks have become exactly what they say they are not: anti-American." The release of the documentary and their latest album were also the source of acclaim. Some writers suggested the movie demonstrated how they "emerge stronger, wiser and arguably a better band" that "never sounded more vital and engaged." Others said the documentary "let's us see ego and stupidity and self-indulgence at play just as fiercely as artistry." This leads into the last categorization of news articles: articles in which the writer her/himself negatively critiqued the Dixie Chicks.

In this category some of the hostility concerned Maines statement and suggested that it was hypocritical of the Dixie Chicks to speak out on the war when their number one song (Travelin' Soldier) was capitalizing on the "patriotic fervor" leading up to the war. Some of these articles included character attacks; for example one suggested they "came across as whiny and self-absorbed." However, a great deal of the negative commentary reacted to the refusal of the Dixie Chicks to back down or let the issue rest. Journalists

suggested that their response was “acerbic” and that they were simply determined to stay “angry and sad.” Furthermore, Maines was deemed to be fuelling the fire with her subsequent behaviour and the Dixie Chicks appeared to be “sneering at the world they left behind.” This type of commentary was used to justify the radio boycotts, by suggesting that it was “fans, not radio” who “turned a deaf ear.” The other portrayal that came through in these news stories was that the Dixie Chicks overstated the importance of the incident and at concerts they “seemed to be putting their minor league pop struggle on a level with some of mankind’s great civil rights movements.” In other words there was a tendency to criticize the Dixie Chicks for prolonging the controversy and elevating it to a free speech debate.

As can be seen from the above commentary the media response to the Dixie Chicks varied significantly. This stands in direct contrast to the coverage of the male artists who seemed to be applauded even when the writers disagreed with them. The fact that this was the case for male artists both supportive of the war and against the war demonstrates that there is a gendered element to the reporting surrounding the Dixie Chicks incident. This is further substantiated by the presence of more substantial speech and intelligence characterizations of the Dixie Chicks in comparison to the male artists. The results of this analysis illustrate that political speech by women, in this case female celebrities, is still mediated in a different way from their male counterparts. In other words gendered mediation is at play.

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### Filmography

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