

A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF COUNTRY MUSIC'S
DISCUSSION OF 9/11, PATRIOTISM, AND WAR

By

JESSICA LYNN GEHRKE

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation/thesis of JESSICA L. GEHRKE find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Elizabeth Blanks Hindman, Ph.D., Chair

Douglas Blanks Hindman, Ph.D.

Michael Salvador, Ph.D.

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Abstract

by Jessica Lynn Gehrke
Washington State University
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Chair: Elizabeth Blanks Hindman

Scholars have established music as an important part of society, including daily life, social movements, and politics. After the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and the subsequent invasion of Iraq, the music industry, including country music, was one of the venues through which these issues were discussed. This study focuses on country music by examining how the lyrics about 9/11, patriotism, and war supported a conservative ideology. From September 2001 and September 2008, 30 songs that discussed these social and political issues were in the top 50 on Billboard's country music charts. A narrative analysis was used to examine the lyrics. This approach was chosen because country music songs often tell a story, music and narratives have an established relationship, and believable narratives have the potential to affect audiences. The narratives had uncritical patriotic themes, reflected on 9/11, and used common imagery with country music to support their arguments and maintain the American metanarrative. Narrators were usually male, telling personal stories of service or discussing what life was like for those at home. Over time, the narratives shifted from a metanarrative to a more traditional form, with slight acknowledgments that popular opinion towards the Iraq war changed, but continued a pro-American and pro-war ideology. These narratives generally reinforced country music's norms

and established a politically and socially conservative worldview. They also illustrate that it can be difficult to share an alternative belief within a dominant ideology. Finally, music still plays an important role in society as it continues to discuss current political issues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
The study of music.....	4
Country music.....	7
Music and social movements.....	11
Music's role in times of war.....	13
Country music and current times.....	16
Historical context.....	18
2001.....	19
2002.....	20
2003.....	21
2004.....	22
2005.....	23
2006.....	24
2007.....	25
2008.....	26
Narrative theory.....	28
Narratives' impact and construction.....	28

Narrative features.....	31
Narrative and music.....	33
Research questions.....	36
3. METHOD.....	38
Narrative analysis.....	38
Sample.....	40
4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	43
Description of lyrics.....	43
Themes.....	43
Patriotism.....	44
Reflections on 9/11.....	54
Use of conventional themes.....	57
Narrators.....	62
Soldiers.....	63
Home front.....	67
Male narrators.....	70
Changes in narratives.....	72
2001-2003: America’s metanarrative and 9/11.....	72
2004-2007: Personal stories of service.....	76
2008: Two home front songs.....	79
Other views.....	80
References to popular opinion.....	81
5. CONCLUSIONS.....	86

Theoretical implications.....	86
Country music industry.....	91
Music and society.....	95
Limitations and future research.....	96
REFERENCES.....	99
DISCOGRAPHY.....	120
APPENDIX	
A. SONG SAMPLE.....	125

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At the 2008 Country Music Awards, a woman walked onto stage and introduced herself, saying, “I’m Leslie Porter, and you do not know me” and then proceeded to talk about her husband, who had served in the Armed Forces. She then shared that her husband, a soldier and “a very real American hero,” (Carrie Underwood, 2008) was killed while serving in Afghanistan. She explained that as she dealt with her loss, one song helped her cope, stating, “Music has the power to help us heal, and we thank God for that power. And I thank God for the privilege of loving and being loved by that man” (Carrie Underwood, 2008). Porter’s statement was used to introduce Carrie Underwood singing her hit song, “Just a Dream,” which is about a woman’s reaction to the death of her loved one during war. Porter’s statements were met with bursts of applause (Carrie Underwood, 2008). It appears the country music industry wanted to honor her and others’ losses, and the industry was very supportive of this widow and her husband’s service. This is one just example of the perceived link between country music and support of the Armed Forces after the events of 9/11 and the war on terror.

After the events of 9/11, there were many varied responses to the terrorist attacks, including fear, disbelief, and shock from the general public and the media, and scholars have been interested in examining this discourse. For instance, Iraq, Islam, and terrorist attacks were linked together in Western news discourses (e.g. Bankoff, 2003; John, Domke, Coe, & Graham, 2007; Simons, 2007). Other media reactions included musical artists sharing their views with the public. This commentary, including remarks from country music artists, continued to grow as songwriters and performers created songs to discuss the political situation. This musical discussion has not been without controversy, however. For example, in country music, the feud

between Toby Keith and the Dixie Chicks is an example of this industry's discourse about the Iraqi conflict. The Dixie Chicks were boycotted when their lead singer, Natalie Maines, spoke against invading Iraq while Keith's patriotic music was a huge success. The artists feuded over what constituted "good" songwriting when Maines attacked Keith's song, "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue (The Angry American)," as being trite and ignorant. The fight escalated when Maines wore a shirt for a concert, directly intending to insult Keith. The shirt spelled out "FUTK," with TK standing for Toby Keith (Willman, 2005). After 9/11, there were obvious political divisions in country music, with many fans supporting the more conservative viewpoint and singer (Willman, 2005).

However, these types of controversies were only a small component of how the country music genre has delved into musical stories about 9/11, patriotism, and war. After terrorists attacked the United States and the American government took military action in Iraq, these events evoked many different responses over time. The country music industry contributed to this discussion. Country music has produced 30 songs from September 2001 to September 2008 that addresses these political issues, providing texts that are worth studying.

This study examines how country music discussed 9/11, patriotism, and war from September 2001 to September 2008. Deconstructing the narratives through the themes, narrators, and how they changed over the years illuminates how the songs generally uphold the genre's perceived conservative ideology through their narratives. Additionally, this analysis suggests it is difficult to share alternative beliefs when a dominant ideology exists in the industry. The narratives provide insight into the ideology that is offered to people as a way for them to understand reality. Specifically, the lyrics use the American metanarrative, themes, and narrators to construct traditional images of the country and individuals' roles, whether it is fighting in a

war or supporting the troops. Over time, the narratives adapt to the context by changing the narrative format. Overall, the songs usually support the same ideology through different types of narratives.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Study of Music

Popular culture has the unique ability to demonstrate, reflect, and provide commentary about the present day, especially as popular culture is part of everyday life (Petracca & Sorapure, 2004). It can be defined as

the accumulated store of cultural products such as music, literature, art, fashion, dance, film, television, and radio that are consumed primarily by non-elite groups such as the working and lower classes (as well as substantial segments of the middle class).

(Johnson, 2000, p. 229)

This “store” of popular culture is made up of “systems or artifacts that most people share and that most people know about,” and more specifically, is “concerned with things, like television, that are a part of the everyday experience of most people” (Brummett, 1994, p. 21). The different components of popular culture—music, film, television, and the like—are given meaning from their cultural context (Brummett, 1994). Brummett (1994) argues that the study of popular culture is a worthwhile pursuit because of its frequent use by individuals in society. He focuses particularly on the importance of understanding the rhetorical power of popular media, stating:

If we want to understand how people are influenced on . . . issues, and how public affairs are nudged in one direction or another, we need to look more at what is happening on television than on the Senate floor. The theory of rhetoric today is increasingly recognizing the important business that is done through popular culture

(Brummett, 1994, p. 63)

Although his statement includes television, the same argument applies to music, particularly popular music. Additionally, Petracca and Sorapure (2004) argue “we see reflected in pop culture certain standards and commonly held beliefs about beauty, success, love, or justice [and] important social contradictions and conflicts” (p. 5). Therefore, the study of popular culture, including popular music genres, is important because ideologies can be easily expressed through different types of popular texts (Brummett, 1994).

Matula (2007) supports this view, arguing that “popular culture texts are rhetorical, then, to the extent that they provide audiences with models—or strategies—for managing the meaning of ongoing everyday social struggles” (p. 22). Popular music, as a part of popular culture, is one medium where this occurs. It is also of interest because pop music “seeks to appeal to the widest possible audience—is initially written, then published, performed, and possibly recorded” to reach more general audiences (Smith, 2003, p. 2). Music executives intend to sell the composed songs to be heard and bought by the public. Moreover, audiences do not require “special” knowledge in order to engage with a popular song heard on radio, as compared a specialized genre like jazz. Smith (2003) argues that music such as jazz can be best appreciated when the listener understands the musical rules of the genre, which then leads to a better appreciation of jazz performances. Popular music, on the other hand, is created with the intent to be acceptable and sellable to the public (Smith, 2003). It is also widely distributed and played, which contributes to why it has cultural value (Smith, 2003), and the lyrics themselves can be described as “cultural storehouses” (Purnell, 2002).

One of the major reasons music has been recognized as an important area of study is because of its potential to influence those who hear it. Music has often been examined because the words used within lyrics create certain images. One common example of this is seen in the

emphasis in the study of how hip hop music portrays women, which has the potential to then affect societal expectations (e.g. Emerson, 2002; Perry, 2003; Shelton, 1997). Other examples of music's possible influence include studies of how music lyrics may play a role in shaping societal expectations through its portrayal of age (Aday & Austin, 2000), how rap lyrics discussing drugs affect adolescent audiences (Diamond, Bermudez, & Schensul, 2006), and how offensive rap lyrics affect listeners (Dixon & Linz, 1997). Music has also been studied as a means for managing emotions, particularly for adolescents (Wells & Hakenan, 1991). Scholars recognize music lyrics and images as an important area of study because of the role they can play in society.

Moreover, music is credited with being able to create social meanings and offers opportunities for people to connect with it on both a personal and cultural level (Van Dijck, 2006). For instance, "rap music articulates a black cultural space, but resonates emotionally with a range of listeners" (Lull, 1992, p. 10). Because this type of music resonates with a broader audience, this helps rap permeate the popular culture. Additionally, music has demonstrated its ability to affect personal opinions about current issues (DeNora, 2000). Individuals choose what musical genres to listen when they identify with them, even at a very young age (Lull, 1992). Songwriters, and by extension, the performers, are creating messages that are worth examining because of music's unique ability to affect individuals in a variety of ways.

Because these performers are working to create appealing lyrics, the construction and possible implications of their messages have often been examined. For instance, Hatch (2002) examines how Gospel Gangstaz's lyrics use both common hip hop and gospel images to combine two very different genres rhetorically to create a certain identity in their music. Murphy (2003) also examines the rhetorical construction of the protest song "We Shall Overcome" in order to

better understand how the lyrical and musical rhetorical inventions are flexible enough for different rhetors to utilize the song as needed, in essence, how the song can be transformed for different situations. The cultural implications are also considered, as when Peters (2007) examines the ideological forces behind Eminem's song *Mosh*. Rhetorically, music and its lyrics have been examined to better understand the significance of the performer's ideas and the societal values the music and lyrics share.

In order to examine how country music constructed its messages about 9/11, patriotism, and war and consider the possible implications, it is necessary to consider how country music is conceptualized. Music's influence, including that of the country music genre, in social movements and political discourse is then examined.

Country Music

Country music is "a distinct format making up about 18 percent of the market and selling about \$2 billion worth of recordings a year" (Hanson, 2005, p. 197). This genre has most often been associated with "hillbilly" Southern images. These links can be traced to when country music was called "old-time or hillbilly music" (Hanson, 2005). Additionally, country music's commercial foundation is in Nashville, which adds to country music's Southern stereotype and assumed demographic. Furthermore, a country music columnist states that

Country music is populist music, plain and simple. And it's not just white music or Southern music or rural music or hillbilly music. It's everyday driving to work, drinking a beer after work with friends, dancing on the weekend kind of music. Forget red states vs. blue states kind of music: Good country music -- as ever -- is just about real life and how it applies to daily life. (Flippo, 2004, ¶ 2)

Country music is established, even by the industry, as being ordinary music that reflects on everyday values.

However, the country music industry is more complex. The genre has artists who are considered “crossovers” to pop music, such as Shania Twain and Garth Brooks, as opposed to “traditional artists,” like Hank Williams and Dolly Parton (Shuker, 2005). These artists are often viewed as dividing the genre. These contemporary popular artists have helped to create “two general strands: traditional country and a more commercial mainstream of pop country” (Shuker, 2005, p. 59). Even with the variety in the genre, it is important to notice that these artists are not ignored by the country music industry, but rather contribute to its future direction, as these artists are popular in country and other genres. While recognizing that there is diversity within the genre, it is also important to consider that country music lyrics still have many common characteristics, regardless of the type of country song.

As mentioned above, country music in particular has been conceived as focusing on social themes and reflects on “everyday” events. Common themes include relationships, family, and work, which help listeners identify with the songs (Buckley, 1993). Another writer stated that country music tells “tales of love, heartache, family ties and middle-aged renewal” (Feiler, 1996). In fact, it was found that themes in the 1990s included:

concerns for community, home and family values that seem too often disrupted and lost in contemporary American lives, and an orientation toward a simpler, often rural (and more than partly imagined) past filled with the romantic warmth of primary, caring relationships. (Lewis, 1997, p. 167)

Furthermore, Van Sickle (2005) argues that after surveying country music from 1960 through 2000, only 6% of lyrics from hit songs refer to any political ideology, suggesting that country

music does not play the political role often assumed. One could argue nonpolitical issues are predominant because first, the audience easily relates to them, and second, the subject matter is less likely to alienate listeners. It may be for these reasons much of music, particularly country music, focuses on more relatable, safe topics.

In spite of this, or perhaps because of its focus on family, traditional relationships, and common occurrences, country music is often perceived to have a traditional, and by a connotative extension, conservative bias. Conservatism can vary in meaning, but in this study, it is based on cultural beliefs, which in turn influences political beliefs. This conservative ideology promotes a very limited, simplistic view of the world. Conservative ideology generally views the world as black and white, easily defining right and wrong. This belief system promotes “traditional” values, such as family, simple living, religion, and individual rights, including the right to defend oneself, especially when attacked (Conservatism, 2001). These types of beliefs also reflect the political views of the former George W. Bush administration. In country music, this is the type of conservative rhetoric often expressed.

Previous research has demonstrated this type of conservatism. Country music has been said to have a “white” bias (Mann, 2008) and lyrics reflecting traditional values (Lewis, 1993). In fact, these “rural” artists take on a moral dimension within their work, drawing on Southern agricultural ideology (Jenkins, 2006). The overall industry has also been found to support traditional gender roles as well. For instance, country music videos tend to portray women in stereotypical roles, and men outnumber women 3:1 in number of appearances (Ansdager & Roe, 1999; Click & Kramer, 2007). Country music privileges the more “masculine” attributes and actions rather than feminine traits. In fact, Pruitt (2007) argues that country music constructs gender expectations that allow men to speak out, but ask women to keep silent. Even though

some argue there are opportunities for different artists to re-write gender roles (e.g. Fenster, 1993; Newlyn, 2004; Wilson, 2000), the industry overall has successfully constructed conventional gender portrayals, fitting its conservative nature.

Another important component of country music is how it features storytelling. Stories are a central part of country music songs. Unlike other genres, country music is “set against a relatively simple musical background, [and] most songs tell a complete story, with considerable detail, from start to finish” (Ryan, Calhoun, & Wentworth, 1996, p. 26). Accordingly, then, country music lyrics tell “everyday” stories, reflecting the traditional values outlined above. It is important to examine these narratives because their lyrics are part of a popular discourse, and “genres are not neutral categories, . . . rather they *are ideological constructs masquerading as neutral categories*” (Altman, 1987, p. 5, italics in original). The industry’s ideology can be examined through the songs’ narratives.

In addition to the research that indicates country music is biased, country music historian Bill Malone states in a 2004 National Public Radio interview that country music has always been socially conservative, and more recently, in light of current events, has become politically conservative (Goodwin, 2004). One example of this conservative bent included the controversy about the radio conglomerate Clear Channel, which allegedly pulled the Dixie Chicks’ music from all their radio stations after Natalie Maines, the lead singer, spoke out against then-President George W. Bush (Gilbert, 2008; Rossman, 2004). After Maines’ comment, other reactions also included a subsequent boycott of their works by fans and a negative reaction to the group at the Country Music Awards that year (Harper, 2003b; Rossman, 2004; Wapshott, 2003). Willman (2005) continues the argument that country music is conservative, as he discusses the political nature of country music, especially considering the Dixie Chicks and Toby Keith feud

over politics and songwriting, as described earlier. Additionally, groups like Montgomery Gentry have clearly shown their support for democratic efforts in Iraq (Quill, 2007).

Country music's perceived pro-war stance has been utilized by politicians in the past, including former Presidents Nixon and George W. Bush (Jenkins, 2006). Willman (2005) quotes the then-president of Sony Nashville about the country industry's conservative nature; the executive states "the stereotype is very well documented, and the perception is pretty much the reality" (p. 8). Although others may argue that country artists and their fans are actually well divided between political parties, the conservative label has stuck to the genre.

Music and Social Movements

While it is important to note that musical hits, including country songs, have been found to avoid political controversy, it is also important to recognize the opposite is also true. This is because music has the ability to become a tangible part of a social movement, and it has, in fact, been part of social movements for hundreds of years (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 2007). Branham (1999) states "virtually every modern social movement and political campaign has made use of song to rally supporters and appeal to the public" (p. 18). Music and music lyrics are a popular and effective way to influence the social norms because

they give persuaders poetic license to challenge, exaggerate, and pretend in ways that audiences would find unacceptable, unbelievable, or ridiculous if spoken or written in prose. They have powerful nonverbal (voice, instruments, rhythm) as well as verbal (words, lyrics, repetition) components. (Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 2007, p. 169)

In fact, Rosenthal (2001) examines how music has moved people to join social movements because they learned something from political music. Therefore, music has a unique rhetorical forum that can affect social perceptions by energizing individuals to take action.

Protest music engages audiences in many ways. Some folk or protest songs want the listeners to identify with the music and do so by utilizing American idealism to present their view (Dunlap, 2006). Other times, music has been utilized to further a cause's values. Two examples of this include the Civil Rights and White Power movements, where music is used to support the values they are espousing, (Eyerman, 2002). Eyerman (2002) believes that "The American Civil Rights movement offers a particularly rich example of the meaning and use of music, as well as of the complex relationship between culture and politics" (p. 446), especially as the core music serves as a way to connect the past to the present. On the other hand, Eyerman contends that White Power music is not rooted in tradition as was Civil Rights music, but the White Power music strives to promote that illusion to help make their message appealing. Furthermore, White Power music sells their extreme viewpoints by appearing to reject the dominant culture, creating an appealing message to those who are uninterested in their political views. Finally, the music unites the various people who are bound together by their belief, whether it is for equality through the Civil Rights Movement, or ironically, more current racist movements.

The analysis of Bob Marley's music and its role in the Rastafarian movement provides another example of how music serves a social movement. King and Jensen's (1995) analysis includes how Marley utilizes metaphors to discuss social issues and how he relates to his listeners' experiences through his exploration of themes of hunger, oppression, and poverty while arguing for equality. King and Jensen also note that reggae music was a useful tool to reach an illiterate audience. Again, music was able to provide a unique voice to the social movement. Music's ability to provide a voice for political dissenters was also seen as rock music became associated with political dissent in Serbia (Steinberg, 2005). Steinberg argues that rock

music became the voice of the younger, oppositional population, highlighting the intersection between pop culture and politics. Carter (1980) makes a similar argument for the role of music in protests as he examines how the labor organization Industrial Workers of the World used song in their campaign for fair labor laws. He suggests that songs are an important rhetorical strategy to consider, especially because music was the rhetorical form that an unskilled, underprivileged group used to argue for the ideal of fairness.

Finally, it is important to note that without an understanding of the actual situation, such as the Rastafarian or Civil Rights movement, the musical works and commentary will not necessarily be completely understood in the way it was intended to be or influence the audience. If people heard a song supporting Civil Rights, but did not understand the issue, they would most likely not fully grasp the message's meaning. It is important, then, to understand the cultural context of the works to understand what may be shaping the messages that musical performers share (Shepherd, 2003).

Music's Role in Times of War

Music is not only utilized by social movements; it can also be a forum for discussing political issues and rally others for war. Furthermore, political themes do appear in country music (Meier, 2004) and can serve to reinforce the listeners' values (Buckley, 1993).

One example of this can be seen during the Civil War. Songs were important to the soldiers who were fighting. Although the Northern and Southern soldiers had different perspectives, each side used songs to validate their reasons for fighting (Moseley, 1991). Music also served as a motivational tool to keep believing in the war. Artists in country music, such as Charlie Daniels and Rhett Atkins, have continued to reference the Civil War in text and images

through songs, album covers, and performances, helping keep the Southern perspective about the outcome of the war alive (Smith & Atkenson, 2005).

A prime example of music's importance is on the eve of the United States joining World War II, especially as popular music functioned to increase morale (Mohrmann & Scott, 1976). During World War I, the music produced by Tin Pan Alley, the name given to the sheet music and recording industry, had been able to raise patriotism through popular war songs; Tin Pan Alley was known for its popular, unforgettable, rousing war songs (Hajduk, 2003). On the onset of World War II, the government debated the "relevance of popular music to the daily headlines and life of a nation at war," and many questioned if society still needed a war song (Smith, 2003, p. 3). Still, throughout World War II, the government worked with the music industry to find a "proper" war song, including holding patriotic songwriting contests. This suggests that popular music still played a role in political issues, resulting in many different wartime songs being written, and led to country music being part of the pursuit for a popular war song (Hajduk, 2003).

One artist, Denver Darling, produced the first American World War II song after the attack on Pearl Harbor and later sang several songs against the Axis Powers. Many speculated he could build his career through war-themed songs (Wolfe, 2005). Although he eventually left recording, his songs showed that popular music reflecting on current events could be successful. The first hit war song from country music, "1942 Turkey in the Straw," was covered by other artists, including Darling, and was played cross-country, indicating its popularity (Wolfe, 2005). Country music artists sang of common wartime emotions, including "loss, separation, and loneliness," especially as it became clear the war would not be over soon (Wolfe, 2005, p. 31). The popularity of these songs suggests they resonated with their audience.

One of the most famous songs from the World War II era is “There’s a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere.” This popular song created a patriotic story that resonated with listeners as it discussed a boy who was disabled but wanted to contribute to the war effort (Hatchett & McNeil, 2005). The narrative was persuasive because it asked listeners to examine their devotion to the war effort compared to the protagonist. According Hatchett and McNeil (2005), after the release of this song, war time songs changed as “patriotism and a willingness to give one’s life for America, even in the face of extreme obstacles, have been spelled out overtly” (p. 41).

However, the role of country music in producing hits during this war era was not coincidence. Rather, the music industry searched for a great, patriotic war song that would not only increase a record company’s profit but also garner support for the war, as the government wanted a morale-boosting song (Hajduk, 2003). Throughout this process, it was found country music “was as likely to click with a large segment of the audience as any other style. And where war songs were concerned, country artists seemed considerably less self-conscious in their efforts to write patriotic fare” which lead to the creation of “There’s a Star-Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere” (Hajduk, 2003, p. 509). Again, the link between music and patriotism is emphasized, as the government felt an inspiring song about the value of fighting was needed.

As post-World War II music sought to unify the country, and even was a common staple in election campaigns, the late 1960s offered a challenge to the traditional thoughts that been emphasized in music (Larson, 2009). As the United States fought in Vietnam, music again played an important role, albeit a different one than in the past. Popular music reflected the common anti-war feelings, and in fact, “in general during the 1960s and early 1970s, singers of folk, folk-rock, and rock presented antiwar and eventually antiestablishment views, while

country western and easy-listening musicians made a pro-war and ‘pro-American’ statement” (Anderson, 1986, p. 62). Bob Dylan and Paul Simon, who were influenced by the folk music movement, questioned some of the traditional images of America, and other artists questioned the rationale for the Vietnam War (Scheuer, 2005).

Current musical artists’ discussion of the Iraq war has also been studied in different ways. One examination considered how music reflected grief and healing about the events of 9/11 (Gengaro, 2009). Another example is Green Day’s perceived anti-war argument in the song and music video of “Wake Me Up (When September Ends),” (Damico, 2007). Damico (2007) argues that the music video’s story supports doing one’s duty, whether it is fighting in the war or supporting the troops, instead of allowing dissent. This research about music’s discussion of 9/11 and Iraq also looks at country music’s role, as seen below.

Country Music and Current Times

Although past research shows that much of music’s focus, including country music’s, is on everyday life and events (De Nora, 2000; Flippo, 2004; Van Dijck, 2006; Van Sichel, 2005), music also reflects important social and political events (Eyerman, 2002; Meier, 2004; Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 2007). As stated earlier, Van Sichel’s (2005) study found that political issues were not predominant in country music, yet he also clearly makes the distinction that his survey does not include songs from 2001 when the World Trade Center towers were attacked. That year and ones that followed had songs that were full of imagery about war and patriotism on the charts. Because of this, Van Sichel (2005) states,

In the wake of the 2001 World Trade Center bombings, and especially since the beginning of war in Iraq, country artists and fans have taken sides in an increasingly ugly display of jingoism, intolerance, and even censorship. These events are without

precedent, and comment on this period of country music history must await another time, as my intent here is to examine the broad sweep of the music's past 40 years, while industry behavior and sales figures since September 11, 2001, would, I believe, inappropriately skew my findings. (p. 317)

The rise of songs dealing with the terrorist attacks and war after September 11 warrants further examination. As seen in the previous discussion of music's role in social movements and war, music can be used as a way to rally support and influence perspectives on the Iraq war.

Additionally, country music is usually viewed as supporting traditional values (Lewis, 1993). Following those assumptions of country music having traditional and often, by extending the connotation of traditional values, conservative bias, many songs that have done well on the charts take on a conservative tone, dividing the United States from the rest of the world (Boulton, 2008). Another example of the industry's conservative reaction to the war is the Dixie Chicks "incident," in which the lead singer made a comment against then-President George W. Bush and the plans to invade Iraq. The backlash against her comment included the radio conglomerate Clear Channel pulling their music from their radio stations (Rossman, 2004). However, Darryl Worley's later apparent pro-war number one hit "Have You Forgotten?" was criticized by individuals against the Iraq war and pulled from playlists by anti-war radio station directors (Rudder, 2005). Furthermore, some country artists created the group Honky Tonkers for Truth and produced the song, "Takin' My Country Back," a song criticizing former President George W. Bush (Goodwin, 2004). The inconsistent reactions to artists and their different views about the Iraq war suggest that the genre and its audience may not always be as conservative and traditional as assumed.

Country music's role in the discussion of 9/11 and the Iraq war has been examined different ways. Some have examined how media, fans, and country artists reacted to the Dixie Chicks' anti-Bush statement and their feud with Toby Keith, including how radio stations boycotted playing the Dixie Chicks' music and the media's misconstruction of country music as red-state, pro-Bush (Henson, 2007; Rossman, 2004; Rudder, 2005, Willman, 2005). Others have considered ideological implications. Fox (2005) examines the ideological differences of traditional and alternative country music, using 9/11 songs as one of his focal points. Specific artists and their work have been examined as well. Darryl Worley's "Have You Forgotten?" has been examined rhetorically to see how the artist maintains his ideology of supporting the war through his song and the medium of television (Mabe & Dong, 2006). Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue" has been examined to see how the lyrics and music construct an identity to help individuals manage differing worldviews about politics and the war in Iraq (Gillespie, 2007). However, even though researchers have analyzed how country music relates to the "War on Terror," attention has not been given to what narratives music artists have shared with the public, including country artists. The purpose of this study is to examine what cultural values country musicians are sharing through the lyrics.

Historical Context

In addition to understanding the role of music in society and issues surrounding country music, it is also necessary to consider the context this music is being written in, especially to determine what changes were made in works to possibly adapt to the political climate. As stated earlier, it is important to understand what is happening as these messages are being created. Brummett (1994) argues that texts occur in a certain context, which then affects the message.

Therefore, in order to better examine the narratives, the context in which they were written should be considered.

2001

The United States Armed Forces invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003, but the impetus for the Iraq war was directly related to the terrorist attacks on 9/11. There had been much speculation that Saddam Hussein created weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), was connected to terrorists, and played a role in 9/11 (Eisler, 2001). The United States already had troops in Afghanistan to fight the Taliban and find Osama bin Laden in what was called “Operation Enduring Freedom” (Thomas & Barry, 2001). After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, discussion about going to war in Iraq began (Dickey & Barry, 2001; Warren, 2001). In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centers, former President George W. Bush called upon Congress to fight against terrorism (McQuillan, 2001), and in November, 74% of the population favored invading Iraq (Gallup News Service, n.d.).

Additionally, people reacted strongly to attacks on American soil, becoming more aware of terrorism and feeling more patriotic about their country (Gallup News Poll, 2001a). For instance, shortly after the attacks, “82% of Americans [said] they have flown or will fly the American flag” (Gallup News Service, 2001a, ¶ 23). Other reactions including an interest in religion, attending memorial services, and mourning for those who were lost (Gallup News Service, 2001a). Furthermore, 73% of the population believed the United States was at war (Gallup News Service, 2001b). Americans’ patriotic reactions to the terrorist attacks and possible state of war extended to an overwhelming support for the government. The Gallup News Service (2001c) reported that “Americans’ post-attack inclination to rally around the flag” included “the

record high approval ratings they are giving to George W. Bush;” those approval ratings were at 90% (¶ 2). After 9/11, American patriotism and support for the government was high.

2002

In 2002, the events of 9/11 were often used as a way to garner patriotic support to invade Iraq, and Bush repeatedly argued for the need for the United States to take action and disarm Hussein if the Iraqi leader did not meet the United Nations regulations regarding nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. (Curl, 2003; Walker, 2002). Bush continued his argument for the war on terrorism in his 2002 State of the Union speech, calling North Korea, Iraq, and Iran an “axis of evil” (DeFrank, 2002). At the onset, and even before the United States invade Iraq, the majority of Americans were supportive of the invasion. According to a September 2002 Gallup poll, the public generally supported U.S. involvement in Iraq; 57% supported sending in troops to remove Hussein, and 38% were against it (Gallup News Service, 2002a). An October Gallup report stated that the high levels of support for invasion were consistent among several different polls taken (Gallup News Service, 2002b). In fact, even though the majority felt that the United States should receive permission from the United Nations and Congress, “Most Americans feel that Iraq has developed or is developing weapons of mass destruction;” in fact 93% of the population believed this (Gallup News Service, 2002c, ¶ 4). Furthermore,

Many Americans feel that if left alone, Iraq will use those weapons against the United States within five years. Most Americans feel that Saddam Hussein sponsors terrorism that affects the United States. A little more than half of Americans say Saddam Hussein was personally and directly involved in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. (Gallup News Service, 2002c, ¶ 4)

At this point, popular opinion generally appeared to support sending troops into Iraq; however, people also believed that any action taken by the United States needed to be sanctioned by the United Nations (Gallup News Service, 2002c). Overall, throughout 2002, the American people supported invading Iraq.

2003

This general support carried over into 2003. According to a CBS News report, a poll conducted by CBS News and *The New York Times* showed Americans were in favor of forcing Hussein's removal from power. However, people also thought diplomatic efforts must be tried and given time to work (Cosgrove-Mather, 2003). Additionally, the United States government needed to have evidence to support their claims against Iraq, such as the existence of WMDs (Cosgrove-Mather, 2003). The use of military was sanctioned only if it was needed, but individual support for this was down to 64% compared to the previous 70% who supported it (Cosgrove-Mather, 2003).

Many people believed that there were WMDs, which may have been helped by Colin Powell's speech to the United Nations Security Council where he showed pictures of supposed WMDs (Harper, 2003a). Bush had also set a deadline for Hussein to step down as ruler and leave Iraq. Hussein did not, so Bush delivered a speech on March 19 explaining the reasons for invasion, including "to disarm Iraq, to free its people, and to defend the world from grave danger" as rationale (Online Speech Bank, n.d.; Stevenson, 2003a). "Operation Iraqi Freedom" began with the invasion into Iraq on March 20 with "a coalition of the willing," according to the then Secretary of State Colin Powell (Schiffers, 2003; Tyler, 2003). Baghdad fell soon after, on April 9, and news showed Iraqis cheering and destroying statues of Hussein (Scarborough & Gertz, 2003).

News coverage before the invasion also tended to be pro-war, with government-affiliated sources often being cited (Rendall & Broughel, 2003). Yet even when WMDs were not found, people still supported the war in Iraq (Gallup News Service, 2003a). It was late in 2003 when the American public started to question the reasoning for war, including removing Hussein from power and the possible threat of WMDs, even as Bush claimed had WMDs existed, but the Iraqi government destroyed them (Holland, 2003). In fact, 67% of the public believed Bush had willfully misled the people (Benedetto, 2003). Bush also struggled to explain the death toll of American soldiers (Curl, 2003), especially after he appeared on a flight deck carrier near a “Mission Accomplished” sign on May 1 (Kornblut, 2003). These things may have contributed to declining support for the war effort. Additionally, as news coverage included reports of insurgency and violence, public tide turned against Bush and the war (Stevenson, 2003b). A November report showed that the population’s opinions were evenly divided about soldiers staying in Iraq even as 61% of the population believed the war was going badly (Gallup News Service, 2003c).

2004

In 2004, the public continued to be against the war. A February poll found that support for the Iraq war had declined and was comparable to the previous fall’s opinions. About half of the population, 49%, felt the war was worth it, and about the other half, 49%, felt it was not (Gallup News Service, 2004a). This divide came after strong Democratic criticism of the situation. In addition, only 28% believed there were weapons of mass destruction; there was also a decline in the belief that Hussein was linked to the development of nuclear weapons, bio-warfare, and Osama bin Laden. These opinion polls reflect that the American public was continuing to question the facts behind invading Iraq.

However, in March, the Pew Research Center (2004a) reported that 60% of Americans still supported the war effort. At this time, other issues were also at play in shaping perceptions about the war. A Gallup poll in May showed that coverage of the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal, which showed how soldiers tortured, abused, and humiliated prisoners (Hersh, 2004), affected people's views of Bush and the Iraq war (Gallup News Service, 2004b). In July, opinions were relatively evenly divided about the war as governing power was transferred from the United States government to the new Iraqi government (Gallup News Service, 2004c). People were still generally divided in November; a Gallup poll showed that 48% supported the war with Iraq while 46% opposed it, but 47% of the population believed the war was a mistake (Gallup News Service, 2004d). In the election that year, exit polls showed that Iraq was an important issue, especially for Democratic voters (even though other issues still played a role voters' choices) (Pew Research Center, 2004b). Throughout much of 2004, the country appeared divided about Iraq war and the United States' role, with the coverage of year's events playing an important role in shaping individual perceptions.

2005

In 2005, the country was still generally divided about the Iraq war. One June report from the Pew Research Center found that "the steady drip of negative news from Iraq is significantly undermining support for U.S. military operation there" (Pew Research Center, 2005a). Support for ending the war completely was steadily increasing. The Pew Research Center found 46% of the population called for an immediate withdrawal, compared to 36% the previous October, and 42% in February, yet many were still optimistic about the United States' ability to achieve its purpose in Iraq (Pew Research Center, 2005a).

In July, Gallup News Service (2005) reported that the perceptions about the Iraqi conflict were about the same. Fifty-three percent still believed the invasion was not a mistake compared to the 46% that did. However, six in ten people doubted the likelihood of a democratic state being established (Gallup News Service, 2005). Much the country was still in doubt about a successful outcome, and this skepticism could relate to what is considered some key events during the year, such as the Iraqi Sunnis rejecting the new constitution, Representative John Murtha of Pennsylvania calling for troop withdrawal, and reports of the death toll of Iraqi civilians (War in Iraq, 2006). Just as in 2004, the public's views on supporting the war remained overall divided (Pew Research Center, 2005b).

2006

As 2006 began, negative news coverage of Iraq continued. Bush worked to show he could handle the war; this effort included a series of speeches beginning in March that was meant to strengthen people's resolve to stay in Iraq (Feldman, 2006). However, more doubted the United States' ability to end the war successfully (Gallup News Service, 2006a). Sixty percent believed it was going badly, and almost half of that 60% felt it was going "very" badly (Gallup News Service, 2006a). Moreover, 57 % now believed the war was a mistake in the first place. Although these numbers fluctuated some in later polls (at one point 53% believed the war was going well compared to the 36% who believed the United States was losing ground) overall, the majority, albeit a small one, was questioning the role of the United States and the costs and reasoning for the invasion (Gallup News Service, 2006b; 2006c; 2006d).

Again, much of the news throughout 2006 was negative, with reports of uprisings, Marines killing civilians, and the release of a National Intelligence report that the Iraq war had increased Muslim countries' antagonism towards the United States (War in Iraq, 2006). In

October, the war was considered an important midterm election issue as 58% believed the war was not going well (Pew Research Center, 2006). There was an unusually strong turnout at the polls for a midterm election, and in many traditionally strong Republican states, like Indiana, Democratic candidates won both local and national contests (Alberts, 2006). The Republicans lost 28 seats in the House of Representatives and six seats in the Senate, and it was suggested that the war in Iraq would need to be re-evaluated because of the election results (Worthington, 2006). Rather than a clearly divided country, more people were against fighting in Iraq, in spite of Bush's attempts to convince the public otherwise.

2007

In 2007, the number of people who questioned the United States' involvement in Iraq grew. One poll showed that 61% were against the war, with many citing the lack of justification for the war, the misinformation about the situation, and the number of deaths as their reasons for opposing the war (Gallup News Service, 2007). The Bush administration attempted to provide positive reports to raise support for the war. This included having General David Petraeus, the United States' military commander in Iraq, announce to Congress that the surge of troops was effective (Hamden, 2007). However, people were very aware of the problems and did not believe in the fight. Only 36% of the population supported the war, citing fighting terrorism and bringing democracy to Iraq as reasons for the United States to stay involved. Another poll stated "since October of last year, solid and growing majorities have said that the war is not going well," with 67% of the public believing the war was going badly and 53% wanting to withdraw troops (Pew Research Center, 2007a, ¶ 3), even as there was general support of the soldiers (Pew Research Center, 2007b). This concern about troops remaining in Iraq was reflected in how the Democrat-controlled Congress refused to fund the war for a full year, but instead held votes about funding

every few months (Gawenda, 2007a, 2007b). Congress also wanted to pass a timetable for leaving Iraq, over Bush's objections (Gawenda, 2007a, 2007b).

The issue of what to do in Iraq—stay or withdraw troops—became an important issue for potential presidential candidates. It had been predicted after 2006's midterm elections that the Iraq war would be an important issue (Worthington, 2006). As Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, Rudy Giuliani, Barack Obama, John McCain, and Mitt Romney began to prepare their political platforms, all focused on the situation in Iraq and attacked each other's stances (Cooper & Healy, 2007; Doyle, 2007; Garekar, 2007; Gorden & Nagourney, 2007; Nagourney, 2007; Spillius, 2007a). Giuliani even based much of his campaign on his leadership after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (Balz, 2007). The Democrats were ready and willing to make it the focus of the next presidential campaigns, arguing for the need to pull out of Iraq and speaking against Bush (Gawenda, 2007a; Hamden, 2007). In fact, as the 2008 election drew closer, it was believed more Republicans representatives would be willing to support bills that called for withdrawing troops, as they were nervous about their own campaigns and their association with an unpopular war (Gawenda, 2007b; Spillius, 2007b).

2008

These strong, negative opinions about the decision to invade Iraq continued into 2008, but perceptions of the actual situation had also improved (Pew Research Center, 2008a; Pew Research Center, 2008b). This may be because 30,000 more soldiers were sent to Iraq in the spring of 2007, and this military effort was perceived as beneficial (Vote USA, 2008). Beliefs remained steady throughout the year; a Gallup report showed that in the beginning of the year, 57% of the population believed the war was not going well, and at the end of the year, 58% believed it was not going well (Gallup News Service, n.d.). Similarly, in September 58% of those

surveyed believed the war was going well, but half still believed troops should be withdrawn right away (Pew Research Center, 2008b). Overall, the population's views of the war and the role of the troops remained the same.

The amount of press coverage of the situation in Iraq had decreased (Beehner, 2008) as the press coverage focused on political candidates' campaigns (Ricchiardi, 2008). However, Iraq was expected to become a focal point as the general election came closer (Ricchiardi, 2008), and it did remain an important issue for the candidates (Bumiller, 2008) until the financial crisis became apparent and received more attention from the media (Kaufman, 2008).

It is also important to note the 2008 approval numbers for the war were vastly different from when the United States made the decision to invade Iraq. In 2003, 75% of the people surveyed thought it was the right course of action, and 21% thought the fight was going "very well" and 64% believed it was going "moderately well" (Gallup News Service, n.d). At the end of 2008, as seen above, 58% believed sending troops was a mistake. Popular opinion had clearly changed between 2003 and 2008.

Finally, many of the surveys taken over these years found that opinions were often based on partisan lines (Gallup, 2004b; Gallup, 2006b; 2006c; Gallup, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2005a; Pew Research Center, 2008b). This is an important distinction because of the perceived link between country music and conservative, and often Republican, values. Because political affiliations affected political views, this could play a role in what ideology the country music industry generally supported. Partisan loyalty could override the discourse about the problems with the war, such as Bush's justification to invade Iraq, prison scandals, and declining support to continue the war. The Republican Party's official stance on the war, combined with country

music's past pro-war stance and conservative nature, might influence how the industry chose to construct songs.

Narrative Theory

In order to comprehend the world around us, we can critically analyze different types of communication—we “can expose meaning” (Cohen, 1998). Sillars and Gronbeck (2001) state that, “A communication critic makes an argument that describes, interprets, or evaluates the messages to which people are exposed in public or collective ways” (p. 3). This is the general purpose of the analysis, but there must be a way to approach the text in order to describe, interpret, and evaluate it. For this study, narrative theory provides a way to analyze the text to examine what ideology is being promoted in country music lyrics.

Narratives' Impact and Construction

A narrative, in a simple sense, is a story. It has been termed many different ways: narrative, story, myth, legend, and the like. Yet there is more to it than it simply being a tale (Lacy, 2000). Humans often tell narratives in order to understand their experiences and persuade others to consider their ideas; this view opposes the thought that humans are always rational creatures persuaded by logic (Fisher, 1984). Foss (2004) agrees, explaining that narratives “organize the stimuli of our experience so that we can make sense of the people, places, events, and actions of our lives” (p. 333). As stories organize our experience, they help individuals comprehend and connect to certain ideas.

Cohen (1998) states cultures use narratives to “shape knowledge and values, maintain social order, and influence action” (p. 88). Additionally, narratives often teach conformity, but they also can push for change (Cohen, 1998). To do this, narratives organize different pieces of information to construct their message; “narrative structure entails parts interacting to form a

greater whole . . . [with] themes created for an intentional purpose” (Cohen, 1998, p. 89). Sillars and Gronbeck (2001) explain the role of narratives stating they “[demonstrate] the mechanisms by which stories govern our perceptions of where we’ve been, where we are, and where we as individuals or collectivities are heading” (p. 15). Therefore, narratives help individuals make sense of what is going on around them—to understand the events that occur in life. As narratives help people manage their experiences, the constructed messages have the potential to influence people’s perceptions.

Because narratives can promote different ideologies, different communication scholars have theorized about how they are able to create persuasive messages. These arguments focus on the construction of the narrative. Some theorists focus on how a rhetor can create a believable story; others focus on how the different features of a narrative work to promote a certain worldview. Together, these approaches examine a narrative’s composition and provide insight into the belief system that is being supported.

According to Fisher’s (1987) narrative paradigm, narratives must fit two criteria: coherency and fidelity. The first element, coherency, “has to do with how probable the story sounds to the hearer. Does the narrative *hang together*?” (Griffin, 2006, p. 344). To hang together, stories must be believable as well as have a beginning, middle, and end. In other words, the different parts of the story must be connected in a way that makes sense. The second element, fidelity, means a story must have a truth value to its audience. People respond to what they hear because they relate to it or understand it. Successful narratives create a way for the audience to easily believe that the story works, and it is something that could happen. This means stories are linked to people’s cultural experiences and values, regardless of whether it is fiction or

nonfiction (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001), and Fisher argues that as the criteria of fidelity and coherency are met, stories are then able to function and affect their audience.

Kirkwood (1992) argues that narratives can serve two different purposes—a rhetor’s story may reflect what the audience already believes or may ask audience to take a certain course of action. Therefore, storytellers have a range of possibilities when choosing how to create a story and must make choices about how to tell a story based on their knowledge and the context to create their message (Kirkwood, 1992). The decisions made depend on the rhetor, the audience, the situation, and societal expectations, so the construction of the message depends on the path the rhetor wants to take. These decisions can also affect how Fisher’s (1987) criteria of fidelity and coherency are achieved, so the storyteller has a narrative that can influence a population’s ideology.

Brummett (1999) discusses another view of narrative through the representative anecdote from a Burkean perspective. He defines an anecdote as “a lens, filter, or template through which the critic studies and reconstructs the discourse” (Brummett, 1999, p. 481). The story’s structure plays an important part in understanding its role in discourse. The purpose of studying these anecdotes is to find how they “[equip] a culture for living in that situation” (Brummett, 1999, p. 482). The narrative provides a model for living, which means that it promotes a certain belief system, and by extension, certain behavior. Examining narrative discourse can then be a useful way to examine guides for living are constructed, including different ideologies in media industries.

Narrative theory, particularly Fisher’s (1987) narrative paradigm, must be considered carefully. Rowland (1987) argues against viewing all discourse as narrative and cautions that the study of narratives be approached thoughtfully. Furthermore, the critic must be aware of what

constitutes a narrative as well as the fact that rhetors may use stories to meet their own purposes rather than serving others' best interests. Still, he recognizes that the study of narratives can provide useful insights and that stories play an important role in public discourse. Rowland (1987) states, "through stories, average people can put into perspective the problems of the world. Narratives also may produce identification, which in many cases leads to persuasion" (p. 268). Even as he critiques narrative theory, he recognizes that narratives do have impact, and at the least, their construction is worth exploring.

Warnick (1987) points out that narrative theory cannot necessarily be used to predict how the audience reacts to the story, but she also states that

Critics are drawn to the paradigm because it focuses on how the intratextual reality of an account is shaped by its emplotment of characters and events. Such close study of a rhetorical text's narrative features enables critics to uncover, discuss, and assess implicit values embedded in the text. (p. 172)

Narrative theory can be a useful tool to better examine the underlying implications of a rhetor's work. As Sillars and Gronbeck (2001) argue, the purpose of examining narratives is to find "what culture is reflected in or influenced by the content and form of the story" (p. 220).

Narrative theory's purpose is to find how stories, in whatever form, share certain ideologies with their audiences. This focus leads to analyzing the construction of narratives to how narratives are constructed to communicate certain values.

Narrative Features

"Anecdotes" or "narratives" must somehow then be broken down in order to better understand how they organize reality for their audiences. It is important to recognize what constitutes a narrative in order to identify it, and more importantly, the different components "are

examined to reveal the cultural messages of the story” (Sillars & Gronbeck, 2001, p. 212). Foss (2004) outlines four common characteristics within narratives that set them apart from other rhetorical forms. First, narratives must have at least two events occurring (which can be either active or passive) because the actions work together to create the story. Second, these events must be arranged in the order they occur. Even as the events are explained chronologically, they should not simply be listed as things that happened, which leads to the third characteristic. There is a relationship between the different events in the story. They are not random, unrelated phenomena. Rather, one part is needed for another to occur. Finally, the subjects in the narrative must be unified. They must be related to each other; random, disconnected thoughts cannot be strung together and be considered a coherent narrative. These characteristics work within the broader components of a narrative: setting, themes, characters, relationships, narrators, and the audience. It is by exploring these dimensions that narratives’ broader implications can be found.

Chesebro (1989) uses similar characteristics to define a narrative, but he varies on some points from Foss (2004). He argues for three features: first, narratives are not limited by rationality; second, they have varied events that are not bound by sequence, but rather have many varied forms; and third, narratives’ meanings depend on how the audience perceives them. From this, Chesebro argues that different media tell stories in different ways, and thus affect analysis.

Cohen (1998) also disagrees with some of Foss’s assumptions, arguing that

not all narratives contain the classical balance of narrative parts, and many times narrative events are presented out of their chronological sequence. It is precisely the choices that individuals or culture make in their narrative structures that are critically interesting. (p. 90)

These distinctions are important especially when considering a more nontraditional narrative form, such as music lyrics. The different understandings of narratives, however, can work together in order to determine how to best approach texts to find the underlying ideologies.

Many authors have used a narrative framework to explore the impact of different types of discourse. For instance, Hollihan and Riley (1987) identified what themes existed in a popular parental support group's narrative to better understand its appeal and possible consequences. In a similar way, Lewis (1995) examines how former President Ronald Reagan drew on the American myth and used anecdotes to construct his messages for different audiences. Rowland and Strain (1994) argue to develop the scope of narrative analysis as they consider the rhetoric of Spike Lee's film *Do the Right Thing*. Sefcovic and Condit (2001) also contend that Fisher's narrative paradigm should be expanded as they include studying the historical context of a particular piece of legislature, the Wagner Act, with the arguments surrounding the bill. As scholars examine narrative components, such as characters and plot, it is clear that narrative's texts can be deconstructed to have a better understanding of its possible impact on society.

Narrative and Music

Narratives can play an important role within music and the message it creates. The words and music provide a way for individuals to understand their reality; this may be because the message is created to persuade the audience to buy it psychologically and economically (Huisman, Murphet, & Dunn, 2005). Narratives within music are worth examining, especially because there is a variety of ways these two things work together, as Ryan (2004) states,

the relations between music and narrative are multiple and too familiar to require more than an enumeration: dramatic scripts or narrative texts set to music . . . ; instrumental

compositions . . . or sketching new ones . . . ; verbally narrated music . . . ; and the use of extradiegetic music . . . to set or undermine the mood in film and drama. (p. 267)

The interworking of music and narratives continues to be explored (e.g. Kafalenos, 2004; Tarasti, 2004) while others have examined how music tells a story. For instance, Rabinowitz (2004) argues against the traditional reading of *Show Boat* as he examines the elements at work within the musical. Others have considered the overarching stories within musical lyrics, such as the themes of loss and desire within relationships in country music (Fox, 1992).

Additionally, specific artists' narratives in songs have been examined. Jensen (2009) examines three narrative texts: the lyrics, the music video, and the artists (Toby Keith and Willie Nelson) and how they use the cowboy image in the song "Beer for My Horses" to understand how the constructed images affect public discourse about justice. Another example of this type of study is Baker's (2005) study of a Croatian artist who draws on his country's mythic history to create a political narrative in his lyrics. Bob Marley's political reggae lyrics have also been examined to see how as an author, he constructed heroic narratives for himself (Meyer, 2007). Other rhetorical studies of musical discourse that includes examining narratives in music lyrics are Dawson's (2006) study of how the punk band NOFX used an album to promote the members' political stance and Erickson's (2000) examination of Woody Guthrie protest songs. Another approach to the rhetoric of musical works is Purnell's (2002) examination of the identity of Billie Holiday, which included close examination of her musical lyrics. Musical performers' narratives have been examined in many different ways, providing insight into their worldviews and the work they are sharing with the public.

Narratives can also build over time, becoming part of a culture's fabric, especially through music. Branham (1999) argues that both a nation and its identity are constructed through

rhetoric, and national songs are a prime example of how this is done. He argues that national songs assert a certain national identity through the singer's relationship with his or her country. Assumptions are made as lyrics define what constitutes a country, and in the United States, it "is imagined in song as a 'land of the free and home of the brave' or a 'sweet land of liberty' where one's 'fathers died' and in which Pilgrims took 'pride'" (Branham, 1999, p. 19). Furthermore, these songs institutionalize a nation's ideals and traditions, especially because these songs are often written in time of crisis (Branham, 1999). One example of this how the song "America" constructs an understanding of American patriotism as it defines the United States as a great country (Branham, 1996). The lyrics add to the overall discourse about what patriotism means.

Scheuer (1991) argues this musical construction of patriotism is the case throughout American history. From early colonial times with Puritan psaltery to more current protest songs, music lyrics have reproduced or commented on the same "myth" or narrative about the American Dream—promoting the idea that the United States is a land of liberty and opportunity. Music lyrics contribute to an American metanarrative. A metanarrative is "discourse in which the narrative itself is discussed and elements in the narrative are commented on explicitly" (Foss, 2004, p. 336). In other words, a metanarrative tells or comments on different pieces of a story. This discussion favors one interpretation of the narrative over another; as the elements of a story are discussed, the parts that are favored are idealized, and dissenting interpretations are ignored. For instance, this occurs in many patriotic songs that glorify the nation as they comment on an American metanarrative. Scheuer examines how popular nationalistic songs add to an overarching pro-American narrative. These types of songs present the country as "a vast, rugged, and plentiful land, whose destiny is providentially guided by the hand of God, and where, because of the noble sacrifices of pilgrims and patriots in the cause of liberty and freedom, we

enjoy unlimited opportunity, equality and freedom” (Scheuer, 1991, p. 5). Through references to land, freedom, and opportunity, which are pieces of the narrative, these songs are able to build an American metanarrative that shapes America’s cultural values, including uncritical patriotism (Scheuer, 1991).

Although there are different approaches to how narrative and music can be studied, scholars agree that narratives exist within music and have the potential to affect the audience. In order to explore what ideology is presented in country music lyrics about patriotism, 9/11, and the war in Iraq, a narrative analysis of country music lyrics is appropriate, especially because of country music’s storytelling (Ryan, Calhoun, & Wentworth, 1996).

Research Questions

In order to understand how narratives are constructed and their implications, narrative analysis requires examining the individual factors at play within a narrative. “In analyzing media texts, we need to interrogate the ideological myths that are told at every level” (Fulton, Huisman, & Murphet, 2005, p. 7), which suggests narrative features must be examined. Foss (2004) describes this as “[exploring] the primary feature of the narrative in detail” (p.335). By comparing and contrasting things such the setting, characters, narrators, audiences, the actions, and/or themes, one can find the predominant features of the narrative, or in other words, one can find the elements that are affecting the nature of the story; one can better understand what ideological forces are at play through deconstructing the text. By analyzing the different narratives’ characteristics, one can better understand underlying messages in the text.

The following research questions arise:

RQ1: In post-9/11 country music between September 2001 to September 2008, what do the predominant narrative features that construct patriotism, war, and 9/11 in their lyrics imply about the industry's ideology?

RQ2: How, if at all, did the lyrics' constructed narrative features reflect the change in popular opinion about patriotism, 9/11, and war between September 2001 to September 2008?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This study analyzed country music lyrics using a narrative framework, a part of rhetorical criticism. According to Foss (2004), rhetorical criticism involves identifying some of the basic concepts involved in a rhetorical phenomenon and explain how they work. Admittedly, the theory that results is based on limited evidence—in many cases one artifact. But even the study of one artifact allows you to step back from the details of a particular artifact to take a broader view of it and to draw some conclusions about what it suggests concerning some process of rhetoric. (p. 8)

Because speakers are often speaking to and for a particular audience, their messages are often examined to better understand what values they promote (Klumpp & Hollihan, 1989). Studying texts provides a way to examine the implications of the views presented.

This study focuses on the narratives in the lyrics. However, musical scores can also play an important role in shaping the message (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001; Stewart, Smith, & Denton, 2007), limiting this study. Yet by only examining only the lyrics, the penned messages and their implications can be better understood. While it can be useful at times to examine the musical score, it can also distract from the text's constructed message by changing the audience's focus from the lyrics to the music (Booth, 1976; Purnell, 2002). Although this is an important concession, since my purpose is to examine the ideology put forth by the lyricists, I am analyzing the words apart from the music.

Narrative Analysis

Foss (2004) states that narrative analysis has two steps, “identifying the dimensions of the narrative [and] discovering an explanation” (p. 355). These steps are followed by carefully

examining the whole narrative and then choosing which features are the most predominant to discover its implications. Within the first step, the different elements of the story that were considered included, but not necessarily limited to, the setting, the characters, the narrator, the events, the temporal relationships of the events, the causal relationships of the events, the audience, and the themes. Not all of these components actually became part of the analysis, but all the possibilities were considered at the beginning of analysis.

This first step involved coding the different features of the story. Drawing from Foss (2004), Cohen (1998), and Chesebro's (1989) views of narrative, this included examining lyrics for a coherent, eventful story. I repeatedly reviewed and coded the events, themes, characters, narrators, etc. to find what features were most predominant in the messages. This process used a constant-comparison technique to find the best results (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Narrative theory provided a framework to work within when approaching the text.

The second step involved choosing which features of the narrative provided the best explanation for the text, providing significant aspects of the narrative and showing insights about cultures, identities, and the text itself (Foss, 2004). Foss suggests that criteria for this analysis can include examining the worth of the message, its ethical implications, how well it meets its purpose, its coherency and fidelity, and what suggestions it offers for living. As Brummett (1999) suggests, narratives can provide one way to organize different experiences, which can then have a broader impact.

Similar rhetorical approaches were used by Dawson (2006) and Erickson (2000) as they examined different political musical lyrics and the arguments they portrayed. Jensen's (2009) analysis includes examining the text to better understand the construction of the cowboy image. These types of works contribute to our understanding of the possible narratives and ideologies

present in music lyrics. It is important to remember that there are different possible readings of a text (Kirkwood, 1992), but utilizing narrative analysis provides a useful way to examine the lyrics in the popular medium of country music.

Sample

The sample consisted of 30 country songs found using the Billboard currently titled “Hot Country Songs” or previously titled “Hot Country Singles & Tracks” charts from September 15, 2001 (the first issue after the events of 9/11) to September 13, 2008. These charts, which are available through microfilm and the EBSCO database Academic Search Complete, suggest that these songs were popular and were accepted in the fragmented country music genre. For 2001, starting after the events of 9/11, there are 17 charts, starting with September 15. For 2002-2008, there are approximately 50 charts available per year. Each chart has 50 songs listed. This appears to be around 2,500 songs, but it is important to remember these charts often have the same songs listed for several weeks as the music moves up and down with its popularity. For example, in 2007, Tim McGraw’s “If You’re Reading This” debuted June 2 and was on charts until November 17, (Hot country songs, 2007a, 2007b). Therefore, the actual number lyrics that will need to read to determine the sample is much smaller. Using the weekly charts instead of the year-end charts of hits also allowed for more songs to be part of the sample (see Appendix 1).

In order to determine what songs would become part of the sample, the lyrics of all of the songs listed on the charts were read. Each song must have had at least one verse dedicated to discussing patriotism, 9/11, and/or war in order to have a complete story to analyze. Lyrics Mania, CMT, and Cowboy Lyrics were the Web sites used to find the texts. As I read the lyrics, I looked for the concepts of 9/11, patriotism, and war. Lyrics usually do not directly reference these terms, but a guide for recognizing these images was found in their definitions.

First, it can be helpful to understand what terrorism is since the events on 9/11 were terrorist acts. “The FBI defines terrorism as, ‘the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a Government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.’” (Terrorism, 2001, p. 670). Terrorism can be either domestic or international, and can include “armed attack, arson, assault, bombing, hijacking, kidnapping, and vandalism. A twentieth-century phenomenon of terrorism is that it commonly targets random victims (Terrorism, 2001, p. 670). The broader impact of terrorism was discussed in some songs, and this definition was helpful in recognizing discourse about 9/11.

War itself can be difficult to define, but a usual “common feature . . . is that a more or less powerful state is at least on one side of the conflict” (Knöbl, 2007, p.5214). Another definition is that “war is organized political violence in which two or more armed groups engage in ongoing combat” (War, 2001, p. 706). Wars usually have ideological rationales (i.e. religion), and some theorize that it is a social construction with cultural norms; fighting occurs to maintain justice or security. (War, 2001). War requires conflict, fighting, weapons, soldiers, and death, which are examples of what appeared in the lyrics.

At a basic level, patriotism is “love of country” and this usually includes loyalty, but actually determining what actions fall under this definition can be challenging (Patriotism, 2003). For some, it means “*uncritical* loyalty” (emphasis in the original), and one does not criticize the nation’s leaders, especially during national disasters, crises, and war (Patriotism, 2003). Others believe that patriotism demands protesting unjust movements; activism is wholly patriotic because people are fighting for the country’s ideals (Patriotism, 2003). Patriotism in the United States can draw on American images, such as the flag, but its use can differ; one patriotic person

may wave the flag while a patriotic activist may burn it. In these texts, however, patriotism usually meant uncritical loyalty.

The lyrics that are part of the sample demonstrated some or all of these ideas. Obviously, the lyrics usually did not say “this song is about war” or “this song is patriotic,” but having an understanding of what constitutes these terms led to an understanding of how it could be portrayed, and therefore recognizable in the sample. Therefore, using narrative analysis and following this process, the research questions were answered by deconstructing the narratives.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Lyrics

Out of this sample of 30 songs, approximately 13-14 of songs reflected on the metanarrative, or an interpretation of the overarching story, of what constitutes the United States, drawing on American images, such as the flag, eagle, or the Statue of Liberty. A few songs blend personal stories that clearly lead into the metanarrative, such as “God, Family and Country.” These songs do not necessarily follow a traditional narrative format, but they do add to our understanding of 1) the discourse about patriotism after 9/11 and 2) one overarching narrative about America and what it represents. These songs provide themes that are worth consideration because the lyrics construct patriotism during a time of crisis and add to an interpretation of how the United States should be viewed. One song, “Only in America,” was written, released, and on the Billboard charts before the events of 9/11. Even though it discusses patriotic ideas, it has not been included because it appears on the country charts before 9/11, and therefore, it does not meet the outlined criteria for the sample because this study’s purpose is to see how 9/11, war, and patriotism are discussed in the years following the terrorist attacks. Other songs, approximately 16-17, have a more traditional narrative format, focused on specific stories told by the narrators. Some of the songs do both; they tell parts of a personal story while also contributing to the American myth.

Themes

In order to answer the first research question, it is important to look at what themes are predominant in narratives and who is telling these stories. Through examining the themes and

narrators, the implications about the ideology within these stories support are brought to the surface.

There are three main themes within the narratives: patriotism, reflections on 9/11, and the use of nonpolitical elements to tell the stories. These themes, a narrative feature, contribute to the conservative ideology often assumed to be part of country music. They provide a framework that suggests the “best” way to understand 9/11, patriotism, and war, fitting the often-assumed traditional assumptions about the country music industry, and even uses those “everyday” elements to construct the narratives.

Patriotism

Patriotism is a predominant theme within many of the lyrics, especially for the 11-12 songs that add to the American myth. As seen in the earlier discussion, patriotism can be defined in different ways, and in this sample of songs, it is depicted as being loyal to one’s country and fighting to preserve its ideals, not protesting decisions made by government leaders. Rather than inviting the audience to consider different definitions of patriotism, the lyrics build upon an American metanarrative of unquestionable pride, arguing that this is the acceptable societal view. This interpretation of an American metanarrative excludes other readings of the country’s past and present, which may include a more problematic and complex discussion. Through the patriotic theme, the narratives suggest that country music chooses to promote the type of patriotism where those who wave the flag love their country, and those who burn the flag do not. Traditional, patriotic views are embraced rather than opinions that question the status quo. As the lyrics define what patriotism is through glorifying America ideals, outlining what constitutes patriotic behavior, and calling for a fight.

Glorifying America. Many lyrics use American images to display a pride for America. The lyrics demonstrate a theme of pride for what America stands for—freedom. American symbols are also used: the flag, the Statue of Liberty, soldiers fighting for freedom, and the land to explain what makes America a great country, fitting in with previous songs that also reflect on the greatness of America. Most of these songs were written after 9/11, but after the attack on 9/11, “God Bless the USA,” originally released in 1984, re-entered the Billboard chart. In this song, the lyrics use different elements that represent America to build the theme of patriotism. The narrator sings of his family, his opportunities in America, and that he will always remember those who fought for this country. In fact, that inspires him to want to defend the country that he loves (Greenwood, 2002). Another example of this pride for the nation is seen in the lyrics for “Where the Stars and Stripes and Eagle Fly.” The song also draws on common American symbols to call for support of the country, as the song states,

There’s a lady that stands in a harbor
For what we believe
And there's a bell that still echoes the price that it costs
To be free. (Beard, Beathard, & Tippin, 2001)

These American emblems indirectly contribute to the ideal story that America always fights for freedom and are a way to comment on the American metanarrative.

Furthermore, the songs “This Ain’t No Rag, It’s a Flag” (Daniels, 2001) and “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)” (Keith, 2001) build unquestioning patriotism as they focus on American symbols. In “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue,” the Statue of Liberty, the eagle flying, and Mother Freedom ringing her bell are all clearly mentioned (Keith, 2001). These national symbols depict an unqualified pride in a country that apparently can do no

wrong. Subsequently, through praising the United States, the theme suggests that it is natural to love this country. If one loves this country and what it stands for, one will not question anything about it. Rather, the focus is on the fact people have always fought to protect this wonderful country. By constructing patriotism through extolling America after 9/11, this theme fits previous, older songs that contribute to this metanarrative and fits the industry's ideology. The United States, its government, and its citizens are acclaimed, not disdained.

Although this positive construction of America may be understandable, especially after the terrorist attacks, the lyrics in country music support the myth of America as a land of liberty, positioning the United States as the "good," and consequently, those who attack the United States as "evil." Country music lyrics contribute to the narrative of America being a land that stands for freedom, and therefore, is the best place to live, which supports the conservative belief system associated with country music. Furthermore, country music's ideology allows the songs to not only glorify the United States but also define what does and does not count as patriotic behavior.

Patriotic behavior. Country music goes beyond discussing what makes this country "the best;" it constitutes what is and is not patriotic behavior. Because America is a great country, the lyrics argue this greatness also means that citizens should recognize how fortunate they are to live in the United States. This realization should then lead to individuals acting according to country's music's definition of patriotism. As the lyrics construct America as a great land of liberty, they also develop the need for a certain type of patriotic support for the country. This includes supporting the government's war decisions and fighting, even to the death, to defend liberty. These ideals reflect the limited type of patriotism maintained by the country music industry. The industry supports a more conservative ideology as the lyrics clearly specify that

acceptable patriotism honors the nation, supports the need to defend its ideals, and never questions its past or present actions.

The song “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue” argues that because the country was attacked, it should react accordingly. The argument stems from the fact that “Now this nation that I love, Has fallen under attack” (Keith, 2001). In a similar way, the song “It’s No Rag, It’s a Flag” argues that United States should fight because “you wounded American pride” (Daniels, 2001). The lyrics construct a story where a “good” America was wrongfully attacked, and as a result, the country must retaliate. This is a land that the citizens are proud of and love, and therefore, they should want to defend and protect it. This requires fighting back; other options are not considered. The country songs reflect an inclination to immediately fight back in order to protect one’s homeland. Diplomatic discussions with the Middle East, taking time to investigate the attacks, and the possible effects of war (especially if there is not a thorough investigation to find who orchestrated the attacks) are not considered as options. Rather, it is the government’s job and duty to retaliate on behalf of the people. Citizens have no choice but to be supportive of the president, any war, and the troops because they are fighting for the country’s inhabitants. Country music lyrics dictate that at the very least, one must support one’s country, if not fighting for it, especially after an attack.

Country music lyrics suggest an ideology that believes in always supporting the nation and its leaders. The lyrics discuss behavior that honors and defends the United States. For instance, the song “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue” states that Americans will always salute the flag in memory of soldiers who fought for this country (Keith, 2001). In fact, this recognition and support of the country is necessary in order to be patriotic; one must respect the United States, what it stands for, and its symbols. Dissent, even if it is simply a question about

the current situation, is not acceptable, as seen in the song, “American by God’s Amazing Grace.” The song, told by a soldier, does not accept anti-war views, stating,

Really don’t care why Bush went in to Iraq

I know what I’ve done there and I’m damn sure proud of that.

You got somethin’ bad to say about the USA

You better save it for different ears ‘less you want to crawl away. (Shultz & Stricklin, 2005)

The narrator indicates that he will only engage with those he agrees with; those who are against the war do not understand the full picture of why America must be at war in Iraq.

Country music generally does not allow for conduct that opposes its ideology. Rather, the lyrics reason that because life is so good in America, patriotism means the population must unite and fight for its ideals, as demonstrated in “America Will Survive” (Williams, 2002), “This Ain’t No Rag, It’s a Flag” (Daniels, 2001), and “Our Country” (Mellencamp, 2007). Division by race, gender, political ideology, and region are to be dismissed, and everyone who is an American should and will unite to support the country, especially as the United States protects itself. The troops who are fighting in the war must be supported because they are fighting for the United States. These lyrics construct the belief that war is necessary in order to preserve American ideals and requires a patriotic, united front. There is only one country, and it is “ours.”

Individuals must act together by ascribing to this patriotic conduct so the nation can continue to be a great land and win the war.

These songs suggest a narrative of a victorious United States; however, this can only happen if the members of the country patriotically stand together. In order for this narrative to work, people should not question the behavior requirements, as they are the only way the United

States will win. For instance, the lyrics in “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue” suggest that Americans will always honor the flag; there is not room to question if this is the only type of patriotic action because it is “always” done (Keith, 2001). Lyrics in “Where the Stars and Stripes and Eagle Fly” also suggest this narrow definition, as the song defines who is truly an American:

I pledge allegiance to this flag

And if that bothers you, well that's too bad

But if you got pride and you're proud you do

Hey, we could use some more like me and you

Where the stars and stripes, and the eagle fly. (Beard, Beathard, & Tippin, 2001)

Only those who are proud of pledging allegiance to America are allowed membership in the United States. Patriotic actions are absolute; this behavior cannot be examined, discussed, and deviate from societal norms.

Furthermore, even as the lyrics call for a united country, only those who agree with this ideology are allowed to belong. The rest are dismissed; it is suggested they are not “real” Americans because they do not believe patriotism requires uncritical loyalty. For instance, the song “I Raq and Roll” argues for the need for uncritical support, as it discusses how people should support the United States’ stance with warfare, otherwise they should be taken out of the picture:

It might be a smart bomb

They find stupid people too

And if you stand with the likes of Saddam

One just might find you. (Black & Nicholas, 2003)

The lyrics in country music do not allow for much other than blind faith in the country and its leaders, especially as these lyrics seem to support an ideology that defines patriotic behavior as a united population showing their love and support for their country. The lyrics deal with the contradiction between accepting only certain types of patriotism and asking for united citizens by dismissing any dissenters.

From country music's definition of patriotism, the lyrics construct who does and does not qualify as an American by supporting an ideology that requires unquestionable support for the government. Country music is able to dismiss any competing views about what constitutes patriotic actions and brand dissenters as people who do not love their country, and are therefore un-American. Any anti-war arguments that appear to defame America can be dismissed because people are not remembering how great this country is or what freedom costs. This narrative theme suggests that country music does not want to truly discuss or analyze these issues, which may be because this discussion could undermine its constructed ideology. Rather, the industry continues to build a narrative that fits its assumed worldview. Additionally, this belief about the need to defend one's country also leads to a call to fight against those who attacked the United States.

A call to fight. Loyalty to one's country is not limited to just mentioning American symbols, pledging allegiance to the flag, or supporting the war. It also means that patriotic Americans will go and battle for their country as many of these patriotic songs argue for avenging the United States' honor after the attacks. The patriotic theme reflects a need for vengeance after the terrorist attacks, arguing that the United States needs to retaliate against the terrorists in self-defense. The lyrics suggest that the country music industry is pro-war, arguing

why war is necessary. Furthermore, the constructed patriotic values are used to justify the right to go to war. Patriotism naturally leads to fighting back actively.

Several songs suggest that the United States must fight because it is the best country in the world. In fact, it is because this country is so wonderful that it was attacked, and now it must fight back. The song “America Will Survive” argues that “we’re them boys and girls that have freedom and fun” (Williams, 2002). This is why the United States was attacked, and the country must fight back to defend its freedom. Another example of this is in “It’s No Rag, It’s a Flag” as the lyrics state that the flag is “a symbol of the land where the good guys live” and “We’re good as the best and better than the rest” (Daniels, 2001). America is declared the “good guy,” which naturally leads to the terrorists being cast as the “bad guys” who deserve and even need America’s interference. The United States has a right to show its dominance over other countries. This unquestioning belief that the United States is the greatest country in the world and this greatness was part of the impetus for the attacks provides the needed support for the United States to go to war.

The lyrics suggest that it is the United States’ responsibility as a superior, democratic country to fight against the world’s evil. For example, in the song, “Osama, Yo’ Mama,” the lyrics claim that the terrorists fight with the United States because they were not raised correctly (but imply Americans were), therefore, the former President George W. Bush should step in to straighten them out:

And I can just hear dubyah sayin’, “You in a heap o’ trouble boy

And I don't think you will enjoy

Our game of search and destroy

We got your terror right here, son yu [*sic*] sure are the real mecoy [*sic*].” (Kalb & Stevens, 2002)

The enemy, terrorists such as Osama bin Laden, should pay for what they did, and patriotic citizens should support American endeavors to fight back. Other countries who are against the United States and terrorists will only receive what they deserve, as illustrated by the lyrics in “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue.” The singer argues that “justice will be served” and

you’ll be sorry that you messed with

The U.S. of A.

Cause we’ll put a boot in your ass

It’s the American way. (Keith, 2002)

The song “Have You Forgotten?” also advocates for fighting for the United States, stating:

I hear people saying we don’t need this war

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. (Varble & Worley, 2003)

These patriotic lyrics call for a total commitment to one’s country, which requires war to protect the nation. For instance, the song “Bumper of My S.U.V.” argues to support the troops, regardless of whom or when they are fighting, because of the service they provide and the rights they protect (Wright, 2004). These lyrics suggest truly patriotic people will remember that the United States must always fight for its rights. War is the only way to react to the terrorists attacks because the “evil” against liberty must be vanquished. Whatever happens, the price for freedom is worth paying.

War is something that necessary, and according to these lyrics, justified, because the United States and its ideals were attacked. The lyrics construct a worldview where a violent response is required because the United States was attacked, building a call to fight, even though the violence is masked in the stories. Patriotic Americans will understand why this war is necessary. These messages construct country music's perceived ideology. They advocate for the United States, the government, and the troops, especially in times of war. The call to fight implies that country music industry is more than willing to support war, particularly the war in Iraq.

These three sub-themes—glorifying America, defining patriotic behavior, and creating a call to fight—all work together to build their arguments about patriotism, and reflect country music's preferred ideology. By drawing on common images of the United States, the lyrics add to a metanarrative of the United States being a great country, a land that people should be proud to live in. This metanarrative clearly focuses on the idealized American story, including the right to fight for freedom. The songs openly discuss what makes the United States a great country; they focus on a model America, which provides a faultless home. Other interpretations and metanarratives are excluded. Moreover, the ideals we value would not be possible without supporting this great country, so, through the metanarrative, the lyrics are able to define what does, and therefore what does not, constitute patriotic behavior. From this, the lyrics justify the current need to fight, especially because the country was attacked. The “other” started the fight, which gives the United States even more justification to fight back. It is not surprising that the country music lyrics construct these ideas based on past research, but it does show that they are persisting in building the same definition of patriotism.

Furthermore, these views of patriotism suggest some important implications about the country music ideology. It is clear that the industry continues to build narratives that reflects a certain conservative, traditional worldview. They support the American metanarrative of a great land, using common symbols. This view ignores the problems within American history, instead focusing on a simple story where everything is easily defined and discussed. The industry does not appear to want to analyze the deeper issues about the ideology it supports, focusing on simplistic renditions of America. The industry also is very clear about what is acceptable behavior. The popular songs in the industry have a one-dimensional approach to patriotism as conventional actions are acceptable, such as waving the flag, but any thought that might hint at a disagreement is not. The industry does not seem to desire a variety of opinions to promote public discourse, but rather focuses on why its beliefs are correct. Because of this, the industry is also able to marginalize anyone who qualifies as an “other” who would disagree with its point of view. As they define what it means to be an American, they also create their call to fight against those who hate Americans. People with perspectives that do not agree with country music’s ideology, whether they are American dissenters or terrorists, deserve whatever actions are taken against them, because they do not truly understand the United States and its greatness. This ideology fosters ignorance about world affairs as it supports an egocentric America.

Reflections on 9/11

There are more than just patriotic themes in these songs; about 10 songs also reflect on 9/11 itself. The songs either tell a story about the personal effects of attacks or reflect on the events of the attacks. This theme reflects on how the terrorist attacks affected everyday lives of individual, ordinary people. The narratives relate personal views and experiences about 9/11, highlighting that 9/11 affected every American, not just a certain group of people or those who

lived where the attacks occurred. As different songs reflected on what happened, the lyrics reflected that country music is, first and foremost, about people living their lives, day-to-day. The attacks on 9/11 created a notable, tragic day worth commentating on because it disrupted “regular” life and the lyrics offer a way to develop individual reactions to the events.

For instance, the song “America Will Survive,” tells the story of two good friends, one from New York City and one from the country. The lyrics reflect on “normal” friendship; they exchanged letters, teased each other, in spite of their different backgrounds (Williams, 2002). As the lyrics tell the story of these characters’ friendship, it naturally leads to the question of why did the friend in New York City have to die because of the terrorists. The lyrics state, “He was lost like so many in the terrible strife, we’re all asking God, now why? Oh why?” The song then provides an opportunity for those who lost someone they were close to on 9/11 to see they are not alone in their grief. For those who only saw the events but did not have a personal connection, the song provides a way for them to empathize with others who lost a loved one. Another song, “One Last Time,” also focused on this grief by telling the story of the last phone call a husband, who was on one of the hijacked planes, made to his wife (Phillips & Matthews, 2003). By focusing on grief, a natural part of the mourning process and questioning why 9/11 had to happen, the song reflects a normal reaction to what happened. The exploration of natural reactions to life and death fits country music’s ideology as it reflects on life’s heartaches. They also suggest how people should be responding to this national disaster, especially because it happened to “normal” people.

This individual reflection and organization of 9/11 is also the focus of the song “Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)?” However, these questions ask people to look at their personal story, focusing on their actions on 9/11. The lyrics ask,

Where were you when the world stopped turning
That September day?
Were you in the yard with your wife and children
Or working on some stage in L.A.?
Did you stand there in shock at the sight of that black smoke
Risin' against that blue sky?
Did you shout out in anger in fear for your neighbor
Or did you just sit down and cry? (Jackson, 2002)

Here, the overarching theme of reflection focuses on individuals across the country. Drawing on the fact these attacks against the United States were broadcast on television, the song reflects that it was national tragedy affecting each individual. The lyrics directly highlight individuals with the use of “you” and how they dealt with the attacks and their aftermath, suggesting several different appropriate responses. These different choices, all acceptable, still determine how one should not respond to terrorists who attacked the United States; some form of anguish should be felt. The song “Have You Forgotten?” takes this individual reflection a step farther as the lyrics ask people to remember what happened on 9/11 to justify war (Varble & Worley, 2003). The lyrics use the events from a horrific, yet memorable day to reflect on what happened and ask listeners to support a fight against terrorists. These songs add a new dimension to the country music industry as they reflect on out-of-the-ordinary events. However, they also fit the industry’s ideology during past wars; they are using the events to remember tragedy and build an argument that works with the call for patriotism.

These reflections about 9/11 can serve as motivation for war, but their construction primarily reflects on what happened, providing scripted opportunities for others to reflect on the

events. By drawing on common knowledge of the terrorist attacks, the lyrics construct a feasible story for others to use as a way to remember and reconcile with what happened, which may include fighting against terrorism. These stories create emotional appeals as they discuss this catastrophe, providing ways for the audience to connect with country music's views of the events. Additionally, these lyrics suggest that country music is able to combine the unexpected events of 9/11 with common emotions to continue to build an ideology that focuses on how individuals live out their lives. Furthermore, these reflections on the attacks on American soil are in line with how the country music industry has reacted during previous wars; the industry reflects on the situation and provides the audience with a way to compare their own reactions with the "right" reactions. Country music continues to define acceptable behavior based on traditional, pro-America values.

Use of Conventional Themes

As noted earlier, country music is considered to be primarily about relationships, family, and a simple life. It is perhaps not surprising that these common themes in country music are referenced in 25 out of the 30 songs, even within songs that focus primarily on 9/11, patriotism, and war. These traditionally nonpolitical elements provide a way to fit the norms of country music as they discuss a more potentially volatile subject not often discussed within the industry. In addition, they add to the metanarrative of America ideology—that the United States is a land of everyday, industrious people who love their God and country.

There are several examples of this at work in the lyrics. For instance, the song "America Will Survive" is obviously arguing for uncritical patriotism and war, but even in the midst of that, a full verse is devoted to references of farm life:

We can plow our fields all day long
We can catch our fish from dusk 'til dawn
Yeah, we have toughed it out a time or two
These are dark days but we're gonna pull through
We grow good ol' tomatoes, we got hometown pride
America can survive, America is gonna survive. (Williams, 2002)

Because the farm teaches life lessons, citizens have the character and the ability to fight for their country. The song "Days of America" makes similar references to different American working identities: Detroit's former association with the automobile industry, Pittsburgh and the steel mills, and, of course, the workers on the family farm (Robbins, Paul, & Miller, 2002). These things all reflect that America is a country where people strive to survive, even in the face of adversity. In fact, a few songs even suggest that country music is a part of why "common" individuals eventually succeed. Because of these "home-town" values, America will be able to survive this catastrophe and win the war. Country music attaches itself to an ideology that promotes hard work and family values as a means of survival. Even in times of trouble, country music attaches itself to an ideology that believes in a hard-working, triumphant America.

Many of these songs also reference family. For instance, the song "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue" tells of how the narrator's father served in the military to protect his children in (Keith, 2002). In "Where the Stars and Stripes and Eagle Fly," the narrator states that for him, the United States is the only place to raise his family, saying that

No it ain't the only place on earth
But it's the only place that I prefer
To love my wife and raise my kids

Hey the same way that my daddy did

Where the stars and stripes, and the eagle fly. (Beard, Beathard, & Tippin, 2001)

These lyrics argue that it is only appropriate to stand up for family, and these constructed values show that country music clings to a rural, conservative ideology, and even uses these references as they build a values-based argument for certain political actions. The right to live a down-to-earth, productive, family-centered life—rights supported through must country songs—leads to country music using these images to support war. As the songs discuss how the United States will approach handling 9/11 and the war, they argue that America will be successful because of things.

Some of the lyrics also separate the singer from any certain political ideology, reflecting that country music usually does not discuss politics. For instance, in “Where Were You?” the lyrics clearly distance the singer from of any political ideology, or even political knowledge; he is portrayed as a “singer of simple songs” who “can’t tell the difference in Iraq and Iran” (Jackson, 2002). Other artists also echo this lack of political involvement. For example, the song “Hey Mr. President” engages in a discussion about current political issues, but the lyrics make it very clear the narrator is separated from political issues:

I ain’t no Democrat, I ain’t no Republican

We’re fathers and mothers,

We’re wives and husbands.

And we pray, that we dance at our daughters’ weddings

And our sons grow to fine men

And for peace, on our land. (Douglas, 2003)

Another narrator argues that she simply wants to try to understand what is going on. She has a “Support the U.S. Marines” bumper sticker on her S.U.V., which causes someone else to flip her off. As she deals with the incident, she claims political neutrality (Wright, 2004). These singers do not claim to be political experts or support certain political parties. Even though country music is associated with conservative, Republican politics, these artists choose to clearly separate themselves from politics. This separation, however, can actually reinforce the industry’s ideology.

The narrators are everyday, normal people who are involved in these issues as Americans. Although the constructed lyrics could add to the perception that country music artists are backwards and ignorant, they also suggest that the artists are perhaps aware of how the country music industry is perceived, know what their audience expects, and simply want to support the troops and the country’s leader. The songs still suggest a Republican political leaning, as they explore what happened on 9/11 and appear to support the troops, if not the war. Furthermore, they continue to reflect the idea that country music does have a particular political agenda, even if it tries to act otherwise.

Finally, religious elements are also worked into these songs. The narrator of “It Ain’t No Rag, It’s a Flag” asks God why terrible things, like 9/11, have to happen (Daniels, 2001). In a similar way the refrain from “Where Were You?” states that,

But I know Jesus and I talk to God

And I remember this from when I was young

Faith, hope and love are some good things He gave us

And the greatest is love. (Jackson, 2002)

The song references 1 Corinthians 13 as the narrator deals with his reactions to the terrorist attacks. Later, as the song lyrics ask the audience to reflect on how they reacted to 9/11, they include “Did you dust off that Bible at home?” and “Did you go to a church and hold hands with some strangers?” (Jackson, 2002). The Christian God, through religion, is considered a normal and appropriate source to deal with life issues, including terrorist attacks and war. It is able to provide answers in the wake of tragedy.

Additionally, it is made clear that Americans are blessed to be part of this country, as songs such as “God Bless the U.S.A.” (Greenwood, 2002), “American by God’s Amazing Grace” (Shultz & Stricklin, 2005), and “Where the Stars and Stripes and Eagle Fly” (Beard, Beathard, & Tippin, 2001) demonstrate that it is a gift from God to be born American. Another song, “God, Country, and Family,” tells the story of how the narrator’s grandfather fought as a soldier because

His was a generation

That answered without question

They knew they had to win

‘Cause they were fightin’ for

God, family and country. (Morgan, Morris, & Mcdaniel, 2003)

Religion (as well as family and patriotism) serves as a motivational tool in these songs. It is only because of God that the United States, and by extension, the right to be an American, exists.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to fight against any enemies; in fact, Americans should fight for God. Country music upholds an ideology that uses the Christian religion as justification for war. This contributes to the belief that America is a Christian nation with a divine right to defend itself from the “others.” It also excludes other religions from providing political answers, especially as

the United States fights against terrorists who are considered Islamic extremists. The affairs of the state and religion clearly are not separate in country music.

The use of these conventional elements—American life, family, and Christianity—imply that the industry is willing and able to use these images to promote a political ideology that asks the audience to protect these institutions. The social and political unrest caused by 9/11 and the Iraq war provided the industry with the opportunity to promote their worldview. Using the norms within country songs, the industry provided stories that reflected that daily life went on, even as individuals grappled with recent events. These narratives that interwove political issues with everyday life demonstrate that the industry is able to use its conventional format to produce lyrics that reflect on political issues. The genre can even use this imagery to mask its ideology.

Narrators

The narrator also plays an important role in these narratives. The narrator has the ability to choose what story about 9/11, war, and/or patriotism to tell. These choices include deciding who tells the story, what actions they take, and how they discuss the characters. As stories are told, the narrators can be the authoritative voice about the subject as well; they often provide firsthand experience, suggesting personal experience affects how they tell their stories. Approximately 13 songs tell of soldiers' experiences, providing evidence that war is necessary. Even the discussion of death constructs an ideology that supports war. Comparatively, only a few narratives—about five—discuss those who waiting at home for their loved ones to come home from war. Only two songs focus on the downside of war. Finally, the narrator's gender plays an important role in the shaping of narratives; out of 30 songs, 25 have male narrators. Through these three areas, the narrator's role especially highlights country music's traditional assumptions about war, including what part each person is to play in wartime. The soldiers and those waiting

on the home front usually tell narratives that support conservative political and social ideologies, especially through the construction of gender.

Soldiers

Many of the narrators either tell the story of a soldier or of their life as soldiers. Usually, these stories focus on how the soldier served his country, and only his service; soldiers are almost always male. These songs portray traditional gender roles; it is rarely suggested that a woman could go fight in a war. Additionally, it is man's duty to go and fight for his country and family, regardless of the war. This responsibility is also an honor because soldiers are also fighting for American ideals. The narrators build their argument by either remembering those who served or their service to the United States in the Armed Forces. These personal reflections, which also reflect country music's ideology, suggest that the narrator is credible. Only a few narrators who tell soldiers' stories consider what it is like for those left behind. Overall, the narrators argue for the need to support the war effort through the soldiers.

Soldiers are continuously serving their country and protecting others from harm. It is not just a job; it is a serious responsibility. The narrators construct an ideal soldier who unashamedly loves his country. Soldiers value patriotism, American rights, and freedom, and hate those who attack the United States, which leads them to serve and even risk death. For instance, the song "American Soldier" outlines why the narrator became a soldier:

I'm an American soldier, an American

Beside my brothers and my sisters

I will proudly take a stand

When liberty's in jeopardy, I will always do what's right

I'm out here on the frontlines, sleep in peace tonight

American soldier, I'm an American soldier. (Keith & Cannon, 2003)

American ideals and American citizens need to be protected, so soldiers who can fight against the enemy are essential to America's future. Soldiers are constructed as men who protect others from harm, even after they die. In the song "Riding with Private Malone" the narrator buys a classic car previously owned by a soldier who died during World War II. The soldier's ghost rides along in the car and protects the new owner during a fatal car crash. Private Malone continues to perform his soldierly duties, protecting an American from a dangerous situation, for which the narrator is grateful (Newton & Shepherd, 2001). These narrators suggest that soldiers are always to safeguard Americans, especially if they cannot fight for themselves. Soldiers play a vital role in protecting American society, and these narrators support this belief.

Service to one's country provides a lasting legacy as it ensures that the United States will endure. For instance, the song "God, Family and Country" discusses the narrator's grandfather, who felt it was his duty to serve his country during World War II and going to war was worth any price because it was for "God, family and country," which is the point of the story (Morgan, Morris, & Mcdaniel, 2003). The narrator clearly sets up that this is what matters: the man's service to his country, especially because of the beliefs he was preserving. Through its narrators, country music argues that it is necessary to have soldiers fighting for America. This connects to what country music songs consider patriotic behavior, but it goes further than that. The narrators believe that soldiers are worthy of more respect than the average person because of the risks they take to protect their country. If soldiers are protecting their country during time of war, it is probably a war worth fighting, especially if it is to protect American ideals, which is also constructed by country music. The support for soldiers, and by extension, war, given by country

music artists suggests that the industry believes in its constructed ideals of service and patriotism.

This service to one's country is worth any cost, even death, because it is an honorable way to die. Because they believe in what they are fighting for, they are willing to give the ultimate sacrifice. They are the examples of the cliché "freedom isn't free," and they take pride in the fact that their deaths ensure others will be safe. For instance, the narrator in "If You're Reading This" wrote a letter for his wife in the event of his death. In this letter, he is sorry that he will not see his wife or child ever again, but clearly shows he has no regrets for "[standing] up for the innocent and the weak," just as his father did (Warren, Warren, & McGraw, 2007). Fighting and dying for his American beliefs was the right and only course of action to take.

The lyrics in "Arlington" suggest the same pride about a soldier's honorable death. The deceased narrator, telling his story from a national military cemetery, is proud that he served his country, as did others before him:

And I'm proud to be on this peaceful piece of property

I'm on sacred ground, and I'm in the best of company

I'm thankful for those thankful for the things I've done

I can rest in peace, I'm one of the chosen ones

I made it to Arlington. (Spillman & Turnbull, 2005)

The narrators appreciate the recognition of their work, but overall, their deaths are part of their service. Their dedication to their country is not something that makes them extraordinary; it is part of being an American. These stories, narrated by soldiers, provide firsthand accounts about the willing patriots who serve the United States. The narrators provide insight into how country music views the troops, especially as they suggest they serve to protect America and to fight for

freedom. These brave soldiers, willing to protect the United States by sacrificing their lives for the overall good, are respectable men. Because of this, the narrators suggest that they would not be fighting in anything but an honorable war. The soldiers' stories subtly suggest that war is necessary, indicating an ideology that supports the overall war effort.

Furthermore, soldiers who have fallen are remembered and respected by those left behind, especially by other soldiers. The song "8th of November" tells of the true story of a man who fought in Vietnam and lost most of his friends in battle, so every year the surviving soldier honors them (Alpin & Rich, 2005). In a similar way, the narrator in "Cryin' Bagpipes," a current soldier who is telling how he came to fight, honors fallen soldiers as well, using images of the flag and freedom to deem them as "heroes" (Rushlow & Waddell, 2006). Another soldier, a captain, honors his fallen soldiers in the song, "Not Me," saying

They were the finest soldiers it was my privilege to lead

They deserve the medals, the men who died, not me. (Thomas, Montana, & Maher, 2005)

The narrators argue that soldiers who fell in the line of duty should be respectfully remembered because they were fighting for freedom. All soldiers are honorable men who believed in fighting for their country. These narrators do not know how those who died felt, but they do show that they will never forget the fallen. Moreover, they believe these soldiers are admirable heroes. Again, country music suggests that soldiers should always be supported because of what they represent and do for the United States. Just as the narrators will always respect those they served with, so should every American citizen. This admiration hints that patriotic Americans will remember who fought to keep their country free. Country music suggests that American soldiers can do no wrong because of what they do; therefore, the troops' efforts should always be honored.

The narrators argue for need to admire the soldier, whose job is to serve American citizens. The narrators construct American ideals by focusing on soldiers' honorable duties. As they do so, they follow country music's ideology through creation of patriotic soldiers who are willing to serve, even if it means death. In fact, death is overwhelmingly constructed as honorable because of the circumstances—and the dead narrators capitalize on this. The narrators, regardless if they are living or dead, soldiers or civilians, clearly believe that this is an important role to be honored. The narrators reflect a traditional ideology in country music that views American soldiers as patriotic, respectable men fighting for their country.

Home front

Compared to the 13 songs that focus on the stories of soldiers, only five songs have narrators who are waiting at home for their loved ones to return. These stories focus on those who are either dealing with their family or friends fighting overseas or with their death. Although there are fewer narrators on the home front, they often continue to build a conservative ideology in country music. Only a few narrators are able to focus completely on the problems of war. Generally, even those who are dealing with loved ones fighting as soldiers acknowledge war is necessary.

The song "Letters from Home" focuses on the stories of those writing letters to support a soldier who away fighting. However, the narrator is a soldier, talking about how important letters from his family are to him. His family serves as his motivation to continue fighting for the United States, and his family tells him of what is going on at home, that they miss and love him, and that they are proud of him. The lyrics state that a letter from home "keeps driving [him] on" (Lee & Lane, 2004). Other soldiers mention their families as well. In "American by God's Amazing Grace," the narrator does not want his family to worry about him (Shultz & Stricklin,

2005). In “If You’re Reading This,” the deceased soldier comforts his family by reminding them he died for a larger purpose (Warren, Warren, & McGraw, 2007). Other times, soldiers are simply trying to protect their families, who serve as motivation for the soldiers’ fight, as in “American Soldier” (Keith & Cannon, 2003) and “Sunday Morning in America” (Steele, Rutherford, & Anderson, 2008). In all these cases, the soldier, as the narrator, is constructing the role of the supporting family. His role dictates how the others should respond to his position. In these songs, more emphasis is usually placed on the soldier than the family.

Other voices add to the discussion of how those left behind respond to the fact they have loved ones overseas fighting, but their perspectives are limited. One story comes from a child’s point of view, as the child asks Santa to bring the father back from war as a Christmas present. Even though the mother tells the child that the father is needed to fight, the child simply wants him home again, even if others may need him for the war (Johnson & Feek, 2007). As a child serves as a narrator, this wish for a soldier to come home becomes acceptable, especially as the child is willing to give up desirable presents, like a Barbie doll or a soccer ball. However, the adult recognizes that others need the father to fulfill his responsibilities as a soldier (Johnson & Feek, 2007). The narrator’s constructed story potentially provides a space for others to discuss that they want their loved ones to come home. However, this potential is limited as the mother in this story and other narrators create the demand for unquestionable support through their songs’ lyrics.

This limited discourse is also seen in the song “Bumper of My S.U.V.” The narrator tells how she was flipped off for having a bumper sticker that supported the U.S. Marines on her S.U.V. She has the bumper sticker because the men in her family have always served their country in times of war, safeguarding America’s freedom (Wright, 2004). As the narrator

privately responds to the other woman, she supports the belief that American soldiers are fighting for worthwhile ideals. In fact, the narrator blatantly reasons that the offending woman should realize that it is because of the troops protect everyone's freedom, she has the right to flip off someone else. This rationale supports the overall belief that American soldiers are fighting for a meaningful cause. Country music continues to construct what is acceptable behavior as narrators discuss how civilians support soldiers.

Two other songs deal with soldiers' death from the loved one's point of view, straying from the beliefs supported by other country songs. These narrators do not glorify the soldier's sacrifice; instead, they focus on the narrator's tragic loss and grief. For instance, the song "Travelin' Soldier" tells how a high school girl wrote to and developed a relationship with a soldier who dies in Vietnam (Robinson & Braniff, 2002). As the girl claims she will never love again, the narrator highlights her personal loss and pain. There is no suggestion that the soldier was serving the greater good or that he had an honorable death. Instead, the narrator constructs a story centered around a very negative, but real, part of war—death. The narrator in the song "Just a Dream," has a similar focus. In the beginning of the story, the female narrator sings of her wedding, but it quickly changes to her denial that her loved one died in the war, as she asks things like "Baby why'd you leave me, Why'd you have to go?" and claims that what is happening is simply a bad dream (Mcewan, Lindsey, & Sampson, 2007). This narrator highlights the individual process of grieving for a loved one who died; it does not view his service positively. These two songs discuss the toll of war, offering another viewpoint.

However, these narrators and their reactions could be excused by country music because both of these narratives are told by females. Country music usually constructs women in traditional roles in country, which are the roles the narrators have in these songs. Therefore, the

use of country music's overall ideology may be what allows the narrators to explore the causalities of war. It is hard to say if country music would accept a male narrator singing a similar song looking at how war causes death. The ideology portrayed in country music is not black and white; one traditional social view may be used to complicate another political view.

Male Narrators

In spite of some contradictions made by the narrators, overall, these country music songs do support traditional worldviews, evidenced by how many of the songs, 25 out of 30, tell the story from a male point of view. For instance, all of the songs that contribute to the American narrative are told by men: Aaron Tippin's "Where the Stars and Stripes and Eagle Fly," Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue," Hank Williams, Jr.'s "America Will Survive," The Charlie Daniels Band's "This Ain't No Rag, It's a Flag," etc. The narration and definition of the America, American ideals, and patriotism are constructed by male voices. Male narrators providing this type of information fit the assumed conservative ideology of country music where men lead and women follow; the narrators help support the male-ordered hierarchy. Although this is never said explicitly, the predominance of male perspectives supports the belief that men, not women, should make the leadership decisions and handle difficult issues, such as war. These male narrators indirectly argue that men should assume the active roles, such as fighting as a soldier, which leave women with passive, supporting roles.

Through the lyrics, the narrators construct typical gender roles, which is common in country music. The soldiers are almost always male; it appears to be generally assumed that women are not fighting. Rather, they are waiting at home while their husbands or fathers protect them. As the male narrators focus on the need to serve and protect, the few women who speak may also mention these ideas, but overall they want war to be over and their loved ones to come

home safely. When soldiers die, women are overwrought (e.g. “Just a Dream” or “Travelin’ Soldier”). As explored earlier, this traditional role highlights that death is part of war, but these different feminine perspectives are limited portrayals. Additionally, the numerous male narrators negate these arguments as they argue that a soldier’s service, including death, is honorable. The other female narrators follow the same argument. Female narrators have a difficult challenge in front of them if they wish to suggest a different ideology about war in country music.

These male narrators also construct what constitute manly attributes. For a man, it is honorable to fight, protect, and die for one’s family and country. The narrators suggest that it is through being a soldier that a man becomes commendable. Men who are soldiers are favored individuals because of their service. This protective role is privileged over the feminine role of supporting the soldiers. The male narrators limit the role and actions of the women. This again reflects on the assumptions within country music’s ideology; these constructed gender roles do not allow room for other interpretations. Rather, patriotic women will support their soldiers, even if they later have to grieve, and men will fulfill their duty to fight and defend.

The male narrators dominate country music’s discussion of patriotism and war. In country music, it is clear who can and cannot add to an understanding of these issues. Moreover, female perspectives are usually only allowed if they fit the constructed social or political beliefs. Country music, therefore, continues to build a traditional belief system that determines men are the nation’s leaders and defenders. The narrators’ traditional views of social roles appear to influence their political actions. These narrators imply that within country music, conservative stances about gender roles, especially in times of war, are acceptable according the industry’s ideology.

The first research question asks how the narratives' construction of 9/11, patriotism, and war reflect the country music industry's ideology. In post-9/11 country hit songs, the narrative features, the themes and the narrators, create limited views about 9/11, patriotism, and war. The patriotic themes contribute to an idealized vision of America. According to country music lyrics, the United States is a wonderful land without any problems. It is a blessing to live in this country, and citizens should be aware of this and act accordingly. This means that patriotism requires proper behavior: supporting the government and defending this land. Moreover, when this great land is attacked, it means war against the enemies is justified. These lyrics overwhelmingly support the ongoing belief that America is the best country in the world, and it is worth any cost to protect American ideals. The themes, especially the use of nonpolitical imagery in the lyrics, help answer the first research question by showing that country music contributes to a conservative and traditional view of patriotism and war while still meeting the industry's norms. This ideology has a narrow view of how the world should work as it constructs what are and are not proper feelings about one's country, suitable reactions to terrorism, and pro-war arguments.

The first research question is also answered through who tells the story. The narrators continue this narrow view of 9/11, patriotism, and war. As soldiers and people at home tell their stories, the majority again suggest it is necessary to fight after 9/11 to preserve America's freedom. Soldiers are honorable men called to serve and protect their loved ones at home, while women and children support their endeavors. Very few narrators are able to break away from the beliefs supported by others, and furthermore, the predominant belief system is sustained mostly by men. The narrators' role in the construction of 9/11, patriotism, and war indicates that the country music industry has a conservative social and political bias. Overall, as the first research

question considers what narrative features imply about country music's ideology, the themes and narrators illustrate what many assume: the country music industry produces narratives with conservative, traditional narratives assumptions.

Changes in Narratives

The second research question considers how, if at all, the narratives in country music reflected popular opinion about the Iraq war. The ideology in country music remained the same, but the narrative form and features changed between September 2001-September 2008. The narratives shifted from building up the American metanarrative to telling individual stories about 9/11, patriotism, and war as public opinion turned against the war. After a national attack, rebuilding the American metanarrative by focusing on patriotic themes may be part of rebuilding pride and security, but as war became a reality, the individual narratives may serve as a reminder to support those fighting to keep America safe.

2001-2003: America's Metanarrative and 9/11

After 9/11, many of the songs discussed the metanarrative of America as a great country. From September 2001 to 2002, lyrics used different elements to construct American patriotism and ideals. About 12 songs furthered the musical discourse that creates pride for one's country by using common imagery from the American metanarrative. These songs reflect that the industry responded to the terrorist attacks by reflecting on patriotism and the nation's attributes as way to deal with a national crisis and rumors of another war.

For instance, 1984's "God Bless the U.S.A." was one of the first patriotic songs on the airwaves after the terrorist attacks, re-entering the country music chart on September 29, 2001. This song illustrates how America is always the land of opportunity and freedom. For instance, as the narrator discusses what would happen if he had to start re-building his life, the lyrics state,

I'd thank my lucky stars,
to be livin' here today.
'Cause the flag still stands for freedom,
and they can't take that away. (Greenwood, 2002)

The United States is a land of opportunity, especially because the country has freedom, represented by the flag. Other songs referenced Old Glory, ("This Ain't No Rag, It's a Flag," on charts 2001) and the Stars and Stripes (Where the Stars and Stripes and the Eagle Fly, on charts 2001-2002) to develop the argument about the United States' superior qualities. American landscapes are also common in these songs, whether it is the greatness of the country itself ("Where the Stars and Stripes and Eagle Fly," on charts 2001-2002; It's No Rag, It's a Flag," on charts in 2001) or specific locations, such as the Rocky Mountains ("America Will Survive," on charts in 2001) or Minnesota's lakes ("God Bless the U.S.A.," on charts in 2001). As the United States dealt with the aftermath of 9/11 and the possibility of war, these reminders of an idyllic land could serve as way for the nation to heal and provide motivation for war.

These initial reactions of defining America and patriotism, demonstrating pre-existing cultural values, represent that the narratives reflect an understanding of the current situation. This patriotic theme of America as a country worth fighting for reflects patriotic feelings, especially as a war with Iraq became a possibility. As people dealt with the tragedy, these songs, like "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue" (on the charts in 2002), capitalize on a narrow definition of patriotism, which can also lead to supporting the fight against the United States' enemies. Not only did these ideas reflect the established ideology within country music, they also mirrored Americans' suspicions of Hussein and support for invading Iraq. Country music's contributions

to the American metanarrative fit a tragic time and corresponded with the nation's opinions about a possible war.

Another predominant narrative theme in approximately 10 songs released relatively soon after 9/11 also reflected on the attack itself and its perceived link to Osama bin Laden. These narrative themes served as a reminder of what had happened and asked what should be done in response. For example, in the song "Where Where You (When the World Stopped Turning), on charts 2001-2002, the narrator asks the audience,

Did you stand there in shock at the sight of that black smoke
Risin' against that blue sky?
Did you shout out in anger in fear for your neighbor
Or did you just sit down and cry? (Jackson, 2002)

This and other songs, like "One Last Time" linked to common reactions after 9/11, as the traumatized population dealt with disbelief and grief. These narratives could provide one possible outlet for these various emotions; they could help guide people through a troubled time. The constructed messages fit the seriousness of the situation and the population's mental state.

Another way the songs recognized current mindsets was by linking the Iraq war to terrorism. Songs on the charts in 2001-2002, included arguments that the terrorists and Iraqi leaders were linked and the existence of WMDs. Country music directly and indirectly highlighted these beliefs as narrators demanded a fight against terror, just as at the time, much of the public supported war and believed Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. For example, the 2001-2002 song, "Osama, Yo' Mama" states that,

Osama yo' karma's really got you in a jam
But that's just what you get - when you mess with Uncle Sam. (Kalb & Stevens, 2002)

Another song, “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue,” never directly references 9/11, but the lyrics do talk about the nation being attacked. Terrorist attacks are negatively characterized as a “sucker punch” or rattling the big dog’s cage (Keith, 2002). Concurrently, the narrator’s pride in America is established. Early on, the songs’ stories develop an ideology that unflinchingly supports the United States, especially after attacks within the homeland.

It is important to note that some of these songs included individual accounts that were used to discuss 9/11, patriotism, and war, but they were not the focal point. Songs like “God Bless the USA,” “God, Country and Family,” and “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue” included references to family or personal experiences, which were used to establish the American metanarrative and reflect on what happened just as American citizens were personally dealing with national issues. Initially, country music’s narratives were aligned with the American people’s views about 9/11, patriotism, and war. In later years, country music did not stop producing songs that plainly discussed the larger issues; for instance, “Our Country” was on the country charts from 2006-2007. However, most of the songs that explicitly used patriotic symbols to argue for war were released relatively soon after 9/11, when the public supported the war.

2004-2007: Personal Stories of Service

The focus on patriotism and 9/11 in country music did not last, just as the outburst of patriotism did not last and support for the Iraq war diminished. Towards the end of the 2003 and the following years, public opinion turned against war, even if people supported the troops. During this time, the 15 popular country songs about war focused more on the soldiers and their service. The predominant narrative form changed as the narrator told individual stories, not America’s.

As mentioned earlier, many of the songs were about or told through the soldier's eyes, providing a personal spin on the role soldiers play in a fight. These narratives imply that that defending one's country is honorable, even though the public questioned the war and wanted to bring the troops home. This ideology in country music contradicted the growing anti-war trend.

Many of these songs told of soldiers who were proud of fighting for their country. In 2003, the song "American Soldier" told of a regular man who wanted to fulfill his duty to his country (Keith, 2003). In the 2004 song "Letters from Home," the letters a soldier's family sent him reminded him why he was serving his country (Lee & Lane, 2004). In 2004-2005, the song "Bumper of My S.U.V." asked for support for troops who were fighting for America (Wright, 2004). In 2005, the song "Arlington" told of a soldier's honorable burial as a hero in a national military cemetery (Spillman & Turnbull, 2005), and the song "American by God's Amazing Grace" proclaimed that it was necessary for an American soldier to fight for those less fortunate (Shultz & Stricklin, 2005). In 2006, "8th of November" told of a Vietnam veteran who honored the fallen in his division every year (Alphin & Rich, 2005). From the end of 2006 to 2007, four songs discussed the life of a soldier: "I Just Come Back from a War" (Worley & Varble, 2006), "Bagpipes Cryin'" (Rushlow, Clawson, & Waddell, 2006), "Sunday Morning in America" (Steele, Rutherford, & Anderson, 2008), and "If You're Reading This" (Warren, Warren, & McGraw, 2007) all tell stories that honor the soldiers fighting for those at home, regardless of how those at home feel about it. All of these songs suggest that country music was producing positive, idealized messages about fighting in American wars, even if the nation did not agree.

These songs about honorable soldiers were playing on the airwaves as the news covered prisoner abuse, the president's administration tried to portray a successful war, and the public and Congress called to remove the troops from the Middle East. Country music generally

ignored these issues and looked at the need for American servicemen during wartime. Most of the narratives ignored any problems with the Iraq war, and through the narrators, continued to build up its rationale, in spite of the numerous problems with the government's reasoning for invading Iraq becoming increasingly apparent. These narratives also supported the president's contentions about Iraq and the war, indicating the genre's political bias. The narratives generally did not reflect that politicians, even some Republicans, and the public were against continuing the war.

The narratives about soldiers, therefore, did not change much, even as popular opinion turned against the war and the president. Using soldiers as narrators might have been a way to deal with those against the war but supportive of the troops. At the very least, it is an interesting coincidence that as anti-war feelings increased, country music told stories of men willing to protect their nation at any cost. These songs, relating personal accounts of service in the Armed Forces, could be more palatable to a wider audience as they further developed country music's pro-war beliefs. Even though there was a shift in how the narratives discussed 9/11, patriotism and war, the broader message generally remained the same, following the genre's assumed ideology.

These personal stories told by soldiers and those supporting those fighting all contribute to the overall belief that America should stand up for itself. The soldiers who defend America preserve its land, citizens, and values. These narratives usually do not blatantly argue for war, but use the soldier as a tool to promote country music's ideology. The soldier usually chooses to go to a dangerous to safeguard what he holds dear—his country. This more subtle approach to building arguments for war fits the context; people are unhappy that the United States invaded and stayed in Iraq. Rather than acknowledging the government may have provided

misinformation, Army scandals, and the anti-war movement, these model soldiers may be simply a tool in country music to continue constructing narratives that match its worldviews.

2008: Two home front songs

From September 2001-2007, there was often a pro-war or pro-America song on the country charts. However, from January to September 2008, there were only two songs in the top 50 on the country music charts, and both dealt with the problems that accompany war. These songs were “Bring Him Home Santa” (Johnson & Feek, 2007) and “Just a Dream” (Mcewan, Lindsey, & Sampson, 2007). This is the first time that country music did not have songs that predominantly promoted a conservative political view. The lack of political songs in 2008 may correlate with the news industry covering the Iraq war less, and other issues, like presidential campaigns, more. The country music industry might also have realized that most people were against the war.

However, country music’s potential acknowledgment of the fact its opinion did not match the majority was very limited. Both songs focus on individuals who only focus on their needs. One is a child, wishing that the father would be home for Christmas, and the other is a woman mourning the death of her boyfriend. “Bring Him Home Santa” hints that the father is serving others, but does not fully develop the argument as to why the father should come home (Johnson & Feek, 2007). “Just a Dream” is noticeably about the woman’s grief; it is all about her emotional reaction to death (Mcewan, Lindsey, & Sampson, 2007). Issues surrounding the ethics of war or war’s potential long-term negative effects, such as possible anti-American sentiment in other countries, are not included in country music. Previous narratives about war were able to point to larger issues; such as the soldiers believing they are working for something greater than

themselves. These two songs do not have the same depth as do the songs that support war, which may be because of country music's dominant ideology.

Other Views

However, country music cannot be simply categorized as espousing traditional conservative values as three songs suggested alternative ideas. Some songs, such as the two from 2008, did not align themselves with country music's ideology. One other hit song, on the charts from 2002-2003, highlights that war causes death and leaves grieving people behind. "Travelin' Soldier" tells the story of a girl who lost her beloved soldier in the Vietnam War (Robinson & Braniff, 2002). This story actually focuses on the problems of war as the girl mourns her loss. The narrative suggests that there are two casualties of war: the soldiers who die and those left behind to deal with their grief, providing another perspective about war within the country music industry. However, it is never explicitly said that the war is wrong, so any potential critique as the United States headed to war may be lost to the listeners, and the country music industry could ignore the implications. Additionally, other songs at this time support fighting, such as "Have You Forgotten?" (Varble & Worley, 2003), which could be perceived as using 9/11 to support the Iraq War and "I Raq and Roll" (Black & Nicholas, 2003), which clearly supports invading Iraq.

Also, popular opinion at this time supported invading Iraq. This anti-war song comes at a time when the general public does not agree that going to war in Iraq is a mistake. Furthermore, the news coverage is also considered pro-war. The context does not help enhance the story's moral, cautioning against war. In addition, the song is a very emotional story about loss, just like the 2008 narratives. That, combined with American support for invading Iraq, country music

songs generally supporting the war, and the fact the song never outright indicates it is against war, may be what helped allow another perspective.

These three different narratives can be viewed as emotional, limited in scope, or hampered by their context and genre, but they also show that the country music industry cannot be written off as one-dimensional. There are some narratives that provide other ways to approach war. These songs begin to challenge the industry's ideology. These attempts may not have a large impact, but they illustrate that some artists within the industry do not agree with the common values. Furthermore, they are on country music charts, indicating that audiences have the opportunity to hear a different point of view. Although they are few in number and slow to appear, these three songs show that some people working in country music constructed narratives that appeared to reflect the public's concerns about the war.

References to Popular Opinion

Finally, it is important to note that three songs explicitly commented on those who were against the war. These observations again suggest country music had some complexity; people in the industry are aware of different views. These narratives, albeit only a few, show that country music did reflect changes in public opinion.

The first reference to changing opinion came from 2003's "Have You Forgotten?" The song does not accept anti-war views as acceptable, following country music's ideology. For instance, the narrator states, "I hear people sayin' we don't need this war, But I say there's some things worth fightin' for" (Varble & Worley, 2003) before using 9/11 as justification for going to war. The song asks,

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 [*sic*] a living hell
And you say we shouldn't worry 'bout bin Laden
Have you forgotten? (Varble & Worley, 2003)

Although the narrator never links bin Laden with Iraq, because of its release in 2003, the two subjects could easily be linked by the audience, as the United States prepared to invade Iraq. Furthermore, the song overrides any objection to fighting by referencing the events of the attack. Even though there may be some against war, the song dismisses public opinion. The narrator assumes that his view is right, so difference of opinion are rejected. Any changes in public opinion can be ascribed to people not remembering the impact of the terrorist attacks correctly.

It is not until 2005 that there is another direct reference to those who are against the Iraq war, when there is a strong anti-war movement. The narrator quickly responds to anyone who wants to argue that the United States should not have invaded Iraq, because he

Really don't care why Bush went in to Iraq
I know what I've done there and I'm damn sure proud of that.
You got somethin' bad to say about the USA
you better save it for different ears 'less you want to crawl away. (Shultz & Stricklin, 2005)

There is unquestionable support for the president and for the war, regardless of what the majority of the country thinks. The narrator realizes that the public has turned against the war, but for him, it is inconsequential. These views do not change his beliefs. This is view is seen again in 2007, in the song, "I Just Came Back From a War." The narrator sings:

I just came back from a place where they hated me

And everything I stand for

A land where our brothers are dying for others

Who don't even care anymore

Chances are I never will be the same

I really don't know anymore

I just came back from a war.

I just came back from a war. (Worley & Varble, 2007)

This is one of the clearest depictions of the fact that in America, the war is unpopular and that war can have negative effects on American soldiers. However, this is not enough to cause the narrator to join the anti-war movement. He states that "I hope you cherish this sweet way of life And I hope you know that it comes with a price" (Worley & Varble, 2007). The lyrics maintain that the war it is worth fighting, as soldiers protect the American way of life.

These specific reactions to the changing public opinion show that they do not matter much in country. Rather, the songs revert to patriotic ideals to answer critics of the war. The historical context may allow a few references to the problems, or even eventually allow a few narratives to consider the heartache of those waiting at home during war, but they are limited in what they can do. The narratives continue to perpetuate the dominant ideology in country music, even when confronted with arguments against the war.

This leads to the question of why did the country music industry generally choose to ignore popular opinion. Although the narrative form changed, the songs overwhelmingly continued to follow traditional belief systems. This may be because country music is assumed to always be conservative, even when it is unpopular. Artists may have been afraid that they would

lose fans if they offered alternative viewpoints. For instance, the backlash from the Dixie Chicks' "incident," including their feud with Toby Keith, loss of sales, and a boycott, may have served as a warning to others in country music; do not speak against the president or the war. Rather, country music chose to continue to back positions that were associated with a conservative stance.

Additionally, over the years, opinion polls about the Iraq war suggest that political affiliations affected people's views of the Iraq war. Country music's nature may have influenced the ideology constructed in these narratives. The industry has a history of supporting war and is associated with conservative cultural values. Furthermore, those within country music often believe the perceptions about the artists and fans are the reality. It would be logical for the country music industry to create songs that reflect support war and America to make money. The point of popular music is to produce hits that bring in revenue. The narratives about 9/11, patriotism, and war would then be constructed in a way to satisfy country fans who are assumed to be conservative and pro-war instead of creating stories that reflect the general population's opinions.

The second research question asks how the constructed narrative features reflected the change in public opinion about 9/11, patriotism, and war. The narrative format and focus shifted over the years, even as the ideology within the narratives continued to support uncritical service and loyalty to one's country and the need to fight for America. In the beginning, many of the songs add to the American story of freedom and reflect on the immediate issue of the terrorist attacks. Over time, they focus more on personal stories, especially those of soldiers. Only a few songs clearly reflected that popular opinion about the war changed, yet the narrators usually maintained that strong soldiers are needed to fight for one's country. The most significant

change, matching public opinion, was the change in narrative form, yet the songs usually continued to support the industry's ideology.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis explores how country music supports a conservative ideology even as the narrative forms change. We can see how the themes and narrators discussing 9/11, patriotism, and war constructed a conservative ideology and how the narratives adapted to reflected popular opinion in the previous chapter. This analysis, however, also has broader implications, including how the narrative features support a traditional worldview and the changes in narratives relate to narrative theory, the country music industry as a whole, and the role music plays in society.

Theoretical Implications

It is clear that the narratives portrayed through the music lyrics support a socially and politically conservative ideology. Predominant narrative features, themes and narrators, are used to construct a limited view of patriotism, support going to and staying in the war, using 9/11 as appropriate behavior. Country music is able to build this ideology using the everyday imagery usually associated with the genre. Even as popular opinion turned against the Iraq war, country music generally remained pro-war, although the narratives shifted from concentrating on America's metanarrative to telling personal stories of service to looking at individual experiences of those at home. Most country hits maintained the industry's worldviews; only a few suggested that the industry was aware of the growing discontent with the situation in Iraq, and would refute those arguments through patriotic values.

According to Fisher (1987), narratives must have coherency—they must be believable—and fidelity—they must have a truth value for their audience (1987). The ideology portrayed through the themes and narrators helps build these two aspects. These narratives are coherent because they are either working from an established metanarrative or are telling about someone's

experiences, sharing values that match the industry's. First, country songs in this sample that comment on the American story start with the assumption that America is a great country, which has been established in previous patriotic songs. These country music songs further develop this metanarrative that maintains that the American metanarrative is still and always will be true. As the lyrics comment on different aspects of the metanarrative, such as the flag or the American landscape, they provide credible and believable references to further the overarching ideology. In a similar way, the reflections on 9/11 use common reactions to the terrorist attacks to try to build a rapport with the audience. The narratives use familiar imagery and responses as they build coherent and authentic stories.

The individual stories tell of realistic, everyday people, dealing with the effects of war, whether it is simply as American citizens, soldiers, or people waiting for their loved ones to come home. As these narrators share their stories, they tell of events that motivate their actions, providing a connection that creates a story. The presented stories are not always told in chronological order, but they do create a coherent story. The narrators create events, characters, settings, etc. that are recognizable; the narrative features provide realistic feelings and actions, which are believable as the narrative features reflect country music's ideology. If the constructed narratives reflect what people already assume about the genre, it is more likely they will simply accept the arguments as true.

Because the presented belief system within the lyrics generally works within the assumed ideology, it helps the different stories create fidelity. For example, the songs that add to the American metanarrative are adding to an already established story. By taking advantage of a pre-constructed definition of American patriotism, the narrators are able to develop a value that is likely to be accepted by their audience, creating a "truth" that will probably be satisfactory to

their audience. Songs that tell personal stories also construct fidelity for the audience because they provide a way for the listeners to understand on a personal level the role soldiers play and the impact they have on everyday life.

These narratives generally do not present a new ideology to the country music industry and its fans, providing conservative political and societal views. This most likely helps the narratives achieve coherency and fidelity, but other narrative features also contribute to these standards. The popular use of male narrators to discuss 9/11, patriotism, and war also can help establish the narratives' coherency and fidelity. This occurred in both songs about American and personal stories. Here, the predominant use of male perspectives to discuss these issues reflects conservative social ideology, where men are allowed to influence the social structures. Because traditional gender roles are constructed, and perhaps even expected in country music, the overwhelming use of male narrators can actually help create a believable narrative. Furthermore, the use of conventional country music images, such as family and religion, also plays a role in creating authentic stories. Because these figures are expected in the country genre, the nonpolitical references could provide relatable material to audience as the narratives argue for American pride and the need for war. Overall, the constructed narratives use the traditional social construction of country music to build their political arguments.

Since the lyrics present a certain worldview, they continue to reinforce certain ideals. As Brummett (1999) argues, the lyrics provide a guide for how to live. The narratives construct an argument that requires patriotism, and by extension, the right to fight for America's freedom. The narratives usually provide a rationale for war, particularly the Iraq war. As narrators, especially those who focus on soldiers who serve others, tell their stories, they construct scenarios where it is necessary to fight. These stories then have potential to organize political

beliefs and actions, and provide the reasoning as to why war is needed, even when the majority of the population is against it. Since the stories establish coherency and fidelity by using the genre's norms, and narratives present the rationale for war, the constructed arguments may not be noticed without close analysis. Rather, the lyrics can serve to reinforce existing beliefs, and any dissent can be misconstrued or dismissed.

This study also provides insight into how music lyrics, particularly country music lyrics, structure narratives. After 9/11, narratives in country music first contributed to the American story, and then turned to personal stories. The first group of narratives shows how the songs contributed to American ideology, focusing on how they defined patriotism and patriotic behavior. This overarching American story does not allow for criticism of the United States, at least within the country genre. This period of music fits with previous patriotic songs that demanded the same unqualified support for America, suggesting patriotic songs that provide this definition of patriotism provide the story that others in the industry apparently want to hear, as these songs were on the country charts.

The individual stories provide specific examples of narratives and support Chesebro's (1989) contention the media format must be considered in narrative analysis. For instance, these narratives are not always presented in chronological order, but because they are songs, this does not mean they are not telling stories. In fact, that is part of what makes these lyrics interesting as these stories are told through verses and chorus. For some songs, that means only one verse discusses the war, which then provides the opportunity for the narrator to tell multiple stories through one song to make a point. In some lyrics, the chorus provides a chance to highlight the story's purpose, which offers the narrator several chances to repeat his or her main point. The narrators have a unique opportunity to craft an appealing story for the industry's demographic.

By exploring the themes and narrators within these country music lyrics, the text provides another way to view how narratives are constructed within music.

Additionally, this study shows how these specific narratives work within the historical context. The construction of these narratives and their potential impact would not be as interesting if one did not understand the atmosphere in which they were written. For instance, the several songs that focus on patriotic ideals and 9/11 tell of a wonderful America after an attack. These patriotic songs could have been written without 9/11 happening (for instance, the patriotic song “Only in America” was a hit before the terrorist attacks), but their potential impact would have been different. The 2003 song “Have You Forgotten?” is another example of the importance of the context. Darryl Worley was inspired to write a song supporting the military effort in Afghanistan after he entertained troops there (Mansfield, 2003). However, it was released the same year the United States invaded Iraq, and if people did not know the story behind the song, the lyrics could easily be perceived as supporting the Iraq war. The historical context can affect the narratives’ potential impact; the songwriter’s actual intent is secondary in this analysis.

Country music also chose to continue to support the war as the public turned against it. The continuous support for America and the war, even as popular opinion changed, suggests that the change in popular opinion and news coverage did not affect the country music industry’s political stance. Although the growing anti-war trend might have influenced changes in the narrative formats, it did not change the general ideology in country music. Comparing the narratives’ constructed ideology to the concurrent events and public opinion highlights how the country music industry’s political views and perceptions of war differed from others. As others questioned the war, country music continued to develop stories that illustrated another view of

reality. In country music, these stories provided equipment for living (Brummett, 1999), at least for those who agreed with the industry. The narratives' use of soldiers to argue for continuing the fight offered palatable reasoning as to why people should still support the war effort.

Between September 2001 and September 2008, country music produced 30 hit songs that discussed 9/11, patriotism, and war, suggesting that their narratives were successful in achieving coherency and fidelity; people were listening to these songs. Popular music is designed to resonate with listeners so the music industry can capitalize on successful songs, and these narratives were successful in the country genre, according to the Billboard charts. At the very least, these narratives contributed to the discourse about 9/11, Iraq, and what actions needed to be taken. These narratives had the potential to influence how others perceived issues surrounding 9/11, patriotism, and war, especially since most were constructed to illustrate the industry's ideology through the themes and narrators.

Country Music Industry

Another important consideration is the fragmentation of the country music industry. Many different artists and music styles are popular in country music, and some country songs are also popular in other musical genres. Evidence of these "crossovers" is seen as 12 country songs climbed various Billboard charts. Eleven country songs also appeared in the top half of the Billboard Hot 100 chart, which includes all music genres. These songs included "God Bless the U.S.A.," "American Soldier," "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue," "Where Were You?" "Where the Stars and Stripes and Eagle Fly," "Riding with Private Malone," "Travelin' Soldier," "Have You Forgotten?" "Letters from Home," "If You're Reading This" and "Just a Dream." The song "Our Country" appeared on the chart entitled Hot Adult Contemporary Tracks. "God Bless the USA" and "If You're Reading This" appeared on the Adult Contemporary and Pop 100

charts, respectively (Billboard, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e; 2008f; 2008g; 2008h; 2008i; 2008j; 2008k). These crossovers are from 2001 through 2008, indicating that at least some of the ideology reflected in the narratives about 9/11, patriotism, and/or war was also acceptable in other genres. As the public was supportive of the war in Iraq after 9/11, it makes sense that narratives reflecting on the terrorist attacks and patriotic themes were popular across genres. Country music could provide ways for the nation to deal with the shock of the attack. At least some of country music's ideology was apparently acceptable in other genres, in spite of its conservative nature.

Even though most of these crossover hits were soon after 9/11 and the Iraqi invasion, "Our Country," "If You're Reading This," and "Just a Dream" are from 2007-2008 (Billboard, 2008c; 2008h; 2008j). It is interesting that "Our Country," a very patriotic song, did much better on the contemporary charts, peaking at number 16, then on the country charts, reaching only number 39 (Billboard, 2008h). This may be because country's songs about soldiers serving America were not as popular in other genres when the war became unpopular. Additionally, because country music has a variety of styles, some artists are more likely to have a broader appeal. The songs on multiple charts suggest that country music lyrics appeal to more than just the assumed demographic, especially because there are some songs from later years, not just songs that could be labeled reactions to the events of 9/11 and the Iraq war.

The fact that country music's constructed narratives appealed to other audiences suggests that the industry knows how to cater to more than just their assumed demographic. As previous research (e.g. Henson, 2007) suggests, that country music cannot always be typecast as appealing to Southern traditionalists. Different audiences find the values in these narratives appealing as these songs appear on various music charts. Country music's populist's nature may help foster its

broader appeal. The inclusion of family, relationships, and God as the songs discuss 9/11, patriotism, and war may resonate with the general population, especially as the anti-war public supported the troops. The acceptable narrative elements may have helped make an unacceptable ideology more suitable.

Within the country music industry, the fact these stories maintain social conservative beliefs may be part of the reason the narratives received airtime. The majority of these songs reinforced the existing ideology in country music. The limitations within patriotic behavior, gender roles, and nonpolitical imagery, such as the Christian religion and the nuclear family, were already a part of the genre. Country songs produced during past wars had already decided that patriotic behavior included men going to fight as women and children waited at home. Traditional social views had been established as common themes in country music. These elements provided a natural foundation for the songs in this sample to build and re-build a conservative political stance. As these songs utilized these elements to fit the established country music culture, they provided suitable generic narratives. In these narratives, the cultural norms were manipulated to construct the political ideology.

However, country music cannot be cast as only sharing traditional views. The few, but important, alternative voices also show that country music has complexity. They suggest that the industry cannot simply be branded as only a conservative genre. There are opportunities, however limited they may be, to construct believable stories that stray from country music's dominant worldviews. These narratives, however, are problematic. When stories focus on the problems of war, they are vague about the narrator's stance ("Travelin' Soldier), silent about the broader issues ("Just a Dream"), or contradict the narrator's own claims ("Bring Him Home Santa"). In order to offer an alternate view of war, it appears the narratives must accommodate

other ideological beliefs in country music. A step forward can also be seen as a step back. Combating the dominant views is a difficult task, especially when the industry embraces conservative stereotypes as reality and fans and the industry punish artists, like the Dixie Chicks, when they deviate from country's cultural norms.

This analysis supports Altman's (1987) claim that genres are not neutral; they have political and social biases. Narrative features can be used to deflect attention away from the ideology within the songs. Themes that highlight the greatness of America by using familiar imagery mask that the narrative can help institutionalize the belief in an ideal America. Narrators can appear credible as they provide first-hand accounts of serving one's country, hiding that the narratives construct only one side of the story. By deconstructing the narratives, this analysis shows that the majority of songs about 9/11, patriotism, and war align themselves with a conservative social and political ideology. These songs do not give neutral accounts; they subtly construct country music's dominant ideology.

It appears that the country music industry once again took on the role of celebrating the nation and supporting the war, even when its political stances were unpopular. Based on the narratives found in the sample, the industry appears to clearly conform with a culturally conservative political agenda. These narratives highlight how difficult it is to suggest alternate interpretations of reality once a dominant ideology is established. Using the potential power of music to persuade their audience, the narrators of these songs constructed stories that ask their audience to, at the least, support the troops, and at the most, always support the reasoning behind the war effort.

Music and Society

Past research has shown that music plays an important role in society. Music has the potential to influence personal perceptions as it constructs different messages. This analysis adds to the argument that popular songs are constructed based on certain ideologies and then share those views with the audience. These narratives, tinted with conservative political and social beliefs, provide tangible arguments for war through music lyrics. As Stewart, Smith, and Denton (2007) argue, music can be persuasive because songs can believably stretch arguments that would not work in any other format. The country industry takes advantage of its musical form to share its values and potentially influence its audience.

These songs also follow the musical tradition of becoming involved in state and social issues during political unrest. The historical context shows that the events on 9/11 caused a surge of patriotism and helped instigate the Iraq war. Furthermore, the United States' involvement in Iraq was never unanimously supported, and as time went on, people became more disillusioned about America's role in the war. Country music provided a wealth of songs that directly and indirectly provided commentary about these issues. Just as the music industry has in the past, the genre took an active role in constructing musical messages to defend a certain point of view. In this case, country music appeared to align itself with the Republican Party as the industry provided political arguments through music. Therefore, the overall pro-war arguments may have lasted because first, they were from country music, and second, as discussed in the previous paragraph, music can manipulate an otherwise unacceptable message. These may contribute to the longevity of country music's ideology.

Finally, this study illustrates the importance of examining popular culture's social and political discourse. Popular culture is a "store" of cultural values (Brummett, 1994, Petracca &

Sorapure, 2004, Purnell, 2002). These songs provide a wealth of information about how one part of the entertainment industry negotiates its ideology. Through these narratives, one type of conservative rationale for war is outlined: when one's great nation is attacked, the country is justified to go to war. Soldiers fight to protect the country's ideals, including family and religion. According to Petracca and Sorapure (2004), these narratives can illustrate commonly held values and beliefs. As Matula (2007) argues, these popular songs are models for individuals; they may decide how to believe and act based on the values expressed in popular culture. Popular culture is a space where social issues are examined and solutions are proposed, so how these ideologies are constructed as well as what ideas are allowed is worth scrutiny. In this case, the analysis shows that country music's conservative ideology persists, and dissenters have difficulty negating these beliefs on every level.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited in its examination of country music lyrics. The focus on country music provides insight into that particular industry's ideology, but does not do so for other music genres. It is not possible to draw conclusions about the implications of the various musical narratives about 9/11, patriotism, and the Iraq war within the general music industry. In addition, for the purposes of this study, I only looked at how the lyrics constructed narratives; other components, such as the musical score or how the narratives are perceived by audience were not examined. By only considering the narratives, other possible rhetorical devices are not considered.

Future research can look at how individual songs in this sample reflected social and political ideologies. Both the lyrics and musical score can provide further insight about how these messages are constructed (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). Other rhetorical devices, such as

metaphors, may also be at work within the lyrics that can also highlight the beliefs country music supports. Analysis of the music videos can also expose the country music industry's worldviews, especially as videos add a visual dimension to the messages. Additionally, how different audiences perceive these songs should be considered. As argued by Denisoff and Levine (1971), the audience does not always hear the intended message. Future research can also compare the role of country music to other genres, especially exploring if and how other genres discussed the same issues. The potential differences in the lyrics and musical scores are worth exploring, especially to find if the different genres perform as expected. Finally, in 2008, there was a significant drop in the number of songs that discussed war. It is worth exploring if this trend continued and its possible implications. These ideological implications of the music industry are worth pursuing.

As I introduced this study, I referenced how at the 2008 Country Music Awards, the song "Just a Dream" was used to honor fallen soldiers. This example of how country music songs support the troops, and by extension, links to conservative values, holds true. The results and analysis of the two research questions show that the narratives in these lyrics advocate an ideology that requires uncritical support of the nation, uses 9/11 as justification for the Iraq war, and believes in honoring those who serve this country. The themes and the narrators, the predominant narrative features from the first research question, shape these beliefs and construct a belief system that few defy. These narratives have the potential to create and reinforce these values for the audience. The shift in narrative form, as found in the second research question, suggests that the industry did adapt as public opinion about the war changed. However, country music's ideology remained dominant. The accepted and promoted social and political ideology

in the country genre should not be ignored, which is why this study examines how these beliefs are constructed within the songs' narratives.

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APPENDIX

America Will Survive, Hank Williams, Jr., 2001

People think we're nearing the end of time
But we've had enough and we've drawn the line
Our flag is up since our people went down
But we're together from the country to town

We live back in the woods you see
Big city problems never bothered me
But the world has changed and so have I
And America can survive, America will survive!

We can plow our fields all day long
We can catch our fish from dusk 'til dawn
Yeah, we have toughed it out a time or two
These are dark days but we're gonna pull through

We grow good ol' tomatoes, we got hometown pride
America can survive, America is gonna survive

'Cause you can't scare us out, you can't make us run
What we got here is freedom and fun
We say grace and we say "ma'am"
If they don't like that, we don't give a damn

We came from the West Virginia coal mines
The Rocky Mountains and the big city skylines
We can hit back and we're gonna be fine
'Cause this ol' country can survive, America can survive

I had a good friend in New York City
Never called me Hank, he called me hillbilly
My grandpa taught me how to live off the land
And his taught him to be a street-smart man

He used to send me pictures of the Broadway lights
And I'd send him some of that homemade scufflin' wine

He was lost like so many in the terrible strife
And we're all asking God, now why? Oh why?
I read, "A tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye"
And that's an old slogan we're gonna revive
'Cause America can survive, America will survive

Cause you can't scare us out, and you can't make us run
We're them boys and girls that have freedom and fun
We say grace, we say "ma'am"
If they don't like that, we give less than a damn

We're from North California and South Alabam'
And all they've done is unite this whole land
There's no more Yankees and Rebels this time
But one united people that stand behind
America can survive, America will survive
American can survive, America is gonna survive

God Bless the USA, Lee Greenwood, 2001

If tomorrow all the things were gone,
I'd worked for all my life.
And I had to start again,
just my children and my wife.

I'd thank my lucky stars,
to be livin here today.
'Cause the flag still stands for freedom,
and they can't take that away.

And I'm proud to be an American,
where at least I know I'm free.
And I won't forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.

And I gladly stand up,
next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land,
God bless the USA.

From the lakes of Minnesota,
to the hills of Tennessee.
Across the plains of Texas,
From sea to shining sea.

From Detroit down to Houston,
and New York to L.A.
Well there's pride in every American heart,
and it's time we stand and say.

That I'm proud to be an American,
where at least I know I'm free.

And I won't forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.

And I gladly stand up,
next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land,
God bless the USA.

And I'm proud to be an American,
where at least I know I'm free.
And I won't forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.

And I gladly stand up,
next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land,
God bless the USA.

God, Country, and Family, 2002, Craig Morgan

He grew up in a time,
When a third-grade education,
Was all the school you needed,
To work the family farm
He'd take time off on Sunday,
Him and all his family, warm a pew
And give thanks to the Lord

There was no gray, only black and white
Didn't need no-one to tell him,
What was wrong or right
'Cause he had God, family and country

He set aside his plow, in early 1940
Said goodbye to his small town,
And put on the army green
Hard times on the front lines
Writin' letters on wet paper
Not one word about
The awful things he'd seen.

His was a generation,
That answered without question
They knew they had to win
'Cause they were fightin' for
God, family and country

On the coffee table
Sits the family Bible
Where just last year he added
A little boy to the family tree

There's the folded flag they gave us
On the day he left us
But the thing that I remember most
Is the way that he, believed
In God, family and country
Ohh, we've got God, family and country

This Ain't No Rag, It's a Flag, The Charlie Daniels Band, 2001

This ain't no rag it's a flag
And we don't wear it on our heads
It' a symbol of the land where the good guys live
Are you listening to what I said
You're a coward and a fool
And you broke all of the rules
And you wounded our American pride

And now we're coming with a gun
And we know you're gonna run
But you can't find no place to hide
We're gonna hunt you down like a mad dog hound
Make you pay for the lives you stole
We're all through talking and a messing around
And now it's time to rock and roll

These colors don't run and we're speaking as one
When we say united we stand
When you mess with one, you mess with us all
Every boy, girl, woman and man
You've been acting mighty rash
And talking that trash
Let me give you some advice
You can crawl back in your hole
Like a dirty little mole

But now you're gonna pay the price
You might of shot us in the back
Now you have to face the fact
That the big boys' in the game
And the lightning's been flashing

And the thunder's been crashing
And now it's getting ready to rain

This is the United States of America
The land of the brave and the free
We believe in God and we believe in justice
We believe in liberty
You've been pulling our chain
We should've done something 'bout you a long time ago
But now the flag's flying high and the fur's gonna fly
And soon the whole world's gonna know

This ain't no rag, it's a flag
Old Glory red, white and blue
The stars and the stripes when it comes to a fight
We can do what we have to do
Our people stand proud
The American crowd is faithful, loyal and tough
We're good as the best and better than the rest
And you're gonna find out soon enough
When you look up in the sky
And you see the eagle fly
You better know he's a heading your way
Cause this ain't no rag it's a flag
And it stands for the USA
USA
USA
USA

This is the United States of America
The land of the brave and the free
We believe in God and we believe in justice
We believe in liberty
You've been pulling our chain
We should've done something 'bout you a long time ago
But now the flag's flying high and the fur's gonna fly
And soon the whole world's gonna know

Days of America, Blackhawk, 2001-2002

Hey.

The furnace burns in steel town
Big business came and tried to shut 'em down
The workers got together and they bought that mill
They're making steel in Pittsburgh still

The family farm down in Indiana
The bank's foreclosin' just because they can
The farmer can't do nothin' 'bout another drought
Sir John, Waylon and Willie came and helped 'em out

These are the days of America
Brother to brother, hand in hand
These are the days of America
Walking together in the promise land

The wheels in Detroit keep on turnin'
A blue collar lesson there for the learnin'
The throttle drives you anywhere no matter how far
Just never give up on who you are

'Cause these are the days of America
Brother to brother, hand in hand
These are the days of America
Walking together through the promise land

Right down the middle of America
Where her heart beats strong and true
You look up, just open your eyes
The flag still waves and the eagle still flies

These are the days of America
Brother to brother, hand in hand
These are the days of America
Walking together in the promise land

These are the days
Yeah, these are the days of America
These are the days
Yeah, these are the days of America...

Osama Yo' Mama, Ray Stevens, 2001-2002

Osama – yo' mama didn't raise you right
When you were young she must have wrapped yo' turban too tight
She should have kept you home on those arabian nights
It's plain to see - you need to stay out of those fights

Osama – yo' mama could have done a lot better
Though I bet every day you did somethin' to upset her
By the way, we got an answer to your anthrax letter

New York City's where it's from - its the news header

And I can hear yo' mama sayin' now, "You in a heap o' trouble son
Now just look what you've done!
Saw you on TV with yo' gun
Mercy sakes, I can't do a thing with you hon."

And I can just hear dubyah sayin', "You in a heap o' trouble boy
And I don't think you will enjoy
Our game of search and destroy
We got your terror right here, son *yu [sic]* sure are the real mecoy *[sic]*."

Osama – yo' mama didn't teach you how to act
You've crossed the line too far this time, there ain't no turnin' back
You're startin' to remind us of another maniac
Yeah, you know what we should of stuffed you in an over sized sack!

Osama – yo' mama didn't teach you to behave
Now they say you're hangin' with the bats in a cave
Well, pullin' off that sneak attack was not too brave
Kinda makes us wonder if your digging your own grave?

And I can hear yo' mama sayin' again, "You in a heap o' trouble son
Now just look what you've done
Saw you on TV with yo' gun
Mercy sakes, you need to settle down hon!"

And I can just hear dubyah sayin', "You in a heap o' trouble boy
And I don't think you will enjoy
Our game of search and destroy
We have made a son that is a real mecoy *[sic]*!"

Osama yo' karma's really got you in a jam
But that's just what you get - when you mess with Uncle Sam

Osama the Taliban is history
Nobody wants to see you startin' World War Three

Osama you know the al-Qaida won't last
Osama, just like you, it's future's in the past

Lets just pray your mama will be plastered!
because oshama you sure are a basturd!

Riding with Private Malone, David Ball, 2001-2002

I was just out of the service thumbing through the classifieds
When an ad that said "Old Chevy" somehow caught my eye
The lady didn't know the year or even if it ran
But I had that thousand dollars in my hand
It was way back in the corner of this old ramshackle barn
With thirty years of dust and dirt on that green army tarp
And when I pulled the cover off, it took away my breath
What she called a Chevy was a sixty six Corvette
I felt a little guilty as I counted out the bills
What a thrill I got when I sat behind the wheel
I opened up the glovebox and that's when I found the note
The date was nineteen-sixty six and this is what he wrote

He said, My name is Private Andrew Malone
And if your reading this, then I didn't make it home
But for every dream that shattered, another one comes true
This car was once a dream of mine, now it belongs to you
And though you may take her and make her your own
You'll always be riding with Private Malone"

Well it didn't take me long at all, I had her running good
I loved to hear those horses thunder underneath her hood
I had her shining like a diamond and I'd put the rag top down
All the pretty girls would stop and stare as I drove her through town
The buttons on the radio didn't seem to work quite right
But it picked up that oldie show, especially late at night
I'd get the feeling sometimes, if I'd turn real quick I'd see
A soldier riding shotgun in the seat right next to me

It was a young man named Private Andrew Malone
Who fought for his country and never made it home
But for every dream that shattered, another one comes true
This car was once a dream of his, back when it was new
He told me to take her and make her my own
And I was proud to be riding with Private Malone

One night it was raining hard, I took the curve too fast
I still don't remember much about that fiery crash
But someone said they thought they saw a soldier pull me out
They didn't get his name, but I know without a doubt

It was a young man named Private Andrew Malone
Who fought for his country and never made it home
But for every dream that shattered, another one comes true

This car was once a dream of his, back when it was new
I know I wouldn't be here if he hadn't tagged along
Yeah that night I was riding with Private Malone
Oh, thank God, I was riding with Private Malone

Where the Stars and Stripes and the Eagle Fly, Aaron Tippin, 2001-2002

Well if you ask me where I come from
Here's what I tell everyone
I was born by God's dear grace
In an extraordinary place
Where the stars and strips, and the eagle fly

It's a big 'ol land with countless dreams
Happiness ain't out of reach
Hard work pays off the way it should
Yeah, I've seen enough to know that we've got it good
Where the stars and stripes, and the eagle fly

Chorus:
There's a lady that stands in a harbor
For what we believe
And there's a bell that still echoes the price that it costs
To be free

I pledge allegiance to this flag
And if that bothers you, well that's too bad
But if you got pride and you're proud you do
Hey, we could use some more like me and you
Where the stars and stripes, and the eagle fly

Chorus:
Yes, there's a lady that stands in a harbor
For what we believe
And there's a bell that still echoes the price that it costs
To be free

No it ain't the only place on earth
But it's the only place that I prefer
To love my wife and raise my kids
Hey the same way that my daddy did
Where the stars and stripes, and the eagle fly
Where the stars and stripes, and the eagle fly

Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)? Alan Jackson, 2001-2002

Where were you when the world stopped turning
That September day?

Were you in the yard with your wife and children
Or working on some stage in L.A.?
Did you stand there in shock at the sight of that black smoke
Risin' against that blue sky?
Did you shout out in anger in fear for your neighbor
Or did you just sit down and cry?

Did you weep for the children who lost their dear loved ones
And pray for the ones who don't know?
Did you rejoice for the people who walked from the rubble
And sob for the ones left below?
Did you burst out in pride for the red, white and blue
And the heroes who died just doin' what they do?
Did you look up to heaven for some kind of answer
And look at yourself and what really matters?

Chorus:

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
The difference in Iraq and Iran
But I know Jesus and I talk to God
And I remember this from when I was young
Faith, hope and love are some good things He gave us
And the greatest is love.

Where were you when the world stopped turning
That September day?
Were you teaching a class full of innocent children
Or driving down some cold interstate?
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 loved her?
Did you dust off that Bible at home?

Did you open your eyes and hope it never happened
Close your eyes and not go to sleep?
Did you notice the sunset the first time in ages
Or speak to some stranger on the street?
Did you lay down at night and think of tomorrow
Or go out and buy you a gun?
Did you turn off that violent old movie you're watchin'
And turn on "I Love Lucy" reruns?

Did you go to a church and hold hands with some strangers
Did you 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?

Chorus:

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
The difference in Iraq and Iran
But I know Jesus and I talk to God
And I remember this from when I was young
Faith, hope and love are some good things He gave us
And the greatest is love.

Chorus:

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
The difference in Iraq and Iran
But I know Jesus and I talk to God
And I remember this from when I was young
Faith, hope and love are some good things He gave us
And the greatest is love.

And the greatest is love.
And the greatest is love.

Where were you when the world stopped turning
That September day?...

Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American), Toby Keith, 2002

American girls and American guys
Will always stand up and salute
Will always recognize
When we see Ol' Glory flyin'
There's a lot of men dead
So we can sleep at peace at night
When we lay down our heads

My Daddy served in the army
Where he lost his right eye
But he flew a flag out in our yard
Til the day that he died
He wanted my mother, my brother
My sister and me
To grow up and live happy

In the Land of the Free

Now this nation that I love
Has fallen 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 shakin' her fist
And the Eagle will fly
And it's gonna be hell
When you hear Mother freedom
Start ringing her bell
And it will feel like the whole wide world
Is raining down on you
All brought to you
Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue

Oh, justice will be served
And the battle will rage
This big dog will fight
When you rattle his cage
And you'll be sorry that you messed with
The U.S. of A.
Cause we'll put a boot in your ass
It's the American way

Hey, Uncle Sam put your name
At the top of his list
And the Statue of Liberty
Started shakin' her fist
And the Eagle will fly
And it's gonna be hell
When you hear Mother freedom
Start ringing her bell
And it will feel like the whole wide world
Is raining down on you
All brought to you
Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue

Oh, oh, of the red white and blue
Oh, oh, oh, oh of my red white and blue

Travelin' Soldier, Dixie Chicks, 2002-2003

Two days past eighteen
He was waitin' for the bus in his army greens
Sat down in a booth, at a café there
Gave his order to a girl with a bow in her hair
He's a little shy, so she gave him a smile
And he said, would you mind sittin' down for awhile
And talkin' to me, I'm feelin' a little low
She said, I'm off in an hour and I know where we can go

So they went down and they sat on the pier
He said, I bet you got a boyfriend, but I don't care
I've got no one to send a letter to
Would you mind if I sent one back here to you

I cried
Never gonna hold the hand of another guy
Too young for him they told her
Waitin' for the love of a travelin' soldier
Our love will never end
Waitin' for the soldier to come back again
Never more to be alone
When the letter says, a soldier's coming home

So the letters came
From an army camp
In California, then Vietnam
And he told her of his heart
It might be love
And all of the things he was so scared of
He said ,when it's getting' kinda rough over here
I think of that day, sittin' down at the pier
And I close my eyes and see your pretty smile
Don't worry, but I won't be able to write for awhile

I cried
Never gonna hold the hand of another guy
Too young for him they told her
Waitin' for the love of a travelin' soldier
Our love will never end
Waitin' for the soldier to come back again
Never more to be alone

When the letter says a soldier's coming home

One Friday night at a football game
The Lord's Prayer said and the anthem sang
A man said, folks would you bow your heads
For a list of local, Vietnam dead
Cryin' all alone under the stands
Was a piccolo player in the marching band
And one name read, but nobody really cared
But a pretty little girl with a bow in her hair

I cried
Never gonna hold the hand of another guy
Too young for him they told her
Waitin' for the love of a travelin' soldier
Our love will never end
Waitin' for the soldier to come back again
Never more to be alone
When the letter says a soldier's coming...

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Never more to be alone
When the letter says a soldier's coming home

Have You Forgotten? Darryl Worley, 2003

I hear people saying we don't need this war
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 [*sic*] a living hell
And you say we shouldn't worry 'bout bin Laden
Have you forgotten?

They took all the footage off my T.V.
Said it's too disturbing for you and me
It'll just breed anger is what the experts say
If it was up to me I'd show it every day
Some say this country's just out looking for a fight
Well after 9/11 man I'd have to say that's right

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 [*sic*] a living hell
And you say we shouldn't worry 'bout bin Laden
Have you forgotten?

I've been there with the soldiers
Who've gone away to war
And you can bet that they remember
Just what they're fighting for
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 [*sic*] a living hell
And you say we shouldn't worry 'bout bin Laden
Have you forgotten?

Have you forgotten all the people killed
Some went down like heroes in that Pennsylvania field
Have you forgotten about our Pentagon?
All the loved ones that we lost and those left to carry on
Don't you tell me not to worry about bin Laden

Have you forgotten?
Have you forgotten?

Hey Mr. President, Warren Brothers, 2003

Hey mister president
I don't think I'd want your job
I can barely handle, the simple one I got.

Hey mister president
How cool is Air Force One?
Are those guys in the house and the senate
Ever gonna get anything done?

I ain't no Democrat, I ain't no Republican
We're fathers and mothers,
We're wives and husbands.
And we pray, that we dance at our daughters' weddings
And our sons grow to fine men
And for peace, on our land.

Hey mister president
How 'bout that money I sent?
Must take a lot of port barrels just to run the government
Hey mister president our kids in the Middle East
I guess you gotta fight sometimes to find a way to keep the peace

I ain't no Democrat,
I ain't no Republican,
Were fathers and mothers,
sisters and brothers,
wives and husbands.
And we pray that we dance at our daughters' weddings
And our sons grow to fine men
And for peace, on our land.

I cannot imagine
How hard it must be
To tell some soldier's mother they died, for their country.
Mister president, won't you, thank her for me.

Hey mister president,
Do you ever feel alone?
Surrounded by all those ghosts in the White House
Bet you wish you could move back home.

We ain't just Democrats, we ain't just Republicans
It's all for one and one for all,
We're all Americans
And we pray that we see our children's children
And our sons grow to old men
And for peace, yea peace, on our land.

...Hey mister president

I Raq and Roll, Clint Black, 2003

You can wave your signs in protest
Against America taking stands

The stands America's taken
Are the reason that you can.

If everyone would go for peace
There'd be no need for war
But we can't ignore the devil
He'll keep coming back for more.

Some see this in black and white
Others only gray
We're not begging for a fight
No matter what they say.

We have the resolution
That should put 'em all to shame
But it's a different kind of deadline
When I'm called in the game.

Chorus:

I raq, I rack 'em up and I roll
I'm back and I'm a high tech GI Joe
I pray for peace, prepare for war
And I never will forget
There's no price too high for freedom
So be careful where you tread.

This terror isn't man to man
They can be no more than cowards
If they won't show us their weapons
We might have to show them ours.

It might be a smart bomb
They find stupid people too
And if you stand with the likes of Saddam
One just might find you.

Chorus II:

I rock, I rack 'em up and I roll
I'm back and I'm a high tech GI Joe
I've got infrared, I've got GPS
And I've got that good old fashioned lead
There's no price too high for freedom
So be careful where you tread.

Bridge:

Now you can come along

Or you can stay behind
Or you can get out of the way
But our troops take out the garbage
For the good old U.S.A.

I rock, I rack 'em up and I roll
In the U.S.A.
I rock, I rack 'em up and I roll
I'm talking about the U.S.A....

One Last Time, Dusty Drake, 2003

When she picked up the telephone,
His voice came on the line,
She said "This can't be happening,"
An' tears fell from her eyes.
She said, "What am I supposed to do?
I can't handle losin' you:
He said "I just had to call and say goodbye"
One last time

He said, "There are some things in this life
That are out of our control"
Like who we fall in love with
And when it's time to go

She said, "What about the plans we had?"
He said, "This connection's getting' bad"
Now c'mon baby, let me hear you smile,
One last time

She started to apologize
For all the things that she'd done wrong.
She said, "I would have loved you better.
If only I'd known

He said, "You were the perfect wife,
Promise me you'll go on with your life"
She said, "The boys won't understand"
He said, "Tell 'em Daddy loves 'em and be strong, whoa"

And he said, "Honey, I've gotta go"
She said, "Don't you dare hang up
There's so many things I need to say
I love you so much"

It was almost like she felt him leave
She cried out, "Can you still hear me?"
She fell down on the kitchen floor, when the signal died
As the pilot tried to pull out of the dive, one last

American Soldier, Toby Keith, 2003-2004

I'm just trying to be a father
Raise a daughter and a son
Be a lover to their mother
Everything to everyone
Up and at 'em, bright and early
I'm all business in my suit
Yeah, I'm dressed for success
From my head down to my boots

I don't do it for money, there's still bills that I can't pay
I don't do it for the glory, I just do it anyway
Providing for our future's my responsibility
Yeah, I'm real good under pressure, being all that I can be

And I can't call in sick on Mondays
When the weekend's been too strong
I just work straight through the holidays
And sometimes all night long
You can bet that I stand ready
When the wolf growls at the door
Hey, I'm solid, hey I'm steady
Hey, I'm true down to the core

And I will always do my duty, no matter what the price
I've counted up the cost, I know the sacrifice
Oh, and I don't want to die for you
But if dyin's asked of me
I'll bear that cross with an honor
Cause freedom don't come free

I'm an American soldier, an American
Beside my brothers and my sisters
I will proudly take a stand
When liberty's in jeopardy, I will always do what's right
I'm out here on the frontlines, sleep in peace tonight
American soldier, I'm an American soldier
Yeah, an American soldier, an American
Beside my brothers and my sisters

I will proudly take a stand
When liberty's in jeopardy, I will always do what's right
I'm out here on the frontlines, so sleep in peace tonight
American soldier, I'm an American
An American
An American soldier

Letters from Home, 2004, John Michael Montgomery

My dear son, it's almost June
I hope this letter catches up with you, and finds you well
It's been dry but they're calling for rain
And every thing's the same ol' same in Johnson Ville
Your stubborn old daddy ain't said too much
But I'm sure you know he sends his love and she goes on
In a letter from home

I hold it up and show my buddies like
We ain't scared and our boots ain't muddy, and they all laugh
Like there's something funny about the way I talk
When I say, "Mama sends her best y'all"
I fold it up and put it in my shirt
Pick up my gun and get back to work
And it keeps driving me on
Waiting on letters from home

My dearest love, it's almost dawn
I've been lying here all night long, wondering where you might be
I saw your mama and I showed her the ring
Man on the television said something, so I couldn't sleep
But I'll be alright, I'm just missing you
And this is me kissing you
X's and O's in a letter from home

I hold it up and show my buddies like
We ain't scared and our boots ain't muddy, and they all laugh
'Cause she calls me "Honey," but they take it hard
'Cause I don't read the good parts
I fold it up and put it in my shirt
Pick up my gun and get back to work
And it keeps driving me on
Waiting on letters from

Dear son, I know, I ain't written
Sitting here tonight, alone in the kitchen it occurs to me
I might not have said, so I'll say it now

“Son, you make me proud”

I hold it up and show my buddies
:ike we ain't scared and our boots ain't muddy, but no one laughs
'Cause there ain't nothing funny, when a soldier cries
And I just wipe my eyes
I fold it up and put it in my shirt
Pick up my gun and get back to work
And it keeps driving me on
Waiting on letters from home

Bumper of My S.U.V., Chely Wright, 2004-2005

I've got a bright red sticker on the back of my car
Says United States Marines
And yesterday a lady in a mini-van
Held up her middle finger at me
Does she think she knows what I stand for
Or the things that I believe
Just by looking at a sticker for the U.S. Marines
On the bumper of my SUV.

See, my brother Chris, he's been in for more than 14 years now
Our dad was in the Navy during Vietnam
Did his duty then he got out
And my grandpa earned his purple heart
On the beach of Normandy
That's why I've got a sticker for the U.S. Marines
On the bumper of my SUV.

But that doesn't mean that I want war
I'm not Republican or Democrat
But I've gone all around this crazy world
Just to try to better understand.

Yes, I do have questions
I get to ask them because I'm free
That's why I've got a sticker for the U.S. Marines
On the bumper of my SUV.

'Cause I've been to Hiroshima
And I've been to the DMZ
I've walked on the sand in Baghdad
Still don't have all of the answers I need
But I guess I wanna know where she's been
Before she judges and gestures to me

'Cause she don't like my sticker
For the U.S. Marines
On the bumper of my SUV.

So I hope that lady in her mini-van
Turns on her radio and hears this from me
As she picks up her kids from their private school
And drives home safely on our city streets
Or to the building where her church group meets.

Yeah, that's why I've got a sticker for the U.S. Marines
On the bumper of my SUV...

American by God's Amazing Grace, 2005, Luke Stricklin

Bottom of my boots sure are gettin' worn
there's a lot of holes in this faded uniform
My hands are black with dirt and so is my face
I ain't never been to hell
but it couldn't be any worse than this place.
Tell my wife don't worry 'cause I know what to do
it makes her feel better sometimes, but I don't know if it's true.
I know if I die it's just my time to go
but I pray to God every day that I make it back home.

Well when you've seen what I've seen
things don't seem so bad
quit worrying 'bout what you ain't got, thank God for what you have
'Cause I could be raising my family in this place
but I was born an American
by God's Amazing Grace.

For the last twelve months I've had a new address
the neighborhood smells like sewage and the streets are lined with trash.
You never know what's gonna be the next thing to explode
but unlike these people, I have another home.
It breaks my heart to see these kids out on the streets
walking barefoot through the trash, beggin' for something to eat.
I give them what I got, just to let them know I care
and I thank God it's not my son that's standing there.

Well when you've seen what I've seen
things don't seem so bad
quit worrying 'bout what you ain't got, thank God for what you have
'Cause I could be raising my family in this place
but I was born an American

by Gods Amazing Grace.

You want to talk about it, you better keep it short
cause I got a lot of lost time I gotta make up for.
Really don't care why Bush went in to Iraq
I know what I've done there and I'm damn sure proud of that.
You got somethin' bad to say about the USA
you better save it for different ears 'less you want to crawl away.
And I'll laugh in your face when you say you've got it bad
and tell you to spend some time on the streets of Baghdad

Well when you've seen what I've seen
things don't seem so bad
quit worrying 'bout what you ain't got, thank God for what you have
'Cause you could be raising your family in this place
but you were born an American, By God's Amazing Grace!!!

Arlington, Trace Adkins, 2005

I never thought that this is where I'd settle down
I thought I'd die an old man back in my hometown
They gave me this plot of land
Me and some other men
For a job well done

There's a big white house, sits on a hill just up the road
The man inside, he cried the day they brought me home
They folded up a flag
And told my mom and dad
"We're proud of your son

And I'm proud to be on this peaceful piece of property
I'm on sacred ground, and I'm in the best of company
I'm thankful for those thankful for the things I've done
I can rest in peace, I'm one of the chosen ones
I made it to Arlington

I remember Daddy brought me here when I was eight
We searched all day to find out where my granddad lay
When we finally found that cross
He said "Son, this is what it costs
To keep us free"
Now here I am, a thousand stones away from him
He recognized me on the first day I came in
And it gave me a chill

When he clicked his heels
And saluted me
And I'm proud to be on this peaceful piece of property
I'm on sacred ground, and I'm in the best of company
I'm thankful for those thankful for the things I've done
I can rest in peace, I'm one of the chosen ones
I made it to Arlington

And every time I hear twenty-one guns
I know they brought another hero home to us

We're thankful for those thankful for the things we've done
We can rest in peace, 'cause we are the chosen ones
We made it to Arlington

Yeah, dust to dust
Don't cry for us
We made it to Arlington

Not Me, Keni Thomas, 2005

No one raised their hand that day when they asked for volunteers.
He got picked out by default he was the only daddy there.
They said we know what you're thinking
Choose someone else instead but this league is built on coaches
who stood right there and said...

Not Me not me no way with this job of mine I could never find the time not me not me
The world becomes a better place when
someone stands and leads the way steps forward when they'd rather say not me

The judge says you're the oldest, makes you the legal guardian
I'm sorry that you lost your folks but there's no next of kin
Two brothers and a sister she knew how hard it would be but she softly said
I'll raise them while a voice inside her screamed....

Not me Not me I can't believe what's happening
This isn't how it's supposed to be Not me not me
The world becomes a better place when someone stands
and leads the way steps forward when they'd rather say not me

A young captain at attention, a star pinned on his chest
He recalls the battle while the final roll call's read
They were the finest soldiers it was my privilege to lead
They deserve the medals the men who died not me

Not me not me I just did what I was called to do you'd do the same if it was you
Not me not me
The world becomes a better place when someone stands
and leads the way steps forward when they'd rather say not me

Yeah steps forward when they'd rather say Not me

Not me
Not me

8th of November, Big & Rich, 2006

{Hello, I'm Kris Kristofferson
On November 8th, 1965, the 173rd Airborne Brigade on Operation
Hump War Zone D in Vietnam were ambushed by over 1200 V.C.
Forty-eight American soldiers lost their lives that day}

{Severely wounded and riskin' his own life, Lawrence Joll, a medic
Was the first livin' black man since the Spanish-American War
To receive the United States Medal of Honor
For savin' so many lives in the midst of battle that day}

{Our friend, Nialls Harris, retired 25 years, United States Army
The guy who Big Kenny his top hat
Was one of the wounded who lived
This song is his story}

Said goodbye to his momma as he left South Dakota
To fight for the Red, White and Blue
He was nineteen and green and with a new M-16
Just doin' what he had to do

He was dropped in the jungle
Where the choppers would rumble
With the smell of napalm in the air
Then the sergeant said, "Look up ahead"

Like a dark evil cloud, 1200 came down
On him and 29 more
They fought for their lives but most of them died
In the 173rd Airborne

On the 8th of November, the angels were cryin'
As they carried his brothers away
With the fire rainin' down and the hell all around
There were few men left standin' that day

Saw the eagle fly through a clear blue sky
1965, the 8th of November

Now he's 58 and his pony tail's gray
But the battle still plays in his head
He limps when he walks but he's strong when he talks
'Bout the shrapnel they left in his leg

He puts on a gray suit over his Airborne tattoo
And he ties it on one time a year
And remembers that fallen as he orders a tall one
And swallows it down with his tears

On the 8th of November, the angels were cryin'
As they carried his brothers away
With the fire rainin' down and the hell all around
There were few men left standin' that day

Saw the eagle fly through a clear blue sky
1965, the 8th of November

Saw the eagle fly through a clear blue sky
1965, the 8th of November
(1965)

On the 8th of November, the angels were cryin'
As they carried his brothers away
With the fire rainin' down and the hell all around
There were few men left standin' that day

On the 8th of November, the angels were cryin'
As they carried his brothers away
With the fire rainin' down and the hell all around
There were few men left standin' that day

Saw the eagle fly through a clear blue sky
1965, the 8th of November
8th of November
(8th of November)

Said goodbye to his momma as he left South Dakota
To fight for the Red, White and Blue
He was nineteen and green and with a new M-16
Just doin' what he had to do

Politically Uncorrect, Gretchen Wilson, featuring Merle Haggard, 2006

I'm for the lone man on the totem pole
And I'm for the underdog, God bless his soul
And I'm for the guys still pulling third shift
And the single mama raising her kids
And I'm for the preachers that stay on their knees
And I'm for the sinner who finally believes
And I'm for the farmer with dirt on his hands
And the soldiers who fight for this land

Chorus:

And I'm for the bible and I'm for the flag
And I'm for the working man, me and Ol' Hag
I'm just one of many who can't get no respect
Politically Uncorrect

Merle:

I guess my opinion is all out of style

Gretchen:

Oh but don't get me started cuz I can get riled
And I'll make a fight for the four fathers plan (that's right)

Merle:

Hell the world already knows where I stand

Chorus

Merle:

Nothing wrong with the bible, nothing wrong with the flag

Gretchen:

Nothing wrong with the working man, me and Ol' Hag
We're just some of many who can't get no respect (none!)
Politically Uncorrect

Merle:

Politically Uncorrect

I Just Got Back from War, Darryl Worley, 2006-2007

First thing I did when that plane finally landed
Was kiss the ground
Next thing I did was to go find my friends

Down at the old hang out
We drank some beer and talked a lot about old times
But when the booze finally hit Billy Joe Grimes
He said, "I don't know what it is
But you seem different to me"

I said, "I just came back from a place where they hated me
And everything I stand for
A land where our brothers are dying for others
Who don't even care anymore"

If I'm not exactly the same good old boy
That you ran around with before
I just came back from a war

The very next morning
I took a walk through the neighborhood
I thought it's been so long
Since I've been in a place where everything is good

People laughin' and children were playing
As I watched them I found myself praying
"Lord keep 'em safe here at home
In the land of the free"

'Cause I just came back from a place where they hated me
And everything I stand for
A land where our brothers are dying for others
Who don't even care anymore

If I'm not the same little freckled-face boy
That grew up in that house next door
I just came back from a war

I hope you cherish this sweet way of life
And I hope you know that it comes with a price

I just came back from a place where they hated me
And everything I stand for
A land where our brothers are dying for others
Who don't even care anymore

Chances are I never will be the same
I really don't know anymore
I just came back from a war

I just came back from a war

I just came back from a war
(You don't know me, you don't know me, you don't know me anymore)

I just came back from a war
(You don't know me, you don't know me, you don't know me anymore)

I just came back from a war
(You don't know me, you don't know me, you don't know me anymore)

I just came back from a war
(You don't know me, you don't know me, you don't know me anymore)

I just came back from a war

Our Country, John Mellencamp, 2006-2007

I can stand beside
Ideals I think are right
And I can stand beside
The idea to stand and fight

I do believe
There's a dream for everyone
This is our country

There's room enough here
For science to live
And there's room enough here
For religion to forgive

And try to understand
All the people of this land
This is our country

From the East Coast
To the West Coast
Down the Dixie Highway, back home
This is our country

And poverty could be
Just another ugly thing
And bigotry would be
Seen only as obscene

And the ones that run this land
Help the poor and common man
This is our country

The dream is still alive
Some day it will come true
And this country it belongs
To folks like me and you

So let the voice of freedom
Sing out through this land
This is our country

From the East Coast
To the West Coast
Down the Dixie Highway, back home
This is our country

From the East Coast
To the West Coast
Down the Dixie Highway, back home
This is our country

Bagpipes Cryin', Rushlow Harris, 2007

Stumbled across an old green box
in my grand daddy's house
inside was a cross
some old dog tags
a picture of when he was shippin' out
so I showed it to him
said tell me about those days
when he looked inside
he closed his eyes
all he could say

Was
I hear bag pipes cryin' amazing grace
Omaha Beach and her crashin waves
Old Glory draped like heaven's mercy
over the fallen sons
I see all the heroes who were willin' to fight
in the name of freedom
layin down their lives
prayin' God's grace would keep us safe from harm
til they brought us boys back home

Those were words to a boy that became a man
now I'm ankle deep in this persian sand

and everyday I'm givin' all I can
cause I'm damn proud to be American
yeah I've made some friends
and I've lost some too
when I think about
what they gave
for me and you

And I hear bagpipes cryin' amazing grace
tears rollin down a mother's face
Old Glory draped like heaven's mercy
over the fallen sons
I see all the heroes who are willin' to fight
in the name of freedom
layin down their lives
prayin God's grace would keep us safe from harm
til they bring us boys back home

I hear bagpipes cryin' amazing grace
tears rollin' down a mother's face
old glory draped like heave'ns mercy
over the fallen sons
I see all the heroes who are willin' to fight
in the name of freedom
layin down their lives
I pray God's grace will keep you safe from harm
til they bring you boys back home

Til they bring you boys back home
Til they bring you boys back home

If You're Reading This, Tim McGraw, 2007

If you're reading this, my momma's sitting there
Looks like I only got a one-way ticket over here
I sure wish I could give you one more kiss
And war was just a game we played when we were kids

Well I'm laying down my gun, I'm hanging up my boots
I'm up here with God and we're both watching over you

So lay me down
In that open field out on the edge of town
And know my soul
Is where my momma always prayed that it would go.
If you're reading this I'm already home.

If you're reading this half way around the world
I won't be there to see the birth of our little girl
I hope she looks like you, I hope she fights like me
And stands up for the innocent and the weak

I'm laying down my gun, I'm hanging up my boots
Tell dad I don't regret that I followed in his shoes

So lay me down
In that open field out on the edge of town
And know my soul
Is where my momma always prayed that it would go.
If you're reading this I'm already home.

If you're reading this, there's gonna come a day
You move on and find someone else and that's okay
Just remember this I'm in a better place
Where soldiers live in peace and angels sing "Amazing Grace"

So lay me down
In that open field out on the edge of town
And know my soul
Is where my momma always prayed that it would go.
If you're reading this, if you're reading this I'm already home.

Sunday Morning in America, Keith Anderson, 2007

Verse1

She dresses up her children and herds them to the car, drives down to the mega-church and can't find a place to park. Then she feels a little guilty when she takes his name in vein, so she folds her last two dollars and she drops them in the plate, its morning Sunday morning, Sunday morning in America.

Verse2

His back is out of kilter from sleepin' on concrete and he'd like to have some breakfast but he'll trade it for a drink, those early morning joggers their quick to pass him by and the ones that drop a dollar don't they don't dare look him in the eye. Another Sunday morning, Sunday morning in America. Sunday morning, Sunday morning in America.

Chorus:

Smell the eggs and bacon, hear the church bells ring, cheerleaders shakin' on a big screen tv, there's Winnebago's and boats

on the lake and a red head, freckled face blows out the candles on his birthday cake. Sunday morning, Sunday morning in America.

Verse3

He's hunkered in a bunker with a rifle in his hand, layin' his life on the line for every inch of sand. He dreamin' about that freedom that he's been fightin' for and the arms that will wrap around him when he comes walkin' through that door, some Sunday morning, Sunday morning in America. Yea Sunday morning, Sunday morning in America.

Chorus:

Smell the eggs and bacon, hear the church bells ring, cheerleaders shakin' on a big screen tv, there's Winnebago's and boats on the lake and a red head, freckled face blows out the candles on his birthday cake. Sunday morning, Sunday morning in America. Sunday morning, Sunday morning in America.

Bring Him Home Santa, The Song Trust, 2008

Dear Santa, I need to change my Christmas list
There's one big thing I missed
You see my Daddy's working, far away from here
And you know Santa, I asked for a Barbie doll
And a brand new soccer ball
But I'd trade it all, for just one gift this year...

Bring him home Santa, bring him home to mom and me
Let us wake up Christmas morning, and find him standing by our tree
You can pick him up on your way, he could ride there in your sleigh
Don't make him spend Christmas all alone
Bring him home

And Santa, here's a picture that I drew
Of him in his dress blues
Mama says our country, needs him over there
And you know Santa, this whole year I have been good
I was hopin' that you would
Do all you could, to answer her prayer...

Bring him home Santa, bring him home to mom and me
Let us wake up Christmas morning, and find him standing by our tree
You can pick him up on your way, he could ride there in your sleigh
Don't make him spend Christmas all alone
Bring him home

Bring him home
Bring him home
Bring him home

Just a Dream, Carrie Underwood, 2008

It was two weeks after the day she turned 18
All dressed in white, goin' to the church that night
She had his box of letters in the passenger seat
Sixpence in a shoe, somethin' borrowed, somethin' blue

And when the church doors opened up wide
She put her veil down, tryin' to hide the tears
Oh, she just couldn't believe it
She heard trumpets from the military band
And the flowers fell out of her hand

Baby why'd you leave me? Why'd you have to go?
I was countin' on forever, now I'll never know
I can't even breathe

It's like I'm lookin' from a distance, standin' in the background
Everybody's saying, he's not coming home now
This can't be happening to me
This is just a dream

The preacher man said, "Let's bow our heads and pray"
Lord, please lift his soul and heal this hurt
Then the congregation all stood up and sang
The saddest song that she ever heard

And then they handed her a folded up flag
And she held on to all she had left of him
Oh, and what could've been
And then the guns rang one last shot
And it felt like a bullet in her heart

Baby why'd you leave me? Why'd you have to go?
I was countin' on forever, now I'll never know
I can't even breathe

It's like I'm lookin' from a distance, standin' in the background
Everybody's saying, he's not coming home now
This can't be happening to me
This is just a dream

Ooh, baby why'd you leave me? Why'd you have to go?
I was countin' on forever, now I'll never know

It's like I'm lookin' from a distance, standin' in the background
Everybody's saying, he's not coming home now
This can't be happening to me
This is just a dream

Oh, this is just a dream
It's just a dream, yeah, yeah