

Outspoken: The Right to be Heard

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April 12th, 2019

In the current day and age in American society, music artists are both encouraged and discouraged to get political and voice their political opinions. However, a little more than a decade ago when music artists spoke out against the state they unknowingly put their careers and lives in jeopardy. Recently, during the U.S. midterm elections it seemed that almost every powerful music artist was encouraging their followers on social media to go out and vote. Although, every time some music artists voiced their opinions in favor of certain candidates they were met with backlash by politicians and those within the political realm. As a result, these events formed the basis of my graduation project. I wanted to know why music artists are encouraged by society to use their platforms to voice their political opinions, but are also silenced by the public and those within politics. I found that there is a paradox within politics since music artists are both used as publicity tools in order to gain leverage for candidates, but the same politicians dismiss other artists' voices when they speak out against them. Therefore, when music artists voice their opinions and speak out about politics it can be seen as an attack on the political institution of the state, and an attack on the power elite who hold the power within society.

Likewise, music artists are then in turn silenced and discouraged from speaking out since it can be interpreted as questioning the legitimacy of the power elite and power structure. In western society, music artists are limited to singular roles as entertainers and artists, so when they step out of this role they are then condemned, and the mobility within these roles also seems smaller for female music artists. Politics by definition is any activity that concerns the ways in which a state is controlled and governed. This includes discourse surrounding the ways a country is governed and one's opinions of how a state should govern. Public discourse in particular, and the opinions of those in society who have greater access to power such as celebrities and specifically music artists have the ability to potentially influence people's political opinions. Perhaps it is this potential to influence the public perceptions of politicians that music artists are silenced by the power elites. The notion of the power elite comes from C. Wright Mills' book *The Power Elites*, which was published in 1956. In the book, Mills breaks down who in society has power, and how power is maintained and structured. For Mills, "the power elite is composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequence" (1956). Mills goes farther by stating that the power elites' ability to make decisions is not as important, but rather the fact that they "occupy pivotal positions" since "their failure to act, failure to make decisions is itself an act that is often of greater consequence than they do make" (1956). Mills states that these positions are important since "they are in command of the major hierarchies and organization of society" (1956). Perhaps, this is the reason why our society today expects music artists and other celebrities to use their platforms to speak out since their voices are heard since they hold pivotal positions in society. However, Mills does not view celebrities which includes music artists as the power elites despite the fact that they may have status and wealth. The power elite according to Mills are "not solitary rulers", but "Advisors and consultants, spokesmen and opinion-makers are often captains of their higher thought" (1956). After the power elite, are the "professional politicians of the middle levels of power, in the Congress and in the pressure groups, as well as among the new and old upper classes of town and city and region" (1956). Mills states that power is upheld by major institutions and that "these hierarchies of state and corporation and army constitute the means of power; as such they are now of a consequence not before equaled in human history – and at their summits there are now those command posts of modern society" (1956). In regards to American society, Mills writes that "major power now

resides in the economic, political, and the military domains” (1956). He notes that the “leading men in each of the three domains of power – the warlords, the corporation chieftains, the political directorate – tend to come together, to form the power elite in America” (1956).

However, Mills’s definitions and examples of who he believes holds the power in American does not include music artists. Even though, Mills remarks about the presence of “mingling” celebrities within the power hierarchy, he notes that “if such celebrities are not at the head of any dominating hierarchy, they do often have the power to distract the attention of the public or afford the sensations to the masses, or, more directly, to gain the ear of those who occupy positions of direct power” (1956). One question still remains, where do music artists then fit within the structures of power? For Mills, he saw celebrities as being “more or less unattached, as critics of morality and technicians of power”, but that “such celebrities and consultants are part of the immediate scene in which drama of the elite is enacted” (1956). He adds that “that drama itself is centered in the command posts of the major institutional hierarchies”, which he has identified as the state, corporation, and army (1956). If celebrities make up the cultural institutions in society, then Mills sees them “as duly subordinated” to the three power institutions. Likewise, Mills adds that these subordinated or “lesser institutions are used to legitimate the power and the decisions of the big three” (1956). Therefore, this may be the reason that the credibility of music artists is often called into question by the power elite when they speak out about their political opinions. Questioning their credibility on political topics can be seen as a way of justifying and solidifying the power of the power elites, and the major three institutions. It seems like this is the case, but why? Even if Mills does not see celebrities as not being apart of the power elites then why do their critiques of the power elites within the state matter? Looking specifically at the state and political order Mills writes that it “now enters into each and every cranny [...] of the social structure” (1956). As a result, a critique of the state which is a power hierarchy is seen as a threat to their legitimacy since “the means of power at the disposal of decision makers have increased enormously; their executive powers have been enhanced” (1956). In addition, Mills writes that “if there is government intervention in the corporate economy, so is there corporate interventions in the governmental process” (1956). This can be interpreted further, in the sense that if there is a cultural intervention (music artists rule this sphere) in the government then there will be governmental intervention in culture. This intervention and intervening in both spheres can be seen in sayings such as ‘I don’t tell you how to do your job’, or ‘shut up and sing’. Discourse such as these sayings can be seen as a silencer as Dorothy Smith highlighted since silencing the opinions of music artists is a way of controlling the command posts within culture.

Although, despite Mills’s critique of celebrities he does see them as having some power. In regards to the power elite and the institutions that they occupy such as the state, Mills writes that these institutions “are the necessary bases of power, of wealth, and of prestige”. Mills also adds that these institutions are “at the same time, the chief means of exercising power, of acquiring and retaining wealth, and of cashing in the higher claims of prestige” (1956). In order for one to be truly powerful they must have “access to the command of major institutions” (1956). According to Mills, once one has access to a major institution such as the state they then have power, and if they also have wealth and prestige then they would be at the top of that command post. In regards to prestige, Mills writes that “great prestige increasingly follows the major institutional units of the social structure, [...] depends, often quite decisively, upon access to the publicity machines that are now a central and normal feature of all the big institutions of modern America” (1956). Now here is where music artists or ‘celebrities’ fit into the picture

since they can be seen and considered as publicity machines. Mills writes that “like wealth and power, prestige tends to be cumulative: the more of it you have, the more you can get” (1956). Celebrities as publicity machines can help the power elites to collect more prestige in order to solidify and validate their positions. This could be why we see that music artists are also celebrated when they share their political views or endorse certain political candidates. Mills writes that if you took the resources such as money and media away from one hundred of the wealthiest and celebrated, “then they would be powerless and poor and uncelebrated” (1956). Mills also adds that “celebrity is not inherent in any personality” (1956), but this could mean that celebrities who are known and are famous can help turn a power elite into a celebrity who would then have prestige. Some power elites that come to mind when thinking about them in terms of having the ‘celebrity factor’ include President John F. Kennedy and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Perhaps then, to reference Nietzsche music artists as celebrities are a will-to-power for the power elite since they can use them in order to gain greater prestige in society. Mills writes, “to be celebrated, to be wealthy, to have power requires access to major institutions” (1956), so if a politician or political candidate who is running to have access to the state celebrities are invaluable since as publicity machines they can aid them in securing a position of power. Additionally, since celebrities can be seen as having great prestige then this might explain why they face backlash from opposing politicians or political parties because it can be interpreted as a way of denying a candidate a position of power.

The prestige power of the celebrity in the form of publicity is further explored by Goldman and Papson in “Advertising in the Age of Accelerated Meaning”. Baudrillard, saw that western society and the world was being bombarded with signs and images that made up the simulacrum. Goldman and Papson, argue that we are overloaded with signs within advertisements where the only way for brands (created by economic corporations) to stand out is to have differentiated images (1996). Celebrities are images that the corporate power elite can use as a way to add wealth and prestige to their image since “celebrities are usually sought because they have a high sign value” (1996). Appropriating the image of a celebrity through endorsements of political candidates or through performing at a political event can give a new sign value to the power elite. For instance, Goldman and Papson note that “once upon a time, the Nike swoosh symbol possessed no intrinsic value as a sign, but value was added to the sign by drawing on the name and image value of celebrity superstars like Michael Jordan” (1996). This example of the Nike swoosh logo can be applied to the recent U.S. Midterm elections where there were countless endorsements of candidates by music artists. Most noticeably was Taylor Swift’s Instagram post, which spoke out against Tennessee Republican Senate candidate Marsha Blackburn, but endorsed Tennessee Democrats Phil Bredesen, and Jim Cooper. Swift noted that she was voting for these two candidates since they were representative of key values that are important to her such as Women’s and LGBTQ rights. For these candidates, a public endorsement by Swift gives them new signs that will be attached to them. For instance, signs of equality could now be attached to these candidates, and the extensions of Swift’s signs can also be attached to them too. As a result, Swift was met with both praise and silencing discourse which questioned her credibility, and for some created a misalignment of signs that some previously attached to her. For instance, President Trump remarked that “I’m sure Taylor Swift has nothing – or doesn’t know anything about [Blackburn]” (as cited in Abad-Santos, 2018). This statement by the President, shows an attempt to question Swift’s credibility and knowledge of the Tennessee election and candidates. In addition, a tweet by former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee stated that “So @taylorswift13 has every right to be political but it won’t impact

election unless we allow 13 yr old girls to vote. #MarshaBlackburn” (2018). This tweet by Huckabee shows that for some Swift is a sign for a young female fan base, which is not the entirely true. These Remarks show how the power elite and those with power work to silence a music artist’s political voice and opinion since it does not align with their values. The remarks made by President Trump can also be seen as a way of solidifying Republican power positions within the state, and as a way of justifying Blackburn’s competency by questioning Swift. However, just over a decade ago in the early 2000s artists who voiced their opinions on President Bush’s decision to go to war with Iraq almost led to the downfall of their careers, and threats to their lives. For instance, the case of the Dixie Chicks shows how voicing one’s political beliefs creates a misalignment of sign values which not only had huge ramifications for the band, but created interference from two of the three major institutions such as the state and corporate. In addition, the political music by artists such as Eminem also faced state interference, thus showing that if an artist speaks out against the current government then the political institution will interfere with music in order to protect their power.

In 2003, the devastation of the 9/11 terrorist attacks created a tense political mood and environment in the United States, and increased when President Bush announced that the United States would be going to war with Iraq. President Bush cited that the reason for going to war was built on the basis that the Iraqi government was concealing weapons of mass destruction, and could be used to facilitate more terrorism. Anger was felt both by people who were pro-war and those who were anti-war. As a result, on March 10th 2003 when the Dixie Chicks’ lead singer Natalie Maines told the crowd in London’s Shepard’s Bush Empire that “Just so you know, we’re on the good side with y’all we do not want this war, this violence. And we’re ashamed that the President of the United States is from Texas” (as cited in Kopple & Peck, 2006, 7:02). Maines’s words were quickly interpreted as being unpatriotic and traitorous. The band who is composed of lead singer Natalie Maines and sisters Martie Maguire and Emily Strayer started their careers in the genres of folk, grassroots, Americana, and then country. This statement by Maines was recorded and documented in the band’s 2006 documentary *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing*, in which the documentary shows the ramifications that this statement had for the band. Prior to the statement, the band was on a world tour; had just played the national anthem at the Super Bowl, had a number one single in the U.S. called “Travellin’ Solider”, and were the best selling female group in history (as cited Kopple & Peck, 2006). Maines’s statement was picked up by the U.K.’s *The Guardian* newspaper, and then spread back to the U.S. where it was picked up by a rightwing website called the Free Republic. The documentary shows the band trying to diffuse the situation by releasing a statement that Maines said would try to reclaim the narrative by accurately showing her “frustration I feel as an American citizen from being ignored” (as cited in Kopple & Peck, 2006, 9:48) by the government’s decision to go to war. For the band, President Bush’s actions were personal since not only is the President from Texas, but it is also where all three band members are from. However, the statement had already caused significant damage amongst country music fans who made up the majority of the group’s fan base. Around this time, country artists such as Toby Keith were releasing patriotic and nationalist songs like “Courtesy Of The Red, White And Blue (The Angry American)” in response to the terrorist attacks. The lyrics featured in the song reveal the pro-war and pro-American feeling that much of the Dixie Chicks’ fan base and country music fans felt as Keith sings “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” (Tobey Keith, 2002, track 1).

Following Maines's statement, the documentary shows the overwhelming anti-Dixie Chicks sentiment within their fan base and the country music fan base by providing numerous audio clips of people phoning into radio stations and threatening them to stop playing their music. In one clip, a woman who called into a country music radio station said that a bomb should be strapped onto Maines and sent to Iraq (Kopple & Peck, 2006). The growing backlash from country music radio fans resulted in local radio stations boycotting the Dixie Chicks. Maines's statement for some felt even more disrespectful and traitorous since it was made on foreign soil instead of 'back home' in the United States (Kopple & Peck, 2006). The documentary also shows various conservative news outlets and shows in which the discourse on the Dixie Chicks was full hateful, sexist, and violent rhetoric. News anchors such as Bill O'Reilly even remarked that the Dixie Chicks "are callow foolish women who deserve to be slapped around" (as cited in Kopple & Peck, 2006, 40:51). Meanwhile, the Dixie Chicks' team was feeling the pressure as their tour sponsor Lipton no longer wanted to endorse them, and as their single "Travellin' Solider" fell from the top of the charts by 42% (Kopple & Peck, 2006). Although, rather than staying silent the band's manager Simon Renshaw encouraged them to embrace their new political image which resulted in the band posing for the cover of *Entertainment Weekly* with the hateful comments they received painted on their bodies. The issue of black listing and banning the Dixie Chicks' music from country radio stations around the country found its way into a senate hearing on July 8th 2003 in regards to media ownership. Simon Renshaw was one of the witnesses who testified against Lewis Dickey the chairman of Cumulus Media Inc, and stated that "what happened to my clients is perhaps the most compelling evidence that radio ownership consolidation has a direct negative impact on diversity of programming and political discourse over the public airwaves" (as cited in Lee, 2003). Whereas, Dickey boasted that the company was a confederation of two hundred and seventy individual stations throughout fifty-five cities (as cited in Kopple & Peck, 2006, 53:22). Although, Senators such as John McCain, Barbara Boxer, and Byron Dorgan defended the Dixie Chicks against Dickey since they saw the banning of their music as media censorship. Senator Boxer even compared it to the actions committed by communist and fascist regimes, and Boxer found this issue worth probing since "it's so important and is very much related to how much power an individual network has to reach Americans" (C-SPAN, 2003, 1:37:56). Senator Boxer explained her concerns and stated that "when people are blacklisted, they're finished, they're through. And when I heard what had happened to the Dixie Chicks, I was literally stunned" (C-SPAN, 2003, 1:37:56). Additionally, Senator Boxer stated that everyday "there is a hue and a cry. That is what this country is all about, a hue and a cry. It's a beautiful sound of freedom. And of all the places that shouldn't be crushing it, it's the radio business" (C-SPAN, 2003, 1:37:56). Also, Senator Boxer suggested that Cumulus's actions promoted a mob mentality against the band in which "it wasn't good business for you to play the Dixie Chicks. What's good business to allow one of your stations to join in and lead the fight of rolling over CDs, destroying – destroying something of value" (C-SPAN, 2003, 1:42:15). This response from the Senator came after Dickey made the statement that it is actual good for business to have some controversy on the air, yet this was in direct contrast to the company's actions (C-SPAN, 2003, 1:42:15). Senator John McCain, also saw the blacklisting and banning of the Dixie Chicks as an infringement on one's freedom of speech in which he stated that "If someone else offends you, and you decide to censor those people, my friend, the erosion of our 1st Amendment is in progress" (as cited in Sanders, 2003). The censoring of the Dixie Chicks by a large corporation horrified the Senators since it could lead to further censorship of important issues, "what's to stop them from keeping a

controversial politician off the air or silencing discussions about hot-button issues such as abortion or gun control?” (Sanders, 2003). Senator Boxer added that Cumulus should not have bowed down to public pressure, but should have continued to play the band’s music and facilitate a conversation to work out the dueling opinions and perspectives (C-SPAN, 2003). The Senator further pressed Dickey asking him if he thought what the company did “sent any type of a chilling message to people that they outta shut up and not express their views one way or another?” (C-SPAN, 2003, 1:43:55). Boxer also added that “the fact of the matter is that one at the top sets how people feel” (C-SPAN, 2003, 1:42:15). In this senate hearing, the battle between the state and corporation which are two major institutions that Mills observed as upholding the power in society. For the Senators, they felt that a large corporation such as Cumulus which is one of the largest media companies in the U.S. was interfering in politics and the state, so as a result the state interfered in the corporate economy (Mills, 1956). However, Mills saw that the Senators which make up the U.S. Congress being behind the power elite in terms of holding power, and while the Congress seemed to support the Dixie Chicks President Bush did not seem to offer the same sentiment. In an interview clip featured in the documentary President Bush remarks that “I mean the Dixie Chicks are free to speak their mind. They can say whatever they want to say and just because – they shouldn’t have their feelings hurt just because people some people don’t want to buy their records, when they speak out I mean you know freedom is a two way street” (as cited in Kopple & Peck, 2006, 41:06). Even though Mills didn’t see solitary leaders as having the most power and being the head of the power elite President Bush in this case has tremendous power as a power elite since he was the head of the U.S. military, and had the power to decide the actions of the military. As a result, since the issue of Natalie Maines’s statement was based on Bush’s decision to declare war on Iraq his comment and involvement in the Dixie Chicks is weighed more heavily than the support that the band got from Congress.

The backlash against the Dixie Chicks by conservative right wing country music fans shows the negative implications of sign values. Country, grassroots, folk, and Americana are all music genres that have a conservative sign value attached to them since this genre is most popular and prevalent in states that are generally regarded as being right wing and conservative. Therefore, Maines’s comment was seen as an undesirable and conflicting sign value to what the band and their music signifies, and as Goldman and Papson state “a sign value is generally equal to the desirability of an image” (1996). For the Dixie Chicks, their music and image prior to the comments made by Maines seemed desirable to these country music fans, yet when Maines voiced her political opinion it was in direct opposition to what the band seemed to represent. As a result, the Dixie Chicks’ conservative fans deemed them as traitors and being anti-American, thus creating conflicting sign values which may explain why and how Maines’s comment quickly snowballed into a larger issue. Whereas, rap artists such as Eminem whose sign values and image are associated with rebellion, subculture, and anti-government and anti-state the ramifications of his lyrics did not cause mass public outrage and backlash like the Dixie Chicks did.

In 2002, a year before the Dixie Chicks were being criticized for speaking out and voicing their opinions rapper Eminem was also releasing music, and music videos that showed his dislike of the Bush administration and government. For instance, the most poignant music video by the rapper is for his sing called “White America”, in which a cartoon depiction of Eminem rips up the U.S. constitution (Milton, 2017). The song was a response for the ongoing campaign by the U.S. Congress to enforce stricter parental advisory labels and censorship on music (Milton, 2017). Earlier in 2000, Eminem’s controversial lyrics and music were at the

forefront of the Congress's hearing on censorship with people such as former Chairman Lynne Cheney testifying against the rapper (Mancini, 2000). Cheney argued that stricter copyright policies should be implemented in which age labeling would "give retailers information they need in order to decide who should be able to buy certain materials and who should not" (as cited in Mancini, 2000). It is also noteworthy to add that Cheney disapproved of Eminem's lyrics which she labelled as misogynistic and violent, yet she disagreed with banning the rapper and explicit content since she has "long been a vocal supporter of free speech" (as cited in Mancini, 2000). The next year in 2001, Eminem's explicit music was once again at the forefront of discussion in Congress regarding the marketing practices of the entertainment even though he was not present (Billboard, 2001). Once again, the Congress tried to push for further labelling of explicit content. Therefore, in 2002 when Eminem released "White America" anti-government sentiment is heavily expressed in the lyrics of the song. In the song, Eminem addresses the parents who accuse him of being the leader of rebellious youth whom he instructs to "march right up to the steps of Congress, And piss on the lawns of the White House, To burn the flag and replace it with a Parental Advisory sticker" (Mathers et al., 2002, track 2). Eminem, also directly addresses the U.S. Congress when he raps "I must've struck a chord with somebody up in the office, 'Cause Congress keep telling me I ain't causing nothin' but problems" (Mathers et al., 2002, track 2) (Milton, 2017). Moreover, in the song Eminem also seems to mock the government by rapping "Fuck you, Ms. Cheney! Fuck you, Tipper Gore! Fuck with the freest of speech this Divided States of Embarrassment will allow me to have! Fuck you! Ha ha ha, I'm just playing, America, You know I love you" (Mathers et al., 2002, track 2). In the case of Eminem, we see that his controversial lyrics caused Congress to interfere in culture and music, and the corporate economy as they saw a potential issue of his music creating havoc in society. However, each time that Eminem and his music was called into question the action of banning the rapper or explicit content was completely out of the question since it infringed on one's freedom of speech. Whereas, the Dixie Chicks were banned by corporate institutions which Cumulus is a part of, and Congress interfered in order to keep the company and the industry in line. Although, even though Eminem's lyrics and music can be described as offensive, violent, and misogynistic to some his music was never banned on radio stations, yet the Dixie Chicks' music was blacklisted due to the comments made by Maines, but not because of their music. On the other hand, one can say that in 2002 in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and just before Bush announced war on Iraq Maines's comments were traitorous in a social environment where many felt it was 'us against them'. Yet, in "White America" which came out the year before Maines's statement cartoon Eminem rips up the U.S. Constitution, and refers to the U.S. as the "Divided States of Embarrassment" which could be regarded as the epitome of Anti-nationalism, yet it did not cause the same level of public outrage.

There is something to say about the way women who become involved in the public political sphere are treated in terms of the level of error they are allowed to make. In the book *Women & Power: A Manifesto* by Mary Beard, Beard states that "It is not just that it is more difficult for women to succeed; they get treated much more harshly if they ever mess up" (2017). Beard further adds, "Think Hillary Clinton and those emails. If I were starting this book again from scratch, I would find more space to defend women's *right to be wrong*, at least occasionally" (2017). Calling Maines's comments a mistake is frankly a mistake since it wasn't an error, but it is clear that the Dixie Chicks were not forgiven or given a pass like artists such as Eminem for their statements. Freedom of speech is the similarity between the Dixie Chicks and Eminem, and even Tobey Keith in which it is a legal right within liberal citizenship since the

U.S. falls into the liberal tradition. For the Dixie Chicks, it seemed that when Maines (a U.S. citizen) expressed this right on foreign soil the band was immediately punished not only financially, but there were also countless threats to their lives. Also, the discourse surrounding the Dixie Chicks such as ‘shut up and sing’ are limiting terms and sayings in which the social roles of the band were being limited by the public to entertainers rather than U.S. Citizens. However, in contrast Eminem’s lyrics though seen as controversial, violent, offensive, and misogynistic they were still deemed to be a part of one’s freedom of speech as a citizen. Therefore, it seems that the line of error that female citizens are socially allowed to cross is a lot smaller than it is for male citizens. As Nedelsky states, the historical exclusion of women within citizenship “is built into the very conceptual framework of citizenship” (2001). Nedelsky points out that women have been legally included within the “male rights of citizenship”, and that historically women’s roles and identities have been tied to the roles of mothers and wives (2001). The interconnectedness of women’s identities to the private sphere as wives and mothers makes them “appear not to be the independent, rational agents that liberal theory presupposed” (2001). As a result, these statements by Nedelsky could explain why female artists such as the Dixie Chicks and more recently Taylor Swift or Beyoncé are told to ‘shut up and sing’, or how their competency and intelligence are often questioned when they express their legal rights such as the freedom to speak out on political issues. Also, it could explain why the line of error, the fault margin, and the social roles for women who are or get involved in politics are slim, restrictive and exclusionary.

Likewise, the case of the Dixie Chicks further reveals western society’s long history of misogyny towards women within power, and as Beard suggests we still have a problem with women being in power. For instance, during the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections and still to this day the subject of Hilary Clinton’s emails still comes up, or when politicians tried to degrade Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for dancing in a university campaign video. As Beard explains “You cannot easily fit women into a structure that is already coded as male; you have to change the structure” (2017). This statement is also parallel to Nedelsky’s in which she expresses that in terms of liberal citizenship which is has been built on a flawed and exclusionary patriarchal structure “the existing structures of inequalities are among the effects of colonialism that imposed the nation-state structure – and its accompanying conceptions of citizenship – in the first place” (2001). Additionally, Nedelsky also adds that women were not included within the initial structure of citizenship since they were not entitled to be landowners and were not allowed to occupy the public sphere where political engagement is centered (2001). Nedelsky, also points out that in countries that praise equal rights and citizenship “Women’s exclusion from the vote, from public office, and from professions such as law continued throughout the nineteenth century” (2001). The notion of structural formations that create and form the basis of society such as citizenship, and the state, military, and corporate as Mills observed can be perceived as structural functionalist theory. Here, we can see how society can be observed as acting in a structural functionalist way in which it is “a large, living organism made up of a number of different interrelated structures” (Anderson, 2012). Therefore, in order for society to function there has to be a certain structure or format or else chaos will ensue since “the system is fragile and unstable” (Anderson, 2012). The fragility of the system can be seen in the case of the Dixie Chicks where a few comments caused mass public outrage amongst people who supported President Bush, and for members within Congress. Music artists such as the Dixie Chicks and Eminem as we have seen have cultural and social power in society, and Foucault saw power as being unstable and fluid and constantly changing since “power is not something acquired, seized

or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away” (as cited in Lemert). Therefore, trying to create stricter explicit content labels, or banning the Dixie Chicks’ music, or using silencing discourse such as ‘shut up and sing’ are all the ways in which the power elite such as the state and corporate institutions try to maintain control. Moreover, these institutions that create the base of power in society are created by humans, and Berger and Luckmann explain that “Institutions also, by the very product of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct” (as cited in Lemert). Thus, Anderson notes that within society “elements of disharmony and mal-integration are present. These elements necessitate the presence of social control mechanisms” (2012). Consequently, silencing and banning the Dixie Chicks from radio and calling Eminem’s music into question within Congress are all forms of social control in order to maintain hegemony. As a result, Anderson states that within the notion of American structural functionalism in society there is also “Deviance and other dysfunctional forms of adaptation [that] put strain on existing social structures” (2012). For this reason, the comments made by Maines were perceived as social deviance and a threat to the social structure where the status quo and hegemony of society was being upheld by the public, the media such as television and radio, and by politicians such as President Bush. Likewise, Eminem’s music and music videos were also seemed as deviant and threatening which is why Congress tried to increase censorship labelling in music. Perhaps, the Dixie Chicks and music artists such as Eminem were the ‘deviants’ who opened the flood gates and allowed for artists today to be both active and engaged citizens as well as artists/entertainers without facing harsh punishment. For this reason, Anderson states that “Eventually, though, dysfunctional elements are integrated into the mainstream, and equilibrium is restored to the system” (2012). If one looks at the music that was being put out in the subsequent years following 2003 when the public opinion of Bush, and support for the war declined it is clear that more anti-war and anti-bush sentiment was beginning to be integrated within mainstream society. Thus, Anderson points out that “Social change is always adaptive and gradual”, and as seen in the Dixie Chicks’ documentary conservative backlash against them eventually died down and many people who initially disagreed Maines found themselves agreeing with her comments.

In conclusion, the case of the Dixie Chicks and other artists such as Eminem reveals the ways in which the major institutions who uphold power in society such as the state and corporate can influence society, and utilize certain methods in order to maintain stability within a fragile social structure. Likewise, the treatment of female music artists such as the Dixie Chicks, Taylor Swift, and Beyoncé, and female politicians reveals the misogynistic and exclusionary structure of U.S. citizenship since freedom of speech is a legal right, yet when women and other minorities have the power and opportunity to speak out they are silenced and punished. As seen in Beard and Nedelsky’s works, women are punished more harshly and severely for stepping out of their ‘boundaries’ or ‘roles’ when they enter the public political sphere. As a consequence of this exclusionary tradition women and young girls are still being excluded from engaging with the political sphere since they are labelled by the power elite, and those within major institutions as being naïve, unintelligent, and incompetent of having political opinions and voices. Thus, we can see the above within former Governor Mike Huckabee’s tweet which basically tells young girls and women that their political voices do not matter, and one cannot help but think of Senator Boxer’s comments to Mr. Dickey in which she asked if the companies actions against the Dixie Chicks “sent any type of a chilling message to people that they outta shut up and not express their views one way or another?” (C-SPAN, 2003, 1:43:55). Not only does society have a problem with music artists who step out of their roles as music artists and entertainers, but we

also have an issue in the ways that we view female citizens since we actively silence them along with other minorities. Additionally, the Congress hearings on the Dixie Chicks and Eminem shows how fragile the social structure is in which the major power institutions such as the state and corporate infringe on each other in order to maintain control. However, if artists such as the Dixie Chicks did not use their freedom of speech to voice their opinions then we would never see a social change (though gradual) in society.

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