COUNTRY MUSIC AS COMMUNICATION: A COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE LYRICS OF TRADITIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC AND PROGRESSIVE COUNTRY MUSIC

THESIS

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By

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The purpose of this study was to determine whether the themes and values represented in lyrics of progressive country music are significantly different from those of traditional country music. Content analytical techniques were used to determine, first, themes and, second, attitudes reflected in those themes in each type of song. The chi square test of independence was utilized, and a difference significant to the .05 level was found between themes and attitudes of lyrics in the two song types.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1973, Michael Hecht stated, "Of all communications we receive perhaps none is as pervasive or as universally appealing as music."¹ The analysis of music lyrics has expanded in many areas of communication research.

To best understand progressive country music, it is essential that one look at the beginnings of country music. Country music is an integral part of American history. In the pre-mechanized society of 100 years ago, there were no records, television, radio, or cinema. For the most part, an individual created his own entertainment. Often families and communities would entertain themselves by telling stories through songs. Country music, as it came to be labeled, was simply that—music that reflected the lives and times of a growing country, and a new breed of people in search of a new dream in a new frontier.²

Country music emerged out of the varied social and musical currents of the South. According to R. S. Denisoff,


it was a unique marriage in which the simple values of fundamentalist religion, hard work, and all of the contradictory elements of southern life were wedded: 3 "Both the music and lyrics were a mirror of a region where the bars and stripes remained a reality." 4 Bill Malone stated in his book, Country Music, U.S.A., that the socially-ingrown rural South, from Virginia to Texas, produced a population that, in its commitment to and preservation of traditional cultural values, should be considered a distinct social unit. The music of these people, lying outside the mainstream of American cultural development, provided the origin and nucleus of what we now call country music. 5 Traditions which had once been the common property of Americans therefore endured in the South long after they had ceased to be important elsewhere.

Country song lyrics have always dealt with subjects that other forms of music would not touch. Country music became the naturalistic mode of expression within American popular music, dealing with such problems as tragedy, hate, happiness, religion, sex, and death. Country music has said in effect, "This is how it is." It has down-to-earth, believable lyrics and describes a situation, story, or experience that is realistic. 6 Country music seems to depict an honest reflec-

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4 Ibid.
5 Malone, op. cit., p. 5.
tion of the times in which we live. It highlights the basic problems of man.

Phase One: Precommercialization

Country music, for all practical purposes, had three distinct phases. Phase one was commercialization—the Jimmie Rogers era, beginning in the early 1920's, during which country music was finally accepted by recording companies. It was in this period of time that the Grand Ole Opry began broadcasting on radio station WSM, capturing the attention of millions throughout twenty states. The population that country music entertained included the blue collar workers of the coal mines, railroads, and truck lines, all of whom came closer to understanding Jimmie Rogers than Kate Smith.

The Grand Ole Opry Saturday night broadcasts soon reached as many people as President Roosevelt's "fireside chats."7 By the late 1930's no one could doubt the importance of the Opry or the loyalty of country music fans. According to Denisoff, country music's success provided a formula for the performers and promoters behind the music.8 Fiddles, guitars, banjos, mandolins, and autoharps were the tools of "country pickin'." The Opry elaborated strict rules of conduct which covered a wide area. Only certain string instruments could be played on stage of the Opry's home, Ryman Auditorium, and drinking, cursing, and smoking were not tolerated.9

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7 Denisoff, op. cit., p. 80.
8 Ibid.
Phase Two: Commercialization

The emergence of phase two became evident when Hollywood discovered the singing cowboy. The Hank Snows, Roy Acuffs, and Chet Atkinsses dominated the airwaves of radio, while Hollywood's singing cowboys continued America's love affair with the West. The western films of the early 1940's captured southern populations, but they also enjoyed immense popularity throughout the states.  

World War II had a profound effect upon country music. The war uprooted millions of farm dwellers, miners, etc., and scattered them around the country. In Okinawa the popular battle cry was, "To hell with Roosevelt! To hell with Babe Ruth! To hell with Roy Acuff!" During the years of the war, country music probably reached more people than it had in the previous twenty.  

After the war ended, country music again underwent changes. Recording executives, and performers discovered that the chief stumbling block to the acceptance of country music by popular fans was its instrumentation. The hillbilly fiddle and the wailing electric guitar either repelled the musical sensitivity of listeners or created a "rural" or "tavern" image with which urbanites could not identify. So the result was a new musical hybrid--the Nashville Sound. The Nashville Sound did away with fiddles and steel guitars and incorporated strings, brass, and background choruses.  

Ibid.
This sound was characterized by a relaxed, tensionless feeling and had little resemblance to early country instrumentation.\textsuperscript{12} A jazzed-up electric guitar, along with electric bass, and drums, replaced the conventional instrumentation, and thus every country singer would be accepted, provided his voice was not too nasal and the song was not too "backwoodsy."

Country music's flirtation with main stream popular music gained momentum. In 1961, there had been a total of eighty-one full-time country music radio stations. By 1966, the figure had risen to 328. By 1967, over 2,000 radio stations programmed at least some country music daily.\textsuperscript{13} Country music, in all its manifestations and styles, became a dominant musical source of the mid 1970's. Country music has grown to be a $1,300,000,000 business nationwide and has now moved into the programming, either full or part-time, of 52 per cent of all radio stations in America, AM and FM.\textsuperscript{14} Every major market now has at least one radio station that programs country music full-time. Radio station WHN in 1973 became the first New York station to program only country records. Within eight months, WHN's listening audience increased 50 per cent to 1.2 million.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[\textsuperscript{12}]Ibid., p. 163.
\item[\textsuperscript{13}]Steve Troy, "Country Music Road Widening to 300,000,000 Million Nationwide Business," Variety, XII (June 1974), 78.
\item[\textsuperscript{15}]Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Phase Three: Progressive Country Music

The Role of Rock

The next major change in country music came about because of the influence of what became known as rock'n'roll. Elvis Presley shocked Nashville to its foundations. Elvis began his career singing country songs, and soon became the first country singer to become a national sensation. He became number one on country as well as popular music charts, yet the response from Nashville was mixed. The majority of the Nashville traditionalists rejected the new sound, stating it was not country and of questionable moral value. More conservative Nashville people agreed with the view of the White Citizens Council that rock'n'roll was part of a sinister Negro plot to corrupt white youth.\(^{16}\)

Nashville continued with its hillbilly singers, but had to share the country charts with the rockabillies. Soon the majority of country singers converted to the lucrative pop market formula. Many artists during recording sessions increased instrumentation in the rhythm section, and added strings, horns, and chorus.

During the 1960's, the Grand Ole Opry's stress on fundamentalism, political conservatism, and clean living had not changed, and declining record sales depicted this clearly. The Country Music Association estimated the country music audience at the time was a low 6 per cent of

\(^{16}\)Denisoff, op. cit., p. 82.
the record buying public. The rock revolution, with the advent of the Beatles and Bob Dylan forced country music to return to its loyal hardcore fans. Loyal country fans disapproved "the new morality," civil rights protests, and drug usage. Yet, the rock connected concept of "doing it your own way" was steadfastly invading Nashville.

A liberation movement had, in fact, begun in Nashville. A few noted artists began to produce their own records, took care of bookings, formed production companies, and built their own studios. Many artists were soon recording songs dealing with sex. The songs were considered immoral by some, yet the song, "Help Me Make It Through the Night," was selected best single of the year in 1972 by the Country Music Association.

For the large recording companies, country music had been manageable, predictable, and above all, a safe investment. The unofficial Nashville establishment was a small group of record company executives whose authority had never been seriously challenged. Yet, within the past few decades, various singers and writers had become disenchanted with the personal and artistic strictures imposed by the Nashville establishment. Some challenged these strictures and suddenly found bookings cancelled and contract options lapsed. In effect, a blacklist existed for those who stepped out of line or broke the unwritten codes musical or behavioral standards.

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18Denisoff, op. cit., p. 83.
19Ibid., p. 85.
As a result, many musicians began to seek other recording companies, many of which were in Texas and not associated with the Nashville system.

The Role of Texas

Texas was part of the southern heritage and yet also it was part of the West. To most Americans, Texas was and is the West. The music originating in Texas arose from older southern sources, but had to adapt to the changing conditions of the Southwest. In Texas, conditions provided fertile ground for new musical development. Early in the twentieth century, Texas experienced a series of developments which served to make its music unique. The oil boom and the rapid growth of industrialization set Texas apart from sister states. A new kind of country music sprang up—honky-tonk. The Texas oil boom created numerous frontier life areas, with taverns selling illegal liquor and catering to the desires of oil workers. Songs about mother, home, and church were out of place in the honky-tonk environment. Instead, honky-tonk songs were about drinking, despair, adultery, and the rigors of the city with titles like "Your Cheating Heart," "If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time," "Honky Tonkin'," and "It Wasn't God who Created Honky-Tonk Angels." Texas bar bands resorted to the use of deep bass fiddle and electric guitar. The songs reflected the problems and changing social status of the rural dweller. 20

20 Ibid.
Now, in the 1970's, country music's latest hybrid of music again originated from Texas. **Progressive Country Music** is a phrase that originated in Austin, Texas, in the late 1960's.\(^\text{21}\) Progressive country music was not strictly Texas music; it was popular throughout the country. However, by embracing rock music style, musicians evolved a brand-new hybrid of country and rock and made Austin, Texas the fastest growing country music center in the U.S.\(^\text{22}\) The performers of progressive country music have grown with country music, and by sophisticating the lyrics and increasing the tempo they transformed country music to meet the changing times and demands of the younger generation.

**Popularity and Influence of Progressive Country Music**

Progressive country music reached its peak of popularity around 1975. During this time two radio stations programmed a totally progressive country music format: KOKE-FM, located in Austin, Texas, KAFM-FM, in Dallas, Texas. Both stations reported large rating increases with the implementation of the new format. Additionally, Austin's public television station, KLRN-TV, produced a thirteen-week series of programs containing a blend of country-rock performers called **Austin City Limits**. The series was programed by the 186-station

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\(^{22}\)*"Grover's Paradise," *Time*, IX (September 1974), 70.
Public Broadcasting Service and plans were made for syndication on commercial television.23

Country music's history had been marked by clear-cut eras, but the country music of the 1970's was in a state of flux. Nashville was invaded by numerous recording labels; more than one hundred minor labels have been started since 1974. Thus, recording executives reevaluated their positions and policies regarding musicians and musical content.

Statement of the Problem

According to Chris Wren, country music is traditionally rural—southern in its origin, conservative in its politics (but with a stubborn streak of gut liberalism), blue-collar in its economics, blatantly patriotic, fundamentalist about God, and nostalgic about Jesus.24 It distrusts urban wealth and intellect, but tolerates homegrown vices such as drinking or philandering when accompanied by an admonition that they do not come free.25

Previously, the audience of country music was what political scientists called "middle Americans." These were the people the Republic could depend upon to pay their taxes and to send their sons faithfully to war, and country music assured these middle Americans that they still mattered.

23 Ibid.


25 Ibid., p. 12.
Tom T. Hall once stated that "Traditional Country songs described the average blue-collar working man who has two kids, a car payment, sort of digs Agnew [former U.S. Vice President Spiro T. Agnew]. That is country music."\textsuperscript{26} Waylon Jennings, one of the more popular star performers of progressive country music said, "Country music is as close to the truth as you can get without going to church."\textsuperscript{27}

The specific question toward which this study was directed was whether the themes and social values propagated by progressive country music are significantly different from those of the older, mainstream country music. If so, the findings would seem to be significant in that they would suggest a shift in values--the younger generation in a traditionally conservative area shifting concerns from those of a number of previous generations.

\textbf{Purpose}

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the themes and social values represented in the lyrics of progressive country music are significantly different from those of traditional mainstream country music. Content analysis was used to make the determination. The lyrics of each song was the unit of analysis; each song's words were analyzed as to the theme or themes with which they dealt and the attitude they reflected concerning the theme or themes. Data from

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
analysis of progressive country music lyrics were then compared to data from traditional country music to determine if differences existed and if they are significant.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that progressive country music propagates different themes and attitudes from those of traditional mainstream country music. Additionally, it was hypothesized that differences between the two song categories, both in thematic content and in moral positions taken (values propagated) would be significant to the .05 level.
CHAPTER II

RECENT AND RELATED LITERATURE

It has been said that music is the universal language. Throughout the years, music has been studied in terms of its communicative effects. It contains all the elements of communication: source, channel, message, receiver. Researchers in the field of communication have dealt with message content, focusing on one area in the communicative process. The importance of message and analysis is easily realized when one reviews the theses, dissertations, and studies completed each year which are related to message content.

The first serious socio-scientific inquiry into popular music was conducted by T. W. Adorno in 1941. He analyzed the fundamental character of popular songs and the role of musical agencies in standardizing certain musical forms. Adorno concluded in his study that disc jockeys played songs that the public wanted to hear.\(^{28}\)

John Peatman differentiated themes in popular song lyrics through the use of content analysis. He found that 92 per cent of the songs dealt with "love" and could be classified into three major types of lyrics: the "happy in love" ballad, the "frustrated in love" song, and the "novelty song with sex

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interest." Both Adorno and Peatman were interested in discovering what the major content areas of popular music expressed.

The advent of rock'n'roll music in the mid-fifties resulted in several studies conducted to determine message statements of the lyrics. S. I. Hayakawa asserted in his study of popular songs that the internalization of the popular song lyric is harmful to individuals because of the lyrics intentional orientation. Language that is intentionally-oriented exhibits a lack of correspondence to the real world. He said that lyrics of the songs he studied were intentionally-oriented because the lyrics depicted an unrealistic portrayal of life, presenting a fantasy or romantic idealism of actual conditions of life.

Donald Horton analyzed the themes of popular songs as they dealt with the relationship between male and female. The popular songs appearing in the June, 1955, issues of *Hit Parade, Country Song Roundup, Rhythm and Blues*, and *Song Hits Magazine*, were surveyed to determine the dominant messages in each of the 235 listed songs. Out of the total number of songs, 196 (or 83 per cent), dealt with love in some fashion.

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31 Ibid., p. 401.
and were included for analysis. Using a form of content analysis with himself as the rater, he divided the song messages into five categories: Prologue; Act I, Courtship; Act II, Honeymoon; Act III, Downward Course of Love; Act IV, All Alone. The categories were constructed to represent what Horton felt were the various stages of activity in which people in love are involved. Horton concluded that popular music provided a tool with which the listener could identify socially acceptable roles.³²

James T. Corey, in 1969, attempted to repeat Horton's analysis by comparing 1955 lyrics with 227 songs published in 1966 magazines. Corey's study stated that 50 per cent of the songs were classified as rock'n'roll.³³ An interesting comparison between studies became evident when Corey found only 64.7 per cent love songs compared to the 83 per cent of the songs contained themes other than courtship and love. Corey's findings demonstrated a noticeable change in the type and quantity of messages during an eleven-year period. Corey stated that, because of the lack of a year-by-year analysis, "a superficial comparison of the mood of popular music in the fifties to that of the sixties suggests that the early music was languid, searching, sweet; the music of

the late sixties is more sensual, direct, sexual, and gutsy.\textsuperscript{34} He concluded that lyrics in the later period had changed significantly from 1955, the major difference being "the more active character" of the 1966 boy-girl courtship. In the idealized sequence revealed by rock'n'roll lyrics of the sixties, one actively searches out and becomes involved with someone else rather than passively waiting for an affair.\textsuperscript{35} The idea here is that love is not placed in the hands of fate but is actively controlled by the lovers. Therefore, rock'n'roll lyrics are not likely to discuss "falling in love." Thus, Corey demonstrated that the lyrics of the 1950's were in a transition period and differed both in type and context from those of 1966.

Richard Cole analyzed the most popular lyrics throughout a ten-year period from 1960 to 1970. Cole utilized other variables in addition to love in his study. He used Billboard magazine as his source of popular rankings. At the end of each year, Billboard rates the top ten songs of that year. Of the 100 songs included in Cole's study, seven were instrumental, leaving 93 songs available for analysis. Love and sex were combined into one of four topics of study. He stated that sex was the most salient variable infusing the youth culture. Love-Sex was the predominant theme in 71 per cent of the lyrics over the ten-year period. Throughout

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 729.
the entire ten-year period, marriage was mentioned only four times. Cole concluded that more liberal attitudes toward physical desire became widespread. 36

John Wanzenreid in 1972 wrote his doctoral dissertation on the extentional and intentional orientations of rock'n'roll music from 1955 to 1972. He defined "extentional-oriented music" as that which corresponds to reality in an accurate and realistic manner. "Intentionally-oriented" songs, on the other hand, depict an unrealistic romanticized approach. His study was an attempt to find when early 1960's popular rock'n' roll songs became more extensional. He concluded that prior to the mid 1960's, the majority of songs were intentional oriented, but that popular music became more extensionally oriented, during the mid 1960's due primarily to the impact of the Beatles and Bob Dylan. 37

Previous research studies have focused upon popular music, most notably rock'n'roll. This present study focuses on country music, a topic never seriously studied with objective, quantitative techniques. This study, like previous studies mentioned, focused on one area of musical content over a set period of time.


The construction of the categories for this project was similar to Cole's study in two ways. First, the concept of love-sex was used in a like manner with Cole's study, a decision based on the overall man-woman relationship concerning romance and physical desire. Love-sex in this study was constructed to determine the status of the relationship (beginning, continuing, and ending), and the attitude (physical desire or romantic desire). Secondly, Cole had religion as a topic of research as does this study. However, Cole incorporated religion as a topic due to the mass media debate over the role of religion at that time. Religion was chosen as a category for this study due to its heritage in country music.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers the procedures and methods employed to answer the research questions asked in Chapter I. Included are the choice and utilization of the songs under study, the design of the research, the training of coders, the procedure for the ratings, the means for ensuring reliability of coders, and the method of analysis.

Sample

There is a staggering number of new country music songs produced each year, very few of which achieve national fame and recognition. The songs that do reach national prominence are those with which this study was concerned. Songs which attain the highest ranking on music charts are those songs which are played over the air more than any other. Additionally, they are the most frequently purchased in the form of records and sheet music, most in demand at live concerts, and have the lyrics that are embedded in the minds of most listeners. Songs rated number one because of frequency of exposure, have the potential for exerting the greatest influence on listeners.38

A study, then, which seeks to determine the message content of country music should direct itself

to an examination of those songs which appear to be most popular and thus influential.

This study of content analyzed country music lyrics of the top rated songs during the year 1975. Billboard magazine was the source used to obtain the song titles for analysis. Billboard magazine is a weekly magazine publication that is considered the most inclusive and exhaustive source on the popularity of current songs.

Each week Billboard compiles a top 100 listing of the titles of country music recordings. They also provide indicators as to whether the recording has ascended or descended on the chart compared to the previous week. To compile a list of all songs that appeared on the top 100 listing in 1975, the top 100 country songs list of each weekly issue of Billboard for 1975 was examined. The entire list from the January, 1975 issue of Billboard provided the first 100 song titles. Then, as new titles showed up in the list each week, these were added to the original 100. Using this method, 493 song titles were identified as having been listed in Billboard's top 100 weekly playlist for 1975.

Each of the 493 song titles was typed on a separate index card. The cards were then sorted by three independent judges into two categories: traditional country music and progressive country music. The judges were music directors of three country music radio stations in Dallas and Ft. Worth, Texas. The use of music directors to serve as judges seemed
appropriate due to their knowledge of the current single hits. Of the 493 songs selected for the study, only 34 were uniformly considered progressive country songs by the three judges. If any of the judges disagreed on whether a particular song was progressive, that song was discarded. Unanimous agreement among judges was thought to give more accurate results.

After the progressive songs and the songs over which the judges disagreed were deleted from the list, an additional 34 country songs were randomly selected. These songs were, of course, all traditional. These 34 songs, added to 34 progressive songs, gave a total of 68 songs for analysis.

The lyrics to each of the 68 songs were obtained by one of three ways. First, sheet music provided one source of printed lyrics. Second, many artists print the lyrics of each song on any long-playing album they produce. This proved to be a good source of obtaining lyrics. Third, when neither of the above were available, the researcher had to obtain the remaining song recordings, listen to each song, and transcribe each word by hand. As would be expected, this method proved most time-consuming.

Category Construction

In this study, the "themes" served as categories, and since the song might deal with several themes, lyrics could fit into more than one category. Additionally, the position (approved, disapproved, acceptance, etc.) taken on each of
these themes/categories as reflected in the song's lyrics, indicated the "attitude" or "value."

The first category constructed in this study was entitled "love-sex." This category dealt with the love-sex relationship of man-woman, where a physical or romantic relationship was either being established, continued, or terminated. It was expected that love-sex themes would show up about equally in both types of country music, but that progressive country music would reflect a more permissive attitude. For example, if a song dealt with living together in a positive manner, then the theme would be categorized as love-sex; the value or attitude, as untraditional.

The second category constructed was entitled "social comment." It was expected that progressive country songs would contain more references to current social conditions and that traditional country songs, when they do deal with social comment, would tend to reflect conservative values and attitudes. For example, if a song mentioned the Women's Lib movement but denounced the movement, the theme would be categorized as social comment; the value or attitude, traditional.

The third category constructed was entitled "religion." This category includes any reference to the Deity, to "Lord," to "Jesus," etc. It was expected that traditional country songs contain more references to religion, and that progressive country songs, when they do deal with religion, would tend to
be irreverent, to reflect a disbelief in organized religion or to be profane. Any religious assertion denoting positive attitudes towards sacred things was considered traditional. Negative assertions were considered untraditional. For example, if a song spoke out asking God's support to see the protagonist through an encounter, the theme would be categorized as religion; the value or attitude, as traditional.

The fourth category constructed was entitled "morality other than love-sex." This category was developed to deal with moral issues such as drinking, gambling, use of illegal drugs or other controlled substances. An untraditional attitude would be more permissive concerning alcohol, dope, or other such vices. For example, if a song proclaimed "We Don't Smoke Marijuana in Muskogee," the theme would be categorized as morality other than love-sex; the value or attitude, as traditional.

The fifth category was entitled simply "other." This category was devised for a theme that could not be otherwise categorized. It was expected that most of the themes expressed in the lyrics of country songs would fit within one of the above four categories.

Coders

The next step was to recruit and train coders to analyze the data and determine the themes, and attitudes of each song. Six individuals were selected out of 23 volunteers
from a survey of radio-television-film class at North Texas State University to participate in the study. Four of the six individuals chosen were utilized to code and analyze lyrics for the pilot study (see Appendices A and B). The remaining two individuals were used to conduct the final study.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted to test categories and coder instructions. The instructions (see Appendix B) and directions were discussed with the four coders to determine whether they had a clear understanding of the categories and what was required of them. Once the coders felt secure in their understanding of the categories and instructions, the researcher randomly chose ten songs from the 68 typed index cards. Each coder then independently coded each of the ten songs.

Once the ten songs had been categorized and the attitude of each determined, the session stopped and a discussion followed to obtain coder feedback. The coders reported they felt the instructions were clear and understandable. The expressed some confusion concerning two of the five categories. An apparent overlap of categories II and IV was discovered. Category IV, "morality other than love-sex," needed revision and clarification. The introductory statement in Category IV (see Appendix A) was expanded to define the categories'
limitations. Category IV was concerned with moral issues other than love-sex and centered upon gambling, excessive drinking, and drug usage.

Additionally, the coders expressed some confusion with the word "progressive" in determining the attitude of each song. Therefore, the word "untraditional" was substituted for "progressive." For the sake of consistency, untraditional will again be referred to as progressive.

The problems encountered in the first pilot study precluded a sufficiently high rate of intercoder reliability. It was determined that a second pilot study was necessary. Two weeks elapsed before a second coding took place. During this time, categories II and IV, and the word "progressive" were amended according to coder feedback as previously stated. Once again, ten new songs chosen at random were given to the coders to analyze and test the amended categories. The second coding proceeded without problems. Using Scott's formula for testing reliability, an .80 reliability coefficient was obtained, and this was deemed sufficient to end the second pilot study. The discussion following the second session produced positive feedback that instructions and categories were clear and understandable. If intercoder reliability had been low, further refining of categories and instructions would have resulted.

39 William A. Scott, "Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding," Public Opinion Quarterly, XIX (Fall, 1965),
Coding

The two coders not used in the pilot study were used to conduct the main study. The 68 index cards on which the song lyrics were typed were presented independently to the two coders. Each coder received two sets of 34 cards that were numbered sequentially 1-34 and 35-68. After reading the lyric, each coder compared the lyrics to the category descriptions in the instructions and chose the thematic category or categories to which the song best corresponded. The coder then reexamined the song lyric to determine which attitude it denoted: traditional or untraditional. The coding session took two hours for one coder, and two hours, fifteen minutes for the other coder.

The seven songs on which the coders disagreed were examined by the researcher. This same procedure was used by Cole in his 1969 study which also employed two judges. Since the researcher was an active participant in the development of the categories and training the coders, it seemed logical that he break the tie. For these reasons, the researcher made judgments on each of the seven songs in disagreement which allowed all 68 songs to be included for analysis.

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40 Cole, op. cit.
Data Treatment

In dealing with data, first mentions of song types were tabled and tallied by themes. A chi square analysis was utilized to determine significance of difference at the .05 level. Next, attitude/value decisions were tabled and tallied by song type holding constant on theme. Again, the chi square test was utilized to test significance of difference at the .05 level. Details of and results from data treatment are explained in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this chapter, results of the experiment are reported. The data are examined to determine whether first, lyric classifications, are independent of song type, then attitude/value decisions.

Lyric Classifications

The hypothesis required comparison of mentions of themes by song type and category. A chi square test of independence (also called a chi square contingency analysis) was performed. The chi square test results would show whether the lyric classifications--traditional (T) or untraditional (which, for sake of consistency with song type labels, will heretofore again be referred to as progressive (P)--are independent of the song type T or P. The test results would either show rejection or acceptance of the null hypothesis. If the null hypothesis were proved, this would show the lyrics are independent of traditional or progressive song type and no relationship occurs. If the null hypothesis were to be rejected, the alternate hypothesis would then be upheld; lyrics are dependent on the song type and therefore are related. Rejection of the null hypothesis would also support the contention of this study that the themes found in pro-
progressive country music lyrics tend to differ from those in traditional country music.

The use of a 2 x 5 table, as shown in Table I, consists of two columns and five rows. The two columns represent traditional and progressive songs. The five rows represent the five theme categories used in the study: love-sex, social comment, religion, morality other than love-sex, and other. The numbers within the boxes reflect the observed values, that is the numbers of observations of each theme in each type of song. Thus, for example, the coders observed 76 references to love-sex in traditional country song lyrics, and 17 in progressive song lyrics.

**TABLE I**

**CHI SQUARE TEST OF INDEPENDENCE**

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<td>Religion</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>154</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td><strong>220</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first step necessary to calculate the chi square was to tally the rows and columns, the results of which indicate the observed values. For example, in all song lyrics, the coders observed a total of 93 references to love-sex, so the number 93 is entered to the right of the love-sex category row. Each successive category row is likewise totaled to the right of each row. Additionally, each column is totaled. Thus, of all references to any of the five theme categories, the coders observed 154 in traditional country song lyrics, 66 in progressive song lyrics. Finally, the column total and the row total each equal 220.

As shown in Table I, the observed (0) values have been numerically entered. However, the key to this test is obtaining the expected values (E). The expected values are those that would theoretically be found if lyrics are independent of record type (T or P). To obtain the expected values, the row total is multiplied by the column total and divided by the grand total. In Table II, each cell's observed (0) values are in the same position as in Table I; E values, in the inset boxes.
TABLE II

CHI SQUARE TEST OF INDEPENDENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional Songs</th>
<th>Progressive Songs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love-sex</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To compare the expected and observed values and to test for significance, values are computed as follows: observed value minus the expected value, squared, then divided by the expected value resulting in the chi square value \((O-E)^2 \div E\) = \(x^2\). The calculated chi square value for this test on Table II was 15.596. The degree of freedom \((df)\) was calculated as follows: the number of rows minus one is multiplied by the number of columns minus one \((df = (row-1) \times (column - 1))\). The degree of freedom established was 4.

A comparison chart was then made to the table value for alpha = .05. The chi square table value computed to 9.488 with four degrees of freedom. Since the calculated chi square value (15.956) is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis could be rejected. The null hypothesis is a chi square test of independence in that the two variables...
being considered are independent. However, since the results reject the null hypothesis, it appears highly probable that the two variables (T and P) are not independent, that is, the type of song (T or P) is dependent or related to the category. The results also show a significance of differences to the .01 level. The table value for .05 is 13.28.

Thus, the contention is supported that themes treated in progressive country music tend to differ from those in traditional country music. Indeed, simple observation of the values in Tables I and II seem to bear this out.

Attitude/Value Decisions

The second research hypothesis required for comparison of attitude/value decisions by song type. To answer the second research question, the number of attitude/value decisions were compared by song type, holding constant on each category.

The null hypothesis again states that lyrics are independent of song type and no relationship occurs. Conversely, if the test results allowed acceptance of the alternate hypothesis, then the lyrics are not independent and, therefore, are dependent and related. Rejection of the null hypothesis again would support the contention of this study; in those themes dealt with in the lyrics of both progressive and traditional country music, the values or attitudes reflected in progressive song lyrics will differ from those in traditional song lyrics.
TABLE III

CHI SQUARE TEST OF INDEPENDENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE VALUE</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>ATTITUDE VALUE</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Love-Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>14.05</td>
<td>7.983</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>6.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>47.93</td>
<td>27.06</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>15.90</td>
<td>12.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love-Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Comment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>15.90</td>
<td>12.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Morality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>8.27</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As illustrated in Table III, the row and column totals of each category were tallied respectively. Expected values were derived as previously described and entered into each cell. The chi square test was applied to each of the five categories. The level of significance was again set at the .05 level. The calculated chi square values for each of the five categories were as follows: category one, love-sex, 6.442; category two, social comment, 10.396; category four, morality other than love-sex, 4.677. Categories three and five had insufficient data to calculate the chi square values.

The results of categories one, two and four were highly significant to the .05 level. The calculated chi square values were greater than the table values, therefore, the null hypothesis could again be rejected. Each of the three categories shows a difference where the lyrics of the song are independent showing a relationship between song type and attitude/value. Again the contention is supported that attitude/values reflected in progressive country music tend to differ from those in traditional country music.

Category three, religion, had numerous references to religion, and these were predominately traditional in attitude/value decisions. There were only two religious references in the progressive type songs, yet both were traditional in attitude/value. From this it could be concluded that religion occupies a place in traditional country songs, but is not of much concern in progressive country
songs. Category five, other, contained five traditional attitude/value decisions that did not fit into one of the other four categories.

This study of content analyzed country music lyrics of the top rated songs during the year 1975. The year 1975 was selected because progressive country music had reached its peak of popularity. *Billboard* magazine was the source used to obtain the song titles for analysis. *Billboard* magazine is a weekly magazine publication that is considered the most inclusive and exhaustive source on the popularity of current songs.

Each week, *Billboard* compiles a listing of titles of the 100 most popular country music recordings for that week. The magazine also provides indicators as to whether the recording has ascended or descended on the chart compared to the previous week. For this study, the researcher compiled a list of all songs that appeared on the top 100 listing in 1975. The top 100 country song list of each weekly issue of *Billboard* for 1975 was examined. The entire list from the January, 1975 issue of *Billboard* provided the first 100 song titles. Then, as new titles showed up in the list each week, these were added to the original 100. Using this method, 493 song titles were identified as having been listed in *Billboard*’s top 100 weekly playlist of country music recordings for 1975.

Each of the 493 song titles was typed on a separate index card. The cards were then sorted by three independent judges
into two categories: traditional country music and progressive country music. The judges were music directors of three country music radio stations in Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas. The use of music directors to serve as judges seemed appropriate due to their knowledge of the current single hits. The judges were provided no definition of the two categories, but were instructed to make the sort based on their idea of what constituted the two types of country music. Of the 493 songs selected for the study, only 34 were uniformly considered progressive country songs by the three judges. If any of the judges disagreed on whether a particular song was progressive, that song was discarded. Unanimous agreement among judges was thought to give more accurate results.

After the progressive songs and the songs over which the judges disagreed were deleted from the list, an additional 34 country songs were randomly selected. These songs were, of course, all traditional. These 34 songs, added to the 34 progressive songs, gave a total of 68 songs for analysis.

The lyrics to each of the 68 songs were obtained by one of three ways. First, sheet music provided one source of printed lyrics. Second, many artists print the lyrics of each song on the cardboard cover of any long-playing album they produce. These album covers proved to be a good source of obtaining lyrics. Third, when neither of the above was available for a song the researcher had to obtain the recording of the song, listen to the recording, and transcribe
each word by hand. As would be expected, this method proved most time-consuming.

Category Construction

In this study, the themes of the songs served as categories, and since the song might deal with several themes, lyrics could fit into more than one category. Additionally, the position (approved, disapproved, acceptance, etc.) taken on each of these themes/categories as reflected in the song's lyrics, indicated the attitude or value of that song.

The two attitude categories were developed: traditional and progressive. "Traditional" was defined as approval of, encouragement of, or adherence to customary, conventional morality with respect to love and sex, social movements, religion, drinking, gambling, use of illegal drugs or other controlled substances, and other such areas where there appears to be dichotomous disagreement between what has popularly been labeled "the old morality" and "the new morality". "Progressive" was defined as approval of, encouragement of, or adherence to unconventional morality in these same areas. Criticism of division of one of these two attitudes was to be interpreted as approval or encouragement of the other. During the pilot study, the name of the progressive category was changed to untraditional, and that is the term used below.

The first of the four theme categories constructed in this study was entitled "Love-Sex." This category dealt with the love-sex relationship of man-woman, where a physical or
romantic relationship was either being established, continued, or terminated. For example, if a song dealt with living together in a positive manner, then the theme would be categorized as love-sex; the value or attitude, as untraditional.

The second category constructed was entitled "Social Comment", and was defined as references to current social conditions. For example, if a song mentioned the Women's Lib movement but denounced the movement, the theme would be categorized as social comment; the value or attitude, traditional.

The third category constructed was entitled "Religion". This category includes any reference to the Deity, to "Lord", to "Jesus", etc. An untraditional attitude would tend to be irreverent, to reflect a disbelief in organized religion or to be profane. Negative assertions concerning religion or worship were considered untraditional. Any religious assertion denoting positive attitudes towards sacred things was considered traditional. For example, if a song spoke out asking God's support to see the protagonist through an encounter, the theme would be categorized as religion; the value or attitude, as traditional.

The fourth category constructed was entitled "Morality Other than Love-Sex". This category was developed to deal with moral issues such as drinking, gambling, use of illegal drugs or other controlled substances. For example, if a song mentioned the use of alcohol within a social occasion,
the theme would be categorized as morality other than love-sex; the attitude of value, as traditional.

The fifth category constructed was entitled, "Other". This category was developed for use if the theme of a song could not fit in one of the other four categories.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The specific question toward which this study was directed was whether the themes and social values propagated by the progressive country music are significantly different from those of traditional country music. This study hypothesized that progressive lyrics would reflect a shift in values and attitudes from those found in the lyrics of traditional country music.

Summary

This study, like several previous studies, focused on one area of musical content over a set period of time. The present study focused on country music, a topic seldom studied with objective, quantitative techniques. The research methodology utilized in this study was content analysis, a choice based on similar studies, most notably that of Cole.

Five categories were constructed. The categories were based partially on those used by Cole and partially on the specific needs of the present study. The first category was love-sex, based on the overall man-woman relationship concerning romance and physical desire. Religion was chosen as the second category, due to its heritage in country music. The third category, social comment, was defined as references
to current social conditions. The fourth category was morality other than love-sex. This category was developed to deal with moral issues such as drinking, gambling, and use of illegal drugs or other controlled substances. The fifth category was a catchall: other. This category was devised for themes that the coders recognized as themes, but could not otherwise categorize.

The songs used for analysis were selected from *Billboard* magazine's weekly list of the 100 most popular recordings of country music songs for 1975. Of the total 493 different songs that *Billboard* listed that year, 34 were unanimously selected by three independent judges as being progressive. These constituted the progressive country music part of the sample. From the remaining songs, another 34 were randomly selected to be the traditional country music part.

The test consisted of analyzing the lyrics of each song, the whole song being the unit of analysis. The songs lyrics were analyzed as to the themes and attitude values they expressed. Since one song often contains multiple themes, each song could be categorized more than once.

A pilot study was conducted to test the categories and coder instruction. Adjustments were made, based on information gathered from the pilot study. A second pilot study was conducted, and the results produced an .80 reliability coefficient. A total of four coders were used during the pilot tests. The actual study was conducted with another
two coders, producing a reliability coefficient of, again, .80.

Coder observations were the data. Observations of themes were tabled by song type (T or P), a chi square test of independence was run, and results were found to be significant to the .05 level. This result allowed rejection of the null hypothesis, which meant that themes are dependent and related to song type. The results thus support the contention that themes treated in progressive country music did, in fact, differ from those in traditional country music.

Observations of each theme were then tabled by song type and by attitude or value (T and P in both cases). A chi square test was run on each of the five tables. Results were found significant at the .05 level for three categories: love-sex, social comment, and morality other than love-sex. Tables for the other two categories contained too few observations to test for significance. Therefore, in the case of love-sex, social comment, and morality other than love-sex, the contention is supported that attitudes/values treated in progressive country music differ from those in traditional country music.

Analysis

Love-Sex

Love-sex was the predominant theme of the song lyrics used in the study. These findings were consistent with
those of both Horton\textsuperscript{41} and Cole.\textsuperscript{42} Coders observed a total of 93 themes which they categorized as dealing with love-sex. Traditional country songs contained 76 of these themes; progressive songs, 17.

Traditional country music.--A casual examination of the 76 love-sex themes which the coders observed in traditional country songs seemed to show that traditional songs dealt with love-sex in terms of old fashioned romance much more than in terms of physical desire. Sixty-eight dealt with romance between two lovers. But, for the most part, these songs did not deal implicitly with the intimate, sexual relationships of the lovers. Rather, they dealt with an individual suffering pain and sorrow over a lost love or romance. For example, "She's Acting Single" deals with a deteriorating marriage between man and wife. The wife is "acting single"--a fact which causes the husband to drink excessively. He is drinking doubles to try and hide his sorrow and pain: ("I hide my pain, I drown my sorrows, my heart is breaking like tiny bubbles"). The husband obviously feels defeated about his wife's actions.

The remaining nineteen love-sex themes dealing with romance discussed positive relationships between man and woman. For example, the lyrics to "I'll Still Be in Love with You" reveal a deep lasting love relationship between

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Horton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 570.}
\footnote{Cole, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 396.}
\end{footnotes}
man and wife. The love affair is relatively young ("If today was a hundred years from now, and our love was a hundred and two"), yet appears to have long lasting qualities ("If the world was on its last turn around, I'd still be in love with you").

The eight remaining love-sex themes from traditional country songs were stated in language more suggestive than that which is usually associated with popular culture descriptions of romance. These eight themes were coded as reflecting a progressive attitude. For example, "Sexy Sensations," deals with a man and woman who have just established a relationship. In the song, the man plainly states his sexual desires and expectations of the woman ("I've got sexy sensations and tender temptations and great expectations of you"). He seems to have been uninterested at first in developing a long lasting relationship ("For the more that I tried to get rid of you, the more I just rubbed you in"). Now, however, he seems to feel good about the relationship ("You come into my life like a summer breeze and stayed like a winter storm").

**Progressive country music.**--Of the 17 love-sex themes found in progressive country songs, 11 dealt with sexual desire as opposed to romance. For example, the song, "Jaded Lover," states that two unmarried lovers who have been living together are now in the process of separating. The song implies that the woman has had many other love affairs and
probably will have more in the future ("Well it won't be but a week or two when you'll be loving someone new, must have happened a hundred times before"). The relationship ends as quickly as it began when the man leaves ("Goodby jaded lover, you undercover queen for a day").

The six remaining love-sex themes from progressive songs described romantic situations in which two individuals have recently established a relationship. However, the pairings in these songs were described in a different manner from those in traditional country songs. These songs dealt with close, continual physical companionship or involvement without marriage, and the sexual aspect of the relationship was either strongly implied or implicitly stated. For example, "Would You Be My Lady," deals with a newly-formed relationship in which a man desires female companionship and sexual fulfillment without the complications of marriage. The man asks the woman if he can come to her when emotional and sexual needs stir ("Would you hold onto my head when I get lonely, could I come to you when I'm in need?"). The man imposes no restrictions on his female lover; he merely asks for a place ("Would you have a place for me when I lay my body down?") to come when he feels in need of female companionship—("Would you be my lady?").

Social Comment

Coders observed a total of 43 themes which they categorized as dealing with social comment. Traditional country
songs contained 26 of those themes; progressive songs contained 17.

**Traditional country music.**--Interestingly, all 28 themes on social comment dealt with the problems of divorce or separation. All 28 were coded as reflecting traditional values or attitudes. They seemed to express discontent about social conditions resulting from, or leading to, divorce or separation, but never about the system that produces the social conditions. For example, the song "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" deals with two married adults in the process of divorce. The situation is complicated because of the couple's four-year-old son ("Our little boy is four years old and quite a little man"). The parents try to hide from their son the anguish of divorce by spelling words ("So we spell the words we don't want him to understand"). The divorce will become final in one day, and the mother and son will leave ("Our divorce becomes final today. I love you both and this will be pure H-E-L-L for me"). Another song, "Alimony," deals with the aftermath of divorce. The ex-husband is required by law to pay alimony to his ex-wife and is apparently bitter about it ("Alimony, alimony, work my fingers till they're bloody and boney. Every Friday when I get my pay, I put it in an envelope and mail it away"). The general theme of the song is that marriage failure is a costly experience ("Thought I bought steak, and it was only bologna").
Progressive country music.--The 13 themes dealing with social comment observed in progressive country songs, were all coded progressive in attitude. Four of the 13 referred to women's status in society. For example, lyrics to "The Pill," mention overtly that the wife demands changes in her marriage relationship. Whereas, the wife has been staying home bearing children during most of their marriage ("But all I've seen of this world is a bed and a doctor's bill"), she now announces she will use birth control measures ("You've set this chicken your last time cause now I've got the pill"). The wife demands her independence or liberation from motherhood ("I'm tearing down your brooding house, there is gonna be some changes made, cause now I've got the pill").

In Chapter I, the concept of progressive country music as a reaction to the Nashville music establishment was mentioned. The present study seems to support this concept. The remaining nine themes in the "social comment" category from progressive country songs dealt with changes in musical content and style. For example, the lyrics of "Brand New Country Star" state that to be a successful country singer today, a performer can diversify for a much broader audience. The song states that a country singer can break the traditional mold concerning clothing or length of hair ("Well he outgrew his sequined suit, let his hair grow a little too long, his ducktail bit the dust"). The lyrics state that by diversifying music type, the performer can expand into pop music as
well as country ("He can either go country or pop"). The need for change in the Nashville music industry, is discussed in the song, "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Away"). The song demands change from past ways ("It's been the same way for years, we need a change"). The promises from the Nashville music industry seem to be questionable ("Are you sure Hank done it this away").

Religion

Coders observed a total of 29 themes which they categorized as dealing with religion. Traditional country songs contained 27 references; progressive, only two.

Traditional country music.--Religion still occupies a place in traditional country music. Religion is always treated in a positive manner, even in progressive songs. In this study, the religion category included any theme that dealt with an individual's spiritual needs in time of duress. All religion themes in traditional country music were found in love songs where an individual was experiencing some sort of problem. For example, in the song "Unchained Melody," a man pleads to God, ("I need your love, God, please speed your love to me") to help him overcome his loneliness. In another example, "I Can't Help It If I'm Still in Love with You," the song discusses a person's willingness to give up hope that a lost companion will someday return ("Heaven only knows how much I miss you").

43 Because of the reference to love-sex, this song was also categorized as dealing with category one, love-sex.
Progressive country music.--The two religious themes coders found in progressive country songs were both casual, off-hand references to the Deity. One reference to a barn door on which was written "Lord, Jesus Saves"; the other, "Lord knows I tried."

Both references, as mentioned above, appeared to be positive, or at least did not disparage the idea of religion. Both were coded as reflecting traditional values or attitude. However, the important factor here was the lack of references of any kind to religion in progressive country music. The implication seems to be that one does not need to rely on a belief in the Deity or spiritual guidance, but should have tolerance and respect for those who do believe in God and His worship.

Morality Other than Love-Sex

 Coders observed a total of 26 themes which they categorized as dealing with morality other than love-sex. Traditional country songs contained 14; progressive songs, 12.

Traditional country music.--The 14 morality other than love-sex themes in traditional country songs all referred to alcohol. Three of the 14 discussed the acceptability of social drinking; the remaining 11 referred to alcohol as a means of escape (e.g., drowning one's sorrows). An example of a song that refers to the acceptability of social drinking as "I Like Beer." The song describes a man who prefers to
drink beer over other forms of alcoholic beverages ("Whiskey too rough, champagne costs too much, vodka puts my mouth in gear"). The man states that an occasional beer or two after work or on social occasions is fine ("I like beer, it helps me unwind and makes me feel mellow, it makes me a jolly good fellow").

The eleven themes that refer to alcohol, as means of escape, do so within the setting of marital problems or separation. For example, "She's Acting Single, I'm Drinking Doubles," as mentioned above, deals with a wife who is flirting with other men. This causes her husband to drink excessively ("I'm drinking doubles, I hid my pain, I drown my sorrows").

**Progressive country music.**—The 12 morality other than love-sex themes in progressive country songs also dealt with alcohol, but in a much more positive manner. Alcohol use was treated within the setting of "good timing." One example was "Flat Natural Born Good Timing Man," which describes a young, single man, going out on Saturday night ("Stepping out and stepping high, step on back and check my stride, I'm ready for everything come Saturday night"). The alcoholic reference seems to be synonymous with going out on Saturday night ("I'm going down old whiskey road"). All 12 themes were categorized as progressive in attitude or value.

44Because of the reference to alcohol, this song was also categorized as dealing with category four, morality other than love-sex.
Other

Coders observed a total of six themes, which they recognized as themes, but could not categorize in one of the other areas. Traditional songs contained five; progressive, one. All were comical and coded as traditional in attitude or value. An example was, "I Love a Rodeo." The song tells of a rodeo clown who entertains the audience ("Jack Brown was a rodeo clown, used to jump up and his pants would fall down"), for the duration of the rodeo ("cause madness goes on until the sun goes down"). The one progressive song coded in category five, "Door Number Three," deals with a man's fantasy of being on the television show, Let's Make a Deal ("I chose my apparel, I wore a beer barrel, and they rolled me to the very first row, my whole world lies waiting behind door number three").

Discussion

The results of this research study support the hypothesis that traditional and progressive country songs tend to deal with different types of themes. In the themes with which both song types deal, they do tend to reflect different attitudes and values.

Love-Sex

Love-sex was the predominant theme in the country music song lyrics comprised of this study. The majority of love-sex themes were in traditional country songs, and most were
non-sexually-oriented romantic songs. However, a number of love-sex themes in traditional country songs were explicitly sexual in nature, and were coded as progressive in attitude, or value. The results perhaps indicate progressive country music had already begun to influence traditional country music.

Social Comment

Traditional country music proved to be very much concerned with the problems that occur within the social system, specifically, divorce, which represents a failure in the institution of marriage or in the persons involved, and the problem inherent in divorce. Progressive country music deals with much more topical themes—women's lib (by implication), contraception, birth control, reaction to "the establishment." Progressive country music proved to be a conscious reaction to traditional country music in musical style and lyrical content.

Religion

In traditional country lyrics, songs that appeal to "God," "Lord," and "Jesus," especially in love songs where someone was experiencing sorrow or pain over a love affair, seem to reflect a deep, positive faith. The absence of references to religion, faith, worship, the Deity, etc., in progressive songs seems to reflect the attitude that such matters are no longer of much consequence.
Morality Other than Love-Sex

Both traditional and progressive country songs were preoccupied with alcoholic beverages and their consumption. Traditional songs tend to associate drinking with sadness—something one does in a bad time. Progressive songs, on the other hand, associate drinking alcoholic beverages either with good times or with having a good time. Interestingly only one progressive song referred to drugs, "speeding my young life away," in the song "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Away?". Neither song type referred to gambling.

Overall Observations

An equal number of progressive country songs and traditional country songs were in the sample. The question arises, "Why were there fewer themes found in progressive country music?" Perhaps progressive lyrics deal with different types of themes, i.e., other than love-sex, social comment, etc., (than traditional country songs).

The Decline of Progressive Country Music

In spite of the positive results of this study, progressive country music, as a separate genre, has all but disappeared. The question arises, of course, as to why it disappeared. According to Bob Shannon, who, in 1975, was the music director at KAFM, Dallas, Texas, the disappearance can be attributed to lack of material. For example, in the present study, out of 493 titles to make Billboard's weekly listing of
the 100 most popular country songs, only 34 were unanimously judged progressive in theme. That figure represents just under seven per cent of the total.

So few progressive music recordings existed that the two Texas radio stations which supposedly programmed a progressive country format, actually had to include other types of music into their programming. Those stations were KOKE-FM, Austin, and KAFM-FM, Dallas. KAFM-FM was actually a blend of true progressive country, rock, and popular music. KAFM, according to Chuck Dunaway, who was KAFM's program manager in 1975, defined that which constituted progressive country music as the need arose. At KAFM, certain types of instrumentation, voice characteristics, performers' lifestyles, and song lyrics were all used as factors in determining whether a song should be included in the station's progressive format.

In November, 1976, radio station KAFM-FM was sold to Bonneville International Corporation. The new corporate management believed that progressive country music had passed its peak and therefore changed the station's format. Radio station KOKE-FM, Austin, Texas, followed suit four months later and changed its format to traditional country. The fact that these two radio stations changed music formats was probably a major factor in the decline of the progressive country movement as an ongoing musical influence. Many persons who had listened to KAFM and KOKE-FM, because of their supposed progressive music format, abandoned the stations
after their programming change and tuned to other stations. For example, station KSCS-FM, Dallas, Texas, which for years had promoted a middle of the road country music format, obtained a substantial following of the progressive country audience. Another radio station, KFJZ-FM, Dallas, which promoted a popular music format, also experienced a sizeable audience gain.

Although no longer active as a separate genre, progressive country music has left a legacy. Pat Taggert, music editor of the Austin American Statesman stated, "Its contributions are going to be here forever, that blend of rock, pop, and country." The influence of progressive country music has brought about musical changes in traditional country music. Art Davis, who for twenty-five years, has been the music director of radio station WBAP-AM, Ft. Worth, Texas, theorized that traditional country music has incorporated much of the subject matter first explored by progressive music. For example, traditional songs used to deal with sex only by implication; today country songs are more graphic and explicit in subject matter. The Country Music Association voted as best single of 1978, a traditional song entitled, "Help Me Make It Through the Night," which graphically spoke of a sexual affair between two unmarried individuals ("I don't want to be alone, help me make it through the night").

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the past, country music was slow to accept musical innovation, yet today, it appears more open minded concerning it.

Country music has expanded its audience and in doing so has affected mainstream popular music. Country music has capitalized on the success of big money, fame, television, record sales, and personal appearances to extend its appeal to ever greater segments of the population. The diversified country audience today demands musical innovations and songs that reflect the changing times. The commercial success of entertaining the broadened audience of country music increasingly depends on "crossovers," a term used in the recording industry to label a musician as capable of appealing to audiences for rock, pop, and country music.\(^4^6\) The tremendous buying power of the popular music audience influences country music performers to utilize newer songs and instrumentation in an effort to achieve commercial success. Art Davis stated that the old dogs learned new tricks and a whole generation has been amazed to discover so much excellence jammed under one umbrella.\(^4^7\) Popular music, in essence, has absorbed the musical style and audience of progressive country music. Willie Nelson, who personified the progressive country music, was awarded male entertainer of the year for 1979, by the Country Music Association. Nelson accepted the award on


\(^4^7\)Art Davis, Music Director WBAP-AM, Ft. Worth, Texas.
national television wearing blue jeans, T-shirt, and tennis shoes. His lifestyle, appearance, and attitude still represent the non-traditional mold of country music entertainers, yet his country songs receive airplay on many popular music (i.e., non-country) radio stations.

Future Research

The often puzzling directions of the country music movement, bluegrass, traditional, progressive, honky-tonk, etc., will provide a subject for countless discussions. A future research study should replicate this study based on traditional and progressive country music on long-playing record albums. An album will be a best seller based on one or two songs; the majority of songs in an album never receive airplay, and album owners listen to them. Therefore, a multitude of songs that are recorded on an album, that never receive local or national promotion, could provide a vast new area of research material.

One of the main hypotheses of this study was that progressive country music lyrics differed from those of traditional song lyrics. As noted above, this was found to be true, but the present study seemed to focus on those themes that were found primarily in traditional country music. It did not investigate to find what themes were in progressive country music that did not show up much in traditional country music. Therefore, it would seem logical to investigate progressive country music lyrics to find out what themes they
do deal with. A follow-up study should be conducted following this research format in which a sample of top rated country songs from 1980 is compared to progressive country songs from 1975 and tested for significance of difference. The contention of the present study is that progressive country influenced traditional country in musical style and lyrical content. If this is so, then country songs from 1979 should reflect less difference in theme and attitude (when compared to 1975 progressive country songs) than 1975 traditional country songs. Additionally, what was the difference between progressive and traditional songs in terms of melodic line, in harmonics, instrumentation, and finally rhythm?

As stated in Chapter I, country music song lyrics reflect the times in which we live. A year by year analysis, 1975-1980, would possibly show a shift in themes and values where traditional country song lyrics have become more sexually suggestive in the man-woman relationship. The results would give evidence as to the direction of country music in terms of themes and values and audience appeal.

Finally, the present study and these suggestions for future research have dealt only with the lyrics of country music. Yet in Chapter I, the statement was made that progressive country songs and traditional country songs differ musically, also. Therefore, an investigation should be made into differences in melodic line, arrangements, instrumentation, and rhythm. Considering the supposed close relationship
between the musical structure of rock and that of progressive country music, such a study might show that, musically, progressive country music, was more progressive than country.
APPENDIX
APPENDIX A

CODER TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS

Introduction

Let me extend my appreciation for your participation in this study. I will give a brief description of what the study is attempting to prove, and what I hope are easy to read and understand instructions.

This study is known as a content analysis. Content analysis is a widely used method of analyzing data in the field of communication. This study is going to analyze the content of two areas or factors of country music, herein described as traditional country music and progressive country music. As coders in this study you will be asked to read the song lyrics presented to you. Each 5" x 7" card will have one typed song on it and your job will consist of reading the lyrics carefully to determine what theme(s) those lyrics expouse, using the guidelines given. After determining the theme(s) of the song, you will then determine what attitude or position the theme reflects.

Immediately following this introductory section, you will find the instructions you are to follow. Attached is a separate packet that explains and defines each of the five theme-categories. Three or four descriptors are included with the explanation of each category. The descriptors will
serve as your guides to enable you to accurately categorize each theme. Directly following the category descriptors, you will find the attitude descriptors. By attitude we mean whether the theme takes the traditional stand (on whatever the song is about), or an (untraditional) liberal stand (here-on known as progressive stand).

To review: you will be trying to discover (1) what themes the song deals with, and (2) what attitudes these themes reflect. As coders in a study such as this you will be responsible for analyzing the songs independently that were randomly selected for the purpose of analysis. It would be an understatement to say you occupy the most important role in a study of this nature. It is, therefore, of vital importance for you to read the following instructions and then become totally familiar with the five categories and their respective descriptors. The more familiar you are with the categories and descriptors, the sooner we will be finished and the better the results.

Instructions

First read the category descriptors to further familiarize yourself with them. Before continuing, it is important to note that each song may have more than one theme. This is expected and should not present a problem provided you are familiar with the category and descriptors. Following is an example of a few song lyrics.
There you were standing there smiling
    As you made your plans.
You were going to leave me and go
    with him.
You said you loved him so and
    your love will always be.
That's the very same thing you
    once told me.

It's easy to single out the love-sex category. In
category one, the partners (husband and wife as we find later
in the song) are on the downward course of their relationship;
in other words terminating the relationship. Also you'll
find the "other" spouse is "determinating the relationship"
to be (has been) on the downswing. The "other" spouse in this
case happens to be the "dominant participant," by taking action
to terminate the relationship. Finally, the "other" spouse is
depicted as being inconsistent or unfaithful with the spouse
who sings the song.

Continuing the Lyric:

And you still have that little
    golden band on your hand.
Does that little band of gold
    mean nothing to you?
To me it means the world and you've torn
    my world apart.
You're leaving me alone with my
    broken heart.
The "other" spouse had apparently broken from the confines of a traditional marriage. That is, the "other" spouse has been (unfaithful) to the spouse singing the song and to the basic principle of marriage.

We can easily determine the attitude of the song as being traditional within the framework of the descriptors utilized. There was a marriage, the ring symbolized the traditional bond of marriage between the husband and wife.

Below is a sample of how you will score or categorize each song and in it I have categorized the above song.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song #1</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. love-sex</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. social comment</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. religion</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. morality other/love/sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next example will show how a song can have one or more themes to it and how it should be categorized.

Alimony, alimony, work till my fingers are bloody and boney.
O me, Oh my, Oh goodness sake
You married men may think it's funny,
Till one fine day you wake and find you're paying for your mistake.
Every Friday when I get my pay
I put it in an envelope and mail it away.

This song has several themes: the former husband (1) has apparently terminated his relationship with his wife. (2) There are possibly some religious connotations—he is "praying" for his "own sake" or mistakes. (3) There is a social comment here, possibly about the current practice of alimony payment to a spouse of a broken relationship.

Continuing with the song:
Same old song, with a little more blues in it.
I'm paying for it while someone else is using it.
Alimony, alimony, thought I bought steak
and it was bologna.
Me, Oh my, Oh goodness sakes,
I'm paying for my mistake.

To determine the attitude of the themes, it is sometimes necessary to look at the entire song. The themes in this song are probably traditional, reasons being (1) there was a marriage; it had failed, (2) the man is paying alimony to his spouse, which is the current practice.

The song can be categorized as follows:
Song #2

Category | Attitude
---|---
_1. love-sex | O Mixed
_2. social comment
_3. religion
_4. morality
_5. other

You will discover themes, the attitudes of which may be difficult to decipher. If this becomes the case, look at the entire song's framework and then decide if it is a traditional viewpoint or progressive. Certain songs may have hidden tips or meanings that will give clues to enable you to properly categorize them.

Review

Our first session will be a "get-acquainted" session with several goals in mind. First, we'll discuss all the requirements and purposes to clear any questions anyone has. The first session will hopefully serve as a "brainstorm session" to enable me to further clarify instruction, categories and attitude descriptors to simplify the main study. The efficiency of any category system is only as good as the coders' abilities to evaluate the material in a like manner. Inter-coder reliability is what we must strive for to give substance to this research study. What researchers and critics demand from a study such as this is a high-level of inter-coder re-
liability. That means the two of you agreeing at a high rate on each song with an independent judgment.

After I feel that you are sufficiently comfortable in understanding the instructions and categories, the main study will be undertaken. During the main test, there will be no convening between coders. What I need is your own independent judgment to see that your judgments correlate highly with one another.
APPENDIX B

THEME CATEGORIES AND ATTITUDES

I. LOVE-SEX

A. Category: If you should find that a song concerns romance or physical desire of the opposite sex, or reflects upon the overall man-woman relationship, then you should categorize it as LOVE-SEX category. Below you will find some descriptors with examples of situations that might be described in song lyrics which would indicate the LOVE-SEX category.

1A. Stage of Relationship: This is where married couples or unmarried couples are involved in:

1) establishing a relationship
2) continuing a relationship
3) terminating a relationship

(In the first example song in the instructions, I coded the relationship between man-wife as terminating a relationship.)

B. Attitude of LOVE-SEX themes: A traditional attitude can be defined as following within conjunction or confines of marriage, where previous traditions have been followed
and practiced throughout the years. To take the definition one step further, we'll assume two people falling in love, proposing, followed by marriage and the responsibilities and duties that are entailed within the marriage framework.

The progressive viewpoint can be defined as such: where two people meet, establish close ties with one another, possibly romance, but do not follow standard or traditional viewpoint. To elaborate, they could possibly live together without matrimony because of physical desire, convenience or whatever and separate without the social embarrassment divorce causes. Below are some attitude descriptors to enable you to indicate which viewpoint is reflected in the theme.

1) If the song reveals true romantic desire then it is a traditional attitude of LOVE-SEX.

2) If the song reveals physical desire only then it is a progressive attitude of LOVE-SEX (one night stand, etc.).

3) If the song refers to one spouse being given certain freedom not in the confines
of traditional marriage, then it is a progressive attitude of LOVE-SEX.

4) If a song reveals a marital problem with one spouse breaking the marriage bond or rules then this should be considered a traditional attitude of LOVE-SEX.

II. SOCIAL COMMENT

A. Category: If you should find that certain song lyrics refer to certain conditions in our society then you should categorize them as SOCIAL COMMENT. Following are some examples of situations you might find described in song lyrics which indicate the SOCIAL COMMENT category.

1A. Expressions favorable to woman's lib or woman's right in our society.

2B. Expressing the treatment of the working man or woman in society. Pro or con, "Take This Job and Shove It."

3B. Expressing ecological concerns of our society.

4B. Expressing military concerns of the United States.

If you encounter any songs that have a SOCIAL COMMENT, possibly not listed above, it should be carefully weighed against the other categories to decrease chance of error. The second example song I coded had a SOCIAL COMMENT in regard to alimony payments and what society requires of men in those cases involving separation.
B. Attitude of SOCIAL COMMENT: Below you should have sufficient descriptors to enable you to decide whether the theme is traditional or progressive in expressing SOCIAL COMMENT.

1) If the song expresses discontent with the current woman's status, woman's lib movement, etc., then it is a traditional attitude (role).

2) If the song advocates or supports woman's movement then it is the progressive attitude.

3) If a song expresses discontent with certain confines placed upon people by society then it is a progressive attitude. An example of which: if a musician is unhappy with the Nashville music/recording structure, he is considered progressive (untraditional) in his viewpoint of the current Nashville hierarchy.

III. RELIGION

A. Category: If you should find that a song speaks of religion in either specifics or in generalities with references to the God, Jesus, Lord, or the Deity as a whole, then it should be considered as bearing a theme in the RELIGION category. Below are some
examples of situations that might be described in song lyrics which would indicate religious overtones.

I. A. If you should note songs that refer to "praying to God," "I pray to the Lord," "Lord please help me," etc., then it should be considered within the religious framework.

B. Attitude of Religious Themes: Below you will find descriptors to enable you to decide whether the songs' religious references are typical or atypical.

1) Any reference to God, Jesus, the Deity, in a positive manner will be considered of the traditional religious attitude.

2) Any atypical references to the above mentioned, using slang terms will be considered untraditional, religious references. (In the second song I coded in the instructions, the man stated, "Oh, Lord I'm praying for my own sake." This is a guide to be considered within the traditional (positive) religious attitude.)

IV. MORALITY OTHER THAN LOVE-SEX

A. Category: If you should find a song concerning moral issues such as drinking, use of drugs, or other controlled substances, gambling, etc.,
then you should categorize the theme as MORALITY OTHER THAN LOVE-SEX. Below are some examples of situations which might occur in some lyrics which would indicate MORALITY OTHER THAN LOVE-SEX category.

1A. If a song refers to the drug element in such a way as referring to use in a positive or suggestive manner, then it should be classified as progressive--untraditional.

2B. If a song refers to use of alcohol, "drowning my sorrows," or "I like beer," refers to the more traditional viewpoint towards alcohol. It should be noted here, that traditionalists view alcohol not as a sin or immoral when not used in excess.

3C. If a song refers to a person out good-timing on the town, ("Saturday night should be painted red," etc.), gambling, etc., should be considered in the category of MORALITY OTHER THAN LOVE-SEX.

B. Attitude of MORALITY OTHER THAN LOVE-SEX: Below you will find some attitude descriptors to determine whether the songs expouse traditional or progressive viewpoints.

1) If a song refers to drug usage in any way other than negative, then it
should be categorized as a progressive attitude.

2) If a song disclaims all drug usage such as "We don't smoke marijuana in Muskogie," then it is of a traditional attitude.

V. OTHER

If you find a theme in a song that cannot be classified in any of the above categories (after conferring with me), then you can categorize it as "other."

This would include (but not be limited to):

1A. Comic songs that cannot be categorized in any category.
Below indicate how you personally code and categorize each song. Then please review the song and choose the attitude of the song. Please read each song carefully.

### Song #

#### Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1. LOVE-SEX</th>
<th>2. SOCIAL COMMENT</th>
<th>3. RELIGION</th>
<th>4. MORALITY OTHER THAN LOVE-SEX</th>
<th>5. OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Beginning a relationship</td>
<td>A. Expressions of women's liberation</td>
<td>A. All positive reference to the Deity, Lord, God, etc.</td>
<td>A. References to drugs, or other controlled substances</td>
<td>A. Any song that cannot be categorized into any of the above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Continuing a relationship</td>
<td>B. Treatment of working man or woman in society</td>
<td></td>
<td>B. References to alcohol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Terminating a relationship</td>
<td>C. Treatment of ecological concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td>C. References to good-timing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D. References to gambling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Attitude

- Traditional
- Progressive (untraditional)
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