"Single Girl, Married Girl:" Managing the Unmarried Woman in Country Music Culture, 1950-1969.

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On 1 August 1927, The Carter Family recorded their seminal hit, "Single Girl, Married Girl," and thus helped to inaugurate "country" as a distinct category of American popular music.[1] The song compared the lifestyle of a woman without a family, who enjoys leisure time and has extra money to spend on new clothes, to a poor wife and mother stuck at home with a crying child. The story changes its tune in the end, however, when the listener finds that the single woman is looking for a husband while the "married girl" already "has her wedding band." On that day, A.P., Sara, and Maybell Carter also secured a place for the lyrical trope of the "single girl" in the nation's soundscape.

Historian Katherine Lehman defines the figure of the "single girl" in popular culture as "a woman in her twenties and thirties, never married, heterosexual, and without children." The character emerged in television

[1] Bill C. Malone and Jocelyn Neal, *Country Music, U.S.A.: The Third Revised Edition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 65.

shows of the 1960s and 1970s, which Lehman argues, helped Americans come to terms with major shifts in gender roles and sexual norms. Accustomed to women being portrayed as either wives or mothers, audiences appreciated the appearance of a new TV personality. But, the independence and sexuality of the unwed career girl, Lehman compellingly suggests, required management through "characterization, plot devices, and strategic endings."[2] While Lehman focuses solely on television, she effectively opens up the discussion of this archetype in other forms of popular culture.

While country music scholars have addressed the genre's discourse on married women in the postwar period, they leave room for an exploration of how the subculture represented single women.[3] This article furthers the ongoing historical discussion by adding representations of single women to the existing scholarship on wifehood and moth-

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[2] Katherine J. Lehman, *Those Girls: Single Women in Sixties and Seventies Popular Culture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 1.

[3] For more on women, gender, and country music see: Peter La Chapelle, "'Spade Doesn't Look Exactly Starved': Country Music and the Negotiation of Women's Domesticity in Cold War Los Angeles," in *A Boy Named Sue: Gender and Country Music*, ed. Kristine M. McCusker and Diane Pecknold (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 24-43; Peter La Chapelle, *Proud to Be an Okie: Cultural Politics, Country Music, and Migration to Southern California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Pamela Fox, *Natural Acts: Gender, Race, and Rusticity in Country Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Mary A. Bufwack and Robert K. Oermann, *Finding Her Voice: Women in Country Music, 1800-2000* (Nashville: Country Music Foundation Press, 2003); Kristine M. McCusker and Diane Pecknold, eds., *A Boy Named Sue: Gender and Country Music* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004); Kristine M. McCusker, *Lonesome Cowgirls and Honky-tonk Angels: The Women of Barn Dance Radio* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); and Charles K. Wolfe and James Edward Akenson, *The Women of Country Music: A Reader* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003).

erhood. It demonstrates the ways country music culture dealt with the perceived threat of the single woman. Similar to television shows of the 1960s, country music culture managed female sexuality, embodied in the "single girl," through strategic use of biographical information and lyrical themes.

This article hopes to contribute to country music scholarship by analyzing articles and publicity photographs printed in the national fan magazine *Country Song Roundup* and other Carlton publications.[4] This study relies on twenty-five albums recorded by *female* country singers between 1952 and 1969. These songs were performed and frequently penned by Kitty Wells, Jean Shepard, Loretta Lynn, and Liz Anderson. Finally, this article incorporates lyrics and publicity on the oft overlooked Goldie Hill.[5]

Fan magazines, photographic images, and lyrics do not offer us much insight into the thoughts of country music fandom or its focus, the stars themselves. Performer's celebrity personas were commodities mediated by a commercial industry for consumption by a mass audience. Nevertheless, as commodities and advertising outlets, fan magazines often tell us much more about middle-class ideals in the world of country music. *Roundup* includes lyrics, articles on the musicians, publicity photographs, fan club announcements, and the location of music venues nationwide. Additionally, lyrical content allows us to compare star personas and biographies to the source of their fame. Looking at songs performed and penned by representative female singers allows for a narrower focus of the subculture's representations of womanhood in the 1950s and 1960s. Taken together, these sources shed light on con-

[4] While historian Peter La Chapelle has used similar sources, my work seeks to foreground representations of the single woman.

[5] Compare with Fox, 217 n.7. Fox expressed regret at not including more on Hill in her study of female honky-tonk answer songs.

structions of gender and ideas about the single women in country music.

Methodologically, this paper borrows its construction from the Carter Family classic "Single Girl, Married Girl." That is, I will analyze country music culture's representations of wifehood and motherhood alongside those of the unmarried female to better understand representations of the single girl. In doing so, this study follows the archetypal "single girl" into the many intricacies of 1950s and 1960s gender relations. Moreover, it seeks to understand how these roles compared with that of the broader culture in the context of the era's shifting gender relations—namely, changing ideas on women's sexuality and the rise of second wave feminism.

In the postwar era, Americans were subject to normative ideals of womanhood and manhood.[6] Dependent on the presence of a male breadwinner and female homemaker, the idea of "togetherness" took root in the nuclear fami-

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[6] Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000). For an alternative view of this gender ideology see, Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994). Meyerowitz and historian contributors disagree on the nature of the gender ideology of the postwar era, she takes a revisionist approach to the study of women during an era typically understood as a time of mass conformity. Like Elaine Tyler May's seminal study of American private life, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), the historians of postwar America, women, gender, and labor focus specifically on the often overlooked 1950s. However, they place themselves in opposition to May by emphasizing the experience of women of color, lesbians, and the working-class who did not share the experience of white middle-class mothers and homemakers. Needless to say, these historians offer a more nuanced view of the country in the postwar era as they attempt to give women back the diversity of experience and agency *Homeward Bound* downplays. Moreover, these authors offer an alternative to May's "conservative" and "constraints" approach to the study of women in the postwar period.

ly. At the same time, anxiety over premarital sex led to marriage at an earlier age. Domesticity helped curtail fears of the sexual chaos that might ensue after an atomic fallout. Sex was "contained" within marriage for the sake of family and country. "Togetherness," Jessica Weiss observed, fixed the couple within the family. This postwar ideal changed the way Americans perceived romantic relationships and family life. "Togetherness" shifted the emphasis from couple-oriented to family oriented activities. Veneration of motherhood and the novelty of fatherhood, or "masculine domesticity," were the result. Masculine domesticity describes the "focus of male leisure time on family."[7] The media, popular culture, experts, public policy, and governmental monetary assistance all promoted these ideals.[8] However, most people's lives did not conform to this gender ideology. With the help of experts, white middle-class Americans adapted and compromised to stay in often unsatisfactory relationships. By the mid-1960s, the critiques of American relationships posited by feminist writers such as Betty Freidan and Helen Gurley Brown slowly began to influence popular culture.

Single women constituted a potential threat to American family life in the postwar era. Country songs performed by female artists addressed premarital sex, licentious affairs, and the realities of life in an androcentric world. Infidelity, especially, loomed large as songs frequently represented married women as victims or vixens. In contrast, single women took on these and a variety of additional roles; they could be moral guardians or "honky-tonk angels." Additionally, country songs articulated with growing detail the reasons for and aftereffects of failed relationships. The lyrics reveal how both the single girl and the

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[7] Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 85.

[8] For more on American private life in the postwar era see, May, *Homeward Bound.*

married girl in country songs turned the tables on a mother-blaming society and held men accountable for their troubled private lives. Even though they served the ideal of the conservative gender ideology, these songs also represented young unmarried women as sexually available and isolated outside the familial unit. For these reasons, *Country Song Roundup* and other Carlton Publishers publications constructed the biographies of country music professionals well into their twenties as innocent teenagers whose sex life was limited to "dating." These women thus became a member of the ideal family, whether real or fictional. Moreover, *Roundup* lionized country music wives who worked with husbands, prioritized family over career, and conformed to the ideal of docile femininity. In each of these ways, artist's personas remained couched in the normative discourse of the nuclear family and the notion of "togetherness." Country music culture, this study argues, managed the treat of female sexuality embodied in the "single girl" through strategic use of biographical information and lyrical themes.

The "Married Girl" in Country Music Lyrics

In the postwar era, country songs performed by female artists addressed premarital sex, affairs, and the realities of life in an androcentric world. As country music scholars, Mary Bufwack and Robert Oermann observed, previously taboo subjects "became common in country songs in the late 1940s" and "dominate[d] themes in country music [by] the 1950s."[9] Infidelity, in particular, persisted as a popular topic in country music songs of this era. Songs performed by Kitty Wells, Jean Shepard, Goldie Hill, Loretta Lynn, and Liz Anderson represented married women as victims or villains. The country songs of the 1950s remained vague in

[9] Bufwack and Oermann, 143.

their descriptions of failed marriages, whereas those of the 1960s articulate more clearly the negative effects a bad relationship can have on women and families. The 1960s also saw a change in the way women responded to marital problems. Both Lynn and Anderson wrote humorous songs about broken homes. While male honky-tonkers joined the nation in blaming "women for the dissolution of relationships and men's declining psychological state," songs of the 1950s and 1960s, however, featured married women who turned the tables and blamed men for their troubled private lives.[10]

Popular country songs repeatedly represented the married woman as a victim of infidelity. In "Mysteries of Life," on Jean Shepard's 1956 aptly named album *Songs of a Love Affair,* the songstress lamented days of old when "daddy told mother till death do us part…and meant it."[11] Likewise, in "Lonely Heartaches," Goldie Hill tackled a similar issue singing, "in your world of broken vows…all those lonely heartaches you gave to me are coming home to you."[12] Lyrics also showed scorned wives reacting violently to revelations of infidelity. "I'm Gonna Bring You Down" warns a cheating husband, "you had your day but now you'll pay."[13] A 1969 hit by Loretta Lynn shows the transformation of a jilted housewife into an angry "squaw …on a warpath."[14] All said, female characters in country music songs reversed the tables and blamed cheating men for destroying the nuclear family.

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[10] La Chapelle, *Proud to Be an Okie*, 168.
[11] Virgil F. Stewart, "Mysteries of Love," (Acuff-Rose Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[12] Wayne P. Walker, "Lonely Heartaches," (Cedarwood Publishing, BMI / Songs of PolyGram, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[13] Wayne P. Walker and Jim Coleman, "I'm Gonna Bring You Down Hill," (Cedarwood Publishing, BMI / Songs Of PolyGram, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[14] Loretta Lynn, "Your Squaw is on a Warpath Tonight," (Sure-Fire Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.

Postwar honky tonk lyrics also featured women as guilty of cheating. These women, too, blamed men for creating the situation leading up to their own acts of infidelity. In her 1956 debut album, thirty-three-year-old wife and mother Kitty Wells sings her infamous number one country single "It Wasn't God who Made Honky Tonk Angels." From the perspective of a cheating wife, she reminisces the days when she was "a trustful wife" and insists that "married men [who] think they're still single" and not "God" are to blame for wives "gone wrong."[15] The song was censored by the Grand Ole Opry and "cautious NBC executives asked that Wells…change the words 'trustful wife' to 'trusting wife'."[16] In her self-titled 1960 album *Goldie Hill*, she performed the tune, "I Slipped Off My Wedding Ring." The song's lead character expresses regret at cheating, having done it "all in fun" and "never meaning to be untrue."[17] In another example, *This is Jean Shepard* (1959) also includes a song about cheating and her resultant bad reputation. Like Hill, Shepard's "My Wedding Ring" details the realities of extramarital affairs and their devastating effects on women. Shepard portrays a married women offering advice to other "girls." This married girl stands up for honky tonk women who "always seem to be so untrue." But, nevertheless, she blames a cheating husbands who "left [her] for someone new." In a last effort to connect with her audience, Shepard pleads, "I'm a girl just like so many others/ neither good nor bad maybe a girl like you."[18] Women, these songs suggest, could also be complicit in an extra

[15] Jimmy D. Miller, "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," (Peer International, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[16] Mary Bufwack, "Kitty Wells," in *The Encyclopedia of Country Music,* ed. Michael McCall, John Rumble, and Paul Kingsbury (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 553.
[17] Wanda Ballman, "I Slipped Off My Wedding Ring," (Cedarwood Publishing, BMI), LP Discography http://www.lpdiscography.com.
[18] Jack Rhodes, "My Wedding Ring," (Central Songs, BMI), LP Discography, http://www.lpdiscography.com.

marital affair. But, "menfolk" were usually to blame for their bad behavior.

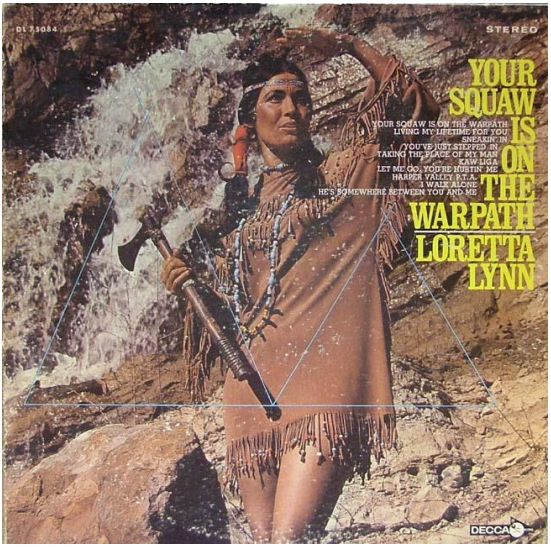


Figure 1. Loretta Lynn, *Your Squaw is on a Warpath Tonight,* 1969.

In the 1960s, lyrics represented women as victims of a wide range of marital problems. Songs written and performed by Loretta Lynn and Liz Anderson exemplify this shift. The theme of neglect recurs in songs from both decades, but lyrics from the 1960s articulated more clearly the many reasons for their abandonment. In "Hundred Proof Heartache," Lynn chastises her cheating and possibly alcoholic husband who she accuses of making his "home the tavr'n down the street."[19] Another song off her 1963 album *Loretta Lynn Sings* asks, "Where were you…all the nights you didn't bother to come home."[20] Women in songs also

[19] Loretta Lynn, "Hundred Proof Heartache," (Acuff-Rose Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[20] Lynn, "Where Were You?" (Acuff-Rose Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.

became less willing to let cheating husbands humiliate them. The title track off Anderson's 1966 album *Stranger* reflects on the toll a bad marriage takes on other relationships. Anderson sings, "Why should I be taken out and tarred and feathered/ to have let myself be taken in by you/ all my friends are gonna be strangers"[21] In Lynn's "Your Squaw is on A Warpath Tonight," the character expresses dissatisfaction with her role as a docile, over-worked housewife and mother at the mercy of a drunken husband. She complains of her husband's drunken sexual advances, and being left alone to take care of the children and housework. Clearly, infidelity remained a key issue, but as these songs demonstrate the way they viewed victimization underwent a change.

The 1960s also saw a more open discussion of divorce and its impact on children. The process of divorce complete with courts, judges, and documents, offered these songstresses inspiration for their country hits. Sung from the perspective of wives and mothers, Lynn and Anderson wrote about leaving abusive relationships. A 1967 song off *Liz Anderson Sings* ruminates: "oh how we fought today behind that courtroom door…it's over now the papers signed."[22] Then again in "I Cried All the Way to the Bank," Anderson wrote about a wife whose husband agreed to give her money to be able to leave the marriage. Furthermore, children entered the country soundscape in these sad songs. Another song off *Strangers* warns a man: "go now pay later…you leave our little children half alone/ they'll grow up having only half a home/ they love you now but when they're not so small/ you'll be someone who gives them

[21] Liz Anderson, "(All My Friends Are Gonna Be) Strangers," (Acuff-Rose Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[22] Anderson, "So Much For Me So Much For You," (Acuff-Rose Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.

presents and that's all."[23] Another song penned by Anderson entitled "Tiny Tears," features a wife who described her children's tearful reaction to their father's departure.[24] In 1969, Anderson poignantly sang about having to spell out the words "D-I-V-O-R-C-E," "C-U-S-T-O-D-Y," and "H-E double L" instead of "T-O-Y or maybe S-U-R-P-R-I-S-E" after finalizing a divorce.[25]



Figure 2. Jean Shepard, *Lonesome Love*, 1958.

While their songs detailed the demise of marriages and homes Lynn and Anderson tackled these morose subjects with humor, thus demonstrating how married women in country songs confidently left relationships. Anderson's "Dumb Blonde" makes light of verbal abuse when she uses the pejorative language against her husband singing: "When you left you thought I'd sit/ And you thought I'd

[23] Anderson, "Go Now Pay Later," (Acuff-Rose Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[24] Anderson, "Tiny Tears," (Acuff-Rose Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[25] Bobby Braddock and Curly Putman, "D-I-V-O-R-C-E," (Tree Publishing, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.

wait/ and you thought I'd cry/ You called me dumb blonde/ Oh but somehow I lived through it and you know if there's one thing/ This blonde has learned blondes have more fun."[26] Lynn, too, used humor in her sad love songs. Operating against the listeners expectations, "Happy Birthday" is about a women leaving a good-bye note to her husband. It reads: "My best wishes may be early but I'm not stickin' around to bake a cake for your birthday while you're out runnin' around…since I won't be here happy birthday, merry Christmas, and happy new year."[27]

The "Single Girl" in Country Music Lyrics

In the 1950s and 1960s, country song lyrics represented single women in a variety of ways. Female country music singers complained of being taken advantage of, worried about their reputations, chastised male honky tonkers, and even participated in affairs with married men. Similar to depictions of married women, however, they, too, blamed men.

Unmarried girls frequently offered moral lessons to their listeners, especially men, and chastised their honky tonk lifestyle. Wells' 1957 "Pace that Kills" warns jaded honky tonkers about enjoying "too many parties and too much drinking." She worries: "What kind of future is before you?/ a wife and children only bore you."[28] Single women susceptible to the advances of married men populate country music's soundscape. Shepard's "Act Like a Married Man" addresses these unwanted advances. She sings: "I don't care a thing about your kind of runnin'

[26] Putman, "Dumb Blonde," (Tree Publishing, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[27] Lynn, "Happy Birthday," (Acuff-Rose Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[28] Harlan Howard, "Pace that Kills," (Tree Publishing, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.

around/ the town will go unpainted if you depend on me/ I don't intend to wreck my life with a man who isn't free."[29]

Shepard's character in "Act Like a Married Man," like many of the unwed women in country songs of the 1950s and 1960s, worried about her reputation. Songs frequently offered explanations of a questionable past or sexual experience. In another song off *Songs of a Love Affair* Shepard sings, "girls in disgrace must face the gossips of the town."[30] Hill's "I'm the Loneliest Gal in Town" also features a single woman misunderstood as promiscuous. "Folks think I really get around," she mused, "But, I'm the loneliest gal in town."[31] Wells' 1956 "I Don't Claim to be an Angel" takes a different approach. "You'll hear talk about things I used to do," she warned her new lover, but "I've paid for each mistake with millions of bitter tears."[32] While single women in country music songs worried about their reputations, they also sought nonjudgmental partners. Female country singers often sang from the point of view of a single women complicit in an affair—a ubiquitous figure in the songs of Shepard, Hill, and Wells. In Wells' "Back Street Affair," a woman learned her lover had a family and a wife who had not "gone wrong."[33] In 1954 *Roundup* ranked the song number four on their top ten "best songs" of 1953.[34] A song off *This is Jean Shepard*

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[29] Jim Odom, "Act Like a Married Man," (ATV Song, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[30] John Welch and Many McDaniel, "Girls in Disgrace," (ATV Song, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[31] Betty Ann Amos, "I'm the Loneliest Gal in Town," Central Songs, Inc. 1953 quoted in *Country Song Roundup*, Vol. 1, No. 34, September 1954.
[32] Johnny Wright, Jack Anglin, and Jim Anglin; "I Don't Claim to be an Angle;" (Unichappell Music, BMI); www.lpdiscography.com.
[33] Billy Wallac and Jimmy Rule, "Back Street Affair," (Unichappell Music, BMI), LP Discography, http://www.lpdiscography.com.
[34] "1955 in Review." *Country Song Roundup*, Vol. 1, No. 29 February 1954, 18-19.

(1959) starts off boldly proclaiming: "I'm the other woman you've heard about." Shepard continues to justify this behavior by telling her audience "how [she loves] that man."[35] Another tune by Shepard proves equally unapologetic starting off in a mocking tone: "We're the pastime for gossips." The song, however, quickly turns into what sounds like an apology. Shepard laments: "I feel guilty when I hold you for another wears your name…I'm sorry that other hearts were broken by our love."[36] But, the title of the song, "I Don't Apologize for Loving You," reveals her true sentiments. Shepard's 1958 "Thief in the Night" also demonstrated the complexity of relationships. Just like "I Don't Apologize for Loving You," this song is performed from the perspective of woman expressing regret for her involvement in an affair. Whether the women in these two songs end their affairs remains a mystery.

Single women in country songs complained of false hopes of marriage. Norma Jean's 1967 song "You Changed Everything About Me But My Name" discusses the "shame" experienced when her relationship didn't end in marriage.[37] By claiming she was "changed" the song hints at premarital sex. Wells' number nine Billboard country hit "There's Poison in Your Heart" from 1956, also articulated feelings of "shame" after being "two-timed" by someone she thought would "change [her] name."[38] Shepard's songs voiced similar concerns. In a song from the same year she worried: "will I be like other sweethearts…is this just a

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[35] Beverly Small, "Other Women," (Central Songs, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[36] Velma Burns, "I Don't Apologize for Loving You," (Unichappell Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[37] Hank Cochran and Jeannie Seely, "You Changed Everything About Me But My Name," Pamper Music, Inc. 1967 quoted in *Country Song Roundup*, Vol. 20, No. 112, November 1969.
[38] Zeke Clements, "There's Poison in Your Heart," (Unichappell Music, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.

passing love affair."[39] Shepard sang, "today so many men are so unfaithful…it's hard to tell the married from the free."[40] Single women in country music songs dealt with the uncertainties of dating in the postwar era.

The "Married Girl" in Fan Magazine Culture

Despite the complexity permeating postwar country songs, *Country Song Roundup* and other Carlton Publishers publications constructed the biographies of country music professionals around the normative discourse of the nuclear family and emphasized the ideal of "togetherness." Besides featuring reoccurring columns dedicated solely to showcasing the musician's families, *Roundup* frequently foregrounded performer's home life in artist profiles where family photos abounded.[41] More commonly, articles simply designated popular performers as "family folks."[42] Articles on popular family-act The Browns offer an example of this construction. The magazine's treatment of married women further demonstrates this impulse. *Roundup* lionized country music wives who worked with husbands and prioritized family over career. Additionally, attributes of docile femininity and masculine domesticity reoccur in the pages of the popular fan magazine. In each of these ways, artist's personas remained couched in the narrow rhetoric of the nuclear family and thus reproduced the conservative gender ideology of the 1950s and 1960s.

Hillbilly and Cowboy Song Hit Parade, a Carlton Publishers publication, prioritized the nuclear family and

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[39] Jack Rhodes and Jack Collins, "Passing Love Affair," (Central Songs, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[40] Don Helms and Gene Jackson, "It's Hard to Tell the Married from the Free," (Cedarwood Publishing, BMI), www.lpdiscography.com.
[41] These columns included, "Children in the News," "Scrapbook," "Meet the…," and "At Home with…".
[42] Norma Barthel, "Great Together or Apart: Loretta Lynn and Ernest Tubb," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.17, No.89, 1965, 9.

the ideal of "togetherness" before musician's professional careers. The magazine's treatment of The Browns exemplified this tendency. In 1959, this popular family-act received extensive attention after their cross-over success with "The Three Bells." *Hillbilly* wondered, "Just why are The Browns so well liked? Well, first off, they are well-mannered, personable and God-fearing folk" and, of course, they "eat, sleep, and breathe country music."[43] A three page spread on the trio published the following year continues in this vein. "The Fabulous Browns, Always 100% Country" operates as a defense of the musician's country credentials. The fan magazine used their familial connection to achieve this and included photos of the adult performers at home with "Mama Brown."[44] Jim, Maxine, and Bonnie are shown doing chores, listening to their new record together in the family living room, and playing with their own children. One caption reads, "First off, a hearty breakfast: then the lengthy rehearsal, followed by a disk session." The case of The Browns offers just one example of how *Hillbilly* constructed performer's biographies around the nuclear family.

When discussing married women, *Roundup* praised country music wives who worked with their husbands. A 1954 story on how Wells started her performing career not when she began singing with her sisters on a radio show but "around 1936, when a lovely young brunette…met a handsome young swain named Johnny Wright… [who] not only changed her name but later gave her the nom-de-stage name of Kitty Wells."[45] Moreover, *Roundup* featured stories on celebrity couples, writing teams, and the ubiquitous husband-turned-manager. These acts toured together, and

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[43] "A Family Affair: The Browns," *Hillbilly and Cowboy Song Hit Parade*, Vol.6, No.25, winter 1958-59, 5.
[44] "The Fabulous Brown Family, Always 100% Country," *Hillbilly and Cowboy Song Hit Parade*, Vol.8, No. 28, spring 1960, 19.
[45] "The Wright Way," 9.

even brought along their children when they were on school breaks. Fan magazines went to great lengths to represent husbands as essential to their wives career.

More frequently though, *Roundup* demonstrated how female performers prioritized family over career ambition. Wells "never let her career come ahead of her family," a 1969 article claims.[46] That same year *Roundup* featured a story on Norma Jean and her recent marriage to singer Jody Taylor. She already had three children aged five, eight and ten, but it was not until after her wedding that she "gave up working on the Porter Wagoner television show and limited her personal appearances to five or six days a month."[47] Images often speak louder than the printed word, and photos of songstresses doing housework accompanied their bios. One such article included a photo of Loretta Lynn doing the dishes.[48] When Ferlin Huskey's wife decided to pursue a career in the music industry, writers were quick to insist, "always and always she is at his side to encourage, inspire and love. Being a good wife is only part of it—she is also a good mother."[49]

In the 1950s and 1960s, the ideal of docile femininity reoccurred in the pages of *Country Song Roundup.* In a 1969 article on "The Queen of Country Music," Wells is pictured seated at a piano holding her toddler. *Roundup* boasts, "She is just as accomplished in the kitchen as she is on stage." Writers frequently referred to the musicians as "Harriet housewife," "homebody," or "the typical neighborhood mom."[50] Capturing the fan magazine's tendency to

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[46] "The Queen of Country Music: Kitty Wells," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.21, No.114, January 1969, 15.
[47] Judy Myers, "Norma Jean and Jody Taylor: We Love Folks," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.21, No.116, March 1969.
[48] Ginger Willis, "Scrapbook: A Day with Loretta Lynn," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol. 17, No. 90, October 1965, 21.
[49] "Ferlin Huskey Flies High on the Wings of a Dove," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.13, No.72, May 1961, 10.
[50] "The Queen of Country Music: Kitty Wells,"15.

stress motherhood over career, an image of June Carter holding an autoharp reads: "June took her kids to Disneyland."[51] Performers participated in this trend and often contributed autobiographies to *Roundup* describing their love of "cooking, sewing, and interior decorating." "I really like being a housewife," gushed Dottie West in 1965.[52] La Chapelle showed how California's country music fan culture similarly depicted women as docile wives and mothers.



Figure 3. June Carter. ***Country Song Roundup, Vol. 18, No. 92.*** **February 1966, 32.**



Figure 4. June Carter and Carl Smith. ***Country Song Roundup, Vol. 1 No. 38,*** **May 1955, 11.**

Judy Myers, "Norma Jean and Jody Taylor: We Love Folks," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.21, No.116, March 1969, 9.
Ginger Willis, "Scrapebook: A Day with Loretta Lynn," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol. 17, No. 90, October 1965, 21.
Mae Axton, "At Home with The Smiths," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.18, No.92, February 1966, 22.

[51] Bill Williams, "News From the Opry," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol. 18, No. 92, February 1966, 32.

[52] "Dottie West and Norma Jean Tell Their Own Stories," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol. 17, No. 91, December 1965, 14-15.

Biographies of male artists emphasized masculine domesticity.[53] A feature on Ernest Tubb, for instance, elaborates on his "charming family" and "cozy" home. *Roundup* insisted, "Ernest is as successful in domestic as in professional life."[54] Moreover, an article on musician Bill Anderson included a picture of his wife and daughter. The infant is decked out in full cowgirl regalia. The caption read, "Bill is completely devoted to his wife…and four year old daughter."[55] In another example, a May 1955 cover of the fan magazine advertises Carl Smith as guest "editor for a day." The two-page photographic special reveals Smith working, not alone, but with his then wife famed country singer June Carter as a co-editor for *Roundup's* upcoming issue. Even in this "professional" setting their domesticity found its way into the story. One photo captured the two in a kitchen preparing lunch for their agent. In it, both husband and wife operate appliances while wearing aprons over sleek business attire. The last photo shows the stars with their heads down resting on an office desk stacked with papers; the caption reads, "Back at their desk, June and Carl rest their weary heads, dreaming of Nashville, Grand Ole Opry—and home!"[56] Celebrity biographies focusing on married women and families emphasized middle-class domesticity and monogamy, the central attributes of the ideal of "togetherness."

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[53] For more on "masculine domesticity" see, Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993) and Weiss, *To Have and To Hold*.

[54] "Children in the News," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol. 1, No. 36, January 1955, 12.

[55] "Bill Anderson is My Name," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.18, No.92, February 1966, 8.

[56] "Editor for a Day: Carl Smith," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol. 1, No. 38, May 1955, 10-11.

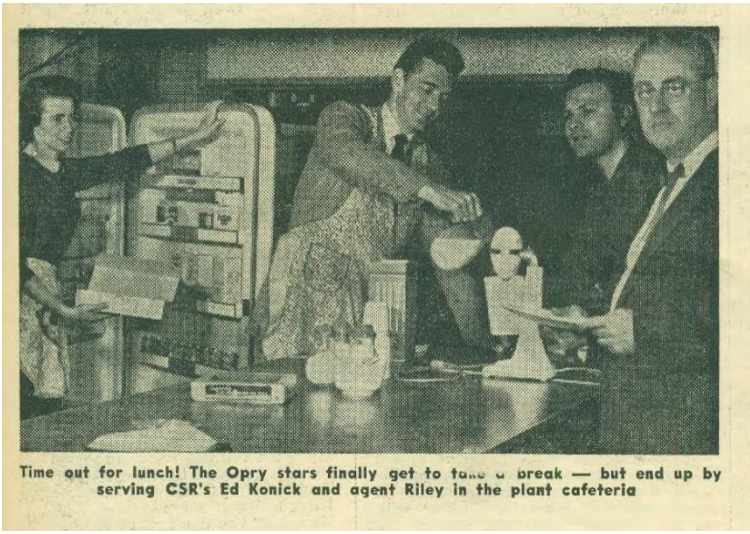


Figure 5. "The Queen of Country Music: Kitty Wells." ***Country Song Roundup, Vol.21 No.114*** **January 1969, 15.**

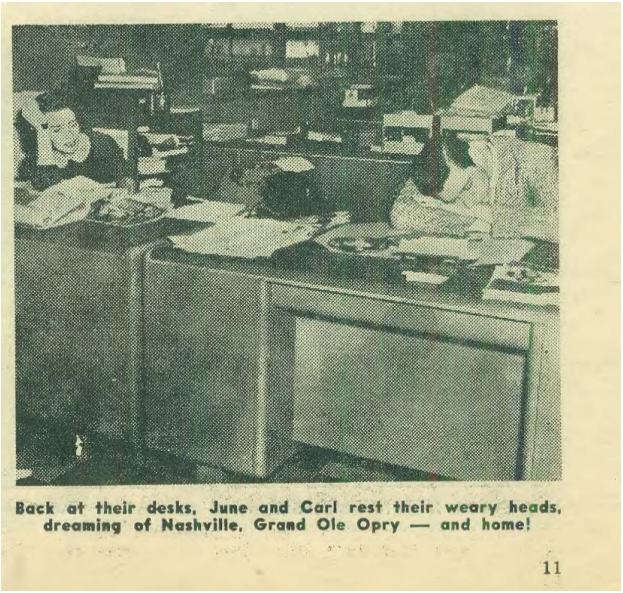


Figure 6. June Carter and Carl Smith. **Country Song Roundup, Vol. 1 No. 38,** ***May 1955, 11.***

The "Single Girl" in Fan Magazine Culture

In order to manage the threat of an unmarried woman working professionally in a music industry whose culture endorsed highly conservative gender roles, *Country Song Roundup* carefully framed these women's biographies around the nuclear family, whether it be real or fictional. Similar to married women, the magazine represented the single girl as a member of the ideal family who exhibited "togetherness." Additionally, they presented women well into their twenties as teenagers closely connected to their "school days." The Davis Sisters offer an example of these normalizing strategies.



Figure 7. Goldie Hill. ***Country Song Roundup, Vol. 1, No. 34,*** **September, 1954.**

Single women were especially susceptible to the magazine's practice of constructing biographies to fit the ideal of the nuclear family. In a 1954 issue of *Roundup* their question and answer column entitled "The Witness Box" featured an interview with Goldie Hill. After answering the reporter's query about her marital status in the negative, the magazine quickly included information about the singer's living situation. Hill, the magazine assured fans, lived with her brother.[57] In a similar case, before Jean Shepard married singer Hawkshaw Hawkins, the magazine introduced fans to the songstress by describing her as "the 5th child in a family of 10…who became interested in singing because of her father's interest in…Jimmy Rogers."[58] Moya Luckett has shown how television shows of the 1960s also chose to depict single women as teenagers to "mediate more safely between domestic and public life."[59] Similarly, *Roundup* presented young career women as "girls" with close connections to their nuclear family.

Treatment of The Davis Sisters offers a clear example of the way fan magazines managed the threat of the single girl by presenting them as teenagers connected to their nuclear family and downplaying their professionalism. Betty Jack ("B.J") and Skeeter, two unrelated musicians, performed under the name The Davis Sisters. The fact that they were not real sisters, however, did not keep editors from constructing their biographies around the nuclear family and stressing the fictional sibling's "togetherness." One writer described the girls as "so close…both in affection for

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[57] "The Witness Box: Goldie Hill," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.1, No. 37, March 1955, 16.

[58] "Dear John: Ferlin Huskey and Jean Shepard," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.1, No. 28, January 1954, 7.

[59] Moya Luckett, "Sensuous Women and Single Girls: Reclaiming the Female Body on 1960s Television," in *Swinging Single: Representing Sexuality in the 1960s*, ed. Hilary Radner and Moya Luckett (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 278.

each other and in harmony singing, that hardly anyone would believe that they were not real sisters."[60] B.J died in a car accident and her biological sister Georgie took her place in the band which kept its name. An article on the new line up titled "A Date with the Davis Sisters" shows the two musicians in the recording studio. Instead of presenting the women as working professionals they included pictures of the women enjoying lollipops. Unsurprisingly, of the four photos, two mentioned the lollipops. One states: "The gals suck on lollipops during a run-through of "Show Me."[61] Moreover, after B.J's death, *Roundups* "tribute" went to great lengths to present the singers as innocent youngsters committed to family and Christianity. The article claims, "[the girls] were traveling by automobile with two of their school-day boyfriends. They were traveling at a slow speed so as to pass the hours and reach their home town…in time for Sunday school service." Like the other single women *Roundup* wrote about, the twenty-something year old Davis sisters are presented as if they are still teenagers and not adult women working professionally in the music industry.

This article illuminated the myriad ways country music culture managed the threat of single women in a period defined both by its shifting notions of womanhood and its proverbial gender conservatism. Drawing on Katherine Lehman's definition of the "single girl" in 1960s television, I followed this country music archetype into the many intricacies of gender relations in the 1950s and 1960s. As a controversial figure, the unwed woman constituted a threat to American family life in the postwar era. I investigated country music's discourse on womanhood by analyzing biographical articles and publicity photographs printed in

[60] "Gene Roe, 'Tribute to B.J'," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.1, No.28, January 1954, 4.
[61] "A Date with The Davis Sisters," *Country Song Roundup*, Vol.1, No. 36, January 1955, 9.

the national fan magazine *Country Song Roundup.* Additionally, I relied on twenty-five albums recorded by representative female singers from 1952-1969. To better understand representations of the single women in country's soundscape, I read depictions of wifehood and motherhood alongside those of the unmarried female. The songs performed and frequently penned by female musicians reveal the complexities of American private life. Infidelity loomed large as songs represented married women as victims or vixens. In contrast, single women took on these and a variety of additional roles; they could be moral guardians or "honky-tonk angels." Country music culture, I contend, managed female sexuality, embodied in the figure of the "single girl," through strategic use of biographical information and lyrical themes. Specifically, *Roundup* constructed the biographies of country music professionals around the normative discourse of the nuclear family, emphasized the ideal of "togetherness," and endorsed clearly delineated gender roles.