THE CARTER FAMILY AND HAZEL & ALICE: A COMPARISON OF MUSICAL INFLUENCES AND CHANGING GENDER NORMS

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by
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Abstract

THE CARTER FAMILY AND HAZEL & ALICE: A COMPARISON OF MUSICAL INFLUENCES AND CHANGING GENDER NORMS (DECEMBER 2016)

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This thesis explores, in detail, the lives and musical careers of The Carter Family (A.P., Sara, and Maybelle) in comparison with those of Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard. These are two trailblazing musical groups of the country and bluegrass music industries. This thesis discusses the effect of these women's accomplishments on the country music and bluegrass industries when taking into consideration the obstacles society presented them with in the form of gender norms. Using the social constructs of gender norms during the 1920s-1970s as a lens for discussing some of the obstacles these women faced in their careers (e.g., restrictions/hindrance). This work will attempt to address what the gender norms of the time period were, if the fact that they were women presented any significant obstacles for their careers, and why these women received the recognition that they did. This work will highlight the significance of these women's musical accomplishments (e.g., recording, solo-performances, widespread popularity) in a time when women were generally not in the foreground of the bluegrass and country music industries.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to several people who have inspired me throughout my life: my grandpa, Hoopie Cecil, without whom I would have never known the joy of this music and my heritage; James Blankenship for pushing me to pursue my goals when I doubted my own capabilities; and lastly, I am eternally grateful to my parents, Genie and Jeffrey Moninger. I would not be where I am today were it not for your encouragement and support. Thank you all.

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Introduction:

Notable Female Musicians Pre-and-Post Bristol Sessions

The effects of oppressive gender norms during the 20s and 30s constricted the musical careers of the women in the U.S. involved in early country and bluegrass music. In the days of pre-commercial music, women were highly influential, and yet, they hardly received the credit for their accomplishments, or were just briefly mentioned (Bufwack & Oermann, 2003). Historically, it seems that women were in fact the primary tradition bearers for balladry. For example, in the "song-catching" of Cecil Sharp and Maude Karpeles during the early 20th century, nearly 75% of the 968 tunes they collected were from women (Eacker & Eacker, 2001).[1] Sue Massek (2015), a musician, arts activist and teacher said, "All cultures are reflected by the artists who are the tradition bearers. Appalachian women are widely accepted as the ballad keepers, but though many were skilled instrumentalists, it was considered unseemly for women to play for dances, or to pursue a career as a professional musician." I will discuss the exception to this societal rule, which was being in a family band or musical partnership with a husband, brother, or father. In traditional music scholarship men generally receive the credit,[2] but as scholar Susan Eacker and others point out, most notable male musicians at this time had a female influence in their lives to whom they could attribute their musical start. Some notable examples are: Bill Monroe's mother, Malissa Vandiver Monroe, who sang ballads, played fiddle, accordion, harmonica, and more; Ralph Stanley's mother, Lucy Smith Stanley, who taught Ralph to play clawhammer banjo; notable old-time musician Clarence Ashley's aunts, Ary and Daisy, who taught him banjo; and Earl

[1] This may have been reflective of the interests of the collectors (one being female) and the proportion of female ballad singers in the mountain South.
[2] This is addressed in the intro of Murphy Henry's book, *Pretty Good for a Girl: Women in Bluegrass.*

Scruggs' older sisters, Eula Mae and Ruby Scruggs, who taught him how to play banjo (Eacker & Eacker, 2001). It is possible that these women received little recognition because they played strictly within the privacy of their own homes.

In the early 20th century, in both Appalachia and the greater U.S., the roles men and women were expected to follow greatly differed from those of modern times. The twentieth century was a time of innovation and hugely significant social changes. In early 1920s, when field and commercial recordings were becoming popular, women were expected, once they had reached a certain age, to follow in the footsteps of their mothers and grandmothers and assume the role of obedient wife and mother (Kitch, 2009). Women faced many obstacles in this time: limited access to education, societal restrictions due to social norms, limited financial options, and the multiple responsibilities of family life (Fariello, 2006). The role of wife and mother at this time meant cooking, cleaning, raising the children, and generally satisfying the needs of her husband. Through new advertising methods in newspapers and magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, American social and gender norms were constantly being reinforced – always focused towards white middle-class urban subscribers. This, in effect, enforced class differences and gender norms. Women particularly were targeted by this media, which depicted women who had attained happiness by fulfilling their expected role of mother and housewife (Fariello, 2006). Music at this time was a family-based entertainment for many folks. With the commercialization and introduction of radio shows, this music grew into a very public and community-based industry. However, there was oftentimes disapproval from society concerning public performances from women (Krieger, 2012).

In this introduction, I will briefly discuss four female musicians who (despite the restrictions on women at the time) recorded or were featured on radio programs before the Carter Family made their first records in 1927: Samantha Bumgarner and Eva Davis, Roba Stanley, and Rosa Lee "Moonshine Kate" Carson. I will also be discussing three women who were popular after the success of the Bristol Sessions: Lily May Ledford (of the Coon Creek Girls), Cynthia "Cousin Emmy" Carver, and Wilma Lee Cooper. All of these women were featured on field or commercial recordings. They were prominently featured in their musical acts, whether they were female duos such as Samantha Bumgarner and Eva Davis, husband/wife duos like Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper, family bands like Rosa Lee Carson and her father, or in the rare case, solo-female performers like Roba Stanley. These women will provide the background for a deeper discussion involving The Carter Family and Hazel & Alice of how the music industry changed for women between these two groups respective time periods (20s/30s vs 60s/70s).

Most scholars agree that "country music" started August of 1927 in what came to be known as the "Bristol Sessions." Some others call this "the big bang of country music."[3] While there were other artists and other family bands who recorded before and during these same Bristol sessions, the two main artists remembered from these sessions are the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, known respectively as "the first family of country music" and "the father of country music" (Olsen, 2015).

[3] Historian Nolan Porterfield referred to the Bristol Sessions as "the big bang of country music evolution" in his article for *Country: The Music and the Musicians.*

Women Musicians Pre-Bristol Sessions

While it may be true that these sessions launched the genre and these individuals into an incredibly heightened popularity, many others had recorded country music before 1927. In fact, it is crucial to understand that one of the first people to record this music, male or female, was Samantha Bumgarner in 1924 with the help of her friend, Eva Davis. However, early commercial old-time and country music were predominately male-driven worlds. In referencing the 2004 *Country Music Records: A Discography 1921-1942* index of some 2, 600 performers, only approximately 250 (9.6%) were women. Of those women mentioned, a large portion were part of a family band or a gospel group that included men.[4]

Samantha Bumgarner was born in 1880 in the mountains of North Carolina. She grew up surrounded by old-time music. At the age of 15, Samantha was playing in public. She eventually became competent enough that her father, Haselton (Has) Biddix, started bringing her with him to performances and gatherings. In this way, Samantha got her start like so many other female old-time and country artists with her father, an old-time fiddler. This draws attention to a recurring theme for women in music at this time – that is, the need of a (usually related) male, or wholesome family connection in order to break into the scene. In the 1920s, stepping outside of the rigid social boundaries was not an easy task. There was a set of rules that women were expected to follow during these times which included being submissive to their husbands or parents and not trying to assume a majorly public role. Women were expected to be demure and obedient. To challenge these expectations as an unaccompanied female would result in heavy disapproval from society, putting their reputation at risk (Smithsonian Folkways, 2016).

[4] Some women were not even mentioned by full name, rather the suffix of their husband (e.g. Mrs. Carl Goble, Mrs. Joe Werner).

While Eva and Samantha were not the *very* first to record this string band music, they were the first women to do so, following the recordings of Gid Tanner and Riley Puckett by barely a month. This is a notable achievement, especially considering the marginalized social status of women in the 1920s. Though is it unknown how Bumgarner made the transition from local fiddle contests to a New York recording studio,[5] it is impressive to note that women at this point had only had the right to vote for four years. Bumgarner and Davis were undeniably the groundbreakers for women in country music.

Having been born in 1880, Bumgarner lived through many changes – from the Gilded Age and industrialization to prohibition, through the Depression and the folk revival. The fact that she was able to reach such musical notoriety, as a woman, in the 1920s may be due to several factors. First of all, she was a married woman and was most likely accompanied by her husband to most events. This obeys the societal norms of the time period. Also, her husband was proud of and encouraged her musical career (Wolfe, 1978).[6] Another factor that may have contributed to her easy acceptance and encouragement in the music world was the fact that she was middle-aged when she received the offer from Colombia. It may have been more acceptable in the eyes of society for a grown married woman to embark on this journey than, say, a young and unmarried girl, which would have appeared indecorous.

Though the 1920s were a time of rapid change, both within and outside of Appalachia, most of society was still struggling to maintain the social structure from the previous era. Schneider and Schneider (1993) state that "Some women inhabited a world largely unchanged from the time of their mothers or even grandmothers. Others were on the

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[5] Historian Robert Hunt Ferguson discusses the unknown history of Bumgarner in *Southern Women: Their Lives and Times: North Carolina Women: Their Lives and Times*.

[6] It was in keeping with social practice at that time to obey the husband, had he not approved, Bumgarner may not have participated as fully as she did.

cutting edge of a changing society (p. 4).” Rumors of promiscuity closely followed women who dared to branch-out on their own musically without a family or marital connection (Goldsmith, 2004). During this period when industrialization and mechanization were growing fast, many people moved from their rural settings into the cities and away from their previous support system of their family and friends: “They moved from farms or small towns where everyone knew their antecedents and status to the indifference of the city. For some, it was alienation – for others, liberation (Schneider & Schneider 2015, p.5).”

Roba Stanley did in fact garner the spotlight as a young single woman for a period of time. Born in Georgia in 1910, Roba picked up the guitar at an early age, and soon she was providing backup for her father’s fiddling at local dances and social gatherings. Through touring and appearances on nearby radio stations with her father and their family band, they came to the attention of Okeh Record company (Bufwack & Oermann, 2003). In 1924, Roba became the first female to record a solo country record. This was largely due to the marketing plans of Ralph Peer. He noted her strong voice in the recordings of her father’s band and asked her to make some solo-recordings (Mazor & Mazor, 2014). Though she recorded only nine tracks for the company, she would be branded by historians as a ground-breaker in the world of early string band and country music. Like Bumgarner, and others before her, Roba Stanley came into this music world along the side of her father, an old-time fiddler. Although a talented musician, it is likely that were it not for the support of her father and his string band, she would not have been provided the chance to record solo.

Being the first woman solo country artist to record was not the most controversial aspect of her career, but the lyrical content of Roba’s song selection drew the most attention. The first two songs she recorded for Okeh records were “Devilish Mary” and “Mister

Chicken" (Akenson & Wolfe, 2003). "Devilish Mary" comes from an Irish ballad "The Wearing of The Britches" and, as noted by Akenson and Wolfe, had fairly modern suggestions for that era, as it dealt with such themes as spousal abuse and divorce (taboo subjects at this time). Another controversial song she recorded, and her most popular, was "Single Life," in which she boldly proclaimed the lyrics, "I am single and no man's wife / and no man shall control me."[7] Despite a few similarities of phrasing to other songs of the time, Wolfe insists that Roba wrote this song mostly on her own. According to Akenson and Wolfe,

> Its imagery and rhythm and scansion suggest Roba was a natural-born songwriter, as well as an early defender of women's rights. In an age and society where women were expected to marry and find happiness only as wives and mothers, to assert that freedom and independence are good was a remarkable statement. (p. 27)

While multiple scholars have used this song as an example of Stanley's daring gusto in recording such a progressive song in the early 1920s, it is possible that this song provides a good example of the unreliable narrator in country music[8] (Titon, 2009). *This* interpretation used by Wolfe (2015), and also McCusker & Pecknold (2004), appears to be the only version being used right now, highlighting Roba's bold feminist statement, when it may be just as likely that this was a misinterpretation of song meaning, especially considering Roba's swift marriage and disappearance from the music seen so soon after this recording.

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[7] Full lyrics located in Appendix

[8] An example of this can be found in the ballad Barbara Allen (Child No. 84), where in the beginning of the song she scorns a young dying man, denying him affection, but, upon his death, by the end of the song we find out she loved him truly, and soon dies of a broken heart.

The final verse states,

> Boys keep away from the girls I say
>
> And give 'em plenty of room
>
> For when you're wed they'll bang you 'til you're dead
>
> With the bald-headed end of the broom.

This could be interpreted as a warning to men, or a feminine assertion of will. Wolfe (2015) credits Roba with this "largely original" song (p. 26) and yet, many of the verses she used mirror those of other songs of the time period (sung by both men and women) such as, "Look Before You Leap" and "Boys, Keep Away From The Girls."[9] Wolfe does mention the similarities of the last stanza featuring the phrase "bald-headed end of the broom," which is a common floating folk-verse; however, it is worth mentioning that this verse is usually featured in songs about a male character lamenting his decision to marry and warning other young men to not do the same (Matteson, 2010).

Since she disappeared shortly after her solo recordings for Okeh records little-to-nothing was known about Roba Stanley's life until some of her records were unearthed and historians began searching to learn more about her. In 1925, her photo was prominently placed in ads for Okeh records, and her records were selling well. Akenson and Wolfe said, "it seemed apparent that Roba, even at her young age, was on the threshold of becoming the first woman solo-singing star of the new county-music genre (p. 25)." Given her abrupt disappearance, many interviews were conducted upon her rediscovery in the 1970s. When inquiries were made as to why she so suddenly disappeared from the music scene, Roba simply stated that "My husband didn't like for me to play out in public much (Akenson &

[9] These songs all featured themes of marriage putting an end to the happy fun-filled days of courting.

Wolfe 2015, p.28).” Historical records suggest that Roba followed the wishes of her husband and gave up her musical career, though it is not known with certainty the exact reasons for her early retirement from country music.

For women such as Roba Stanley and Sara Carter these strongly-worded songs such as “Single Life,” “I Wish I Was A Single Gal Again,” and “Single Girl, Married Girl” may have been a way for them to voice their opinions or dissatisfaction (or perhaps in the case of Roba’s early retirement, reinforce traditional gender roles) without crossing the boundaries of their place within society. This story of Roba Stanley is like other stories of women musicians who chose to put their careers on hold, sometimes indefinitely, in order to raise their family. Unlike Samantha Bumgarner, Roba’s husband was not supportive of her musical career, and her increasing role in the spotlight as a solo female artist may have had something to do with this (Akenson & Wolfe, 2003).

Like both Samantha Bumgarner and Roba Stanley, Rosa Lee Carson was born in Georgia in 1909, to a family of old-time musicians. Her father was the renowned fiddler Fiddlin’ John Carson. By age seven, Rosa Lee was buck dancing on stage as an accompaniment to her father’s playing. At age 14 she was a permanent addition to her father’s act, playing guitar and banjo. She also developed a comedic stage persona, known as “Moonshine Kate.” Together Rosa Lee and her father traveled the country performing at radio stations, political rallies, square dances, carnivals, and traveling medicine shows. Fiddlin’ John Carson would play the “sly, boozy reprobate” to which Rosa Lee played the “brassy, slow-drawlin’ mountain gal” who had rapid-fire comebacks in response to her father’s stage antics (Bufwack & Oermann, 2003). The audiences enjoyed the comedic banter

of their shows. Rosa Lee was one of the first women to start developing a comedic persona as part of a musical act.

Besides the recording opportunities Rosa Lee had with her father, she also recorded several solo albums between 1925 and 1934 (Bufwack & Oermann, 2003). It wasn't until the spring of 1927 that Rosa Lee's name began appearing as "Moonshine Kate" on the record labels. By 1930 she was recording solos as "Moonshine Kate." It seems likely that she *chose* to record as Moonshine Kate, since by this time in her career this was her best known moniker.

Throughout the changing social dynamics of the 20s and 30s, these four women made significant contributions to the development of the country music industry. In a time when even the record companies disagreed over what to call this emerging music (some called it "old-time" or "hillbilly," others just "southern") these women were making a living from their music. The radio industry was creating steep competition for the phonograph, and women were right alongside the men promoting and producing this music. As stated in the introduction for the *Encyclopedia of Country Music,*

> Even if businessmen in a way "created" country music by identifying various strains of rural music and getting them to their rightful audience, they never completely controlled it. Because it was music, after all, it had meaning for its audience far beyond whatever the businessmen had ever intended. Music can be sold like a commodity (like breakfast cereal), but it is never merely consumed, and it is in an entirely different way than a simple disposable commodity.

Perhaps it was for these unpredictable elements of the music that groups like Samantha Bumgarner & Eva Davis, Roba Stanley, and Rosa Lee "Moonshine Kate" Carson were able to work as extensively as they did in the midst of these changing times to forge innovative music, songs, and repertoire for emerging country music. While businessmen may have been marketing this music, they had no control over what this music would mean for so many different people. As the radio industry rapidly grew, both male and female listeners were looking to music as a way of coping, expressing, and relaxing in a world where much had changed from what it had been even five years before. These women provided that escape through their songs, which expressed what others may have been thinking but were not able to say, or for the nostalgic quality the of older songs they remembered from their childhood. During this time when radio in the home was a new development for most people, radio officials strove to make the experience as unobtrusive as possible. Most radio programs were trying to use female voices, as they thought listeners may have better identified with what they deemed the less-intrusive female voice (McCusker & Pecknold, 2004). This increased women's opportunity for employment in the radio world and better highlights this idealized "mother" that can often be found in traditional bluegrass and county music.[10]

Women Musicians of Post Bristol Sessions

In the years to follow the accomplishments of these four women, country music exploded into an industry much larger than the recording companies ever could have foreseen. The golden age of radio was approaching, and radio programs such as the National

[10] Songs from The Carter Family, Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, and the Stanley Brothers all address a fondness for "mother" as the idolized, and revered family member. (e.g. "Picture On The Wall", "Mother's Not Dead (She's Only Sleeping)", "If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again", and "Sweeter Than The Flowers.")

Barn Dance Radio, Renfro Valley Barn Dance Radio, the Grand Old Opry, and WWVA's Wheeling Jamboree would begin to enact the changes that took this music from an aural pastime to a commodified visual entertainment industry.

After the "big bang" of country music in 1927, the industry rapidly expanded, and musicians all over the country could now viably make a living from their music. The accomplishments of the next group of musicians being discussed – Lily May Ledford and The Coon Creek Girls, Cynthia "Cousin Emmy" Carver, and Wilma Lee Cooper – are significant to understand the changes taking place within the industry. When discussing the Coon Creek Girls (one of the first all-female string bands), the role played by producer and writer John Lair becomes important. As these radios shows rapidly gained popularity, the demand from the audience for live entertainment grew, as well. Lair took advantage of this and recruited musicians, providing them with an embellished background story, exaggerated stage presence, and oftentimes a new name (Stamper, 2015). One specific example of this is his management of Lily May Ledford and The Coon Creek Girls. Lair managed his own version of barn dance radio, called the "Renfro Valley Barn Dance" (Stamper, 2015).

Lily May Ledford was born in Kentucky in 1917. She grew up, like Bumgarner, Stanley, and Carson, with a father who was an old-time fiddler. By the time she was 14 Ledford was said to be an accomplished fiddler, and she frequently toured the area with her band, the Red River Ramblers. The band consisted of Lily May; her brother, Coyen and sister, Rosie; as well as a nearby neighbor, Morgan Skidmore (Matteson, 2010). This arrangement may have arisen out of convenience, but again, it highlights the likelihood of female musicians getting their start in professional music through a family band, which

would have been necessary for them to be taken seriously in that time period (Goldsmith, 2004).

The Red River Ramblers auditioned for John Lair in 1935, but only Lily May came away with a job offer. Mr. Lair had a very specific idea of how his performers should appear on and off the stage, and even went as far as to hire chaperones to watch over how the performers conducted themselves, especially the females (McCusker, 2008). Ledford's career was very much influenced by John Lair's ideal construct of rural radio, stating in an interview, "Mr. Lair discouraged my buying clothes, curling my hair, going in for make-up or improving my English. 'Stay a mountain girl, just like you were when you came here. Be genuine and plain at all times,' he said" (Bufwack & Oermann 2003, p.88). This was beneficial to Lair's over all idea for Renfro Valley, where he wanted to convey to listeners a show where "the good old days" were still very much the daily life of the characters. The other girls tell similar stories of concealing their smoking habits and always trying to behave in a proper manner publicly. This again highlights how women were restricted in the burgeoning country music world. They were constantly being reminded to behave within their expected roles of society. In a society that was ever-changing and growing, the members of Renfro Valley were instructed to maintain the expected behaviors of the previous generation.

As radio shows were becoming more and more of a local attraction, people traveled from great distances to come see a show live. A big concern for audience members and at-home listeners was authenticity. Viewers often wrote in inquiring if musicians were the "real deal." This was all part of Lair's big-picture plan to present a nostalgic picture of Appalachia for the listeners – a picture of idealized better times, times before the Depression struck hard

for so many. As country music historian Pete Stamper (2015) states, “With word pictures he [Lair] painted the Valley as a place shut away from the outside world, where the way of life moved at such a pace that it could be called the ‘valley where time stands still’” (p. 21). Ledford would work for several years on her own, at Lair’s instruction, performing mainly on banjo instead of her main instrument, the fiddle. This was just the first of many things about her life that Lair would restructure and embellish to fit with his ideas of Appalachia and the “better times” that listeners where hoping for.

In 1937 The Coon Creek Girls performed for the first time on the Renfro Valley Barn Dance. Though the line-up of girls would vary from season to season, the idea being presented remained the same – down-home innocent girls from Kentucky, whether this was true or not. Eventually, the line-up would include Lily May and her two younger sisters. The sisters formed the core of the band for many years until they all retired from the business by 1957 to devote more time to their families (Hull, 1987). This choice between career or family was a decision many female musicians found themselves faced with (and still struggle with today) (Greenhaus & Powell, 2016).

Cynthia Carver, better known by her stage name “Cousin Emmy,” is a great example of one of Lair’s missed opportunities. Lair had recently signed a contract with Carver when he left National Barn Dance Radio to start his own Renfro Valley Barn Dance. He wrote to tell her of his career shift and that, since the contract was so new, she was under no obligation to join him for Renfro Valley. Carver would go onto become “country music’s first independent, unmarried, self-supporting, female touring attraction” (Bufwack & Oermann, p 86). Why Carver, specifically, was successful in this way may be explained by her use of older comedy styles which have her performances a nostalgic appeal.

Carver was born in Kentucky in 1903. She grew up surrounded by a ballad and string band tradition, and by her teenage years, was playing regularly with her two cousins, Warner and Noble Carver who were said to be the first to record in the area (Wolfe, 2015). She was talented on multiple instruments, but perhaps most remembered for her banjo and other quirky instruments such as the rubber glove and hand saw. Again, it is important to note here the predominately male family connections at the start of her career. However, Carver would soon branch out on her own. By the 1930s Carver was on the path to fame, she would make a living through multiple radio stations over the course of her life, leaving a piece of her legacy at each stop. For example, during her time with WWVA's Wheeling Jamboree, she taught a young Grandpa Jones how to play banjo. In 1936 Carver became the first woman to win the National Old Fiddlers Contest in Louisville, Kentucky (Eacker, 2006).

By 1938 Carver was fronting her own groups, and her popularity was quite impressive, as noted by author Charles Wolfe (2015): "In one sense she was out of place in the increasingly sophisticated country music of the late 1930s, and was a throwback to the early days of medicine show 'buskers', who had higher regard for flair and showmanship than for subtlety or original songs" (p. 88). Carver's comedic persona, "Cousin Emmy," and use of "medicine show" style performances may have provided a nostalgic quality that audiences were seeking at thing time. This could have contributed to her popularity. Through Carver's hard work and dedication, she made possible the path for many other women who chose country music as their profession.

Another musician whose work broadened that path for future women of country music (and who also spent time on the Wheeling Jamboree) was Wilma Lee Cooper. Cooper was born in 1921 in West Virginia as Wilma Leigh Leary. She grew up singing in her family

band, The Leary Family Singers. Coincidentally, this is where she met her husband, Stoney Cooper, who played fiddle for the family band starting in 1938. The two branched-out on their own as a husband-and-wife duo for nearly three decades playing at radio stations across the nation. Wilma Lee and Stoney married in 1941, and by 1942 they had started a family. It was at this time that they decided to quit the music business and raise their family out of the spotlight. After six months, they realized that they wanted to be in the music for life, and resumed work touring radio stations. Unlike other women who gave up their careers entirely to raise their families, such as Roba Stanley, Wilma Lee and Stoney juggled raising their family and their expanding career, and managed both successfully.

In 1957, the couple joined The Grand Ole Opry with their band, Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper and The Clinch Mountain Clan. They performed as regulars on the Opry for some twenty years after that. In 1977 Stoney passed away, and Wilma Lee continued by herself with the Clinch Mountain Clan. It is a testament to how much change had taken place in the industry that Wilma Lee could lead this band on her own. She also recorded several solo-albums and toured frequently.

Concluding Thoughts on Early Women Musicians

In this introduction, I highlight the changing times and the roles that women played in the rapidly growing and morphing country (and emerging bluegrass) music industry. Barn dance radio was a concept created by officials who wished to utilize the profits of a commercialized industry. Country music began the shift from playing for enjoyment and entertainment within the home to a consumer-based performance for an audience. I have surveyed these women to set the scene for a more focused analysis of the influence and

accomplishments of women in the country and bluegrass music industries. These accomplishments took place during a time when, both in music and society, women faced many challenges. For the remainder of this thesis, I will focus solely on Sara and Maybelle of The Carter Family and the duo of Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard. Their careers allow me to contrast the changes that took place for women in the country and bluegrass music industries between the 20s and 30s with the Carter Family and the 60s and 70s with Hazel & Alice. This thesis strives to bring light to the accomplishments of women in early country and bluegrass music despite the social barriers they faced, which I will discuss further in the chapters to follow.

I have also created a 25 minute documentary film to accompany the written portion of this thesis. I interviewed four individuals from the country and bluegrass music worlds (Buddy Griffin, Megan Darby, Ginny Hawker, and Tracy Schwarz) about the Carter Family, Hazel Dickens, and Alice Gerrard. Chapter Four of this work will include an introduction of the interviewees and a short analysis of their responses to some of the interview questions.

Chapter One:

The Carter Family and the 20s-30s

The original Carter Family consisted of husband and wife A.P. and Sara Carter and sister-in-law Maybelle Carter. The story of the Carter Family is well-documented.[11] However, they have seldom been discussed in regards to the gender norms that were prominent during the time period of the 1920s and 30s, when they were most popular. Discussing these gender norms is beneficial in understanding the significant accomplishments of the women of The Carter Family.

Gender Norms of the 20s-30s

The 1920s and 30s are known as the Progressive Era. Every part of society was rapidly changing. Two of the biggest influences on society during this time period were the suffragette movement and prohibition. As women gained more freedom in the voting area, other parts of women's lives began to change, as well. Daring short-length haircuts and hemlines became the trend among many middle-class women. An increase in sexual freedom began to occur, generations became opposed to one another, and the lines between what was or was not proper blurred (Kyvig, 2002). This underlying struggle between progress and tradition has been identified as a constant paradox in American culture (Currell, 2009). Between the advent of the automobile and the media's portrayal of increasingly racy behavior as the new norm, a cultural shift began to take place. Author David Kyvig (2002) describes during this time also a blurring of regional and class differences saying that, while

[11] *Will You Miss Me When I'm Gone: That Carter Family & Their Legacy in American Music* Novel by Mark Zwonitzer & Charles Hirshberg. *The Winding Stream: The Carter's, The Cashes, and the Course of Country Music* Documentary by Beth Harrington.

these differences did not disappear altogether, they began to fade in significance. However, restrictive gender norms were still very much a part of society. After WWI (which ended in 1918) a culture of consumerism rapidly developed. It is at this time that the "double standard" for men and women was again reinforced and applied to the culture of America. While it was generally accepted (or expected) for young males to "sow their wild oats," if a lady were to behave the same way it would have been considered inappropriate (Kyvig, 2002).

Within Appalachia at this time, the region was being viewed in a positive light from the region's recent contribution of "good soldiers," an increase in social workers coming into the region, and the growing service sector (Brosi 2006, p. 202). Many women at this time in America became involved in progressive reform movements of education, science, hygiene, and domesticity. The popular 19th-century ideal of "maternalism," or a woman's special predisposition to nurturing and child-rearing, meant many middle-class women could work outside the home advocating for the above listed reform movements, while not outstepping their expected roles, and therefore reinforcing their importance as "civic housekeepers" (Tice 2006, p.1598). For women in Appalachia, these middle-class social-working women coming to the region presented a paradox in that, while they were advocating domesticity and marriage, these women as role models portrayed a different idea of gender roles in their public advocacy work. For the members of The Carter Family, being raised in this changing atmosphere where older generations were conflicting with new may have had subtle effects on their adult lives. In order to better understand the gender dynamics taking place within the band setting of The Carter Family, I will first discuss briefly the background of each band member.

Brief Biographical Sketch of Carter Family

Alvin Pleasant Carter was born in Scott County, Virginia in 1891. By age ten he had stopped attending school and would start down the road of odd jobs that he worked most of his life. Music was a delicate subject in his home. His mother, Mollie Bays Carter, would often sing hymns and ballads while she worked around the house and farm, but seeing as fiddle and dance music was known to make people act too rowdy at times, she was not fond of that particular style of music (Zwonitzer & Hirshberg, 2004). While she forbade her husband to go out and play, he would still play some around the house, and this is where A.P. got his start with the fiddle. A.P.'s father was a wanderer at heart: he often would leave Mollie alone to handle the children for days at a time. She would have to shoulder the work of both husband and wife in order to keep her family fed and the farm running. These gender dynamics that A.P. was raised with may help to explain his actions during his and Sara's marriage.

Sara Dougherty was born in 1898 in Wise County, Virginia. Her mother died of typhoid when she was just three, and she and her sister were sent to live with relatives, despite the fact that their father, Sevier Dougherty, was still alive. Sevier was known to ramble from friend's house to friend's house. Although he would visit his daughters, he was never a steady presence in his children's lives. While Sara's true parents had a small influence on her life, her aunt and uncle Nickels provided a stable environment for her and her siblings. She grew up surrounded by the old ballads and would often visit her cousin's place to take advantage of the vast array of instruments found there. She met A.P. Carter when he came by the Nickels' farm as a fruit tree salesman. The two would spend the day

sharing songs, and their courtship ensued. By age 17 she was married to A.P. Carter. Little did she know the musical relationship that would form between her, A.P., and her young cousin, Maybelle Addington.

Maybelle Addington was born in 1909, a full decade after Sara. Though ten years separated them, they became close through their mutual love of music. Maybelle was one of ten in a large and boisterous family, and music was a huge part of their family life. Though Maybelle never learned to read music, she could learn almost any instrument by ear. In her visiting with A.P. and Sara, she met A.P.'s younger brother, Ezra. The two would marry in 1926 when Maybelle was just 16. Soon after this union, in August of 1927, A.P., Sara, and Maybelle made the long journey over to Bristol, Tennessee for their first recording session.

Confronting Change Within the Confines of Convention

The Carter Family faced challenges as a group predominately led by women. Apparently, a scout for Brunswick Records turned them away for being a women-led group, wishing instead that A.P. and his fiddle were the featured aspects of the band. But it was for this very reason that Ralph Peer chose to record them. In particular, he found Sara's voice to be very striking and different. This unique quality was one of his goals for the Bristol recordings (Mazor & Mazor, 2014). Sara's voice combined the familiar sounds found in church music and family harmonies with narrative storytelling, which gave The Carter Family the distinctive sound that Peer was seeking (Mazor & Mazor, 2014).

Women of early country were mainly playing in their parlors in the company of friends and family – to step out of these roles required women to take precautions in how they presented themselves because they were under the watchful and judging eyes of society.

The Carter Family was very careful about the way they presented themselves in public – high collars, long sleeves, and long hemlines were all strictly adhered to. Music historian Rebecca Thomas uses the Carter Family as an example of such precautions women took, saying:

> The Carter sisters were pivotal in gaining acceptance for their gender in traditional music, but they did so within the confines of convention. Traveling under the protection of husband and brother-in-law A.P. Carter, the family's decorum in dress and presentation was uncompromising…. Standing for publicity photos in wool coats and a man's suit that revealed only their heads and hands, the trio's message was all business. (Akenson & Wolfe, 2003)

This again highlights how necessary the role played by A.P. Carter was in The Carter Family. With A.P. playing the role of front-man and husband, people were much less likely to raise an eyebrow at the actions of Sara and Maybelle. However, as mentioned in the quote above, they were "all business" in conducting themselves. Sara and Maybelle may have been stepping outside these unspoken boundaries of society by performing publicly, but they were doing so in a manner that would be hard to find inappropriate. Their actions and dress remained proper at all times, and with A.P.'s constant presence, it would be hard to accuse them of any promiscuity. The shows of The Carter Family were always advertised as family friendly and "morally good" (Krishef & Harris, 1978). As the years went by, the popularity of The Carter Family only increased. National record sales plummeted during The Great Depression, and yet, The Carter Family maintained stable record sales.

Final Years and Mother Maybelle

Throughout their marriage, A.P. and Sara's relationship often struggled. Like his father, A.P. would often disappear for days at a time on song-catching trips. He constantly traveled the surrounding areas to scavenge songs that he could re-arrange and on which he could claim royalties. Sara would be left at home with their three children to maintain the household and farm chores. As their career took off, tensions also grew. Sara resented being left to deal with things by herself, but A.P. saw this as his way of life; this was his way of providing for the family.

Despite their undeniable success, The Carter Family often struggled to make ends meet. In 1936, Sara announced her desire for a divorce. They had been living in Mexico for a few years working the famous Border Radio Station. Sara longed to return to the hills of Virginia and to stop the incessant traveling (Zwonitzer & Hirshberg, 2004). Divorces at this time in history were not unheard of, but were seldom pursued. While this did present a bit of a scandal for the group, they continued to work together – even though A.P. and Sara were no longer together, until Sara remarried (A.P.'s cousin) Coy Bayes in 1943 and relocated to California. The original Carter Family recorded their last album in 1941. During the time of their careers, both Sara and Maybelle had growing families. One way they were able to do this was by incorporating their children into their shows. When the split of the original Carter Family occurred, there was a new generation of Carter's who took their place. Maybelle Carter and her three daughters (Helen, Anita, and June) would continue the musical legacy as Mother Maybelle and the Carter Sisters (Zwonitzer & Hirshberg, 2004).

Mother Maybelle and the Carter Sisters became well-known for their shows and especially for June Carter's comedy routine. The Carter Sisters veered more into the emerging commodified country music industry than the original Carter Family. Maybelle's husband, Ezra Carter, supported their endeavors but was not involved in their shows. By contrasting the difference in appearance and performance attitude it becomes clear how quickly these changes were taking place within the music industry. The girls wore clothes in the latest fashion – higher hemlines, and shoulder-revealing necklines, notably less modest when compared to the reserved and proper clothing of Sara and Maybelle Carter.

Throughout their multi-generational legacy of country music, The Carter Family (in their various arrangements) has been predominantly female-led – first by Sara and Maybelle, then Maybelle and the Carter sisters. In keeping with this matrilineal trend of the Carter family, Janette Carter (A.P. and Sara's daughter) established the Carter Family Fold in 1979. The Carter Family Fold is a non-profit organization that is still in operation today (Norris, 2016). Its mission is to help preserve old-time, traditional country, and mountain music.[12] They have a strict acoustic-only instrument policy. It is yet another testament to how much change had taken place within society and the country music industry that a woman could found this business on her own when, just a few decades before, it would have been unusual for a woman from rural Appalachia to do so.

Many changes took place in the country music industry between the 1920s and the 1950s. These developments reflect the changes that were happening for women in society at the same time, both within Appalachia and throughout the greater U.S. When discussing these changes in society, many scholars make a distinction between rural and urban

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[12] Janette Carter was awarded the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Award in 2005 for her "lifelong advocacy for the performance and preservation of Appalachian music."

communities within Appalachia and "mainstream" America. Several studies have been conducted to challenge the ideas of Appalachian isolation[13], and while it is true that the mountains were harder to travel, it is clear that Appalachia developed a number of trade connections early on with the greater U.S. As Henry Shapiro argues, this idea of the Appalachian "other" developed out of a (urban) middle-class ideal of nostalgia for the past coupled with fears about the changing future rather than having much realistic factual basis (as cited in Waller, 1995).

In the field of Appalachian studies, the idea of authenticity is often brought up when discussing music and culture. Debates over the roles women should or should not play in traditional country or bluegrass was often brought up during the time the music was being defined. Traditionalism and perceived authenticity have been subjects of debate from the start of the country and bluegrass industries, and there are several different paths this music has taken over the years. These paths have been maintained in the old-time and string band-tradition, the early country music of the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, the early bluegrass of Bill Monroe, and the Grand-Ole-Opry- or Barn-Dance-Radio-influenced music of today's pop county. All of these genres or sub-genres stress the importance of "tradition" and yet each one has tailored which aspects they deem to be traditional or nontraditional to fit their ideal definition. These new subgenres tend to emerge as society changes and older and newer generations of musicians butt heads over what is the correct or incorrect way for this music to be performed – whether or not it was proper for women to be involved in music performance was also a part of this.

[13] e.g., *The Sociology of Southern Appalachia; Fighting back in Appalachia: Traditions of resistance and change; Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes: Back talk from an American Region*.

Changing Times

During the time between the end of the original Carter Family in the 1940s and the start of Hazel and Alice's career in the mid-60s, important changes were taking place both in society and in the music industries. The years following WWII had a big impact on the social structure of this time. As more women were entering the workforce, gender roles were being questioned, or rethought. Things were also changing in the music industry. For example, female country music artists were now almost as likely as male artists to sing of infidelity (Schäfer, 2012).

Though the 1950s is the era that most recall as that of the domesticated housewife happily devoting her life to fulfilling the needs of her husband and children, it was at this same time that America saw its highest increase in employment rates of women in the workforce. This decade also saw the highest number of female high school graduates in history (Coontz, 2011). This increase in education marks the start of a subtle shift in the attitude of society towards women. It was slowly becoming acceptable for women to work outside the home, provided, of course, that they had the husband's approval, and the children were all of schooling age (Coontz, 2011).

At home, in the media, and in public, these social views and expected gender norms were constantly reinforced through portrayals of these roles. Young women and girls watching television and reading magazines were being inundated with images of the nurturing housewife. Consider, for instance, *The Martha White Flour Show*, featuring Flatt and Scruggs. This show presented an entirely male band (as was the norm) playing the hard-driving, straight-ahead bluegrass they (men) were known for. When women were featured on

the show, it was a cut scene to the studio kitchen for a recipe featuring Martha White flour ingredients. Women were encouraged to mail in their request for a copy of the recipe – for these scenes were always geared towards women, and women alone, because the image of the submissive domestic housewife was the mainstream social and gender norm of the time.

While it is worth nothing that the show couldn't easily make any radical feminist statement (mostly because that just wasn't done at this time in the early 1950s), this is a great example of how media of the day reinforced the gender norms of that time.[14] By showcasing woman on the show only in the sense of baking for their family, and not as professional musicians, young viewers (specifically females) would perhaps never be spurred to act out of their expected role and pursue a career outside of their given options at this time (such as nurse, secretary, or school teacher). However, this could have had the opposite effect and instead spurred some young women to rebel against these expectations.

Multiple forms of media during this era portrayed working women, but these women (in the T.V. shows, and in greater society) often readily dropped their careers when the prospect of marriage was made available to them. This further enforces the dominant views of society at that time: that it was perfectly acceptable and encouraged to work a job as a young single woman, but upon marriage, her duties ought to lie within the household, caring for the husband and children (Coontz, 2011). Country and bluegrass music industries were slowly changing. Both genres were composed of mostly older conservative generations who were still following the unspoken rules of conduct from the previous generation. This is a great example of the generational paradox of progress and tradition mentioned earlier. Times

[14] It is worth noting that Martha White Flour is currently the official sponsor of Rhonda Vincent and the Rage, a woman fronted bluegrass band. Perhaps this is a reflection of the credibility women have earned in the bluegrass industry.

were changing, and throughout the feminist movement of the 1960s women began to challenge these unspoken rules and eventually attained more freedoms within society. Soon gender norms would be questioned and would undergo serious changes again. The groundwork for these changes taking place within the music industry had been carefully laid by female musicians such as the Carter Family, as well as by the women mentioned in the introduction and countless others who played minor and major parts in successfully making a difference for women to come in the industry.

Chapter Two:

Hazel & Alice and the 60s-70s

There were multiple factors that contributed to a widening shift for women in music during the 60s and 70s. First, the civil rights movement was nearing its peak, and secondly, the feminist movement was entering its second wave (Guest, 2016). This was a time of redefining culture in America. It was a reawakening of the womens' rights movement. Women recognized their mutual oppression and shared experiences, and began to work toward equal rights. Music was a huge part of these resistance movements. America has a deep history of spiritual and protest music and that tradition held strong throughout the 60s and 70s. Social protest music at this time was growing more and more popular and became intrinsically connected to labor strikes, union organization efforts, and social movements such as the civil rights movement and the anti-war efforts (Roy, 2010). It is important to note these music trends to better understand the social climate of the 60s and 70s when Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard were becoming more aware of their social surroundings.

Though they came from widely different backgrounds (Hazel, rural, and Alice, urban), the music they made when bringing these two backgrounds together was a new and striking sound. Hazel's love of her musical heritage and Alice's newly discovered love of this music and culture combined for a groundbreaking duo. By modeling their voices after that of men such as the Stanley Brothers or the Louvin Brothers, the two brought a new sound to the genre (Newby, 2015). The duo was showcasing their ability to perform just as effectively as the males of the industry. This combined with the content of the songs they were singing, may have had a lot to do with their popularity.

Hazel Dickens

Hazel Dickens was born in 1935 in Mountcalm, West Virginia at the southernmost part of the state, a place some may call the "heart of Appalachia." She was one of eleven children born to a family (like most families of the 1930s) struggling to make it through the Great Depression. Growing up in a mostly destitute family had a profound impact on Dickens throughout the rest of her life. She worked hard in order to be able to support herself. It wasn't until 1979 that Dickens quit her day job and pursued music full-time (Dickens & Malone, 2008). During her lifetime, both inside and out of the music world Dickens quietly observed the actions of others around her. These observations were eventually turned into songs that she wrote in an effort to bring attention to some of the inequalities she observed in everyday life.

The fact that Dickens was able to ease her way into the bluegrass world through playing in a band with her brother relates well to common gender-norms of this era (both societal and in the world of bluegrass). Hazel in particular was careful throughout her music career to present herself in a proper manner, especially on stage. Musician Ginny Hawker says Hazel felt this honored the music. She chose to dress professionally, and required all musicians playing with her to do the same – no shorts or jeans, only dresses, skirts, and dress pants (G. Hawker, personal communication, October 15, 2016). Whether she did this because it was the *proper* way to do things according to her upbringing, or if she was actively making sure people had nothing to talk about remains to be determined. At any rate, Hazel always followed these unspoken rules of behavior.

Since then, and with the innumerable freedoms women possess in today's society, it may be hard for some readers to fathom just how impressive the numerous accomplishments of Hazel Dickens actually are. As author Murphy Henry (2013) says,

> Today it is almost impossible to understand what a monumental leap this was for Hazel, moving out of the supportive behind-the-scenes mountain woman's role and into the public arena with a group of men. She was violating the mountain taboo of "Keeping her mouth shut if she knew what was good for her." And in public. Having her brothers in the band helped to make this possible. (p. 117)

The "mountain taboo" Murphy mentions in the quote above can be better understood when compared with Patricia Beaver's writing of private vs. public behavior among men and women of Appalachia. The public and private roles of husband and wife are very different. In public the man has the say, and the wife would never contradict or correct him. Conversely, within the home in their private lives, the woman has the majority of control. Here, in their home, the wife may disagree with her husband, and arguing may ensue, something that would otherwise never happen in public (Beaver, 1992). Beaver continues to say, "With a deep sense of the complementary nature of their roles and the obligation of a good man toward his family and their needs, the wife accepts the authority of her husband as a natural fact of life" (p. 98). She and her children depend on the husband financially, and emotionally for support, and so she accepts the public restrictions in exchange for private freedoms within the household.

One exception to this, addressed by scholar Christiana Miewald (2006), is working women. In parts of Appalachia where farming is still an important part of the economy.

Women's involvement in wage labor, and increase in available education has altered these traditional gender roles, providing women with more freedoms both within and outside of the household. By the 60s and 70s Miewald states, "Appalachian women – unlike their mothers and grandmothers – were seeking both meaningful work and financial independence" (p. 195). However, many women struggled to reconcile their altered traditional family role with that of their past family members, especially their mothers. Many women justified their actions by returning to their communities and giving back through education and after school programs.

The fact that Hazel was loudly voicing her opinion in public challenges the social expectations she was raised with. She was raised in a rural setting, and now she had to relearn the rules of society in her new urban setting. While she may have got her start in the music industry playing in a band with her brothers she soon ventured into a partnership with Alice Gerrard, which was a big step for Hazel. While she had no trouble getting work in the city, it was often in places like small smoky bars filled with rough people. In order to reconcile these types of settings with her upbringing, she would often tell her mother she was performing at what would be considered a more acceptable setting such as libraries, so that she would not worry (G. Hawker, personal communication, October 15, 2016).

Looking at Hazel's life in this urban vs. rural setting can be useful, for her life is largely split into two pieces: her time spent in West Virginia growing up, and then after her pivotal move into the city looking for work. It just so happened that she found work in the form of the biggest parts she brought with her from her home in Appalachia – her music. With the folk revival quickly gaining popularity, people were seeking what they deemed 'authentic' mountain music which Hazel was able to share in excess. Throughout her music

career Hazel grew in confidence, and outstepped those roles that were expected of her and together with Alice Gerrard wrote ground breaking and inspirational songs that would forever change the way women to come would view the bluegrass and country music scenes.

Alice Gerrard

If we look at Alice's life in a similar urban vs. rural manner, we see that it was almost a total opposite division for her. She was born in an urban setting and ,through her life, transitioned into a more rural setting. Alice Gerrard was born in the state of Washington and raised in California. Born in 1935, Gerrard says, she was brought up in an era when "women were taught to believe they'd get married, have kids, and have a husband who would take care of them forever"(Vernon, Rosenburg, Gerrard, & Dickens, 1996) Her family comes from a mainly classical music background, and it wasn't until She moved to Ohio to attend Antioch college that she was truly exposed to this traditional music. It was through her boyfriend Jeremy Foster (later to become her husband), a close friend of Mike Seeger, that she first learned of bluegrass and old-time music. As she became more interested and learned more about this music she recalled that they "reveled in the hard-edged sound, the close-to-the-bone feelings, and the way old-time and bluegrass music put us in touch with a missing piece of our lives" (Vernon, Rosenberg, Gerrard, & Dickens, 1996). For her it was like coming home (Vernon, Rosenberg, Gerrard, & Dickens, 1996).

As she and Jeremy, her husband, became more involved with the bluegrass and folk scene in the D.C. and Baltimore area she soon met and developed a friendship with Hazel Dickens. Hazel was recently married, and Alice was widowed in 1964, just before the duo's first folkways recording. This meant Alice was left a single mother to four young children. It

was nearly impossible for her to be both a full-time musician, and a full-time mother on her own. This is oftentimes still the case in current times. Both men and women are forced to choose between their career and their families, and in struggling to juggle both, one or the other is usually negatively impacted (Greenhaus & Powell, 2016). During this time of change and discovery for women in the United States, Hazel and Alice themselves were undergoing a transformation, or discovery, of their own.

The duo split in 1979 to pursue individual careers. Alice would go on to found *The Old Time Herald* a magazine dedicated to old-time music in 1987 and remained the magazine's editor until 2003 when she stepped down to pursue her music career again full-time. Another contributing factor to the split was that maintaining a full-time job as a musician was difficult to do while also raising a family.

One of the things that makes their recordings so significant is the fact that these two women decided on the material for their album, and who would play on it with them entirely on their own. In a time when it was common for producers to bring their own requirements and materials to a recording, these women insisted on exactly what they wanted in their own style (Vernon, Rosenberg, Gerrard, & Dickens, 1996). Though they were exerting their independence as female recording musicians, and writing politically and socially poignant song material, both Dickens and Gerrard claimed they were not pursuing a feminist following (Henry, 2013).[15] However, that is exactly what was happening as their music became more popular, so did their following of strong-willed women – to the extent that one of their shows was female only admittance by the control of the audience in attendance (Dickens & Malone, 2008). Gerrard (2008) stated in the updated liner notes of their folkways album, "Generally,

[15] This may have been due to possible negative feelings associated with aggressive feminism at the time,

women were the girlfriends or wives of the musicians, or a threat to those same. If they played they were the bass player in an otherwise male band;[16] they might sing one country song per set, and were often treated badly" (Vernon, Rosenberg, Gerrard, & Dickens, 1996).– It was through Hazel and Alice's observations of this mistreatment that they were inspired to write some of their most pointed materials. While they may not have been seeking a feminist following as mentioned earlier, one rapidly developed none the less based around a love of these songs. Author Murphy Henry says this new fan base was because for the first time in the bluegrass world, songs were being written by women, about women.

Pioneering Women

Although bluegrass was a predominately male dominated industry, and Hazel and Alice are known for blazing a trail for women in this music, it is worth noting that they met with little resistance. Their bands included mostly male instrumentalists, and they even were gifted a song by none other than the father of bluegrass, Bill Monroe himself. "The One I Love Is Gone" was written by Monroe, and during one of the many musical gatherings of the D.C. Baltimore bluegrass scene, he played it for them, telling them they could have it if they wanted. Hazel and Alice would include it on their second folkways album (Henry, 2013). If there was any resistance from traditional bluegrass musicians or fans about this female participation, it would have been wiped out with this "christening" from Monroe.

While conducting this research, I began to wonder if the accomplishments of these two women had more to do with the changing times, or their personal musical accomplishments. Was it because of their talent, and songwriting that they became so

[16] Hazel's time spent as bass player in the Pike County Boys with her brother and Mike Seeger is a good example of this.

popular, or was it simply the right social climate for the types of songs they were writing? Though it is true that their material was indeed fresh, and at times controversial,[17] it is because of changes taking place in society at the time that they were inspired to write the contents of their songs in the first place. During the 60s and 70s society as a whole was questioning why things were done the way they were, and instead of accepting gender norms as the general rule, some people were beginning to challenge and attempt to correct what they saw as injustices, however small. One major change was how women viewed themselves, and how they believed they should be treated – equal to men (Wayne, 2014).

Hazel and Alice were young independent women during this time, and happened to find a niche where they were encouraged to pursue their musical passions rather than hindered in doing so. As they progressed in their careers, and observed the inequalities all around them, they became more involved in changing and speaking out about these injustices. Though both Hazel and Alice have countless songs to exemplify this, the first one that comes to mind is Hazel's "Black Lung" which was her first strongly social song.[18]

> Black lung, black lung, oh your hand's icy cold
> as you reach for my life and you torture my soul
> cold as that water hole down in that dark cave
> where I spent my life's blood diggin' my own grave.
> (Dickens & Malone, 2008)

The words of the songs of Hazel & Alice combined with the strong emotionally evocative harmonies presented a fresh take on an already emotionally powerful music.

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[17] See Appendix for "Mary Johnson".
[18] Dickens was moved to write this song after witnessing her brother slowly die from black lung, and receive almost zero help from the coal company he was employed by (Pickering & Dickens, 2007).

Musician Ginny Hawker describes this ability to "put you there" saying that Hazel and Alice carefully chose their songs so as to place the listeners in a certain place, feeling, or memory. Her husband Tracy Schwarz says the same of The Carter Family, asserting that their harmonies were very affective, and that people related to the material on a deep emotional level (G. Hawker and T. Schwarz, personal communication, 2016). This idea of memories linked to past aural experiences has been studied many times, with a strong found to link song and memory (Tillmann, Peretz, & Samson, 2011). These strong emotional reactions to the music were undoubtedly a contribution to the popularity of Hazel and Alice.

Scholars and musicians alike have asserted, "If the two were pioneering anything, it was themselves (Pankake & Pankake, 1997)." This could be interpreted one of two ways that they were (1) pioneering, or, discovering themselves as they grew in their career, or that (2) they were careerists strategically pioneering their music. Either way, the success of these two women, and the undeniable inspiration the duo provided for future generations of female and male musicians alike, is a contribution that cannot be overlooked. I would also like to point out the wide variety of fans the duo found over the years. So many culturally different people found joy within this music. Bluegrass historian Neil Rosenberg made note of this in his updated liner notes for Hazel and Alice's second folkways album *Who's That Knocking?,* stating that, "It is curious, and I think significant, that this music should appeal to people of such divergent backgrounds in our culture…" (Vernon et al. 1996). Rural, Urban, Middle, or lower class – people of many different social backgrounds enjoyed the music of Hazel & Alice.

I agree with Rosenberg that this is indeed a significant accomplishment for these two women, and I think the variety in the fan base has a lot to do with the folk revival taking off during this same time period. Ginny Hawker tried to explain this saying:

> The content of what they were doing, songs about home, songs about family, songs about death and all the rituals of our lives, those were songs that really touched people. Sometimes I think those were things that popular culture was straying away from, this music kind of touches people, and I think, even if they weren't from the same culture, even if someone from New York City, never been out of Brooklyn, they would hear that…and they were really into it. (G. Hawker, personal communication, 2016)

People of all backgrounds were in search of music with heart and substance, something they were not finding in the pop music at that time, and they found just that in the music of Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, who were bringing this fresh sound of two strong female voices.

Chapter Three:

Contrast of Musical Materials

Contrasting the differences in song material covered by these two groups highlights the differences in the social norms of the time periods. While the social practices in the music industry generally reflect the social practices taking place in society of the same time, it is worth noting that songwriting and performance provided safe spaces for people, male and female alike, to voice their concerns, opinions, and fears about society – this was especially true in the 1960s and 70s (Roy, 2010). It was during this time that protest music became widely popular in relation to the folk revival and movements of resistance. That being said, what follows in this chapter is my own analysis and comparison of the song material covered by these two groups.[19] Contrasting the difference in lyrical content between the songs The Carter Family and Hazel & Alice were performing and writing, will highlight and strengthen the changes that had taken place in society between the two time periods.

During their time as a band The Carter Family covered songs about things such as family, true love, unrequited love, appreciation for home, being orphaned, and the ever-popular tragedy song.[20] These songs were popular at this time because their audience could relate to the themes of the music. Many people were struggling with the same problems as were taking place in these songs. On top of this, they were being delivered by the powerful voice of Sara and Maybelle Carter. The familiarity of their voices (similar to that of church music and family singing) touched a lot of people, and could have been a contributing factor of their immediate popularity. Society as a whole was struggling to make it through the Great

[19] Complete Lyrics for each song discussed located in Appendix.

[20] e.g. “Can The Circle Be Unbroken,” “Sweet Fern,” “Dark And Stormy Weather,” “In The Shadow Of Clinch Mountain,” “The Poor Orphan Child,” and “Jim Blake’s Message.”

Depression, and people held to such themes as family and religion, all of which can be found in the music of The Carter Family. Songs such as: “No Depression In Heaven,” “Can The Circle Be Unbroken,” “Heaven’s Radio,” “Keep On The Firing Line,” and “God Gave Noah The Rainbow Sign” are all examples of the various religious themed songs they were singing. In a way, these songs gave people hope of better times to come, whether in this life of after. They also sang such songs as “Worried Man Blues,” “Single Girl, Married Girl,” “I Know What It Means To Be Lonesome,” and “Lover’s Return.” These songs feature themes of lost love, hard work, and fond memories of times past – all more than likely themes that people affected by the Depression could readily relate to. Country music at this point was just developing as a viable career opportunity. Radio was taking off, and commercial music was becoming widely popular. While some songs of social dissatisfaction, such as “Single Girl, Married Girl” could be found it was not the central focus of the genre, or what the Carter Family became known for.

A few decades later as the social atmosphere was changing, socially and politically charged songs helped to make Hazel and Alice popular. Songs such as “Don’t Put Her Down, You Helped Put Her There,” “Custom Made Women Blues,” “Ramblin’ Woman,” “Mama’s Gonna Stay,” and “Workin’ Girl Blues” all made strong statements about the neglect, or mistreatment of women. These songs reflect the women’s rights movement that was sweeping the nation during the 60s and 70s. Though Hazel & Alice wrote many of these progressive songs, they were also writing songs wherein the lyrics followed a more traditional song structure. Songs like Hazel’s “Beyond The River Bend” (which was intentionally modeled after the style of the Carter family) and Gerrard’s “Gabriel’s Call” (a gospel song written with the help of her husband Jeremy Foster, their friend Marge Marash,

and Hazel) were modeled after a more traditional song structure. Though they payed homage to these women of the past who contributed so many inspiring songs, they added new materials to the genre which would inspire a new generation of songwriters and musicians while also reflecting the changing views in society.

Hazel & Alice, similarly to The Carter Family, were singing songs that many of their fans related to on an emotional level. Author and Journalist Dana Jennings (2008) sums up these strong emotional connections to the music by saying,

> With the deepest country music, there are no casual listeners because the music is curse and redemption, the journey and the home place, current events and ancient tales. The very best country music is prayer and litany, epiphany and salvation. That's why it's still with us. (p. 10)

This is something that The Carter Family and Hazel & Alice both had in common, and it is something that, in my opinion, today's commercial country music is sorely lacking.

Single Girl Married Girl vs. Rambling Woman

"Single Girl, Married Girl" is a frequently referenced Carter Family song, as it was among the first four songs recorded by The Carter Family during the Bristol Sessions of 1927. It voices feelings of dissatisfaction that many women of the day may have felt. But most of these women, similarly to Sara Carter herself, simply accepted marriage and family responsibilities as their inevitable fate. Though it could be said that Sara rebelled against this accepted norm by her divorce of A.P. Carter in 1936, historians have made note of Sara's dislike of this song, and I would offer this could be because it held to many truths for her at

the time (Mazor & Mazor, 2014). She was dissatisfied with her married life and, as discussed earlier, shouldered many family responsibilities.

The lyrics of "Single Girl, Married Girl" are probably the most straightforward of the variations on songs about the single life.[21] The version they recorded was said to have been learned from A.P.'s mother. The second verse states:

> Single girl, single girl
>
> she goes to the store and buys
>
> oh, she goes to the store and buys.
>
> Married girl, married girl
>
> she rocks the cradle and cries
>
> oh, she rocks the cradle and cries.

This verse contrasts nicely with the last verse of the song "Rambling Woman" written by Hazel Dickens that says:

> So take all of that sweet talk and give it to some other girl
>
> who'd be happy to rock your babies and live in your kind of world
>
> for I'm a different kind of woman got a different set of plans
>
> and you know a ramblin' woman is no good for a home-lovin' man.

The lyrics of the Carter song openly voice a dissatisfaction with the way things are but, they are tinged through with an acceptance, a surrender of sorts, to the subject's circumstances in life. Dickens' song openly says she will not settle for that life, and refuses to settle down and assume her expected role of mother and wife. This song could illustrate how the times had changed enough by the 1960s that women were no

[21] Roba Stanley's "Single Girl" and the traditional song "I Wish I Was A Single Girl Again"

longer settling, and accepting their fate as unchangeable. They were instead confronting these societal norms when they felt they were unfair.

Tell Me That You Love Me vs. When I Loved You

This Carter family song, “Tell Me That You Love Me,” is one that features the common theme of unrequited love. Though it is unclear whether the subject of the song is male or female, by virtue of being sung by Sara and Maybelle, it is given a distinctly female voice. The chorus of the song says:

> Oh, tell me that you love me yet
>
> For, oh, this parting gives me pain
>
> Please tell me that you'll not forget
>
> For we may never meet again.

The verses entail a lot of flowery imagery and details of their sad parting. The tone of the song is mournful in a sense, with twinges of regret found throughout. The song ends with the subject declaring they will remain faithful, and that they will love only the one who has left them. “When I Loved You” provides a nice contrast to the above Carter Family song. While the Carter Family song features flowery imagery, and a declaration of unending faithfulness, this Hazel and Alice song starts off with the chorus:

> When I loved you, you didn’t want me
>
> You turned me away from the door of your heart
>
> When I loved you, you loved me too but,
>
> You didn’t know it darling till another won my heart.

From the start of the song it is clear that the subject has moved on. While the tone of the Carter Family song is melancholic, "When I Loved You" is making a definite statement that they will not wait around for him to return, they have found someone who treats them better. The second verse makes this clear saying:

> Oh I just got the message you sent by a friend
>
> Tellin' me that you had to be with me once more
>
> You heard of my wedding and you can't believe it
>
> But my heart is safe now, it don't ache no more.

Despite the pleas of the former lover, the subject makes it known she will not be swayed to tarnish her new marriage by cheating. The very fact that women were singing of infidelity and asserting their independence, marks a distinct shift in the tone of what types of songs would be considered acceptable or not in this changing era of new music.

Carter's Blues vs. Custom Made Woman Blues

This Carter family song, "Carter's Blues," features the common theme of lost love. The chorus of this song states:

> You love some other and you don't love me
>
> You care not for my company
>
> You love some other and I know why
>
> Because he has more gold than I
>
> But gold will melt and silver will fly
>
> My love for you will never die.

Losing a love interest due to a lack of funds is a common occurrence in older country music, and ballads. The main character of this song is lamenting the loss of his love interest, who "cares not for his company." The songs of The Carter family though predominately sung by Sara and Maybelle sometimes, as in this song, featured lyrics from the male's perspective. Though this song was being sung by women, it is obviously from a male perspective, which maybe in part due to A.P.'s heavy influence in song arranging. This pattern of women singing songs from a male perspective began to change as more women became involved with the music, often times changing the lyrics to a female perspective (Henry, 2013). The last line of the chorus, as in the song before, "Tell Me That You Love Me" makes the same claim of undying love or faithfulness. Despite being scorned, the subject will maintain his longing affections. The songs of The Carter Family frequently featured a moral at the end of the song, such as in this song where the last verse states:

> So, fare you well my charming little love
> Oh meet me in that land above
> And when we meet there in that land
> We'll take no more this parting hand.

This theme of receiving a better life in heaven (upon morally good behavior) was featured in many songs of the time period, as people who met with hard times through the depression and beyond found solace in the idea of heavenly rewards. This need for a higher affirmation of their actions, could perhaps be another reinforcement of societal expectations. "Custom Made Woman Blues" (written by Alice Gerrard) provides a different take on lost love. While there is no moral stated plainly in the lyrics, a life lesson could still be gleaned

from these words. The bluesy timing and vocal style of this song give it a lazy, resigned feeling making it sound almost satirical. The second verse states:

> Yes, I tried to be the kind of woman you wanted me to be
>
> And I tried to see life your way and say all the things you'd like me to say
>
> Lovin' thoughts, gentle hands, all guaranteed to keep a' hold on your man
>
> Made to please and not to tease it's the custom made woman blues.

This song conveys a deeper problem Hazel & Alice had encountered within society, and that is the expected roles of women. As previously established, girls (including Dickens and Gerrard) were raised to believe their purpose in life was to find a husband and start a family. In order to secure a husband, girls were oftentimes expected to look and act a certain way, effectively tailoring their behavior to that of what they thought a life partner would find appealing. In the case of this song, that did not work for the main character. In the last verse we see:

> And now you say you're tired of me
>
> And all of those things I thought you wanted me to be
>
> Is it true you want someone who knows how to think and do on her own
>
> Lord it's hard to realize the lessons I learned so young were nothing but lies
>
> Made to please and not to tease it's the custom made woman blues.

The overall statement of this song appears to be that being yourself is the best way to find someone who will treat you well. While the older generations were teaching their young women to be kind, gracious, and defer to the male opinion, I believe Gerrard is making a statement here by illustrating how the gender roles she was raised with were no longer the norm. Times were changing throughout the nation, and perhaps many men were no longer

interested in the obedient housewife, but rather an intelligent and intellectually stimulating life partner. The difference in perspectives of these two songs could be a reflection how much change had taken place between the 20s/30s and the 60s/70s. While The Carter Family often sang of lost love in a longing and melancholic manner, Hazel & Alice put a different kind of emotion into their songs that provided a straightforward and often brazen viewpoint. Women struggling with these changing roles of society who heard the music of Hazel & Alice may have identified with it on a deep emotional level which, perhaps, reinforced their thoughts of deserved equality.

Kissing Is A Crime vs. Mary Johnson

"Kissing Is A Crime" is a Carter Family song that details the mischievous behavior of a courting couple. The chorus of the song says:

> Going to be a better girl and never kiss again
> afraid my ma might find it out and cause her great pain
> you may walk and talk and hold my hand but kissing is a crime
> I'll not kiss you anymore until next time.

While the song is playful, and more than likely meant to be taken lightly, it also conveys the expected social behavior for young women at that time. The Carter Family was marketed as a *family* band. Their advertisements expressed that their shows were "morally good." Historian Barry Mazor explains that this meant their comfort zone and willingness to broaden their subject matter remained small, and Peer worked around this to their advantage. They followed an older code of conduct and weren't willing to

compromise their wholesome image, within the realm of song, or in the real world (Mazor & Mazor, 2014).

It was difficult to find a Carter Family song comparable to the next Hazel & Alice song, "Mary Johnson." I chose "Kissing Is A Crime" in order to highlight the sharp contrast between these two songs. By doing this, I think I effectively illustrate the difference in societal views between the two generations. While Hazel and Alice were both brought up in a relatively conservative background, this song makes clear the progressive and changing atmosphere for women in the 60s and 70s. The opening verse of the song states:

> I'm just sitting in this bar room, yes that's whiskey that you see
> And my name is Mary Johnson, and lord my feet are killing me
> I've been working hard and I just stopped in before I head on home
> And if you're thinkin' somethin' different friend you sure are thinkin' wrong
> And if you think you're reading want-to in these big brown eyes of mine
> Well it's only a reflection of the want-to in your mind.

The meaning behind this Hazel & Alice song cannot be misinterpreted, it is straightforward and cuts directly to the point. This song makes perhaps one of their boldest statements. In the song, Mary Johnson is asserting her right to her independence. She works hard to support herself, not to be subjected by men. If she would like to stop at a bar for a drink before heading home, she has that right, and it doesn't mean she is a woman looking for a man. The song goes onto say that while everyone gets lonely, and she herself may occasionally indulge in the "want-to," she reserves the right to initiate or decline. This is a very forward statement to make in country and bluegrass music, even in the changing times of the 60s and 70s.

Chapter Four:

Short Documentary Analysis

In developing the documentary that accompanies this thesis, I decided on four people to interview about the legacy of The Carter Family and Hazel & Alice. Buddy Griffin is a native of Braxton County West Virginia, and has made a living through most of his adult life as a professional fiddler and banjo player. He founded the Glenville State College bluegrass program in 2007. The college now offers a four-year accredited degree in traditional bluegrass music. He grew up in a musical family in which his parents actively performed Carter Family style music. He learned Mother Maybelle's famous guitar style, the "Carter Scratch," from his own mother and passes his knowledge on willingly to friends and students. I chose Buddy as an interviewee for his extensive knowledge of the Carter Family, and his professional experience in the field of bluegrass music during the 60s and 70s when the biggest changes for women were taking place.

Griffin retired from his position as director of the bluegrass degree program in 2011, and this position was filled by Glenville Alum Megan Darby. I chose to interview Megan Darby because she is the current director of the bluegrass degree program. She grew up in Appalachian Ohio in a family that plays traditional bluegrass and old country. They attend multiple bluegrass festivals annually and, as a result, she maintains strong ties with higher ups in the bluegrass world and is able to provide fantastic internship opportunities for her students. She is in tune with the politics of the traditional bluegrass world and has firsthand experience of what it is like to be a woman in the professional world of bluegrass as it is today.

The last two individuals I chose to interview were Ginny Hawker (originally of Southern Virginia) and Tracy Schwarz (a New Jersey native). These two musicians have contributed a lot over the years to bluegrass and country music alike. In June of 2016 the West Virginia State Folk Festival was dedicated to the two. Since its start in 2009, Ginny has been the director of the Augusta Heritage Center's Early County week (renamed Classic Country week in 2016). She has recorded with artists such as Hazel Dickens, Kay Justice, and Carol Elizabeth Jones. She has performed at many folk festivals showcasing her Primitive Baptist style singing, which she learned from her father. Tracy was a member of the New Lost City Ramblers and the Strange Creek Singers, which included Alice Gerrard and Hazel Dickens. He also played backup for Maybelle Carter. Tracy spent a lot of time in the Baltimore and D.C. area at the start of the folk revival when bluegrass and folk music was experiencing a new wave of widespread popularity. I chose these four musicians in order to give a few different perspectives (both male and female, from different generations) on bluegrass and country music, and the legacy of The Carter Family and Hazel & Alice.

Interview Responses

I asked everyone similarly phrased questions, and they all brought up factors for consideration that I had not thought of which may be of interest for future researchers. Each of them, when asked questions about the appeal of the music of The Carter Family and Hazel & Alice, had similar experience to share of having a physical reaction to the music – goose bumps, raised hairs, or maybe even tears. These reactions, referred to as psychoacoustic experiences, are frequently addressed in music psychology research. For some reason, the human body reacts to certain frequency combinations. These responses are brought up

frequently in modern old-time music, when musicians in tight jams speak of altered states of consciousness, resembling that of a spiritual experience (Wood, 2015). Professor of Psychology Alf Gabrielsson addresses these phenomena his book *Strong Experiences with Music: Music is Much More Than Just Music.* Within the book Gabrielsson discusses the struggles in defining a systematic form of classification for strong musical experiences. This struggle arises from the fact that peoples' musical experiences are so varied both across cultures and from person to person. A song that evokes a strong reaction of memory from one person, may not have any effect on another person (Gabrielsson & Bradbury, 2011). The interviewees spoke of the effectiveness of the combined female voices found in both The Carter Family and Hazel & Alice's music. The effectiveness of the strong female harmonies, may have contributed to the popularity of the groups. There may be a psychoacoustic reason that explains why higher frequencies would be more effective than lower frequencies for some listeners.

Another observation I made during these interviews was the growth of technology within the industry. Within just a few decades the media had changed format multiple times – from phonograph, and radio, to records and cassettes, compact discs, and now digital files. Megan Darby mentioned during her interview that a contributing factor to Hazel & Alice's widespread popularity may have had a lot to do with the improved sound quality of the recordings, and the fact that their music was being pushed by a label. The improved sound quality is undeniable. Remastered versions of The Carter Family's recordings have been released, and may have something to do with their continued popularity. While increased sound quality of recordings and record labels may have had a strong influence on the popularity of their music, another possible influence is the increase in media exposure that

Appalachia experienced during the War on Poverty. Buddy Griffin says the increased media focus on the region brought more attention to Appalachia, and therefor attention to the music, which in turn brought attention to the region again.

Another interesting contrast I picked up on was that people kept saying the strong female voice combination of Hazel and Alice was unheard of, and that is why it became so popular. This is interesting because of the multiple collections of work from the Carter family – songs featuring strong female harmonies. At some point between the 20s/30s and the 60s/70s, perhaps this strong female voice had lost its appeal. In the start of early commercial country music, radio stations sought out female voices to feature on the radio, considering it a "less intrusive voice" as mentioned in the introduction. Peer signed the Carter Family, in part, because of the women's strong voices. The music of the Carter Family echoed church music, and the types of songs people were hearing their mothers sing at home. It provided a reminiscent quality and emotional attachment to the music that most people loved. By the time Hazel and Alice were singing, it was if this strong unabashed female voice had come back full force. The county and bluegrass industries had been predominately male dominated, and to have women providing an equally powerful version of this music may have been appealing to listeners, and inspired future generations of female musicians to pursue a career on their own.

Conclusion

Throughout my research for this work, it became increasingly apparent that the societal norms surrounding a musician can have a direct effect on his or her career. The success of a musician connects directly to how effectively they comply with or rebel against these expected roles. For the Carter Family, it was beneficial to flirt on the edge of rebellion, or to challenge these roles "within the confines of convention" as with the use of modest clothing discussed earlier. They marketed themselves as "morally good," because that is how they were raised to behave, and because that was still largely the expected behavior for women.[22] They were stepping outside of these expected roles by performing publicly, but it was accepted by society because they were doing so accompanied by A.P. Carter, Sara's Husband, and Maybelle's brother-in-law. They dressed appropriately, and their song material, while dealing at times with unsavory circumstances such as infidelity, never blatantly challenged the social norms of the time period. The 20s and 30s were a time of subtle yet substantial changes for women as evidenced by the success of The Carter Family, a female led group.

By the 60s and 70s, society had undergone many changes for women who were now more involved in the workplace than any time since WWII. This is equally true for those living both within and outside of Appalachia. In fact, much of the younger generations were moving out of rural Appalachia and into urban settings to find work. The majority of society was still changing, questioning, and challenging the usefulness of gender norms. With social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, anti-war movements, the War on Poverty, and the reawakening of the feminist movement, people were more involved in enacting

[22] Perhaps this is also due to the fact that it was in Ralph Peer's interest to market them in this fashion. (Mazor & Mazor, 2014)

changes in society (Roy, 2010). Hazel & Alice rose to popularity in the middle of this and unintentionally cultivated a huge feminist following. While they did not actively pursue this audience, they welcomed it none the less, and it had a significant impact on their popularity.

In writing songs of their lived experiences, they were giving a voice to the shared experiences of countless other women who were fighting the oppression of gender norms. Though they may have encountered discrimination in their private day-to-day lives, in their career they were not discouraged from writing controversial songs and, in fact, these songs are what they are best known for today. They broke into the male dominated world of bluegrass with their powerful voices and strong harmonies, modeled the same as popular male groups of the time period, but this combination found in two female voices was different and fresh. They were carving a substantial path that other women would follow them down in pursuing a professional career in bluegrass or country music.

Current Atmosphere for Women

Though things have rapidly changed for women in bluegrass and country, it can still be a struggle for women, especially in the world of traditional bluegrass. Megan Darby recalls what it was like for her coming up in a bluegrass world, stating that it still seemed to her a male dominated genre. She talks about how maintaining a proper image is still important in traditional bluegrass today, especially for women. It is important to keep your personal life separate from your professional life she says, “There is no mixing drugs, and partying and that whole scene if you want to be taken seriously” (personal communication 2016). It would seem people are more lenient with male behavior in traditional bluegrass music circles. The Bluegrass Degree Program at Glenville State College struggles with this

difference in expectations of men and women as a traditional based program. How do women factor into this traditional framework? The genre of bluegrass was founded by a man, and traditionally included entirely male bands, however, this program is now being run by a woman. The bluegrass history curriculum includes mainly male based musicians.[23] In my time at Glenville State, the Glenville State College Bluegrass Band was evenly split between male and female musicians. These numbers have been known to fluctuate and currently, in a program of 12 musicians, there is only one female. It could be argued that this program which is tradition-based is stepping outside of tradition by including females and this paradox is something the program juggles lightly – it is a traditional program functioning in modern times – women are included and respected for their musical contributions. I would argue the expected behavior of male and females in the sphere of traditional bluegrass is similar to any other professional atmosphere – there is a right and wrong way to conduct yourself in a business setting.

Although some social stigmas still remain for women in traditional bluegrass, and the character of women is called into question more often than men, progress is being made every year. In this year's IBMA (International Bluegrass Music Association) awards, for the first time a woman won both Fiddle player of the year (Becky Buller), and mandolin player of the year (Sierra Hull), categories that have always been male dominated in the past. Donna Ulisse was awarded songwriter of the year this year, a category that women had only been included in starting the previous year in 2015.

These ongoing accomplishments for women in bluegrass and country music would not have been possible without artist's like Samantha Bumgarner and Eva Davis, Roba

[23] Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys, Flatt & Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys , Reno & Smiley, The Osborne Brothers, Jim & Jessie and the Virginia Boys, etc.

Stanley, Rosa Lee Carson, Lily May Ledford, Cynthia Caver, Wilma Lee Cooper, Sara and Maybelle Carter, and Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard. The pathways these women created, allowed for future generations of women to start paths of their own, and in turn inspire more women. The obstacles they faced in society at times indeed hindered their careers, and yet, they persevered to leave a legacy that women are adding to still today, and will continue to add to for generations to come.

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Appendix A

"Single Girl"

Do not care for pretty little things,

Always felt like dancing,

Streets all lined with one dollar bills,

Girls all sweet and dainty.

Single life is a happy life,

Single life is lovely,

I am single and no man's wife,

And no man shall control me.

Some will come on Saturday nights,

Some will come on Sunday,

And if you give them half a chance,

They will stay till Monday.

Single life is a happy life, etc.

Cupid came last Saturday night,

Took him in the parlor,

Every time he'd hug my neck,

He'd say now don't you holler.

Single life is a happy life, etc.

Boy fell in love with a pretty little girl,

He'll talk as gentle as a dove.

He'll call her his honey and spend all his money,

And show 'er he's solid on his love.

Single life is a happy life, etc.

Would not marry a red-headed boy,

Would not marry for money,

All I want is a brown-eyed boy,

To kiss and call me honey.

Single life is a happy life, etc.

Boys keep away from the girls I say,

And give 'em plenty of room,

For when you're wed they'll bang you til you're dead,

With the bald-headed end of the broom.

Single life is a happy life, etc.

Appendix B

List of Interview Questions

In your opinion, what is so significant about the songs of the Carter Family that makes their music still widely covered today?

Would you say people are drawn more towards the style of the Carter Family's music, or the words of the songs.

How has the Carter Family influenced you musically?

Would you say it was the content of The Carter Family songs, or the presence of a strong female lead that influenced you the most? And for Hazel and Alice?

Why do you think the Carter Family songs have been covered by such a wide variety of artists?

Hazel and Alice are frequently referred to as the first female fronted bluegrass group. Do you agree with that title?

Bluegrass music is often recognized for its fast-paced tempo, soaring vocals, and intense harmonies. What would you say influences listeners more, the tempo of the music, or the lyrics of the song?

What do you think was so special about the way Hazel and Alice did things that made them so popular?

How have Hazel & Alice influenced you musically?

Would you say it was Hazel & Alice’s songwriting, or again, the strong female presence that contributed to their popularity?

How do you think the country and bluegrass music industries’ attitude changed towards women from the time of The Carter Family, to Hazel & Alice?

Do you think The Carter Family, or Hazel &Alice brought recognition to Appalachia through their career accomplishments?

Vita

Laiken Boyd was born and raised in the mountains of West Virginia. Boyd graduated from Cameron High School in 2011. The following August she began attending Glenville State College where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in traditional bluegrass music. In the Spring of 2015 she began working toward a Master of Arts degree in Appalachian studies. The M.A. was awarded in December 2016. Ms. Boyd's plans include returning to her home state to pursue a career related to her interests in preserving the heritage of the Appalachian Region.