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## Celebrity Protest and Media Consumption: A Comparative Analysis Across Media and Cultural Context

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**Celebrity Protest and Media Consumption:  
A Comparative Analysis Across Media and Cultural Context**

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By Paxton Elizabeth Williams

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion  
Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies  
Croft Institute for International Studies  
Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College  
The University of Mississippi

University, Mississippi  
May 2017

Approved:

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Dedicated to  
*Her Majesty* The Queen

*(Her Majesty* Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith)

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis, I performed a comparative case study between the United States and a foreign country, particularly Australia, Venezuela, and the United Kingdom, in each of the media ages that I defined. I defined these media ages as the Pre-24 Hour News Cycle Age, the Internet Age, and the Social Media Age. For the Pre-24 Hour News Cycle Age, I examined Muhammad Ali and his refusal to be inducted into the Armed Services in 1967 after being drafted for the Vietnam War and Peter Norman, an Australian Olympic medalist, and his decision to take a silent stand for equality at the 1968 Olympics, while Australia's Indigenous population underwent a civil rights movement. For the Internet Age, I examined the Dixie Chicks and their anti-Bush comment in 2003, and Alejandro Sanz, a Spanish singer, who made anti-Chavez commentary in Venezuela in 2004. For the current Social Media Age, I examined Colin Kaepernick and his decision to kneel during the National Anthem in 2016 and 2017, and Andy Murray, a Scottish-born tennis player who plays for Great Britain, and his tweet in support of Scotland voting yes to the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014. I explored how American culture reacts and how a foreign culture reacts to a celebrity protest that has been widely perceived as anti-patriotic in their home country. I also examined the implications of the evolving media environment to understand the reactions to celebrity protest. Are the protests perceived differently across the ages as the media and our news consumption evolves? Do the countries react the same to celebrity protest, despite cultural differences, or do they act differently?

My conclusions regarding the impact of changing news consumption are as follows. First, as a result of these changes in the news platforms, the news cycle, and the consumption of news, I saw different reactions amongst the public across the media

ages. Before the internet, the limited amount of news platforms resulted in just the dominating opinion having a platform to be heard, thus creating a kind of one-sided argument driven by the media that the public just agreed with. As more platforms to consume news have become available, we are being exposed to more opinions and able to consume the story from many perspectives. In addition, the creation of social media platforms allows for people to read opinions and express their own, specifically choosing how they consume their news and the type of news they are consuming. This increased diversity of information outlets, and the ability for consumers to choose the outlets from which they received their news has changed the face of the media environment. With regard to celebrity protest, reactions are equally as strong as they were in the first media age, but the current environment also allows for more diversity of opinion. As a result, I found more support of celebrity protest as time progresses to the Social Media Age we live in today. This support was not common before the creation of the internet.

Finally, I concluded that despite the cultural and social differences, countries reacted the same to perceived anti-patriotic protests by celebrities in each media age. I discovered that the change in our consumption of news and the availability of news platforms transcends the cultural and societal differences between the United States and these foreign countries. I think the media environment transcends these differences due to its structure and the conversation it incites. In the beginning, public opinions were very media driven, but as more platforms became available, opinions became more driven by the public with the media mirroring these thoughts.

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## Introduction

Colin Kaepernick sat on the bench during the National Anthem at a San Francisco 49ers preseason NFL game in August 2016 as a silent protest of the oppression of African-Americans in this country. By the end of the preseason, this progressed to him kneeling during the National Anthem, which caught international media attention and sparked a wide range of emotional responses and opinions among the American public.<sup>1</sup>

Reactions to Kaepernick's protest included burning his jersey in disgust at his perceived lack of patriotism. Many viewed his protest as unpatriotic and a complete disrespect to the nation that gave him his freedoms. People dubbed him the ultimate un-American, a traitor, and an enemy of the state. People wanted him deported, even though he is an American citizen.<sup>2</sup> How dare he kneel during America's rallying cry?

Despite the many that condemned Kaepernick, reactions to his protest were not all negative; many praised him. For every person that burned a jersey, someone else bought one, then paraded it around as a symbol of a rising, new American hero. His jersey sales went from twentieth on the 49ers to first in the NFL.<sup>3</sup> Other NFL athletes followed suit and kneeled during the anthem. High school football players took part in this protest, sometimes entire high school football teams, coaches included, kneeled in solidarity with Kaepernick. Even a middle school band followed suit and took part in this protest. Following Kaepernick's lead became known as "Kaepernicking."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Ashmeade. "Can We All Stand?." *The Atlantic Union Gleaner* (2017): 4.

<sup>2</sup> Eoghan Macguire. "Colin Kaepernick: Quarterback Says He Receives Death Threats." *CNN*, September 22, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Darren Heitner. "Colin Kaepernick Tops Jersey Sales in NFL." *Forbes*, September 7, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan Toporek. "H.S. Athletes Emulate NFL Star on Anthem." *Education Week* (2016): 5.

We stand for the National Anthem with our hand over our heart to revere the country that we come from. Kaepernick feels that not everyone in this country thinks it is something to revere. He refused to stand to call attention to various issues in our nation at the moment, including police brutality.<sup>5</sup> The media vilified him, and the media glorified him.

Kaepernick's protest is originally what sparked my interest in this topic. One person in a public role ignited a flame in the American people. Love him or hate him, people were talking about him. Yet Kaepernick is not the first celebrity to use his status to speak out in ways the country perceives as unpatriotic. It is not a new phenomenon.

In 2003, Natalie Maines, lead singer of the Dixie Chicks, said she was ashamed President Bush was from Texas during a concert in London, which evoked an intense response from the American people and media. The band's career never truly recovered.<sup>6</sup>

Long before that, in 1967, Muhammad Ali, a legendary professional boxer, evaded his Vietnam War draft notice claiming that it was not his fight. This protest was also perceived as unpatriotic, garnering a strong response in the public and media.<sup>7</sup>

While we are more familiar with these high-profile cases from the United States, this type of protesting is not exclusively an American phenomenon. In fact, there have been several celebrity protests that can be perceived as unpatriotic in countries all around the world.

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<sup>5</sup> Ashmeade, 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Emil B. Towner. "A <Patriotic> Apologia: The Transcendence of the Dixie Chicks." *Rhetoric Review* (2010): 293-294.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Hauser. *Muhammad Ali: A Tribute to the Greatest* (New York: Pegasus, 2016): 157.

We usually associate the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City with John Carlos and Tommie Smith's iconic protest, but the Australian silver medalist, Peter Norman, was a controversial character in his country after this day. He wore a patch on his jacket for the Olympic Project for Human Rights while he stood on the podium wearing his silver medal. Huge media and public backlash resulted from this, due to the Indigenous people's civil rights movement, which echoed the sentiments of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.<sup>8</sup>

In 2004, Spanish pop star Alejandro Sanz stated that he stood with 3 million Venezuelans who signed a petition for a recall referendum against Hugo Chávez, the President of Venezuela. The government cancelled his next concert in Venezuela, then declared him a persona non grata, which effectively cancelled his following concert in the country as well.<sup>9</sup>

Andy Murray is a Scottish born professional tennis player who resides in England and represents Great Britain in his tennis matches. The morning of the Scottish Independence Referendum in September 2014, Murray tweeted his support of the referendum and Scottish independence. He received plenty of responses, ranging from happy Scots because their sports hero was supporting their cause, to angry Scottish and British people because he was going against the crown and the country he represented on a professional level.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jorge Sotirios. "Essay: A Good Sport: The boy from Bowral, neglected heroes and the stigma of race." *Griffith REVIEW* (2012): 214.

<sup>9</sup> Efe. "Alejandro Sanz, Vetado En Venezuela." *EL PAÍS*, October 11, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Kevin Rawlinson. "Andy Murray on Scottish Independence Vote: 'Let's Do This!'" *The Guardian*, September 18, 2014.

While the protests of Ali, the Dixie Chicks, and Kaepernick, as well as the protests of Norman, Sanz, and Murray, are similar in terms of being perceived by large segments of society as unpatriotic, these six cases also occurred in three very distinct ages related to the media and news, which I have identified and named as the Pre-24 Hour News Cycle Age, Internet Age, and Social Media Age. The news cycle has changed as the way we consume our news has changed.<sup>11</sup> Originally, we got our news from a select few newspapers, radio stations, and television channels. NBC, CBS, and ABC were dominating the media.<sup>12</sup> During that time, watching the nightly news was part of the daily routine. This time was often referred to as the “Golden Age” of television news, where the news anchors were some of the most trusted people in the country. Every member of the family circled around the television to receive their news from the few available networks.<sup>13</sup> Media choices and perspectives were limited.

Once the internet became available to the public, it created a platform conducive to conversation, thus creating more places to access news and opinions of the public, with platforms varying from official news sites to chat forums. The 24 hour news cycle began with the birth of cable news, but the cycle has continued to gain speed as we transitioned from few news platforms to many with the rise of the internet and social media. Currently, we are living in the age of the 24 hour or less news cycle that came about with the creation and mass usage of social media platforms.<sup>14</sup> Social media is really a platform for anyone and everyone to express themselves through posts, photos,

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<sup>11</sup> Howard Rosenberg and Charles S. Feldman. *No Time to Think: The Menace of Media Speed and the 24-hour News Cycle*, (London: Continuum, 2009): 12.

<sup>12</sup> Horace Newcomb, *Television: The Critical View* (New York: Oxford UP, 1976): 42.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>14</sup> Rosenberg and Feldman, 36.

articles, videos, blogs, and more. With the sheer number of social media platforms and the immediate access to them through smart phones, the news cycle is now much less than 24 hours, and the variety of news sources has increased dramatically.<sup>15</sup>

In this thesis, I will be performing a comparative case study between the United States and a foreign country, particularly Australia, Venezuela, and the United Kingdom, in each of the media ages that I have defined. I will be exploring how American culture reacts and how a foreign culture reacts to a celebrity protest that has been widely perceived as anti-patriotic in their home country. I will be examining the implications of the evolving media environment to understand the reactions to celebrity protest. Are the protests perceived differently across the ages as the media and our news consumption evolves? Do the countries react the same to celebrity protest, despite cultural differences, or do they act differently?

My expectations regarding the impact of changing news consumption are as follows. First, as a result of these changes in the news platforms, the news cycle, and the consumption of news, I expect to see different reactions amongst the public across the media ages. Before the internet, the limited amount of news platforms resulted in just the dominating opinion having a platform to be heard, thus creating a kind of one-sided argument driven by the media that the public just agreed with. As more platforms to consume news have become available, we are being exposed to more opinions and able to consume the story from many perspectives.

In addition, the creation of social media platforms allows for people to read opinions and express their own, specifically choosing how they consume their news and

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<sup>15</sup> Rosenberg and Feldman, 5-6.

the type of news they are consuming. This increased diversity of information outlets and the ability for consumers to choose the outlets from which they will receive their news has changed the face of the media environment. With regard to celebrity protest, reactions are equally as strong as they were in the first media age, but the current environment also allows for more diversity of opinion. As a result, I expect to find more support of celebrity protest as time progresses to the Social Media Age we live in today. This support was not common before the creation of the internet.

Finally, I expect that despite the cultural and social differences, countries will react the same to perceived anti-patriotic protests by celebrities in each media age. I anticipate discovering that the change in our consumption of news and the availability of news platforms will transcend the cultural and societal differences between the United States and these foreign countries. I think the media environment transcends these differences due to its structure and the conversation it incites. In the beginning, public opinions were very media driven, but as more platforms became available, opinions became more driven by the public with the media mirroring these thoughts.

## Methodology

In this thesis, I use a comparative case study approach to explore the relationship between news consumption, cultural environment, and the response to celebrity protest. The case study method allows for the examination of real world occurrences, like these cases of celebrity protest, to be viewed and analyzed in the social, cultural, or temporal context in which they occur.<sup>16</sup> Each case will be examined in relation to the time at which it occurs and the news/media available at that time to better understand the reactions to celebrity protesting.

The relative advantages and disadvantages of using a case study approach are well documented. Perhaps the primary disadvantage with using the case study approach are concerns about the ability to generalize an entire news age from a single case to a broader theoretical understanding of the phenomena under inquiry.<sup>17</sup> The concern about the generalizability of a case study approach is that any theory or empirical observation formed by examining these specific cases may not provide any form of insight or explanation related to other cases of celebrity protesting. The information and explanations gathered from this analysis may not be representative of all instances of celebrity protest.<sup>18</sup>

However, the concerns raised about the generalizability of this method are balanced against the overall benefit of using the case study approach. Case studies allow for a deeper understanding of the circumstances surrounding any given case, and thereby allow for greater nuance when examining contemporary and historical

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<sup>16</sup> Robert K. Yin. *Applications of Case Study Research* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Hamel, Stéphane Dufour, and Dominic Fortin. *Case Study Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1993): 23.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

phenomena.<sup>19</sup> Case studies encourage greater detail in data collection, especially concerning the news ages overall, and thus lend themselves to a richer understanding of the complexity that exists within the setting being examined.<sup>20</sup> Case studies can offer insight into potentially complex relationships and generate avenues for further research on the subject.

While the nature of my research question did not lend itself to immersion in the actual case environment, I am able to make use of previous research and commentary, secondary data, and historical analysis in order to better understand the context in which my cases of celebrity protest occurred. The cases I am examining consist of instances of well-known celebrity or athlete protest (each discussed in greater detail below). In an attempt to provide some insight into both media environment and cultural context, six cases were chosen, two within each era of media consumption. Within each media context a case is chosen from within the United States and from outside the U.S. In an attempt to provide as much comparability as possible across both media and cultural contexts, each case represents a high-profile instance of a celebrity or athlete engaging in social protest in an area broadly related to “patriotism” or high-profile government policies or leadership. The idea behind this is to explore instances in which celebrity protest is likely to evoke a similar emotional response within the public and media to make the comparative analysis of these cases and the media environment as comparable as possible using the same type of issue.

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<sup>19</sup> Dennis Basil Bromley. *The Case-study Method in Psychology and Related Disciplines* (New York: J. Wiley, 1986).

<sup>20</sup> Hamel, Dufour, and Fourtin.

## Age 1: Pre-24 Hour News Cycle

### **Muhammad Ali**

“I ain’t got no quarrel with those Vietcong,” Muhammad Ali is famously quoted as saying when he refused his Vietnam War draft notice and his induction into the armed services. Ali was famous for being a boxing champion, but he became infamous on April 28, 1967.<sup>21</sup> Before this incident, Ali was well liked in the public eye. Ali won an Olympic gold medal for Team USA at the 1960 Olympics in Rome. He very publicly changed his name from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali when he converted to Islam in 1964, which was questioned in a predominantly Christian nation, but it did not cause any real waves.<sup>22</sup> In the public eye, he was not considered a very controversial person. He won titles, provided entertainment, and generally, stayed out of negative press.

Originally, he was ranked in a low grade for the draft and was not eligible to be drafted due to his underdeveloped skills in reading and writing. As the war progressed, the draft grade would lower. In March of 1966, he was eligible to be drafted when the government lowered the standard for draftees to include Ali’s draft grade.<sup>23</sup> On April 28, 1967, his life and public image changed forever with his refusal to be inducted into the army.<sup>24</sup>

Ali reported to the Military Entrance Processing Station in Houston, Texas. When the military induction officials called Ali’s name, he refused to step forward. His name was called again, and still, he remained. An officer warned him that refusing to

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<sup>21</sup> Hauser, 145.

<sup>22</sup> John Miklos Jr. *Muhammad Ali: “I Am the Greatest”* (New York: Enslow, 2011): 12-32.

<sup>23</sup> Howard Bingham and Max Wallace. *Muhammad Ali’s Greatest Fight: Cassius Clay vs. the United States of America* (Boulder: M. Evans & Company, 2000): 138.

<sup>24</sup> Hauser, 145.

step forward was a felony. His name was then called one last time, but his feet remained planted as he refused his induction in to the armed forces. He was arrested. Immediately, the New York Athletic Commission revoked his boxing license and stripped him of his titles.<sup>25</sup>

Ali was put on trial for draft evasion. At this point, the war was still relatively popular with the American public.<sup>26</sup> On June 20, 1967, he was convicted of draft evasion. This included a five-year prison sentence, a \$10,000 fine, revocation of his passport, and a boxing ban. He immediately appealed his case, which kept him out of prison. The Court of Appeals upheld the verdict. The Supreme Court would review the decision on June 28, 1971, and overturn the conviction.<sup>27</sup>

After Ali's trial, he stated, "So when the time came for me to make up my mind about going into the army, I knew people were dying in Vietnam for nothing, and I knew I should live by what I thought was right. I wanted America to be America. And now the whole world knows that, so far as my own beliefs are concerned, I did what was right for me."<sup>28</sup> This quotation perfectly sums up Ali's sentiments toward the war and his refusal to be inducted into the armed services after his conscription.

### **America at the time**

The Vietnam War was a war between the Republic of Vietnam, more commonly known as South Vietnam, and the communist North Vietnam. The United States supported South Vietnam in the war, while China supported the North. The war began

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<sup>25</sup> Bingham and Wallace, 139-142.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel C. Hallin. *The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley: U of California, 1989) : 3.

<sup>27</sup> Bingham and Wallace, 160.

<sup>28</sup> Miklos, 130.

in 1955, but American combat troops were not sent to Vietnam until March of 1965. Many Americans supported the anti-communist agenda at the beginning of the war, but as the war progressed, anti-war sentiments began to set in.<sup>29</sup>

27 million people were eligible for the draft from 1964 to 1973, according to the National Archives.<sup>30</sup> Of those drafted, some could be granted deferments. Those deferments were usually granted for health reasons or to wealthier individuals for education.<sup>31</sup> For example, the current President of the United States, Donald Trump, was granted five deferments in the war—four for education and one for heel spurs.<sup>32</sup> The draft raised 2,215,000 men for service. Those that had no grounds for a deferment but did not want to serve evaded the draft or deserted after serving some time. 209,517 men illegally resisted the draft, while about 100,000 deserted.<sup>33</sup> Tactics for illegally resisting the draft included moving to Canada or Mexico or forging a military id or service papers to avoid signing up after their number was called.<sup>34</sup>

Anti-war sentiments existed at the inception of the war, but they were few and far between. They were condemned as un-American. The number of anti-war protests did not really increase until the late 1960s, but the majority of the country was still in favor of the war at that time. The resistance movement peaked in the early 1970s, as the American public really started to question the Vietnam War, what it stood for, and if it was worth the time, money, and blood of Americans.<sup>35</sup> In the early 1970s, the number of

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<sup>29</sup> Hallin, 3.

<sup>30</sup> "Military Resources: Vietnam War." *National Archives and Records Administration*.

<sup>31</sup> Hallin, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Steve Eder and Dave Phillips. "Donald Trump's Draft Deferments: Four for College, One for Bad Feet." *The New York Times*, August 1, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> "Military Resources: Vietnam War."

<sup>34</sup> Hallin, 12.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

legal cases of men refusing the draft overwhelmed all major cities, which occurred after Ali's public draft refusal.<sup>36</sup>

To avoid the draft, men could register as conscientious objectors. This generally had a negative effect on them later, as it was seen as a way of avoiding their call of service and therefore cowardly. A conscientious objector had to have religious, moral, or ethical objections to war. It could not be specific to this particular war; the sentiments had to encompass all types of war everywhere,<sup>37</sup> or else everyone that disagreed with a war would apply for this status.

America was also nearing the end of the Civil Rights Movement, which formally lasted from 1954 to 1968. In 1966, the Black Panthers, a militant Civil Rights group, formed. In 1967, Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia* determined that prohibiting interracial marriage was in fact unconstitutional, forcing 16 states to revise their laws. The Civil Rights Movement ended in April of 1968 with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and President Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which granted fair housing, after it passed Congress, mere days after King's funeral.<sup>38</sup> Although the formal movement was over, the social goals of this movement were far from complete. African-Americans were not suddenly accepted everywhere without question. Informal segregation rose as white people moved out of downtowns and cities into suburbs to create new school districts and communities, informally

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<sup>36</sup> "Military Resources: Vietnam War."

<sup>37</sup> Hallin, 13.

<sup>38</sup> "Civil Rights Timeline." *Boys' Life: Boy Scouts of America* (2009): 12-14.

segregating these communities as African-Americans stayed in the city centers and in downtown areas.<sup>39</sup> This struggle continues even today.

## Reactions

America exhibited a variety of reactions to Ali's protest, some positive and some negative. Overall, Ali's refusal of the draft started a more vigorous debate about the Vietnam War in the public.<sup>40</sup> Celebrities like Elvis Presley, who served from 1958 to 1960, could not have created the same conversation because Elvis served willingly and served at the beginning of the American involvement<sup>41</sup> when there was immense public support for the war.

Overwhelmingly negative press surrounded Ali and his decision to refuse the draft. Jackie Robinson, the first African-American in Major League Baseball, famously stated that he was not supportive of Ali's decision. "He's hurting, I think, the morale of a lot of young Negro soldiers over in Vietnam, and the tragedy to me is, Cassius has made millions of dollars off of the American public, and now he's not willing to show his appreciation to a country that's giving him, in my view, a fantastic opportunity." Along with Robinson, Joe Louis, a famous boxer and former world heavyweight champion in the 1930s and 1940s, also opposed Ali's decision. Louis voluntarily enlisted and served in World War II. "Anybody in America who don't want to fight for this country; I think it's very bad, especially a guy who has made a lot of money in this country. I was

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<sup>39</sup> Catherine Jurca. *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century American Novel*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Bingham and Wallace, 159.

<sup>41</sup> Michael S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2003) :10.

champion at the time World War II started; and when my time came up, I had to go. I think that he should fight for his country,"<sup>42</sup> Louis stated regarding Ali, echoing Robinson's sentiments.

Disapproval of Ali's decision was not just restricted to famous African-American athletes. David Susskind, a popular television talk show host, spoke about Ali on air. "I find nothing amusing or interesting or tolerable about this man. He's a disgrace to his country, his race, and what he laughingly describes as his profession. He is a convicted felon in the United States. He has been found guilty. He is out on bail. He will inevitably go to prison, as well he should. He is a simplistic fool and a pawn."<sup>43</sup> His sentiments were echoed by other news outlets. His hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, was especially critical of his decision. The *Louisville Courier Journal* wrote "Clay is a slick opponent who clowned his way to the top. Hail to Cassius Clay, the best fighter pound for pound Leavenworth Prison will ever receive."<sup>44</sup> Louisville's black newspaper, the *Defender*, wrote "Clay should serve his time in the Army just like any other young, healthy, all-American boy. But what better vehicle to use to put an uppity Negro back in his place than the United States Army."<sup>45</sup>

Ali was also supported in his decision to refuse his military induction, though the congratulations did not nearly equal the condemnations. Bill Russel, a professional basketball player for the Boston Celtics, said "I envy Muhammad Ali. He has something I have never been able to attain and something very few people

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<sup>42</sup> Hauser, 43.

<sup>43</sup> *Trials of Muhammad Ali*. Dir. Bill Siegel. Perf. Muhammad Ali, David Susskind, and Eamonn Andrews. Independent Lens (PBS), 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Bingham and Wallace, 161.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

possess.... I'm not worried about Muhammad Ali. He is better equipped than anyone I know to withstand the trials in store for him. What I'm worried about is the rest of us."<sup>46</sup>

His refusal also had an effect on the Civil Rights Movement at the time. Robert "Bob" Moses, a leader in the movement, said "Muhammad Ali galvanized the Civil Rights Movement."<sup>47</sup> He took a stand for what he believed in, against popular opinion and culture. Activists could relate to Ali in a way; he was risking it all when he refused the draft, just like the activists were risking it all, sometimes even their lives, to fight for what they believed in.

When veterans threatened to protest theaters if they showed Ali boxing, ABC television signed a contract to televise it, paving the way for the televised boxing we know today. Howard Cosell, a host on ABC, fiercely defended Ali and his decision to refuse the draft. Cosell even thought that Ali should face no legal repercussions for his actions.<sup>48</sup>

Currently, historians look back on Muhammad Ali's draft refusal as a monumental moment in history, with the effects being seen on a small scale in the 1960s and 1970s, but increasing steadily over time as society came to better understand the nature of the difficult and divisive era in American history. Today, he is considered heroic for his refusal of the draft, but that was certainly not the sentiment at the time. Ali said "I never thought of myself as great when I refused to go into the Army. All I did was stand up for

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<sup>46</sup> Bill Russel and Tex Maule. "I Am Not Worried About Ali." *Sports Illustrated* (June 19, 1967): 19.

<sup>47</sup> Bingham and Wallace, 136.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

what I believed.”<sup>49</sup> His unwavering ideals, passion, and resilience mark him as a hero today.

Bert Sugar was a prominent sportswriter at the time Ali was boxing, and he personally experienced the Vietnam War’s effects on the home front and Ali’s draft refusal. Today, he has nothing but praise for Ali, after a presumed disinterest in him in the 1960s and 1970s. “Muhammad is one of the few Americans, and certainly the first American athlete ever, to transcend the borders of this country and become an international hero. He was the greatest sports hero of all time.”<sup>50</sup>

Sentiments toward the Vietnam War have changed over time. Originally, there were overwhelmingly positive opinions to protect freedom and fight the evil that is communism. By the end of the war, the anti-communist agenda had been lost, and the public thought the risks and the loss that had already occurred could never outweigh any benefit.<sup>51</sup> Today, opinions of the Vietnam War are predominantly negative in the United States. It is often described as pointless and something America never should have gotten involved in in the first place. The change in public perception of the war over time moved Ali from a pariah to a hero, which constitutes his refusal to be inducted into the armed services as an act of bravery and a stand for the American people, instead of the stand against the American people it was seen as at the time.

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<sup>49</sup> Miklos, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>51</sup> Hallin, 3.

## Peter Norman

The American media never paid much attention to the foreigner who stood in solidarity with Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the podium at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. Peter Norman was basically just the white guy that got the silver to the American press, or worse, he was overlooked and forgotten all together in our media. As easy as he was for the United States to forget, Australia still remembers him to this day.

On October 16, 1968, Peter Norman said “I will stand with you”— five small words with one everlasting legacy. He learned of Carlos and Smith’s plan to use their time on the podium to raise awareness to the inequality and oppression of African-Americans in the United States.<sup>52</sup> Norman borrowed a badge for the Olympic Project for Human Rights from Paul Hoffman, a member of the USA’s rowing team. The Olympic Project for Human Rights was established by African-American sociologist Harry Edwards to protest racial segregation in the United States and advocate for racial equality in all nations.<sup>53</sup>

All three wore OPHR badges and stood on the podium wearing the Olympic medals they earned. The American National Anthem played while Smith and Carlos raised their fists in the air. Smith held his right fist in the air wearing a black leather glove in the black power salute, while Carlos raised his left fist, also wearing a black leather glove, to symbolize black unity. They also wore black scarves and black socks with no shoes to symbolize black poverty in America. Carlos and Smith bowed their

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<sup>52</sup> Myrte van de Klundert, and Robert van Boeschoten. *Organisations and Humanisation: Perspectives on Organising Humanisation and Humanising Organisations* (London: Routledge, 2016): xi.

<sup>53</sup> Jack Ormiston, Jason Ormrod, and Iain Adams. "Black Gold." *The Sporting Image: Unsung Heroes of the Olympics (1896-2012)* (Preston, UK: SSTO Publications, 2013): 145-146.

heads, while Norman stood at attention.<sup>54</sup> To America, this really seemed like nothing, but to Australia, a patch standing for human rights, the equality of all, especially a minority population, was appalling.<sup>55</sup>

### **Australia at the time**

The indigenous people of Australia were going through their own civil rights movement at this time, inspired by and similar to the civil rights movement in the United States. Indigenous people had been fighting for the right to vote for years. Slowly, region by region, indigenous populations were given this right, but complete suffrage for all indigenous people everywhere in Australia was not granted until 1965. In 1967, a ban was lifted that excluded indigenous people from the census. Indigenous Australians were included in the census for the first time in Australian history in 1971.<sup>56</sup>

Australia had recently relaxed a policy in 1966 called the White Australia Policy, but it would not be fully dismantled until 1973. The White Australia Policy was a collective group of policies that banned non-European descendants from immigrating to Australia. Australia was practicing a “West is best” mindset, but particularly wanted to keep out Asians and Pacific Islanders. This racism the policies stemmed from was in full force toward the indigenous populations in the country.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ormiston, Omrod, and Adams, 148.

<sup>55</sup> John Chesterman. *Civil Rights: How Indigenous Australians Won Formal Equality* (Brisbane: U of Queensland, 2005): 159.

<sup>56</sup> Sarah Joseph. “Sport and the Law - Sport and Human Rights: Closer than you Think.” *Alternative Law Journal* (2010): 235.

<sup>57</sup> Chesterman, 39.

## Reactions

Norman faced immense backlash at home. Imagine the United States shortly after desegregation policies were implemented. The people who advocated for segregation and similar policies were not all of a sudden going to be happy with the changes just because it was law. This is exactly what happened in Australia. Yes, the laws changed, but the people did not.

Norman was never a fan of the White Australia Policy because he “believed in God and believed in human rights,”<sup>58</sup> which was exactly what he told Carlos and Smith when they asked him to stand in solidarity with them. Those that supported Norman and his silent stand called him a hero for civil rights,<sup>59</sup> but majority of the country did not see eye to eye with Norman.

Norman was condemned. He refused to condemn Smith and Carlos for their protest or retract his support of it, which further alienated him from the Australian community. He was never allowed to race in the Olympics again, despite making qualifying times for the 1972 Olympics, and to this day, holding the record in Australia for the 200 meter dash. In 2000, when the Olympics were held in Sydney, he was not even invited to participate in the Opening Ceremony or attend the Olympics at all.<sup>60</sup>

Norman died in 2006, and Carlos and Smith were pallbearers at his funeral. Smith gave a speech at the funeral saying, “Not every young white individual would have the gumption, the nerve, the backbone, to stand there.” Carlos also contributed

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<sup>58</sup> Joseph, 235.

<sup>59</sup> Damian Johnstone and Matt Norman. *A Race to Remember: The Peter Norman Story* (Melbourne: Jojo Publishing, 2008): 76.

<sup>60</sup> Sotirios, 219.

saying, "You guys have lost a great soldier... Peter's legacy is a rock. Stand on that rock. Go tell your kids the story of Peter Norman."<sup>61</sup>

The public and the media in Australia painted Norman in such a negative light that that six years after his death in 2012, the Australian parliament gave a posthumous apology to Norman, recognizing his accomplishments, apologizing for his treatment and inability to go to the 1972 Olympics, despite qualifying, and commending his efforts in civil rights.<sup>62</sup>

### **Ali, Norman and the Pre-24 Hour News Cycle Age of News Consumption**

During the time of the Ali and Norman protests, the news consisted of a few television channels, a few radio stations, and a few magazines and newspapers. The variety of news the public consumed was limited. A few major news outlets dominated the media, which holds true for both American media and foreign media.<sup>63</sup>

Listening to the news on the radio or watching it on television was a daily ritual in most people's lives at this time. The Walter Cronkite Era, named for famous CBS host Walter Cronkite, was the epitome of this. He was considered the "most trusted man in America," and everyone tuned in to hear the nightly news. This time was also considered the "Golden Age" of television news, with the nightly news being incorporated into the day to day ritual of families, just as important as family dinners and going to church on Sundays.<sup>64</sup> With every member of the family participating in this

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<sup>61</sup> Sotirios, 220.

<sup>62</sup> Ormiston, 150.

<sup>63</sup> Joseph D. Straubhaar. "Beyond Media Imperialism: Asymmetrical Interdependence and Cultural Proximity." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* (1991): 42.

<sup>64</sup> Newcomb, 42- 48.

tradition, families were exposed to the same news from the few news stations available. Reading the newspaper in the morning was also part of this ritual. The newspaper would carry the same negative perspective that was portrayed on the news, thus reinforcing the negative perspective and solidifying the negative reactions in the public to these instances of celebrity protest.

In addition to the media influencing the perspectives of the public, the shelf life of these controversies was also at the mercy of the media. The media could pick and choose what issues to talk about and how to cover them. The coverage of Ali in the media was not consistent.<sup>65</sup> The media extensively covered his refusal in April of 1967 and his first trial, but the issue did not stay in the spotlight. The negative reactions toward Ali and his refusal lingered, but they were not at the forefront of the media any longer. The same holds true with Norman.<sup>66</sup> His silent protest occurred in October of 1968 followed by a media frenzy, but did not garner many headlines as other issues rose. His subsequent rejection from the Australian National Olympic Team in 1972 did again gather the attention of the media. His rejection from the Olympics, despite making qualifying times, shows the extent of the disdain towards Norman and its lingering emotions years later.

Today, both Ali and Norman are portrayed as heroes as the public's attitudes toward history and toward their actions evolved. Ali and Norman took a stand for what they believed was right, which went against popular culture at the time, but is accepted today. The Vietnam War is a wildly unpopular part of American history today, therefore Ali's refusal to participate in something that America has a distaste for now is seen as

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<sup>65</sup> Hauser, 157.

<sup>66</sup> Sotirios, 219-220.

heroic. With the media of today, there are many fan pages dedicated to Ali and his actions throughout his life.<sup>67</sup> He has a strong following and lots of support in present-day America. Today, Australia as a whole accepts and acknowledges that the oppression of the Indigenous people was wrong. While Norman's stand caused him to be a pariah at the time, today he is revered for his support of the Indigenous people of Australia.<sup>68</sup>

Both athletes were unwavering, refusing to take back their actions. They were passionate, preserving despite the persecution they faced in their countries from the media and the public. Their unwillingness to break down or go against their ideals is admirable and heroic. This shows the extent of the media driven society at the time. The limited but very influential media environment they lived in ostracized them, and they were not even considered redeemable until the creation of the internet and wider availability of news platforms shifted news to a more public driven environment.

### **Ali and Norman: Comparison Across Cultural Context**

While there are cultural and social differences between the United States and Australia, the reactions to the protests of Ali and Norman were essentially the same. Both athletes took a stand against the popular opinion in their countries at the time, and the media vilified them for it.

Muhammad Ali's refusal to be inducted into the Army went against the norm in America at the time. America was in a state of war, which still had majority of the public's support, and his refusal was received as a rejection of patriotism, a display of

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<sup>67</sup> Miklos, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Johnstone and Norman, 12.

cowardice, and an insult to the Americans shedding their blood for our free nation. He was met with an overwhelming amount of criticism and very little support.

Peter Norman's decision to wear a patch symbolizing equality for all and to stand in solidarity with Carlos and Smith could not be overlooked by a country in an internal race war. The indigenous populations were fighting for basic rights that the government was denying them by popular support of the people. Norman's silent gesture was seen as an action against his own kind. He was ridiculed and kept out of the Olympics, despite qualifying, for the rest of his life.

Media consumption transcends cultural and societal differences between the United States and Australia as seen by these cases. Due to the limited media platforms, there were few places to hear or defend the unpopular, and in these cases, the supporting, opinion. With all of the media pushing the negative opinion in both cases, the response of the public followed suit.

The limited number of news sources contributed to the reactions of the people in this media age. Each of these limited news sources was providing and then reinforcing the current popular opinion at the time.<sup>69</sup> The popular opinion in both of these cases was negative. The public was exposed to the negative opinion on all of the news networks, radio stations, and papers at the time. The overwhelmingly negative press coverage of these events continued to reinforce the negative opinion of these cases. Individuals heard on their preferred news channel, selected from very few options, that the actions of both Ali and Norman were wrong; they then heard the same information on the radio and read the same information in the newspaper. The negative

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<sup>69</sup> Newcomb, 86.

perspective of these cases was dominating the media. People only heard one side of the argument that was not even considered an argument at the time; it was just fact. Only later would the public be exposed to voices contrary and the supporting opinion. This constant exposure of the public to the negative perspective of both cases across all media platforms caused the public to accept the negative perspective as the only perspective, thus influencing the negative opinions and reactions of the public to both Ali and Norman's protests.

## Age 2: Internet

### Dixie Chicks

“Just so you know, we're on the good side with y'all. We do not want this war, this violence, and we're ashamed that the President of the United States is from Texas.” Natalie Maines, lead singer of the Dixie Chicks, said this before singing “Travelin’ Soldier,” a song about the Vietnam War, at a concert in London on March 10, 2003.<sup>70</sup> The Dixie Chicks were a country music trio that dominated the charts in the 1990s and early 2000s. Their extensive and impressive resume included 7 Grammy Awards, several Academy of Country Music Awards, including Entertainer of the Year and three time winners of the Top Vocal Group award, and awards from the Country Music Association, again for Entertainer of the Year and four time winners of Vocal Group of the Year.<sup>71</sup> The Dixie Chicks were on the top of the charts, winning all of the awards, and beloved in the public eye.

The Dixie Chicks were watching news coverage about the American troops in the Middle East before they went on stage, which prompted Maines to make her remark.<sup>72</sup> Since their concert was abroad, it took the news a few days to reach the United States. *The Guardian*, a major publication in Great Britain, wrote an article about the concert on March 12, and on March 13, the Associated Press published the first major American article about the protest, which then became national news. The media quoted Maines

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<sup>70</sup> Jeffery Gilbert. "The Dixie Chicks: A Case Study for the Politics of Hollywood." *Texas Review of Entertainment & Sports Law* (2008): 309.

<sup>71</sup> Towner, 293-294.

<sup>72</sup> Claire Katz. "'The Eternal Irony of the Community': Prophecy, Patriotism, and the Dixie Chicks." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* (2008): 142.

only as saying “Just so you know, we’re ashamed the President of the United States is from Texas.”<sup>73</sup>

### **America at the time**

This was a trying time for America. The country was attempting to recover from the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, while trying to combat the terrorist groups that incited the attacks abroad. The War on Terror that began with the American invasion of Afghanistan was in full swing.<sup>74</sup> America was on the brink of entering war with Iraq.<sup>75</sup> With no official declaration of war, America invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003, starting the Iraq War.<sup>76</sup>

### **Reactions**

On March 12, 2003, the day after *The Guardian* posted its concert review, the Associated Press released an article about the concert and Natalie Maines’ comments. The article also claimed that reports of angry phone calls were flooding in to Nashville radio station WKDF-FM requesting boycotts of the Dixie Chicks music. After the article’s online publication, more news platforms got ahold of the story and began reporting on it. Internet chatrooms and blogs were blowing up with insults thrown at the Dixie Chicks. On March 14, the Associated Press again reported on the controversy,

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<sup>73</sup> Gilbert, 309.

<sup>74</sup> Paul Rogers. *War on Terror: Afghanistan and After* (London: Pluto Press, 2004): 1-2.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

stating radio stations were stopping all airplay of the Dixie Chicks and leaving trash cans outside for people to throw their Dixie Chicks CDs in.<sup>77</sup>

Airplay of all Dixie Chicks music dropped from thousands of plays a week, and having a number one on the Billboard chart, to 0 plays on the “Country Top 50 Indicator” by March 22, and 0 plays on the “AC Top 30” by March 29 and completely dropping off the charts.<sup>78</sup>

The Dixie Chicks’ words represented “the epitome of American decay.”<sup>79</sup> They were brutalized on the radio, television, and in internet chatrooms. They received hate mail and death threats. They were called sluts, communists, and traitors to country music and to the country itself. The reactions to the Dixie Chicks’ protest was overwhelmingly negative and brutal. Some corporate radio executives even officially banned their music from being played on hundreds of stations across the country.<sup>80</sup> Celebrities that normally would support the Dixie Chicks at events did not publicly support them again for years. The publicists of these other celebrities would tell the journalists that their clients were all “on vacation.”<sup>81</sup>

Country music star Vince Gill commented in April of 2003, saying, “There’s political leaders that have said a lot worse things about George Bush than Natalie did, and nobody rips them for it... I kind of feel like she’s been bashed enough.” He received backlash from the country community and its fan base for his noncommittal comment,

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<sup>77</sup> Gabriel Rossman. "Elites, Masses, and Media Blacklists: The Dixie Chicks Controversy." *Social Forces* (2004): 61-62.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>79</sup> Katz, 139.

<sup>80</sup> Gilbert, 313.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

which caused him to then clarify that he fully supports the president and the troops.<sup>82</sup> There were very few people who sympathized with the Dixie Chicks from this event.

In 2006, the Dixie Chicks released their first album since the controversy. *Taking the Long Way* was their seventh album overall. “Not Ready to Make Nice” was a single from the album and a direct response to their controversy in 2003. The Dixie Chicks lost a lot of their country fan base after the controversy but had gathered a new fan base amongst pop music lovers, who went out and bought their new music and requested it on the radio. Country radio stations still refused to play the Dixie Chicks’ music three years later, while pop stations slowly obliged to appease the Dixie Chicks’ new found fan base. “Not Ready to Make Nice” won three Grammys in 2007, and the album won two.<sup>83</sup> Despite winning 5 Grammys for their new work, the Dixie Chicks were not nominated for any Academy of Country Music Awards or any Country Music Association Awards.<sup>84</sup> The country community, just like the radio stations, was reluctant to welcome the Dixie Chicks back.

### **Alejandro Sanz**

“I don’t like him. If they gave me 3 million signatures to stop singing, I would stop singing immediately.”<sup>85</sup> (translated by Paxton Williams (author) from “Su presidente no me gusta. A mí, si me dieran tres millones de firmas para que dejara de cantar, dejaría de cantar de inmediato.”) Spanish singer Alejandro Sanz made these comments about Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez at a press conference in Caracas in 2004. In

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<sup>82</sup> Gilbert, 330-331.

<sup>83</sup> Towner, 297.

<sup>84</sup> Towner, 298.

<sup>85</sup> Efe.

Venezuela, a petition calling for a referendum about allowing Chavez to run for re-election garnered 3 million signatures from the Venezuelan people.

Sanz's next scheduled performance in Venezuela was not until his next tour, which occurred in November 2007. He had already sold out the venue in Venezuela. The concert would take place in the Poliedro Stadium in Caracas. The Higher Education Minister, Luis Acuña, cancelled the concert. Acuña claimed he would not allow someone who made comments against the government of Venezuela to use a state owned facility for his event. The concert was moved to February 2008 at a privately owned venue. A week before the rescheduled concert, the event was cancelled by the private event promoters without a specific reason. It is speculated that this is a direct result of the government's feelings toward Sanz.

### **Venezuela at the time**

In 2004, there was a recall referendum to see if President Hugo Chavez should be removed from his position. The recall mechanism was introduced in the new Venezuelan Constitution in 2009. Petitioners must gather 20% of the signatures from the corresponding electorate. 20% of the national electorate in 2004 was 2.4 million signatures. The people were able to gather 3.4 million signatures, which the National Electoral Council rejected on grounds of false signatures. The people persisted and were able to gather 3.6 million signatures, which the National Electoral Council rejected again on grounds of false signatures. In May of 2004, the Council set aside a week

where people could come and verify their signatures. At the end of that period, 2,436,830 signatures were verified, which met the minimum for a referendum.<sup>86</sup>

Public opinion of Chavez was mixed.<sup>87</sup> Some loved him, and some thought he was controlling, abusing his power, and running a discriminatory government. Majority of the country was in favor of him with the referendum occurring on August 15, 2004, with 58% of the voters voting “no.” Majority voted against recalling Chavez from his position.<sup>88</sup>

## Reactions

The Venezuelan government created a petition to see if Sanz would make good on his promise, but it garnered only 230,000 signatures. There was little public outcry against Sanz in Venezuela.

Sanz was not alone in his anti-Chavez sentiments. Many other celebrities, ranging from professional athletes to actors, condemned Chavez. Miguel Bose, a professional singer, refused to play there while Chavez was in charge. From Shakira to David Beckham, many stars stood with Sanz. Jennifer Lopez, Ricky Martin, and Penelope Cruz all signed a letter protesting the decision of the Venezuelan government regarding Sanz.<sup>89</sup> Though Sanz himself was not officially banned from the country, he was informally banned from using public venues, and with the cancellation of the rescheduled concert at a private venue, the message was clear: Sanz is not welcome in

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<sup>86</sup> Margarita López Maya. *Del viernes negro al referendo revocatorio* (Caracas: Alfa Grupo Editorial, 2006): 283.

<sup>87</sup> Steve Ellner. “Respuestas al debilitamiento del Estado y la sociedad venezolana en la época de Hugo Chávez.” *Política* (2004): 47.

<sup>88</sup> López Maya, 287.

<sup>89</sup> “Un Grupo De Artistas Firma Una Carta De Apoyo a Alejandro Sanz.” *Reuters España*. February 14, 2008.

Venezuela. Sanz's comments from three years earlier were still haunting the Venezuelan government.

When Sanz's concerts were cancelled in 2007 and 2008, he did not go to Venezuela. Shortly after the cancellation of the concert in 2008, Chavez stated that he did not ban Sanz, who was welcome to perform in the country any time. Sanz did not go to Venezuela. In September of 2010, Sanz tweeted an open statement to Chavez asking to perform in Venezuela. Though Chavez did not respond, Sanz ended the final leg of his tour in Venezuela later that same year.<sup>90</sup>

### **Dixie Chicks, Sanz, and the Internet Age of News Consumption**

The internet changed the world! Although this sounds a little dramatic, it is a completely accurate and drama-free statement. Technological advancement blessed us with the gift of the Internet, and life has never been the same since. Particularly, the internet revolutionized the way we produce and consume news.<sup>91</sup> The internet expanded news sources to online websites. It created the internet forum— places to express our opinion in writing and react to the opinions of others almost immediately. Journals, blogs, chat rooms, and news stations all appeared immediately in front of you with the push a button. The internet allowed people to openly express their mind with complete strangers, which was something that was never available before.

The internet also expanded, and thereby shortened, the 24 hour news cycle. Instead of a select few stations running 24 hour news channels, the internet created a space for many news outlets, and the ability to constantly update and post material

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<sup>90</sup> Alejandro Sanz (@AlejandroSanz). September 6, 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Rosenberg and Feldman, 3.

made news more immediate. With the intensification of the news cycle and the all-around limitless availability of the internet, information tended to travel quickly.

Although there were 24 hour news stations before the creation of the internet, once the internet was used by majority of the country, news traveled much faster.<sup>92</sup>

It is important to note that very limited social media existed at this time (e.g.: Myspace), but it was not used to the extent that social media is used today. It also was not used to communicate news the way social media does today either.<sup>93</sup> It was simply a way to share music, keep your friends on their toes by changing your "Top 8," and as an instant messaging platform before texting was readily available.

In contrast to the Ali and Norman protests, the internet also allowed this controversy to have a longer shelf life than it would have if it was only printed or talked about on the evening news.<sup>94</sup> The public now had the ability to more or less decide what was at the forefront of the media based on what was being talked about online. This occurred to such an extent that three years after the controversy, songs by the Dixie Chicks were still not getting any airplay on the radio.<sup>95</sup>

Radio is still a relevant news source in this age, particularly in the context of the case of the Dixie Chicks. The radio was important in gauging the reactions of the public, allowing people to call in and express their opinions. In addition, radio hosts openly expressed theirs, and the essential ban on airplay of the Dixie Chicks' music showed the extent of the backlash the Dixie Chicks' received for speaking their minds.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Rosenberg and Feldman, 7.

<sup>93</sup> Monica Anderson and Andrea Caumont. "How Social Media Is Reshaping News." *Pew Research Center*, September 24, 2014.

<sup>94</sup> Rosenberg and Feldman, 27.

<sup>95</sup> Gilbert, 323.

<sup>96</sup> Rossman, 62.

### **Dixie Chicks and Sanz: Comparison Across Cultural Context**

In the case of the Dixie Chicks and Alejandro Sanz, both essentially criticized the president in a very public fashion. The Dixie Chicks were not in the United States when their comment was made, and Sanz was not commenting on his president, but Venezuela's.

The news of the Dixie Chicks spread rapidly in a chatroom and was then picked up by a major American news outlet. The effects were seen immediately with an overall outcry of disgust and confusion, and their career never really regained the status it held before. Celebrities chose to say silent on the Dixie Chicks controversy, while in the case of Sanz, they spoke out.

The reaction to Sanz wasn't so much a public reaction, as it was a governmental reaction. The public sold out his venues twice, so I think it is reasonable to assume that fans of Sanz were upset with the government's reaction to his comments, but there was no available information about the fans' reactions. The media purely focused on the spat between Chavez and Sanz, ignoring the people of Venezuela.

Although there are huge political differences between the United States and Venezuela, the country music fan base aligns in some ways with the Chavez regime. The country music fan base completely froze out the Dixie Chicks. Country music radio stations removed the Dixie Chicks from their airplay immediately. These same radio stations' hosts slaughtered the Dixie Chicks on their radio shows. Country music forums blasted them as well. Country stars refused to speak on behalf of the Dixie Chicks and avoided any of their events. This freeze out continued for years, even with

the release of their new album. Country music refused to acknowledge it, even though their new music won 5 Grammys. Collectively, all aspects of country music iced out the Dixie Chicks, from the fans, to the radio stations and award shows, to the actual country singers.

Chavez's regime took the same approach as the country music scene. Chavez and the rest of his government made it impossible for Sanz to perform years after the initial comment was made. There was no formal ban against Sanz or the Dixie Chicks, but both parties treated the celebrities as such.

The consumption of media transcends cultural and social differences in the two countries. These cases both involved public critiques of the president, where after the initial comment, the internet took over the narrative. The consumption of media via the internet allowed both controversies to fester in a way that was not possible before. The Dixie Chicks were vilified in chat rooms before the mainstream news even caught wind of Maines' comment. The chat rooms, blogs, and other public forums were flooded with comments denouncing the Dixie Chicks. Once the chatrooms were flooded with critiques of Maine's comment, the calls came in to the radio stations to denounce the Dixie Chicks or request their removal from the set list of the day.

The Internet Age differs from the age of Ali and Norman's protests. At the time of Ali and Norman's protests, the news was reporting from the same perspectives and the public's constant exposure to these perspectives, influenced the public to accept the negative perspective as their own. In the age of the Dixie Chicks and Sanz, the country music fan base completely rejected the Dixie Chicks and all news coming from any media platform associated with country music was negative. The Dixie Chicks garnered

a new pop fan base who purchased their albums, therefore showing their support of the music group. The Venezuelan government unofficially banned Sanz. Despite this political standoff, his concert venues sold out twice, showing the Venezuelan people still supported Sanz.

The response to the Dixie Chicks was overwhelmingly negative in the media, and even more so in any media related to the country music industry. When the Dixie Chicks released their new album three years later, the first since the incident, the country music industry was still rejecting them. Yet, the release of their new album sparked a renewed conversation in the public, and highlights the changing nature of the media in the Internet Age.

The Dixie Chicks garnered a new pop fan base that purchased their album and played it on the radio, while air play was little to none on country music stations. This is further evident when the Dixie Chicks won all five Grammys they were nominated for with their new music, and they failed to even be nominated at the award shows of both the Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music.

The Dixie Chicks were able to appeal to a pop fan base in a way that was not available before the creation of the internet. Their album's sound was more pop/rock than country, which was the first step at garnering a new fan base, but the Dixie Chicks appealed to pop fans through album propaganda. They launched a counter campaign to the negative media attention they'd been receiving through promotion of their album by releasing a documentary, participating in several high profile interviews, like Diane Sawyer, and marketing their album as an unapologetic apology. Their album addressed their protest and the reactions to it through a platform they know all too well — music.

The pop fan base was very receptive to the Dixie Chicks' counter campaign, talking up their album in chatrooms and making their first single from the album, "Not Ready to Make Nice" one of the top downloaded songs on iTunes.<sup>97</sup> A counter campaign like this would not have the ability to be successful without a media environment allowing for discussion and a little bit of dissent from the popular opinion.

The shelf life of the issues at the time of Ali and Norman was very much media controlled. The media reported on what it felt were the relevant issues and kept issues alive immediately, but not long after. In contrast, the shelf life of the issues in the Internet Age are more so controlled by the public. The public could pick and choose what issues mattered to them by talking about news on the internet. The commonly talked about issues on the internet, assumed to be the issues at the forefront of the public's mind and therefore relevant to the public at the time, were the issues being reported on to meet the public's demand. The public will consume the news that they are interested in, causing the media to report on these issues to maintain viewers.

The nature of the issue transcends the differences between the United States and Venezuela. The country music fan base and the government under Chavez reacted in the exact same way to a protest that goes against their grain and can thus be called anti-patriotic. Free speech is allowed, but not encouraged, unless it supports the regime. Regarding the cases examined here, we see this play out both in terms of Chavez's government and the hyper-patriotism of the country music industry and its fan base.

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<sup>97</sup> Gilbert, 322 – 323.

### Age 3: Social Media

#### **Colin Kaepernick**

“Land of the free, and home of the brave” rings out on the speakers in a 2016 pre-season NFL game. The San Francisco 49ers stand reverently with their hands over their hearts or at attention, but a lone player sits on the bench with his hands in his lap. That player is Colin Kaepernick. By the end of the pre-season, the 49ers still stood reverently, while Colin Kaepernick kneeled on the sidelines during the National Anthem.<sup>98</sup>

Kaepernick, when interviewed by the official NFL media after the game, stated, “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.”<sup>99</sup> The 49ers released a statement as well saying, “The national anthem is and always will be a special part of the pre-game ceremony. It is an opportunity to honor our country and reflect on the great liberties we are afforded as its citizens. In respecting such American principles as freedom of religion and freedom of expression, we recognize the right of an individual to choose and participate, or not, in our celebration of the national anthem.”<sup>100</sup>

Colin Kaepernick sparked a conversation in the United States unlike anything seen in recent times. People felt passionately that he was right and felt passionately

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<sup>98</sup> Steve Wyche. "Colin Kaepernick Explains Why He Sat During National Anthem." *NFL*, August 27, 2016.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

that he was wrong. What started as a silent protest of racial inequality and police brutality ended in a metaphorical screaming match, somewhat dividing the nation.

### **Times in USA**

America is at a place where racial injustice is at the forefront of the media.

Police brutality is being more publicized than ever before.<sup>101</sup> Generally, these acts have been carried out against unarmed black men. Video footage recorded by bystanders or body cams would be released to the media, then a frenzy would follow. Names like Alton Sterling, Michael Brown, and Freddie Gray<sup>102</sup> were just a few of the victims in the headlines.

Black Lives Matter, a modern civil rights movement started as a hashtag in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the death of Trayvon Martin<sup>103</sup> was gaining a lot of media attention for their sometimes unconventional means of protest. Blocking highways, breaking windows, and other means of unconventional, and also illegal protest, paint the movement in a negative light in the media.

The Black Lives Matter movement has also united a population and placed civil rights back at the forefront of the media. Many peaceful protests have been successfully organized and carried out by this movement. It has gotten the youth of America involved in a publicly renewed civil rights movement. This movement also supports the LGBTQ community and aims to get all people, regardless of race, involved in its fight.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Elliott C. McLaughlin. "There Aren't More Police Shootings, Just More Coverage." *CNN*, April 21, 2015.

<sup>102</sup> "Unarmed Victims." *Mapping Police Violence*, January 17, 2017.

<sup>103</sup> "The Creation of a Movement." *Black Lives Matter*.

<sup>104</sup> "Guiding Principles." *Black Lives Matter*.

Race as a whole is a sensitive issue in this country. The Black Lives Matter movement and the reactions to it reflect this sentiment. The ways racism is addressed or is not addressed in America is controversial, and it becomes more challenging when the historical relationships between African-Americans and the police rise to the surface. The hesitancy of people to address racism in this country creates an uncomfortable environment, effectively silencing communication about some of the issues related to race, and that hesitation sparks further controversy in our society.

## Reactions

Reactions to Colin Kaepernick's protest were like night and day. Everyone had a strong opinion. A video of a former Kaepernick fan wearing a 49ers jersey burning a Kaepernick jersey went viral, and it was shared on several social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Kaepernick received death threats on Twitter. Petitions were signed calling for him to be kicked out of the NFL.<sup>105</sup> He was painted as the ultimate un-American in the media, a traitor to the nation that gave him his freedoms and figuratively signs his paychecks. He may as well have burned the American flag based on the reactions of the public and the media. Other athletes sounded off on Twitter. Justin Pugh, a New York Giants player, tweeted<sup>106</sup> "I will be STANDING during the National Anthem tonight. Thank you to ALL (Gender,Race,Religion)that put your lives on the line for that flag."<sup>107</sup> A news anchor named Gary Radnich also tweeted his disagreement. "Kaepernick not standing for National Anthem: I respect Freedom of

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<sup>105</sup> Macguire.

<sup>106</sup> All tweets quoted in this thesis are printed in the original format in which they were tweeted.

<sup>107</sup> Justin Pugh (@JustinPugh). August 27, 2016.

choice but if he really wants to take a stand? Give back his NFL salary!!!"<sup>108</sup> A lot of people felt Kaepernick himself had not experienced the oppression he was standing up for with \$61 million of his \$126 million salary guaranteed.<sup>109</sup>

Yet unlike other media eras, the Kaepernick protest was met with not just derision and animosity, but also by vocal and active support. The president at the time, President Barack Obama, even supported his right to kneel during the Anthem. In response to a question about his thoughts on the Kaepernick protest, Obama said "The test of our fidelity to our Constitution, to freedom of speech, to our Bill of Rights, is not when it's easy, but when it's hard. We fight sometimes so that people can do things that we disagree with... As long as they're doing it within the law, then we can voice our opinion objecting to it, but it's also their right." In addition, however, Obama also stated that he feels that "honoring our flag and our anthem is part of what binds us together as a nation."<sup>110</sup>

Reaction in the public, while negative overall, was not entirely one-sided. A YouGov poll taken between August 31 and September 1, 2016, revealed that while most disapproved, 32% of respondents supported Kaepernick and his protest, with 15% strongly approving. Not surprisingly, the survey also revealed significant racial differences in support for Kaepernick, with 72% of African-American approving, and 69% of whites disapproving. Hispanics were largely mixed in their reactions.<sup>111</sup>

Support for Kaepernick was expressed in other more tangible ways as well. His jersey sales, which originally placed him at 20<sup>th</sup> on the 49ers, skyrocketed and became

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<sup>108</sup> Gary Radnich (@KRON4GRadnich). August 27, 2016.

<sup>109</sup> "Colin Kaepernick: Salary." *Spotrac*.

<sup>110</sup> Daniella Diaz. "Obama Defends Kaepernick's Anthem Protest." *CNN*, September 29, 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Peter Moore. "Significant Racial Divide over Kaepernick Protest." *YouGov*, September 6, 2016.

the number one selling jersey in the entire NFL.<sup>112</sup> Perhaps most importantly, other athletes began following Kaepernick's lead and kneeled in solidarity with him. This effect dubbed "Kaepernicking" trickled down from the NFL to college athletes, high school athletes, referees, and even a middle school band.<sup>113</sup>

Colin Kaepernick opted out of his contract with the 49ers at the end of the season to become a free agent. Currently, Kaepernick has not been re-signed to any team.<sup>114</sup> Some speculate that it is in regards to his protesting, though no definitive answer has come about.

Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People just named Colin Kaepernick in its 2017 list. Jim Harbaugh, head football coach at the University of Michigan, wrote the blurb for Kaepernick on Time Magazine's website stating, "I also applaud Colin for the courage he has demonstrated in exercising his guaranteed right of free speech. His willingness to take a position at personal cost is now part of our American story."<sup>115</sup>

### **Andy Murray**

"Huge day for Scotland today! no campaign negativity last few days totally swayed my view on it. excited to see the outcome. lets do this!" Andy Murray tweeted his support of voting yes in the referendum for Scottish independence in 2014.<sup>116</sup>

Andy Murray is a Scottish tennis player who plays for Great Britain. He is currently the number one male tennis player in the world. He has won several Grand

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<sup>112</sup> Heitner.

<sup>113</sup> Toporek, 5.

<sup>114</sup> "Colin Kaepernick: Salary."

<sup>115</sup> Jim Harbaugh. "The 100 Most Influential People: Colin Kaepernick." *TIME*, April 20, 2017.

<sup>116</sup> Rawlinson.

Slams at various competitions like the US Open and Wimbledon. He is also an Olympic gold winning tennis player.<sup>117</sup>

### **Times in the UK**

Scottish Parliament passed the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill in November of 2013. The actual vote would take place on September 18, 2014. The voting age was reduced from 18 to 16 for the referendum.<sup>118</sup>

Two main groups, Yes Scotland and Better Together, campaigned for their cause of staying or leaving the United Kingdom. Currency, membership in the European Union, and oil<sup>119</sup> were a few of the main concerns voters had when determining if they did or did not want an independent Scotland.

On September 18, 2014, 44.7% of voters voted “yes” to independence, while 55.3% of voters, which was over 2 million, voted “no” to independence. There was a high voter turnout with 84.59% of the eligible voters participating in the referendum, showing just how important the vote was to the people of the Scotland and Great Britain.<sup>120</sup>

### **Reactions**

Many supporters of the Yes Scotland campaign were elated to have one of the most famous and revered Scottish athletes support their cause. They tweeted him their

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<sup>117</sup> Rawlinson.

<sup>118</sup> Tom Mullen. "The Scottish Independence Referendum 2014." *Journal of Law and Society* (2014): 628-630.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 630.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 633.

joy, and then they went out and voted “yes” to independence. Andy Murray’s brother Jamie Murray, also a professional tennis player, tweeted his support of Yes Scotland saying, “Scotland is full of smart talented hard working humble people. Have faith in them to run our country successfully.”<sup>121</sup>

There is no available information of whether or not Jamie Murray was bashed in the media for his stance supporting Scottish independence, but based on the lack of information, I assume that he was not subject to the same ridicule as his younger brother, Andy.

Andy Murray received a lot of backlash. Death threats were sent his way on Twitter. People were appalled that he would vote against Great Britain; he is a member of Great Britain’s national tennis team, and Great Britain essentially signs his paychecks. Some tweets just denounced Murray and reminded him that due to his current place of residence, he was not eligible to vote in the referendum at all. One tweet said “@andy\_murray shame on millionaire Andy Murray. You live in Surrey, can’t vote and have benefitted from Great Britain!”<sup>122</sup>

One particularly ugly example related to a difficult memory from Murray’s childhood. When Murray was a student at Dunblane Primary School, a brutal massacre occurred there. A gunman shot 16 children and a teacher during the school day. Though Murray was present that day, he does not like to speak of the incident publicly. Yet some people in the “Twitter-verse” were so outraged by Murray’s stance that they even referred to this tragic event in their hate fueled tweets. One tweet stated “Wish u

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<sup>121</sup> Jamie Murray (@jamie\_murray). September 18, 2014.

<sup>122</sup> Gregor Park (@Gregor\_Park). September 18, 2014.

had been killed at Dunblane, you miserable anti-British hypocritical little git. Your life will be a misery from now on.”<sup>123</sup>

Murray spoke to the BBC saying, “I don’t regret giving an opinion. I think everyone should be allowed that. The way I did it, yeah, it wasn’t something I would do again. I think it was a very emotional day for a lot of Scottish people and the whole country and the whole of the UK, it was a big day. The way it was worded, the way I sent it, that’s not really in my character and I don’t normally do stuff like that.”<sup>124</sup>

### **Kaepernick, Murray, and the Social Media Age of News Consumption**

The creation of social media and a social media oriented society changed day-to-day life, especially for social media oriented Millennials and Generation Y.<sup>125</sup> Social media has created endless platforms for your own thoughts and everyone else’s. People have access to opinions exactly like theirs and opinions that are the complete opposite of theirs. This is both amazing and horrifying. We can now choose to only read media that supports our own thoughts, so it serves more as validation for our opinions, however uninformed they may be.<sup>126</sup> While we can certainly use the vast number of information outlets to understand the opposing side or explore which side to stand on in any argument, we can also choose to shield ourselves from the opposing points of view.

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<sup>123</sup> Harry S. (sportingharry). September 17, 2014.

<sup>124</sup> “Scottish Referendum: Andy Murray 'disappointed' by Indyref Tweet Fallout.” *BBC News*, September 23, 2014.

<sup>125</sup> Anderson and Caumont.

<sup>126</sup> “The Media Insight Project: The Personal News Cycle.” *The Media Insight Project*. American Press Institute, March 17, 2014.

The number of social media platforms is constantly growing and evolving, making an exact number hard to pin down. The variety of these social media platforms adds to the overall media environment, creating a large number of outlets. Whether by use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Tumblr, YouTube, Pinterest, BuzzFeed (and many others), we now have the ability to choose exactly how we get our news and the type of news we get. The social media age is the age of customizable news.<sup>127</sup>

The smart phone and its overall popularity further advanced this social media age by placing the internet and various applications in the palm of our hands. One important capability of the smart phone is the ability to get notifications. These notifications can be tailored to our personal preferences from the applications of our choice. News apps, social media, websites, and other platforms can send alerts to your phone whenever new information is posted, when a friend posts something, or whenever a post of our own receives feedback, like “likes” or comments. There are options for real-world news, like CNN and the Wall Street Journal, sports news, like ESPN and Bleacher Report, and plenty of celebrity gossip forums like E! and Daily Mail.<sup>128</sup> Facebook has a trending news feature where taglines from popular news stories are viewable on the side of the social media dashboard. It is easy to click these taglines and see what people are saying about the trending news stories of the day.

As a result of the availability of so many social media platforms and the excessive use of these platforms, the news cycle has shortened to significantly less than 24 hours as people are able to send and receive information and media almost

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<sup>127</sup> “The Media Insight Project: The Personal News Cycle.”

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

instantaneously.<sup>129</sup> The ease with which we access these social media sites and applications makes refreshing to receive new information a constant activity for many.

Twitter is used heavily in gauging the reactions of the public in both the Kaepernick and Murray cases. Twitter is a social media website and application that allows the public to express their opinions in posts called tweets. Tweets must be 140 characters or less. They can include photos as well. The character limit on tweets forces them to be straight to the point. Twitter is one of the main social media platforms used by celebrities today.

Hashtags are used in tweets to track information. For example, while watching an award show like the Grammys or Oscars, somewhere in the tweet “#grammys” or “#oscars” would occur. This makes the tweets searchable by content in the “Twitterverse.” It is also used to see how many people are talking about a certain person or event. Tweets regarding Kaepernick used hashtags like, “#kaepernick,” “#49ers,” and “#NationalAnthem.” Hashtags are also used to express emotions on Twitter. After tweeting a statement, someone may add “#happy,” “#blessed,” or “#mad” depending on the nature of the tweet. People can also use Twitter to directly communicate with celebrities, since it is so popular among them. They can tweet at someone, called mentioning, and then add their comment on the end. People tweeted at the NFL, the 49ers, and at Colin Kaepernick himself. The account user can then scroll through their “mentions” on Twitter to see what people are saying to them.

The constant use of smart phones has created a new phenomenon — cell phone addiction. 90% of Americans under the age of 25 are addicted to their cell phones.

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<sup>129</sup> Rosenberg and Feldman, 7.

This shockingly high number is not so shocking considering the wide use of smart phones, their applications, and the current culture surrounding social media. Receiving a notification on a smart phone releases endorphins. Endorphins are neurotransmitters released in the brain that create a feeling of a high. Commonly endorphins are associated with exercising, eating chocolate, and laughter. Endorphins make us feel good. Receiving a text message or an Instagram notification has been shown to release the same endorphins as exercising, eating chocolate, and laughter. This endorphin release<sup>130</sup> contributes to the cell phone addiction, validating the youth's desire to have their phones, knowing it will make them feel good about themselves the instant they receive a notification.

This addiction is unhealthy. Constantly checking to see if we received a text message, if anyone commented on our Instagram, or our favorite celebrities posted anything new on Snapchat is time consuming, and if we are not receiving notifications or that endorphin "high," then we feel bad. Self-validation by the number of Instagram likes we receive may seem silly to older generations, but we still strive to break our top like count every time we post a perfectly timed, perfectly edited, and perfectly captioned photo. We cannot leave our phones alone; we are reliant on them and the information they give us.

The relevancy of issues is important in the social media age. The issues that are at the forefront of the news today may not actually be the relevant or important issues due to customizable news. Social media allows us to choose the issues we want to know more about, and then the applications recommend more articles, photos, and

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<sup>130</sup> Lee Sian Chei and Ma Long. . "News Sharing in Social Media: The Effect of Gratifications and Prior Experience." *Computers in Human Behavior* (2012): 332.

videos about those specific topics.<sup>131</sup> I can follow Taylor Swift's tour instantly and read about each concert every day. I could tell you exactly what Kate Middleton wore yesterday and where she was, knowing that I will get the same information but about a different day tomorrow. While news concerning global politics, like the attacks in Syria, and local politics, like the impending impeachment of Alabama Governor Robert Bentley, are mere tag lines on the bottom of the screen or go unnoticed on the application all together.

With regard to political news and celebrity protest, the instantaneous nature of social media platforms has had a dramatic impact on the speed at which information travels. Facebook and Instagram both have a "live" feature, where videos can be broadcast in real time. Snapchat creates stories that are a compilation of videos submitted of events occurring at the time. For example, recently there was a shooting at a San Bernardino school, and Snapchat had a story for it. Videos right outside of the school or of parents or students involved were then posted on this story for the world to see. These videos were all self-submitted. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are just a few of the platforms that allow users to upload things essentially in real time. It is not uncommon to find out about an event on social media before hearing about it from the news. This instantaneous media has shortened the time between incident and public reaction, since there is no need to be present at an event to see or hear the nature of an incident that occurred there.

Social media has also allowed the public to see a variety of reactions. Social media allows for everyone with every opinion to share their thoughts, now readily

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<sup>131</sup> Anderson and Caumont.

available for consumption to their followers. It has intensified the positive reactions and the negative reactions. It has shifted the shelf life of headlines, causing the issue at the forefront of the media to be about public interest and entertainment instead of actual news value. This is evident in the cases of both Kaepernick and Murray. Their reactions ranged from screams of support to death threats. The shelf life of the reactions was completely controlled by the public and how long the protest held their interest. The media now responds to not only the incident at hand but also to the emotions and the demands of the public.

Colin Kaepernick and Andy Murray's cases are both perfect examples of modern media and the extent of its usage. Both athletes received the majority of their congratulations and condemnations on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. There were hundreds of thousands of tweets and posts directed at both of them in agreement or disagreement with their actions. Social media, particularly Twitter, had a significant impact on driving the public debate.

Kaepernick took a stand in the form of kneeling during the National Anthem. He had as many haters as he did fans after his silent protest. Kaepernick remained rather unfazed about the media, while the public could not keep quiet about their opinions. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media applications exploded with praise and criticism of Kaepernick. After every game, Kaepernick was trending. His newfound popularity, whether fame or infamy, incited the revolution of Kaepernicking,<sup>132</sup> where other athletes, students, or just regular people would emulate his actions as a sign of

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<sup>132</sup> Toporek, 5.

solidarity and an acknowledgement of the social injustices facing this country at the time.

This popularity Kaepernick received from his supporters, making him even more of a celebrity in this realm, was unheard of before the social media age. The ability of people to tailor their news to their specific interests and beliefs has created stars out of people in certain ideological circles that would never have had this opportunity before. For example, if Ali or Norman's protests occurred today, they would experience a similar phenomenon to this instead of the ostracism they experienced from the public in their news age.

In the case of Andy Murray, his criticized statement was posted on Twitter. He did not verbally speak it; he tweeted it. This is a perfect example of using social media to express opinions, which is so common today. He received a variety of praise and criticism all through social media platforms.

### **Kaepernick and Murray: Comparison Across Cultural Context**

Media consumption transcends the cultural and societal differences between the United States and the United Kingdom. The creation and mass usage of social media showcases the many different reactions to these cases. With the expansive amount of posts and tweets directed toward these two athletes, it is easy to view the positive and the negative reactions and the reasoning behind them. Customizable news tends to create a supportive environment, meaning the news a person chooses to receive is exactly what they want to hear about. In the case of Kaepernick, a veteran tweeted "I'd never try to shame someone with "patriotism" in order to silence their 1st amend Right.

#VeteransForKaepernick,”<sup>133</sup> which then became a trending hashtag on Twitter as more people with the same stance began to tweet their support as well. For people against Kaepernick, they received validation of their opinions through tweets like “#ColinKaepernick is third string. You would think he would want to stand after all that sitting on the bench. #49ers,”<sup>134</sup> which then allowed them to express their denunciation of Kaepernick as well.

The variety of opinions on the internet has the potential to allow the public to absorb all of the opinions, both supporting and contradicting to their current one, and then form a more well-rounded opinion. This is typically not the case due to customizable news. Customizable news can lead to a mob mentality, making the positive and negative opinions even more impassioned as people fight on social media to assert that their opinion is the correct opinion.

In addition, the current Social Media Age has more positive reactions to these protests in the news than the past ages have had. The past cases seemed to garner a very limited number, if any, of positive reactions, while today, it is evident that there are more published positive reactions due to the widespread availability of so many opinions on many different media platforms. In these past cases, the positive opinion was the unpopular opinion, and it reflected the type of information that people were exposed to. With both Kaepernick and Murray, I still think there were more negative responses than positive ones, but not as overwhelmingly so as observed in the past media ages.

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<sup>133</sup> Brandon Keating (@BrandonTalks). August 30, 2016.

<sup>134</sup> Kevin Rainey (@KevinRaineyLive). September 1, 2016.

The massive increase in news sources and the ability to only hear opinions that reinforced our own through customizable news caused the media environment to shift from all negative press as the positive opinions were shared on social media. Though the media was still negative, there were outlets reporting on the supporting reactions to the protests of Kaepernick and Murray. Instead of an overwhelmingly negative news environment, the positive reactions were being recognized. The massive increase in news sources also increased the shelf life of the issues. There are now whole websites dedicated to Kaepernick and tracking the effects of his protest that are updated daily. Social media fan and hate accounts receive thousands of views on Instagram and Facebook as people classify these men as saints or sinners.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, my primary goal was to examine changes in the production and consumption of news information and the impact this has on celebrity protest over time. I was particularly interested in how the changes in the speed of the news cycle, the mass expansion of available news platforms, and customization of information outlets impacted these reactions. Additionally, my goal was to explore if these changes in media and consumption varied across or transcended different cultural contexts through an analysis of a comparative case study between the United States and a foreign country.

In the Pre-24 Hour News Cycle Age of Muhammad Ali and Peter Norman, news was consumed in very few ways. There were a few major news outlets, which dominated the media. Watching the news was a family affair and part of the daily ritual of everyone, whether young or old. Families were exposed to the same news from the few available news stations.

Due to the limited media platforms, there were few places to hear the unpopular, and in these cases, the supporting, opinion. Both protests went against the norm of their society, and the media reported these protests with a negative perspective. The reactions of the public mirrored the reporting of the news; the way the media framed the news influenced public opinion accordingly. As a result, there was very little support of Ali and Norman initially.

The media environment at the time of the cases of Muhammad Ali and Peter Norman had a significant impact on the way they were treated. The public ostracized both Ali and Norman in response to their protests. Ali refused induction when he was

drafted, and Norman supported the Australian Indigenous Civil Rights Movement. Their actions went against the societal norms at the time, and the media reacted accordingly, influencing the reactions of the public as well.

The shelf life of news was also completely media driven at this time, with the media picking and choosing which issues to put at the forefront. This media driven shelf life caused both Ali and Norman to continue to be ostracized. Norman was kept out of the Olympics, despite qualifying, in 1972, and due to Ali's boxing ban, a direct result of the negative media coverage, Ali lost out on boxing in what would have been some of the best years of his life physically.

The Internet Age expanded and shortened the 24 hour news cycle. The availability of outlets of information expanded, and the internet forum created a revolutionary way to share news and express opinions. The consumption of media via the internet allowed the controversy of the Dixie Chicks and Sanz to play out in a way that was not possible before. The internet took over the narrative. The news of the Dixie Chicks spread rapidly in a chatroom and was then picked up by mainstream media. Chatrooms, blogs, and other internet forums exploded with the news.

The shelf life of both controversies was now more or less controlled by the public. The public now had the ability to essentially decide what was at the forefront of the media based on what was being talked about online. This occurred to such an extent that three years after the controversy, songs by the Dixie Chicks were still not getting any airplay on country music radio.

The Internet Age differs from the age of Ali and Norman's protests. At the time of Ali and Norman's protests, the news was reporting from the same perspectives and the

public's constant exposure to these perspectives influenced the public to accept the negative perspective as their own. In the age of the Dixie Chicks and Sanz, the country music fan base completely rejected the Dixie Chicks and all news coming from any media platform associated with country music was negative. The Dixie Chicks garnered a new pop fan base who purchased their albums, therefore showing their support of the music group. The Venezuelan government unofficially banned Sanz. Despite this political standoff, his concert venues sold out twice, showing the Venezuelan people still supported Sanz.

In the Social Media Age of Colin Kaepernick and Andy Murray, social media and the mass usage of smart phones have revolutionized the way news is conveyed. There are now endless platforms for our own thoughts and everyone else's. Smart phones allow us to have all of these platforms and opinions in the palm of our hands for instant access to information. This instant access has shortened the news cycle to significantly less than 24 hours. In fact, the news cycle could even be considered instant due to technological advances and an increase in information outlets.

The use of platforms like Twitter and Facebook allow for almost instantaneous communication of ideas and information. Often, I find out things on social media before I hear it on the news. Both Kaepernick and Murray were vilified and praised on Twitter. Hundreds of thousands of tweets were directed at both athletes. Social media had a significant impact on driving the debate. We now have access to opinions exactly like our own and the exact opposite. This leads to customizable news.

Customizable news allows us to immerse ourselves in supportive platforms, meaning platforms that support our personal opinion, not necessarily that support the

issue at hand. We can customize our news through notifications on our smart phones and by following accounts that align with our views on social media. Despite the wild availability and variety of opinions on the internet, the opinions of others the public receives may serve as reinforcements for the opinion they already hold, further intensifying the reactions of the public to these protests.

The shelf life of issues is now extensively driven by the public. The public has the ability to keep issues alive or squash them with the amount of chatter on social media sites. What the public feels is relevant at the time goes to the forefront of the media, while everything else fades into the background. Due to this, the issues making headlines may not be the important issues of the day. Political issues can easily be overlooked for the newest celebrity scandal.

Muhammad Ali and Colin Kaepernick both experienced similar ostracism, despite the differences in their news ages. Ali was stripped of his one true love, boxing, due to his protest, while Kaepernick was allowed to continue playing as much as he had before. Although some of the public did call for his removal from the NFL, the San Francisco 49ers and the NFL stood by Kaepernick and his right to not participate in the National Anthem.

Ali's protest was in 1967, nearing the end of the formal Civil Rights Movement. Kaepernick's protest in 2016 comes in the middle of a rejuvenated civil rights movement, Black Lives Matter. What little support Ali had in 1967 mainly came from the African-American community, just as majority of Kaepernick's support comes from the African-American community today.

The massive increase in news sources and the ability to only hear opinions that reinforce our own through customizable news has caused the media environment of today to shift from the all negative press of Ali's time as social media has created an outlet for the positive opinions to be shared. Though the media was still negative, there were outlets reporting on the supporting reactions to the protests of Kaepernick. Instead of an overwhelmingly negative news environment like Ali experienced, the positive reactions were being recognized.

The shelf life of issues and the overall news perspective has shifted from being media driven like in Ali's time to being more or less controlled by the public. Public discussion on the internet and trending topics on social media tell the news what they should be reporting on. Instead of the news reporting and the public mirroring the news, the media now responds to not only the incidents at hand, but also to the emotions and the demands of the public, creating a public driven news environment.

The common theme among all six of these cases is that each case is an example of a celebrity sharing the unpopular opinion at the time. The unpopular opinion is still an opinion. In all of these cases, people expressed their opinions about government or politics, which went against the commonly accepted practices of the time. In my research, the following quote by Claire Katz, author of a scholarly paper on the Dixie Chicks, perfectly sums up the motivations behind these celebrities and their protests:

The pursuit of "liberty and justice for all" obligates us to be able to recognize social injustice and to have the moral courage to respond to it. If they are to commit themselves to the ideals of liberty and justice, children must know that being willing and able to speak up is the first act of courage—and the first act of patriotism. Our republic is grounded in documents that depend on us to keep them honest. The constitution does not refute itself nor do state laws tell us they are unconstitutional. Both rely on human intervention and human vigilance to amend them...

Patriotism is a commitment to the values this country holds, values that include democratic principles of free speech and the pursuit of liberty and justice for all. Thus, to be patriotic means to stand up for these values even if, and especially if, that means standing against the prevailing political authority.<sup>135</sup>

Katz's statement offers insight into the motivation behind all six of these cases.

Each case consisted of a celebrity, which is an influential position, using their position to stand up for what they felt was right, either for them personally or for the world.

The reactions to these acts of celebrity protest are conditioned by the nature of the media environment. The media environment has evolved from a limited number of news stations to a seemingly limitless number of social media platforms. The variety of media outlets, speed of the news cycle, and the ability to customize how and what we receive as "news" has a dramatic impact on how information is produced and consumed. The news has evolved from a primarily media driven shelf life and single opinion to a public driven shelf life and varying opinions.

Based on my research, I think the media environment transcends the cultural and social differences between the United States and foreign countries, particularly Australia, Venezuela, and the United Kingdom. Countries reacted more or less the same within each defined media age to these celebrity protests, but as the media environment evolved, media moved away from a few news outlets to many information outlets, allowing the public to voice both sides of the argument for and against the celebrity protest. The increased speed at which information travels also reduced the news cycle from longer than 24 hours to significantly less than 24 hours, creating a

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<sup>135</sup> Katz, 146.

more chaotic, yet public driven news environment with headlines shifting as public interest shifts.

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