2018

I'll hang around as long as you will let me : hard country music, the white working class, and the experience of loss in the American neoliberal context

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I'LL HANG AROUND AS LONG AS YOU WILL LET ME: HARD COUNTRY MUSIC,

THE WHITE WORKING-CLASS, AND THE EXPERIENCE OF LOSS IN THE

AMERICAN NEOLIBERAL CONTEXT

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2017

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ABSTRACT

This paper utilises the object relations theories of Ronald Fairbairn to conceptualise the

narratives of Hard Country music, and understand how they relate to the shifting experiences of

the male, white working-class in America in the latter half of the twentieth century. This paper

understands the privileges that masculinity and whiteness have afforded the male, white

working-class in the post-war period, and attempts to locate the relative loss felt by this

population in the subsequent eras of de-industrialisation, neoliberalisation, second-wave

feminism and the civil rights movement. Undertaking a thematic analysis of Hard Country

music, an art form that purports to provide a narrative to the white, working-class experience,

this study works to contextualise a population's felt sense of loss from an object relations

perspective.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

I - Introduction

Throughout the history of America, race and gender and class have sustained

foundational importance to the creation of identity (Bederman, 2008). Whiteness, masculinity

and the ability to own capital have had a stranglehold on hierarchy throughout the landscape of

power in the American context. And displays of masculinity through manual labour have

afforded working-class men their own form of hegemonic identity in spite of a subordinated

class position (Simpson, Hughes & Slutskaya, 2016). Through these properties of identity,

expectations have been created — assumptions of what one can amount to. And for a good deal

of history, the expectations of masculinity — and whiteness especially — have been fulfilled by

the structures supporting them. The expectations of the male, white working-class have been

informed by history and policy: the possibilities afforded to their forebears.

Many elements in the more recent period, though, have worked to erode a sense of

privilege which the male, white working-class has enjoyed. While real privileges still exist, no

doubt, especially for whiteness and masculinity, globilisation, financial-market deregulation, de-

unionisation, second-wave feminism, the civil rights movement, and a shift in national-political

rationality towards neoliberal policies have all worked to chip away at the façade of expectation

for this population.

This study intends to track these shifts from an object relations perspective, using the

artistic-narrative form most consumed by this population - Hard Country music (Fox, 2004) —

as a signpost. This genre, which emerged in the 1960s, and reached its peak popularity in the late

1970s — an intentional rebuke to mainstream-oriented pop country music, is a self-consciously

low-brow form of music, produced with intention for an audience of poor, rural, white

Americans (Fox, 2004; Ching, 2001). In understanding that this trope and style of music

emerged and enjoyed its popularity alongside the mass expansion of neoliberal policies, this

study's assertion is that the loss and scorn of the poor, rural white man, as represented in this

music, mirrors a particular political class position at a particular time in history. With the erosion

of power, along with an ingrained presumption (represented as an expectation of privilege), and a

new political rationality pushing blame on the individual for his impoverished position, Hard

Country may emblemise an understanding of white, male, working-class loss in the modern era.

This study will use the work of the psychoanalyst Ronald Fairbairn to conceptualise

several narrative themes in Hard Country music within the context of class loss, and the erosion

of white and masculine privilege in America. I conceptualise the neoliberal state as the

insufficient parent to the white, poor, rural working-class. Here, in conjunction with Fairbairn's

model of object relations, I assume that, in expectation, there exists a "more ideal parenting" that

is wrapped up in the liberal democratic state and its investment in their property of whiteness and

muscular masculinity. Neoliberalism, along with the other forces mentioned above, have worked

to frustrate this expectation, providing a parenting which falls quite short of assumed investments

of welfare and support.

This study hypothesises that Fairbairn's model will help us comprehend the painful

longing and attachment to rejecting objects, an enduring trope of Hard Country Music. Further, it

hypothesises that this trope has become canonical for its white, rural, poor, masculine working-

class audience as a result of the shift in nurturance that they have experienced from the state in

the neoliberal era.

For Fairbairn, a child bonds to its early attachment figures through the contact provided. Pain and longing, under poor treatment, become the preferred, or, at least, the understood form of connection. The assertion here is that the white working-class has internalised a relationship with the neoliberal state in an attempt to free themselves from the fruitlessness of attempts to prosper, and feel recognised or loved. This population has internalised and split the state into an exciting and rejecting internal object, attempting to make and maintain connections with both, no matter how frustrating either may be. Fairbairn would say that those scorned by the state would be addicted to its nurturance, as well as addicted to long-fostered feelings of humiliation, betrayal and exploitation. These are the early bonds of "parenting" that this population has grown to know. In that the neoliberal state represents a rejecting object, part of the self remains incessantly obsessed with wresting any form of love it can get. And at the same time, a substantial part of the self, for this population, is actualised through its own dependence on being continually tormented. And, further, this part of the white, working-class self despises itself for its dependence on the tormenter, and finds itself pathetic in its devotion to the alluring object. For Fairbairn, a strong attachment to an ever-present rejecting object, brings pathologies of shame and impotence inflicted upon the self.

It has, further, been theorised (Harvey, 2007; Brown, 2003; 2006; Simpson et al., 2016) that the political rationality created by the neoliberal state has further ascribed blame to those most affected by its policies. This logic dictates that the fault of the working poor's inability to prosper lies squarely on themselves, due to their inferiority and their low aspirations in a system which rewards mobility and entrepreneurship. Fairbairn may understand this as representing the primary step in the internalisation of objects and object relationships — understanding the

scenario not as a system being unresponsive, but of one's love and desire for nurturance being toxic in itself. As a way to cope with the scorn of the state, the white working-class cast the blame on itself for its sorry situation.

This study asserts that the white, working-class, under a neoliberal political rationality, both produce and identify with cultural forms which represent their situation. The trope of the solitary character fetishising his own misery around the loss or scorn of an object of love mirrors the addiction of part of the self to the rejecting object. Self-pity is wallowed in, and blame is cast on the self. The object of love, as with the neoliberal state, is never cast as deficient, scornful or to blame. And no matter how bad the object may be, the protagonist is stuck, unrelentingly searching for any morsel of love, nurturance or reflection.

This study uses a thematic analysis of the singles produced by four Hard Country stars from the pre-neoliberal era through to today. It tracks the changes in themes through the shift to neoliberalism, and uses Fairbairn's conceptual model of the self to understand the relationships that are created and/or persistent throughout this time period.

From a social work perspective, this study will help to contextualise the complex and systemic impacts that face the white working-class in their current state. It will help to contextualise generational loss, and how it manifests in a regional-class group. It will also address what it means for a faction of people to internalise the pain and loss that has been inflicted on them, and how bonds of addiction and resentment are created between the self and both real and internalised objects. This study will also address how forms of art and music may serve as an object of representation of an internalised landscape. Further, it will address the grander theme of how systemically created pain is cast on this population, and how the factors

that divert blame away from the powers that be place it firmly on those among the most affected

by its reach.

CHAPTER II

II - Literature Review

Whiteness, Masculinity and the Working-Class Identity as Relates to Property and

Expectation in the American Context

The history of American racial exclusion has its roots in the function of stifling class

tensions among white workers in the era of black chattel slavery. In an attempt to thwart the

worker's political organisation and promote unrest among the working-classes, poor working

whites - some among them indentured servants - were afforded rights and citizenship based upon

their racial lineage; these were rights not afforded to the black, enslaved population (Fields,

1990). This ascription ingrained an understanding amongst the poorest whites: we may be

indentured, we may be oppressed, but at least we're not black. This concept of whiteness as

power has served as the ideological basis for the long legacy of chattel slavery (Fields, 1990).

Harris (1993) asserts that this history of oppression has enabled the ascription of a certain

form of property to the status of whiteness, a form of property whose legacy still remains evident

in the post-civil rights era. Whiteness has represented a position free from threat, and the

potential for protection from myriad sources. Over the decades, it has promised the property of

citizenship, the ability to own land, protection from deportation, membership in trade unions —

just a few among countless privileges. Whiteness, above all, has held the promise of freedom, as

opposed to a broad range of manifest and implicit injustices facing those not identifiable as

white. "Property is nothing but the basis of expectation … in the persuasion of being able to

draw such and such an advantage from the thing possessed" (Harris, 1993). And further,

American history has inscribed these expectations into law and legislation, reifying the property

of whiteness as inherent along the way. Whiteness, Harris (1993) asserts, became ingrained as the essential quality for personhood, for autonomy. It affords inherent, if not overt, privilege to its people, and stifles the ability of others to reach such potential.

Similarly and historically, masculinity has been projected as the normative standard against which difference is measured (Bederman, 2008). The masculine has held dominance over the feminine; in the American context, subjecthood has relied heavily on ascription of a gendered identity. Even within a system of class exploitation, masculinity has been able to hold a privileged position. Embedded in a dynamic of class under-privilege, Simpson et al. (2016) argue that the male working-class have been able to emphasise a form of power over both women and white-collar men by taking pride in the physical manifestation of their embodied, waged employment. This form of waged employment has historically enabled men of the working-class to occupy a favourable, perhaps, even respectable position.

Whiteness and masculinity, as evolved historically, create a presumption of entitlement, one which thoroughly informs the expected inevitabilities of their lives.

A Shift in Context and the Experience of Loss: The Neoliberal Project

Class and the Neoliberal Context. Before we understand the notion of loss as experienced across the different markers of identity, I would like to address the context of neoliberal political ideology in America. In this study, I argue, following David Harvey and Wendy Brown among others, that the shift toward this ideology is paramount in eroding lower-class privilege, as well in its connection to the markers of masculinity and whiteness. In this section, I will examine the changing American political context since the 1970s, how it pertains

to the poorer classes, and how its policies form the mindset of a political rationality of self-reliance and personal responsibility which has become embedded and internalised.

Harvey (2007) understands that, since the 1970s, neoliberal thought has become the central guiding principle of economic thought and management. Through policies centred on fixed property rights, free markets and free trade, the state abandons its function as a liberal democratic welfare engine. Instead, it focuses on policies which guarantee the integrity of money and capitalist markets to drive social good, and searches for ways to support the forces of the free market above all other interests (Harvey, 2007).

In a neoliberal economy, all aspects of human action are brought to market. The major loss in this transaction has been the distribution of welfare provision, and the divisions of labour. "Redistributive effects and increasing social inequality have in fact been such a persistent feature of neoliberalisation as to be regarded as structural to the whole project" (Harvey, 2007). The project's entire intention, Harvey argues, is to restore class power, and to protect the assets of the privileged (property) over the capital of the impoverished (primarily their working capacity, and income). In addition, neoliberalism focuses on the state in business terms: the nation's success becomes measured as a function of GDP rather than equality. Wall Street's success is taken as the marker of, and focus of prosperity, and distributive measures take a backseat — a moot point in the metrics of the nation.

Under a system of neoliberal governance, Harvey (2007) cites a general outcome of lower wages, increasing job insecurity, plus the loss of benefits and protections. With the state withdrawing from welfare measures, larger segments of the population become impoverished. Brown (2006) further highlights the severe effects which neoliberalism has on the rural, poor,

working-class: the destroying of small businesses, elimination of job and union benefits and protections, and the gutting of the infrastructure which sustains families and smaller towns. Harvey (2007) points out that the market rationalities which are synonymous with neoliberalism also assert that all individuals become responsible and accountable for their own actions, as well as for their own well being. As prosperity is measured in Wall Street terms, entrepreneurial virtue becomes the main marker of success, while personal failings are viewed as an inability to prosper. Embedded within this heightened personal responsibility is the absence of any systemic critique of the ingrained policies (Brown, 2003).

In *American Nightmare*, Brown (2006) supports Harvey's assertion that neoliberalism becomes internalised by the struggling individual. Brown advances the concept of neoliberalism beyond its simple understanding as emboldening free-market economic policies, and towards its more total operationalisation as a political rationality (Brown, 2006). As a political rationality, neoliberalisation can be understood as creating a "specific form of normative political reason organising the political sphere, governance practices and citizenship" (Brown, 2006). In this system of governance, "the sayable and the intelligible [about the how and what of the political sphere] are policed, along with the truth criteria for both" (Foucault, quoted in Brown, 2006). Free markets and entrepreneurial rationalities are held as normative standards from which to govern all spheres of life; all citizens begin to be valued via their status as rational economic actors. The capacity for "self-care," and its antithesis — the "mismanaged life" —become the major markers for moral autonomy, as citizens become cast and measured for their ability to act as individual entrepreneurs (Brown, 2003; 2006). Social and economic powers become de-politicised, and political citizenship is reduced to a state of complacency and passivity; citizens

must strategise for themselves amongst all options. This process trumpets the emergence of the new neoliberal subject — where certain actions are labeled as rational, and those outside the norm are labeled irrational. The citizen is controlled by a state which holds no responsibility for them — and at the same time the citizen is controlled *through* their freedom (Brown, 2003).

Harvey (above) cites neoliberalism's ability to erode equality among the poorer classes. And Brown, here, underscores the political rationality's tabling of commitments to egalitarianism (along with the creation of a permanent underclass). What Brown adds is an idea of political rationality which faults the individual actors who are unable to thrive in this political situation. Neoliberal rationality, simultaneously, defines value in economic terms, and strips certain individual abilities to reach a point of said value — all the while ascribing fault to these individuals, neglecting to understand the systemic origins for this rationality. To be alone, alienated, poor, unwanted, unworthy, in this political rationality, becomes understood as a fault of the individual. Brown points to Foucault, who adds that within the biopower and discipline of neoliberalism, a subject is at once required to make his own life, and is heavily regulated in its making.

Further, Brown makes the point that neoliberal policy has paved the way for the citizenry to be unphased by policies which are undemocratic. Rather than blame the state, we blame ourselves. She says that neoliberal de-democratisation produces a subject who is desirous of their own subjection and is complicit in their own subordination.

The process of neoliberalisation which started in the 1970s, and became firmly entrenched in normal political policy in the ensuing decades, served to alienate a class of people,

who had been acclimated to a relative sense of autonomy in the United States, especially since

the post-war period.

Whiteness and Loss. Whiteness, as described above, holds its legacy of privilege.

Understanding oneself as an outsider in the dominant racial paradigm, some authours argue,

effects a certain form of personal trauma. Eng & Han (2000) identify a phenomena they call

racial melancholia — a form of mourning which occurs when one understands oneself as

excluded from the privileges promised by the identity of whiteness. While the authours write

mainly from the context of the Asian American experience, they also point out that few white

Americans actually reach the aspirational and promised status of desired whiteness. While it is

inferred that whiteness in America implies a position of power, the class system in the country

(especially under a neoliberal political rationality) actually affords this to very few. The authours

identify an experience of loss or the elusive attainment of expected privilege. Whiteness, for the

poor working-class, implies a position of castration. For this population, whiteness is understood

not as a form of access, but as equivalent to the embodied limits to, and betrayal of, the privilege

and promise of whiteness itself.

The assertion in this section is that there is an *experienced* loss in white working-class

America. Whiteness certainly affords an exorbitant wealth of rights to white citizens which it

doesn't afford to people of colour, regardless of class. As Harris (1993) points out, whiteness still

means that you will not be on the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy. But the poorest

of this white population, who theoretically have been afforded an inherited attribute as property,

in the neoliberal context, are recognising the erosion of this value. This is especially true under

multicultural liberal governance which has highlighted other special interest groups/interests as equally important (Kuttner, 2016; Hothschild, 2016).

Overall, the realities of class dynamics and economic policies/rationalities in the US have created a schism between expectation and actual access to said privileges, especially among poorer, working-class men.

Masculinity and Loss. The rise of a globalised financial capitalism, and its associated neoliberal policy drivers in individual nation states has resulted in deindustrialization in the United States, and driven the rise of financial and service economies on the continent. These effects have put pressure on employment prospects for lower-class American workers; they, accordingly, have struggled to find a positive identity in the new context. The neoliberal based policies have placed a primacy on middle- and upper-class markers of personal fulfilment, mobility and merit, leading to a subsequent devaluation of physical working-class employment — primarily male. The unfettered market of the neoliberal system has, as described above, ignored the needs/plight of the working-class, and led greater uncertainty and insecurity. The demand for flexible labour and systems of deregulation and de-unionisation has led to a situation where manual, working-class jobs have become unstable and increasingly disposable.

In a neoliberal context, manual work is contracted out in an open market, with service delivery and cost highlighted as the prime factors for contract selection. As above, the workers on the lowest rungs have been the hardest hit by the neoliberal mindset, as evidenced by the downward pressure on wages pensions and benefits, greater job insecurity, reduced trade union power, and a tighter monitoring and focus on performance. That new focus on the performance, cost and benefit of capital has, in a sense, mechanised the working-class body, and, accordingly,

created a high amount of risk and potential for failure. Worn-out bodies become disposable as the manual labourer loses his status and power, and the market shifts work from full time to part time, from a situation where jobs are stable with benefits to one where workers are replaceable and anonymous.

The onus of the failure to prosper in this political rationality has been directed towards the supposedly low aspirations of the working-class. A neoliberal mindset works to denigrate those who do not possess the material conditions necessary for achievement. This mindset reframes working-class and manual labour as deficient — as a wasted opportunity made by a culpable, disinterested party.

As described above, Simpson et al. (2016) argue that physical waged employment has historically offered working-class men a relative position of power (thanks to of the primacy of physical embodied masculinity) in relation to women and middle-class career men. In this new neoliberal environment, working-class men struggle to find their place in an American labour market which has featured a decrease in manufacturing positions, and has oriented itself towards the service sector. Class work that was once physical and rugged has now transitioned towards work which values care and docility — classically feminine values. Masculine identities, in the working-class context, have accordingly become threatened. Neoliberal forces have disrupted the hegemonic expectation of a position of relative dominance for working-class men (Simpson et al., 2016).

The resultant, embodied low self-regard enacted within the white, male working-class interferes with their visions of the future, and limits their understanding of potential. Choices once attainable are cleaved from the list of possibilities. And further, in a neoliberal political

rationality, the white working-class comes to be seen as a blockage to the national future. Their demands, in the face of the realities of global competition and prosperity, are dismissed as selfish and naïve; the responsibility for their position is placed squarely on their shoulders.

The Hard Country Context

And if drinking don't kill me, her memory will. I can't hold out much longer the way that I feel. With the blood from my body I could start my own still. But if drinking don't kill me, her memory will (Sanders & Beresford, 1981).

Hard Country — also referred to as Hillbilly, Honky-Tonk, Pure Country and Real Country — emerged as a popular musical style in the late 1970s, a feisty rebuke to mainstream-oriented pop country music. A self-consciously low-brow form of music, it is billed as intended for the "'real people," a class-specific biography reflecting the narratives of the poor, rural, white Americans (Fox, 2004; Ching, 2001). Historically, Hard Country was a genre not featured on the top-40 charts (although in its heyday, singles by its biggest stars became best-sellers). Rather, it's the typical music of honky-tonk bars — a working-class controlled space, hidden from outside scrutiny. It is epitomised by its lyrical stories told by southern-accented, paunchy, white male performers, who narratively bill themselves as long-suffering, self-pitying losers. Emotionally, the genre's songs typically express feelings of alienation, ambivalence, regret and sadness above all, occasionally highlighted by a survivor's pride (Ching, 2001).

Hard Country, like other genres, features a few canonical tropes. The most oft repeated is that of the torn-up fool, ominously withdrawn and crying for help (Fox, 2004). This appears in the genre in a few forms, but the most oft-repeated is that of a solitary character (often the narrator) fetishising his own misery around the loss or scorn of an object of love. In these

narratives, there is hardly another soul with whom to commiserate. And there is an extreme stasis — never any progress made away from an extreme wallowing in the saddest of memories. While others in these lyrics may escape, the narrator remains forever trapped (Ching, 2001).

Fox (2004) understands Hard Country music as a vital cultural tradition which promotes the preservation of community, and the expression of white, working-class identity. Its deliberate reflection of the narratives of its audiences works as a practical tool for cathecting pain and healing injuries to the social body. On the edge of sociability, the narrator of the song occupies a liminal position, recognising his own state of abandonment and marginality. The torn-up fool of the narrative is disengaged and is quick on a descent to self-immolation. The listener who relates to such narratives gains a sense of subjecthood through their consumption and an identification with the narrator. Understanding a commonality in isolation, Fox (2004) argues, especially in the collective context of the honky-tonk bar, can work to socialise the real life torn-up fool, and connect him to others through a shared sense of loss.

The psychoanalyst Ronald Fairbairn spent his career working to understand how pain is internalised and creates strong bonds of connection to the very people that reject and harm. This present study understands his work as providing a key theoretical basis for exploring the thematic content of Hard Country music, and understanding the foundations on which it relies.

An Object Relations Understanding of Pain and Loss in an Economic-Political Context

William Ronald Fairbairn was a Scottish psychoanalyst who, though not typically heralded as one of its canonical contributors, made significant advancements to the British School of Object Relations. His major contribution was an amendment to Freud's formulations on the ways that people are driven to make themselves unhappy. Freud's initial theory was a

hedonic one — he believed that people are primarily driven to seek pleasure, and to avoid pain (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Fairbairn found this formulation hard to reconcile with certain fundamental concepts, primarily repetition compulsion, the systematic regeneration of distress. Whereas for Freud, the libido was thought to get painfully stuck to old, inaccessible objects which it had associated with pleasure-seeking impulses, Fairbairn, along with the other Object Relationists, understood the libido as not pleasure-seeking, but object-seeking — finding that connection with others was the end in itself, not just the satisfaction of an impulse (Mitchell & Black, 1995).

For Fairbairn, the libido is adhesive to objects because that's its very nature. A child bonds to its early attachment figures through whatever contact is provided, and this becomes inscribed as the lifelong pattern of connection with others. Fairbairn, in his work with abused children, noticed that a lack of gratification does not weaken the bond between parents and child; rather, it promotes the development of children who come to seek pain as the preferred form of connection. Children, no matter the scenario, look to build their subsequent emotional lives around the kind of interactions they had with their early caregivers. "Others are desirable with respect to their resonance with attachment to old objects" (Mitchell & Black, 1995).

Fairbairn theorised that inadequate parenting creates a pathological turning away from external reality. He understood this, not as a situation which was unique to only the most deprived of children, but as universal — a response to the inevitability of a caregiver's inability to be completely responsive at all times. The way the child understands this unresponsiveness is: their own love and need for the caregiver has driven that person away — their own desire is toxic. Fairbairn believed that an internal world was formulated in response to this early trauma,

driven by an unrelenting effort to transform the unloving aspects of this relationship into loving ones — an effort to reverse his toxic love's effect on his caregiver.

Fairbairn understood this created space as the unconscious self — a complex world of internal objects and internal object relations. He split the unconscious world into different components of the self, understanding each as having intense bonds of devotion, attraction and aggression towards each other. For him, the connections between these components is understood as the driver of all human unconscious thought, and explains all pathological behaviour.

And Fairbairn understood this as a key stage in childhood development, helping to extricate oneself from one's futile efforts to wring love from the imperfect caregiver. In trying to undo the toxicity of one's own love, real relationships with outside objects get reformulated as internal object relationships. The caregiver gets split into a good and bad internal object, and in turn, a fantasied presence is established (internal objects), to which one maintains a fantasied connection (internal object relations). The child becomes like the unresponsive features of the parents; to absorb them is to feel connected. Part of the self, Fairbairn theorised, is always identified with the frustrating aspects of the parent.

In Fairbairn's formulation, the ego splits into the part of the self which seeks responses from the actual caregivers, which he terms the Central Ego; whereas part of the self gets redirected, and bound to the illusory parents as internal objects in the unconscious. This unconscious illusory-parent-bonded self is further split into a self that identifies with the loving parent, termed the Exciting Object, and an aspect of the self that identifies with the frustrating and disappointing features of the parents, which he called the Rejecting Object. A further part of

the unconscious self gets bound to the Exciting Object, representing perpetual longing and hope — this he termed the Libidinal Ego. And part becomes identifies with the Rejecting Object (the rejected self), showing itself as anger and hate, especially towards vulnerability and need — this is called the Internal Saboteur. Fairbairn understood the entire self as being comprised of these five components, and all components as being understood as combating/symbiotic parts of the self: the Central Ego, the Exciting Object, the Rejecting Object, the Libidinal Ego, and the Internal Saboteur.

Important to this study is the bond which ties Fairbairn's Internal Saboteur and the Rejecting Object. He identified this not as a bond of hate, but a bond of pathological love experienced as resentment. There is a dependence between the Internal Saboteur and the Rejecting Object, and neither part of the self wishes to relinquish the tie between them. This is a bond of finding pleasure in nursing and licking the wounds of being wronged, cheated, humiliated, betrayed, exploited and discriminated against (Ogden, 2010). The Internal Saboteur represents the rejected self; in a fit of dependence, nothing is more important to it than coercing the Rejecting Object into understanding the pain that has been caused by it. Likewise, the Rejecting Object finds the Internal Saboteur greedy, insatiable, thin-skinned, ungrateful, unreasonable, and likely to hold grudges. Even so, the Rejecting Object is unwilling to give up the relationship with the Internal Saboteur. It understands its very being as derived from its tie to it, and it relies on the Internal Saboteur's obsession to wring love from it. Life, for both of these aspects of the self, depends on the perpetuation of the tie between them — a mutual dependence between a tormentor and tormented.

The second aspect of Fairbairn's conceptualisation which is important to this study is the relationship he describes between the Internal Saboteur and the Libidinal Ego (the aspect of the self that is attached to the Exciting Object). The Internal Saboteur is filled with self-hatred for its own toxic dependence on the Rejecting Object, and attacks and shames the Libidinal Ego as a pathetic wretch for its own dependence on the Exciting Object. And the Internal Saboteur sees the Exciting Object as a seducer, tantalising the Libidinal Ego. This relationship, though, is all derived from the Internal Saboteur's self-hatred, impotence and shame around its own dependence on, and loyalty to the Rejecting Object (Ogden, 2010).

CHAPTER III

III - Methodology

The following chapter describes the purpose of this thematic analysis and the

methodology used to conduct this research. The purpose of this study is to determine whether

Hard Country music narratives reflect the sentiment of hopelessness and loss in conjunction with

the rise of neoliberal governance, globalisation, civil rights and second-wave feminism in the

United States. Using Ronald Fairbairn's Object Relation theories of repetition compulsion to a

rejecting object (Fairbairn, 1943; Mitchell & Black, 2016; Ogden, 2010), the hypothesis of this

study is that as the parental state embraces neoliberal policies — eroding support to the poor,

rural, white working-class — the narratives of the genre will more prevalently feature themes of

loss or pain, addictive attachment to a rejecting object, and a blame on the self. A secondary

hypothesis is that the popularity of such thematic elements increase during the era WHEN

neoliberal policies take hold (represented in sales and performance on the charts).

Research Method and Design

A thematic analysis was used for this study to identify and interrogate certain thematic

narratives in songs in the Hard Country genre. Using Barbara Ching's (2001) historical

breakdown as a tool to highlight the canonical figures in the genre, four artists were chosen for

this study (George Jones, Waylon Jennings, Merle Haggard and David Alan Coe), and their song

narratives were examined over the course of their careers. All four artists began recording before

the neoliberal era began in America, and their careers and success expanded well into the era's

entrenchment. Several artists were eliminated from Ching's list - Hank Williams, as he died in

1953, well before the era of investigation, and Dwight Yoakum, whose career began in 1986,

after the neoliberal era had already taken hold. Willie Nelson, also mentioned by Ching, has enjoyed a career of mainstream commercial success alongside his Hard Country singles, and was omitted from the study in an effort to not contaminate the findings with mainstream country narratives.

Sample

The selected study sample (n=331) was every single released by George Jones, Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings and David Allan Coe throughout the span of their careers. The selected singles range in release date from 1954 to 2012. Since George Jones was the only artist in this group recording before 1960, the start date of this study was adjusted to 1960 to allow for consistency across artists. Singles were selected as the sample, over all recorded songs by these artists, as singles are more representative of popularity and canonical narratives. Single releases represent the album form that is used in jukeboxes, and that were sold as standalone items to be played in the home.

One hundred songs from the population were identified using a simple random sampling technique. This random sampling method was chosen in order to derive a selected sample that is representative of the larger sample. To perform this, each single was assigned a random number, and the list of singles was reordered by this new variable. The first 100 songs in this new reordering were selected as the sample for this study, and were examined in this order to help prevent rater bias from influencing the scoring's methodology or criteria as the study went along. The fear here is that the rater's bias would more easily score criteria in the neoliberal era to justify the hypotheses.

The lyrics, then, were retrieved via internet search engine (corroborated between two sources) and analysed and the data was recorded. Five songs had no reliable lyrics readily available, so were omitted. The next five songs in the randomised selection were added to the sample to bring the sample size up to 100.

Type of Data

The data collected for the array of singles included releasing artist, single name, and year released. Singles were scored and split into two eras - the pre-neoliberal era (1960-1975), and the neoliberal era (1976-present). While there is no distinct date or year that neoliberalism in the United States began, 1975 was chosen as the watershed for its representation of the midpoint between the political theory's first insertion into US policy and the point in which it had become the practiced and preferred form of governance. 1971 represented the introduction of the concepts into US policy with Lewis Powell's confidential memorandum to the US Chamber of Commerce (Harvey, 2005). By the early 1980s, with neoliberalism as its guiding factor, major industries had been deregulated (Harvey, 2005), union membership had begun its major decline (Dinlersoz & Greenwood, 2016), and federal tax spending had been slashed by 25% (Harvey, 2005).

Singles were also scored for their appearance on the US Country Top-40 Charts. Presence on the chart was scored as a "hit," whereas a failure to reach a position on the charts were scored otherwise.

In addition, a thematic analysis was performed on each song, scored for their containment of four themes that the researcher identified as being key components of a Fairbairnian reaction to the precarity faced by the white working-class in the neoliberal era. These themes are: an

overarching emotion of pain or loss in the song; the significant identification of a rejecting object; the appearance of an adherence or dependence on the rejecting object; and whether there is blame cast on the self or the character narrated for. Each of these thematic variables were scored either for their appearance or absence (1 or 0) (See Appendix B). The researcher acted as the sole rater for the data.

To understand the selection of these themes, we need to re-visit Fairbairn's formulation of the internal world of object relations. Pain and loss as a theme is seen as representative for the essence of experience that drives Fairbairn's internal model of the self. Pain and loss are the catalyst that internalises all object relationships in an effort to cope with the overwhelming feelings that they produce. The theme of the rejecting object represents Fairbairn's understanding of the bad object, a component that gets internalised in an effort to transform the unloving aspects of a relationship into loving ones. This internalised relationship is experienced as a bond of pathological love to the Internal Saboteur in Fairbairn's model, which represents the theme of dependence to the rejecting object. In his model, neither the rejecting object nor the Internal Saboteur wants to relinquish the tie that each has with one another — each understands itself only in relationship to the other — they both are the deriver of the other. As is such, there is a bond of obsession between them that is extremely sticky and ultimately unwavering. Finally, the theme of self-blame is seen in Fairbairn's model as the ego's understanding of its own love and dependence as being the cause for rejection. The Internal Saboteur attacks itself in understanding its own toxic dependence on the rejecting object, as well as attacking the Libidinal Ego for its pathetic pursuit of the Exciting Object.

A song was scored positively for the theme of pain and loss if there was significant emotions of pain and loss experienced by the narrator or the presence of the song. This was found by searching for key words including pain, loss, sad, useless, heartbreak, gone, the blues. Actions such as crying, lamenting, regretting and drinking excessively in an attempt to forget would also score a single positively for the theme of pain and loss.

A song was scored positively for the presence of a rejecting object if the narrator or protagonist mentions, or nods specifically to, someone or something specifically that has rejected him, or made him feel inferior. Personal pronouns (such as she and he) were specifically investigated, and the actions following them were examined for content. Actions that were scored positively include: abandonment, adultery, exhibiting scorn, and passing harsh judgment.

A song was scored positively for the presence of a bond of dependence to the rejecting object if the narrator or protagonist is dwelling on the memory of the rejecting object. Explicit dwelling on the specific happy memories that the two used to share, or mention of the actions of: haunting, pining, wishing for reunion were all scored positively for this theme.

A song was scored positively for the presence of an ascription of blame on the self if the narrator or protagonist explicitly turns blame for his position on himself. This is exhibited in the singles as either mention of an overall unworthiness, dwelling on aspects of their character that were objectionable, or description of explicit fault in action.

Data was coded and processed by this researcher. Data was coded and organised using SPSS software.

Data Analysis

Several basic statistical methods were used in this study to test the hypothesis that themes of pain, dependence and adherence to a rejecting object, and self blame would intensify in Hard Country music as the neoliberal era took hold in the United States. The sample was analysed using an independent t-test in order to differentiate the frequencies of each theme in each era. A Chi-square test of independence was also calculated to compare the frequencies of appearance of each thematic device with each other in both eras studied. A simple linear regression was calculated to predict the themes present in the singles based on the presence of the themes that may be identified as an independent variable by the previous Chi-square test of independence. And a logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict a Hard Country single's appearance on the US Country Top 40 Charts in the each era using the the themes of pain and loss, the rejecting object, a bond of dependence to the rejecting object, and the ascription of blame to the self as predictors.

CHAPTER IV

IV - Findings

This study assessed whether the thematic issues addressed in Hard Country music shifted as neoliberalism, globalisation, civil rights and second-wave feminism took hold in the United States. It secondarily assesses whether certain themes became more mainstream or marketable in the same time-period. The findings that follow begin with a thematic analysis of the sampled songs over the entirety of the sample, as well in the two eras studied. A t-test is then conducted to draw comparisons between the frequencies of each theme in each era. Following, a Chi-square test of independence is calculated to compare the frequencies of appearance of each thematic device with each other in both eras studied. Then, a simple linear regression is calculated to predict the themes present in the singles based on the presence of the themes that may be identified as an independent variable by the previous Chi-square test of independence. To conclude, a logistic regression analysis is conducted to predict a Hard Country single's appearance on the US Country Top 40 Charts in the each era using the themes of pain and loss, the rejecting object, a bond of dependence to the rejecting object, and self blame as predictors.

Thematic Analysis

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the frequencies of each theme in the pre-neoliberal and the neoliberal eras (See Table 1).

Pain and Loss. There was a significant difference in the frequencies of the theme of pain and loss in the pre-neoliberal era (M=0.82, SD=0.39) and the neoliberal era (M=0.59, SD=0.50) conditions; $t(98) = 2.46$, p=0.016. These results suggest the era in which the single was produced really does have an effect on the appearance of pain and loss as a theme in Hard Country singles.

Specifically, as the neoliberal era emerged, pain and loss as a thematic device in Hard Country

Music decreased in frequency.

Table 1

Appearance of Themes by Era (T-test Results)	1960-1975		1976-2008	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pain/Loss	0.82*	0.39	0.59*	0.50
Rejecting Object	0.64*	0.49	0.39*	0.49
Bond of Dependence to RO	0.51*	0.51	0.26*	0.44
Self-Blame	0.21	0.41	0.34	0.48

* statistically significant (p<.05)

The Rejecting Object. There was a significant difference in the frequencies of the theme

of the rejecting object in the pre-neoliberal era (M=0.64, SD=0.49) and the neoliberal era

(M=0.39, SD=0.49) conditions; t(98) = 2.46, p=0.015. These results suggest the era in which the

single was produced really does have an effect on the appearance of the rejecting object as a

theme in Hard Country singles. Specifically, as the neoliberal era emerged, the rejecting object as

a thematic device in Hard Country Music decreased in frequency.

A Bond of Dependence to the Rejecting Object. There was a significant difference in

the frequencies of the theme of the bond of dependence to the rejecting object in the pre-

neoliberal era (M=0.51, SD=0.51) and the neoliberal era (M=0.26, SD=0.44) conditions; t(98) =

2.41, p=0.018. These results suggest the era in which the single was produced really does have

an effect on the appearance of the bond of dependence to the rejecting object as a theme in Hard

Country singles. Specifically, as the neoliberal era emerged, the bond of dependence to the rejecting object as a thematic device in Hard Country Music decreased in frequency.

Ascription of Blame to the Self. There was not a significant difference in the frequencies of the theme of the ascription of blame to the self in the pre-neoliberal era (M=0.21, SD=0.41) and the neoliberal era (M=0.34, SD=0.48) conditions; t(98) = -1.497, p=0.138. These results suggest the era in which the single was produced does not have an effect on the appearance of the ascription of blame to the self as a theme in Hard Country singles. Specifically, as the neoliberal era emerged, the ascription of blame to the self as a thematic device in Hard Country Music remained statistically similar in frequency.

Correlations Between Themes

A Chi-square test of independence was calculated to compare the frequencies of appearance of each thematic device with each other in both eras studied (see Tables 2 and 3).

Pain and Loss & the Rejecting Object. In the pre-neoliberal era, a significant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 15.23, $p < .05$) between the themes of pain and loss and the appearance of a rejecting object. In the pre-neoliberal era, there is a positive association between the themes of pain and loss and the appearance of the rejecting object.

In the neoliberal era, a significant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 15.91, $p < .05$) between the themes of pain and loss and the appearance of a rejecting object. In the neoliberal era, there remained a positive association between the themes of pain and loss and the appearance of the rejecting object.

Pain and Loss & the Bond of Dependence to the Rejecting Object. In the pre-neoliberal era, a significant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 8.98, $p < .05$) between the themes of

pain and loss and the bond of dependence to a rejecting object. In the pre-neoliberal era, there is a positive association between the themes of pain and loss and the bond of dependence to the rejecting object.

Table 2

Correlations of Themes (Chi-Squares) (1960-1975) n=39

Theme	Rejecting Object	Bond of Dependence to RO	Self-Blame
Pain/Loss	15.23*	8.98*	0.20
Rejecting Object	—	22.99*	0.52
Bond of Dependence to RO	—	—	0.01

* statistically significant (p<.05)

Table 3

Correlations of Themes (Chi-Squares) (1976-2008) n=61

Theme	Rejecting Object	Bond of Dependence to RO	Self-Blame
Pain/Loss	15.91*	10.82*	17.37*
Rejecting Object	—	35.83*	2.94
Bond of Dependence to RO	—	—	0.84

* statistically significant (p<.05)

In the neoliberal era, a significant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 10.82, $p < .05$) between the themes of pain and loss and the bond of dependence to a rejecting object. In the neoliberal era, there remained a positive association between the themes of pain and loss and the bond of dependence to the rejecting object.

Pain and Loss & the Ascription of Blame to the Self. In the pre-neoliberal era, an insignificant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 0.20, p = 0.65) between the themes of pain and loss and the ascription of blame to the self. In the pre-neoliberal era, there is an insignificant association between the themes of pain and loss and the ascription of blame to the self.

In the neoliberal era, a significant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 17.37, p < .05) between the themes of pain and loss and the ascription of blame to the self. In the neoliberal era, there is a positive association between the themes of pain and loss and the ascription of blame to the self.

The Rejecting Object & the Bond of Dependence to the Rejecting Object. In the pre-neoliberal era, a significant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 22.99, p < .05) between the themes of the appearance of a rejecting object and the bond of dependence to a rejecting object. In the pre-neoliberal era, there is a positive association between the themes of the appearance of a rejecting object and the bond of dependence to a rejecting object.

In the neoliberal era, a significant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 35.83, p < .05) between the themes of the appearance of a rejecting object and the bond of dependence to a rejecting object. In the neoliberal era, there is a positive association between the themes of the appearance of a rejecting object and the bond of dependence to a rejecting object.

The Rejecting Object & the Ascription of Blame to the Self. In the pre-neoliberal era, an insignificant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 0.52, p = .47) between the themes of the appearance of a rejecting object and the ascription of blame to the self. In the pre-neoliberal era, there is an insignificant association between the themes of the appearance of a rejecting object and the ascription of blame to the self.

In the neoliberal era, an insignificant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 2.94, p = .09) between the themes of the appearance of a rejecting object and the ascription of blame to the self. In the neoliberal era, there remained an insignificant association between the themes of the appearance of a rejecting object and the ascription of blame to the self.

The Bond of Dependence to the Rejecting Object & the Ascription of Blame to the Self. In the pre-neoliberal era, an insignificant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 0.01, p = .94) between the themes of a bond of dependence to the rejecting object and the ascription of blame to the self. In the pre-neoliberal era, there is an insignificant association between the themes of a bond of dependence to the rejecting object and the ascription of blame to the self.

In the neoliberal era, an insignificant interaction was found (X^2 (1) = 0.84, p = .36) between the themes of a bond of dependence to the rejecting object and the ascription of blame to the self. In the neoliberal era, there remained an insignificant association between the themes of a bond of dependence to the rejecting object and the ascription of blame to the self.

Identifying an Independent Variable - Pain and Loss

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict the themes present in the singles based on the presence of the theme of pain and loss. This linear regression was calculated on the theme of pain and loss due to its performance in the Chi-square test of independence above, having a statistically significant association with all other themes. If the linear regression is significant, pain and loss can be identified as an independent variable that predicts the presence of other themes.

The Rejecting Object. A significant regression equation was found when comparing the occurrence of the rejecting object as a theme as predicted by the occurrence of the theme of pain

and loss ($F(1,98)=47.97$, $p<.5$), with an R^2 of .329. The appearance of the rejecting object is equal to $0.06 + 0.61$ (appearance of pain and loss). The appearance of the rejecting object increased in frequency by 61% in cases where the theme of pain and loss was present.

A Bond of Dependence to the Rejecting Object. A significant regression equation was found when comparing the occurrence of the bond of dependence to the rejecting object as a theme as predicted by the occurrence of the theme of pain and loss ($F(1,98)=27.76$, $p<.5$), with an R^2 of .221. The appearance of the bond of dependence to the rejecting object is equal to $0.31 + 0.48$ (appearance of pain and loss). The appearance of the bond of dependence to the rejecting object increased in frequency by 48% in cases where the theme of pain and loss was present.

The Ascription of Blame to the Self. A significant regression equation was found when comparing the occurrence of the ascription of blame to the self as a theme as predicted by the occurrence of the theme of pain and loss ($F(1,98)=13.14$, $p<.5$), with an R^2 of .118. The appearance of the ascription of blame to the self is equal to $0.06 + 0.34$ (appearance of pain and loss). The appearance of the ascription of blame to the self increased in frequency by 34% in cases where the theme of pain and loss was present.

Prediction of a Hit

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict a Hard Country single's appearance on the US Country Top 40 Charts in the pre-neoliberal era using the the themes of pain and loss, the rejecting object, a bond of dependence to the rejecting object, and self blame as predictors. A test of the full model against a constant only model was not statistically significant, indicating that all predictors did not reliably distinguish between a single's appearance on the charts (X^2 (4) = 6.191, p = .185).

A further logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict a Hard Country single's appearance on the US Country Top 40 Charts in the neoliberal era using the themes of pain and loss, the rejecting object, a bond of dependence to the rejecting object, and self blame as predictors. A test of the full model against a constant only model was not statistically significant, indicating that all predictors did not reliably distinguish between a single's appearance on the charts (X^2 (4) = 6.015, p = .198).

CHAPTER V

V - Discussion

The present study sought to address changes in the thematic content of Hard Country narratives as America passed into the neoliberal era. The assertion has been that Hard Country music has held stature as representative to the experience of the white working-class (Fox, 2004), and, as this population experienced an erosion of relative privilege and power in the national landscape, the musical narratives would reflect this change. This study works with the theories of Ronald Fairbairn, who asserted that a lack of gratification from the parent does not weaken the bonds to them, but rather nurtures the development of children who seek pain as a preferred form of connection. As the state has taken on the role of the less nurturing, less present parent, the assumption has been that the narratives of Hard Country would focus on relationships of pain and loss, with a draw to the rejecting object, and an increased amount of blame being put on the self.

This chapter will discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter, beginning with the thematic shifts between the eras. Next, the theme of pain and loss will be discussed as an identified independent variable for all other themes in this study. Then, correlations between themes will be discussed, followed by an examination of the findings that addressed performance on the US Country Top-40 Charts. This chapter will also present the study's limitations and implications for clinical social work.

Thematic Shifts Between Eras

Three of the studied themes exhibited a significant difference in their frequency among the sampled singles between the two eras studied. The themes of pain and loss, the rejecting

object, and a bond of dependence to the rejecting object all appeared significantly less in the neoliberal era as compared to the pre-neoliberal era. The ascription of blame to the self as a theme did not exhibit any significant change between the pre-neoliberal era and the neoliberal era.

Pain and Loss. There was a statistically significant decline in the frequency of the theme of pain and loss in the singles sampled between the pre-neoliberal and the neoliberal era. Before neoliberalism, 82% of singles featured the theme, whereas in the era of neoliberalism, 59% of singles featured it.

That pain and loss are mentioned in fewer singles in the neoliberal era goes against the original hypothesis presented in this study.

One explanation for this shift is that the study failed to select correctly for only Hard Country narratives, and included mainstream/popular singles that these artist produced in the neoliberal era. The neoliberal era coincided with the propulsion in popularity of each of the studied artist's careers. It is possible that, as mainstream success was achieved in the Hard Country genre, these artists took on other lucrative projects, and explored different means for success and sales, including mainstream narratives. Though this study failed to measure for this, it was observed by the researcher that singles in the later years did tend to exhibit more mainstream and sentimental themes. Among the singles sampled in the neoliberal era included a few folk covers, love songs, a duet with the artist's daughter about the father-daughter bond, and a theme song to a popular television show — all hardly canonical of the genre.

Another explanation is that this study may have put too much weight into the assumption that neoliberalism would represent a significant change for the white working-class, whereas a

post-war liberal democracy may have provided those in the harshest economic positions with an already substantial amount of experienced pain. Class dynamics, under capitalism, may have already afforded the working-class with enough grief and complaint to already understand themselves as at the ire of the ruling class and state. Or, perhaps, the effects of second wave feminism and civil rights actions may have already begun to have been felt, and the earlier songs are signalling a loss of white and masculine privilege. If so, the narratives of the 1960s and early 1970s may reflect this.

The Rejecting Object and The Bond of Dependence to the Rejecting Object. There was a significant decline in the frequency of the theme of the rejecting object in the singles sampled between the pre-neoliberal and the neoliberal era. Before neoliberalism, 64% of singles featured the theme, whereas in the era of neoliberalism, 39% of singles featured it. As well, there was a significant decline in the frequency of the theme of the bond of dependence to the rejecting object in the singles sampled between the pre-neoliberal and the neoliberal era. Before neoliberalism, 51% of singles featured this theme, whereas in the era of neoliberalism, 26% of singles featured it.

Specifically, the object that has wronged the individual in the song is being named less as the neoliberal era progresses. This finding goes against the original hypothesis presented in this study.

One explanation for these trends could be the same as above for the theme of pain and loss. Either that mainstream success of these artists represented a moving away from typically Hard Country narratives, or that the neoliberal era may have only exacerbated an already precarious position for the working-class in America.

Another explanation for this finding is that as neoliberalism becomes an entrenched form of governance, comprehension of the state policies and practices as being responsible for the plight of the working-class may decrease. As the welfare state eroded, unions dismantled, factories closed and capital flight began to be seen on the wider, global scale, protection for the working-class has been undercut. The expectation of protection has, perhaps, eroded in this era too, and a reorientation to the rejecting object has been created in the mind of the working-class masses. Fairbairn would argue that, to create the internalised world, one must have the fantasy of a parent that is both good and bad. Perhaps, with a neoliberal state exhibiting no nurturing qualities, this bond of dependence to the rejecting object begins to fall away, as the structure of hope that forces the internalisation becomes absent from the equation.

The **Ascription of Blame to the Self.** While all other themes decreased in frequency in absolute terms over the neoliberal era, the ascription of blame to the self increased from a frequency of 21% to 41% over the same time period. That said, this shift was statistically insignificant.

That the ascription of blame to the self is mentioned in a statistically similar ratio of singles in the neoliberal era goes against the original hypothesis presented in this study.

While the ascription of blame to the self may not have significantly increased, the fact that it remained stable in its frequency among the fall of all other themes points, perhaps, to its resilience in the neoliberal era. The responsibilisation of the self is a particularly stinging feature of neoliberalism that Brown (2006) highlighted in her paper. Neoliberalism has paved the way for those hurt most by it to be ultimately unphased by its undemocratic policies. In her argument, de-democratisation produces a subject who is desirous of their own subjection and is complicit in

their own subordination. Blaming the self for ones abject position is symptomatic being a neoliberal subject.

Fairbairn, too, understands the internalisation of a rejecting parent as a response to understanding one's own desire as toxic. In order to cope with the rejecting nation-state, it could be summarised that the working-class has blamed the self for asking for, or expecting too much from an inadequate guardian. The self is filled with shame at its own dependence on the rejecting object, and with self-hate for doggedly trying to wrest love from a protector who is ultimately withholding.

Pain and Loss as an Independent Variable

Pain and loss was identified in this study as an independent variable, whose presence positively predicted the presence of all other themes studied. For Fairbairn, pain is the emotion that drives the whole internal model. In a case of inadequate parenting, the pain of rejection is internalised, and the emotion becomes the preferred (learned) form of connection with the outside world. Others are always desirable with respect to their resonance with attachment to old objects. Thus, it is pain that creates a bond of dependence to the rejecting object, and it is pain that pushes one to understand the self as the person to blame for the situation. The rejecting object would not be adhered to without an overarching feeling of pain, and there would be nothing to blame the self for in pain's absence.

Correlations Between Themes

Throughout the entirety of the eras studied, there was a measured strong correlation between all three themes of: pain and loss, the appearance of the rejecting object, and the bond of dependence to the rejecting object.

It is understandable that these themes are firmly linked. The bond of dependence to the rejecting object asks that a rejecting object be present in the song. Fairbairn's theory explains a repetition compulsion to the rejecting object, which helps us to understand the prevalence of a bond of dependence when there is a rejecting object present. Fairbairn also understands the repetition compulsion, as well as the his whole endopsychic structure as borne from an initial position of pain and loss, too.

What changes between the pre-neoliberal and neoliberal eras, though, is the correlation between the themes of pain and loss and that of the ascription of blame to the self. In the pre-neoliberal period, there was no correlation between these themes, whereas in the neoliberal era there is a significant positive correlation between them. This relationship can be understood in the same way that it is described above in the section titled "The Ascription of Blame to the Self."

Chart Performance, and its Relationship to the Studied Themes

There was no measured correlation between success on the charts and any of the studied themes. It had been hypothesised that in the neoliberal era, one or more of the themes identified may have been significantly correlated with performance on the charts.

One possibility for this outcome is that this study examined four artists who enjoyed comparatively successful careers. Most singles they produced were hits, and as is such, it was difficult to produce statistically significant results that distinguish between hit and not.

In addition, Hard Country has never truly been measured by its success on the charts. In fact, Ching (2001) explicitly describes the genre as defining itself in opposition to the mainstream country music that populates the charts. That said, chart performance may not have

been the most salient measure for the white working-class' consumption of Hard Country music narratives.

Implications for Social Work Practice

This study helps to understand the complex and systemic forces that are at work in the impacting the white working-class under neoliberal policies. It can help us to understand class-wide trauma, and how it manifests through pain and repetition. Knowledge of the systemic factors at play can help us to contextualise feelings of loss and grief with our clients, and help our clients to draw connections to the causes of these emotions — the larger factors that are at play.

As clinicians, we must be able to work with this information, especially in understanding the complex contexts that construct our client's unconscious worlds. We must especially ask what it means for our clients to have an increasing sense of internalisation or self-blame that surround their experiences of pain and loss.

Study Strength & Limitations

This study may suffer from a small sample size. Though the distributions of sampled singles by artist and era closely mirror that of the population, the margin of error is calculated to be above the desired level of 5% (8.69%). To achieve a representative sample with a margin of error of 5%, and a confidence level of 95%, 179 singles would need to be sampled from the population of 331. This study would have benefitted from multiple raters engaging in the thematic analysis.

Further, this study suffers from only having one rater (the researcher) performing the thematic data collection. Multiple raters would have offered this study a measure of inter-rater reliability, which would have helped to measure, or removed rater bias in the data collection.

This study may not have had an appropriate selection procedure for its assembling of Hard Country narratives. As explained above, singles in the neoliberal era may have veered away from the canonical forms that define the genre, which might have affected the statistics.

This study, too, may have placed too much emphasis on the shift towards neoliberalism, and neglected to understand that class position in the United States under liberal democratic governance may have already represented a underwhelming form of nurturance. Singles from the pre-neoliberal era overwhelmingly spoke of pain and loss, the rejecting object and the bond of dependence to the rejecting object, which, if we are to hypothesise that this represents the style of governance that the class is under, may signal an original understanding of their position as at the bottom of the national hierarchy.

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Appendix A - List of Sampled Songs

Year	Artist	Single
1960	George Jones	Window Up Above
1962	George Jones	Beacon In the Night
1962	George Jones	Open Pit Mine
1962	George Jones	A Girl I Used to Know
1963	George Jones	Not What I Had in Mind
1964	George Jones	Your Heart Turned Left (And I Was on the Right)
1964	Waylon Jennings	Four Strong Winds
1964	Waylon Jennings	Sing the Girls a Song Bill
1964	Merle Haggard	Sam Hill
1965	George Jones	Love Bug
1965	Waylon Jennings	Stop the World (And Let Me Off)
1966	George Jones	I'm a People
1966	George Jones	Old Brush Arbors
1966	Waylon Jennings	(That's What You Get) For Lovin' Me
1967	Merle Haggard	Branded Man
1968	George Jones	Milwaukee, Here I Come (with Brenda Carter)
1968	George Jones	When the Grass Grows Over Me'
1968	Waylon Jennings	Yours Love
1968	Waylon Jennings	Another Blue Day
1968	Merle Haggard	The Legend of Bonnie & Clyde
1970	George Jones	Where Grass Won't Grow
1970	Waylon Jennings	The Taker
1971	George Jones	Sometimes You Just Can't Win
1971	Waylon Jennings	Cedartown, Georgia
1971	Merle Haggard	Soldier's Last Letter
1972	George Jones	A Picture of Me (Without You)

Year	Artist	Single
1972	Merle Haggard	I Wonder If They Ever Think of Me
1973	George Jones	What My Woman Can't Do
1973	George Jones	Nothing Ever Hurt Me (Half as Bad as Losing You)
1973	Waylon Jennings	You Ask Me To
1973	Merle Haggard	The Emptiest Arms in the World
1973	Merle Haggard	Everybody's Had the Blues
1974	George Jones	The Door
1974	Waylon Jennings	This Time
1974	Waylon Jennings	I'm a Ramblin' Man
1974	Merle Haggard	Things Aren't Funny Anymore
1974	Merle Haggard	Kentucky Gambler
1974	David Allan Coe	(If I Could Climb) The Walls of This Bottle
1975	David Allan Coe	You Never Even Called Me by My Name
1976	George Jones	You Always Look Your Best (Here in My Arms)
1976	David Allan Coe	Longhaired Redneck
1976	David Allan Coe	When She's Got Me (Where She Wants Me)
1976	David Allan Coe	Willie, Waylon and Me
1978	George Jones	I'll Just Take It Out in Love
1978	Merle Haggard	It's Been a Great Afternoon
1978	Merle Haggard	The Bull and The Beaver (with Leona Williams)
1978	David Allan Coe	Divers Do It Deeper
1979	George Jones	Someday My Day Will Come
1979	Waylon Jennings	Come with Me
1979	Merle Haggard	My Own Kind of Hat
1980	Waylon Jennings	Clyde
1980	Waylon Jennings	Theme from The Dukes of Hazzard (Good Ol' Boys)
1980	Merle Haggard	Misery and Gin

Year	Artist	Single
1980	David Allan Coe	Get a Little Dirt on Your Hands (with Bill Anderson)
1981	Waylon Jennings	Shine
1982	George Jones	Same Ole Me (with The Oak Ridge Boys)
1982	Merle Haggard	Big City
1982	David Allan Coe	Now I Lay Me Down to Cheat
1982	David Allan Coe	What Made You Change Your Mind
1983	George Jones	I Always Get Lucky with You
1983	Waylon Jennings	Lucille (You Won't Do Your Daddy's Will)
1983	Waylon Jennings	The Conversation (with Hank Williams, Jr.)
1983	Merle Haggard	What Am I Gonna Do (With the Rest of My Life)
1983	Merle Haggard	That's the Way Love Goes
1983	David Allan Coe	Crazy Old Soldier
1984	George Jones	Size Seven Round (Made of Gold) (with Lacy J. Dalton)
1984	Waylon Jennings	Never Could Toe the Mark
1984	David Allan Coe	Mona Lisa Lost Her Smile
1985	George Jones	The One I Loved Back Then (The Corvette Song)
1985	Waylon Jennings	Waltz Me to Heaven
1985	Waylon Jennings	The Devil's on the Loose
1985	Merle Haggard	Kern River
1985	David Allan Coe	Don't Cry Darlin'
1985	David Allan Coe	My Elusive Dreams
1986	Waylon Jennings	Working Without a Net
1986	David Allan Coe	A Country Boy (Who Rolled the Rock Away)
1987	George Jones	The Right Left Hand
1987	George Jones	The Bird
1987	Waylon Jennings	Rose in Paradise
1987	Merle Haggard	Almost Persuaded

Year	Artist	Single
1988	George Jones	I'm a Survivor
1988	David Allan Coe	Actions Speak Louder Than Words
1989	George Jones	Writing on the Wall
1989	George Jones	Radio Lover
1989	Merle Haggard	A Better Love Next Time
1990	Waylon Jennings	Where Corn Don't Grow
1990	Waylon Jennings	What Bothers Me Most
1990	Merle Haggard	"Broken Friend"
1991	Waylon Jennings	The Eagle
1991	Merle Haggard	A Bar in Bakersfield
1992	George Jones	Honky Tonk Myself to Death
1992	George Jones	I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair
1992	Waylon Jennings	Just Talkin'
1993	George Jones	Wrong's What I Do Best
1994	George Jones	Never Bit a Bullet Like This (with Sammy Kershaw)
2000	George Jones	Sinners and Saints
2000	Merle Haggard	Motorcycle Cowboy
2001	George Jones	The Man He Was
2002	George Jones	50,000 Names
2008	George Jones	You and Me and Time (with Georgette Jones)

Appendix B - Questionnaire for the Thematic Analysis of Singles

Appendix B

Questionnaire

Question		
1. What year was the single released?	Year:	
2. What was the highest position that the single reached on the United States Country Charts?	Position:	
3. Is the main experience of the narrator/protagonist that of pain or loss? Are words that describe pain (sad, loss, loneliness) present in this song?	Yes (1)	No (0)
4. Does the narrator point to a person or institution that has abandoned or rejected the narrator/protagonist?	Yes (1)	No (0)
5. Is the narrator/protagonist presently significantly attached, addicted or drawn to the rejecting person or institution? Does the narrator/protagonist yearn for connection with the rejecting person or institution? Does the narrator/protagonist dwell on their being rejected by this person or institution?	Yes (1)	No (0)
6. Does the narrator or protagonist place significant blame on themselves for their situation?	Yes (1)	No (0)