

GEMS (Gender, Education, Music, & Society)

Volume 8, Number 4, April 2015

From Dirty Little Secrets To Prime Time: Values, Metaphors, And Social Change At The 2015 Grammy Awards

Dr. Catherine A. Dobris & Rachel D. Davidson, MA

© 2015 Catherine A. Dobris, cdobris@iupui.edu; Rachel D. Davidson, davids52@uwm.edu
Copyright Notice: The policy of GEMS is that authors will retain copyright to their materials.

Abstract: This paper seeks to understand values articulated through the themes of social change as a counterpoint to a celebration of popular culture in the 2015 Grammy Awards. In this study, we provide a close reading of metaphors in five performances in order to address how contemporary values are juxtaposed with entertainment in this public context. The five artifacts selected for analysis include: President Obama's public service announcement, anti-domestic violence advocate Brooke Axtell's brief speech on behalf of survivors, pop star Katy Perry's performance of, "By the Grace of God," Australian singer Sia's performance of, "Chandelier," and Common and John Legend's performance of "Glory," from the film, *Selma*. We offer the current analysis as a means for understanding the larger rhetorical issue of how values are utilized to convey or motivate social action in a platform that some argue represent antithetical aims to social change rhetoric.

Music uplifts, celebrates, commemorates, highlights, heightens, sets the scene, inspires lovers, succors the wounded, and, in some cases, foments social change. Popular music reflects the culture and time period of its inception, and through performance can augment and even reinvent the meaning of its lyrics. Like most rhetorical forms, the genre of popular music may encompass the best and worst impulses inherent in the human condition. Both academic and social milieus embrace debate regarding the role of popular music in our society, asking to what extent popular discourse propels social change and to what extent it merely reflects it? A critic might ponder, to what degree is violence against women perpetuated in the “innocent” 1970’s sexism of a Todd Rundgren refrain intoning that “girls may be stupid, but they sure are fun,” or may consider the impact of Robin Thicke’s 2013 misogynist rap lyrics, proclaiming, “I know you want it.” When song lyrics aimed at young people, in particular, tell authentic stories of oppression and abuse, does the music merely reflect dysfunctional, even violent or illegal comportment? Does discourse in popular venues create injurious behavior? Is it possible that music has the power to turn victims into survivors and offer hope of healing to sufferers? Moreover, what level of responsibility, if any, do purveyors of popular culture have to their audience members beyond providing a diversion from day-to-day existence?

In the 2015 broadcast of the 57th annual Grammy Awards, the venerable institution for the appraisal of popular music took a provocative stance on significant social justice issues as an integral thematic backdrop for the entertainment program. Each year, beginning in 1959, the American National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences has presented awards for outstanding achievement in the record industry. At its peak, the Grammy Awards has reached upwards of 28 million audience members, many in the under-thirty age bracket. The 57th presentation “averaged 24.8 million viewers and a[n] 8.3 rating among adults 18-49” (O’Connell n. pag.) but was “down more than 3 million viewers from last year’s performance” which “marks its lowest telecast since 2009” (O’Connell n. pag.). Nonetheless, the audience for the entertainment show is significant, thus the potential to reach millions in 30 second to 4 minute spots, is correspondingly impressive.

Two weeks after the Super Bowl telecast featured commercials, musical performances and public service announcements promoting modern-day visions of fatherhood and denouncing domestic violence, the Grammy Awards followed suit by incorporating carefully orchestrated themes featuring messages addressing domestic violence, substance abuse, and civil rights. Providing a serious framework for the entertainment program was not a new concept. In 2014, under the direction of executive producer, Ken Ehrlich, the Grammy Awards featured pro-Gay marriage rhetoric, in which thirty-three Gay and Lesbian couples were married as part of the musical presentation. This year, according to domestic abuse advocate Brooke Axtell, Ken Ehrlich “want[ed] to find ways to not only honor the creative work of their musicians and performing artists, but also to give them a platform to speak about issues that are important to them” (Kaplan n. pag.). Such issues undergirded the entertainment-based program, emerging in song, poem, and speech, and provided an alternative context for viewing musical performances and the bestowing of accolades, beyond the conventional award show scaffolding. This paper seeks to understand values articulated through the serious themes of social change as a counterpoint to a celebration of popular culture. In this study, we examine five performances from the Grammy Awards presentation in order to address how contemporary values are juxtaposed with entertainment in this public context. The five artifacts selected for analysis include: President Obama’s public service announcement, anti-domestic violence advocate Brooke Axtell’s brief speech on behalf of survivors, pop star Katy Perry’s performance of, “By the Grace of God,” Australian singer Sia’s performance of, “Chandelier,” and Common and John Legend’s performance of “Glory,” from the film, *Selma*. Each artifact addresses a social justice issue, such as domestic violence or racism, and was selected to illuminate the overall theme of the event. We investigate the extent to which social justice themes offset the negative messages associated with specific entertainment forms, such as popular music, which is often a repository of misogynist and other oppressive messages. We offer the current case study as a means for understanding the larger rhetorical issue of how values are utilized to convey or motivate social action

in a platform that some argue represent antithetical aims to social change rhetoric.

Even before the 2015 Grammy Awards was broadcast on February 8 from the Staples Center in Los Angeles, critics reported that a theme of social significance was being planned for the program. Neil Portnow, president and CEO of the Recording Academy, indicated that “a fair amount of social commentary” (Thompson n. pag.) would be incorporated in some of the performances. When the show aired, those messages were encompassed in a variety of formats, ranging from a pre-recorded public service announcement by President Obama on domestic violence, to a presumably spontaneous utterance on the part of pop icon, Prince, commenting, “Black lives matter,” in an unrelated award presentation for album of the year. Throughout the program, audiences were induced to consider social issues through musical performances, poetry, impromptu expressions, traditional rhetorical constructs, and alternative presentations of musical numbers such as Pharrell Williams’ contrary, rather dark take on his award-winning song, “Happy.” The theme of social justice was built into the structure and execution of the program.

Metaphorical Analysis

Close textual analysis guides the methodology in the current study. We evaluate the significance of brief interludes and selected performances in the awards ceremony as indicative of a broader schemata of social messages embedded in the structure of the event. Although our texts for this study encompass fragments of the 2015 Grammy awards, as Kenneth Burke illuminates, partial accounts may characterize the whole because “in reality, we are capable of but partial acts, acts that but partially represent us and that produce but partial transformations” (“A Grammar of Motives” 19). Examination of metaphors as they are utilized in the discourse suggests the advancement of particular cultural values in juxtaposition with the rhetorical situation. The current analysis reveals how a theme of social justice is integrated in a platform that sometimes celebrates an antithetical stance in the very substance of themes and lyrics embedded in popular music. Because the social justice theme in the 2015 Grammys is tied to issues that are traditionally privatized, including domestic violence and substance

abuse, a critical lens helps make sense of the private subject/public platform negotiation. Additionally, employing close textual analysis provides an appropriate lens to understand the social justice theme in the 2015 Grammys in which the personal manifestly becomes the political.

Using close textual analysis, we examine values revealed through metaphors observing selected social justice themes, which emerge throughout the program. Employing Michael Osborn’s conceptualization of metaphor as “an event that occurs in the minds of listeners, often with important consequences for attitude and action” (80) we suggest that metaphors offer insight into this case study for understanding how the social justice theme invites a response in the context of the 2015 Grammys. Because metaphors, as rhetorical devices, reveal much about understanding our everyday experience (Lakoff & Johnson), metaphoric analysis provides an inroad for critics to interpret advocacy rhetoric. Our analysis suggests five themes that emerge as values from the overall collection of identified metaphors: agency, community, cooperation, equality, and process. Although all five do not inhere in each artifact, the themes co-construct a worldview, which is consistent throughout the awards show. In what follows, we analyze the Grammy performances in the chronological order in which they appeared during the 2015 telecast.

Obama’s Public Service Announcement

Midway through the Grammy awards, without fanfare or even a nominal introduction, President Obama emerged in an 84 second public service announcement, urging Americans to enlist in the “It’s On Us” campaign, “an anti-domestic violence campaign the Obama administration launched last year” (Plank n. pag.). In his video announcement, “Obama called on musicians to use their power to bring awareness to rape and domestic violence against women” (Hope n. pag.). His brief speech garnered scant praise from detractors who noted that his homily neglected to examine both the misogynist lyrics promoted within the music industry as well as performers encouraging violence against women through their personal example and professional choices. The following chart reveals Obama’s reliance on metaphors that invoke *agency*, *community*, *process*,

cooperation, and equality in attempting to motivate spectators to take the pledge at ItsOnUs.org.

Metaphors

<i>Vehicle</i>	<i>Tenor</i>
Celebrate artists	Acclaiming talented professionals
Helped shape our culture	Forming and structuring attitudes, values and principles which underlie our image of Americans
We can change our culture	Asserting control over that image
Ending violence	Obliterate brutality
Unique power	Exceptional ability to make a significant change
To change minds and attitudes	Alter negative patterns in others
To set an example	Model what we want others to be
Join our campaign to stop this violence	Become part of the mainstream group
“ItsOnUs.org”	Take responsibility
Take the pledge	Vow, oath, promise
And to the artists at the Grammy’s tonight, I ask you to ask your fans to do it too	Direct appeal to artists to be role models to audience members
It is on us, all of us,	Responsibility to create change
To create a culture where violence isn’t tolerated	We can change what has always been
Where survivors are supported	We no longer “blame the victim”
And where all our young people	Focus shifts from women to youth, male and female
Can go as far as their talents and dreams will take them	Young people can do anything, unfettered by violence

President Obama begins by offering praise to the entertainers, appropriate to a venue in which performers are being honored for their accomplishments in the music industry. But while he applauds their contributions, which “shape our culture,” he also challenges them to make conscious choices concerning how that culture is fashioned. By assigning them *agency* within the music business, he asserts that their obligation is beyond providing entertainment, indicating that they have a significant role in promoting *equality* specifically as regards to gender in the context of reducing and even “ending violence.” He positions the music industry, and the individual artists who populate that industry, as both a part of a *community* and as leaders in an on-going *process* “to create a culture where violence isn’t tolerated” and “where survivors are supported.” Obama’s plea for support of “ItsOnUs.org,” unequivocally asks performers to *cooperate* in assuming agency for inducing social change from their position of privilege as celebrities. His message is one

in which women are survivors, rather than victims, and in which youth, the primary focus of popular music, will benefit from an improved society. Obama emphasizes the collective nature of the issue of domestic violence, but in doing so, deflects notions of gender and how this larger systemic characteristic perpetuates domestic violence. In this sense, *equality* is emphasized as *cooperation* between *community* members, populated exclusively by celebrities with *agency*, which becomes the primary *process* by which social change is enacted.

Brooke Axtell’s Speech On Domestic Violence

Domestic violence advocate Brooke Axtell’s brief speech on behalf of survivors also served as an introduction to Katy Perry’s ballad about her emergence from an unhealthy romantic involvement (Rutter n. pag.). Axtell was the victim of sexual trafficking from the age of seven, when her parents were unable to care for her and she was put under the guardianship of a man referred to as, “Jim” (Kaplan n.

pag.). Axtell has previously described the nightmare of sexual abuse she suffered for years, being sold to men who raped her and filmed the violent attacks for pleasure and profit (Kaplan n. pag.). Later, when she was free of her captors, she involved herself in an adult relationship with a man who beat and mistreated her, eventually threatening to kill her. When she finally sought assistance, Axtell became an advocate for victims of abuse. According to an article in *The Washington Post*:

Axtell describes the role art played in helping her recover from her experiences. A singer and poet, she has released three albums and two collections of poetry. Art . . . is what made her a survivor, not a victim. “When we express our creativity, we have the power to decide how we will relate to our trauma and the story we will tell about our lives,” she said. (Kaplan n. pag.)

Axtell is a founder of “Healing and Empowerment, a support group for victims of sexual violence,” and is also associated with the “Rape,

Abuse and Incest National Network” and “SafePlace,” a domestic violence shelter in her hometown of Austin” (Kaplan n. pag.). Asked if she was concerned about whether her comments might be exploited “as part of a PR stunt,” Axtell confidently responded:

If I were just there to stand up as some sort of prop to promote [Perry], I don’t think I’d be given so much range and freedom to have my own content . . . They accepted the first version that I sent them. . . . Not a word has been changed. (Kaplan n. pag.)

Axtell’s brief prose poem detailing her abuse was inserted after Obama’s public service announcement and as introduction to Katy Perry’s performance of, “By the Grace of God.” Perry wrote about her own experience emerging from an unhealthy relationship and apparently struck a chord among abuse survivors (Kaplan n. pag.). Similar to Obama’s public service announcement, themes of *agency*, *community*, *process*, *cooperation*, and *equality* are found embedded in the metaphors employed in Axtell’s spoken poem.

Metaphors

<i>Vehicle</i>	<i>Tenor</i>
Survivor	One who has moved past a traumatic event
Domestic violence	Physical abuse within the private sphere, presumably within the context of family
Passionate romance	A love relationship that is strong and usually sexual in nature
Charismatic man	Charming
I was stunned	Stopped
Abuse me	Physically and emotionally harmed
Lashing out	Using words or actions to harm another
He was in pain	He has emotional/psychological baggage
Needed help	Emotional or possibly psychiatric assistance
Compassion could restore him	If she didn’t judge him and loved him, he would become the good person he is presumed to have been before being “hurt”
Empathy was used against me	Because she showed caring for him, he hurt her
Terrified of him	Afraid for her life
Ashamed I was in this position.	Felt she was to blame for the abuse
Bound me to him	She couldn’t leave
Desire to heal him	She wanted to help him despite the fact that he was hurting her

My compassion was incomplete because it did not include me.	She did not value herself
I had to escape	Get away from the abuse
Revealed the truth	Realize that this was abuse
Seek help	Seek professional intervention
Saved my life	Saved her from being killed by her abuser
Authentic love	Love that does not entail abuse
Devalue another human being	Abuse another
Silence	Keep the abuse secret
Shame	Feeling it is her fault
Abuse	Physical, mental, emotional
Honor	Doing what is right for self
Respect	Regard for self
Worthy of love	Good enough for someone to care about her
Reach out for help	Ask a friend a professional for assistance
Your voice will save you	Speaking out, you can save yourself
Let it extend into the night	Speak out on behalf of yourself
Let it part the darkness	Hopeful
Let it set you free	Get away from your abuser
To know who you truly are	Know that you are a good person who does not deserve abuse
Valuable	Important to yourself and others
Beautiful	On the inside
Loved	By others and possibly by God

In Axtell's speech, *agency*, *equality*, *community*, *process*, and *cooperation* work together to suggest that individual survivors can remove themselves from abusive situations. However, according to Axtell's text, this individual *agency* is only enacted with the *cooperation* of a larger *community*; in this case professional intervention or assistance from others is a precondition for effective action. As both a survivor of abuse and an advocate of support groups, it may be expected that Axtell would promote a message of individual healing as a *process* that occurs within a larger *community* of professionals, trained to help individuals move from victim to survivor. She also underscores the lack of *equality* victims feel, explaining "my compassion was incomplete because it did not include me," which deprives them of the *agency* that Axtell seeks to restore to survivors. Her final words move her personal story to create consubstantiality with her audience, entreating victims of abuse to use their "voice[s]" to speak out against abuse and reminding them that they are each "valuable," "beautiful," and loved."

Katy Perry's Performance Of, "By The Grace Of God"

Selected as Billboard's 2012 "Woman of the Year," Perry aggravated feminists by her "I am not a feminist," declaration, as she accepted her honor from the preeminent proprietor of the entertainment industry (Davies n. pag.). While few feminists would take issue with her claim that her work has not been particularly feminist in nature, in the context of her award, her disavowal was disheartening. Although Perry has previously written and performed song lyrics hinting that date rape might be okay (Davies n. pag.) and that sexual involvement with another woman for her boyfriend's amusement could be fun, such proclamations, which distance public figures from feminism, are disappointing when they indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of what feminism "is" (i.e., equal rights and opportunities) and "is not" (i.e., male bashing). Nevertheless, some of Perry's songs, like "Firework," have had the capacity to inspire her young audiences, while reinforcing self-esteem and positive regard for individuality and uniqueness. These

are messages, which can certainly be placed within a feminist lexicon, despite the artist's lack of affinity for feminism in general. In, "By the Grace of God," Perry reflects on a damaging relationship which drives her to the brink of suicide but from which she finally emerges intact. Themes of *agency, community, process, cooperation, and equality*, are resonant through her choice of metaphors.

Metaphors

<i>Vehicle</i>	<i>Tenor</i>
Surviving my return of Saturn	Surviving her divorce
Long vacation	Death
Full of secrets	Not telling anyone what was happening
Locked up tight like iron mountain	Secretive
Running on empty	Had no inner resources
So out of gas	No energy
I wasn't enough	Could not stand up for herself
Found I wasn't so tough	Thought she was being strong, staying in this relationship and discovered this was weakness
Layin' on the bathroom floor	Beaten
We were living on a fault line	At any moment, everything can disintegrate and we can't control what happens to us
And I felt the fault was all mine	She believed that she was the cause of the relational problems
Couldn't take it anymore	Realized she no longer was willing to be mistreated
By the grace of God	Saved by a higher power
I picked myself back up	Decided to face destructive forces in her life
I knew I had to stay	Decided to live
I put one foot in front of the other	Took a small step toward her own salvation
And I looked in the mirror and decided to stay	Decided not to kill herself
Wasn't gonna let love take me out that way	Decided that she did not want to die for a misconstrued idea about romantic love
Keeping my head above the water	Surviving
When the truth was like swallowing sand	Difficult to come to terms with the truth of her unhealthy relationship
Now every morning, there is no more mourning	No longer a victim but a survivor
Oh, I can finally see myself again	Sees the good in herself
I know I am enough	Realizes her worth
Possible to be loved	Realizes she deserves real love
It was not about me	The abuser is in the wrong and nothing she did brought on the situation or could have ended it
Now I have to rise above	Has to be strong enough to keep going no matter how hard it is
Let the universe call the bluff	There is some meta-perspective that can judge this situation fairly and assess that she is in the right and he is wrong
Yeah, the truth'll set you free	Now that she knows that she does not deserve to be in a bad situation, and she can go on with her life

Not in the name of love	Will not subjugate herself because she cares about someone who doesn't care about her. This is not love
I am not giving up	Not going to die

In contrast to Axtell's focus on *process* from victim to survivor, Perry's song reveals that individuals have the *agency* to enact this *process* by critical self-reflection. Whereas *cooperation* and *community* were essential in Axtell's discursively constructed process of becoming a survivor, Perry empowers the audience to understand that the power of change lies within themselves. However, the lyrics of Perry's song, coupled with the performance of the song at the Grammys, suggest there exists a larger *community* standing behind individuals undergoing the process from victim to survivor. This was vividly enacted through a visual metaphor of performance when Perry took the stage in front of a white screen wearing an all-white dress with what appeared to be her shadow illuminated on the display. As she began to sing, the shadow proved to be several dancers who were performing behind the white screen (Dillon & Vanmetre n. pag.). The multiple, but faceless dancers, indicate that the survivor, Perry, is still the primary focus and has primary *agency* in her role as survivor, yet there exists a *community* of others supporting her in this role. Perry's all-white dress can be understood as a metaphorical blank slate, suggesting the song is not about her as survivor, but serves as a voice for all survivors. In Perry's song she triumphs over her demons and offers a hopeful scenario for the future. A happy ending is not assured, since *process* is always on-going, but her audience can identify with an expectation of a favorable outcome.

Sia's Performance Of "Chandelier"

Sia Furler, known singularly as "Sia," focused on alcoholism, drug addiction and suicide, all issues from

her personal narrative, in a dramatic performance of her Grammy nominated song, "Chandelier." Called "socially phobic" by *New York Times Magazine* (Knopper n. pag.), this prolific singer-song writer has provided top hits for mega-stars Christina Aguilera, Beyoncé, and Rihanna. In her own performances, as in this Grammy show piece, she often makes dramatic social statements, but employs the unusual technique of hiding her face from the audience. In interviews, the singer-songwriter claims she wants to avoid celebrity, admitting, "I thought it would be a funny joke that I'm getting away with . . . And it was, partly, I don't wanna go out and sell my soul, my body, my peace of mind" (Sanders n. pag). According to *National Public Radio* journalist, Sam Sanders:

Sia now refuses to be photographed. She was on the cover of *Billboard* magazine recently, with a paper bag over her head . . . and when she does perform, it's with her back to the audience. (Sanders n. pag.)

During her Grammy performance of "Chandelier," she stood with her back to the audience, while dancers outfitted in matching blonde "bob" wigs and other accouterments identical to the artist, performed an interpretative dance to her song about addiction. While she is known to produce popular songs at a rapid pace for her famous clientele, her songs have also been dubbed, "victim to victory," compositions (Knopper n. pag.), making her an ideal choice for this year's theme of social justice. Themes of *agency*, *community*, *equality*, and *process* are revealed through the coding of metaphors in the lyrics of her song.

Metaphors

<i>Vehicle</i>	<i>Tenor</i>
Party girls	Females that are young and using alcohol and/or drugs to have fun
Don't get hurt	Women are immune to damage physically, mentally, emotionally
Can't feel anything	Emotionally numb

When will I learn	Rhetorical question; despite repetition, keeps making same mistakes
Push it down	Not deal with what is happening, pretending it isn't; not getting rid of it though—it is still there
For a good time call	Anonymous, promiscuous sexual activity; a name and number scrawled on a wall
Phone's blowing up	Doing drugs, drinking and having sex in a continuous cycle (so many people are "calling" for a "good time")
Ringin' my doorbell	The alcohol, drugs, and sex are tempting her
Feel the love	The influence of alcohol and drugs make her happy for a little while
Throw 'em back	Drinking and taking drugs
Til I lose count	She has no idea how much she is drinking and she's trying not to care
Holding on for dear life	Reaching a breaking point
Won't look down	She's terrified
Won't open my eyes	Avoiding problems
Keep my glass full until morning light	Trying to get through another day
'Cause I'm just holding on for tonight	She has no plan for anything beyond this moment
Help me	Needs assistance from others; can't do this on her own
Sun is up	Facing another day
I'm a mess Gotta get out now	After-effects of drugs, alcohol and sex
Gotta run from this	Need to stop doing this
Here comes the shame	Feeling this is all bad
Throw 'em back till I lose count	Keep drinking
I'm gonna swing from the chandelier	She is going to have unrestrained alcohol, drugs and sex, regardless of the danger
I'm gonna live like tomorrow doesn't exist	She is not considering the implications of what she is doing
I'm gonna fly like a bird through the night	"Flying" is drug and alcohol induced but birds usually fly in daylight, so she has no idea where she is or where she is going
Feel my tears as they dry	She is not going to feel sorry for herself

Clearly, the predominant theme in Sia's dirge is the endless cycle of drug and alcohol abuse and her inability to interrupt the sequence of destructive behaviors and their negative repercussions. Themes of *agency*, *community* and *process* emerge from the dance performance as well as from her lyrics. Unlike other artifacts with social messages, Sia's enactment, seeks to share the worldview of the victim/survivor with the audience, connecting to a like *community* of abusers and those affected by the drug and alcohol abuse of others, and affording insight to outsiders by means of creating empathy. *Agency*, or at least

personal responsibility, is dimly recognizable in phrases such as, "when will I learn," and "gotta get out now . . . gotta run from this." In contrast to Obama's plea to the musical community to be proactive, Sia's weak request for "help" reduces her scenario to victims and heroes. Similarly, while other artifacts highlight process as something linear and progressive, for Sia, *process* is an endless cycle with little hope for redemption. However, the key metaphors in her offering may be more salient in the performance by dancers Kristen Wiig and Maddie Ziegler, than in her lyrics. In the performance, Sia does not interact with her audience, while Wiig and Ziegler, dressed in look-

alike wigs and outfits, present an interpretative dance against the backdrop of a run-down apartment. The much smaller Ziegler has been referred to in blog posts as Sia's "childhood self" (Washington n. pag.), while Wiig represents the present-day Sia, struggling metaphorically as well as literally with her damaged, younger self. Only once do Sia's lyrics indicate that she cannot do this on her own, when she cries out to a nameless visage, "help me." But the final dance steps, accompanied by her reflection, "feel my tears as they dry," end her performance with ambiguity regarding to what extent she will let herself be helped or allow herself to heal. She appears to be wedged in a *process* in which she cannot reach out beyond herself to the *community* who might be able to save her. Personal *agency* is thwarted and *equality* is denied. Sia's preference to avoid facing the audience fits with the audience's expectations of her "socially phobic" performance style, however, understood within the context of the 2015 Grammys, this choice also suggests that Sia's personal narrative provides a universal face for others who have substance abuse issues. The selections made within the performance may disclose that the song is less about Sia and her internal struggles, and more about providing others a way to see themselves in their own *process* of internal

struggle, and the barriers to *community* and *agency* embedded in that struggle.

Common And John Legend Perform, "Glory"

Performers Common and John Legend, backed with a full choir, offered a dramatic rendition of "Glory" from the Grammy and Academy award nominated film, *Selma*, which chronicled Martin Luther King's famed march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in support of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Common reflects on his artistic role as "storyteller," observing:

You got to be able to speak the truth, you've got to be able to absorb life and take in life and be able to interpret it in a way that anybody in this room could say, 'Man, that's my story, I can relate to that.' And it's just finding the humanity in the stories and the creativity in the stories. That's what it means to me. (Gallo n. pag.)

Common's remarks disclose his efforts to create consubstantiality through the lyrics, music and performance of his art. The following chart reveals emphasis on the themes of *agency*, *community*, *process*, and *equality* in their performance of "Glory."

Metaphors

<i>Vehicle</i>	<i>Tenor</i>
One day	In the future
When the glory comes	When we have racial justice but also a reference to Jesus' return
It will be ours	African Americans will have it
When the war is won	Racial justice
Hands to the Heavens	Be good Christians
No man, no weapon Formed against	Nonaggression
Yes glory is destined	Racial justice will happen
Every day women and men become legends	Common people become everyday champions
Sins that go against our skin become blessings	Acts of racism inspires us to overcome
The movement is a rhythm to us	African Americans are all inspired by the crusade
Freedom is like religion to us	Racial justice is a part of Christianity
Justice for all just ain't specific enough	The pledge of allegiance does not go far enough and does not protect all of us, African Americans in particular
One son died, his spirit is revisitin' us	May refer to Jesus or to Martin Luther King
Truant livin' livin' in us, resistance is us	African Americans can confront, oppose, challenge, defy
That's why Rosa sat on the bus	Rosa Parks stood up for racial justice more than 60 years ago

That's why we walk through Ferguson with our hands up	Reference to shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and protests where people put their hands up in solidarity with Brown
When it go down we woman and man up	When there is trouble, African Americans are strong
They say, "Stay down" and we stand up	African Americans defy oppression
Shots, we on the ground, the camera panned up	The media and even the mainstream culture, purposefully chooses not to highlight oppression and racism against African Americans
King pointed to the mountain top and we ran up	King showed African Americans the way to oppose racism through peaceful means and we have followed his lead
One day, when the glory comes It will be ours, it will be ours	We will achieve racial equality
When the war is won	When we achieve racial equality
We will be sure, we will be here sure	We will know when we have achieved it
Glory	Equality
Now the war is not over	We aren't done yet
Victory isn't won	We aren't done yet
Then when it's all done And we'll fight on to the finish	We will continue until we have racial justice
Selma's now for every man, woman and child	What King did at Selma and what was portrayed in the film, "Selma," can inspire us all
Even Jesus got his crown in front of a crowd	Jesus did not act alone
They marched with the torch	He was supported by early Christian followers
We gon' run with it now	We must follow in the tradition of early Christians
Never look back	Don't get mired is past issues or failures
We done gone hundreds of miles	We have already come a long way
From dark roads he rose	Jesus also rose from a difficult path
To become a hero	He achieved immortality
Facin' the league of justice	Standing up to the judicial branch of the government, law makers (Justice Department). Possibly a reference to the Justice League (D.C. comics superheroes) (Harris)
His power was the people	Strength and force emerges from all of us behind and as a part of our leaders
Enemy is lethal	Oppression and racism will lead to death
A king became regal	Martin Luther King and Jesus became dignified through their struggles for a larger cause
Saw the face of Jim Crow under a bald eagle	We recognize the incongruity of juxtaposing racism with patriotism
The biggest weapon is to stay peaceful	We can achieve racial equality through nonviolent means
We sing	We speak out
Our music is the cuts that we bleed through	Our voices are inspired by our pain; we turn pain into strength
Somewhere in the dream we had an epiphany	Martin Luther King's "dream" is expanded upon
Now we right the wrongs in history	Reparation

No one can win the war individually	Collectivity
It takes the wisdom of the elders	Need to profit by those who have been part of working toward racial equality since King
And young people's energy	Need to inspire youth to be part of the movement
Welcome to the story	The quest toward racial justice
We call victory	When we have achieved racial justice
The comin' of the Lord	Reference to Battle Hymn of Republic
My eyes have seen the glory	Reference to Battle Hymn of Republic
When it's all said and done	When we have achieved our goal
We'll cry glory	We will have achieved our goal and will thank God

In "Glory," *equality* and *community* become elements of the *process* of social change. *Agency* is attributed to 1) the African American community, 2) entertainers, 3) audience members, 4) Christians, 5) young and old, and ultimately all who are willing to join and "fight on to the finish." Martin Luther King is compared to Jesus Christ, and the audience is enjoined to "call victory," only when "we right the wrongs in history" and "the Lord" has "come." The performance of "Glory" and the values embedded in the song's metaphors bring together the other performance's themes including *equality*, *community*, individual and collective *agency*, social change as *process*, and triumph in personal and collective victories. Their performance brought many audience members to tears and most present to their feet in a standing ovation.

Similar to those critics who objected that Obama's speech was oxymoronic given the context, some critics objected to an overly sentimental tribute to Martin Luther King at the "whitest Grammy awards in years," pointing out that few African American entertainers were honored for their contributions (Kristobak, n. pag.). The dramatic inclusion of so many Black performers for this finale was striking in this context. Nevertheless, that this performance closed the 2015 Grammys and brought together many of the social justice themes of the night suggests that "Glory" could be read as a climatic end to the 2015 Grammys and to the night's theme of social justice.

Conclusions: Values Expressed

In the current study, coding metaphors for values is employed as a means for understanding the larger rhetorical issue of how values are utilized to convey or motivate social action in a platform that some argue represent issues antithetical to the rhetoric

of social change. As Rachel Davidson suggests, "Values are always embedded in our language choices. Values coach us and give us clues to society's preferences" (57). Furthermore, values demonstrate one of the many practical tools that the rhetorical discipline offers to scholars and practitioners, in part, because, critics "can look at the rhetorical dimension of value in texts to uncover how those texts are employing values to make persuasive discourse" (Davidson 57). Important for the current analysis, values offer an understanding of attitudes and beliefs, which are undergirded by the larger structure of our morals and ideals.

This analysis reveals two important lessons to consider with regard to the larger rhetorical issue of promoting social transformation in a setting that sometimes fosters messages contrary to proactive social change. First, this study discloses that close attention should be paid to what values are selected to represent social change and what is subsequently deflected in that selection. Analysis of the 2015 Grammys invites us to think about social change through the themes of *agency*, *community*, *process*, *cooperation*, and *equality*. These themes are emphasized by pointing to the collective nature of domestic issues, highlighting internal struggles through personal narratives, and offering stories about triumph and survival. However, in every selection there is a deflection. As Kenneth Burke observes, "even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality" ("Language as Symbolic Action" 45). Although the presentation of the performances offers motivating narratives to understand social change, these themes deflect a larger

discussion about gender and power. In other words, the producers of the Grammy Awards select particular social change narratives, but deflect the larger systemic issues, such as gender and power, that perpetuate barriers to legitimate social change.

The second lesson this analysis uncovers is attention to symbolic tension between values revealed through the metaphors. For example, our examination exposes tension in understanding the *process* of social change. All of the Grammy performances grapple with *agency* in motivating the *process* of social change. Obama's public service announcement suggests that celebrities have the power to motivate social change, whereas Common and John Legend's performance suggests that everyday individuals have power to enact social change. Sia's enactment implies that *agency* may not be possible, while Brooke Axtell's speech indicates that it is, but only in concert with a larger *community*. For Katy Perry, *agency* is part of a larger journey of self-discovery and personal enactment. These tensions in *agency* are instructive in understanding the extent to which popular culture venues, such as the 2015 Grammys, propel or merely reflect social change.

While some argue that entertainment should not go beyond its reach as amusement for the masses, others argue that since theatrical performance has always exerted more influence than merely providing a diversion, it has a concomitant obligation to educate audiences in order to counterbalance the negative messages promoted by some performers. If we desire to live in a democratic universe of ideas in which Chris Brown is permitted to promote date rape drugs with lyrics such as, "Put Molly all in her champagne, she ain't even know it. I took her home and I enjoyed that, she ain't even know it," to vulnerable teenagers, then it is sensible that the entertainment industry takes tutelage of the cultural implications of those messages, as a serious charge.

But to what extent can social justice themes offset the negative messages associated with specific entertainment forms, such as football, which glorifies violence, and the music industry, which is sometimes a repository for misogynist and other oppressive messages? Although it is appropriate and important for entertainment venues to take responsibility in promoting social justice themes, the current study indicates that efforts to motivate social change through

themes of *agency*, *community*, *process*, *cooperation*, and *equality*, may not be enough to counteract the negative messages associated with the popular music industry. For example, Obama's message prompted comments such as:

Let's be real. This is a music culture that rewards lyrics demeaning and abusing women. Obama wants to stop domestic violence by raising awareness. What better setting than Grammy night? What better audience than the artists and producers who profit off it?" (Easton n. pag.)

Moreover, some critics decried the presence of artists in attendance including Chris Brown and R. Kelly, "who both have documented, serious histories with their treatment of women, were both nominated in the Best R&B Performance category, with the former up for two other categories" (Greenwald n. pag.). Madeline Boardman observes that "many viewers took to Twitter in the midst of the segment to express their disbelief that the same show was warning against domestic abuse and sexual misconduct while honoring both men" (n. pag.). These responses indicate that careful attention must be paid to promoting a message, which many agreed was appropriate and necessary, in a setting where contradictory messages are celebrated and even rewarded.

Conversely, even if some viewers were offended by the ideological juxtaposition, the risk was compensated by prompting important discussion via social media. Although there was clearly some public pushback regarding the social justice messages, the same voices who critiqued the discourse also documented evidence of a larger public conversation in which citizen advocates enacted their *agency*, weighing in on issues of social change. Inspiring discussion and critical reflection on the theme of social change in popular programs such as the Grammy Awards, allows collective institutions to take responsibility for leading the way on issues that demand input from everyone in our culture. Productions such as award shows offer untapped potential for transforming culturally entrenched attitudes and behaviors. As Brooke Axtell told reporters, "both she and Perry were honored by the opportunity to address the issue before such a large audience" ("Katy Perry," n. pag.). Thus, the 2015

Grammys initiated this essential set of public dialogues and, as such, offers an important contribution in generating political awareness of issues that are traditionally grounded in the private sphere.

We conclude that an assessment of metaphors in the 2015 presentation of the Grammy Awards indicates a predominantly positive influence on an event that might otherwise be devoid of much serious content. How those messages are conveyed, what messages are absent, and what role context plays on the reception of those messages, is critical in apprehending the overall effects of inducing social change through celebrations of popular culture. Is this a step in the right direction? We believe so. But like so many other aspects of cultural evolution, we still have a long way to travel in promoting social justice while advancing artistic freedom of expression. In the 1950's and 60's, folk and rock singers sought to revolutionize society through music. In the 21st century, their mission continues as both a part and a counterpart to mainstream cultural events.

Works Cited

- Boardman, Madeline. "Grammys Called Hypocritical for Sending Domestic Violence Message While Nominating Chris Brown, R. Kelly." *USMagazine.com*, 2015. Web. <<http://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-news/news/grammys-send-domestic-violence-message-while-nominating-chris-brown-201592>>.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966. Electronic.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1969. Print.
- Davidson, Rachel. "Rhetorical Lessons in Advocacy and Shared Responsibility: Family Metaphors and Definitions of Crisis and Care in Unpaid Family Caregiving Rhetoric." Diss. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2015. Print.
- Davies, Madeleine. "Katy Perry, Billboard's Woman of the Year, Is 'Not a Feminist.'" *Jezebel.com*, 2012. Web. 9 March 2015.
- <<http://jezebel.com/5964727/katy-perry-billboards-woman-of-the-year-is-not-a-feminist>>.
- Dillon, Nancy and Elizabeth Vanmetre. "Katy Perry's Grammy Performance Sheds Light on Domestic Violence as President Obama, Brooke Axtell Help Make Message Clear." *NYDailynews.com*, 2015. Web. 17 February 2015. <<http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music/katy-perry-grammy-performance-sheds-light-violence-article-1.2107904>>.
- Easton, Nina. "2015 Grammys: Obama Missed the Moment on Domestic Abuse." *Fortune.com*, 2014. Web. 15 February 2015. <<http://fortune.com/2015/02/11/obama-domestic-abuse-grammys/>>.
- Gallo, Phil. "Backstage at the Oscars with John Legend & Common." *Billboard.com*, 2015. Web. 11 March 2015. <<http://www.billboard.com/articles/events/oscars/6480269/backstage-at-the-oscars-with-john-legend-common>>.
- Greenwald, David. "The Grammys Take on Domestic Abuse, but Specter of Violence Lingers." *Oregonlive.com*, 2015. Web. 15 February 2015. <http://www.oregonlive.com/music/index.ssf/2015/02/the_grammys_domestic_abuse.html>.
- Harris, Aisha. "Please, Don't Honor Selma by Giving the Oscar to 'Glory.'" *Slate.com*, 2015. Web. 21 March 2015. <http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2015/02/19/_glory_by_john_legend_and_common_please_don_t_give_it_the_oscar_for_best.html>.
- Hope, Clover. "President Obama Delivers an Intense Grammys PSA on Domestic Abuse." *Jezebel.com*, 2015. Web. 3 March 2015. <<http://jezebel.com/president-obama-delivers-an-intense-grammys-psa-on-dome-1684590013>>.
- Kaplan, Sarah. "Brook Axtell, Survivor of Human Trafficking and Domestic Abuse, Storms the Grammys." *Washington Post*, 2014. Web. 14 February 2015. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/02/09/brooke-axtell-survivor-of-human-trafficking-and-domestic-abuse-storms-the-grammys/>>.
- "Katy Perry, Brooke Axtell, President Obama Address Domestic Violence at the 2015 Grammys." *Wkbw.com*, 2015. Web. 16 February 2015.

- <<http://www.wkbw.com/news/katy-perry-brooke-axtell-president-obama-address-domestic-violence-at-the-2015-grammys>>.
- Knopper, Steve. "Sia Furler, the Socially Phobic Pop Star." *The New York Times Magazine*, 2014. Web. 8 March 2015.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/20/magazine/sia-furler-the-socially-phobic-pop-star.html?_r=0>.
- Kristobak, Ryan. "Do the Grammys Have a Race Problem? The 2015 Grammys The Whitest in 35 Years." *The Huffington Post*, 2015. Web. 15 February 2015.
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/11/grammys-race-problem_n_6663640.html>.
- Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Print.
- O'Connell, Michael. "TV Ratings: Grammy Awards Lose 3 Million Viewers From Last Year." *Hollywoodreporter.com.*, 2015. Web. 4 March 2105. <<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/tv-ratings-grammy-awards-lose-771653>>.
- Osborn, Michael. "The Trajectory of My Work with Metaphor." *Southern Communication Journal* 74.1 (2009): 79-87. Electronic.
- Plank, Elizabeth. "President Obama Made a Surprise Appearance at the Grammys With a Video You Need to See." *Mic.com*, 2015. 3 March 2015.
<<http://www.mic.com/articles/110126/president-obama-made-a-surprise-appearance-at-the-grammys-with-a-video-you-need-to-see>>.
- Rutter, Claire. "2015 Grammys: Brooke Axtell delivers passionate speech about domestic violence with Chris Brown and Rihanna in the audience." *Mirror.com*, 2015. Web. 9 march 2015. <<http://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/2015-grammys-brooke-axtell-delivers-5130092>>.
- Sanders, Sam. "A Reluctant Star, Sia Deals with Fame on Her Own Terms." *NPR*, 2014. Web. 13 March 2015.
<<http://www.npr.org/2014/07/08/329500971/a-reluctant-star-sia-deals-with-fame-on-her-own-terms>>.
- Thompson, Arienne. "Grammys Take a Serious Turn with Domestic Violence PSA." *USAToday*, 2014. Web. 13 February 2015.
<<http://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2015/02/08/grammys-take-a-serious-turn-with-domestic-violence-psa/23099075/>>.
- Washington, Arlene. "Grammys 2015: Sia Performs 'Chandelier' With Kristen Wiig (Video)." *Hollywoodreporter.com*. Web. 21 March 2015.
<<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/sia-grammys-video-performance-2015-771413>>.