

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

Honors College

Spring 5-2022

Cancel Culture Conundrum

Hannah Marsh

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/honors>



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#)

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

CANCEL CULTURE CONUNDRUM

by

Hannah Longfellow Marsh

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
(Political Science)

The Honors College

University of Maine

April 2022

Advisory Committee:

Mark Brewer, Professor of Political Science & Honors, Advisor

Anthony Haines, Senior Military Science Instructor

Ryan LaRochelle, Lecturer of Leadership Studies

Richard Powell, Professor of Political Science

Steve Veves, Professor of Military Science

© Copyright 2022 Hannah L. Marsh
All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

The term cancel culture describes a phenomenon in which people are effectively shunned from society for their actions or statements due to others' dislike of those actions or statements. While this term has become widely used in politics in recent years, many of the reasons people are cancelled have no direct link to politics. However, there are several characteristics, some politically-linked, that make people more apt to engage in cancel culture. Statistics show that the two characteristics which mark people as likely to engage in cancel culture are identifying as a Democrat and being part of the millennial or GenZ generations. These two factors hold true within the broader culture and in academia. While those who are ideologically more liberal are more likely to cancel, there are examples of conservatives cancelling as well, and examples of cancellations by both parties are illustrated in four case studies.

Understanding cancel culture is vital for those who are attempting to avoid finding themselves cancelled, as well as for those who study or involve themselves in politics. For those who have political involvement, understanding the overlap between cancel culture and political characteristics is important, as political affiliation is one of the two biggest predictors of whether individuals will engage in cancel culture.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: Introduction	1
Overview	1
Political Disclaimer	1
Survey Data and Academic Research Disclaimer	2
Important Definitions	2
Methodology	2
Project Background	5
Description of What is Coming in the Rest of the Project	7
Chapter II: History and Literature Review	10
How Cancellation is Done	15
Why Do People Cancel	22
Chapter Conclusion	24
Chapter III: Quantitative Data	25
Cancellation in the Broader Culture	25
Risks of Cancellation in the Broader Culture	37
Cancellation in Academia	39
Risks of Cancellation in Academia	42
Post-Cancellation	46
Chapter Conclusion	50
Chapter IV: Case Studies	51
Colin Kaepernick	51
Joe Rogan	56
The Dixie Chicks	61
Louis C.K.	65
Chapter Conclusion	68
Chapter V: Conclusion	70
Recap	70
Implication of the Findings	73
Questions and Work for Future Researchers	74

Chapter Conclusion	75
Bibliography	76
Author's Biography	81

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Political Ideologies & Beliefs on Why People Cancel	27
Figure 3.2: Political Ideologies & Knowledge About Cancel Culture	36
Figure 3.3: Political Ideologies of Academics	40
Figure 3.4: Political Ideologies & Opinion on Cancel Culture Change	41
Figure 3.5: Political Ideologies & If Cancel Culture Has Gotten Worse or Better	44
Figure 3.6: Political Ideologies & Pressures to be Politically Correct	45
Figure 3.7: Political Ideologies & Beliefs on Academic Freedom	46

CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW

This thesis examines the phenomenon known as cancel culture. It explores what the phenomenon is, as well as how and by whom it is perpetuated. Additionally, historical precedent is discussed, along with possible ill-effects. Data are presented to show familiarity with and likelihood to engage in cancel culture on the basis of race, age, education levels, and political party affiliation. Four case studies are presented to show commonalities and differences between instances of cancel culture. The case studies describe the cancellation process these individuals experienced, which allow the case studies to be compared to the research data. Additionally, these case studies show examples of the way in which cancelling is done and the path cancellation usually takes.

Political Disclaimer

The term cancel culture is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the practice or tendency of engaging in mass shunning as a way of expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure.” While this has become a politicized term due to its weaponized use by opposing political parties and ideologies, this thesis is done in an unbiased manner. This thesis examines all sides of the cancel culture debate, including both political parties’ views of and uses of the term. This report is non-partisan and examines the term now known as cancel culture while utilizing specific examples to illustrate the phenomenon.

Survey Data and Academic Research Disclaimer

I was unable to gain access to the raw data for the Kaufmann survey, the Norris survey, and the two Pew surveys used here. Thus, I am working with the data as published in the findings of these four studies. Additionally, despite all of the talk surrounding cancel culture, there is still very limited academic research on the topic. I have utilized all of the pertinent academic research on the topic that I could uncover and was available to me.

Important Definitions

All of these definitions are from the Merriam-Webster dictionary:

- Cancel culture: the practice or tendency of engaging in mass shunning as a way of expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure.
- Democrat: a member of the Democratic party of the U.S.
- Republican: a member of the Democratic-Republican party or of the Republican party of the U.S.
- Left-leaning: sympathetic to or tending toward the Democratic side of politics.
- Right-leaning: sympathetic to or tending toward the Republican side of politics.

Methodology

This thesis was completed using studies and data that others have gathered. These were then compiled with relevant quotes, graphics, and case studies to provide a comprehensive view of cancel culture and the possible ill-effects it has on society, and more specifically, the political sphere.

A primary data source for this thesis is research entitled “Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality” by Pippa Norris. Norris’ study was published in July 2021 via the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Norris’ study focuses primarily on cancel culture in academia and how individual values fit into the dominant group culture. Norris shows that within academia, scholars most likely to experience silencing are non-congruent with the with the masses surrounding them. Survey data are presented as they relate to scholars (particularly political scientists) and their perceptions of cancel culture. By and large, these academics reported that cancel culture had worsened. This study examines a World of Political Science Study from 2019 and how Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s theory of the Spiral of Silence impacts cancel culture. Additionally, it examines why, within academia, scholars are likely to perceive cancellation occurring.

This worsening of cancel culture is consistent with Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s theory regarding the spiral of silence. Noelle-Neumann’s research is also referenced in this thesis. Noelle-Neumann’s research suggests that if someone feels their opinion is not the popular opinion, they are more likely to keep quiet. That amplifies the ‘sound’ of the opposing opinion, thus further making it sound as the majority opinion, further silencing the opposition.

A study conducted by Eric Kaufmann, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, is also used. This work is entitled *The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America*. Kaufmann’s study was published in late January 2022 and the data is drawn from a survey Kaufmann conducted using the Qualtrics platform. Kaufmann describes this study as “the first comprehensive analysis of the wider American experience with, and opinion

of, cancel culture...” Through his Qualtrics survey, Kaufmann was able to ascertain whether the majority of Americans support or oppose cancel culture and whether individuals felt as though cancel culture was getting better or worse. In his report, each of these questions were broken down by demographic data, such as race, age, religion, and party identification. The main findings of his research are that a majority of Americans oppose cancel culture, and that people feel as though cancel culture has worsened as of late and that it is going to continue worsening. Kaufmann’s study provided large portions of the data presented in the ‘cancel culture in the broader culture’ section of this thesis.

Lastly, two Pew Research Center studies are used to compliment the data presented in Norris’ and Kaufmann’s work. These studies are entitled *Americans and ‘Cancel Culture’: Where Some See Calls for Accountability, Others See Censorship, Punishment, and How Americans feel about ‘cancel culture’ and offensive speech in 6 charts*. These studies were conducted by Emily Vogels et al. and Katherine Schaeffer, respectively. These studies describe cancel culture in the non-academic portions of society. Additionally, these include demographic data regarding those who cancel and the general public’s feelings surrounding cancel culture. These two studies provided many of the charts presented in this thesis, particularly the ones that are in the ‘cancel culture in the broader culture’ portion of this thesis.

The first of these two studies was published in May of 2021 and the data stems from a September 2020 survey which asked people to share what they think the term cancel culture means and how they feel about the act of calling out others on social media. This study established who has heard of cancel culture, how Americans define cancel culture, which political party affiliates are more likely to engage in cancel culture

and whether people felt calling others out on social media represented accountability or punishment.

The second Pew study was published in August of 2021 and utilizes the same survey as the Pew study referenced above. Through that survey, Schaeffer was able to determine Americans' familiarity with the topic, whether familiarity with the topic varied by age, gender, education level, or political party affiliation, and the driving forces behind why people engage in cancel culture.

Other articles and research are referenced to provide context and provide greater detail to relevant topics. Combined, these studies are able to paint a broader picture of what cancel culture in America looks like and who is most likely to engage with it. Additionally, through these studies, trends or lack thereof can be established. All four of these studies show there are potential dangers and upsides to cancel culture, and that despite its prominence, many Americans might not be in support of the phenomenon.

Project Background

I chose to research this topic because I thought a majority of the people who engage in cancelling are in my age group, thus making this is a generational issue which interests me. Additionally, as a Political Science student, I have always wondered why people were so quick to attempt to completely remove something from society when I view the beauty of this country as the ability to have and express a variety of viewpoints. Throughout my time in college, probably due to greater involvement in and awareness of politics and current events, cancel culture became more apparent to me. As it became time to pick a thesis topic I thought cancel culture was timely, making it a good topic to choose.

There are three main research questions for this thesis. They are: what is cancel culture, how do cancellations happen, and how may cancel culture affect our society. These are important questions to consider as they allow individuals to understand the societal forces around them. As of late, cancel culture is a main one of those forces. Cancel culture is necessary to understand for a variety of reasons. Understanding what might get an individual cancelled can help one avoid finding themselves in that position. Additionally, understanding the pros and cons of cancel culture is helpful when determining whether this is a beneficial or harmful phenomenon. A positive of cancel culture might be the fact that cancelling someone and exposing their activities prevents those activities from happening again. Cancel culture has been successful at combatting wrongdoing, especially as it relates to sexual misconduct. A con to cancel culture might be the fact that individuals find themselves without careers after expressing themselves through some medium, while operating completely separately from their employers.

Cancel culture does not just affect individuals. It impacts groups, corporations, and beliefs. There are also greater societal impacts, such as the modification of curriculum by teachers in an attempt to avoid finding themselves cancelled. Additionally, cancellation often turns into bullying as the victim finds themselves ostracized and unable to express their opinion for fear of further cancellation. This leads to a decline in mental health.¹

Cancel culture has elements of what is known as the chilling effect baked into it. The chilling effect is the suppression of free speech and dissent over fears of repercussions. The phenomenon got its name after it was used in a Supreme Court case in

¹ Lindsey Toler, "Cancel Culture and Its Mental Health Effects," Verywell Mind (Verywell Mind, May 1, 2021), <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-mental-health-effects-of-cancel-culture-5119201>.

reference to the Constitution. With cancel culture, those repercussions involve being cancelled.

Understanding cancel culture will help readers make an educated assessment as to the desirability of cancel culture, as well as its positive and negative effects. Additionally, this thesis will help readers understand the most common path by which a cancelling takes place. Case studies will provide real life examples to deepen readers' understanding of this process.

Description of What is Coming in the Rest of the Project

The following portions of this thesis will contain many statistics and data sets, all of which were sourced from previous research. The report will cover the age, education level, political party affiliation, and race of those cancelling. Additionally, the process by which many are cancelled will be outlined. Following that, the negative implications of cancel culture will be discussed, and historical examples of cancelled groups and individuals will be provided. Finally, the implications of this research, as well as follow up questions for future researchers, will be provided.

This chapter of this thesis is the introduction, which sets the rest of the work up. This chapter includes an overview of the project and the references used and important definitions for reference during the rest of the work. The methodology of this thesis is also contained in this chapter. This helps readers to understand which studies were used for what portions of the thesis and why those studies were chosen. Additionally, the project background is in chapter one. In this section I describe why I had an interest in researching this topic and why I think it is necessary for readers to know about cancel culture.

Chapter two of this thesis contains the history of cancel culture and the literature review. Understanding the history of cancel culture is important because cancel culture as we know it today did not just appear in the form it is in now. Cancelling someone started in a very different manner than we know it now. There are three historical examples that show how cancel culture has manifested itself previously. The literature review allows patterns regarding how cancelling occurs and why people cancel to be established which allows for greater knowledge of the subject when viewing cancel culture statistics in chapter three.

All of the quantitative data are presented in chapter three. These data are comprised of statistics from all of the aforementioned studies, and describe cancel culture in the broader culture before going on to describe cancel culture in academia. The first section of chapter three examines different characteristics of people and the potential impact those have on their beliefs regarding cancel culture. The second portion examines academics beliefs about cancel culture and whether they feel as though the pressure to avoid cancellation has increased or decreased in recent years.

Chapter four contains four case studies of individuals who have all faced cancellation. The case studies detail Colin Kaepernick, Joe Rogan, The Chicks, and Louis C.K. While all of these individuals were cancelled for different reasons, these case studies allow commonalities between cancellations to be established. These case studies can also be used when viewing statistical data to ascertain whether the statistical data is reflected when a cancellation transpires.

The final chapter, chapter five, is the conclusion. Here, there is a recap of the thesis and an explanation on why cancel culture matters. This section describes the

potential real world impacts of cancel culture if it continues to go unchecked. Lastly, questions for future researchers are presented.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The term “cancel culture” is believed to have originated from a slang term “cancel” which was used in a 1980s song written by Nile Rodgers, entitled “Your Love Is Cancelled” (linked). This song used the term cancelled to refer to breaking up with someone. Since then, the term has been featured in Lil Wayne songs, reality television shows like *Love and Hip Hop*, and then spread widely on Twitter in 2015.

The phenomenon now known as cancel culture is believed to have started on social media, more specifically Twitter. There is a faction of Twitter known as ‘Black Twitter.’ While this group is not well understood by those who are not a part of it, the term is “used to describe a large network of black Twitter users and their loosely coordinated interactions, many of which accumulate into trending topics due to the network’s size, interconnectedness, and unique activity.”² This group harnesses Twitter’s size and their interconnectedness to gain traction on issues.

‘Black Twitter’ is comprised of African Americans. This group started to use the term ‘cancelled’ as a form of responding to those whose actions they did not agree with, and the term spread to other factions on Twitter. Meredith Clark studies Black Twitter and believes that there is a six-stage process to the development of Black Twitter. The first step is identifying as a black person and having a Twitter account. This is important because individuals “kind of have to have that background and a comprehension of the

² Donovan X. Ramsey, “The Truth about Black Twitter,” *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, April 10, 2015), <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/04/the-truth-about-black-twitter/390120/>.

language that's being used to talk about whatever the issue of the day is."³ Step two of Clark's process is identification. This step begins with talks about the issue of the day. In this step, individuals evaluate issues that are being discussed, giving them a chance to determine what is important to them, establishing themselves in the group. This allows "participants [to] become active contributors to the community's welfare through creating conversation about issues of interest to and from the perspective of Blacks..."⁴

The third step is participation and Clark says participation is marked by a certain degree of performance. "Procedurally speaking, performance as means of participating in the Black Twitter phenomenon online includes creating a topic that is adopted by the network, adding to such a conversation via use of a key phrase, tweeting with a specific hashtag that has been adopted by a large enough portion of the network so that it extends beyond a particular region and/or re-tweeting such communicative messages."⁵ Engaging with those who you do not follow and who do not follow you is how the conversation spreads. Clark believes that the fourth step is affirmation, which is the portion of the process in which members of the community let others know they are not alone in this conversation and that others are willing to be engaged. "These tweets are a means of the network's way of saying to the public sphere that the participants- whether they support the overarching sentiment – value what is being said."⁶

³ Donovan X. Ramsey, "The Truth about Black Twitter," *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, April 10, 2015), <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/04/the-truth-about-black-twitter/390120/>.

⁴ Meredith D. Clark, "To Tweet Our Own Cause: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Online Phenomenon 'Black Twitter'" (dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Graduate School, 2014), pp. 86-112.

⁵ Meredith D. Clark, "To Tweet Our Own Cause: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Online Phenomenon 'Black Twitter'" (dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Graduate School, 2014), pp. 86-112.

⁶ Meredith D. Clark, "To Tweet Our Own Cause: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Online Phenomenon 'Black Twitter'" (dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Graduate School, 2014), pp. 86-112.

The last two steps in Clark’s process are the two most pivotal ones. The fifth step is re-affirmation. “Offline spaces serve a secondary function in the formation of Black Twitter as an active network of communicators. They are the spaces that participants return to in order to affirm points of conversations that have taken place in the Twittersphere. Here, language, symbols and cultural practices common to Black physical-world communities are used to validate the ongoing interactions of Twitter users, non-users and texts relevant to Black Twitter’s conversations. Here, individuals can present their arguments and personal experience from the Twittersphere and subject them to analysis with like-minded members of their offline personal communities and thematic nodes for confirmation.”⁷

Vindication is the final step. This is the portion of the process in which people are looking for tangible change in the real world. This is “where Black Twitter’s discourse is concerned with some specific end — be it the cancellation of a book contract or bringing attention to ongoing issues of race, gender and power, its participants use the public-private conversation as their means to achieve it... The measurable impact of these conversations in terms of the headlines, news stories, reports, editorials, blogs, etc., that they generate advance the conversations out of the realm of Black Twitter’s community-based existence via the mass media.”⁸

This fifth and sixth steps of Clark’s process in which things happen on Black Twitter are vital parts of the phenomenon now known as cancel culture. Through re-

⁷ Meredith D. Clark, “To Tweet Our Own Cause: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Online Phenomenon ‘Black Twitter’” (dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Graduate School, 2014), pp. 86-112.

⁸ Meredith D. Clark, “To Tweet Our Own Cause: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Online Phenomenon ‘Black Twitter’” (dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Graduate School, 2014), pp. 86-112.

affirmation, cancelling and cancel culture spread from Twitter to all other facets of people's lives. Nowadays, this term is widely used in people's everyday parlance. Because it is commonly used, the term has been adopted widely by politicians in recent years, many of whom have caused the phenomenon to become politically charged.

Cancel culture is often conflated with another phenomenon known as call-out culture. Call-out culture is the identification and publicly pointing out of a problem, whereas cancel culture can be best described as calling for the complete removal of an idea, person, group, etc. While these two ideas are often confused, there are smaller, more individualized narratives, such as trolling, which have been lumped together with cancel and call-out cultures. Together, all of these things have been dubbed as "outrage culture" by the media. All of these phenomena are important to understand, as call-out culture, trolling, and other narratives are often seen during the cancellation of someone. For example, a problem may be publicly addressed on Twitter, showing the use of call-out culture, however, it is then taken a step farther, and people call for the topic being discussed to be completely 'cancelled' or removed from society. The removal of that topic is what makes cancel culture different from other phenomena that stem from public outrage.

While research shows that left-leaning individuals are more likely to engage in cancel culture, there are plenty of examples of Republicans engaging in this behavior as well. Generally a progressive cancelling would be directed at any person, group, idea, or corporation that is thought to have offended an ethnic, sexual, or gender minority group. A conservative cancelling is generally directed at any person, group, idea, or corporation who is believed to be acting in unpatriotic ways.

While anyone can be cancelled, these attempts at cancelling are usually directed at celebrities and other notable public figures. These individuals have fame, a large following, and often a large presence that is readily accessible through the Internet. Because of this, their actions are often easier to target than those of an ordinary citizen.

Actions that are deemed egregious are usually Tweets, Snaps, posts, and shared content that was from many years prior. Often, those who are cancelled are accused of bullying, sexism, racism, or homophobia. Mueller says “this relates not only to influencers and motion picture stars; corporations may be ‘cancelled’ through boycotts of products or services.”⁹ Some define “cancelling as the choice to withdraw attention from the actions, values, and speech from those who are viewed as offensive.”¹⁰ Others describe this “as a public reaction to a particular person’s objectionable opinions or actions usually takes the form of a de facto boycott of the target’s work and an online campaign to draw attention to the perceived offenses and damage the wrongdoer’s cultural reputation.”¹¹

Often, after a cancelling, there is a push for a forced public apology. These vary, with some being perceived as sincere and others being perceived as “checking a box” given they come across as self-serving and insufficient to the aggrieved. Interestingly, “the evidence suggests that when a prominent figure apologizes for a controversial

⁹ Thomas S. Mueller, “Blame, Then Shame? Psychological Predictors in Cancel Culture Behavior,” *The Social Science Journal*, September 2021, pp. 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03623319.2021.1949552>.

¹⁰ Thomas S. Mueller, “Blame, Then Shame? Psychological Predictors in Cancel Culture Behavior,” *The Social Science Journal*, September 2021, pp. 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03623319.2021.1949552>.

¹¹ Gale Opposing Viewpoints Online Collection, “Cancel Culture,” Go, 2020, <https://www.gale.com/c/in-context-opposing-viewpoints>.

statement, the public is either unaffected or becomes more likely to desire that the individual be punished.”¹²

Public apologies have occurred for centuries, and while they were originally done in a manner that allowed the offending individuals to earn a second chance and make different choices in the future, that is not the case anymore. “The past remains in the present, accessible at any time through the click of a computer key. Compromising photos remain in the global digital collection forever. The retrieved information can be used out of context. It has been proposed that digital expiration dates on some forms of information may be necessary [to combat this].”¹³

How Cancellation is Done

Today, cancellation usually follows this pattern: “Person X has a misdeed in his or her past or holds a controversial opinion. Person Z, for reasons of his or her own, brings this action or opinion into wider circulation. X can react in a variety of ways, from over-the-top apology to an over-the-top pantomime of being harmed. After this, anything can happen.”¹⁴ The surfacing of this action or opinion usually involves social media.

Social media is by far the most popular platform on which to cancel someone. While there are other methods of cancelling someone such as boycotting a brand or unsubscribing to a subscription service of theirs, most people are cancelled through outcry on social media.

¹² Richard Hanania, “Does Apologizing Work? an Empirical Test of the Conventional Wisdom,” SSRN, September 8, 2015, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2654465.

¹³ Gale Opposing Viewpoints Online Collection, “Cancel Culture,” Go, 2020, <https://www.gale.com/c/in-context-opposing-viewpoints>.

¹⁴ B.D. McClay, “Cancel,” *The Hedgehog Review* 22, no. 3 (2020): pp. 157-160.

It seems as though the social media platform one chooses to cancel on is of little relevance provided that it has a way to hashtag something. Hashtags are used to sort and categorize content online, and they make it easier for consumers of social media to find and interact with what they enjoy. By hashtagging something, someone with a relatively small social media following can have an impact. Using hashtags allow for the social media algorithms to start categorizing the calls to cancel and then broadcast them to a larger audience. This audience is algorithmically determined and it is usually because they have similar interests or have interacted with something similar in the past. Once the algorithm has spread this trend celebrities and other people with larger followings and influence see it. University of New Haven lecturer Susan Campbell says that “these users’ path goes through influencers, who ‘spread the word’ on their behalf, hoping that it catches on.”¹⁵ Should it catch on, a snowball effect ensues. “The ensuing cacophony drives bewildered audiences to social media- a minimum stress, advertiser-friendly, practically truth-proof environment designed to reinforce user prejudices.”¹⁶

The algorithm uses increased engagement with a particular topic and shares it with those who have not interacted with the topic. Those who have interacted with the topic continue to be algorithmically fed information that supports their position, causing them to post about the topic even more. This whole cycle repeats itself and soon, the entire Internet knows who is being cancelled and for what reason.

¹⁵ Didi Rankovic, “Social Media Algorithms Fuel Cancel Culture, Researcher Says,” Reclaim The Net, July 21, 2020, <https://reclaimthenet.org/social-media-algorithms-fuel-cancel-culture/>.

¹⁶ Juliana Geran Pilon, “2020 America and the Cancel Culture of Fools,” *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 14, no. 2 (March 2020): pp. 183-196, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2020.1815365>.

While cancel culture seems to manifest itself most often on social media, and social media platforms “facilitated the creation of ‘cancel culture’ as we know it today,”¹⁷ a version of this phenomenon has existed through recorded history. Cancel culture “has *always* existed, in rumors, whispers and smear campaigns, and censorship and retribution.”¹⁸ And while this type of behavior may not have had a name during its origin, “the speed, sloppiness and relative anonymity of social media haven’t created a radically new strain of bullying; they just facilitate and exacerbate an old one.”¹⁹

“Attempts to call out and cancel are not new. As early as the 1920s, the predecessor of the AAUP [American Association of University Professors] spoke out against organizations that monitored the political ideology of faculty. Furthermore in 1985, the AAUP issued the statement, “External monitoring of in-class statements not only presents the prospect that the words uttered will be distorted or taken out of context; it is also likely to have a chilling effect and result in self-censorship...”²⁰

There are interesting parallels between how people were cancelled in centuries past to the way they are cancelled today. Historically, society has seen cancellations through public quests, such as the Salem Witch Trials, the Hollywood Blacklist, and Mao Zedong’s China. During the Salem Witch Trials, which occurred in Salem, Massachusetts between 1692 and 1693, “many practicing Christians, and those of other religions, had a

¹⁷ Shriya Meesala, “Cancel Culture: A Societal Obligation or Infringement on Free Speech?,” UAB Institute for Human Rights Blog, November 16, 2020, <https://sites.uab.edu/humanrights/2020/12/04/cancel-culture-a-societal-obligation-or-infringement-on-free-speech/>.

¹⁸ Ligaya Mishan, “The Long and Tortured History of Cancel Culture,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, December 3, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/03/t-magazine/cancel-culture-history.html>.

¹⁹ Ligaya Mishan, “The Long and Tortured History of Cancel Culture,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, December 3, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/03/t-magazine/cancel-culture-history.html>.

²⁰ Mark Carl Rom and Kristina Mitchell, “Teaching Politics in a Call-out and Cancel Culture,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54, no. 3 (2021): pp. 610-614, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096521000433>.

strong belief that the Devil could give certain people known as witches the power to harm others in return for their loyalty.”²¹ At the time, the region was seeing a large influx of people, which put a strain on Salem’s resources. The limited resources exacerbated existing rivalries between families with ties to the wealth of the port of Salem and those who still depended on agriculture. Controversy also brewed regarding Reverend Samuel Parris, who was Salem’s first ordained minister. He was despised for his greedy nature and rigid ways. Soon, Parris’ female family members, including his nine-year-old daughter and his eleven-year-old niece, as well as other, unrelated females, started having “fits.” During these fits they threw things, made strange noises, and contorted their body in odd ways. The local doctor blamed this behavior on supernatural power and the women were brought before a judge. Under pressure from judges Jonathan Corwin and John Hathorne, the girls blamed three women for afflicting them: Tituba, the Parris’ Caribbean slave; Sarah Good, a homeless beggar; and Sarah Osborne, an elderly impoverished woman.²² The women were found guilty and thrown in jail. This began a period where townspeople looked for strange behavior and reported it, with many of the supposed witches being imprisoned and hanged.

While many of today’s cancellations may see a celebrity whose reputation is temporarily tinged, these attempts at cancelling what townspeople believed to be witchcraft had a more dramatic effect on society. Here, cancel culture resulted in a loss of freedom and life. Through these attempts at cancellation, 24 suspected witches were

²¹ Smithsonian Magazine, “A Brief History of the Salem Witch Trials,” Smithsonian.com (Smithsonian Institution, October 23, 2007), <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-the-salem-witch-trials>.

²² Smithsonian Magazine, “A Brief History of the Salem Witch Trials,” Smithsonian.com (Smithsonian Institution, October 23, 2007), <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-the-salem-witch-trials-175162489/>.

killed through hanging or torture. Historians “believe the accused witches were victims of mob mentality,”²³ which further connects them to cancel culture as it is seen today, which can be viewed as a form of mob mentality.

The Hollywood Blacklist is another example of historical cancellations. This was a list of media workers who were made ineligible for employment because of alleged communist or subversive ties. The Blacklist was generated by Hollywood Studios in the late 1940s and the 1950s. The list stemmed from Congressional accusations of communist influence in the film industry when Senators began investigations into Hollywood’s role promoting Soviet propaganda. After these Senators’ investigation, the House Un-American Activities Committee began its investigation in 1947, and shortly thereafter, Hollywood announced that no subversive would knowingly be employed. Of the individuals subpoenaed that year, 10 refused to testify, giving them the title of “The Hollywood Ten.” These ten were indicted for contempt of Congress and were sentenced to a short stint in prison. Although Hollywood’s motion picture studios initially supported The Hollywood Ten, after their convictions, they soon denounced them and they were suspended without pay. Because of HUAC’s statement and Hollywood studios’ position, a blacklist of individuals ineligible for employment was born, which began with the ten individuals who refused to testify. HUAC continued subpoenaing individuals during the 1950s, asking questions about their activities and the activities of their peers. These questions often meant implicating themselves, coworkers, or friends, as those who did not cooperate with the subpoena risked jail time and blacklisting.

²³ Rebecca Beatrice Brooks, “The Salem Witch Trials Victims: Who Were They?,” History of Massachusetts Blog, November 13, 2021, <https://historyofmassachusetts.org/salem-witch-trials-victims/>.

“The blacklist was implemented by the Hollywood studios to promote their patriotic credentials in the face of public attacks and served to shield the film industry from the economic harm that would result from an association of its product with subversives. Though many of the entries on the blacklist were the result of rumours, the hint of suspicion was enough to end a career.”²⁴ The blacklist persisted up until the 1960s and at its height, swelled to 150 names.

This example of cancel culture in history is a closer representation of what is seen today. Unlike the Salem Witch Trials where individuals faced death, the Hollywood Blacklist impacted celebrities’ careers, which is a common effect of cancel culture in today’s society. While many celebrities’ careers are able to recover today due to the fast-paced nature of the society in which we now reside, that was not an option for the individuals on the Blacklist. These people had their careers permanently ruined through cancellation which had a significant negative impact on their lives.

There are more extreme examples of cancellations in history as well. The cultural revolution which occurred in China during Communist leader Mao Zedong’s effort to assert his authority is one of them. Zedong was born in 1893 in the Shaoshan village in the Hunan province as the son of a peasant. Zedong became an affluent grain dealer and farmer. He grew up in an environment where education was seen as only necessary for keeping records and accounts. Zedong rebelled against his paternal authorities and left the village. After leaving the village, Zedong enlisted in the army, where he spent six months as a soldier, which marked the end of his military career and the beginning of a slightly scattered professional life. Zedong graduated the First Provincial Normal School

²⁴ Allison Perlman, “Hollywood Blacklist,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., October 18, 2021), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hollywood-blacklist>.

in Changsha and attended the Peking University in Beijing. He then landed his first job post-education as a principal of a primary school. In 1923, when the Chinese Communist Party entered into an alliance with Sun Yat-sen's Nationalist Party, Zedong was one of the first communists to join the joint party.

In 1966, Zedong, who was previously the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, believed that the current leaders of that organization were taking the party and China in the wrong direction. Because of that belief, "Mao called on the nation's youth to purge the "impure" elements of Chinese society and revive the revolutionary spirit that had led to victory in the civil war 20 years earlier and the formation of the People's Republic of China."²⁵ Zedong's call sparked what is called The Cultural Revolution. The youth formed paramilitary groups that tortured, killed, and imprisoned members of China's older and intellectual population. This continued in various phases until Mao's death in 1976, with some 1.5 million people being killed during the Cultural Revolution.

Zedong's Cultural Revolution serves as an example of a large-scale cancellation of ideas and people with whom Zedong did not agree. While today's cancellations may not involve loss of life, they do often involve people attempting to cancel things they do not agree with. Using Zedong might seem a bit extreme, however, this example of widespread cancellation shows that if cancel culture and the cancellations that society is seeing today go unchecked, they may blossom into a much larger issue.

So, while some may view the behavior now known as cancel culture as a recent development, this type of public shaming, punishment and cancellation is not a new concept.

²⁵ History.com Editors, "Cultural Revolution," History.com (A&E Television Networks, November 9, 2009), <https://www.history.com/topics/china/cultural-revolution>.

While ‘cancelling’ has occurred for centuries, the prevalence of it has increased dramatically in recent years. In September 2020, a Pew Research study showed that 44% of Americans reported having heard at least a ‘fair amount’ about the term cancel culture, with 22% of Americans having heard ‘a great deal’ about the topic.²⁶ The increased role that technology plays in people’s lives has been blamed for the rise of cancel culture and studies of online communications have attributed the intensification of culture wars to the connectivity provided by digital social networks.

Why Do People Cancel?

Forty nine percent of Americans who are familiar with the term cancel culture say that the term describes an action that people take to hold others accountable.²⁷ While responses vary, the most common responses when people are asked to describe cancel culture in their own words centered around accountability. These definitions give us some insight into why people choose to engage in this behavior.

Seventeen percent of Americans who say that calling out others on social media holds people accountable say it can be a teaching moment that helps people learn from their mistakes and do better in the future. Conversely, 18% of those who say calling out others unjustly punishes them say it’s because people are not taking the context of a person’s post or the intentions behind it into account before confronting that person.²⁸

²⁶ Katherine Schaeffer, “How Americans Feel about 'Cancel Culture' and Offensive Speech in 6 Charts,” Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, August 17, 2021), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/17/how-americans-feel-about-cancel-culture-and-offensive-speech-in-6-charts/>.

²⁷ Emily A. Vogels et al., “Americans and 'Cancel Culture': Where Some See Calls for Accountability, Others See Censorship, Punishment,” Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech (Pew Research Center, September 27, 2021), <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/05/19/americans-and-cancel-culture-where-some-see-calls-for-accountability-others-see-censorship-punishment/>.

²⁸ Emily A. Vogels et al., “Americans and 'Cancel Culture': Where Some See Calls for Accountability, Others See Censorship, Punishment,” Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech (Pew Research Center, September 27, 2021), <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/05/19/americans-and-cancel-culture-where-some-see-calls-for-accountability-others-see-censorship-punishment/>.

Interestingly, nearly a quarter of adults mention that there is a fine line between rushing to judge or trying to be helpful when calling someone out online. Fourteen percent of these individuals' responses center on whether calling out others on social media is a productive behavior or not; 10% focus on whether free speech or creating a comfortable environment online is more important; 8% address the perceived agendas of those who call out others; and 4% focus on whether speaking up is the best action to take if people find content offensive. Some students, however, feel that others need no reason to cancel someone. "People won't call you out because your opinion is wrong. People will call you out for literally anything."²⁹

Anne Charity Hudley, a researcher at the University of California Santa Barbara, said "Canceling is a way to acknowledge that you don't have to have the power to change structural inequality. You don't even have to have the power to change all of public sentiment. But as an individual, you can still have power beyond measure."³⁰

This power comes into play at the individual level by those who choose to speak up, typically because they know that those around them may hold the same or very similar views. "Those believing that many others hold similar views within a group feel emboldened to speak up openly in meetings, debates, or online social networks; they are convinced that their beliefs and attitudes are so popular that they will be adopted eventually by everyone."³¹ In contrast, those who are on the opposite side of the spectrum and believe they hold minority opinions are more likely to withdraw from the debate and

²⁹ Mark Carl Rom and Kristina Mitchell, "Teaching Politics in a Call-out and Cancel Culture," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54, no. 3 (2021): pp. 610-614, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096521000433>.

³⁰ Nicole Dudenhofer, "Is Cancel Culture Effective? How Public Shaming Has Changed," *Pegasus Magazine*, 2020, <https://www.ucf.edu/pegasus/is-cancel-culture-effective/>.

³¹ Pippa Norris, "Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?," *Political Studies*, August 11, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>.

stay silent. Many of the issues that spawn a cancellation are ‘hot button’ progressive issues, causing many to remain silent if they are not overly supportive of what is being discussed. “Caution about rocking the boat can be expected to be strongest on controversial, sensitive, and polarizing topics, such as those concerning issues of sex and sexuality, gender identity, and sexism, racism, and ethnic or religious identities.”³² Because this caution causes the public to believe the consensus is support for this topic, even when that might not be the case, the group opinion shifts towards accepting the view that is most prominent and therefore seen as the majority view.

Conclusion

The term cancel being used to describe the removal of something that someone does not like is not a new concept, as it originated in a 1980s song. This term gained frequent use by those who are members of Black Twitter, and it migrated from the social media platform into everyday conversations. While there are more examples of left-leaning individuals engaging in cancel culture, there are plenty of examples of right-leaning individuals condemning actions they find less-than-desirable. The individual(s) who feel they have been impacted then bring the perceived offence to the attention of a larger group, usually using social media. And, while this phenomenon might seem to be something that has started recently due the publicity that it has received, that is not the case. There are examples of cancellations from centuries ago, although at the time, the term cancel culture did not exist.

³² Pippa Norris, “Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?,” *Political Studies*, August 11, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>.

CHAPTER III

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Beliefs about and willingness to engage in cancel culture rest on a variety of demographic datapoints. In the broader culture, these includes things like a person's age, their political ideology, and their gender. In academia, however, the statistic with the most impact is one's political beliefs. Additionally, fears of cancellation in academia alter individual's behaviors. The potential impacts of cancellation affect individuals ranging from ordinary citizens to academics to celebrities, with the difference in force and long-term effects of those cancellations being the loftiness of one's position.

Cancellation in the Broader Culture

One of the things to consider when viewing cancel culture in the broader culture is whether the phenomenon is viewed positively or negatively. As part of this, it is important to understand whether the timing of actions that are deemed egregious impact people's desire to engage in cancel culture. It is also important to establish whether people think that cancel culture is a helpful tool to hold people accountable or whether it punishes people.

General Beliefs

The survey that formed the basis of Eric Kaufmann's *The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America* asked a question surrounding what respondents felt was the biggest issue facing America. The results showed that "over 30% of voters ranked cancel culture and political correctness as a top-three issue from a list of nine. Among

Republicans, 48% ranked this issue in the top three...”³³ Ryan Lizza’s POLITICO survey results support Kaufmann’s. “A plurality (46%) of Americans believe that cancel culture ‘has gone too far.’”³⁴ For many, day-to-day developments regarding controversial or offensive statements change their opinion on public figures. Fifty-four percent of respondents to the POLITICO survey said that a problematic statement made a year ago would likely completely or somewhat change their opinion of the person, with only 29% saying that the statement would change their opinion a little bit or not at all.

In that same POLITICO study, “twenty-seven percent of voters said cancel culture had a somewhat positive or very positive impact on society, but almost half (49%) said it had a somewhat negative or very negative impact on society.”³⁵ Kaufmann’s research also shows that society has a generally unfavorable view regarding cancel culture. “...While 29% of people have not heard of cancel culture, among those who have, 62% have an unfavorable view while 9% have a positive view.”³⁶

When a Pew Research study asked if cancel culture was more likely to hold people accountable or punish those who don’t deserve it, 58% of U.S. adults say in general, calling out others on social media is more likely to hold people accountable, while 38% say it is more likely to punish people who don’t deserve it. The Pew Research study findings are depicted below.

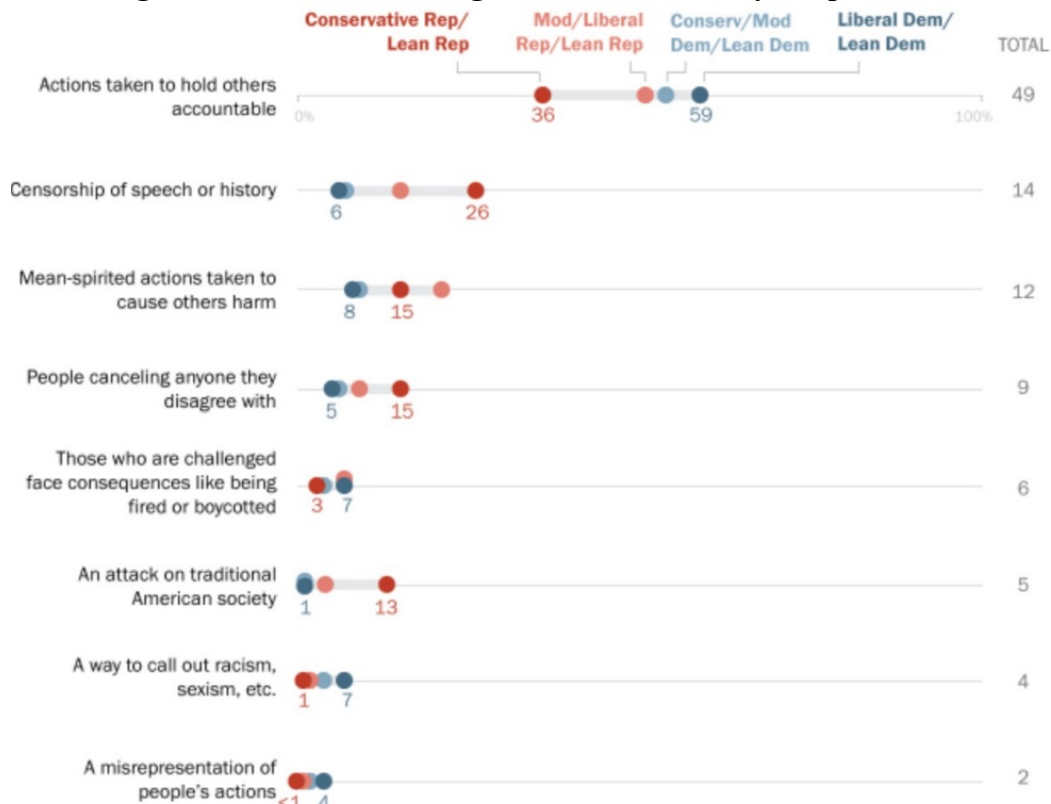
³³ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

³⁴ Ryan Lizza, “Americans Tune in to 'Cancel Culture' - and Don't like What They See,” POLITICO (POLITICO, July 27, 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/22/americans-cancel-culture-377412>.

³⁵ Ryan Lizza, “Americans Tune in to 'Cancel Culture' - and Don't like What They See,” POLITICO (POLITICO, July 27, 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/22/americans-cancel-culture-377412>.

³⁶ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

Figure 3.1: Political Ideologies & Beliefs on Why People Cancel



Source: Americans and Cancel Culture

Cancel culture is clearly an issue for many Americans. With a plurality of Americans reporting they feel cancel culture has gone too far, it is important to establish what makes individuals likely to engage in this phenomenon, as it continues despite individuals distaste for it.

Gender

According to a Fall 2020 Pew Research study, men were more likely to have heard a great deal about cancel culture than women, at 27% and 18% respectively. Thirty-one percent of men reported hearing nothing at all about cancel culture while 44% of women reported the same. This stands to reason, as studies have confirmed that

“women are modestly less pro-free speech than men...”³⁷ and that “women are over a third of a scale point more pro-PC [political correctness] than men.”³⁸

A Rasmussen Report study from October 2021 asked “Which is more important, protecting people from speech that is offensive, or protecting freedom of speech?”³⁹ Fourteen percent of male respondents said they felt protecting people from offensive speech was more important, while 18% of women said the same. When it came to protecting free speech, 78% of males said that was more important, compared to 71% of women. Women are statistically more likely to endorse cancel culture on the basis that it protects people from offensive speech than they are to rebuke it in the name of free speech.

The same Rasmussen Report study referenced above showed that “slightly more men (75%) than women (70%) think cancel culture is out of control.”⁴⁰ While the 5 percentage point difference in opinion between the opinion of males and cancel culture and females and cancel culture might seem small and irrelevant, when that is compounded with other factors, the 5 percentage points become a bigger deal. In 2019, 56% of female registered voters identified as a Democrat and 42% of registered male

³⁷ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

³⁸ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

³⁹ Rasmussen Reports, “72% Say 'Cancel Culture' Is out of Control,” Rasmussen Reports®, November 3, 2021, https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/partner_surveys/72_say_cancel_culture_is_out_of_control.

⁴⁰ Rasmussen Reports, “72% Say 'Cancel Culture' Is out of Control,” Rasmussen Reports®, November 3, 2021, https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/partner_surveys/72_say_cancel_culture_is_out_of_control.

voters identified in the same way.⁴¹ This 14 point spread not only helps to explain the difference in opinion between the two genders and their beliefs on cancel culture, but also shows that women are more liberal, a trait which has also been identified as impacting one's beliefs on cancel culture.

Race & Ethnicity

Kaufmann's study identified that "Whites are slightly more likely to oppose cancel culture than minorities..."⁴² but "that a slight majority of African-Americans see PC as demeaning to blacks rather than necessary to protect them."⁴³ The same Rasmussen Report study referenced above found that "71% of whites, 73% of blacks and 76% of other minorities – think cancel culture has gotten out of control."⁴⁴

The 2020 YouGov study supported the notion that whites are more likely to oppose cancel culture than other racial and ethnic groups. When asked "In general, how effective or ineffective do you think "canceling" someone is in driving social change?"⁴⁵ 49% of whites said it was somewhat or very effective. Sixty-two percent of Blacks, 53% of Hispanics, and 50% of other racial minorities said the same.

⁴¹ Ruth Igielnik, "Men and Women in the U.S. Continue to Differ in Voter Turnout Rate, Party Identification," Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, September 2, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/18/men-and-women-in-the-u-s-continue-to-differ-in-voter-turnout-rate-party-identification/>.

⁴² Eric Kaufmann, "The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America," Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

⁴³ Eric Kaufmann, "The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America," Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

⁴⁴ Rasmussen Reports, "72% Say 'Cancel Culture' Is out of Control," Rasmussen Reports®, November 3, 2021, https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/partner_surveys/72_say_cancel_culture_is_out_of_control.

⁴⁵ Jamie Ballard, "Most Americans Say Cancel Culture Is a Big Problem," YouGov (YouGov, July 27, 2020), <https://today.yougov.com/topics/entertainment/articles-reports/2020/07/28/cancel-culture-yahoo-news-poll-data>.

When asked “In general, how appropriate or inappropriate do you think it is to “cancel” someone for making an objectionable or offensive statement?,”⁴⁶ more whites found it appropriate than those of other races. Sixty-six percent of white individuals found it very or somewhat appropriate to cancel someone in that circumstance, compared to 60% of Blacks, 54% of Hispanics and 57% of those of other races. This is contrary to the general feelings held by racial and ethnic groups who generally endorse cancel culture at higher rates than whites.

The difference in opinion regarding the appropriateness of cancelling someone over a statement they made is not due to a difference in familiarity with cancel culture. Usually, those who are more familiar with the ins and outs of the phenomenon are more outspoken against it, however, that is not the case with race. When asked “How familiar are you with the concept of ‘cancel culture’?”⁴⁷ 77% of whites said they were somewhat or very familiar with the concept. Of Blacks, 71% said the same.

While there are small differences in opinions surrounding cancel culture when viewing responses by race, when race and partisanship are viewed together, there are slight differences. Kaufmann’s study showed that weak Democrats of religious minorities are “somewhat more pro-cancel than average, while weak Republicans and married people are somewhat more anti-cancel.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Jamie Ballard, “Most Americans Say Cancel Culture Is a Big Problem,” YouGov (YouGov, July 27, 2020), <https://today.yougov.com/topics/entertainment/articles-reports/2020/07/28/cancel-culture-yahoo-news-poll-data>.

⁴⁷ Rasmussen Reports, “72% Say ‘Cancel Culture’ Is Out of Control - Demographic Details,” 72% Say ‘Cancel Culture’ Is Out of Control - Demographic Details - Rasmussen Reports®, November 3, 2021, https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/partner_surveys/crosstabs_cancel_culture_october_27_28_2021.

⁴⁸ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

In general, whites oppose cancel culture slightly more than other racial and ethnic groups. These groups are more likely to find it to be an effective means of change than white individuals do.

Education

Those who have at least a bachelor's degree had more familiarity with cancel culture than those with lower education levels. Fifty six percent of those who have a bachelor's or higher level of education report having heard a fair amount to a great deal about cancel culture. Of those who only have a high school level of education, 32% say that they have heard a fair amount or great deal about this phenomenon. Kaufmann's study showed that of the college educated, 74% of the respondents agreed that political correctness and cancel culture had gone too far. Only 14% opposed that sentiment.

When asked "How confident, if at all, are you that you know what it means for someone to be "canceled" in popular culture?"⁴⁹ those with higher education levels were significantly more confident in their knowledge of the subject. Among those who have a high school diploma or lower, 21% reported being very confident that they knew what it meant to be cancelled. Of those with up to a two year degree, 27% reported the same. 39% of respondents who have at least a four year degree reported they felt very confident they knew what it meant to be cancelled.

Despite many with higher levels of education agreeing that political correctness and cancel culture had gone too far, people with higher education levels are more likely to find cancelling someone appropriate after that individual makes an objectionable

⁴⁹ Jamie Ballard, "Most Americans Say Cancel Culture Is a Big Problem," YouGov (YouGov, July 27, 2020), <https://today.yougov.com/topics/entertainment/articles-reports/2020/07/28/cancel-culture-yahoo-news-poll-data>.

statement. A 2020 YouGov study revealed that of those with up to a high school level of education, 27% found cancelling someone to be a very appropriate response to an objectionable statement. Of those with some college or up to an associates degree, 31% of respondents felt the same. Among those with a four year degree or higher, 36% felt it was very appropriate to cancel someone in response to a statement they had made.

Despite those with higher education levels finding cancel culture to be offensive, those with higher levels of education are more likely to engage in cancel culture and to find it an appropriate response to something.

Age

Age is a predictor of one's attitudes towards cancel culture, as well as the pros and cons that one sees in the phenomenon. When asked whether they favor political correctness as it protects against discrimination or oppose it given it stifles the freedom of speech, "half of the respondents under 35 are pro-PC on this question, with only about three in 10 opposed."⁵⁰

According to a Fall 2020 Pew Research study 44% of Americans say they had heard a great deal or a fair amount about cancel culture. Of those under 30 years old, 64% said the same. When looking at those who were between the ages of 30 and 49, 46% of them say that they had heard a great deal or a fair amount about cancel culture, while 34% of those that are 50 and older report the same. Research shows that "those under 25

⁵⁰ Eric Kaufmann, "The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America," Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

[are] about 20 points less likely than older respondents to agree that PC has gone too far.”⁵¹

In the same 2020 YouGov study referenced above, respondents were asked “How confident, if at all, are you that you know what it means for someone to be “canceled” in popular culture?”⁵² Younger respondents were significantly more confident they knew what being cancelled meant than older respondents. Of those between the ages of 18 and 34, 41% said they were very confident they knew what being cancelled meant. Of those between 35 and 54, 29% said the same. Only 17% of those 55 and above reported being very confident they knew what it meant to be cancelled.

Kaufmann’s Qualtrics survey results show the younger someone is, the more likely they are to support cancel culture and political correctness. Of those 18-25, 55% say they agree cancel culture and political correctness has gone too far, with 22% disagreeing. Those between the ages 26 and 35 have 72% agreeing to that statement and 20% disagreeing. As the age increases, the percentage that report these phenomena have gone too far also increases. Of those between 36 and 50, 75% report they agree cancel culture and political correctness has gone too far, with only 12% disagreeing. Seventy-seven percent of those above the age of 51 say they agree with that statement and 13% disagree.

The 2020 POLITICO report showed that members of Generation Z are the most sympathetic towards punishing people or institutions for offensive views, and they are

⁵¹ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

⁵² Jamie Ballard, “Most Americans Say Cancel Culture Is a Big Problem,” YouGov (YouGov, July 27, 2020), <https://today.yougov.com/topics/entertainment/articles-reports/2020/07/28/cancel-culture-yahoo-news-poll-data>.

followed closely by Millennials. GenXers and Baby Boomers have the strongest antipathy towards cancel culture. “This indicates that we are likely to see more support for cancel culture as millennials become a larger share of the workforce.”⁵³

Age and Partisanship

Interestingly, among Democrats, nearly three-quarters of those under 50 (73%) as well as those ages 50 and older (76%) say calling out others on social media is more likely to hold people accountable for their actions. At the same time, majorities of both younger and older Republicans say this action is more likely to punish people who didn’t deserve it (58% and 55%, respectively). Lizza’s research shows “it appears to be more of a liberal pursuit: Half of Democrats have shared their dislike of a public figure on social media after they did something objectionable, while only a third of Republicans say they have.”⁵⁴

So, while some members of both political parties engage in this behavior, the majority of Republicans find it to be a less-than-ideal solution. This means the trend is largely supported by left-leaning individuals.

Strength of Political Party Affiliation

While Democrats and Republicans were about as likely to say they’d heard at least a fair amount about cancel culture, when party and the intensity with which they affiliate with that party was taken into account, there were striking differences in familiarity. “When asked to make trade-offs, strong Democrats lean more in favor of PC

⁵³ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

⁵⁴ Ryan Lizza, “Americans Tune in to 'Cancel Culture' - and Don't like What They See,” POLITICO (POLITICO, July 27, 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/22/americans-cancel-culture-377412>.

than others, giving greater priority to protection from hate speech and minority harm, while Republicans are more strongly anti-PC and pro-free speech.”⁵⁵ Kaufmann’s research shows there is a 20-to-40-point difference, with this difference being increased support, between self-identified “strong Democrats” and others on a partisanship scale. “Liberal Democrats stand out as most likely to be familiar with the term.”⁵⁶ This means that those who consider themselves avid supporters of the Democratic party are twice as likely as those who consider themselves weak supporters to endorse cancel culture.

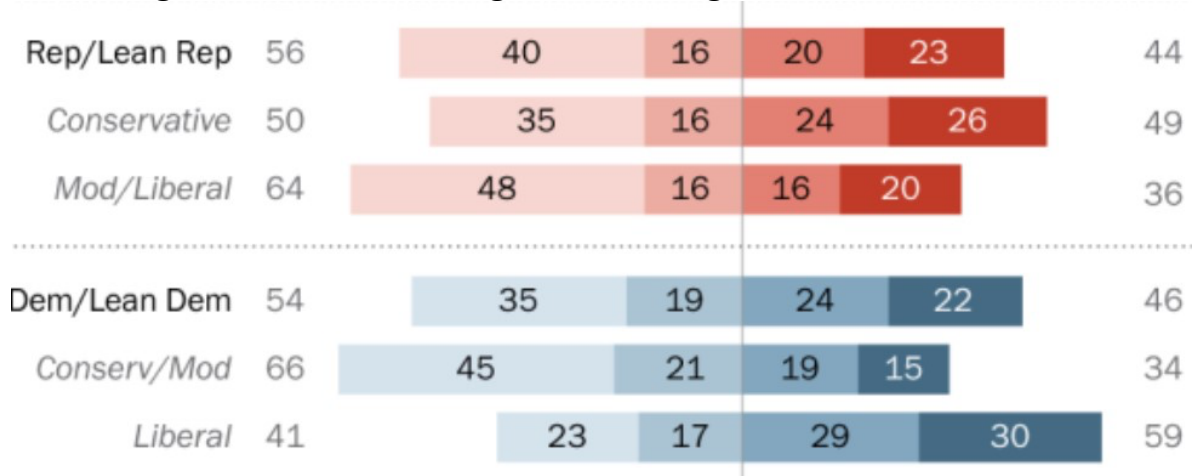
According to Pew Research, whose study results are shown below, 59% of liberal Democrats said they had heard at least a fair amount about cancel culture, compared with roughly a third of conservative and moderate Democrats (34%). Similarly, around half of conservative Republicans (49%) had heard a fair amount about the term, compared with around a third of moderate and liberal Republicans (36%). “...Strong Democrats are often the outlier – substantially less opposed to cancel culture than weak Democrats or Republicans.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

⁵⁶ Emily A. Vogels, “Americans and ‘Cancel Culture’: Where Some See Calls for Accountability, Others See Censorship, Punishment,” Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech (Pew Research Center, September 27, 2021), <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/05/19/americans-and-cancel-culture-where-some-see-calls-for-accountability-others-see-censorship-punishment/>.

⁵⁷ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

Figure 3.2: Political Ideologies & Knowledge About Cancel Culture



Source: Americans and Cancel Culture

The strength with which one affiliates themselves with their political party has an impact on whether they think cancel culture has gone too far. Compared to weak Democrats, “strong Democrats are almost 1.5 scale points less likely to agree.”⁵⁸ Kauffman’s study shows that, when asked “thinking about political correctness are you generally in favor of it (it protects against discrimination), or against it (it stifles freedom of speech)?”, a majority of both strong and weak Democrats favor political correctness, however, there are differences among the groups. When viewing strong Democrats, 65% of respondents said they agreed with political correctness and 14% opposed it. Among weak Democrats, 46% said they were in favor of it and 32% said they were opposed. The results are almost the opposite when viewing Republican answers to the same question. Twenty-one percent of weak Republicans favor political correctness and 56% oppose it, while 21% of Strong Republicans favor it and 65% oppose it.

All of the above statistics show that while demographic characteristics such as education level, age, race and religion play a small role in predicting whether an

⁵⁸ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

individual will engage in the cancel culture process, the biggest indicator is their political party affiliation. “The youngest age group is considerably more pro-PC and less pro-free speech than older age groups, even if party identification is a stronger correlate of attitudes than age.”⁵⁹

Generally, research shows that the more strongly someone identifies as a Democrat, the more likely they are to support cancel culture.

Risks of Cancelling in the Broader Culture

There are heated debates surrounding campaigns of public shaming and their apparent efficacy or lack thereof. Some claim these campaigns give voices to marginalized groups, citing this technique as a way of civil resistance to hold public figures accountable. Others, however, point out various dangers, including the fact that this is silencing free speech and debate.

Some see cancel culture as an effective tool to mobilize large groups with a common goal aimed at achieving social justice and cultural change, through actions like legal redress or a public apology. They achieve this by withdrawing attention from someone or something that is seen as morally offensive. It is a form of social pressure for those who are seen as offensive to change. Such campaigns have been waged on those who are alleged to have committed harassment, rape, and pedophilia. Other activists have used this technique “when calling out the authors of racist textbooks, fatal cases of police violence in communities of color, racial stereotypes used to sell consumer products, and university departments lacking diversity.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Eric Kaufmann, “The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America,” Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022, <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.

⁶⁰ Pippa Norris, “Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?,” *Political Studies*, August 11, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>.

While these acts are all noble in the abstract, there are dire consequences. “The process may start with legitimate criticism of cases attracting widespread moral disapproval, like outing serial sexual abusers, but critics caution that is a slippery slope silencing a variety of unpopular perspectives, including racist, anti-Semitic, misogynistic, Islamophobic, transphobic, and xenophobic views. As the tumbrils have rolled downhill, like revolutions eventually eating their own, the process may ultimately undermine tolerance of contrarians, generate groupthink, and reinforce the risks of confirmation bias in social science, thereby stifling intellectual debate, ideological diversity, and academic freedom...”⁶¹

Some targets of cancel culture have been fired or suspended from their jobs as a result of cancel culture. Others have been denied future opportunities. Sometimes celebrities will retreat from the public eye after having been cancelled, however, that is often relatively temporary. Some people face legal ramifications and others face ruined reputations. “Cancellation can mean losing your job, getting dropped by your publisher, losing your friends, or being disliked by strangers. And the reasons for cancellation can vary from racist abuse, to domestic violence, to losing your temper in public, to things you might have done or said years ago.”⁶² The possibility of adverse effects for expressing one’s opinion is widely felt according to a January 2022 study conducted by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. “Nearly one-quarter of people surveyed are ‘fairly often’ or ‘very often’ afraid to state certain opinions for fear of losing

⁶¹ Pippa Norris, “Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?,” *Political Studies*, August 11, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>.

⁶² B.D. McClay, “Cancel,” *The Hedgehog Review* 22, no. 3 (2020): pp. 157-160.

their jobs or their standings in school, while 18% are similarly ‘afraid to say what [they] believe’ for fear of the potential consequences.”⁶³

Cancellation in Academia

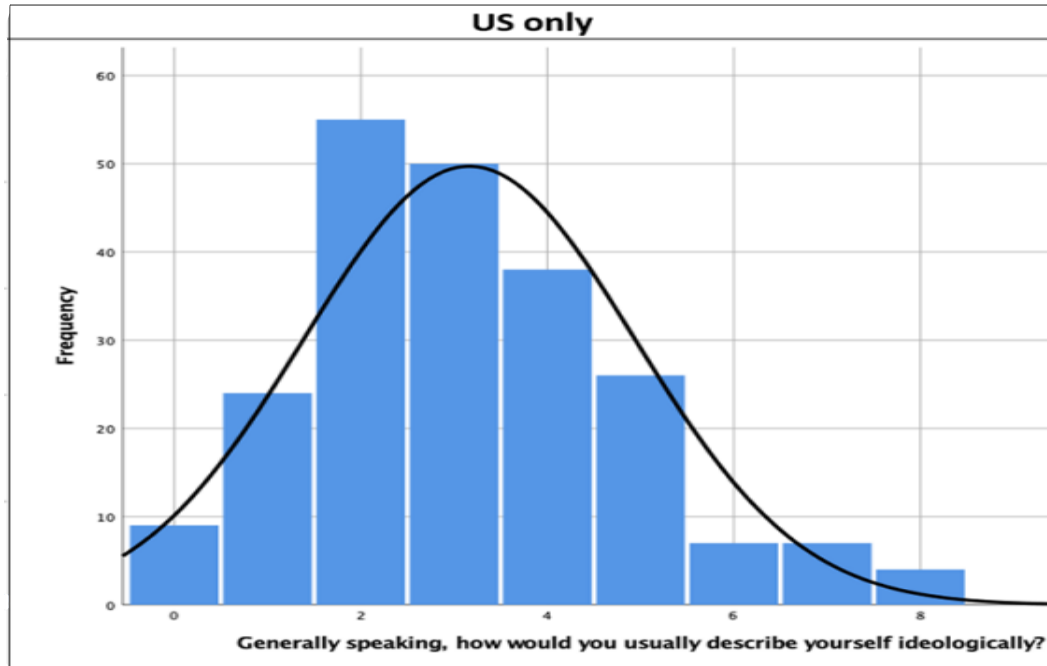
A World of Political Science (WPS) study was conducted to gauge whether there was an increase in “liberal” identities among those who are political scientists in academia. This study was conducted because data, like those shown above, show that Democrats are more likely to engage in cancel culture. Researchers wanted to see if this ideology affected the environments of college campuses. This study asked about political ideology as “This is commonly claimed in political arguments about the “silencing” of conservative or right-wing voices on campus...”⁶⁴ 1,788 political scientists were asked the following question: Generally speaking, how would you usually describe yourself? The responses, which are shown in the chart below, were collected on a sliding scale from the most left-wing (0) to the most right-wing (10). The self-identified scale was initially broken into four categories: far-left (0-1), moderate left (2-4), moderate right (5-8), and far-right (9-10). For analysis, this was broken into left (0-5) and right (6-10). The figure below shows the distribution, modeling a left-wing skew. “In total, the majority of political scientists (58%) around the globe saw themselves as located in the moderate left of the ideological spectrum, while another 14% positioned themselves on the “far left.” The ideological imbalance of the discipline should not be exaggerated, however; just over

⁶³ Fire, “Cancel Culture Widely Viewed as Threat to Democracy, Freedom,” FIRE, January 31, 2022, <https://www.thefire.org/national-fire-survey-cancel-culture-widely-viewed-as-threat-to-democracy-freedom/>.

⁶⁴ Pippa Norris, “Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?,” *Political Studies*, August 11, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>.

one quarter (27%) of political scientists worldwide placed themselves as moderate right, although at the same time very few respondents (only 2%) saw themselves as “far-right.”

Figure 3.3: Political Ideologies of Academics



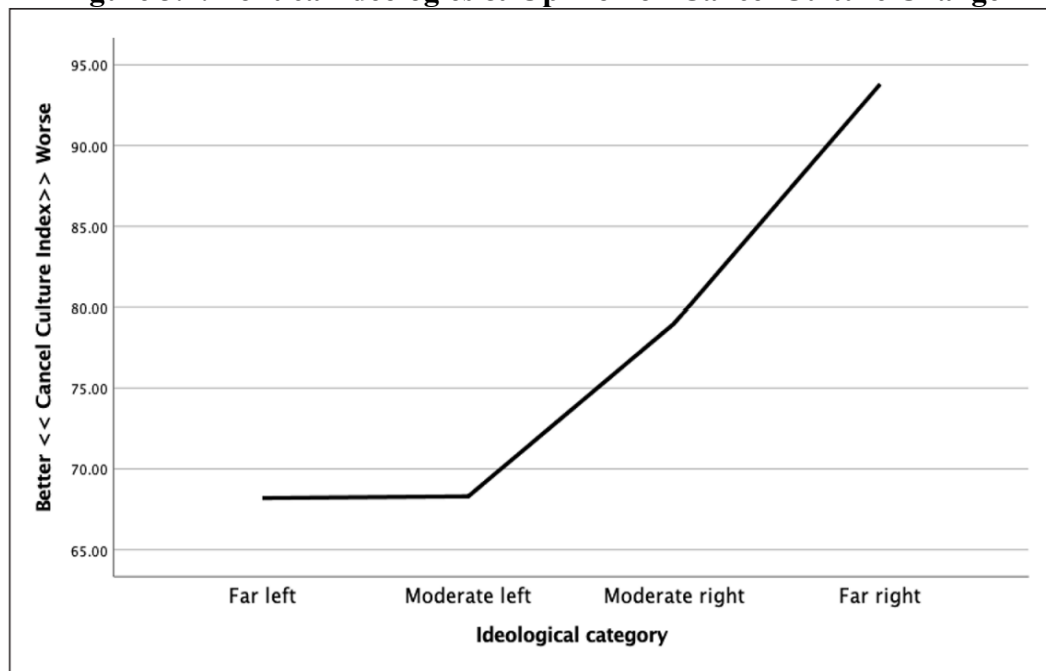
Source: Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?

Because of this, the researchers further studied these academics to discern the following: “on the basis of their personal experiences, do many political scientists feel that restrictions on academic freedom of speech, pressures for ideological conformity, and politically correct speech have worsened in recent years? And, given the ideological imbalance in the discipline, and their minority status, are right-wing political scientists most likely to agree with these statements in liberal cultures, but not in conservative cultures?”⁶⁵ To consider whether this phenomenon varies by society, the researchers broke participants into three groups. Model A is restricted to 193 respondents studying or working in the US (where the cancel culture is often thought to be most evident) while Model B includes 1023 respondents in 23 post-industrial societies (in North America,

⁶⁵ Pippa Norris, “Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?,” *Political Studies*, August 11, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>.

Western Europe, and Australasia). Model C includes the pooled sample of 487 scholars in 78 developing countries worldwide. The results of this study showed that left-right ideological identity is a constant and significant predictor of the Cancel Culture Index. The effect of one's ideology is stronger in the United States than in all other post-industrial societies. As illustrated in the figure below, American scholars on the moderate right and far-right report experiencing worsening pressures to be politically correct, limits on academic freedom, and in lack of respect for open debate. Americans were not the only ones with this view, however. In the pooled sample across all the post-industrial countries, more right-wing political scientists reported that, in their own experience, the cancel culture had worsened in recent years. These responses are illustrated on the following graph.

Figure 3.4: Political Ideologies & Opinion on Cancel Culture Change



Source: Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?

Risks of Cancellings in Academia

Many are concerned about the education system as educators and education institutions figure out how to teach while avoiding being cancelled. Academic administrators, students, teachers, and professors are all at risk of being cancelled when expressing viewpoints or teaching a subject that has been deemed unacceptable. The National Association of Scholars describes the process of academic cancellation as: 1) a professor, administrator, or student says or writes something considered heretical by progressives; 2) outcry ensues among the faculty and student body, who demand institutional discipline; 3) administrators cave to the mob and punish the “culprit.”⁶⁶ For those that are not tenured, punishments can range from a suspension to a firing, while tenured individuals usually have more protections. For students, however, this cancellation might end their career before it even starts, especially since social media is almost guaranteed to be involved.

The National Association of Scholars reports 194 examples of academic cancellation. While these span from 1975 to the end of 2021, all but 15 of those examples are from the last 5 years. “Between 2000 and 2020, political scientist Jeffrey Adam Sachs (n.d) documented 84 faculty contracts that were terminated because of political-speech controversies.”⁶⁷ For some professors, there is the fear of ending up on *Professor Watchlist*, a website in which students report professors whom students feel slighted by. *Professor Watchlist* and similar websites serve as a blacklist, making those professors a target for future outcry, helping to perpetuate the cycle. “Watchlists are essentially

⁶⁶ David Acevedo, “Tracking Cancel Culture in Higher Education,” NAS, June 2020, <https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/tracking-cancel-culture-in-higher-education>.

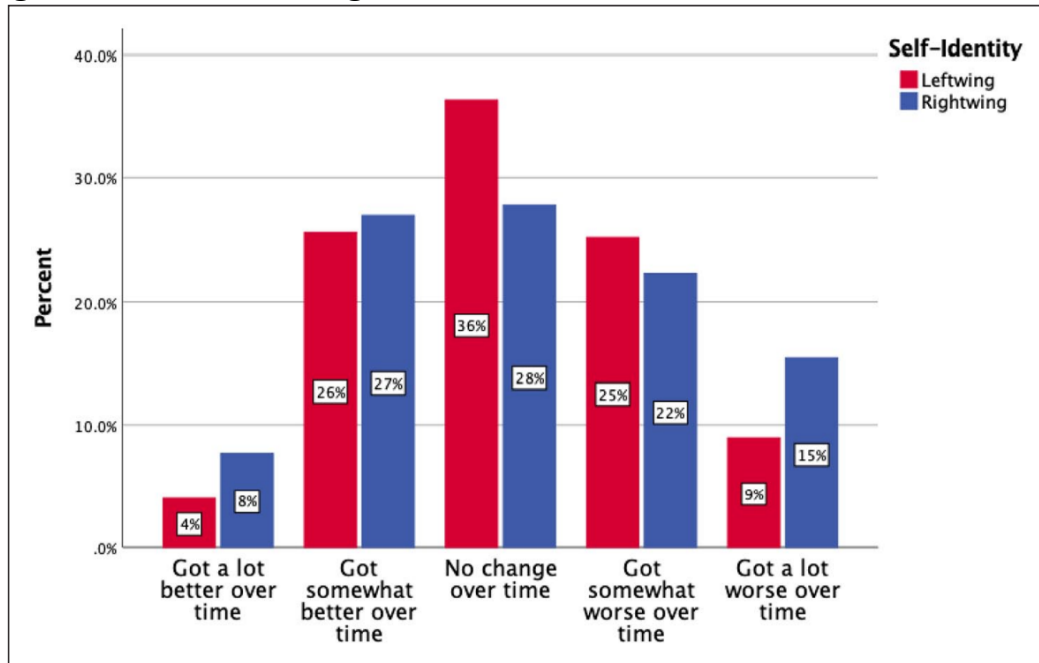
⁶⁷ Mark Carl Rom and Kristina Mitchell, “Teaching Politics in a Call-out and Cancel Culture,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54, no. 3 (2021): pp. 610-614, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096521000433>.

blacklists: they create an invitation for harassment, intimidation, and retaliation, and they can create serious obstacles in the professional life of the named professor.”⁶⁸

The risk of reducing intellectual diversity in educational institutions is at the core of the cancel culture debate. The same WPS study referenced above asked participants if they felt as though respect for open debate from diverse perspectives had changed for the better or worse in academic settings over the past five years. The result was a normal curve with a mean of 3.16 on a 1-5 scale. The plurality view suggests that there has been no change in the quality of open debate over time, with many of the political science faculty agreeing. Almost as many political scientists said that based on their experiences that open debate had improved as that it had worsened. However, if the responses are broken down between left-right ideological identities, some differences can be observed. Faculty that self-identify as left-leaning were more likely to feel as though the quality of debate has not changed over time, whereas self-identified right-leaning faculty were slightly more likely to perceive that open debate has gotten a lot worse over time. This is depicted in the chart below.

⁶⁸ Mark Carl Rom and Kristina Mitchell, “Teaching Politics in a Call-out and Cancel Culture,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54, no. 3 (2021): pp. 610-614, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096521000433>.

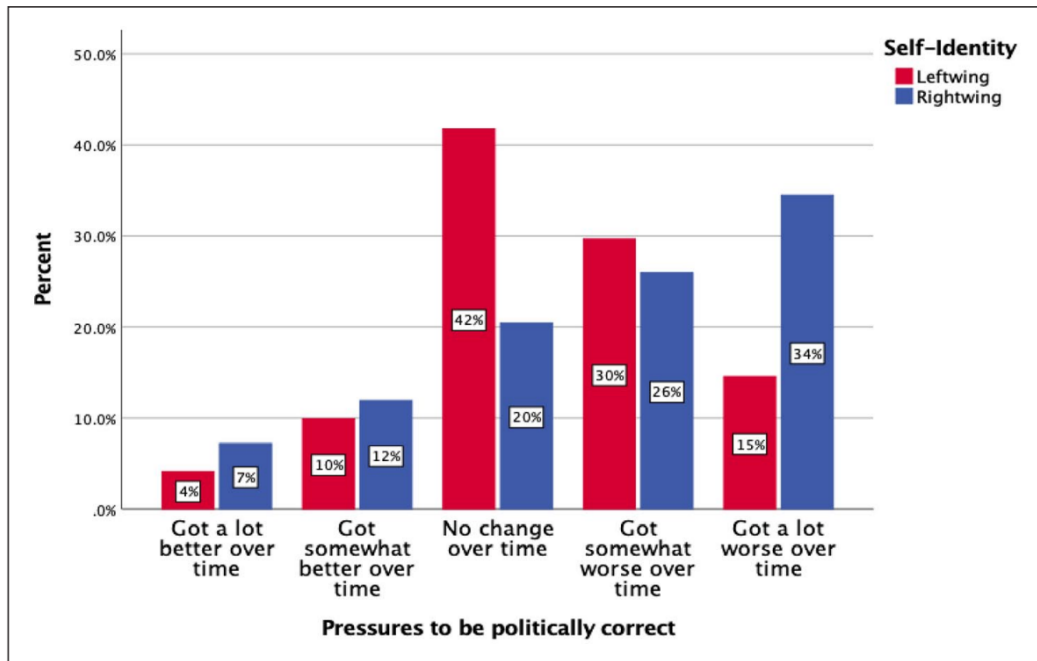
Figure 3.5: Political Ideologies & If Cancel Culture Has Gotten Worse or Better



Source: Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?

While faculty might not feel as though open debate has been stifled in recent years, they do feel as though they have experienced pressures to be “politically correct.” This concept refers to conformity towards a group, through self-censorship of authentic words and actions, in an attempt to fit in socially and avoid castigation. While the largest percentage of respondents reported that, based on their experience, there had been no change in the pressures to be politically correct over time, many others reported different experiences. Thirty six percent of the respondents said that in their experience these pressures had worsened somewhat or a lot worse, while 15% of respondents said they felt these pressures had gotten somewhat or a lot better. These contrasts can be further observed when breaking these responses down by left-right ideologies. Sixty percent of those on the right reported feeling as though these pressures had gotten somewhat or a lot worse whereas only 45% of those on the left felt the same way. These data are illustrated below.

Figure 3.6: Political Ideologies & Pressures to be Politically Correct



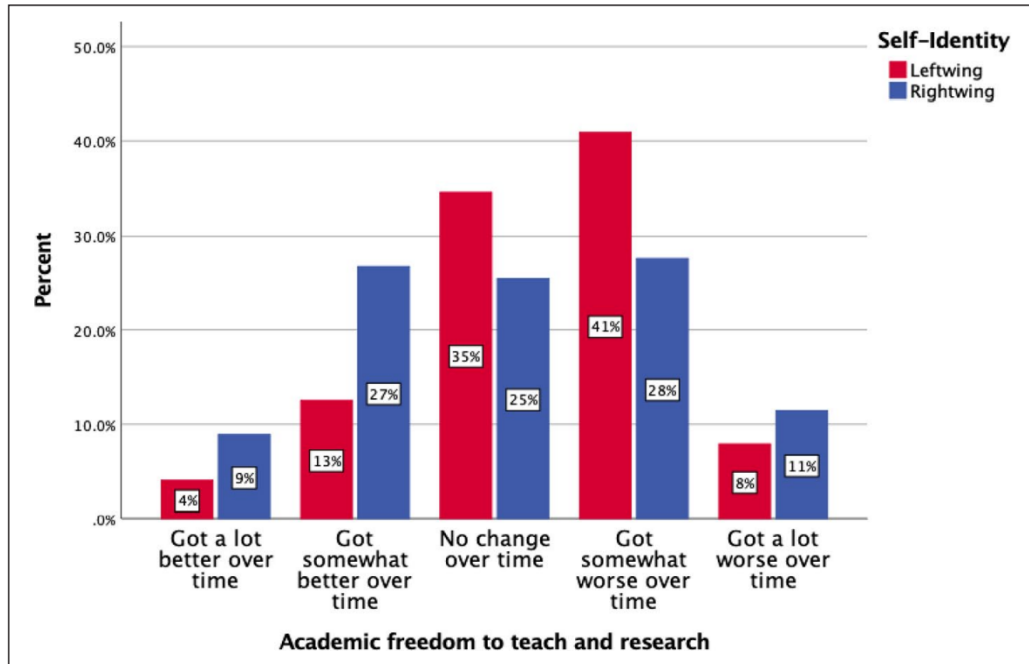
Source: Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?

The last indicator of cancel culture prominence in academia that WPS studied was the experience of academic freedom to teach and. There were no specified reasons for the perceived change and the data provides an important indicator of the quality of intellectual life and feelings of autonomy in the profession. The largest plurality (47%) felt as though academic freedom had deteriorated somewhat or a lot. One-third of respondents reported that they experienced no change and 20% of respondents reported feeling as though academic freedom had improved somewhat or a lot.

Despite more of those on the right feeling as though the pressures to be politically correct had increased, when broken down by political ideology, those on the left report feeling as though academic freedom has deteriorated more than those on the right. Almost half (49%) of those on the left thought that academic freedom has deteriorated somewhat or a lot as compared to 39% on the right, as shown below. Norris believes that this is due to the fact conservatives are in the minority on the majority of college

campuses, so they have always felt restricted in their academic freedoms. Because of this, they do not feel the situation has worsened unless they have had a direct experience with the phenomenon on campus.

Figure 3.7: Political Ideologies & Beliefs on Academic Freedom



Source: Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?
Post-Cancellation

While some of those who have been cancelled have faced life-altering effects, others have seemingly had few ramifications. This is especially true with celebrities, as very few of them have experienced career-ending repercussions. Celebrities are very hard individuals to cancel, largely because of their fan base. “Fame makes celebrities vulnerable to cancellation, but paradoxically, it also helps them to recover”⁶⁹ This group of devout fans, some of whom have supported an individual for years, are quick to

⁶⁹ Jennifer Graham, “Why Cancel Culture Hits Regular People Harder Than Celebrities,” Why cancel culture hits regular people harder than celebrities, July 26, 2021, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/entertainment/news/why-cancel-culture-hits-regular-people-harder-than-celebrities/ar-AAMywn6>.

condemn, however, also quick to praise once the initial flash of the cancellation has passed.

Most celebrities simply disappear from the limelight for a bit, allowing tensions to cool, causing people to forget about their perceived wrongdoings. They then return later, seemingly to continue life as they had before. Rapper Kanye West is an example of this unsuccessful attempt at cancelling someone. West found himself being cancelled after aligning himself with Presidential Candidate Donald Trump in 2018. While West laid low for a month after the backlash, upon the release of his album entitled *Ye*, it was as though the public had simply forgotten about the transgressions they had accused him of the month before. West was suddenly back in their good graces.

Ellen DeGeneres found herself in a similar situation as West in late 2020 and early 2021. During the end of the 17th season of DeGeneres' show, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, DeGeneres was slammed with multiple allegations of promoting a toxic workplace, unkind behavior, and bullying. While these allegations surfaced during the 17th season which was airing in 2020, DeGeneres denied the claims and returned for an 18th season in 2021 after a holiday hiatus. Throughout the 2021 season, however, the allegations became more distant and the *Ellen DeGeneres* show continued to air with viewership, so much so that the show is still being filmed in 2022.

While some celebrities face few effects, others face an outpouring of support following the public's attempt at cancelling them. This was the case with J.K. Rowling who faced criticism from some fans after expressing what some believed to be transphobic beliefs. Rowling Tweeted "Live your best life in peace and security. But force women out of their jobs for stating that sex is real?" and people were quick to

respond. Despite facing initial backlash, the sales of her books increased significantly in her home country of Great Britain, showing her fellow Brits stood in solidarity with her while people in other parts of the world were outraged by the Tweet.

While celebrities might be hard to permanently cancel, everyday citizens are not hard. Many of the ordinary people who have been on the receiving end of cancellation face life-long, life-altering effects. Damian Goddard is an example of this. Goddard is a devout Roman Catholic who was working as a sportscaster in 2011 when he was relieved of his duties. The reason for his firing was a Tweet that Goddard published, in which he spoke out against gay marriage. In 2013, two years after losing his job, Goddard had to refinance his mortgage to have enough money to remain on his feet. The father of two is still trying to piece work together to make ends meet, more than a decade later. “In his Twitter bio, he says ‘cancel culture is real.’”⁷⁰

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s ‘spiral of silence’ is important to consider when discussing the pros and cons of cancel culture. According to this theory, on moral issues where the balance of opinion is deeply divided within a group, people’s perceptions of other people’s views in the group influence their willingness to express their own opinions. As such, those holding what are perceived as minority views are less likely to express those opinions for fear of violating prevailing norms, risks of social isolation, and because some without strong opinions may take their information cues from what others think. In contrast, those that believe they are in the ideological majority will openly defend their views, expecting affirmation and those around them to agree. The loud

⁷⁰ Jennifer Graham, “Why Cancel Culture Hits Regular People Harder Than Celebrities,” Why cancel culture hits regular people harder than celebrities, July 26, 2021, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/entertainment/news/why-cancel-culture-hits-regular-people-harder-than-celebrities/ar-AAMywN6>.

opinions on one side, and silence on the other, sets the spiral of silence in motion. As a result, the ‘spiral of silence’ suggests that the trajectory of existing shifts in public opinion and cultural values in any society are reinforced and even accelerated by processes of online communications and interpersonal discussion.⁷¹

According to Noelle-Neumann, “the actual number of partisans of an opinion is not necessarily decisive for their weight in the spiral of silence. The opinion of a minority may actually be perceived as majority in the public sphere if their partisans act assertively enough and publicly defend their opinion with emphasis.”⁷² This is because public opinion is limited in time and space. Wherever there are people living together in societies, public opinion will manifest itself as a form of social control, however, what the public accepts as public opinion will change with time and differ from place to place. Because of this difference in public opinion due to location and time, mass media plays critical role in the formulation of public opinion. Noelle-Neumann says “if the media repeatedly (in a “cumulative” way) and concordantly (in a “consonant” way) support one side in a public controversy, this side will stand a significantly higher chance of finishing the spiral-of-silence process as winner.”⁷³ This process perpetuates the spiral of silence, as the public on the silent side has determined the public opinion differs from their opinion, and rather than risk violating social norms and isolation, they should conform to that opinion.

⁷¹ Pippa Norris, “Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?,” *Political Studies*, August 11, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>.

⁷² Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, “Spiral of Silence,” Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, 1984, <https://noelle-neumann.de/scientific-work/spiral-of-silence/>.

⁷³ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, “Spiral of Silence,” Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, 1984, <https://noelle-neumann.de/scientific-work/spiral-of-silence/>.

Conclusion

While there are a multitude of factors that contribute to whether an individual will engage in cancel culture or not, one thing is clear: the more strongly that someone identifies as a Democrat, the more likely they are to engage in cancel culture. The prevalence of cancel culture in academia has increased rapidly over the past few years, and many students and staff find themselves unable to speak and teach freely due to the fear of being cancelled. These fears have some merit, as there are numerous examples of people losing their careers over a view they expressed, even if it was independent of their workplace. While everyday citizens are easier to permanently cancel than celebrities are, celebrities are the primary target of cancel culture. As cancel culture continues to manifest itself, it is important that Noelle-Neumann's theory be kept in mind, as this explains why and how cancel culture is a self-perpetuating phenomenon.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDIES

The following are case studies of individuals who have experienced the effects of cancel culture. These case studies were selected to provide an in-depth look at individuals who have faced cancellation, including the reason for the cancellation, the manner in which they were cancelled, and the path their cancellation took. By juxtaposing these case studies, similarities and differences can be drawn regarding the outcomes of cancelling those who have societal influence. These case studies can also be compared to the data presented in the previous chapter.

Colin Kaepernick

In a National Football League (NFL) preseason football game on August 26, 2016, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick kneeled during the playing of the National Anthem while the rest of the team stood. This act would go on to set the stage for his football career for the foreseeable future.

Kaepernick was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1987, and was adopted by White parents, Rick and Theresa Kaepernick, at a few weeks old and raised in California. Heidi Russo, Kaepernick's biological mother, was 19 when Kaepernick was born. She spent much of her pregnancy debating whether to keep her baby or put her baby up for adoption, given she knew she would not have the help of Kaepernick's biological father who fled after learning Russo was pregnant. After meeting the Kaepernicks, who had been introduced to her through a mutual friend, she let the Kaepernicks adopt her son.

It was evident that Kaepernick was athletic at a young age. He began playing youth football at the age of eight and his strong arm quickly elevated him to the position of quarterback. That was the very arm that allowed him to become an elite high school baseball pitcher, capable of throwing a fastball at 94 miles per hour. While Kaepernick had baseball success, football was his passion. “In the fourth grade, he even penned a letter predicting that he would be the starting quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers. ‘I hope I go to a good college in football then go to the pros and play on the Niners or the Packers, even if they aren’t good in seven years,’ he wrote.”⁷⁴ Despite his successes, he was largely passed over by college football recruiters due to his poor throwing form.

Kaepernick attended a tryout camp at the University of Nevada, Reno, and was awarded a scholarship. While he was recruited to play safety, Kaepernick stepped in to play quarterback during the fifth game of his freshman year. Throwing for 384 yards and four touchdowns, Kaepernick never relinquished the starting role and finished the year with 19 touchdowns.

Kaepernick was drafted by the 49ers in 2011 as a second round pick and quickly became known as a star running quarterback, almost winning them the Super Bowl title in 2012. However, that success only lasted a few years. In 2016, Kaepernick was recovering from surgery when he took to social media to comment about the police killings of Alton Sterling, Philando Castille, Charles Kinsey, and Freddy Gray. These comments were made during the first two preseason games, during which he remained on the bench, without his uniform on, to adequately recover.

⁷⁴ “Colin Kaepernick,” Biography.com (A&E Networks Television, January 26, 2021), <https://www.biography.com/athlete/colin-kaepernick>.

There was no public outcry during the two games in which Kaepernick was injured and remained seated on the sideline sans uniform. Kaepernick remained seated during the National Anthem during those two games. For the preseason game on August 26, Kaepernick remained seated, however, this time his uniform was on and a reporter noticed. When the reporter asked about it after the game, Kaepernick said “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses Black people and people of color. To me, this is a bigger issue than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.”⁷⁵

That response to the reporter garnered lots of feedback and a few days later, the 49ers released a statement that said they recognized Kaepernick’s right to do as he wished during the National Anthem. At the same time, the NFL stated that standing was encouraged but not a requirement. Kaepernick and a former Green Beret subsequently had a conversation which caused Kaepernick to kneel, instead of remaining seated, during the National Anthem, showing greater respect to the United States military. Kaepernick kneeled before the final preseason game on September 1, 2016. It is the kneeling that came to be associated with Kaepernick.

Initially, there were mixed feelings towards Kaepernick’s kneeling. President Obama defended Kaepernick’s “Constitutional right to make a statement” while NFL Commissioner Robert Goodell said “I don’t necessarily agree with that he is doing.” Others, like presidential candidate Donald Trump said players who felt the need to kneel

⁷⁵ Tom Joyce, “Quarterback Colin Kaepernick Sits during National Anthem, Gives Interview about It for the First Time,” History.com (A&E Television Networks, July 9, 2021), <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/colin-kaepernick-kneels-during-national-anthem>.

should “try a different country,” which more closely mirrored the sentiments of NFL team owners. “A poll during the 2016 season named Kaepernick the most disliked player in the league, with 37% of Caucasians saying they ‘disliked him a lot,’ and 42% of African Americans saying they ‘liked him a lot.’”⁷⁶

The commentary regarding Kaepernick’s stance continued throughout the season as the 49ers struggled. While Kaepernick attributes his departure from the team to the team’s struggles, and despite having better credentials than many other free agent quarterbacks, Kaepernick has never been offered another NFL contract. While Kaepernick was never offered a position on another team, he, for years, continued practicing like he was a part of the NFL. Once his continued attempts to rejoin the league proved unsuccessful, he filed a collusion grievance against the league’s owners.

While Kaepernick had little success in the football world after his stance during the National Anthem, he did not remain unemployed or out of the public eye for long. In 2018, Nike revealed that Kaepernick would headline one of their 30th anniversary “Just Do It” campaigns. This brand deal stretched farther than just one campaign, as it included Kaepernick-branded shoes and apparel, as well as a massive Kaepernick billboard in San Francisco’s Union Square.

This case study shows that actions that are not in keeping with the customs, such as standing for the National Anthem, may cause one to find themselves cancelled. As a patriotic country,⁷⁷ Americans do not appreciate those who are not acting in line with that

⁷⁶ Brian Urvater and Courtney Vandegrift, “Case Study: Nike & Colin Kaepernick ‘Just Do It’ Campaign,” Pennsylvania State University, September 28, 2021, <https://sites.psu.edu/burv/case-study-nike-colin-kaepernick-just-do-it-campaign/>.

⁷⁷ “Most Patriotic Countries 2021,” World Population Review, 2021, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/most-patriotic-countries>.

level of patriotism, and will speak out against them. Contrary to what the data says most often occurs, this cancelling was effected by Republicans. Kaepernick was supporting a predominantly progressive movement and was cancelled by patriotic individuals, who have been identified as more patriotic than their Democrat counterparts.⁷⁸ Kaepernick was, however, able to recover from being cancelled and continue life as a public figure after temporarily stepping back, which research data supports is the norm for celebrities. However, despite the resurgence of his professional career, Kaepernick has not been able to rejoin the NFL, something he tried to do for years after his 2016 cancellation.

⁷⁸ Paul Bedard, "Harvard: July 4th Parades Are Right-Wing | Politics | US News," U.S. News & World Report, June 30, 2011, <https://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/washington-whispers/2011/06/30/harvard-july-4th-parades-are-right-wing>.

Joe Rogan

Joe Rogan self describes himself as a “stand-up comic, mixed martial arts fanatic, psychedelic adventurer, host of the Joe Rogan Experience podcast.”⁷⁹

Rogan was born in Newark, New Jersey on August 11, 1967. His parents divorced when he was five years old and he has not had contact with his father since. Rogan has lived in various parts of the country with his family, including San Francisco, California, Gainesville, Florida, and Newton Upper Falls, Massachusetts. The high school which served the Newton community is the one that Rogan graduated from in 1985.

It was during high school that Rogan developed an interest in mixed martial arts (MMA). Rogan said that MMA “gave me not just confidence, but also a different perspective of myself and what I was capable of. I knew that I could do something I was terrified of, and that was really difficult, and that I could excel at it. It was a big deal for me.”⁸⁰ When Rogan was 19, he won the U.S. Open Championship Taekwondo Tournament as a lightweight. Rogan was a Massachusetts full-contact state champion for four consecutive years after his win, however, he retired from competition at age 21 after suffering some injuries that left him with frequent headaches and a fear he might suffer greater injury if he continued competing.

Because of his premature departure from the fighting world, Rogan began practicing his stand-up comedy more often, a skill he found he had early in his childhood. Rogan was able to persuade the owner of a Boston comedy club to allow him to practice

⁷⁹ Joe Rogan, “Joe Rogan,” Joe Rogan, 2022, <https://www.joerogan.com/>.

⁸⁰ Stephie Haynes, “Renaissance Man,” SBNation.com, June 5, 2014, <https://www.sbnation.com/longform/2014/6/5/5762052/joe-rogan-interview-mma-ufc>.

a new, five minute routine one night. Talent manager Jeff Sussman was at that show and Sussman offered to become Rogan's manager. Rogan accepted.

Rogan moved to New York City in 1990 to work as a full-time comedian. Gaining popularity, Rogan moved to Los Angeles in 1994 where he had a his first national television spot. That spot caused MTV to offer him a three year contract for \$500, which Rogan refused. This move started a bidding war. Rogan eventually accepted a development deal with Disney Network. Around this time, Rogan also started performing at The Comedy Store in Hollywood, California and was hired as a paid regular. He performed at the club for the next 13 years for free.

Rogan found himself working for the MMA portion of Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) as a backstage and post-fight interviewer. However, due to the often remote nature of the fights, Rogan quit after two years, as his salary could not cover the cost of his travel to the events. UFC was taken over by a new president in 2001 and Rogan was offered another job, this time as a color commentator. While Rogan initially declined because he wanted to "go to the fights and drink,"⁸¹ Rogan accepted a position in exchange for free tickets to fights in 2002. After 15 fights as a commentator, Rogan accepted pay for his work.

It was around this time that Rogan began talks with Warner Bros. Records to star in his own prime-time sitcom named *The Joe Rogan Show*. In 2001, however, the development of the show was interrupted when NBC asked him to host *Fear Factor*. "He declined initially as he thought the network would not air such a program due to its

⁸¹ Erik Hedegaard, "How Joe Rogan Went from UFC Announcer to Psychedelic Warrior," Rolling Stone (Rolling Stone, January 24, 2020), <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/how-joe-rogan-went-from-ufc-announcer-to-21st-century-timothy-leary-182319/>.

content, but Sussman convinced him to accept.”⁸² The show ran until 2006 and caused Rogan’s national exposure to increase, thus increasing the attendance at his stand-up comedy shows. Rogan continued to perform at comedy shows around Hollywood until 2009 when he hosted the CBS show *Game in My Head*. That December, Rogan released a comedy special that was exclusively available through download from his website for \$5. This was the beginning of his web-based content success.

Rogan launched a free podcast with fellow comedian Brian Redban and was available for livestream once a week. The podcast featured Rogan and Redban “sitting in front of laptops bullshitting.”⁸³ By August 2010, the podcast was named *The Joe Rogan Experience* and entered the list of the Top 100 Podcast on iTunes. In 2001, Rogan’s podcast was being played by SiriusXM Satellite Radio. The podcast “features an array of guests who discuss current events, politics, philosophy, comedy, hobbies and numerous other topics.”⁸⁴

By October of 2015, the podcast was downloaded 16 million times each month, making it one of the most popular free podcasts. On May 19, 2020, Rogan announced that he signed a multi-year deal with Spotify, an audio streaming and media service provider, which was estimated at \$100 million. This makes it one of the largest licensing agreements in the podcast business history.⁸⁵ Spotify made episodes available on their platform on September 1, 2020 and *The Joe Rogan Experience* was exclusively available on their platform beginning January 1, 2021.

⁸² Schneider Ryan, “Joe Rogan Proves Fear Is Not a Factor,” *Black Belt*, December 2002, pp. 54-59.

⁸³ Thom Carnell, “Interview: Joe Rogan,” Thom Carnell (Thom Carnell, January 25, 2016), <https://thom-carnell.squarespace.com/writing-samples/2016/1/24/interview-joe-rogan>.

⁸⁴ Joe Rogan, “Joe Rogan,” Joe Rogan, 2022, <https://www.joerogan.com/>.

⁸⁵ Anne Steele, “Spotify Strikes Podcast Deal with Joe Rogan Worth More than \$100 Million,” *The Wall Street Journal* (Dow Jones & Company, May 19, 2020), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/spotify-strikes-exclusive-podcast-deal-with-joe-rogan-11589913814>.

At the beginning of 2022 Rogan came under fire for the content in his podcast that was released a month prior. Rogan was accused of “having a ‘concerning history of broadcasting misinformation, particularly regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.’”⁸⁶ These accusations were brought in an open letter, of which more than 270 doctors, scientists, and healthcare professionals supported, to Spotify. Spotify deemed that the information in question did not meet their threshold for removal. As listeners went to listen to episodes of Rogan’s podcast to hear what was being deemed misinformation, they stumbled upon other content in his podcasts they found to be more troubling. Some musicians whose music is on Spotify gave Spotify an ultimatum, saying they must silence Rogan to prevent these falsehoods from spreading. Musician Neil Young was one of those individuals, saying “They can have Rogan or Young. Not both.”⁸⁷

In February 2022, *The Joe Rogan Experience* and Spotify came under fire once again. A video collage of Rogan using the N-word on his podcast went viral, and people called for Spotify to cancel his contract and remove the podcast from their platform.

Despite the calls for cancellation, Spotify CEO Daniel Ek refused to remove Rogan’s podcast from his platform. Ek wrote a letter to Spotify employees regarding his stance on the matter. The letter reads, in part, “Not only are some of Joe Rogan’s comments incredibly hurtful – I want to make clear that they do not represent the values of this company... While I strongly condemn what Joe has said, I realize some will want

⁸⁶ Maya Yang, “Menace to Public Health: 270 Experts Criticize Spotify over Joe Rogan's Podcast,” *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, January 14, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/jan/14/spotify-joe-rogan-podcast-open-letter>.

⁸⁷ Alexandra DeSanctis, “The Real Reason They Want to Cancel Joe Rogan,” *National Review* (National Review, February 3, 2022), <https://www.nationalreview.com/2022/01/the-real-reason-they-want-to-cancel-joe-rogan/>.

more.”⁸⁸ Ek’s letter continues to say “I want to make one point very clear – I do not believe that silencing Joe is the answer. We should have clear lines around content and take action when they are crossed, but canceling voices is a slippery slope.”⁸⁹

Rogan released a statement on February 11, 2022 saying the video collage is “the most regretful and shameful thing I’ve ever had to talk about publicly” and that it was made from “out of context snippets from 12 years of conversations.”⁹⁰ While Rogan will remain on the platform, he has chosen to remove some of the episodes that were featured in the collage.

While celebrities who have faced calls for cancellation usually retreat from the spotlight temporarily, Rogan shows this is not always a celebrity’s course of action. This situation is still developing as of completion of this thesis, however, Ek’s refusal to censor Rogan and remove his programming is a refusal to give in to what seems to be Democratic demands. This attempt at cancellation from Democrats is in keeping with the research data, which says Democrats are far more likely to engage in cancellation than their Republican counterparts.

As the situation continues to develop, it will be important and interesting to watch whether Rogan’s viewership takes a dramatic and sustained downturn. It will also be important to watch whether Rogan is able to secure future brand deals, as that has been a problem for celebrities who have faced cancellation in the past, like Kaepernick.

⁸⁸ Kenneth Garger, “Spotify CEO Says Company Won't Cancel Joe Rogan after n-Word Controversy,” New York Post (New York Post, February 7, 2022), <https://nypost.com/2022/02/07/spotify-ceo-daniel-ek-says-company-wont-cancel-joe-rogan-after-n-word-controversy/>.

⁸⁹ Kenneth Garger, “Spotify CEO Says Company Won't Cancel Joe Rogan after n-Word Controversy,” New York Post (New York Post, February 7, 2022), <https://nypost.com/2022/02/07/spotify-ceo-daniel-ek-says-company-wont-cancel-joe-rogan-after-n-word-controversy/>.

⁹⁰ Kenneth Garger, “Spotify CEO Says Company Won't Cancel Joe Rogan after n-Word Controversy,” New York Post (New York Post, February 7, 2022), <https://nypost.com/2022/02/07/spotify-ceo-daniel-ek-says-company-wont-cancel-joe-rogan-after-n-word-controversy/>.

The Dixie Chicks

The Dixie Chicks, a band consisting of singer Natalie Maines, banjo player Emily Strayer, and fiddle player Martie Maguire, found themselves going from sky-high on the Billboard music charts to being cast out of the public eye.

Maines was born in 1974 in Lubbock, Texas, and knew of her desire to become famous one day at an early age. “Her second grade teacher recalls being told by Maines during a math lesson, ‘Teacher, I don’t need to learn this stuff—I’m gonna be a star.’”⁹¹ From there, Maines continued through her primary education while singing in the choir. After high school, Maines attended several colleges. She attended West Texas A&M focusing heavily on radio studies for two semesters before spending a year and a half at South Plains College. Maines’ first professional music engagement was recording the lead vocals for the song “White Women’s Clothes,” a song on one of artist Andy Wilkinson’s albums. At the end of 1995, at age 21, Maines joined the Dixie Chicks.

Emily Strayer was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in August of 1972. Shortly after she was born, her family moved to Addison, Texas, where she spent the rest of her childhood. Her parents pushed her to start studying instruments at a young age, and Strayer began playing the violin at age seven and the banjo at age ten. During her primary school years, Strayer, her sister Martha, and friends founded The Blue Night Express, a bluegrass band that performed frequently. After graduating high school, Strayer and her sister continued to play music together. Initially, they were accompanied by guitarist Robin Lynn Macy and upright bassist Laura Lynch, but the latter two quit the band in

⁹¹ James Dickerson, “Dixie Chicks,” Internet Archive (Taylor Trade Pub., 2000), <https://archive.org/details/dixiechicksdownh00dick/page/n9/mode/2up>.

1995, and singer Natalie Maines replaced them. This group went on to have a lot of commercial success being known as the Dixie Chicks.

The final member of the Dixie Chicks, Martha “Martie” Maguire, was born in October of 1969 as the older sister of Strayer. Similar to Strayer, Maguire was encouraged to learn how to play instruments and was playing the violin by age five. Thanks to “fiddle style” violin lessons, she was playing “fiddle style” violin by age twelve. Throughout this time, she was active in her school orchestra. Maguire was awarded second place for her fiddle performance in at the National Fiddle Championship in 1987. Two years later, Maguire and Strayer founded the band in which they still play, The Dixie Chicks.

The group first drew widespread attention in 1998 with their song *Wide Open Spaces*, which sold more than 12 million copies. From there, the band was nominated for multiple awards, including Grammys. Their fame continued in 1999 upon the release of *Fly* which debuted at #1 on the Billboard chart and won them multiple Grammys. This pattern of success continued into the 2000s, and their 2002 song *Home* seemed poised to be their biggest success yet.

The band didn’t stop releasing albums due to the usual peaks and valleys of fame. Rather, in 2003, after criticizing then-president George W. Bush (and refusing to apologize for it), the band was cancelled. This moment “was arguably the first time the internet played a role in cancelling a celebrity for having an unpopular opinion.”⁹²

⁹² Gabrielle Moss, “The Dixie Chicks Were Cancelled for Criticizing the President. Now, They're Heroes.,” Yahoo! (Yahoo!, January 22, 2020), <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/dixie-chicks-were-cancelled-criticizing-130039511.html>.

On March 10, 2003, Natalie Maines, the lead singer of the Dixie Chicks, declared during a concert, “Just so you know, we’re ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas.”⁹³ Her remark, which came on the eve of the American invasion of Iraq, was said when President Bush’s popularity was near an all-time high and had instant, negative repercussions. Suddenly, the Dixie Chicks, who had sung *The Star Spangled Banner* at the Super Bowl less than two months before, had topped charts, and sold out arenas, found their music banished from much of the country music world. Southerners were enraged by Maines’ comment, and held rallies where the Dixie Chicks CDs were gathered and destroyed. Maines received death threats, and she and her two bandmates were forced to cope with the fury by limiting themselves to the outskirts of society so as not to further inflame matters. While Maines thought that this incident would blow over in a week or two, to her surprise, it did not. The Dixie Chicks were forced to reassess their career and public image.

Despite this backlash, the Dixie Chicks, who have since renamed themselves to The Chicks for fear of racial insensitivity due to the use of Dixie, a Civil-War era nickname for the South, released *Taking the Long Way* in 2006. This sold one million copies in three weeks, but in the South, boycotts persist. The South’s disdain for The Chicks caused the Dixie Chicks to cancel their planned tour stops in the South and create an itinerary that brought them through Canada, instead. That song released in 2006 would be their last until 2020 when they released their latest album.

⁹³ Stephen Holden, “In an Instant, Country Stars Became Political Casualties,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, October 27, 2006), <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/27/movies/in-an-instant-country-stars-became-political-casualties.html>.

Irrespective of their historical woes, The Chicks have managed to regain much of what they lost after they expressed their anti-war sentiments. It seems as though the world needed a few years to cool off after Maines' comment and that the release of new music, accompanied by new public appearances, helped their case. Additionally, their name change came alongside their 2020 album, helping to show that they were in touch with the current happenings, including a renewed focus on racial inequalities. The band released a statement saying "We want to meet this moment,"⁹⁴ and they have remained popular since.

This case study, similarly to the Kaepernick case study, shows that unpatriotic behavior is not well received. While the comment Maines made was only at a singular person, the President, and Kaepernick was taking a stand towards the country as a whole, the President represents the entire country and is a patriotic symbol. Additionally, like Kaepernick, The Chicks' professional careers took a temporary hit given they went fourteen years without releasing music. It is interesting to note, that similarly to the Kaepernick cancelling, this was executed by what would seem to be Republicans. This is contrary to much of the data, which indicates that Democrats are more likely to engage in cancelling. In keeping with research data, however, the Chicks were able to resurface and become successful again after allowing the situation to die down although this took quite some time.

⁹⁴ Ben Sisario, "The Dixie Chicks Change Their Name, Dropping the 'Dixie'," The New York Times (The New York Times, June 25, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/25/arts/music/dixie-chicks-change-name.html>.

Louis C.K.

While *The Chicks* were cancelled for a political statement that they made almost a quarter-century ago, there are plenty of more recent examples of individuals cancelled for allegations of criminal behavior, such as sexual misconduct. Comedian Louis C.K. finds himself in this category.

C.K. was born as Louis Szekeley in Washington, D.C. in 1967 to parents who met while studying at Harvard University. Shortly after his birth, C.K.'s family relocated to Mexico City and later moved to Massachusetts when he was seven. C.K.'s parents later divorced, and his mother raised him and his siblings in Newton, Massachusetts. According to C.K. his career choice was inspired by "seeing his mother come home after a long day at work, only to have lackluster TV programs to choose from."⁹⁵

In his youth, C.K. changed the pronunciation of his name to "See-kay" because his Hungarian surname often caused confusion. C.K. was 17 when he first tried his hand at stand up comedy at an open-mic in Boston, however, he quickly became discouraged when he ran out of material in three minutes. After graduating from Newton South High School, C.K. worked as an automobile mechanic before moving to New York City in 1989, where he tried to enter the comedy scene. Although comedy in the Big Apple bloomed in the 1980s, by the time C.K. arrived, it was on a decline and most of the clubs in Manhattan were going out of business. He practiced his routine at empty venues and unsuccessfully auditioned for *Saturday Night Live*. Things improved, however, when C.K. got a job as a staff writer for the cable show *Caroline's Comedy Hour*. In 1993, he worked as a writer on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, helping craft the talk-show host's

⁹⁵ "Louis C.K.," Biography.com (A&E Networks Television, August 13, 2020), <https://www.biography.com/performer/louis-ck>.

very first sketch. From there, C.K. worked with various other celebrities while building his following. In 2006, C.K. released a string of comedy specials whose sales topped more than \$1 million dollars in less than two weeks. Starting in 2012, his comedy tours began selling out almost immediately.

In 2017, Louis C.K. admitted that he engaged in sexual misconduct with at least five women. He was dropped by his publisher, the FX Network, and the movie that he was in, “I Love You Daddy,” was no longer going to be released.⁹⁶

Louis C.K. made this statement at the height of the ‘#metoo’ movement, a movement that swept the country as allegations of sexual misconduct emerged. This movement is what drove the allegations against Louis C.K. Rumors about his conduct “had been circulating for years, most explicitly in a Defamer story written in 2015.”⁹⁷ After admitting to his wrongdoings, Louis C.K. was almost instantly shunned from the public eye, most aggressively on Twitter. While many of these Tweets were from victims of Louis C.K. or supporters of the #metoo movement who praised the victims for speaking out, other comedians who weighed in on Louis C.K.’s behavior. “Gentlemen, comedy is often inappropriate. It is sometimes daring and audacious and shocking. But our behavior, in the real world, toward women – that doesn’t get a pass on inappropriate.

⁹⁶ Melena Ryzik, Cara Buckley, and Jodi Kantor, “Louis C.K. Is Accused by 5 Women of Sexual Misconduct,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, November 9, 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/09/arts/television/louis-ck-sexual-misconduct.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur&_r=1.

⁹⁷ Merry Stephanie, “The Entertainment World Reacts to Louis C.K. Sexual Harassment Allegations,” ProQuest (WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post, November 9, 2017), <https://library.umaine.edu/auth/EZproxy/test/authej.asp?url=https://search.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/entertainment-world-reacts-louis-c-k-sexual/docview/1962099707/se-2?accountid=14583>.

— jason alexander (@IjasonAlexander) November 9, 2017.”⁹⁸ Alexander is a “Seinfeld” comedian.

Louis C.K. quietly slipped out of the public eye as the firestorm towards him on Twitter continued, promising to “step back and take a long time to listen.”⁹⁹ However, that absence did not last for long. “Louis C.K. made a surprise return to the stage on Sunday night, nearly 10 months after admitting to sexual misconduct against a number of female comedians.”¹⁰⁰ This return came in August of 2018 when the comedian held a pop-up show at New York’s Comedy Cellar, a club that he was known to frequent in the past. Louis C.K. executed a 15-minute set and did not address the scandal which caused him to “step back” from his career in November of 2017. “Despite the scandal, the Times reported this week that Louis C.K. received an ovation when took the stage.”

Seemingly due to his success in his first ‘comeback’ shows, Louis C.K. announced in October of 2019 that he would be heading on tour, again. The 18-show tour included stops in comedy hotspots like Peoria, Illinois, Mobile, Alabama and Holon, Israel. This announcement was met with both positive and negative feedback. While some expressed their distaste for the fact that Louis C.K. was reemerging into the public realm, others used the opportunity to point out that just because someone is ‘cancelled’ does not mean that their career is necessarily over.

⁹⁸ Merry Stephanie, “The Entertainment World Reacts to Louis C.K. Sexual Harassment Allegations,” ProQuest (WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post, November 9, 2017), <https://library.umaine.edu/auth/EZproxy/test/authej.asp?url=https://search.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/entertainment-world-reacts-louis-c-k-sexual/docview/1962099707/se-2?accountid=14583>.

⁹⁹ Aila Slisco, “Louis C.K.’s Comeback Tour Announcement Doesn’t Appear to Be Sitting Well with Many Former Fans,” Newsweek (Newsweek, October 29, 2019), <https://www.newsweek.com/louis-ck-announces-comeback-tour-despite-lack-popular-demand-1468286>.

¹⁰⁰ Ed Mazza, “Louis C.K. Makes Surprise Return to Comedy in First Gig since Scandal,” HuffPost (HuffPost, August 28, 2018), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/louis-ck-returns-to-comedy_n_5b84d605e4b0cf7b002e722c.

On December 18, 2021, C.K. released an hour-long stand-up comedy special entitled *Sorry*. Recorded at Madison Square Garden's Hulu theater, the special is available exclusively on C.K.'s website, with a \$10 fee for streaming rights, or a \$25 fee to download the act. While many believe the title of the special is a nod to the allegations he once faced, C.K. has not addressed the reason for the title.

This case study is unlike those of Kaepernick or the Chicks. Louis C.K. was accused of criminal offenses which go against prevailing norms and are seen as immoral, causing him to be cancelled. However, the outrage ensued when he tried to reintegrate with society, as almost every celebrity successfully does. When trying to continue with his life, Louis C.K. was met with Democratic pushback, given he admitted to his wrongdoings in the midst of a progressive campaign promoting awareness of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Conclusion

These case studies describe individuals who were cancelled for different reasons, and there are both similarities and differences in the path their cancellation took. While Joe Rogan's cancellation is ongoing, there is no evidence that he will face long-term ill-effects in his career. Despite left-leaning individuals calling for his cancellation due to his racially insensitive language and beliefs about COVID-19, Rogan remains a highly successful podcaster. For Kaepernick, his career was effectively ruined by his decision to kneel during the National Anthem during an NFL game. Republicans called for the cancellation of Kaepernick and he has been poorly received in the NFL since, however, he does have a brand deal with Nike.

The Chicks' career took an almost two decade hit, however, they were able to recover after releasing music in 2020 and changing their name. While the South and Republicans called for The Chicks cancellation, Democrats called for the cancellation of Louis C.K. who was cancelled over his admissions that he had engaged in sexual misconduct. Similar to The Chicks, C.K. was able to recover, albeit to a lesser extent than The Chicks, after letting the situation cool off.

These case studies all show that while celebrities may be temporarily cancelled, they are extremely hard to effectively cancel permanently. Additionally, these case studies show that while Democrats are statistically more likely to attempt to cancel someone, there are plenty of examples of Republicans attempting to do the same.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Recap

While the phenomenon now known as cancel culture stemmed from a verb in a song that made its way onto Black Twitter, it has become something much larger. The term migrated off of Black Twitter and into people's everyday lives. Now, in 2022, it is a hotly debated topic and one for which support rests on a multitude of factors.

Anyone has the ability to be cancelled, however, celebrities are often the ones finding themselves on the receiving end of a cancellation. This is due to their Internet presence, which makes them an easier target, given that most cancellations happen using social media and most often stem from a Tweet, Snap, post, or shared content. After this information is spread, and following calls for the individual to be cancelled, there is often a public apology. Almost all cancellations happen using social media due to its prevalence and ease of access.

Many cancellations follow a common pattern of someone's past holding a controversial opinion or action, someone else bringing that opinion or action into wider circulation, and the original person having to apologize. From there, there are a variety of courses a cancellation can take, however, if it was a celebrity that was cancelled, it is highly unlikely that they will remain cancelled forever.

Despite this phenomenon being named in relatively recent history, there are examples of behavior similar to this in history. Such examples include the Salem Witch Trials, the Hollywood Blacklist, and Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution. While

cancelling has occurred throughout history, the prevalence of it has dramatically increased. A 2020 study showed that 44% of Americans had heard at least a ‘fair amount’ about the topic with 22% of Americans having heard a ‘great deal’ about it.

To understand why cancel culture is so prominent and why it may be problematic, it is important to understand why people cancel. Almost half (49%) of people familiar with the term cancel culture say the term describes an action that is taken to hold others accountable. Others say that being called out and cancelled can serve as a teaching moment. However, 18% of people familiar with the phenomenon say that it unjustly punishes others because it is not taking the other party’s viewpoint into concern or letting them explain themselves. Some people also feel that cancel culture inhibits free speech.

Among the general public, there are a variety of demographic datapoints that contribute to one’s feelings towards and likeliness to engage in cancel culture. Among these are religion and race, age, education, and strength of political party affiliation. All of these have individual roles in one’s beliefs, however, the two biggest indicators of whether someone will support cancel culture is their age and the strength of their partisanship. In general, the younger someone is and the more Democratic they lean, the more they will endorse and engage in cancel culture. In academia, the results are similar. Academics have felt as though cancel culture has worsened in recent years and research shows that left-leaning academics were more likely to engage in cancel culture. This is notable as 58% of political scientists describe themselves as a Democrat, thus increasing the chances of cancellations in academia.

While there are some potential upsides to cancel culture, such as protecting minorities from potentially hateful speech, the chances of a less-than-desirable outcome

are greater. The greatest risks to cancelling certain types of criticism are that it might undermine the tolerance of contrarians of all types, stifle intellectual debate, and reduce ideological diversity. All of these risks carry over from society into academia, thus impinging on academic freedom and the material taught.

Those are only some of the risks. There are other, more tangible, risks to cancel culture, such as individuals losing their jobs. While celebrities often find themselves at the center of cancellations, they do not often remain cancelled as the less famous in society do. The risk of losing one's job is not something that is confined to the general public. Academics of all kinds find themselves avoiding anything that might get them cancelled in an attempt to keep their job and livelihood.

These attempts to remain un-cancelled are worsened by what is known as the Spiral of Silence. This is a theory that states a minority opinion might be seen as a majority opinion because those who hold the minority view defend their opinions with force. Those who find themselves holding the majority opinion become less and less inclined to speak up over time, thus further driving society to believe the minority opinion is the majority opinion. As people see an opinion that appears to be the public norm, to avoid cancellation, social isolation, and violating social norms, they remain silent, perpetuating the Spiral of Silence.

The case studies of Kaepernick, Rogan, The Chicks, and C.K. illustrate real life examples of celebrities being cancelled, and many of them support the research data. While Kaepernick and The Chicks were cancelled by right-leaning individuals, the case studies of them show that while cancel culture may be primarily supported by Democrats, there are examples of Republicans cancelling as well. Rogan and C.K. were cancelled by

Democrats as is the norm. Additionally, as research shows, while the timeline by which a celebrity recovers after cancellation may vary, it is very unusual for a celebrity to remain permanently cancelled. All four of these individuals were able to recover and remain high-profile celebrities.

Implication of the findings

These findings are consistent with research that has previously been done on the topic. All research shows that the more left-leaning someone is, the more likely they are to support cancel culture and engage in it. The younger age groups are also more likely to fall into that category.

One of the biggest concerns with cancel culture is the impact the phenomenon it may have on free speech. In a democracy, the freedom to say as one wishes is vital, and it should be concerning to all that cancel culture impacts that freedom. By allowing everyone to say as they wish, a democracy of ideas starts to develop. More extreme ideas are cast off and society generally comes to a conclusion of sorts where they meet in the middle on most ideas. The Spiral of Silence says that the ideas that are taken may not actually be the ones that are the middle ground because those that in the majority that hold the middle ground opinion are too afraid to speak up. This threatens the democracy of ideas, as people who don't feel they are in the middle stop expressing their ideas. Additionally, it is important for politicians and those governing the democracy to be able to speak freely, as this gives voters the best look into who they are, thus allowing the voter to cast their vote in the way they best see fit. If politicians are too worried about being cancelled, they will not utilize their right to free speech in telling voters their real

plans if they are elected, which means constituents may not have the elected officials they want.

This thesis also shows that there are serious negative consequences to cancel culture, such as the removal of contrarian ideas, the stifling of free speech and education, and the fact that people lose entire careers over one seemingly benign action or comment.

Understanding cancel culture is important to different people for different reasons. Everyone should understand the potential positive and negative effects of cancel culture so they can assess whether they believe it is a positive or negative phenomenon, thus allowing them to decide whether to engage in it or not.

For most of the general public, it is important to understand why and how cancellations occur so they are able to avoid them. It is equally important for academics to understand why and how cancellations occur; however, academics should be doing what is academically sound, regardless of whether it is seen as the commonly held belief or not. That is the only way that intellectual debate with a wide variety of viewpoints will continue. Celebrities must understand cancel culture to understand that, while they have more eyes on them due to their fame, not all hope is lost if they find themselves cancelled, which is more likely due to said fame.

Questions and Work for Future Researchers

A question yet to be answered is why younger generations are so much quicker to silence, thus cancelling, than older generations? The same question exists as to why Democrats feel more inclined to cancel than Republicans? While there are fundamental differences in their ideologies, each group wants the freedoms to express their beliefs and cancellations make that hard to do.

Future researchers should work to understand these issues and they should work to determine whether cancel culture has worsened from the point it has now. Does cancel culture become worse or does it improve with different a ideological make-up of our senior elected officials? Is cancel culture a trend that will disappear for good? Will it disappear temporarily and have a resurgence, making it almost retro? Why did or why cancel culture disappear?

Conclusion

Cancel culture is a problematic phenomenon in the United States and the rate at which cancellations have occurred has dramatically increased within the past decade. While a plurality of this country seem to disagree with cancel culture in the abstract, some of those people go on to attempt to cancel someone. While those cancellations are usually targeted towards celebrities who can often recover well, ordinary citizens can face also face cancellations and do not recover as well. There are a number of factors that indicate the likelihood that someone supports cancel culture, however, identifying as a Democrat and being a millennial are the biggest indicators. Despite the risks of cancel culture, this trend shows no signs of slowing down as the younger generations are proponents of its use, and the younger generations are slowly becoming a larger portion of society than older ones.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acevedo, David. "Tracking Cancel Culture in Higher Education." NAS, June 2020.
<https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/tracking-cancel-culture-in-higher-education>.
- Ballard, Jamie. "Most Americans Say Cancel Culture Is a Big Problem." YouGov.
YouGov, July 27, 2020. <https://today.yougov.com/topics/entertainment/articles-reports/2020/07/28/cancel-culture-yahoo-news-poll-data>.
- Bedard, Paul. "Harvard: July 4th Parades Are Right-Wing | Politics | US News." U.S.
News & World Report, June 30, 2011.
<https://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/76britannica-whispers/2011/06/30/76britann-july-4th-parades-are-right-wing>.
- Brooks, Rebecca Beatrice. "The Salem Witch Trials Victims: Who Were They?" History
of Massachusetts Blog, November 13, 2021.
<https://historyofmassachusetts.org/salem-witch-trials-victims/>.
- Carnell, Thom. "Interview: Joe Rogan." Thom Carnell. Thom Carnell, January 25, 2016.
<https://thom-carnell.squarespace.com/writing-samples/2016/1/24/interview-joe-rogan>.
- Clark, Meredith D. "To Tweet Our Own Cause: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Online
Phenomenon 'Black Twitter.'" Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel
Hill Graduate School, 2014.
- "Colin Kaepernick." Biography.com. A&E Networks Television, January 26, 2021.
<https://www.biography.com/athlete/colin-kaepernick>.
- DeSanctis, Alexandra. "The Real Reason They Want to Cancel Joe Rogan." National
Review. National Review, February 3, 2022.
<https://www.nationalreview.com/2022/01/the-real-reason-they-want-to-cancel-joe-rogan/>.
- Dickerson, James. "Dixie Chicks." Internet Archive. Taylor Trade Pub., 2000.
<https://archive.org/details/dixiechicksdownh00dick/page/n9/mode/2up>.
- Fire. "Cancel Culture Widely Viewed as Threat to Democracy, Freedom." FIRE, January
31, 2022. <https://www.thefire.org/national-fire-survey-cancel-culture-widely-viewed-as-threat-to-democracy-freedom/>.
- Gale Opposing Viewpoints Online Collection. "Cancel Culture." Go, 2020.
<https://www.gale.com/c/in-context-opposing-viewpoints>.

- Garger, Kenneth. "Spotify CEO Says Company Won't Cancel Joe Rogan after n-Word Controversy." *New York Post*. New York Post, February 7, 2022. <https://nypost.com/2022/02/07/spotify-ceo-daniel-ek-says-company-wont-cancel-joe-rogan-after-n-word-controversy/>.
- Geran Pilon, Juliana. "2020 America and the Cancel Culture of Fools." *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 14, no. 2 (2020): 183–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2020.1815365>.
- Graham, Jennifer. "Why Cancel Culture Hits Regular People Harder Than Celebrities." Why cancel culture hits regular people harder than celebrities, July 26, 2021. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/entertainment/news/why-cancel-culture-hits-regular-people-harder-than-celebrities/ar-AAMywn6>.
- Hanania, Richard. "Does Apologizing Work? An Empirical Test of the Conventional Wisdom." SSRN, September 8, 2015. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2654465.
- Haynes, Stephanie. "Renaissance Man." *SBNation.com*, June 5, 2014. <https://www.sbnation.com/longform/2014/6/5/5762052/joe-rogan-interview-mma-ufc>.
- Hedegaard, Erik. "How Joe Rogan Went from UFC Announcer to Psychedelic Warrior." *Rolling Stone*. Rolling Stone, January 24, 2020. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/how-joe-rogan-went-from-ufc-announcer-to-21st-century-timothy-leary-182319/>.
- History.com. "Cultural Revolution." History.com. A&E Television Networks, November 9, 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/china/cultural-revolution>.
- Holden, Stephen. "In an Instant, Country Stars Became Political Casualties." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, October 27, 2006. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/27/movies/in-an-instant-country-stars-became-political-casualties.html>.
- Igielnik, Ruth. "Men and Women in the U.S. Continue to Differ in Voter Turnout Rate, Party Identification." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, September 2, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/18/men-and-women-in-the-u-s-continue-to-differ-in-voter-turnout-rate-party-identification/>.
- Joyce, Tom. "Quarterback Colin Kaepernick Sits during National Anthem, Gives Interview about It for the First Time." History.com. A&E Television Networks, July 9, 2021. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/colin-kaepernick-kneels-during-national-anthem>.

- Kaufmann, Eric. "The Politics of the Culture Wars in Contemporary America." Manhattan Institute, January 26, 2022. <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/kaufmann-politics-culture-war-contemporary-america>.
- Lizza, Ryan. "Americans Tune in to 'Cancel Culture' – and Don't like What They See." POLITICO. POLITICO, July 27, 2020. <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/22/americans-cancel-culture-377412>.
- "Louis C.K." Biography.com. A&E Networks Television, August 13, 2020. <https://www.biography.com/performer/louis-ck>.
- Magazine, Smithsonian. "A Brief History of the Salem Witch Trials." Smithsonian.com. Smithsonian Institution, October 23, 2007. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-the-salem-witch-trials>.
- Mazza, Ed. "Louis C.K. Makes Surprise Return to Comedy in First Gig since Scandal." HuffPost. HuffPost, August 28, 2018. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/louis-ck-returns-to-comedy_n_5b84d605e4b0cf7b002e722c.
- McClay, B.D. "Cancel." *The Hedgehog Review* 22, no. 3 (2020): 157–60.
- Meesala, Shriya. "Cancel Culture: A Societal Obligation or Infringement on Free Speech?" UAB Institute for Human Rights Blog, November 16, 2020. <https://sites.uab.edu/humanrights/2020/12/04/cancel-culture-a-societal-obligation-or-infringement-on-free-speech/>.
- Mishan, Ligaya. "The Long and Tortured History of Cancel Culture." The New York Times. The New York Times, December 3, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/03/t-magazine/cancel-culture-history.html>.
- Moss, Gabrielle. "The Dixie Chicks Were Cancelled for Criticizing the President. Now, They're Heroes." Yahoo! Yahoo!, January 22, 2020. <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/dixie-chicks-were-cancelled-criticizing-130039511.html>.
- "Most Patriotic Countries 2021." World Population Review, 2021. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/most-patriotic-countries>.
- Mueller, Thomas S. "Blame, Then Shame? Psychological Predictors in Cancel Culture Behavior." *The Social Science Journal*, 2021, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03623319.2021.1949552>.
- Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth. "Spiral of Silence." Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, 1984. <https://noelle-neumann.de/scientific-work/spiral-of-silence/>.

- Norris, Pippa. “Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality?” *Political Studies*, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>.
- Perlman, Allison. “Hollywood Blacklist.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., October 18, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hollywood-blacklist>.
- Ramsey, Donovan X. “The Truth about Black Twitter.” The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, April 10, 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/04/the-truth-about-black-twitter/390120/>.
- Rankovic, Didi. “Social Media Algorithms Fuel Cancel Culture, Researcher Says.” Reclaim The Net, July 21, 2020. <https://reclaimthenet.org/social-media-algorithms-fuel-cancel-culture/>.
- Reports, Rasmussen. “72% Say ‘Cancel Culture’ Is out of Control.” Rasmussen Reports®, November 3, 2021. https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/partner_surveys/72_say_cancel_culture_is_out_of_control.
- Rogan, Joe. “Joe Rogan.” Joe Rogan, 2022. <https://www.joerogan.com/>.
- Rom, Mark Carl, and Kristina Mitchell. “Teaching Politics in a Call-out and Cancel Culture.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54, no. 3 (2021): 610–14. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096521000433>.
- Ryan, Schneider. “Joe Rogan Proves Fear Is Not a Factor.” *Black Belt* 40, December 2002.
- Ryzik, Melena, Cara Buckley, and Jodi Kantor. “Louis C.K. Is Accused by 5 Women of Sexual Misconduct.” The New York Times. The New York Times, November 9, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/09/arts/television/louis-ck-sexual-misconduct.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur&_r=1.
- Sarner, Lauren. “Behind the Comedic Rise – and Controversial Fall – of Ellen DeGeneres.” New York Post. New York Post, May 13, 2021. <https://nypost.com/2021/05/12/how-ellen-degeneres-spectacular-downfall-happened/>.
- Schaeffer, Katherine. “How Americans Feel about ‘Cancel Culture’ and Offensive Speech in 6 Charts.” Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, August 17, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/17/how-americans-feel-about-cancel-culture-and-offensive-speech-in-6-charts/>.

- Sisario, Ben. "The Dixie Chicks Change Their Name, Dropping the 'Dixie'." The New York Times. The New York Times, June 25, 2020.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/25/arts/music/dixie-chicks-change-name.html>.
- Slisco, Aila. "Louis C.K.'s Comeback Tour Announcement Doesn't Appear to Be Sitting Well with Many Former Fans." Newsweek. Newsweek, October 29, 2019.
<https://www.newsweek.com/louis-ck-announces-comeback-tour-despite-lack-popular-demand-1468286>.
- Steele, Anne. "Spotify Strikes Podcast Deal with Joe Rogan Worth More than \$100 Million." The Wall Street Journal. Dow Jones & Company, May 19, 2020.
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/spotify-strikes-exclusive-podcast-deal-with-joe-rogan-11589913814>.
- Stephanie, Merry. "The Entertainment World Reacts to Louis C.K. Sexual Harassment Allegations." ProQuest. WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post, November 9, 2017.
<https://library.umaine.edu/auth/Ezproxy/test/authej.asp?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.proquest.com%2Fblogs-podcasts-websites%2Fentertainment-world-reacts-louis-c-k-sexual%2Fdocview%2F1962099707%2Fse-2%3Faccountid>.
- Toler, Lindsey. "Cancel Culture and Its Mental Health Effects." Verywell Mind. Verywell Mind, May 1, 2021. <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-mental-health-effects-of-cancel-culture-5119201>.
- Urvater, Brian, and Courtney Vandegrift. "Case Study: Nike & Colin Kaepernick 'Just Do It' Campaign." Pennsylvania State University, September 28, 2021.
<https://sites.psu.edu/burv/case-study-nike-colin-kaepernick-just-do-it-campaign/>.
- Vogels, Emily A. "Americans and 'Cancel Culture': Where Some See Calls for Accountability, Others See Censorship, Punishment." Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. Pew Research Center, September 27, 2021.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/05/19/americans-and-cancel-culture-where-some-see-calls-for-accountability-others-see-censorship-punishment/>.
- Yang, Maya. "'Menace to Public Health': 270 Experts Criticize Spotify over Joe Rogan's Podcast." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, January 14, 2022.
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/jan/14/spotify-joe-rogan-podcast-open-letter>.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Hannah L. Marsh was born in Rowley, Massachusetts on November 26, 1999. She was raised on the North Shore of Massachusetts, and graduated from Triton Regional High School in 2018. Majoring in political science, Hannah has minors in military science, legal studies, and leadership. She is a member of the University of Maine Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). Upon graduation, Hannah will become a Chemical Corps Officer in the United States Army.