The Musical Messages of Madonna and George Michael
and How They Relate to Love, Dating, Relationships, and Sex

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Introduction

Casually listening to the radio, as I often do, I have noticed that the lyrics to many of the most popular songs today deal with the topics of love, dating, relationships, and sex. While some of these songs deal with these topics in a reasonably healthy manner, many of the songs contain unhealthy and deceiving lyrics. Healthy in the context of dating and relationships may be defined as making a "positive contribution to the mind, body, and spirit of each person involved as well as a positive influence on the relationship" (Carr, Ch.3, p.8). Unhealthy relationships, on the other hand, occur "when the dating experience is negative to one or both people in the relationship and/or the relationship is dysfunctional" (Carr, Ch.3, p.8). My career goal is to become a marriage and family counselor, so this particular area is of great interest to me.

What are the most popular and well known musical artists communicating to our nation's young people? This question led me to choose the topic of popular music lyrics and what they portray to young people about love, dating, relationship, and sex for my Senior Honors Thesis. It is important that before going any further I indicate that: 1) most of this thesis will be stated from the point of view of my interpretations of the music and messages, and not on any formal, organized, professional study, and 2) my views may be biased due to a traditional, Midwest, Roman Catholic upbringing. Because the number of popular artists who include these topics in their lyrics is absolutely astronomical, I have decided to narrow my focus to two particular artists. The artists will be Madonna and George Michael.

The purpose of my research is to study the music of Madonna and George Michael to discover what these two very popular artists portray to young people about love, dating, relationships, and sex. My hypothesis is that much of their material promotes attitudes and views that go against the principles of healthy dating. Perhaps many of my peers who have, unfortunately, grown up in or surrounded by distorted
relationships would have a difficult time distinguishing between what is healthy and what is unhealthy. I do realize that some of these distinctions would have to be made on an individual level, and would consist largely of personal opinion. However, there are some general norms that dictate whether particular behaviors are socially acceptable, healthy or unhealthy, when it comes to love, dating, relationships, and sex. For example, possessive love and game playing love are not generally accepted norms in our society, and are examples of unhealthy love. Characteristics of unhealthy dating may include deception, exploitation, manipulation, or coercion - once again going against the norms for healthy dating. According to society's norms, violent relationships, domination in a relationship, and even jealousy in a relationship are not acceptable or healthy forms of relationships, even though all of these do occur. We often see talk shows focusing on these topics because of their unhealthy nature. Finally, it may be noted that while something may be a norm in our society, it is not necessarily healthy. For example, premarital sex is the norm in our society according to a 1985 Gallup poll in which 64% of men and 52% of women approved of premarital intercourse. Also, the mean age of first intercourse for white males was 16.3 years, and for white females was 16.8 years (Cox, 1990, p.116). Although premarital sex may be the norm, it is not always healthy. It can lead to pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, emotional trauma, isolation, etc. These are simply examples of norms directing love, dating, relationships, and sex, and will be discussed in more detail later. While some of these norms are more clear-cut than others, for example, it is not socially acceptable for a man to beat his wife, norms do exist for many areas pertaining to these topics. Being guided not only by these norms, but also by my views of what it takes to have a healthy, successful relationship with someone, I will analyze ten of the most popular songs by these artists - five for each artist - for the messages portrayed to young people, whether these messages promote healthy or unhealthy behaviors in love, dating, relationships, and sex.
Profile

Madonna

Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone was born on August 16, 1958 in Bay City, Michigan. She is the third child of eight and the oldest daughter of an Italian Catholic family that lived in racially mixed, working-class Pontiac. She was named after her mother, who died of breast cancer when Madonna was only five. She reportedly was devastated by her father's remarriage three years after her mother's death, and Madonna has never made peace with her stepmother. Her crucifix collection is said to be a reaction to her strict Catholic upbringing and a sign of her individuality. When she was ten years old, her family moved to Rochester, Michigan, where in high school, Madonna listened to Motown, became a cheerleader, and, in her junior year, began ballet classes at the University of Michigan. She was a very outspoken youth, and often went with her dance instructor to gay bars, where they would clear the floor and dance with everyone watching them. After three semesters at the University of Michigan, Madonna decided that ballet dancing was the career for her, and she headed for New York. She landed a spot with a dance company there, but soon began exploring other opportunities. She began singing on the SoHo art rock/New Wave scene, produced a demo tape, and before long, released her first album, *Madonna*, under Sire records in July of 1983. Madonna probably best describes herself as tough, ambitious, and knowing exactly what she wants. She certainly is not afraid to go after it. Her second album, *Like A Virgin*, produced even more hits, and her popularity soared. In 1985 she launched a coast-to-coast concert tour where many of the crowds of teenage girls who flocked to see their idol showed up dressed as look-alike Madonnas. Obviously the star had some effect on her fans. Her message on the *Virgin* album, as Madonna saw it, was that virginity was hers to claim as long as she belongs to herself. Also in 1985, Madonna married actor Sean Penn.
(to whom she is no longer married), and in 1986 released her third album, *True Blue*, which proved to be no less popular than her first two albums. Besides her music career, Madonna has taken part in several other ventures including a couple of movies (*Desperately Seeking Susan, Shanghai Surprise, and Dick Tracy*) as well as appearances in *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. Since the beginning of her career when Madonna proudly wore a belt buckle with the words "Boy Toy," which she called her unchastity belt, her sexy image has not changed much except to become even more openly sexual. All of these many characteristics of Madonna coupled with her high popularity in the young adult population make her a good source of focus for this research. She has a lot to say to young people in America and elsewhere, and her message is being heard. (Current Biography Yearbook 1986 and People Weekly for March 11, 1985)

**George Michael**

Georgios Kyriakou Panayiotou was born on June 25, 1963, in the Finchley section of London. He is the youngest child of a Greek Cypriot immigrant and restaurant owner and a housewife, and has two older sisters. His childhood dream was to become a pilot, but his nearsightedness and partial color blindness forced him to abandon that dream. Young George received a tape recorder from his parents for his seventh birthday, and never wanted to do anything but sing from that point on.

When George was twelve, his family moved to a prosperous suburb of London, Bushey. He attended Bushey Meads School there, where he met his friend and future singing partner, Andrew Ridgeley. George was said to be introverted, awkward, and overweight in his teens (which is hard to believe considering his current status as a sex symbol), but Andrew Ridgeley was outgoing, handsome, and popular. George learned to be fashion conscious and more personable from Andrew. Unfortunately, George Michael's parents disapproved of their son's friendship with Andrew Ridgeley because they believed he was luring George away from his studies and a respectable
ambition. They were right. In 1979, at sixteen years of age, George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley quit school to form their first band, The Executive. Fame was not far behind, however. In December of 1981, the duo produced a demo tape with their band. In 1982, they signed a contract with the recording company Innervision, Georgios Panayiotou changed his name to George Michael, and the musical group Wham! was formed. Their first album, Fantastic, became very popular in England, but did not become popular in the United States. Their second album, Make It Big, was released in 1984 and was known as up-tempo, lightweight pop. It did “make it big” in America, as did their third album, Music From the Edge of Heaven. Two men who had made their start as the “Bad Boys” of British controversial rap, had changed their look and style - their image - and had become extremely popular in America. The popularity of Wham! did not last long, however. In 1986, George Michael left Wham! to pursue a solo career, which turned out to be a wise move on his part.

As a solo performer, George once again began to sport the rugged, tough look of his earlier days. Reportedly, he even “assured his fans that his new music would be ‘more abrasive and sexual, much more real!’” (Current Biography Yearbook 1988). He lived up to his promise, and in 1987 released the song, “I Want Your Sex” from his new album, Faith. That song was so controversial, that it was limited to only nighttime airplay in England, and was banned entirely from many United States radio stations. This controversy was strategic for George Michael, though, for it helped his popularity grow immensely. He has continued to produce hit songs, and his latest album, Listen Without Prejudice, is no exception. His image has changed along with his popularity. He is now viewed as a serious composer, singer, and producer who uses openly sexual lyrics, and sings frequently of romantic love. Now that he has gained a large following and is very popular in this country, and now that he is seen as a serious musician, one thing is certain. We have not seen the end of George Michael. (Current Biography Yearbook 1988)
Rationale

I chose to review the music of these two artists for two main reasons. First, the popularity of both Madonna and George Michael was a major factor in the decision. They are both extremely popular in the young adult segment of the population. Even those who are not avid fans of either one have at least heard their songs on the radio and are familiar with them. These songs along with their messages then have a potential effect even on casual listeners. Madonna and George Michael are two productive artists who we are likely to see much more of in the future. Their popularity is not likely to decline in the near future.

The second reason that I chose these two artists is because of the controversy their music causes. They both portray what the American public views as controversial messages, and most of these controversial messages deal with human sexuality and how it relates or does not relate to relationships. This controversy has a positive relationship with their levels of popularity. It seems that the more controversial the messages become, the more popular the artists become. I am interested in looking at what exactly these controversial messages are saying.
Nature of the Research

The purpose of this thesis is to study the music of two particular artists, Madonna and George Michael, to discover what these two very popular artists are portraying to young people (high school and college aged students) about love, dating, relationships, and sex. Much of the message is unhealthy, not only in my opinion, but according to society's norms as well as the principles of healthy dating.

To begin with, there are several styles and types of love. While many of the styles of loving are considered healthy (best friend's love, unselfish love), some of the styles are definitely unhealthy. Game-playing love is one of these unhealthy styles. "To the game-playing lover an emotional relationship is a challenge to be enjoyed, a contest to be won" (Cox, 1990, p.75). This style of lover cannot deal with commitment, and usually keeps the other person emotionally off-balance (Carr, Ch.2, p.7). Obviously, this would not be a healthy style of loving. In fact, it has been stated that "game playing love is not truly love at all, that it is hedonism at best and promiscuity at worst" (Cox, 1990, p.76). Possessive love is also an unhealthy style of loving. Actually, it is quite possibly the most unfulfilling and disturbing style of loving.

According to Frank Cox (Human Intimacy), this style of love alternates from "peaks of excitement" to "depths of despair" and is capable of shifting quickly from "intense devotion" to "intense jealousy" (1990, p.76). These lovers constantly fear the loss of their lover and are usually enormously dependent on him or her. They also may see jealousy as a natural part of being in love. Being on a constant emotional roller coaster would describe a possessive love relationship. This can definitely be viewed as unhealthy.

As far as types of love are concerned, there are three main types: Infatuation, Romantic Love, and Mature Love. While mature love is what we should all be striving for in a marriage relationship, the other styles are not necessarily unhealthy as long as
we understand them for what they are. It should be understood that one should never marry in the infatuation or romantic love state. Infatuation happens very quickly, and the infatuated person often feels out of control (of both emotions and behaviors). There is usually a strong physical or social attraction coupled with a feeling of great excitement, but also insecurity. Infatuation can grow into romantic love. Romantic love signifies more control and "implies viewing the person and/or relationship from an imaginative or emotional perspective" (Carr, Ch.2, p. 9). The danger of romantic love is the unrealistic manner in which the victim tends to see the other person and the relationship. A person feeling romantic love tends to "exaggerate...positive qualities and de-emphasize...negative qualities" (Carr, Ch.2, p.9). Romantic love, like infatuation, is exciting and adventurous, but insecure. It can, however, lead to mature love. Mature love grows slowly over time. In a mature love relationship, sharing love is more important than receiving it, serving and self-sacrificing are accepted, needs are understood and met, and deep friendship and companionship develops (Carr, Ch.2, p.10). Mature love is also free of jealousy. Obviously, mature love is what most of us are eventually striving to attain. My point in discussing these styles and types of loving is that, as we will see, Madonna and George Michael sing about “Love” often in their songs. However, no differentiation is made as to whether they are singing about romantic love, mature love, or simply infatuation. To a listener who does not understand these different types and styles, the lyrics can be misleading. Perhaps the lyrics are describing an infatuation, but the naive listener understands it as describing the characteristics of love as it is or should be. This could potentially lead to an unhealthy view of how a mature love relationship should operate.

The examples given earlier of characteristics of unhealthy dating do not require much explanation. It seems obvious that any kind of deception, exploitation, manipulation, or coercion would be unhealthy to any relationship, especially a dating relationship. In fact, those who use these tactics are learning unhealthy attitudes,
beliefs, and behaviors toward themselves and others that could follow them into future relationships (Carr, Ch.3, p.9). Unfortunately, many people who have been raised in an unhealthy environment like this may see this as the norm for a relationship. Once again, my point is that songs that portray deception, exploitation, manipulation and/or coercion as part of a relationship may mislead listeners who are vulnerable to these messages. Perhaps these songs may even reinforce previously held and possibly unhealthy beliefs.

As far as unhealthy views of relationships are concerned, society obviously says that violence in a relationship is not healthy mentally or physically. There is not much objection to that. Having complete dominance over another person in a relationship is also not healthy - not only for the partner that must submit to this dominance, but also for the controlling "partner." Dominance simply does not allow for a mature love relationship to grow. Finally, while many see jealousy as a normal part of love, jealousy is not part of a mature love relationship, and is usually destructive (Carr, Ch.2, p.10). It reflects a lack of self confidence and a lack of security, and is usually unhealthy. I am interested in whether Madonna and George Michael portray any of these examples of characteristics of unhealthy relationships in their songs.

Finally, what seems to be the norm in our society of premarital sex and sexual experimentation is not always healthy. For example, premarital sex can lead to an unwanted pregnancy. This can be emotionally unhealthy for a woman not ready to deal with parenthood and who may be facing it alone. Who would argue that a 13 or 14 year old raising a child is unhealthy? The girl is still a child herself. Sexual experimentation can also lead to sexually transmitted diseases as well as AIDS. This is not only physically unhealthy, but emotionally unhealthy as well. Some of these diseases may even cause infertility. In many cases, experimenting with sex when the individual is not really ready for it can lead to emotional trauma. Perhaps there is a feeling of guilt or shame - especially in the case of abortions. Definitely not least of the
possible repercussions of early sexual experience is a feeling of isolation. The young person may feel isolated from family if the family learns of the behavior. Especially when sex leads to pregnancy, isolation is felt - not only from family, but from friends and the community. What are these artists telling young people about sex? Do they warn them of the possible consequences? Or do they just confirm that everything is OK? Do they paint a truly realistic and healthy picture of sex?
Methods

Survey

To begin with, I surveyed 222 Ball State University undergraduates (70 males, 152 females) to determine whether they listen to the type of music I am studying, how long they have listened to it, whether they listen to the words of a song, whether they watch accompanying videos, where they believe they are most influenced by these songs, whether they are familiar with Madonna and George Michael, how the lyrics to these songs may have influenced them, and whether they see these artists' messages as healthy or unhealthy.

I found that 16% always listen to Top 40 music, 42% usually listen, and 32% sometimes listen. Only 8% rarely listened, and 2% never listened. I had apparently chosen the type of music nearly everyone listened to. Answers to the question of how long these students had listened to Top 40 music varied from 2 years to their whole life, with 10 years (22%), 15 years (17%), and life (22%) being the most popular answers. Of these students surveyed, 14% said that they always pay attention to the words, 56% said they usually pay attention, 28% said they sometimes pay attention, and 1% said they rarely pay attention. Clearly, the lyrics are being heard. Whether or not the videos are being watched was answered with 85% saying that they do watch these videos, and 13% saying they do not. The videos could then be enhancing the messages. Students thought they were most influenced by the words to a song when they were in their rooms (42%) or in the car (49%). Some (6%) thought they were most influenced at a party, while others threw in answers including: not influenced (1%), when drunk or on drugs (1%), anywhere (3%), when alone (3%), when depressed (1%), during sex, and when with a man. According to the students' answers, they are influenced in many different places.

I learned that the artists I have chosen, Madonna and George Michael, are
indeed very well known in this population. Of the students surveyed, 96% had listened to songs by Madonna, and 94% had listened to songs by George Michael. In evaluating the influence of these songs, 82% said that songs by these artists had made them think about love, dating, relationships, or sex. On the other hand, 59% said that songs by these artists had not ever inspired an idea, and 81% said that songs by these artists had not ever influenced them to behave in a certain way. This is an interesting finding considering the fact that in question #5, all students surveyed except 3, stated different places where they were most influenced by songs, and 82% answered that songs by Madonna and/or George Michael had made them think about love, dating, relationships, or sex. Granted, thinking is not doing, but an argument could be made here that perhaps these students are influenced to behave in a certain way without consciously realizing that these songs may be influencing them. Also, there is the possibility that even thinking about the topics that these songs present could lead to desensitization, and the thinking could lead to doing. Interestingly, it was found that 44% of those surveyed believed that the messages Madonna is portraying are healthy, while 47% believed that these messages are unhealthy. While this question is split almost in half, it is somewhat disturbing to discover that 44% of the students surveyed believe that Madonna's messages are generally healthy. At least some of her messages are in fact healthy, but many of them are not. The students who answered that they are healthy are quite possibly being mislead and deceived. The same goes for the finding on the question asking the same of George Michael's songs. Students believed even more strongly that his messages were healthy (65%). These artists could potentially have a strong, and misleading impact on vulnerable young adults, especially if these young people believe that what they are hearing is healthy and/or normal.
Survey

Male______  Female______

1) Do you listen to Top 40 music?
   Always   Usually   Sometimes   Rarely   Never

2) How long have you been listening to Top 40 music?________

3) When you listen to a song, do you pay attention to the words?
   Always   Usually   Sometimes   Rarely   Never

4) Do you watch videos that include Top 40 artists and songs?
   Yes_____  No_______

5) When do you think you are most influenced by the words to a song?
   In your room_______
   In the car_______
   At a party_______
   Other(specify)_______

6) Have you ever listened to songs by Madonna?
   Yes_____  No_______

7) Have you ever listened to songs by George Michael?
   Yes_____  No_______

8) Have the words to a song by one of these artists ever made you think about
   dating, love, relationships, or sex?
   Yes_____  No_______

9) Have the words to a song by one of these artists ever inspired an idea?
   Yes_____  No_______

10) Have the words to a song by one of these artists ever influenced you to behave in
    a certain way?
    Yes_____  No_______

11) Do you think that the messages Madonna is portraying are generally
    Healthy_____  Unhealthy_______

12) Do you think that the messages George Michael is portraying are generally
    Healthy_____  Unhealthy_______
Survey Tally

Male - 70  Female - 152  Total - 222

1) Do you listen to Top 40 music?

- Always - 35
- Usually - 93
- Sometimes - 72
- Rarely - 17
- Never - 5

2) How long have you been listening to Top 40 music?

Answers varied from 2 years to life, with 10 years, 15 years, and life being the most popular answers (48, 37, and 48 respectively).

3) When you listen to a song, do you pay attention to the words?

- Always - 32
- Usually - 124
- Sometimes - 63
- Rarely - 2
- Never - 1

4) Do you watch videos that include Top 40 artists?

- Yes - 189
- No - 29

5) When do you think you are most influenced by the words to a song?

- Room - 94
- Car - 109
- Party - 13
- Not influenced - 3
- When drunk - 2
- Anywhere - 6
- On drugs - 1
- With a man - 1
- During sex - 1
- Depressed - 3
- By myself - 6

6) Have you ever listened to songs by Madonna?

- Yes - 214
- No - 8

7) Have you ever listened to songs by George Michael?

- Yes - 209
- No - 13

8) Have the words to a song by one of these artists ever made you think about love, dating, relationships, or sex?

- Yes - 183
- No - 39
9) Have the words to a song by one of these artists ever inspired an idea?
   Yes - 92  No - 130

10) Have the words to a song by one of these artists ever influenced you to behave in a certain way?
    Yes - 40  No - 180

11) Do you think that the messages Madonna is portraying are generally
    Healthy - 97  Unhealthy - 105

12) Do you think that the messages George Michael is portraying are generally
    Healthy - 144  Unhealthy - 54
Selecting Songs

The task of selecting the songs to be analyzed proved to be relatively simple. I listened intently to the lyrics of a wide variety of songs from each of the albums of Madonna and George Michael, and chose five songs from each of these artists which I believed had something significant to say about love, dating, relationships, and sex. While many, or perhaps even most of the songs had at least something to do with these topics, I selected the ones that seemed to have the most to say. Each of these will be analyzed in the next section.

Evidence that music affects behavior

One question that may be asked relative to my research is whether or not popular music actually is influential to the thoughts and behaviors of students. In fact, there is some research that suggests that it is influential. It can be noted that popular music generates more than 50 billion dollars a year (Toohey, 1982). College students comprise 11.5% of the population and purchase 19% of the records and tapes (Iversen, Reed, and Revlin, 1989). Sixty percent of students spend approximately 2-4 hours a day listening to music (Toohey, 1982). Obviously, listening to music makes up a large dimension of the lifestyle of most college students. There has also been much speculation that popular music and its lyrics may contribute to personality development and development of attitudes. According to Iversen, Reed, and Revlin, (1989), “music is powerful in creating moods and as such it is an important contributor to our emotional experiences.” These authors also state that there is great concern about the impact of musical lyrics on the young because lyrics have the potential to function as socialization agents and introduce these young impressionable people to new emotions and situations. It has further been proposed that “objectionable” song lyrics have an influence on the behavior of adolescents because first, the lyrics are presented by a credible source to them - popular singers - and second, they are
presented through a medium that is valued by these adolescents, rock or pop music. Therefore, it is likely that students would give priority to these messages, treating them as personally relevant and letting them govern their actions (Iversen, Reed, and Revlin, 1989). In fact, it has been shown that "placing words in the context of music makes them more memorable" (Serafine, Davidson, Crowder, and Repp, 1986). In light of all of these proposals and findings, a concern is growing in American parents and educators over what messages these young adults (high school and college students) are receiving and how these messages will affect their attitudes and behaviors.

Several researchers have tackled the task of beginning to identify and answer some of these concerns. To begin with, Jack V. Toohey (1982) surveyed 100 university students to discover what beliefs they held concerning how much influence popular music had in shaping their social values. Interestingly, and quite surprisingly, 48% of those surveyed believed that musical lyrics do have a significant influence on shaping their values, and only 2% believed that lyrics have little or no influence. An amazing 82% thought that lyrics could shape values subconsciously. Perhaps even more significant to my research, 58% answered that lyrics could have a greater influence on personality if listening was combined with marijuana or alcohol, and 66% felt that lyrics "contribute (significantly) to establishing standards for dating behavior and relationships" (Toohey, 1982). In Toohey's study, even the students acknowledged that yes, they can be affected by the lyrics to popular music.

In another study conducted by Janet Iversen, Henry Reed, and Russell Revlin (1989), 34 male and female university students judged the personal relevance of lyrical excerpts from 14 popular songs. Half of the subjects received written excerpts only to evaluate, while the other half received written excerpts accompanied by the sound recording. The subjects rated the lyrics on a 7-point scale ranging from not at all worthwhile to consider to extremely worthwhile to consider. It was found in this
study that females rated the lyrics to have higher relevance when they are sung rather than simply appearing in written format. While this was not found to be true for men, it is significant and may be an important point in support of the idea that the medium of music may have more effect on value formation and personal behaviors. This evidence does suggest that songs do affect the behavior of at least female listeners, "making them susceptible to the lyrical messages" (Iversen, Reed, and Revlin, 1989).

A third study conducted by Jeremiah S. Strouse and Nancy L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (1987) examined the effects of media exposure on the sexual attitudes and behaviors of 465 college students. These researchers noticed that popular mass media contains many "nonmarital, inaccurate, and unrealistic sexual themes and messages" (Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1987). They believed that these messages may have relevance to the consumers of mass media partly because of the earlier finding that heavy TV viewers tend to believe that what they see on TV is reality. It has also been found that young people imitate those media figures whom they admire. The researchers therefore expected "that those who have had the most exposure to popular mass media would exhibit the most liberal sexual attitudes, values, expectations, and behavior" (Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1987). They performed their research through the use of an extensive questionnaire given to 457 college students (259 females and 198 males). They found that MTV (Music Television) viewing frequency was the greatest predictor of number of sexual partners in the students surveyed, and MTV viewing also emerged as the most powerful predictor of females' sexual attitudes. Additionally, they found that popular music consumption was the second best predictor of sexual attitudes, and the second greatest source of pressures to become sexually involved. Strause and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1987) state "Overall, TV presents sexuality an an exploitive, recreation-oriented, casual activity that occurs outside of marriage in over 90% of the alleged incidences...MTV and related music videos contain even more incidences of implied sex than conventional
TV; they are also physically titillating and devoid of emotional involvement." The researchers also conclude that the students' familiarity with popular music can be associated with a greater involvement with friends and a lesser involvement with family which could lead to peer discussions that create "a norm of acceptability to 'say yes to sex'" (Strause and Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1987).

Clearly, these researchers have found that it is possible and perhaps even likely for students to be effected by the popular music they listen to as well as by the videos of these songs seen on MTV. Apparently the music videos do have an enhancing effect on the song's simple lyrics and accompaniment. This is also of relevance to my research because a great deal of the controversy surrounding Madonna and George Michael is related to their highly sexual and suggestive videos. Some of these videos even border on pornography. If students listen to these popular songs and watch the videos that accompany them, they may be receiving a double dose of unhealthy and deceiving messages regarding the very important topics in their lives of love, dating, relationships and sex.
Thesis Results

Analysis of Songs
Madonna

"Like a Virgin"

I made it through the wilderness
Somehow I made it through
Didn't know how lost I was
Until I found you

I was beat
Incomplete
I'd been had
I was sad and blue
But you made me feel
Shiny and new

Like a virgin
Touched for the very first time
Like a virgin
When your heart beats
Next to mine

Gonna give you all my love, boy
My fear is fading fast
Been saving it all for you
'Cause only love can last

You're so fine
And you're mine
Make me strong
Yeah you make me bold
Oh, your love thawed out
What was scared and cold

(Chorus)

You're so fine
And you're mine
I'll be yours
'Til the end of time
'Cause you made me feel
I'd nothing to hide

(Chorus)
Madonna

“Like a Virgin”

The title song from Madonna’s second album, “Like a Virgin,” tells the story of a girl who has experienced some rough times and who apparently has not experienced any successful relationships. She has felt used and unhappy for a while, until she finds her “dream guy.” This wonderful new man makes her feel strong and alive and new. She feels loved. This is a good story. It could give a healthy message to young women that they can make it through any rough times they may be experiencing, and that there is someone out there who could help them to feel good about themselves. They should not settle for a relationship with which they are unhappy. As we saw when defining “healthy,” this type of relationship is making a positive contribution to the girl’s life.

However, the good qualities of the lyrics are largely lost in Madonna’s discussion of her virginity. She says that the new man makes her feel

Shiny and new
Like a virgin
Touched for the very first time

First of all, this phrase obviously implies that she is not a virgin - that sex has been part of her previous relationships. She has followed the not necessarily healthy social norm of premarital sex. There is even some evidence of a possible emotional effect of this act. She says she was lost, beat, incomplete, sad and blue. But, the man in her life has made her feel like a virgin all over again. What kind of message does this send? An unclear one. At least, to her credit, Madonna does portray virginity as a good thing in this song. However, she also gives the idea that virginity, once lost, can be regained by implying that she was not a virgin, but now feels like one again because of this new relationship. If you find the right guy, do not worry she seems to
say. He will make you feel like you are a virgin again, and he will erase all of the “bad” things you have ever done. This is a very romantic idea, but also a quite unrealistic one. This thought could be dangerous because it could lead someone to think they can do anything they want now, because later, when they meet the right man, it will not matter. In reality, many people do not have the capacity to blindly and lovingly accept all of someone’s past mistakes. Madonna has created an illusion that may not be reality for most people in their relationships.

Perhaps where the song loses the most credit, however, is where, right after she says how wonderful it is to feel like a virgin again, she says that she is ready to go to bed with him. She says,

Gonna give you all my love, boy  
My fear is fading fast  
Been saving it all for you  
‘Cause only love can last

What has she been saving? The lost virginity that she theoretically regained? If she does not have the virginity to give, she cannot be saving it for him. This is definitely a mixed message being given to impressionable young people. While these girls may know the facts - that virginity cannot be regained - the message given in this song may give them a way to justify their sexual behaviors.
Madonna

"Material Girl"

Some boys kiss me
Some boys hug me
I think they're OK
If they don't give me proper credit
I just walk away

They can beg and
They can plead
But they can't see the light
'Cause the boy with the cold hard cash
Is always Mr. Right

'Cause we are living in a material world
And I am a material girl
(Repeat)

Some boys roam and
Some boys know that
That's all right with me
If they can't raise my interest
Then I'll have to let them be

Some boys try and
Some boys lie
But I don't let them play
Only boys that save their pennies
Make my rainy day

(Chorus)

Living in a material world (Repeat)

Boys may come and
Boys may go
And that's all right you see
Experience has made me rich
And now they're after me

(Chorus)

Now everybody's living in a material world
And I am a material girl
Madonna

“Papa Don’t Preach”

Papa, I know you’re going to be upset
‘Cause I was always your little girl
But you should know by now
That I’m not a baby

You always taught me right from wrong
I need your help, Daddy
Please be strong
I may be young at heart
But I know what I’m saying

The one you warned me all about
The one you said I could do without
We’re in an awful mess
And I don’t mean maybe

Please, Papa don’t preach
I’m in trouble deep
Papa don’t preach
I’ve been losing sleep
But I made up my mind
I’m keeping my baby (Repeat)

He says that he’s going to marry me
We can raise a little family
Maybe we’ll be alright
It’s a sacrifice
But my friends keep telling me to give it up
Sayin’ I’m too young
I oughta’ live it up
What I need right now is some good advice

(Chorus)

Daddy, Daddy if you could only see
Just how good he’s been treating me
You’d give us your blessing right now
‘Cause we are in love (Repeat)

(Chorus)
Madonna

"Papa Don't Preach"

Madonna brings up important social considerations in her song "Papa Don't Preach." This song tells of a young girl who is pregnant and is struggling with some difficult decisions, one of them being telling her father. This is reality, and surely strikes home with a lot of pregnant teenagers in America. She says,

\[
Papa, I know you're going to be upset  
'Cause I was always your little girl
\]

and

\[
You always taught me right from wrong  
I need your help, Daddy  
Please be strong
\]

Lyrics such as these tell the reality of the situation. It tells teens that having sex is not always glamorous and trouble free. There are certain consequences to our behaviors and this song acknowledges that. It deals with the realities of sexual experimentation and the effects it can have on a young girl's life.

The young girl in the song is torn between her friends and her life as a teenager and the responsibilities that lie ahead. Madonna sings,

\[
My friends keep telling me to give it up  
Sayin' I'm too young  
I oughta' live it up
\]

On the other hand, she wants to keep her baby. She fears isolation from her friends if she keeps the baby, and isolation from her father simply because she has gotten pregnant. Here we see some of the unhealthy consequences of premarital sex - a teenage pregnancy and isolation for the young girl and her baby. Although it may seem out of character for Madonna, she is making a point to teenagers to think about the consequences of sex.
The solution that the girl in the song comes up with may be questioned, however. The girl has not only decided to keep her baby, which will be a huge responsibility for her - one for which she is probably not ready - but she is also going to marry the one that Daddy warned her all about and said she could do without. Madonna sings,

*He says that he's going to marry me*
*We can raise a little family*
*Maybe we'll be alright*
*It's a sacrifice*

Obviously, this is not a good circumstance to get married under. If one should only marry in the mature love state, then these two should probably not be getting married. It is especially risky if they see it as a sacrifice, and she says "maybe we'll be alright. The marriage does not stand a very good chance of success. While such a decision may be the right one for some couples facing this dilemma, it should not be taken by teenagers as the ideal solution. After the release of this song, many religious groups commended Madonna on not promoting abortion in this song, but promoting life. While it is true that she does not promote abortion in this song, the solutions may still not be ideal. A teenage couple raising a baby and being married may not be healthy for either one of them or the baby.

While Madonna's song "*Papa Don't Preach*" may be an eye-opener for many teens, it is important that the teens understand that marriage should not be an automatic decision in such a circumstance. It would not necessarily be a healthy one.
Madonna

"Justify My Love"

I wanna kiss you in Paris
I wanna hold your hand in Rome
I wanna run naked in a rainstorm
Make love in a train cross-country
You put this in me
So now what, so now what?

Wanting, needing, waiting
For you to justify my love
Hoping, praying
For you to justify my love

I want to know you
Not like that
I don’t wanna be your mother
I don’t wanna be your sister either
I just wanna be your lover
I wanna be your baby
Kiss me, that’s right, kiss me

Wanting, needing, waiting
For you to justify my love
Yearning, burning
For you to justify my love

What are you gonna do?
What are you gonna do?
Talk to me - tell me your dreams
Am I in them?
Tell me your fears
Are you scared?
Tell me your stories
I’m not afraid of who you are
We can fly!

Poor is the man
Whose pleasures depend
On the permission of another

Love me, that’s right, love me
I wanna be your baby
Madonna

"Justify My Love"

Madonna's latest hit, "Justify My Love," has caused more controversy than any of her other previous hits. While the lyrics to the song, along with the sexy whisper she uses to deliver these lyrics create some of the controversy, the video that accompanies this song has created much more of the controversy. In my survey, 85% of the students watch music videos, so it is quite possible that the video for "Justify My Love" will affect these people. If this video is to have any effect, however, the video viewers will have to go to the video store and rent it or buy it, because MTV had refused to play it, saying that it is pornographic. It is exactly this censorship by MTV that drew the controversy, and made the song and video more popular than it already was or would have been. As soon as viewers learned that the video could not be seen on MTV, but could be bought at the store, people rushed out to buy or rent it. Rather than censorship killing the song's popularity, it bolstered it tremendously. The public's curiosity was raised, and everyone wanted to see just what this video that even MTV refused to play was all about.

The lyrics of the song basically send the message that sex justifies love. The Random House College Dictionary defines justify as "to show to be just, right, or warranted" (1984). Madonna, then is saying that she is waiting for the man to make her "love" just, right, and warranted. It is obvious through the lyrics that the way she wants him to do this is through sex. The message that sex makes love right is very distorted and unhealthy. In fact, this message is backwards, and may be interpreted as if you have sex, then it is OK that you love the person. At the very least, it should be the opposite. The whole message is very confusing.

In the song, Madonna is saying that the man (or woman) caused her sexual desire, and that now he (or she) must satisfy that desire. She sings,
You put this in me
So now what, so now what

and

What are you gonna do?

She uses words like wanting, needing, waiting, hoping, and praying in the beginning to show her desire for the other person. Eventually, she shifts to sexier words such as yearning and burning to show increased desire. The lyrics are quite openly sexual.

The video in this case proved even more provocative and controversial than the song. In the video various forms of sexual deviations from norms are shown graphically. For example, voyeurism, exhibitionism, group sex, and bondage are all shown. The video even features Madonna passionately kissing a woman. These actions correspond to the words,

Tell me your stories
I'm not afraid of who you are
We can fly!

Poor is the man
Whose pleasures depend
On the permission of another

In this last stanza, she is telling listeners not to pay attention to social norms, but to be free to do as we please sexually. She is saying that we should not be constrained. In other words, “anything goes.”

Obviously, the message portrayed in this song about sexuality is not the accepted version of “normal” sexuality in this society. If it were, there would not be such controversy. The idea of sex justifying love is an unhealthy message to be given to those who are struggling to understand love, and to understand their sexuality. This is not the type of message that needs to be portrayed if we want young people to develop healthy thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.
Madonna

“Cherish”

So tired of broken hearts
And losing at this game
Before I start this dance
I'll take a chance
I'm telling you I want more than just romance
You are my destiny
I can't let go
Baby, can't you see?
Cupid, please take your aim at me

Cherish the thought of always having you
Here by my side
Oh baby, I cherish the joy
You keep bringing it into my life
I'm always singing it
Cherish the strength
You got the power to make me feel good
Oh baby, I'll perish the thought of ever leaving
I never would

I was never satisfied with casual encounters
I can't hide my need
For two hearts that beat
With burning love
That's the way it's got to be

Romeo and Juliet
They never felt this way I bet
So don't underestimate my point of view

(Chorus)

You can't get away
I won't let you
I could never forget to
Cherish is the word I use to remind me of
Your love
You're giving it to me, boy
Keep giving me the joy
Give me faith
I will always cherish you
Madonna

“Cherish”

Of the five Madonna songs analyzed her, “Cherish” is the most tame and harmless. It really contains no seriously unhealthy or distorted lyrics. I included it here so that it is a fair sample of Madonna’s work. Not all of the songs are unhealthy.

“Cherish” is basically a song about romantic love. Frank Cox in his book, Human Intimacy (1990) says the following about romantic love:

“Cupid’s arrow piercing the heart and instantaneously awakening passionate devotion is the definitive image of romantic love. The romantic lover is often as much in love with love itself as with the beloved... The typical romantic lover seeks a total emotional relationship with the partner. Moreover, he or she expects the relationship to provide a constant series of emotional peaks” (77).

“Cherish” definitely fits this description of romantic love. The girl believes that the guy is her “destiny,” a romantic idea. Madonna sings,

Cupid, please take your aim at me

She wants to always be by his side, and she cherishes the joy and strength he gives her - and example of the desire for a constant emotional peak. She sings,

Give me faith
Give me joy
My boy
I will always cherish you

Intense attraction is another part of romantic love. Madonna sings,

I can't hide my need
For two hearts that beat
With burning love
That’s the way it’s got to be

She even compares their relationship to Romeo and Juliet, the most romantic couple of all time. She is basically “head over heels” for this guy and wants to be with him forever. She says she won’t let him get away.
“Cherish” is just a simple song about a couple in a romantic love relationship. It is not unhealthy for young people to listen to these lyrics because most of them are experiencing romantic love at some point. Romantic love is not an unhealthy style of love as long as one does not marry in this state.
George Michael

"Faith"

Well I guess it would be nice
If I could touch your body
Oh no, not everybody
Has got a body like you

But I gotta' think twice
Before I give my heart away
And I know all the games you play
Because I play them too

Oh, but I need some time off
From that emotion
Time to pick my heart up off the floor
Oh when that love comes out without devotion
Well it takes a strong man, baby
But I'm showin' you the door

'Cause I gotta' have faith
I gotta' have faith (Repeat)

Baby, I know you're asking me to stay
Say please, please, please don't go away
'You say I'm givin' you the blues
Maybe you mean every word you say
Can't help but think of yesterday
And a lover who tied me down to loverboy rules

Before this river there comes an ocean
Before you throw my heart back on the floor
Oh baby, I'll reconsider my foolish notion
Well I need someone to hold me
But I'll wait for something more

Yes, I gotta' have faith
I gotta' have faith
"Faith," the title song from George Michael's *Faith* album, gives a somewhat distorted impression of what exactly faith is. Faith is defined as "confidence or trust in a person or thing" and "a belief that is not based on proof" (Random House 1984). This could be faith in God or another person. The song begins with organ music like one would hear in a church, giving the impression that the song will discuss faith in God. The theme quickly changes, however, with the opening lyrics:

*Well I guess it would be nice*
*If I could touch your body*

Besides bordering on sacrilegious, this song does not discuss faith as it really is.

The character in the song is a young man who has been hurt in relationships before, is leery, and must be careful before getting involved in a new relationship. This song does discuss game-playing love, and in fact, the man is saying that he does not want to be a part of this type of love anymore. This is a healthy message. George Michael sings,

*I know all the games you play*
*Because I play them too*

implying his game-playing style of love. Then he sings,

*But I need some time off*
*From that emotion*
*Time to pick my heart up off the floor*
*Oh, when that love comes out without devotion...*

Here he describes the game-playing style with no commitment and says that he needs to get away from that. This is a good message to be sending to young people.

On the other hand, the man does not trust the new girl he has met. In essence, he says that he must hold off on a relationship until he has faith in her. He implies that
he cannot get involved until he is sure that she loves him and that he will not get hurt again. This idea describes the way many people feel about beginning a relationship. They are afraid of getting hurt and will not commit to someone until they have some proof, as they see it, that they will not be hurt again. The whole idea of having proof of someone's love before committing denies the whole concept of faith. If faith is confidence or trust in a person that is not based on proof, then George Michael is not singing about faith. If he is waiting for someone to give him faith in them, he is likely to be waiting for quite some time. Faith is not given to us, but is something that must come from within. For the many people who do not understand that, this song will reinforce their beliefs that another's love must be proven before a relationship is "safe."

This song, while encouraging people to get out of game-playing styles of love, distorts the concept of faith on which the song is based and gives an unhealthy message that proof should be required before entering a new relationship.
George Michael

"Father Figure"

That's all I wanted
Something special
Someone sacred
In your eyes
For just one moment
To be warm and naked
At your side
Sometimes I think that you'll never understand me
Baby, this time is forever
Say it can be

That's all you wanted
Something special
Someone sacred
In your life
Just for one moment
To be warm and naked
At my side
Sometimes I think that you'll never understand me
But something tells me together we'd be happy

I will be you father figure
Put your tiny hand in mine
I will be your preacher
Teach you anything you had in mind
I will be your father, baby
I have had enough of crying
I will be the one who loves you
'Til the end of time

That's all I wanted
But sometimes love can be mistaken
For a crime
That's all I wanted
Just to see my baby's blue eyes shine
This time I think that my lover understands me
If we have faith in each other
Then we can be strong

(Chorus)
If you are the desert
I'll be the sea
If you ever hunger
Hunger for me
Whatever you ask for
That's what I'll be

So when you remember the ones who have lied
Who said that they cared
But then laughed as you cried
Beautiful darling, don't think of me
Because all I ever wanted
Is in your eyes
Baby
And love can't lie
(Greet me with the eyes of a child)
My love is always telling me so
(Heaven is a kiss and a smile)
Just hold on, hold on
And I won't let you go, my baby

(Chorus)

I will be your father
I'll be your daddy
I will be the one who love you
'Til the end of time
George Michael

"Father Figure"

The most outstanding message in George Michael’s hit, “Father Figure,” is an unhealthy one. The basic message is that the man in the song wants to love the woman as her father figure. This message is unhealthy because he really does not want to love her as a father would, but as a lover would. George Michael uses the analogy of a father’s love to prove a point, but it is ineffective because a father’s love is absolutely not the same kind of love as a romantic partner’s love. The point he is trying to prove is that he will take care of her, never hurt her, and would be there forever like a father would. He says,

I will be your father figure
Put your tiny hand in mine
I will be your preacher
Teach you anything you had in mind
I will be your father, baby
I have had enough of crying
I will be the one who loves you
’Til the end of time

He says that he will be anything she wants him to be and will take care of her. It could be argued that this is bordering on possessive love. For example, he says,

If you are the desert
I’ll be the sea
If you ever hunger
Hunger for me

but at the very least, it is unhealthy to interpret romantic love as fatherly love. He cannot possibly love her as a father because he is not her father, and the two types of love are completely different. The most important example of a difference between the two types is that a father does not desire his daughter sexually. That is not part of the accepted definition of a father-daughter love relationship. It would be very unhealthy
for a daughter to be sexually involved with her father, but probably without intending to, this song alludes to that type of relationship. In speaking to his lover, wanting her to trust him because he will not treat her like her past lovers have, he says,

I will be your father  
I'll be your daddy  
I will be the one who loves you  
'Til the end of time

While what he may want to say is that he wants her to love and trust him completely as a child does a father (i.e. *Greet me with the eyes of a child*), the message is ineffective and unhealthy. One simply cannot compare a father's love to a lover's love. This type of message may create or reinforce distorted views in young people. An especially susceptible group may be those who have been sexually molested by a father or relative.
George Michael

"I Want Your Sex"

There's things that you guess
And things that you know
Boys you can trust
And girls that you don't
There's little things you hide
And little things that you show
Sometimes you think you're gonna' get it
But you don't and that's just the way it goes

I swear I won't tease you
Won't tell you no lies
I don't need no bible
Just look in my eyes
I've waited so long, baby

Now that we're friends
A man's got his patience
And here's where mine ends

I want your sex
I want your love
I want your sex (Repeat)

It's playin' on my mind
It's dancin' on my soul
It's taken so much time
So why don't you just let me go
I'd really like to try
Oh, I'd really love to know
When you tell me you're gonna' regret it
Then I tell you that I love you
But you still say no

(Chorus)

Out in the cold
But I can't take much more, girl
I'm losing control

I want you sex
I want your love
I want your sex (Repeat)

It's natural
It's chemical  (Let's do it)
It's logical
Habitual  (Can we do it?)
It's sensual
But, most of all
Sex is something we should do
Sex is something for me and you

Sex is natural
Sex is good
Not everybody does it
But everybody should
Sex is natural
Sex is fun
Sex is best when it's one on one

I'm not your father   (Sex)
I'm not your brother  (Sex)
Talk to your sister   (Sex)
I am a lover         (Sex)

Come on
What's your definition of dirty, baby?
What do you consider pornography?
Don't you know I love you 'til it hurts me, baby?
Don't you think it's time you had sex with me?
(Repeat)

Sex with me (Repeat)
Have sex with me
Come on

Oh, so much love
That you never see
Let's make love
Put your trust in me
Don't you listen
To what they told you
Because I love you
Let me hold you

I'm not your brother
I'm not you father
Oh will you ever change your mind?
I'm a tempting lover
With a heart of gold
Baby, you've been so unkind

I want your sex
Come on, I want your sex
That's right
I want your sex (Repeat)

Sexy baby
Sexy body
Keeps me guessing
With a promise
I know we can come together
But the question is
Will we ever, ever

 Sexy baby, sexy baby
Sexy body, sexy body
Keeps me guessing (Repeat)
With a promise I know we can come together
But the question is
Will we ever, ever

Do you want me?
I want your love
The incredibly controversial and popular song, "I Want Your Sex," is inundated with very unhealthy messages running the gamut of messages about premarital sex.

The first seriously unhealthy message about sex in the song regards friendship and sex. Telling the woman that he wants to have sex with her, George Michael sings,

\[
\begin{align*}
I've \text{ waited so long, baby} \\
\text{Now that we're friends} \\
A \text{ man's got his patience} \\
\text{And here's where mine ends}
\end{align*}
\]

These lyrics imply that because they are friends, it is now appropriate to have sex. Like "Father Figure," these lyrics confuse different kinds of love. Friendship love is not the same as romantic love. The definition of friendship love does not include sexual interaction. In other words, "friends" - if that is as far as the relationship goes - do not have sex. For young people receiving many mixed and conflicting messages about sex, hearing that a friend is expected to have sex may add to the confusion. In many cases, those who have not grown up with healthy messages may have a hard time distinguishing who they should or should not have sex with. If the other person they care about, perhaps only as a friend, wants to have sex, will they do it? If they have not received appropriate messages, and have not learned appropriate behaviors, the confusion may lead to an act that is not understood and is later regretted.

Perhaps even more disturbing, George Michael equates love and sex. He treats them as synonyms when he says,

\[
\begin{align*}
I \text{ want your sex} \\
I \text{ want your love}
\end{align*}
\]

Sex is not love (although it can be, but is not always an act of love), and love is not sex. It is important that young people understand that. Love does not mean you must
have sex, and unfortunately, sex does not have to mean love. They are not one and the same.

A third disturbing message is the excessive begging and pleading, the coercion to get the woman to have sex with him. The following lyrics include strong messages to try to convince the woman to have sex with him:

*When you tell me you're gonna' regret it*
*Then I tell you that I love you*

*But most of all*
*Sex is something we should do*
*Sex is something for me and you*

*Sex is natural*
*Sex is good*
*Not everybody does it*
*But everybody should*

*Let's make love*
*Put your trust in me*
*Don't you listen*
*To what they told you*
*Let me hold you*

*Oh, will you ever change your mind?*

and  *Baby, you've been so unkind*
*I want your sex*
*Come on, I want your sex*

All of these coercive messages are unhealthy, and unfortunately are telling young people that they should be having sex. That is quite a strong and powerful message.

Two other sets of lyrics also used to coerce the woman use the stereotype that men cannot hold off when they want sex - that they or their hormones are out of control. The song says,

*I've waited so long, baby*
*Out in the cold*
*I can't take much more, girl*
*I'm losing control*
and

*Don't you know I love you 'til it hurts me, baby*
*Don't you think it's time you had sex with me?*

People often rationalize male sexual behavior by saying, “He’s a man. He can’t help it.” But, the truth is, he can help it. Women should know that he is in control if he wants to be, that not having sex is not “hurting” him, and that “the time to have sex with him” is when the woman decides the time is right for her, too, not just to satisfy his desires. Lyrics such as these just perpetuate old myths and wife’s tales.

Overall, this song can be seen as a complete sex promotion. It has nothing of value to say, with the focus of the entire song being to convince someone to have sex. Considering its enormous popularity, it most likely had an impact on thousands of young people. Unfortunately, the song proves to be completely irresponsible in that it shows sex to be fun, natural, wonderful, etc., but does not discuss any consequences of the act.
George Michael
“Waiting For That Day”

Now every day I see you in some other face
They crack a smile, talk a while
Try to take your place
My memory serves me far too well

I just sit here on this mountain thinking to myself
You're a fool boy
Why don't you go down
Find somebody
Find somebody else
My memory serves me far too well

It's not as though we just broke up
It's not as though it was yesterday
But something I just can't explain
Something in me needs this pain
I know I'll never see your face again

C'mon now
I've got to be strong now

Now everybody's talking about this new decade
Like you say the magic numbers
Then just say goodbye to
The stupid mistakes you made
Oh my memory serves me far too well

Don't you know that
The years will come and go
Some of us will change our lives
Some of us still have nothing to show
Nothing baby
But memories

And if these wounds
They are self inflicted
I don't really know
How my poor heart could have protected me
But if I have to carry this pain
If you will not share the blame
I deserve to see your face again
C'mon now
You don't have to be so strong now
Come back

Come back to me darling
I will make it worth your while
Come on back to your baby
I miss your kiss
I miss your smile
Seems to me the peace I search to find
Ain't gonna be mine until you say you will
Don't you keep me waiting for that day
I know
You hear these words that I say

You can't always get what you want
George Michael's latest album, *Listen Without Prejudice*, shows a tremendous change from his previous albums. Critics have been saying that he has changed his style and is now respected as a more serious writer and artist. His new style is much more serious and realistic. It is also often much more depressing. The entire new album contains no openly sexual and destructive lyrics. Perhaps he has cleaned up his act. The new album is a far cry from his history of unhealthy lyrics such as "I want your sex."

"Waiting For That Day" is a song that takes a look at the feelings and emotions of a man who is trying to deal with a failed relationship. He is having a difficult time accepting that the relationship has ended. The topic of ended relationships is of great relevance to the young adults listening to this music because most of them deal with these feelings at some time before finding the person they will marry. George Michael paints a very realistic picture of how someone feels after a relationship has ended.

Throughout the song he talks about the memories of the relationship that stick with him when he repeatedly says,

*My memory serves me far too well*

He cannot forget the girl and their relationship, and this gets in the way of his dealing with the situation. He cannot think about other girls as he says,

*I just sit here on this mountain thinking to myself*  
*You're a fool boy*  
*Why don't you go down*  
*Find somebody*  
*Find somebody else*  
*My memory serves me far too well*

He talks about feeling sorry for himself when he says,

*Something in me needs this pain*
I know I'll never see your face again

Most people experience the feelings after a break-up and can relate to what George Michael is saying. The message is not an unhealthy one, but a realistic one.

At the end of the song, he tells the girl that he misses her and would like her to come back. This would be unhealthy if he was begging her to come back, or if it meant that he would not get over the loss. But, he is not begging her to come back, and there is evidence that he is on his way to getting over it. The last line of the song is,

You can't always get what you want

This is a depressing and pessimistic thought, but it is true. The entire message of the song is painful, but realistic and is not unhealthy.
George Michael

"Heal the Pain"

Let me tell you a secret
Put it in your heart and keep it
Something that I want you to know
Do something for me
Listen to my simple story
And maybe we’ll have something to show

You tell me you’re cold on the inside
How can the outside world
Be a place that your heart can embrace
Be good to yourself
Because nobody else
Has the power to make you happy

How can I help you
Please let me try to
I can heal the pain
That you’re feeling inside
Whenever you want me
You know that I will be
Waiting for the day
That you say you’ll be mine

He must have really hurt you
To make you say the things that you do
He must have really hurt you
To make those pretty eyes look so blue

He must have known
That he could
That you’d never leave him
Now you can’t see my love is good
And that I’m not him

How can I help you
Please let me try to
I can heal the pain
Won’t you let me inside
Whenever you want me
You know that I will be
Waiting for the day
That you say you'll be mine

Who needs a lover
That can't be a friend
Something tells me I'm the one you've been looking for
If you ever should see him again
Won't you tell him you've found someone who gives you more

Someone who will protect you
Love and respect you
All those things
That he never could bring to you
Like I do
Or rather I would
Won't you show me your heart
Like you should

Won't you let me in
Let this love begin
Won't you show me your heart now
I'll be good to you
I can make this thing true
And get to your heart somehow
George Michael

“Heal the Pain”

“Heal the Pain” represents George Michael’s latest album well with no unhealthy messages in the lyrics to this song. The song tells the story of a girl who was really hurt in her last relationship and a guy who wants to help her through the pain and show her how things should be. She is having a hard time opening up to the new guy, and he is trying to convince her that he can give her more and that he truly cares for her. He says that he will be,

Someone who will protect you
Love and respect you
All those things
That he never could bring to you
Like I do
Or rather I would
Won’t you show me your heart

This is a healthy and perhaps comforting message to those who may be feeling the pain the woman is feeling. This song may give them hope that there is someone who can help them and treat them the way they should be treated.

Additionally, two very healthy messages are given in the lyrics to this song. The first one is in the words,

Be good to yourself
Because nobody else
Has the power to make you happy

This is true and is an important point for people to understand. Someone else can help you deal with your pain, but they cannot give you long-term happiness. You must be happy with yourself in order to be a happy person. No one can give you personal happiness.

The second very healthy message is the following,

Who needs a lover
That can't be a friend

To have more than just a romantic love relationship, to move into a mature love relationship, it is important that the couple not only be lovers, but see each other as friends as well. The public could benefit from this type of message.

George Michael seems to be turning his songs around to have something healthy to say. Hopefully, this new image will continue.
Conclusions

At the beginning of this paper, I hypothesized that much of the material found in the lyrics of Madonna's and George Michael's songs would promote attitudes and views that go against the principles of healthy dating. My hypothesis has clearly been supported. While not all of the messages contained in these songs are unhealthy in the context of love, dating, relationships, and sex, many of them are. Because of the number of high school and college students who spend much of their time listening to this music, these unhealthy messages can be considered significant. Evidence suggests that messages sent through various channels of the media, including those messages sent to popular music audiences, do have some effect on attitudes and possibly behaviors. Such highly visible artists as Madonna and George Michael may have an especially strong effect because of their popularity and the level of controversy that surrounds them.

The topic of love seems to be one of the most popular topics in popular music today. Madonna and George Michael are no exception when it comes to using love as the topic of their songs. Most of these artists' songs to date deal with the topic of love. Unfortunately, Madonna and George Michael do not handle the topic well. They use love as a generic term when love actually has many meanings. They simply do not distinguish between different types and styles of loving. This is especially harmful when they talk about unhealthy styles of loving, but treat them as "normal" or acceptable. This type of message is especially strong in Madonna's latest highly controversial hit, "Justify My Love." Also, infatuation is not differentiated from romantic love which is not differentiated from mature love. To young adults who are trying to come up with their own definition of what love is or should be like, this could be confusing if not destructive. If a young adult were to construct a concept of mature love based on the lyrics to songs by Madonna and George, they would be terribly
misdirected and probably headed for a lot of trouble.

Madonna and George Michael also have their share of unhealthy things to say about dating. Exploitation, domination, and manipulation in a relationship is portrayed as fun and exciting in Madonna's hit, "Material Girl." George Michael gets about as coercive as one can get in "I Want Your Sex." With the exception of Madonna's "Cherish" and George Michael's "Heal the Pain," dating is not portrayed in a healthy light. The lyrics, however, suggest that there is nothing wrong with any of the unhealthy behaviors referred to in the songs as long as these behaviors are pleasurable. To those young adults who may already be in unhealthy dating relationships, these types of messages could reinforce their unhealthy and misinformed beliefs about the characteristics of healthy dating.

Relationships are dealt with in an unhealthy and deceiving manner in Madonna's "Material Girl," in George Michael's "Faith," and in George Michael's "Father Figure." In "Material Girl," Madonna treats her relationships very lightly, and gives the impression that the purpose of having a relationship with someone is to get something for your own good, in this case money. She is completely unconcerned when it comes to any characteristic of the other person other than money. Commitment is not a part of her relationships, and she becomes a part of a relationship simply to use others for her own benefit. Unrealistically, she gives the impression that this type of behavior makes her happy. This is an unrealistic and deceiving message to send. George Michael gives distorted views of love relationships when he discusses the concept of faith, and again when he compares a father-daughter love relationship to a relationship between two lovers. In "Faith" he gives the impression that someone should have to earn trust before it is safe to enter a relationship - a view held by many, many people. In "Father Figure" he says that he will love his lover as her father. Since a father's love and a lover's love are not the same thing, this message is confusing, not to mention unhealthy.
Finally, it seems that sex is a part of almost every song today, either implicitly or explicitly. In general, the message is that sex is a fun, trouble-free sport that everyone participates in and that should be expected out of any kind of relationship. Unfortunately, when Madonna and George Michael deliver their steamy and exciting messages about sex, they fail to recognize the consequences (with the exception of “Papa Don’t Preach”). They don’t discuss STD’s or AIDS. They don’t advise people to use precaution and/or protection. They do not treat it as a serious subject at all, when in reality, it can turn out to be a quite serious subject. Young people do not need to hear messages that promote unhealthy sex. On the contrary, they need to hear messages about responsible sex.

One of the main concerns regarding these unhealthy messages being sent to young people in our country is that desensitization could lead to a breakdown of healthy attitudes and views that may be in place. After hearing these messages over and over again, and after witnessing others behaving in exactly the same manner as the characters in the songs do, young people may slowly begin to believe that what they see and hear is healthy, and the “normal” way to do things. If this situation is not remedied by the artists who sing these songs, then it will be up to parents and educators to work harder than ever to teach our young people about the consequences of unhealthy behaviors, and to teach them the principles of healthy love, healthy dating, healthy relationships, and healthy sex. In light of the messages on George Michael’s new album, it looks like he may be one of the few that is finally turning his messages around to have something of value to say. With the thousands of artists out there turning out hits, however, unfortunately we will probably never see the day when all of the messages are healthy and valuable. That is why it is so important that young people learn what is truly healthy for them and for society before it is too late.
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