POP FROZE THE EASEL: DECODING THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TOP TEN POP SONGS FROM TWO ERAS

By

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by

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To Music and all who love what can be the most honest and interactive expression of the human character

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And for those about to rock…I salute you!

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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The popular music of the United States serves as a set of cultural artifacts. Interpreting the song lyrics of this music provides a means to discover the cultural climate of the era during which the songs were authored and released in mainstream media. This study selects two eras of pop music, the period 1968 through 1971 and the period 2002 through 2005, and compares and contrasts the content of the lyrics, tracking what themes and discourses have changed or remained constant between the two eras. What is most evident in this analysis is the dominance across eras of songs treating the subject of romantic relationships, and the departure from "polite" or "proper" language moving chronologically from the first era to the second.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

It is said that you know you are getting old when you no longer like anything on the radio. A broad generalization indeed, for there continues to be an abundance of radio stations that specialize in delivering the "good old songs" that played an integral part in defining the culture of eras passed. What is intended by the above adage however is the identification of a truth that has existed since the distribution of radio technology became widespread: as quickly as time may pass, the passing of popular trends will occur just as, if not more, quickly. What was "hip" back before the explosion of communication technology may have had more longevity, primarily because it simply took longer for what was "new" to circulate and effectively become "old." Whatever it is that prevents people from appreciating new musical styles, bands, and songs after they mature beyond young adulthood is not necessarily within the scope of this paper, nor could such a study necessarily generate significant evidence to support the adage.

What is important to this paper is more the significance of what the music of a generation is saying *about* that generation. In other words, we can use music, specifically music with lyrics, as analyzable cultural artifacts to decode the social, political, cultural, and even economic characteristics of an era. In order to narrow the field of possible musical selections to analyze, there must be some filtering criteria employed, lest the hundreds—even thousands—of songs released in a given time period generate countless hours of research. The primary criterion used for this study is popularity. Wide scale acceptance and appreciation for a song is indicative of cultural relevance. The relationship may work in both directions: either the cultural climate of the era solidifies the appeal of the song, or the appeal of the song solidifies the climate of that era. In either case, the song's popularity accounts for a larger audience and more frequent encounters with that song. The discussion of the selection process will be expanded in the

Materials and Methods section later on. But before that, a look at what others have said about culture and music could serve to not only put into context a society's selection criteria for popular music, but also enhance the validity of my later analyses.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

Since the purpose of this study is to use popular music to determine how American culture has changed in over thirty years, there are key components of the sociology of music worth reviewing in order to build a foundation on which to make analyses. This review of literature will cover five subjects in the sociology of music in particular, all of which are variously related. The subjects in question include the relationship between music and culture, the role of the musician, the role of the audience, the nature of musical meaning constructed by both artist and audience, and the industry aspects that decide what is heard and how often.

These categories are inspired, in part, by sociologist Paul Honigsheim's extensive work in the sociology of music, but where this study's and his categories diverge will become apparent momentarily. The categories were actually outlined in the introduction, written by editor K. Peter Etzkorn (1989), to a compilation of Honigsheim's later works entitled *Sociologists and Music*. Honigsheim's intention with these categories was to investigate forms of music and their relationship to social structures. They are: The Intended Meaning of Music, The Cultural Evaluation of Music, The Socioeconomic Position of the Musician, The Social Structure of the Audience, and Social Forms and Musical Forms (Etzkorn, 1989). I will briefly treat each individually before exploring in depth my own categories.

The Intended Meaning of Music can account for two elements of a piece of music. First is the actual sounds being produced: musical notes, timbres, rhythms, chord progressions, etc. The second is the content of the lyrics, if any. In either case, Honigsheim seems to be implicating the artist or composer of the piece and what messages s/he is hoping to convey. Whether the audience derives the same meaning as what was intended plays a crucial role in the interplay

between the categories of *this* study, though this is not explicitly stated in Etzkorn's (1989) review of Honigsheim's categories. Nevertheless, it is the meanings that can be discerned from the lyrics of music that are most integral to the purpose of this study, regardless of the lyricists' intentions behind them. As will be discovered during the analysis section of this paper, when it comes to pop music, the obvious point of the song usually garners little cause to delve any deeper. A prime example would be Edwin Starr's 1970 song "War," in which he reminds us what it is good for (absolutely nothing!).

The Cultural Evaluation of music is comparable to my category of the relationship between music and culture. The cultural climate of a society engages in an interaction with what music is being produced in that society, as hinted at in the introduction of this paper. In other words, the state of affairs of a given society, from politics to social norms and practices to current events, influences the production of music, while the music that is most highly disseminated can in turn influence the state of affairs.

Concerning the Socioeconomic Position of the Musician, this specific detail bears little weight on this study, but parallels the importance of the musician's role in the types of sounds reaching a vast audience. We obviously cannot have music without the individuals who are inspired and skilled enough to create it. Their socioeconomic position actually factors in more heavily with the industry aspects of music, mostly because of the phenomenon of stardom and how that can affect the reception of musicians' works, and consequently the revenues generated for the businesses promoting them. Musicians have had a variety of roles throughout history, but the one that will be most important here is the role of being "the voice of the people."

The Social Structure of the Audience more or less sums up the goal of my category. It is difficult to detach the role of the audience from the culture in which that audience is situated, so there will be some overlap between these two categories within this review.

The category Social Forms and Musical Forms effectively gets co-opted into my category of the relationship between culture and music. Regarding musical forms, this will receive very little attention; as already stated, the song lyrics themselves will be more important to this study than the musicological quality of the selections.

The final category, which has completely escaped Hongisheim's five but serves as my fifth is the industrial aspects of music. It would be impossible to single out any of the five as being the most important to the phenomenon of popular music, but in a sense, the music industry serves as "the final word" on what enters, and when it exits, the mass market. Popular music is a business, and it happens to involve a vast bureaucratic network, most of which is invisible to the average music lover who gets his/her fix with the turn of a radio dial. It should be stated up front that the songs covered in this study will not undergo a massive deconstruction under which the producers and record labels providing these songs will be implicated and analyzed from within their industrial contexts. That would be an interesting possible future study, but for now, it is important to at least call attention to the operating channels of "the music biz" to provide a backdrop for how these songs achieved such popularity.

So all of the gear is set up. Now let us do a sound check.

The Sociology of Popular Music

What good is music anyway? What is it for, what does it do? Music has had a long history and has undergone a world of changes, and has been applied and used in a variety of settings and functions. Nowadays, we think of it primarily as a form of entertainment. It was not always so.

In fact, through his historical analysis of the uses of music in society, Honigsheim (1973) discovered that its use as entertainment or for personal enjoyment is quite rare indeed. He writes, “a study of history and of various cultures reveals that these extramusical and individualistic associations with the experience and practice of music have appeared infrequently,” adding that “music has usually been considered principally as a supportive tool with immediate use for collectivistic and social purposes” (Honigsheim, 1973). While words such as “extramusical” and “individualistic associations” appear vague, the point being made is clear: music has historically been used primarily to reinforce the goals of certain social events. These events were most likely religious services and rituals, or even events that involved “primitive magical practices” (Honigsheim, 1973). This conjures images of robed figures saturating the halls of a cathedral with their haunting unisons at a mass, or funeral, etc. Another image could be a Native American tribe drumming and dancing, accompanied by the breathy accents of a flute, in a ritual intended to ward off bad fortune. In either case, the music is “functional.” According to Gaston (1951), “*functional* music is far older and more abundant than music played or composed for aesthetic purposes,” which would be in accordance with Honigsheim’s (1973) assertion.

But why music? What is it about a deliberate collection of sounds that stimulates the participants of a social event like a religious/spiritual ceremony? The answer to this is quite in depth and could warrant its own chapter, but the simple response is that music serves as an alternative form of communication. What is usually being communicated at such social events is a set of symbols. For now, I will ignore the use of words in music. The human brain can interpret the music’s nonverbal communication to abstractly represent the importance of the event (Gaston, 1968; Merriam, 1964) in addition to whatever spoken rites are employed. The

ritual or service in question has specific sounds and patterns associated with it; certain notes, phrases, rhythms, etc. are used for certain events, distinguishing them from other events. What occurs as a result of this is a socializing effect on participants. That is, the impact of music can help validate the significance of social institutions and/or religious rituals, serving as a means of cultural indoctrination (Merriam, 1964; Honigsheim, 1973). It will later be argued that a similar phenomenon occurs with popular music.

Before that, however, it is important to note how music made the transition from being functional to being a source of entertainment and enjoyment. This is not at all to say that there was no room to enjoy the musical sounds featured at ceremonies; it was just not the express purpose. Any aesthetic appreciation for those sounds was likely very private. This of course depends on the culture and the nature of the event, but it is reasonable to assume that one would not find church members "groovin'" to the soundtrack of a 14th-Century mass. Likewise, the fact that *most* music was historically functional certainly does not mean that *all* of it was. The transformation deals more with our general perception of music. Functional music still exists, but the amount of music for pleasure, at least within modern American culture, far exceeds the amount of music for function (although music for pleasure can still be used functionally) (Radocy and Boyle, 1979). We may find the roots of the transformation in traditional folk music. It is impossible to know which musicians from which cultures played a role in the transformation, and at what times in history, primarily because the transformation itself is neither precise, nor region specific. Regardless, the examination of traditional folk music has shown that it historically has a strong association with lower, uneducated classes, being performed almost exclusively by and for them, with their wishes and sentiments in mind (Honigsheim, 1973). More precisely stated, the favored music of such groups "reflects and reinforces the kinds

of behaviors essential to [their] main subsistence efforts and [their] central and controlling social institution," a detail which could extend to any cultural setting (Lomax, 1968). For rural folk cultures, subsistence farming and trades work was physically taxing and monotonous. Music and dance (and perhaps a barrel of mead) facilitated the refreshment of people's spirits and enriched their sense of community, and was indeed quite enjoyable. In pop culture phraseology, "work hard, play hard."

Music for enjoyment was not reserved for the lower and uneducated classes, however. What happened was a sort of co-optation of entertainment music by the higher and elite classes. This is the point where the notion of "popular" music begins to arise, but as will be seen, involves a sort of "call and response" between higher and lower classes. Elites discovered the charms of music for enjoyment and featured musicians from the lower classes in their courts and theaters, sometimes more to serve as comic exhibitions of class differentiation. Yet, musicians playing for higher strata were often granted special distinction from other performers, even if they hailed from the same lower classes. Honigsheim (1973) offers the examples of the low caste Hindu musicians, the minstrels and *jongleurs* in France, and the *Fahrende* in medieval Germany. However, as everyday life in the higher strata became more rationalized, so too did the art (Honigsheim, 1973). In addition, musicologist Gerhard Pinthus indicates that the differentiation of a society lends itself to a differentiation in the appreciation of arts and music, varying by social subclasses (Etzkorn, 1989). In a sense, the higher classes wanted more. According to Wilensky (1964), there are two operating characteristics of high culture in the relationship to the arts: "it is created by, or under the supervision of a cultural elite operating within some aesthetic, literary or scientific tradition, and secondly, critical standards independent of the consumer of the product are systematically applied to it." This seems more like one

characteristic, since the “critical standards” mentioned in the second are directly related (if not identical) to the “aesthetic tradition” of the first. What is important is that the culture elite are focal in the process of “high” art’s genesis. So as educated appreciators of music draw upon the influence of folk music’s success and apply more rationalized musical forms and structures to address the aesthetic traditions of their contemporaries, the music changes. As Honigsheim (1973) writes, “a new situation tends to arise, consisting of highly specialized art for the upper and middle classes, unrelated to the life of the masses.” Masses, here, refers to the lower, or working classes.

This new music does not stay amongst the elite, however. High culture tends to have a “trickle down” effect, in that, what is fashionable or stylish or appealing to the higher strata often in some way finds a path back to the lower strata. Perhaps the goal of certain “benevolent monarchs and especially democratically minded members of the middle class” was to acculturate the masses, by bringing them into “direct contact with the culture and art” from above (Honigsheim, 1973). Musical theaters became open to the public, or tickets were available at discount rates for poorer classes. Their seating may have been isolated from the bourgeoisie and aristocracy, but everyone was still experiencing the same music. The lower classes can derive inspiration from such exposure and create adaptations based on their subcultural aesthetic and concerns. Then all it takes is another handful of enterprising musicians from the working classes to bring their ideas back into the musical theaters and redefine (again) for everyone the possibilities of musical form and style. It is an ongoing process. As expressed by Middleton (1990): “Particularly in complex, internally differentiated societies, musical styles are assemblages of elements from a variety of sources, each with a variety of histories and connotation, and these assemblages can, in appropriate circumstances, be prised [*sic*] open and

the elements rearticulated in different contexts." This is effectively what is occurring as music serves as a metaphorical tennis ball in a match between classes. The shortcoming of the analogy is that the ball sounds different with each return.

Popular culture is generally thought to belong to the majority group of a population, which in most cultures would in fact be the working and lower middle classes. Thus, we could assume that popular music also belongs to that group. Our concept of popular culture in the United States has changed since the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent emergence of communication technology. Because of three inventions in particular, art and culture was influenced by a new catalyzing factor: mass media. The three inventions in question are movies, radio, and television (Honigsheim, 1973). Suddenly, the same images and sounds were available to people from different geographical locations, and from different social backgrounds, assuming of course some access to the technology. As a result, the concept of mass culture came about, although in the 1980s music sociologists began to withdraw from the notion that such a thing exists (Scott, 2000). What the sociologists resisted was the notion of a "mass audience passively consuming the mass-produced commodities of a 'culture industry'" (Scott, 2000). Whether passive consumption is what truly occurs or not is irrelevant; in this paper, the term mass culture will be used to implicate the combined forces of mass media, mass production, and mass marketing on consumer choices. And it is these combined forces that developed the robust entertainment industry we are familiar with today.

The terms popular culture and mass culture are often used interchangeably, aside from some semantic differences, but there is no such thing as "mass music." The variety of musical styles and genres that are popular may be the result of mass culture, but are by no means uniform, as a term like mass music may imply. At the same time, a particular style of music that

is popular within a particular subculture may be mass produced, but would not be labeled "pop music." An example is "goth" music. Goth music is part of mass culture because it is a response to and rejection of pop music and culture, but is still widely available to those who seek it. The means of mass production for these different styles are also often owned by the same set of companies. What distinguishes "pop music" is that it tends to connote music that has widespread appeal, is what is most often heard through conventional media outlets (radio, TV, movies), but is relatively ephemeral. Part of the reason for this transience may be the market pressures to continuously pump out new material. Once the population has accepted (and purchased) one cross-section of music, there would be little continued revenue by letting that music fester. The record companies then promote a new set of acts and market them until it is time to repeat the process.

One factor that relates very closely to the transience of pop music is the transience of youth. In fact, upon closer examination, it is adolescents' "interests" that the pop culture industry is most able to capitalize on. The concept of youth having its own subculture was introduced by Talcott Parsons in 1951, and can still be used to demonstrate the differing values of youth and society as a whole (Epstein,1995). Epstein (1995) defines youth subculture as: "the expressive form of young people's shared social and material experience…distinguished by the distinct values, beliefs, symbols, and actions which certain youth employ to attend to, and cope with, their shared cultural experience." It is these distinct symbols, values, and manners of expression that are "generally in opposition to, often in direct contradiction with, societal values, norms, and expectations" (Epstein, 1995). Epstein (1995) more narrowly defines those societal values as belonging to, and perhaps created by, "white middle-class adult male[s]."

The person responsible for fathering this expressively dissimilar dimension of youth subculture, as many of the authors agree, is Elvis Presley. His fateful 1956 appearance on the Ed Sullivan show marked a transformation of youth culture into something which adults considered "menacing and fearful" (Epstein, 1995). Elvis and the popularization of rock music came to symbolize a rejection of adult values, which for youth in the 1950s were characterized as rigid, boring, and restraining (Grossberg, 1992). It is perhaps the restraints of adult routine like career and family that even today's youth is most wary of. Elvis' youthful energy and disregard for adult conventions was clearly antithetical to such routines, but the subsequent generations would require their own figureheads. As stated by Epstein (1995): "As generation of rock fans grow up, they bring their rock music with them…requiring rock music to change, to mutate, in order for it to remain a viable center of youth culture." This could obviously extend to any style of music beyond rock, but it was an early form of rock that Elvis sold, and thus rock that served as the backbone of the pop music industry for many years after, arguably even today.

The discussion of youth and pop music can go even deeper. Adolescence in particular is a brief period in life, serving as a transitional period in which childlike ideals are met with certain adult desires and sensibilities. There is no way I could put it better than Weinstein (1983): "To be beyond dependency, but still dependent, and moving toward responsibility, but not responsible yet, releases the adolescent into a suspended state of social freedom that tends to become an end-in-itself." In addition, this time in life is a period of significant identity construction, wherein lies the use of music. It has already been stated that certain music, particularly rock, can be used by youth to distinguish itself from adults. Simultaneously, music can be used to distinguish youths from other youths. According to Epstein (1995), "musical preference contributes to the creation of subcultural identity," and thus "what you listen to, or

don't, partially defines who you are within youth culture." A similar statement, though much more brazen, is that "all adolescents have the same problems, all adolescents pass through peer groups, all adolescents use music as a badge and a background, a means of identifying and articulating emotions" (Frith, 1983). Perhaps we could allow for at least *some* variation within the experience of adolescence, but it is this consistency of youth that lends itself to the development of targeted marketing strategies by record companies.

Furthermore, while music is produced to address the concerns of youth, it may also be produced to popularize, and thus capitalize on, new concerns. Recall the earlier discussion of music's role in religious ceremonies as an enhanced means of cultural indoctrination. The same can be said for popular music used secularly. Honigsheim (1973) called it "negative indoctrination," using examples of periods in which political leadership or aristocracies were ridiculed publicly in operas and theater. The result was a broadening of awareness among citizens, concerning social and economic injustices perpetrated by the ruling classes. For such reasons, and depending on one's political affiliation, American pop music can be "reviled as an agent of moral or civil corruption, [or] hailed as a stimulant to social reconstruction" (Weinstein, 1983). Perhaps one of the greatest examples in the last century was the way in which rock and pop music served to rally the American public, especially youth, against the Vietnam War and other social policies in the late '60s and early '70s, containing "radical criticism of the existing society and calls to arms for change" (Weinstein, 1983). Whether it successfully manifested in the desired changes or not is irrelevant; the role that music played in the discourse of that generation is significant. However, rock and pop music did not invent these concerns; it simply offered a medium to make these concerns "cool" and thus prevalent, or popular.

So far, this review of literature has been focusing primarily on music and culture, but has also addressed the categories of the audience and the industry. Not much attention has been paid to the role of the artist or the nature of musical meaning, so those should be engaged before concluding with more detail on the music business itself. Musical meaning is a broad category that could incite its own subcategories, but I will only focus on some general ideas that are more relevant to this study. Often, the meaning depends on the audience, so again, there will be some overlap in this discussion between the audience category and a different category. One of the first points to make about meaning and music is that, as with any cultural item, its value and meaning could be totally socially given (Willis, 1978). In other words, the item itself is "without inherent structure or meaning, so that it is the social group and its expectations which supply a content" (Willis, 1978). This stands to reason since music is created by people, and it is people who create meaning. Their meanings are also in part determined by their social contexts, so a set of symbols that characterize their social experiences will inevitably enter their music. At the same time, "there is no privileged point of meaning, no point where meaning can be definitely read" (Shepherd, 1991). The reason for this is that "the different intentionalities that producers and consumers bring to bear on musical practices are specific to concrete conjectures of social, cultural, and biographical processes" (Shepherd, 1991). This is to say that both the artist and each individual listener have their own frameworks of interpretation, which may not necessarily align to the same meaning. However, there is some authority granted to the social and cultural contexts in which music is being both created and heard. Take pop music for example. As already mentioned, pop music's dissemination is the result of marketing acts that appeal to common senses. As offered by Weinstein (1983), "since rock [and pop] as commodity is aimed at the largest possible number of consumers, it must be geared to the lowest common

denominator." Hence, regardless of any possibility for hidden meaning in pop music, it is often the "obviousness" of the text that the record companies are counting on to resonate with the greatest number of potential buyers. This is an important detail since one of the main goals of this study is to interpret songs' lyrics and group them by similar theme. Were there more space for alternative interpretations in these pop songs, this study would never have been feasible.

That said, pop music "romanticizes and mystifies the everyday life of everyman, particularly in its sexual dimension," at least according to Weinstein (1983). The sexual dimension of pop music is especially important to adolescents because, according to Frith and McRobbie (1979), it is often through music that "teenagers 'learn' adult sexual behavior and are socialized into the already constructed sex roles provided by a patriarchal, capitalist society." It is the content of the lyrics specifically that "glamorizes stereotypical attributes" (Taylor, 1979). Certainly not all pop songs are about sexuality specifically, nor do all even convey subtle sexual undertones, but even the act of "pairing off" is a sexual behavior to some extent. Songs about relationships, as will be discovered in the analysis portion of this paper, account for the largest percentage of subject matter in the top popular music. Perhaps it is the conveyed meanings of these pop songs which help the teenage audience disambiguate the meanings of their relationships. Whether the stereotypical roles they may learn present a favorable set of conditions for romantic interactions is a different question all together and certainly not within the scope of this paper.

There is nothing more that must be attended to in the discussion of meaning in pop music. Any attempt to expand the discussion would only complicate the issue since pop has proven its straightforwardness. We may now turn to the role of the musician, which will also be brief. The primary reason for this is that once the artist has created the product, it is out of his/her hands,

and wholly dependent upon the music industry and of course the audience to process it. However, it is not uncommon for the artist him/herself to be a commodified product as well. The process of this may begin with "saturation marketing," in which record companies douse the market with a variety of acts to determine which can create consistently favorable responses in the audience, "then devote full-scale promotional campaigns to them" (Epstein, 1995). What happens next is the production and promotion of other acts that are similar in style or sound, so as to maximize the profits of a successful formula. The result is a certain homogeneity of pop music, and the solution is the distinction of the pop star. Theodor Adorno, who was quite critical of pop culture, recognized that the "star system" is what would preserve the aura of uniqueness for certain cultural products (Scott, 2000). Offering her own cynical commentary, Weinstein (1983) adds, "celebrity and image rather than artistic profundity and proficiency are the requirements for successful audience appeal." This leaves out the importance of the music's ability to move the audience; no amount of glitz and glamour can make up for that, but this may still be achieved fairly easily without requiring great proficiency or profundity from the artist. Often all that is required is a clever and catchy chorus line. Nevertheless, the point being made by these authors is that the pop/rock star is an integral part of the business. Peter Wicke's (1990) contributions will further illuminate this phenomenon.

Wicke (1990) uses the phrase "star cult" to describe an audience's attachment to an artist's image. What it is about the audience that makes them susceptible to joining a star cult is less of Wicke's (1990) concern than the economics behind the promotion of a star. The "life" of a record is short compared to the potential life of an act. One reason for this is that the audience will desire new material, and if they have already approved of one iteration of an act's material, they would be optimistic about future releases. This ensures more long term sales for the record

company. As Wicke (1990) writes, “if the band has a stable image, this can be carried over onto each of their records with considerably reduced costs,” since the established image circumvents the need for further promotion. He also notes that it tends to be more effective if the image is centered on a single musician (typically the singer) than a whole band. It is through this rationale that certain singers have become the “voices of the people,” especially if they employ broadly applicable themes in their music. Even Honigsheim (1973) agrees, “the United States never ceased to emphasize the individual singer,” further asserting that this is because of an individualistic philosophy which has been dominant in the U.S. Not surprisingly, individualism and egocentricity are themes that emerge in a number of the top pop songs this study analyzes. The analysis portion of this paper will not focus on individual singers or bands, however it will feature a general demographic breakdown of the artists in order to demonstrate how the ratios of artists have changed, along the dimensions of gender and race, in the 30-year span.

I would like to conclude this review with some additional remarks about the music industry. The analysis portion also will not directly address these aspects, but since the business of pop music is the channel through which the songs analyzed became popular, the following are some important points to keep in mind. It was already stated that certain changes in technology resulted in the emergence of mass culture. Such changes made it possible “to mass produce the kinds of goods that suited the common needs of millions of people” (Honigsheim, 1973). Also hinted at is that “mass art is produced for profit and both its content and form is determined by that pursuit” (Epstein, 1995). Thus, what occurs is standardization in order to ensure that the fruits of mass production will be commercially viable (Vuillamy, 1977). What it is that the public actually wants is only a concern of the music business if those desires are accompanied by an ability and willingness to pay (Wicke, 1990). Standardization will inevitably leave many

desires unsatisfied. However, “the product must meet an average of tastes, and it loses in spontaneity what it gains in accessibility and cheapness” (Haag, 1959). Artists will even specifically compose with pop sensibilities in mind, a sort of self-standardization, in order to increase their likelihood of being offered a record contract. However, the formulas the record executives have in mind immediately preclude many artists from having even the remotest chance of signing to a label.

This is an especially ugly detail about the business. Talent, creativity, innovation, and passion are not what “talent” scouts seek in a band. Their criteria have a more superficial basis, and looks do matter. Plus, the business is dominated by men. That is not necessarily enough to vilify it, but when men occupy most of the important roles in the music industry, two things happen. First, those men are “responsible for the creation and construction of suitable female images” (Frith, 1979). Can you think of many female pop stars who did not have standardized sex appeal? And second, masculine styles, desires, and interests are what wind up being marketed, and thus diffused as “normal.” Aggressively masculine behaviors are often condoned or endorsed in pop music, as will be witnessed in the analysis of some of the songs from the modern era. All of these details point to the ability the music business (and most mass media businesses) has to influence, even force, culture into the acceptance of marketable stereotypes. Does the influence last? Or do new concerns displace the old stereotypes? Let us turn now to the methods this study used to investigate these and other questions.

CHAPTER 3
MATERIALS AND METHODS

Selection of Data

In this paper's introduction, our pool of potential songs has effectively been shallowed but is still deep enough to warrant additional siphoning. Popularity was a good start; no longer are unaired B-sides and no-name acts a concern. We can take popularity to the extreme, however, and ask what the most popular songs were. Specifically, the 10 most popular songs of a given year. With a little help from the Billboard magazine's rating system, those "top 10" songs have already been determined and documented by genre. Now all we must do is select a genre and the years to focus on.

Since popularity is the primary criterion, "popular" or "pop" music will serve as the genre. This is, however, a peculiar genre. Arguably, it has no dedicated style. That is, there are no musical characteristics that define a song as pop. In contrast, jazz can be differentiated from rock, from classical, and from R&B by virtue of each genre's stylistic components, such as the rhythms, instruments, and melodic and chordal patterns typically used. But pop songs can stylistically be any of the above; they just happen to be popular. There are some common features that tend to characterize pop music, regardless of style, including short song length (anywhere from two to four minutes), intelligible lyrics, recognizable themes and subject matter, predictable or formulaic song structure, and at least one "hook." Briefly, the hook is the part of the song (usually the chorus) that most people remember, usually an effective combination of a distinctive melody line and a lyrical summation of the song's main theme. An example would be from Diana Ross's 1970 hit "Ain't no Mountain High Enough," in which the hook actually features the title of the song, a fairly common practice. It is important to note, however, that

while these features are common, they are by no means rules. Even instrumentals can make it to the top 10 pop charts, like Paul Mauriat's 1968 hit "Love is Blue."

The original intention of this project was to single out one year from the late 1960s and one from the 2000s, and take the top 10 pop songs of those two years to draw comparisons and contrasts. However, one year per era is hardly enough material to make claims about the eras, so both eras now incorporate a four year span. For the 2000s, the most current list (at the time of writing) is 2005, so the "modern" era will encompass the top 10 songs of the year from 2002 to 2005. The "classic" era was not as easy to select, since there is no such limiting factor off of which to anchor the span of years. The span selected is 1968 to 1971. The following are some of the details that helped in this decision. One national concern that is common to both eras is war. After the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush promptly decided to wage a "War on Terror," which mutated into a war with Iraq in 2003. The war in the 1960s was with North Vietnam, although that war began for the United States in 1957 and had been raging for almost twelve years before the first year of this study's decided span. The United States' military involvement in the conflict increased significantly in 1965, and American troops were not withdrawn until 1973. That places the four year span approximately in the middle of the United States' increased involvement. A few other details helped reinforce this decided span. In January of 1968, North Vietnam launched the Tet offensive on major cities in South Vietnam, which, while successfully suppressed, marked for many Americans that the situation was more dire than expected. Months later, the My Lai Massacre occurred, in which American troops descended on the village, populated primarily by women and children civilians, and executed hundreds of inhabitants, though news of the incident did not surface until 1969. This further garnered criticism for the war among Americans. Also

significant in 1968 was the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who had been an outspoken advocate for civil rights and a known detractor of the war, the assassination of Robert Kennedy who had been running for president, and the election of President Richard Nixon.

Rock music especially was known for its pro-peace/anti-war sentiments during that era, being an integral part of the "hippie" movement and enabling the legendary turnout for the Woodstock Festival in August of 1969. However, the purpose of this study is not to focus on such sentiments specifically. As will later be seen, songs that treat the topics of war and peace occur fairly infrequently in the top 10 lists from both eras. This is not to say they were uncommon in the top 100, but the *most* popular songs deal mostly with relationships, or the desire thereof. The wars from both eras are simply serving as a cultural/political parallel, plus as a means to keep the spans relatively short.

The top 10 lists for the two eras were available from Billboard's online archives. Access, however, required a subscription. The website also featured information on how the lists were compiled. The following is a brief explanation. Billboard's titles for the top pop charts have changed over the years, sometimes reflecting a shift in selection methodology. There are two methods for selection: airplay and record sales. Both utilize data from the Nielsen Media Research company. The amount of airplay is measured using Nielsen's Broadcast Data Systems, which is able to track the number of times commercial radio stations play a given song. The top songs obviously scored the most plays. The record sales are compiled by Nielsen's Soundscan, which captures sales data from more than 90% of the U.S. music retail market. To reiterate, the title of the charts distinguish between selection methodology, though not expressly so; one must cross-reference the title to its methodology. Each year of classic era songs were labeled "Top Pop Singles," but by 2002, the title changed to "Top 40." Both of these groups were based on

airplay. The 2005 chart is the only unique year, consisting of the top 10 songs from the "Hot 100." What is also unique about that year is that the Hot 100 songs are the only used in this study whose ratings are determined by both airplay *and* record sales. Unfortunately, Billboard did not offer a list for that year that was based solely on airplay, like the Top Pop Singles and Top 40. Would this skew the results? I argue that it does not, since this study's basis is popularity, and all of these songs, regardless of the precise ways they are measured, are among the most popular for a given year.

After gathering all of the lists, finding the song lyrics was a simple matter. Popular songs lyrics can almost always be found via an internet search using the title and artist as searching criteria. The absolute accuracy of the lyrics found online is sometimes debatable. However, the errors and/or omissions are minor and do not detract from the overall point of the song. The only songs that I could not find lyrics for with this method turned out to be instrumentals. I copied and saved the 78 songs-worth of lyrics onto my computer and organized them by year for easier access. Table 3-1 displays a complete list of all 80 songs, organized by year and chart position.

Methods of Analysis

I employed a simplified method of content analysis to begin processing the data. With the first "pass," I scanned the lyrics of each song, starting with the number 1 song of 1968. In a separate word processor file, I jotted some notes for each song indicating what I could determine, with just one reading, was the subject matter being treated by the narrator(s). Of the 78 songs with lyrics, less than five proved difficult to interpret with one reading. The language utilized in many of these pop songs is descriptive and concrete. Arguably, even the most seemingly concrete language could be riddled with hidden meanings and/or be variously interpreted. How a song can be alternatively interpreted would make for an interesting future study. However, this study is more concerned with the "face-value" meaning of the songs, primarily because pop

music is targeted at the masses. Songs featuring recognizable themes that appeal to common senses are more marketable, thus more profitable, and profit is the primary driving force behind what is being heard on commercial radio.

With a second pass, some of the more subtle cultural messages conveyed in the songs were discovered. The primary areas of interest in this closer look are common areas of sociological inquiry: gender, sexuality, race, class, deviance, conflict, etc. This is where a distinction is drawn in the methods of content analysis between manifest and latent content. To briefly summarize these terms, "manifest" content is what is readily seen or understood, whereas "latent" content requires more in-depth examination, where meanings must be decoded. An example of manifest content would be the first lines from the 1970 hit "American Woman" by The Guess Who: *"American woman, stay away from me; American woman, mama let me be."* The face-value interpretation of this line, as well as for the entire song, is that a woman (of American origin) has been demanding the narrator's attentions, but he would prefer not to give them. In the same song, a particular sequence of lines could alter the meaning: *"I don't need your war machines; I don't need your ghetto scenes; Coloured lights can hypnotize; Sparkle someone else's eyes."* Here, the narrator is still speaking to the American woman in question on a manifest level; however these details appear to offer commentary on American culture, almost as if the American woman is America itself, or perhaps even represents the Statue of Liberty. The first line may be indicative of the war in Vietnam (or America's history of war), the second a comment on the country's economic policies, the third a remark on the growing influence of flashy media images on the culture, and the last a rejection of such influences. It is not necessary, however, that latent content offer an alternative interpretation of the song lyrics. The subject determined in the manifest content may be the same, but the latent content could

demonstrate other details, for example, how gender roles are portrayed. Examining the 2003 hit "In Da Club" by 50 Cent, a detail emerges about women and stardom in the lines: "*When my junk get to pumping in the club it's on; I wink my eye at ya bitch, if she smiles she gone.*" The song is about 50 Cent's rise to fame. The manifest interpretation of the lines is that if 50 Cent desires it, he can lure a woman away from her boyfriend. The latent meaning is more a disempowering assessment of women that operates beyond the use of the demeaning word "bitch." It is as if to say that women occupy a subjugated role in society, and fame and success are sufficient conditions to undermine the bonds they have worked to establish. He does grant, however, that not all women will necessarily behave this way, using the conditional word "if." Still, his assertion that it is possible (and quite easy) is making a strong latent statement about culture.

In the analysis portion of this paper, all of the song titles will be organized in a chart grouping them by themes. I have taken a "grounded theory" approach to constructing the typology. That is, rather than delineating categories of topics first, I would allow the songs themselves to determine the categories. Some will be unique in subject matter, and some will have themes that could exist in more than one category. However, the main point of the songs is what will determine their categorization, not the peripheral themes. In addition, throughout the analysis I would be bracketing (to the best of my ability) my biases about these two eras of music in order to attempt as objective an interpretation as possible. That way, the cultural commentary offered by this music will also emerge from the data rather than being rooted from my preconceived notions. I will state up front here that my own musical preferences, at least in terms of popular music, favor the classic era considerably more than the modern era.

Table 3-1. Master list of songs by era

From TOP POP SINGLES

1968
1. HEY JUDE - Beatles (Apple)
2. LOVE IS BLUE (L'AMOUR EST BLEU) - Paul Mauriat (Philips)
3. HONEY - Bobby Goldsboro (United Artists)
4. (SITTIN' ON) THE DOCK OF THE BAY - Otis Redding (Volt)
5. PEOPLE GOT TO BE FREE - Rascals (Atlantic)
6. SUNSHINE OF YOUR LOVE - Cream (Atco)
7. THIS GUY'S IN LOVE WITH YOU - Herb Alpert (A&M)
8. THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY - Hugo Montenegro (RCA Victor)
9. MRS. ROBINSON - Simon & Garfunkel (Columbia)
10. TIGHTEN UP - Archie Bell & the Drells (Atlantic)

1969
1. SUGAR, SUGAR - Archies (Kirshner)
2. AQUARIUS/LET THE SUNSHINE IN - Fifth Dimension (Soul City)
3. I CANT GET NEXT TO YOU - Temptations (Gordy)
4. HONKY TONK WOMEN - Rolling Stones (London)
5. EVERYDAY PEOPLE - Sly & the Family Stone (Epic)
6. DIZZY - Tommy Roe (ABC)
7. HOT FUN IN THE SUMMERTIME - Sly & the Family Stone (Epic)
8. I'LL NEVER FALL IN LOVE AGAIN - Tom Jones (Parrot)
9. BUILD ME UP BUTTERCUP - Foundations (Uni)
10. CRIMSON AND CLOVER - Tommy James & the Shondells (Roulette)

1970
1. BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER - Simon & Garfunkel (Columbia)
2. (THEY LONG TO BE) CLOSE TO YOU - Carpenters (A&M)
3. AMERICAN WOMAN - Guess Who (RCA)
4. RAINDROPS KEEP FALLIN' ON MY HEAD - B.J. Thomas (Scepter)
5. WAR - Edwin Starr (Gordy)
6. AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH - Diana Ross (Motown)
7. I'LL BE THERE - Jackson 5 (Motown)
8. GET READY - Rare Earth (Rare Earth)
9. LET IT BE - Beatles (Apple)
10. BAND OF GOLD - Freda Payne (invictus)

1971
1. JOY TO THE WORLD - Three Dog Night (Dunhill)
2. MAGGIE MAY - Rod Stewart (Mercury)
3. IT'S TOO LATE - Carole King (Ode)
4. ONE BAD APPLE - Osmonds (MGM)
5. HOW CAN YOU MEND A BROKEN HEART - Bee Gees (Atco)
6. INDIAN RESERVATION - Raiders (Columbia)
7. GO AWAY LITTLE GIRL - Donny Osmond (MGM)
8. TAKE ME HOME, COUNTRY ROADS - John Denver with Fat City (RCA)
9. JUST MY IMAGINATION (RUNNING AWAY WITH ME) - Temptations (Gordy)
10. KNOCK THREE TIMES – Tony Orlando and Dawn (Bell)

From TOP 40

2002
1 HOW YOU REMIND ME - Nickelback (Roadrunner/IDJMG)
2 COMPLICATED Avril Lavigne – (Arista)
3 WHEREVER YOU WILL GO - The Calling (RCA)
4 A THOUSAND MILES - Vanessa Carlton (A&M/Interscope)
5 HOT IN HERRE - Nelly (Fo' Reel/Universal/UMRG)
6 DILEMMA - Nelly Featuring Kelly Rowland (Fo' Reel/Universal/UMRG)
7 GET THE PARTY STARTED - Pink (Arista)
8 AIN'T IT FUNNY - Jennifer Lopez Featuring Ja Rule (Epic)
9 U GOT IT BAD - Usher (Arista)
10 IN THE END -Linkin Park (Warner Bros.)

2003
1 UNWELL - matchbox twenty (Atlantic)
2 I'M WITH YOU - Avril Lavigne (Arista)
3 IN DA CLUB - 50 Cent (Shady/Aftermath/Interscope)
4 BEAUTIFUL - Christina Aguilera (RCA/RMG)
5 BRING ME TO LIFE - Evanescence Featuring Paul McCoy (Wind-up)
6 WHEN I'M GONE - 3 Doors Down (Republic/Universal/UMRG)
7 WHERE IS THE LOVE? - Black Eyed Peas (A&M/Interscope)
8 IGNITION - R. Kelly (Jive)
9 CRAZY IN LOVE - Beyonce Featuring Jay-Z (Columbia)
10 ROCK YOUR BODY - Justin Timberlake (Jive)

2004
1 YEAH! - Usher Featuring Lil Jon & Ludacris (LaFace/Zomba)
2 THIS LOVE - Maroon5 (Octone/J/RMG)
3 THE REASON - Hoobastank (Island/IDJMG)
4 HEY YA! - OutKast (LaFace/Zomba)
5 BURN - Usher (LaFace/Zomba)
6 SOMEDAY - Nickelback (Roadrunner/IDJMG)
7 THE WAY YOU MOVE - OutKast Featuring Sleepy Brown (LaFace/Zomba)
8 MY IMMORTAL - Evanescence (Wind-up)
9 SHE WILL BE LOVED - Maroon5 (Octone/J/RMG)
10 I DON'T WANNA KNOW - Mario Winans Featuring Enya & P. Diddy (Bad Boy/UMRG)

From HOT 100

2005
1 WE BELONG TOGETHER - Mariah Carey (Island/IDJMG)
2 HOLLABACK GIRL - Gwen Stefani (Interscope)
3 LET ME LOVE YOU - Mario (3rd Street /J/RMG)
4 SINCE U BEEN GONE - Kelly Clarkson (RCA/RMG)
5 1, 2 STEP - Ciara Featuring Missy Elliott (Sho'nuff/MusicLine/LaFace/Zomba)
6 GOLD DIGGER - Kanye West Featuring Jamie Foxx (Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam/IDJMG)
7 BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS - Green Day (Reprise)
8 CANDY SHOP - 50 Cent Featuring Olivia (Shady /Aftermath/Interscope)
9 DON'T CHA - The Pussycat Dolls Featuring Busta Rhymes (A&M/Interscope)
10 BEHIND THESE HAZEL EYES - Kelly Clarkson (RCA/RMG)

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS

As mentioned in the Materials and Methods section, the 80 songs were organized by categories. A complete table of the songs and their respective categories is found at the end of this chapter (Table 4-1). To reiterate, this study employed a grounded theory approach to constructing the typology, meaning that the song lyrics were read—and reread as necessary—to determine the categories, rather than creating them first and trying to force the songs into them. After a few passes, I discovered that I had too many categories, so I determined broad themes that effectively condensed similar categories into more convenient groups. The final number of categories is seven.

- Relationships/Love
- Global/Conscious/Commentary
- Fun/Party/Club/Sex
- Introspective
- Dance
- Instrumental
- Miscellaneous.

While some songs contain details that transcend these boundaries, the main topic of each enabled mutual exclusivity between categories. In other words, no song appears in more than one group. Below is how each group is operationalized.

Relationships/Love: This is by far the most populous category, accounting for 20 of the 40 songs in the classic era, and 24 of the 40 in the modern era. It is also arguably the broadest. While every song in the category treats on the subject of relationships or romantic love, the nature of the relationships being conveyed is diverse. Originally, I intended to create a category out of each permutation of love that I found among the songs. Some examples are Unrequited Love, Love Lost, Disintegration of a Relationship, etc. There were too many songs that had a relatively unique plot, making such an exhaustive system of distinction counterproductive. In

order to facilitate the construction of the overall typology, any song whose primary concern is with love or a relationship, regardless of the state of the love or relationship, was included in this group. Thus, songs that had a pessimistic view of a relationship, songs that were cheerful and celebratory of love, songs that treat the temptation of infidelity, songs where the narrator offers to be at a (potentially former) lover's beck and call, and many more were placed in this category. This may be a reductionist maneuver, but it is temporary. When it is time to compare the differing nature of love and relationships between the two eras, this category will be exploded.

Global/Conscious/Commentary: The songs in this category all share one important detail: they treat themes relating to some aspect of social structure and the nonromantic interrelation between people. There were 7 songs in the classic era, and 4 in the modern era that would fit in this category. The contents of this category are also diverse, with subjects ranging from war protestation, to race and class relations, to people's self-esteem issues. The narrator of each song either explicitly or implicitly offers commentary on a social issue, sometimes approaching it from a first person point of view (using the word "I") to tell a story that renders an opinion about the issue. This category ties for second place with the next, in terms of the number of constituent songs.

Fun/Party/Club/Sex: It was not a difficult decision to reduce the constituents of this category into one category. The primary reason for this is that most of the songs treating the party life mentality also have a notable sexual dimension. The only exception is Sly and the Family Stone's 1969 hit "Hot Fun in the Summertime," which makes no mention of sexuality at all. It should be noted that not all of the songs that emphasize sex also implicate the occurrence of a party, but the attitude of the language used in such songs conjures the same images of fun,

exhilaration, and or substance use and irresponsibility. The classic era featured just 2 songs, and the modern era offered 9.

Introspective: Each of these songs features a narrator's account of the place he is at in life, along with some degree of poignant imagery to flesh out his plights. The 1971 song "How can you Mend a Broken Heart" by the Bee Gees may appear that it belongs in the Relationships category, however there is no mention made of the person who broke the narrator's heart, and most of the details are thoroughly introspective in nature. Some of the songs rely heavily on allusions to the narrator's past; some are more focused on the present and concerned about the future. Each of them has a wistful tone in the language, but some are sprinkled with optimism. Unlike the previous category, this one has a greater representation by the classic era than the modern: 5 songs to 1, respectively. The next two categories are special, in that they will receive very little treatment in the analysis at all.

Instrumentals: These songs obviously have little use to this study, since there simply are no words to analyze. It is important to note that songs with no lyrics are rare in pop music, and even rarer in the top pop music. There are only two such songs out of the entire 80, and both coincidentally hail from the same year (1968): "Love is Blue," by Paul Mauriat, and "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," by Hugo Montenegro. The former eventually featured lyrics, but the original hit did not.

Dance: This category is equally small, consisting of two songs. These are songs dedicated to a particular style of dance, in both cases named after the song (or vice versa). The song is about the dance, and may consist of lyrical instructions for how the dance is properly executed, along with other details that are supposed to incite the revelry associated with the dance. It is

arguable that the two songs could have appeared in the Fun/Party/Club/Sex category, but they are both specific enough to warrant their own category.

Miscellaneous: The final category is for those songs that were otherwise uncategorizable. The so-called Miscellaneous group is small, consisting of four songs that do not relate to one another in any way and have such specific topics that it would have been inappropriate to force them into any of the other categories. I will briefly summarize each here. First is The Beatles' 1968 song "Hey Jude," which was No. 1 for that year. What is unique about this song is that, of the 80, its subject matter is the most elusive. The lyrics are quite vague, and without knowing the context of the situation the song recounts, it would be difficult if not impossible to decipher the details. In brief, the author of the song (Paul McCartney) wrote it for Julian Lennon (fellow band member John Lennon's son), who was coping with his parents' divorce and other hardships.

The second was a hit during the same year, and appeared on the soundtrack to the movie *The Graduate*. Simon & Garfunkel's song was about (and named after) the character Mrs. Robinson, who was engaged in an age-discrepant, extramarital affair with a recent college graduate named Benjamin. This song did not fit in the Relationships category because the narrator is not involved in the relationship, nor do many of the vague details in the song even deal with Mrs. Robinson's relationship(s). The next song is also by Simon & Garfunkel, a hit in 1970 named "Bridge over Troubled Water." The narrator of the song is assuring someone that he will be available to lend comfort and friendship when times are tough. This song is unique because, while a number of songs from the Relationships category feature themes of helpfulness and friendship, this is the only one that makes no reference to love or the possibility of a romantic relationship. Plus, it is specifically about helpfulness, whereas the others (besides

perhaps Jackson 5's "I'll be There") seem to mention it as a fringe benefit to their love. And finally, Gwen Stefani's 2005 "Hollaback Girl" is simply a statement that the narrator is not the type to humor people's denigration of her by countering with her own slanderous remarks.

I will conduct the comparisons between the classic and modern era within the appropriate categories first. So all of the songs about relationships will be compared across the 30 year span, then a summary will review some of the key differences. The other categories are considerably smaller, thus will be summarized *en masse* after they are individually treated.

But before all of that, I would like to give a demographic breakdown of the artists appearing in the top 10 lists for these two eras. The demographic characteristics this study will focus on are gender and race.

Demographic Comparisons

Although the main point of this study is to analyze song lyrics, it has been indicated in the review of literature that the role of the artist is important to the study of popular music, since it is in part an artist's image that contributes to a song's success. Were a study devoted to this aspect of the popular music, a more comprehensive examination of the people involved in the song's creation would be necessary, including a biography of the artist him/herself. The present study will simply focus on two superficial demographic characteristics of each artist: gender and race or ethnicity. The reason for this, besides that an in-depth examination would beleaguer the main point of this study, is that these two characteristics are the most noticeable about an artist, and may have the strongest correlation with his/her image.

It is difficult to systematize an account of how the demographics have changed among pop artists between these two eras. Two factors in particular contribute to this. First, there are occurrences in which the same artist is featured twice in one year, or more than once during the four year span. The question becomes, do the demographic characteristics of that artist get

counted for each occurrence of that artist? I have decided that they would be, since any ratios drawn from the data would require the preservation of the 10-song-per-year lists. Second, and especially with modern era music, many songs feature guest artists who would change the final tally. In order to address this concerns I needed to apply some discretion in which guest artists would be included, based on the degree of their roles. For example, the No. 10 song of 2004 was "I Don't Wanna Know," by Mario Winans, featuring Enya and P. Diddy. Both Winans and Diddy are black males, whereas Enya is a white female. In reality, Enya's involvement was quite small. Her song "Boadicea," in which she hums a haunting melody, was electronically sampled and looped in this track while the men sang and/or rapped over top of it. Had she been more involved, this song's artists would have been coded as multicultural/bi-gender (MC/BG). Instead, it is coded as black/male.

It should also be noted that for many artists, their backup band may have been MC/BG, but if the emphasis is placed on one artist, then his/her demographic characteristics are the only counted. Examples would be Mariah Carey, Gwen Stefani, Avril Lavigne, and Christina Aguilera. A counter example would be Evanescence. The lead singer Amy Lee is female; the rest of the band is male. However, the artist that made the top 10 is not "Amy Lee;" it is the entire band. Evanescence is thus coded as W/BG, indicating an all white group, and bi-gender. The codes include W (white), B (black), MC (multicultural, indicating a mix of racially/culturally diverse members), ME (multiethnic, applying to an individual), M (male), F (female), and BG (bi-gender, indicating the involvement of at least one male and female). Tables 4-2 and 4-3 display the breakdown for all 80 songs and are found at the end of this chapter.

In comparing the two eras, one detail that is immediately apparent is that the dominance of whites and males characteristic of the classic era is significantly reduced in the modern era. Whereas the ratio of males to females is 10:1 in the classic era, it is approximately 2:1 in the modern era. The number of bi-gender acts is comparable between the eras (7 and 8, respectively). This data clearly shows that pop music has become more open to female influence, despite the fact that there are still twice as many male acts becoming popular in the modern era. It should also be noted that not one of the female acts is an all female group. The closest was The Pussycat Dolls, whose song "Don't Cha" was No. 9 in 2005. The Pussycat Dolls actually is an all female group, however their hit single features a significant vocal influence by male rapper Busta Rhymes, so their combined efforts earned them a coding of BG. Even "1,2 Step" of 2005 by Ciara, featuring Missy Elliot cannot count as an all-female group because Elliot is a guest artist, not a member of the same group as Ciara.

A possible explanation for the lack of all-female groups in the top pop charts is that there is dearth of female groups being signed to record labels to begin with. The music business seems to have found greater "worth" in producing and promoting a single female star and assembling an interchangeable backup group for her, which usually consists primarily or entirely of males. Vanessa Carlton and Avril Lavigne serve as examples from the top 10 lists. This is not to say that all-female groups cannot achieve great popularity. The Spice Girls, Destiny's Child, TLC, and Salt-N-Pepa are some examples that did. Whoever composed the music for these groups is a different story. Female bands in which the members play instruments and collaborate on the songwriting, rather than simply sing, are still virtually unheard of. It is much more common to find females playing such roles in bi-gender groups, such as Fifth Dimension, Sly & the Family Stone, and the Foundations, and of course, Evanescence.

In terms of race, pop music has also shown a marked shift in the distribution of black and white artists. For the classic era, the ratio of whites to blacks is approximately 3:1, versus a ratio of approximately 4:3 in the modern era. Coincidentally, there was an equal number (4) of multicultural acts between eras. The classic era featured no multiethnic artists, while the modern era featured just two. These numbers are too small to make inferences.

But returning to the discussion of black and white artists, it is difficult to precisely account for the change in ratios across eras. Black musicians have enjoyed great popularity since before the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, some of the most notable names being Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith, and Duke Ellington. Thus the change probably cannot be attributed to a relaxing of any exclusory tendencies of the music business. As has been stated numerous times in this paper, the music business' primary concern is producing profitable acts, so the answer must be in there. If record companies have determined that adolescents tend to gravitate toward music that is distinctly different from their parents' preferred music—as discussed in the literature review—then an examination of how black music has changed since the classic era could provide clues. Soul and R&B were common in the '60s, and R&B continues to be successful. But what the '60s did not have was rap. Emerging in the '80s and becoming extremely popular in the '90s and 2000s, rap was unlike anything the '60s generation encountered. Rap music tends to feature bass-heavy beats, direct and controversial language, unapologetic delivery, and is almost exclusively provided by black artists. In a sense, it was the perfect music with which white adolescents could rebel. Record companies realized this and endorsed music that parents would find downright offensive, an example being the song "Don't Cha." Here is a sample of some of Busta Rhymes' lines: *"Oh, we about to get it just a lil hot and sweaty in this mu'fucka;" "Tryna put it on me till my balls black and bluish;"* to which The

Pussycat Dolls added, *"I know you should be fucking me."* Additionally, because rap's lyrical content and delivery tend to be aggressively masculine and deemphasize vulnerable emotions, it became a means for young men to publicly enjoy music without appearing weak in front of their peers. If you know the words, it is easy to "rap along to," requiring no ability to reach higher notes or even sing in tune. It is also conducive to dancing. Over a third of the 40 top songs of the modern era involve rap characteristics. Not all feature black artists, like Linkin Park's 2002 "In the End," in which the verses are rapped by an Asian-American and the chorus is sung by a Caucasian. Likewise, as should go without saying, not all music that parents would consider offensive is influenced by rap or performed by black artists. But the popularity of this relatively new style of music reflects an effective formula that young persons gratefully accepted, the result of which boosted the demand for it and consequently the increased recognition of black rappers. Recall that the classic era consisted of a total of 9 songs by black artists. Over 9 of the 15 songs by black artists in the modern era's top pop are either dedicated rap songs, or feature a black rapper.

With these demographic changes in pop artists reviewed, we may begin to analyze the lyrical content of these songs. I will tackle the giant Relationships/Love category first.

Relationships/Love

Without even deconstructing the language of these songs, there is one item that stands out in comparing the two eras: songs about relationships and/or love are the most prevalent in the top pop music. This has not changed in the 30 years between our eras. I suspect that a review of the '70s, '80s and '90s would reveal similar proportions. As I have grouped them, there are four more songs in the modern era than the classic. Exactly half of the songs from the entire classic era treat these subjects. Let us take a closer look at what these songs are conveying. Note that after the first mention of a song's full title, I will often condense subsequent mentions using key

words to identify them. Also note that I will often use the word "object" to indicate the object of the narrator's attention. It is in no way intended to imply that the narrator is objectifying her/him; it is merely serving as a gender-neutral noun.

Many songs have an optimistic or celebratory view of love or attraction. The songs that are expressly so are "Sunshine of Your Love," "Sugar, Sugar," "Dizzy," "Crimson and Clover," and "Get Ready. These songs use language that indicates the positive feelings of the narrator, or anticipation of encounters with the objects of their desires. Here are some key lines from "Sunshine:" *"I'm with you my love; The light's shining through on you; It's the morning and just we two; I'll stay with you darling now;"* and the chorus, *"I've been waiting so long; To be where I'm going; In the sunshine of your love."* A similar sentiment is found in "Get Ready:" *"Never met a girl could make me feel the way that you do; Get ready baby, 'cause here I come; I'm bringing you a love that's true."* Both songs use imagery of some distance being closed, and celebrate the way the object makes the narrator feel. "Get Ready" takes it a little further and specifically mentions the aspect of sex, though uses tasteful language: *"Start making love to you."* "Sugar" almost belabors the saccharine metaphor of the title with lines like: *"Sugar, ah honey honey; You are my candy girl; When I kissed you girl, I knew how sweet a kiss could be; Like the summer sunshine, pour your sweetness over me; I'm gonna make your life so sweet,"* etc. Many of these lines are used more than once. Also note the use of the word "sunshine," which conveys similar imagery to Cream's "Sunshine." "Dizzy" and "Crimson and Clover" both begin with the narrator having desires to be a part of the object's life, with the former offering the audience the closure of his success. Some of the key lines are: *"First time I saw you girl, I just knew I had to make you mine; I want you for my sweet pet, but you keep playing hard to get; I finally got to talk to you and told you just exactly how I felt; then I held you close to me and*

kissed you and my heart began to melt." The metaphor this song uses is dizziness, indicating that object's power over the narrator is staggering, and perhaps at times confusing. While he uses words like "whirlpool" and "spinning," he at no point says this is a bad thing. "Crimson" is harder to interpret, for one because there are few words to begin with. Lines that give it away include: *"Now I don't hardly know her; But I think I could love her; Well if she come walkin' over; Now I been waitin' to show her."* What make this song optimistic is lines like: *"My mind's such a sweet thing; I wanna do everything; What a beautiful feeling."* The title may be vague, but I believe it may be referring to blood and the heart. Crimson is sometimes used to describe the color of blood, and "clover," assuming it is a four-leaf clover, could equate to the four chambers of the heart. Thus again, we have a song that pays homage to the physiological effects of the object's influence.

Turning to the modern era, there are also songs that have an optimistic tone, though none seem to be dedicated appreciation songs like "Sugar." Additionally, the list is shorter: "Bring me to Life," "Crazy in Love," and perhaps "U Got it Bad." "Bring Me" is unique because, whereas other love songs may use imagery of light or sunshine, this song employs dark imagery to indicate what the narrator is being freed from through the love of the object. Here are some sample lines: *"Where I've become so numb without a soul, my spirit sleeping somewhere cold; Until you find it there and lead it back home; Call my name and save me from the dark; Frozen inside without your touch without your love darling; Only you are the life among the dead."* Indeed, it is difficult to classify this song as positive or optimistic based on such intense imagery. Additionally, the music of the song is at times eerie, at times heavy and agitated, and at times desperate sounding. However, the overall point of the song is appreciative of the object's role in the narrator's happiness, or at least in her escape from the clutches of darkness. The language

she uses fits with Evanescence's gothic-rock motif, so it is crucial for the band's image to maintain those standards.

"Crazy in Love" is somewhat more conventional. This song features a sort of dialogue between the two characters—one played by Beyoncé, the other by Jay-Z—in that they both get a chance to share their feelings. The premise is similar to some of the classic songs, where there is a distance separating the lovers. Despite this distance, their mutual feelings are strong enough to be considered by others as somewhat "crazy." The overall tone of both narrators conveys a great appreciation of one another, and the difficulties they each experience in being apart. As for "U Got it Bad," the song seems to be more of a general recognition of the power of love, not necessarily a celebration of the narrator's own situation.

There are a few songs that are more neutral, and/or uncertain. From the classic era, there is "This Guy's in Love with You," "Knock Three Times," and "One Bad Apple." In each of these songs, the narrator would like to become involved in a relationship with the object, but seems to entertain the possibility that it will not happen, without dwelling on it. The only song within the modern era that conveys such a tone is "Let me Love You," which has remarkable similarities to "Bad Apple." In both songs, the narrator is recognizing that the object has been hurt by a man. In "Let me," it is clearly the result of a man's infidelity: *"Baby I just don't get it; Do you enjoy being hurt?; I know you smelled the perfume, the make-up on his shirt; You don't believe his stories; You know that they're all lies; Bad as you are, you stick around and I just don't know why."* Also apparent by that last line is that the woman is still involved with the man who hurt her. In "Bad Apple," it seems like the woman is not still involved with the man who hurt her, though it is not clear how the man hurt the woman. But it is clear how it has affected her: *"I can tell you've been hurt; by that look on your face, girl; Some guy brought sad into your happy*

world; You need love, but you're afraid that if you give in; Someone else will come along; And sock it to ya again." In both songs, the narrator asserts that he is the person who the object deserves. However, in neither song does the narrator indicate having success or failure convincing her of this.

The logical next batch is the songs that are pessimistic, or that dolefully recount having lost a relationship, or express the inability to secure the relationship desired. I will start with that one. From the classic era, songs in which the narrator feels s/he may not have a chance with the object include "I Can't Get Next to You," "They Long to Be Close to You," and "Just my Imagination." What is interesting about "Can't Get Next" is that the narrator, played by the different singers of the Temptations, paints himself as a person of tremendous power and possessing varying amazing abilities, but despite that, cannot achieve what he really wants, which is to win the affections of the object. Exemplary are the lines from the first verse: *"I can turn a gray sky blue; I can make it rain, whenever I wanted to; Oh, I can build a castle from a single grain of sand; I can make a ship sail, uh, on dry land; But my life is incomplete and I'm so blue; 'Cause I can't get next to you."*

The language used to indicate this distress reflects the narrator's perception of need; he *needs* the object to return his feelings in order to feel happy, or even function. This concept of need is not uncommon among the songs in the Relationships category, but without surprise is absent from all of the more positive songs beside "Bring me to Life," which is arguably the basis of that song. The following are the songs that mention this type of need, along with a representative line from each: from "Guy's in Love," *"I need your love, I want your love; Say you're in love and you'll be my girl, if not I'll just die;"* from "Build me Up, Buttercup," *"Why do I need you so, baby baby;"* from "Just my Imagination," *"Dear Lord, hear my plea...don't*

ever let another take her love from me or I will surely die;" from "A Thousand Miles," *"And I need you; and I miss you;"* from "Dilemma," *"I love you, and I need you;"* and from "We Belong Together," *"I need you, need you back in my life baby."* Apparently, using need as a signifier of intense emotions is a practice in pop music that is still alive and well today.

However, the modern era approaches the concept of the "unattainable relationship" in different ways than the classic era. The most unique of which is "I'm With You," in which the narrator has the desire of a relationship, but does not have a particular object in mind: *"Isn't anyone tryin' to find me? Won't somebody come take me home? It's a damn cold night; Trying to figure out this life; Won't you take me by the hand, Take me somewhere new; I don't know who you are; But I... I'm with you."* Other songs focus on a relationship that is unattainable due to an existing arrangement. Examples are: "Dilemma," "Ain't it Funny," and of course "Let me Love You." In the case of "Dilemma," there is a conversation between the artists—similar to "Crazy in Love"—in which Kelly Rowland's character is already involved in a relationship, but desires Nelly, who asserts *"I never been the type to break up a happy home."* It appears that the two do engage in a surreptitious physical relationship, but in the end part company on behalf of her other ties. The premise of "Ain't it Funny" is similar, though the sexual dimension is absent. Since the song is based on the movie "The Wedding Planner" in which the artist Jennifer Lopez plays the lead role, one can infer that the song's story parallels the movie plot. That said, the song concludes with the desired relationship being attained, but most of the song relays the disappointment of the preventative circumstances. "Let me Love You" has already been discussed, but like the previous two, demonstrates a desire for someone who is otherwise involved. There is just one song from the classic era that features a comparable premise. In "Go Away Little Girl," the difference is that the actor who desires the "spoken-for" person is not the

narrator at all. Instead, the narrator wishes to remain honorable to his current arrangement, and insists that the object of the song cease with her temptations. The ironic twist is found in the lines: *"When you are near me like this; You're much too hard to resist; So, go away, little girl, before I beg you to stay."*

The differing approach to the unattainable relationship in the modern era could signify a departure from the traditional concept of unrequited love. There are four songs in the classic era that could be subcategorized as such, but none in the modern era. "Let me Love You" is excluded from that subcategory because there is no closure. That is, it is uncertain how the object would respond to the narrator's desires. Some of the four classic songs also contain no definitive closure, but the overall tone of the language is indicative of a perceived unlikelihood of success. Any explanation for this departure in modern pop would be purely speculative. It is however my opinion that songs of unrequited love are either too common or too uniform—or perhaps too clichéd—to stand out and reach the top 10. It is almost as if the edgier modern culture would rather hear songs about "forbidden" loves than the potentially whiny "s/he doesn't love me" songs.

One topic that has not seemed to get weary for the modern era is what I refer to as "relationship gone awry." Quite the contrary, this topic is the most common in the top modern pop, accounting for a startling 13 of the 24 songs in this category. They are as follows: "How You Remind Me," "In the End," "Burn," "This Love," "Hey Ya!" "Someday," "She will be Loved," "I Don't Wanna Know," "The Reason," "My Immortal," "We Belong Together," "Behind these Hazel Eyes," and "Since U Been Gone." I will not belabor the point by treating each, but will instead focus on the most noteworthy. There are several ways in which a relationship can go awry, from the loss of affect, to the damage of infidelity, to an imbalance in

power, to death. Often, songs do not expressly state the actual cause. In fact, the majority of the 13 do not. Additionally, the relationship going awry does not necessitate it ending, as is the case in "I Don't Wanna Know," where the narrator has evidence of the object's infidelity, but would prefer to remain oblivious. As a side note, he does offer an ultimatum: *"Now it's time you invest in me; 'Cause if not then it's best you leave."* The songs "Someday" and "The Reason" may also serve as examples, but it is unclear how the stories will conclude. What is unique about "The Reason" is that it is essentially an apology; the narrator is admitting to doing wrong, but would like to prove he is willing to change: *"I'm sorry that I hurt you; It's something I must live with everyday; I've found a reason for me; To change who I used to be; A reason to start over new; and the reason is You."* In "Burn" and "We Belong Together," the respective narrators had ended their relationships, but changed their minds and wish to reinstate them, although in "Burn" the narrator appears torn on the issue: *"I know I made a mistake, now it's too late; I'm twisted cuz one side of me is tellin' me that I need to move on; On the other side I wanna break down and cry."* The song "Since U Been Gone" features a peculiar twist: *"But since you been gone; I can breathe for the first time; I'm so movin' on, yeah yeah; Thanks to you, now I get what I want; Since you been gone."* Rather than being mournful about the end of her relationship, the narrator exhibits relief and a sense of freedom. What is ironic is that the song "Behind these Hazel Eyes," a top 10 hit the same year and performed by the same artist, conveys a much different message with lines like: *"Now I can't breathe; No, I can't sleep; I'm barely hanging on; I'm torn into pieces; Broken up, deep inside; Now all that's left of me is what I pretend to be."*

Turning to the classic pop, there are far fewer songs about a relationship going awry, but it is still the most populous subcategory in that era. The 6 songs are "Honey," "Build me Up Buttercup," "I'll Never Fall in Love Again," "Band of Gold," "Maggie May," and "It's Too

Late." In "Honey," the object dies: *"One day while I was not at home; While she was there and all alone; The angels came; Now all I have is memories of Honey."* This is a unique situation that many young listeners would not be able to empathize with, so it is surprising that it is a top 10 hit. It is possible that "My Immortal" from the modern era also features a death, but the imagery is not as concrete as "the angels came." The primary difference between the plotline where a character dies and other songs of this subcategory is that it is impossible to place blame on either or both of the participants. The listener may still sympathize with the narrator, but is not expected to take sides. Conversely, songs like "Buttercup" and "Never Fall" do seem to command the allegiance of the listener. Some key lines are: from "Buttercup," *"Why do you build me up; Buttercup baby just to let me down; And mess me around, and then worst of all; You never call baby when you say you will; But I love you still;"* and from "Never Fall," *"All those things I heard about you; I thought they were only lies; But when I caught you in his arms; I just broke down and cried."*

Just from this array of specific plots within this subcategory alone, there is no discernable difference between the eras in terms of culture. Heartbreak and the souring of relationships are timeless themes that will likely be fodder for pop music for eras to come. However, the same could be argued for songs dealing with unrequited love. So why is it that there are no occurrences of that subcategory in the modern era, yet disproportionately more than the classic era about a relationship going awry? Again, any response to this would be highly speculative. Regardless, I will offer possibilities. Relationship dysfunction may have become a more marketable theme because the parents of the modern generation have a higher divorce rate than the parents of the classic generation. Even if adolescents have not had their own relationships yet, they may have already witnessed how they can go awry at home. As for young adults, since

the median age at first marriage has increased since the classic era (approximately 4 years for males and 5 years for females; Infoplease, 2006), there is more time for the modern generation to experience a greater number of "long-term" relationships that inevitably fail before settling down. These details may indicate an erosion of the concept of "ideal love;" rather than brooding for the unattainable one that is considered perfect, an individual may be more apt to "take what is available" to whatever end.

The final subcategory of songs are not as conveniently grouped. Since there is a broad "Miscellaneous" category for the oddballs of the entire study, this could be a "Miscellaneous" subcategory for such songs that still treat relationships. From the classic era are the songs "Ain't No Mountain High Enough," and "I'll be There" and from the modern era are "Wherever You will Go," "A Thousand Miles," "When I'm Gone," and "Gold Digga." What is interesting about these remaining songs is that the first four of the five deal with a theme already discussed: distance. The two from the classic era are remarkably similar, both indicating the narrator's willingness to drop everything and go to the object if the object so desires. In "Wherever," the situation is somewhat different. The details of the relationship are vague, but it seems like returning to the object is not an option: *"If I could, then I would; I'll go wherever you will go."* It is entirely possible that either the narrator or the object has died. In "Thousand," the nature of the relationship is also unclear, but the narrator does express a willingness to bridge the distance: *"'Cause you know I'd walk a thousand miles; If I could just see you tonight."* For the two classic songs, it seems like a reunion is feasible, given the beckoning of the objects. For the modern songs, the abstractness of both conveys greater uncertainty. It is this uncertainty that kept these two songs out to the "relationship gone awry" subcategory. Meanwhile, "When I'm Gone" is just confusing. Some details seem to celebrate a relationship that is strong even in the narrator's

absence, some details hint at a hidden weakness in the relationship: *"When your education X-Ray; Cannot see under my skin; I won't tell you a damn thing; That I could not tell my friends."* The final song is "Gold Digga," the premise of which is, as the title suggests, an account of a particular woman's propensity for using wealth as the primary criteria for selecting a (temporary) mate. This could have been included in the "relationship gone awry" subcategory, since the narrator indicates being victimized by the object at one point. However, the main point of the song is the object's exploits in general, rather than his review of the relationship they had.

Summary: Because the Relationships/love category is so large, it is the only of the seven main categories in this study's typology that will have its own summary. The other categories will all be summarized together. That said, let us review the comparisons between the two eras, and point out some additional details in general that were not covered in the exhaustive analysis above.

The most basic point is that relationships and love still constitute the most prevalent subject matter in popular music. I would imagine an analysis of other popular entertainment media, such as movies and televisions shows, would produce similar results. Even action and science fiction films, generally geared toward males, usually feature some sort of romantic interest between select characters. American culture seems to be in love with love. In both eras, the orientation of the characters involved in the songs is almost always explicitly heterosexual, which I ascertained by the occurrence of gender specific pronouns, or from the use of words like "girl" by a male narrator. Only one song openly mentions marriage: "Band of Gold." Likewise, only one mentions a child ("Dilemma") but the child is not the product of the two main characters in the plot.

If sexual intercourse is mentioned at all, it is usually just implied. The most candid references to sex are found in the modern pop song "This Love" with lines like: *"I tried my best to feed her appetite; Keep her coming every night;"* and *"My pressure on your hips; Sinking my fingertips; Into every inch of you."* The only song from the classic era that even remotely approaches this kind of explicit detail is "Maggie May:" *"But you turned into a lover and; Mother what a lover, you wore me out; All you did was wreck my bed."* The song "Hey Ya!" from the modern era also features a rather frank line: *"OHH OH, don't want to meet yo' mama; Just want to make you cumma,"* which implies the narrator's disinterest in evolving the relationship beyond the physical dimension, despite earlier details in the song that suggest it already has. The degree to which language has become more explicit in modern pop will be more clearly seen in the discussion of the "Fun/Party/Club/Sex category.

In terms of gender roles, it would appear that men and women are equally portrayed as both strong and weak in both eras. In other words, both male and female narrators may either express their vulnerabilities, or demonstrate their steadfastness. Meanwhile, a monogamous and loyal relationship is still the professed goal of both men and women in both eras, with little tolerance for infidelity. An exception would be "Dilemma," in which the narrators do engage in a relationship (to whatever extent) outside of a preexisting one. In none of the songs does the narrator use his/her relationship difficulties to justify chauvinistic generalizations about the opposite sex. Likewise, in none of the songs does the narrator use his/her gender to justify questionable actions.

To review some of the points already made, the classic era generally features more positive or optimistic songs about relationships than the modern era. Both eras favor songs that focus

more on the results of a stressed relationship, but there are twice as many in the modern than the classic era.

Global/Conscious/Commentary

From here, the comparisons of the songs will be more superficial, since each of the remaining categories does not have a specific unifying theme like "Relationships/love." Recall that the concept delineating the present category is that each of the songs treats some aspect of social structure and society from a critical standpoint.

Despite the range of topics, some of the songs do actually address common themes. The songs "People Got To Be Free," "Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In," "Everyday People" and to some extent "Joy to the World" all address the notion of peace and harmony between people of varying backgrounds. They are all also coincidentally from the classic era. Some of the key lines are: from "Be Free," *"You should see, what a lovely, lovely world this'd be; Everyone learned to live together, ah-hah-unh; Seems to me such an easy, easy thing this should be;"* from "Aquarius," *"Harmony and understanding; Sympathy and trust abounding; No more falsehoods or derisions; Golden living dreams of visions;"* and from "Everyday," *"Oh sha sha - we got to live together; I am no better and neither are you; We are the same whatever we do."* The most similar song from the modern era is "Where is the Love?" but said song offers a much broader commentary, treating the topics of the war on terror, discrimination, the nation's cover-ups, forgiveness, fixation on money, and the negativity of media. Additionally, the song seems more focused on pointing out the problems than offering peaceful solutions. The tone is at times resigned, illustrated by the chorus: *"Father, Father, Father help us; Send us some guidance from above; 'Cause people got me, got me questionin'; Where is the love."*

Another song that offers general commentary about the state of affairs in the United States was already discussed in the Methods section. The narrator of the classic pop song "American

Woman" uses a clever metaphor to convey disenchantment with certain aspects of American life. The "woman" he is speaking to throughout the song represents the country as a whole, or at least the governing principles. Like "Where is the Love?," it too calls attention to war (*"I don't need your war machines"*) however does not focus on it as heavily. The song from the classic era that does is "War." The entire song is devoted to the subject, even recognizing the fact that young people are the ones being sent to fight and possibly die: *"War has shattered many a young man's dream; Made him disabled, bitter and mean."* It is surprising that, for as much unrest as was reported from that era, only one top 10 song of the four year span was so explicitly detracting of the Vietnam War. As stated near the beginning, this certainly does not deny that other anti-war songs achieved popularity; they just did not garner enough popularity to reach the top 10. The fact that just one song from the modern era is clearly anti-war is not as surprising for two reasons. First, this war has not been waging as long, and second, there is currently no threat of being drafted. Another difference is that the current war was waged in response to attacks on the United States mainland. Although the Bush administration does not seem to have maintained a clear view of who their actual enemy is, much of the support that was garnered for this war is rooted in those attacks and the perceived threat of future attacks. Such was not the case for the Vietnam War. Perhaps if the situation in Iraq deteriorates further over the next few years, the top 10 lists will feature more songs voicing disapproval.

The social commentary that the modern era seems most concerned with operates on a more individual level. The songs "Complicated," "Unwell," and "Beautiful" each have a different subject, but each address a more personal issue of some sort. What distinguishes "Complicated" is that it is a pop song that criticizes pop culture. The premise is that the narrator's good friend has a tendency to present him/herself (the gender is not stated) differently amongst a different

circle of friends: *"But you become; Somebody else; 'Round everyone else; Watchin' your back; Like you can't relax; You're tryin' to be cool; You look like a fool to me."* This is a criticism of pop culture because there are particular patterns of dress and behavior associated with certain pop culture motifs—especially among teenagers—and the narrator would prefer her friend to remain true to him/herself and not subscribe to those patterns: *"Acting like you're somebody else gets me frustrated; Take off all your preppy clothes."* The irony of this song is, of course, that its popularity likely produced its own pop culture motif, based on the artist's chosen style.

The song "Unwell" deals with emotional disorders like anxiety and depression. The fact that this is the No. 1 song of 2003 indicates that such concerns have become widespread among the pop culture audience. Though the prevalence of such disorders is also evidenced by the booming anti-depressant/anxiety medication industry, these are still very personal problems that are a source of shame for the afflicted individual: *"And I know, I know they've all been talking about me; I can hear them whisper; And it makes me think there must be something wrong with me;"* and from the chorus *"But I'm not crazy, I'm just a little unwell; I know right now you cant tell."* It is entirely possible that the narrator is playing the role of the entire American culture.

"Beautiful" is similar in that it discusses self-esteem, often one of the key factors in the development of emotional troubles. The primary assertion of the song is that every person is beautiful in every way, and that we should not allow others to convince us otherwise. Perhaps this song served as an anthem to counter some of the realities put forth in "Unwell."

The only remaining song in this category is "Indian Reservation," from 1971. As the title suggests, the song reminds Americans what happened to the people who were here before there was an America. While the population being recognized by this song is very specific, the song's

main point could be extended to implicate other imperialistic instances of American policy, perhaps even the Vietnam War.

Fun/Party/Club/Sex

This is the category which accounts for the most noticeable shift in American pop culture. However, this shift will not become apparent through a comparison between songs within this category alone; there are only two classic pop songs that qualified for this category versus the nine from the modern era. What is most readily apparent within the lyrics of the modern pop songs is the drastic difference in language compared to any of the classic songs, regardless of category. I will briefly discuss the two classics in order to "get them out of the way."

Both songs were hits in 1969. They are "Hot Fun in the Summertime," and "Honkey Tonk Women." Among all the songs in this category, "Hot Fun" is without question the most "gentle." The song consists of several narrators offering recollections of the carefree lifestyle associated with school-aged youth on summer vacation. The only two lines that could possibly be interpreted to indicate drug use or sex are *"That's when I had most of my fun, back high high high high there;"* and *"'"Boop-boop-ba-boop-boop" when I want to;"* but that would be a bit of a stretch. The other details just celebrate the summer. In contrast, "Honkey Tonk" has a notable sexual dimension: *"I met a gin soaked, bar-room queen in Memphis; She tried to take me upstairs for a ride;"* and *"I laid a divorcee in New York city."* Also note the attention given to alcohol use, furthered by the line: *"'Cause I just cant seem to drink you off my mind."*

These details are relatively "G-rated" compared to many of the details discovered amongst the modern pop. The most notable songs are "Hot in Herre [*sic*]," "In Da Club," "Yeah!," "The Way You Move," "Candy Shop," and "Don't Cha." Coincidentally, these are all rap influenced songs. Many of them are set in a dance club, which immediately gives rise to the mention of alcohol and/or other substances, and sexuality. Each of these songs features several details, so I

will only focus on the most prurient. I will leave out "Don't Cha" because it was already used as an example in the section on demographics. I would like to caution the reader: if you are easily offended, skip the rest of this paragraph. From "Hot in Herre:" *"I was like, good gracious ass bodacious; It's gettin' hot in here, so take off all your clothes; What good is all the fame if you ain't fuckin' the models; Say she like to think about cuttin' in restrooms."* Note: "cutting" is slang for engaging in sexual intercourse. From "In Da Club:" *"Mama, I got that X, if you into takin' drugs; When you sell like Eminem, and the hoes they wanna fuck; I see Xzibit in the Cutt that nigga roll that weed up; You that faggot ass nigga trying to pull me back right?"* From "Yeah!:" *"These women all on the prowl, if you hold the head steady I'm a milk the cow; I won't stop till I get 'em in they birthday suits; So gimmie the rhythm and it'll be off with their clothes, then bend over to the front and touch your toes; if they ain't cutting then I put 'em on foot patrol."* From "The Way You Move:" *"Drip drip drop there goes an ear-gasm; Now you cumin' out the side of your face; Skinny, slim women got the camel toe within them, you can hump them, lift them, bend them, give them something to remember."* And finally, from "Candy Shop:" *"I'll let you lick the lollipop; Go 'head girl, don't you stop; You gon' back that thing up or should I push up on it; Got the magic stick, I'm the love doctor; Get on top then get to bouncing round like a low rider; I melt in your mouth girl, not in your hands; Lights on or lights off, she like it from behind."*

What is most apparent from many of these lines, beside of course the blatantly sexual nature of most of them, is the unabashed use of words that would never be used in mixed company, notably "fuck," "nigga," and "faggot." And yet, they appear in pop songs. These songs are most certainly edited if they appear on the radio or television, but the attitude behind them would not be changed by such edits. In terms of the overall point of this study, the change

in American culture is clear with these lyrics. The tolerance for offensive language in pop culture has drastically increased in the last 30 years. It obviously is not simply the use of foul words that is condoned. These songs all convey a manner of objectifying women and many endorse the use of alcohol and drugs. As mentioned in the section on demographics, these are the kinds of songs that are most dissimilar from the music of the classic era, which solidifies their use as methods of rebellion for the younger generation. Whether the audience internalizes any of these messages or not is a potential topic for another study.

Introspective

This is the final category that will undergo a comparison between eras, however it will be rather superficial since the modern era boasts just one song. The song is "Boulevard of Broken Dreams," and as the title hints at, has a doleful tone that recounts the narrator's torment: *"I walk a lonely road; The only one that I have ever known; Don't know where it goes; But it's home to me and I walk alone."* The chorus conveys similar themes to "I'm With You," discussed in the Relationships section, with lines like: *"My shadow's the only one that walks beside me; My shallow heart's the only thing that's beating; Sometimes I wish someone out there will find me; 'Til then I walk alone."* The theme of loneliness is also described in "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay:" *"Sittin' here resting my bones; And this loneliness won't leave me alone, listen."* The most notable contrast between these two songs is that the narrator in "Boulevard" prefers to remain in motion, using metaphors of walking, while the narrator of "Dock" is more sedentary and resigned. Neither indicates that he thinks his situation will improve. Also quite pessimistic is the song "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart." As mentioned earlier, this song escaped the Relationships category because the narrator does not discuss the situation or person that broke his heart. This song is similar to "Dock" in that it consists of details that dwell on the past: *"I can think of younger days when living for my life; Was everything a man could want to do; And*

misty memories of days gone by." The similarity to "Boulevard" is that both narrators look to someone else to help them emerge from their troubles. From "Boulevard," the aforementioned line "*Sometimes I wish someone out there will find me,"* and from "Mend," *"Please help me mend my broken heart and let me live again."*

The remaining songs are somewhat more optimistic. In "Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head," although the narrator admits to his difficulties, he remains assured that they are temporary: *"But there's one thing I know; The blues they send to meet me won't defeat me; It won't be long 'til happiness steps up to greet me."* Perhaps the narrators of "Boulevard," "Dock," and "Mend" could learn from the line: *"'Cause I'm never gonna stop the rain by complainin'; Because I'm free."* The song "Let it Be" also speaks of hard times, and the solution, though more abstract, is similar: *"When I find myself in times of trouble; Mother Mary comes to me; Speaking words of wisdom, let it be."* The final song is "Take me Home Country Roads," which could have been categorized as "Miscellaneous," but it has enough of introspective tone that it joined the others of this category. The song is more a celebration of the archetype of "home," and recounts the fond feelings of attachment to such a place. Some key lines are: *"Country Roads, take me home; To the place I belong; Misty taste of moonshine, teardrop in my eye; And drivin' down the road; I get a feelin' that I should have been home yesterday."* "Boulevard," and "Dock" also allude to this concept of home.

Summary: Recall that this summary is dedicated to all of the categories besides Relationships, since that mammoth of a category engendered its own summary. However, key songs from that category will not be excluded from this summary in order to help illustrate some of this study's findings.

As stated, the most visible change that emerged from this lengthy analysis of pop music is the transformation of language. Just focusing on word selection is only part of the story, but the most drastic. The rap songs in particular utilized rather frequently words that are considered obscene, but this is not confined to rap. There is an occurrence of "fuck" in "Boulevard" (*"What's fucked up and everything's alright"*), and in the chorus of "U Got it Bad" (*"I've been there, done it, fucked around"*) and recurrent use of "shit" in "Hollaback Girl" (*"Let me hear you say, this shit is bananas"*). Beyond that, there are no "bad words" in any of the other songs, and none at all in any of the classic songs.

It would also be appropriate to comment on the way that language has syntactically changed between the two eras. Since song lyrics are akin to poetry, the rules of syntax and grammar are typically more lax, granting a sort of artistic license. In other words, there is simply less demand for strict adherence to the guidelines of the English language. Many artists will take this liberty where appropriate to fit key ideas or messages to the meter, resulting in condensed or incomplete sentence structures. This has likely been a feature of lyrical music since before the rules of grammar were even outlined. However, some of the music in the modern era deviates from the rules consistently, possibly intentionally. The rap songs account for the greatest amount of deviation, employing numerous colloquialisms and syntactically erroneous lines. There are several lines that could illustrate this point, but consider this line from 50 Cent's "In Da Club:" *"Look nigga I done came up and I ain't change."* Were this line written with proper grammar, it would read: "Look, [nigga]; I have become successful, but I have not changed." The explanation for rap music's defiance to the rules of "proper English" is rooted in the fact that, since its founding in the 1980s, the language of rap music has been based on the dialect of urban dwelling, poorer class black youth. Exceptions have circumstantially arisen, but record

companies have proven imprecise language to be an effective cultural item to market. This is not implemented with white artists, likely because American society's parochial attitudes on race construct a system of expectations in which it is more inappropriate for white artists to extravagantly break language rules than it is for black artists. At the same time, since the young white audience buys rap music (and is a larger market population), as noted in the Demographics subsection, the imprecise language used therein can further rap's distinction as a style of music scorned by parents, steeping its efficacy as a tool of rebellion. Plus, the idioms and colloquial terms utilized provide young persons with an alternative system of speech symbols which parents may have difficulty decoding.

The candor of discussing sex has also inclined between eras. Again, this is most evident in rap music, but as earlier mentioned, the song "This Love" also provides vivid detail of sexual acts. There is little mention of sex at all in the classic era, and when there is, it is occurring within the context of a relationship, with the exception of "Honkey Tonk Women." Conversely, in modern pop the act of sex is more likely constructed as an isolated incident with a person of relative anonymity. The modern era also features the only two songs that are dedicated "sex songs" ("Ignition" and "Candy Shop") where the majority of the details advance the plot of a sexual encounter. "Don't Cha" could arguably be considered a sex song as well, but most of the details convey the tension being built between the narrator and object(s) rather than the actual encounter.

Whereas the songs in the Relationships category tended to portray objects with respect, this was not necessarily the case in the Fun/Party/Club/Sex category. Only one of the two classic songs in that category can be discussed here, since the subject matter of "Hot Fun" is not relevant. "Honkey Tonk" does not specifically use disrespectful language, but it is clearly

focusing on women as sexual objects. Women are objectified in most of the rap songs as well, but these songs may also employ disrespectful words, like "bitch," and "hoe." What is more notable than using such words however is the overall manner in which gender roles are constructed. Often, in songs about relationships, it is the duty of the male narrator to win and maintain the attention of the female object. He must impress her and satisfy her and appreciate her; essential he must prove his worth. In the rap songs, the role of the narrator is much more passive. Such songs often portray the women "throwing themselves" at the narrator, just on account of his hyper-masculinity and/or status. Some examples include: from "In Da Club," *"Now shawty said she feeling my style, she feeling my flow; Her girlfriend wanna get bi and they ready to go;"* from "Yeah!" *"I saw shorty she was checkin' up on me, from the game she was spittin' in my ear you would think that she knew me;"* from "The Way You Move," *"The girls all pause with glee, turning left turning right, are they looking at me? Now they got me in the middle feeling like a man whore;"* and from "Don't Cha," *"Seems like shorty wanna little menage pop off or somethin', let's go; Lookin' at me all like she really wanna do it."*

Since the nature of the engagement between the characters in these songs is much more transient than what is depicted in relationship songs, it would stand to reason that the narrator need not prove what he would contribute to an arrangement beyond the sexual encounter. If the goal of both parties is simply sex, then in a sense the women are also objectifying the men; we just do not get to hear their sides of the story, nor what descriptive terms they would use. That is an important detail as well. The so-called "double-standard" is visible in top modern pop in that there are no songs in which a female narrator is proudly describing her conquests. The closest are "Don't Cha," and "Get this Party Started." In the former, the male narrator has a much more active role than the female narrator(s). In the latter, the narrator (a female) does not describe any

sexual encounters, but does spend most of the song addressing her appeal. One can conclude that male sexuality is more accepted in modern pop music than female sexuality. To compare the two eras, since the classic era features only one applicable song, it is more accurate to argue that sexuality in general is more accepted in modern pop, as already stated. The sexuality just happens to be specifically male. This is not to say that female pop stars have not successfully used sexuality to achieve popularity. Some examples would be Britney Spears, Shakira, and Christina Aguilera. However such images are absent from the top pop in this four year span, indicating it is not as broadly accepted or tolerated as what is offered by males.

Sexuality is not the only aspect that has changed. There are more songs from the classic era that pay heed to broader social issues than from the modern era. Additionally, the issues that the modern songs treat operate more on a personal level, with the exception of "Where is the Love?" Perhaps this is not enough data to infer that modern pop culture is more egocentric, especially given the fact that there are more songs in the classic era that qualify for the Introspective category. However, to factor in the content of the songs from the Fun/Party category in the modern era may provide more evidence to support a possible incline of egocentrism. In her book on modern youth culture entitled *Generation Me*, Twenge (2006) shows that this generation has encountered the greatest emphasis on the self in history, so this incline would definitely appear likely. The theme of being helpful is also more common in the classic era, appearing in songs like "People Got to be Free," "Hey Jude," "Bridge Over Troubled Water," "I'll There," "Mrs. Robinson," and "Let it Be." The modern era is practically devoid of this theme, with the strongest—though indirect—example in "Beautiful."

Table 4-1. Categories of analysis

Relationships/Love

1968

This Guy's in love with you

Sunshine of your Love

Honey

1969

I can't get next to you

Crimson and Clover

Dizzy

Sugar, Sugar

Build me Up Buttercup

I'll Never Fall in Love Again

1970

They long to be close to you

Ain't no mountain high enough

I'll be there

Get ready

Band of Gold

1971

Just my imagination

Knock three times

Maggie May

It's too late

One bad apple

Go away little girl

2002

Dilemma

Ain't it funny

U got it bad

How you remind me

Wherever you will go

Thousand Miles

In the End

2003

When I'm gone

Bring me to Life

Crazy in love

I'm with you

2004

Burn

This Love

Hey Ya!

Someday

She will be loved

I don't wanna know

The Reason

My Immortal

2005

Let me love you

We belong together

Behind these hazel eyes

Since U been gone

Gold Digga

Global/Conscious/Commentary

1968

People got to be Free

1969

Aquarius/Let the sunshine in

Every day People

1970

American Woman

War

1971

Joy to the World

Indian Reservation

2002

Complicated

2003

Unwell

Where is the Love

Beautiful

Misc

1968

Hey Jude

Mrs. Robinson

1970

Bridge over Troubled Water

2005

Hollaback girl

Fun/Party/Club/Sex

1969

Honkey Tonk Women

Hot Fun in the Summertime

2002

Hot in here

Get the party started

2003

In Da Club

Rock your body

Ignition

2004

Yeah!

The way you move

2005

Candy shop

Don't cha

Dance

1968

Tighten Up

2005

1,2 Step

Instrumental

1968

Love is Blue

The Good, Bad, Ugly

Introspective

1968

Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay

1970

Raindrops keep falling on my head

Let it be

1971

Take me home country roads

How can you mend a broken heart

2005

Boulevard of Broken Dreams

Table 4-2. Classic era demographic breakdown

1968	
1. HEY JUDE - Beatles (Apple)	W/M
2. LOVE IS BLUE (L'AMOUR EST BLEU) - Paul Mauriat (Philips)	W/M
3. HONEY - Bobby Goldsboro (United Artists)	W/M
4. (SITTIN' ON) THE DOCK OF THE BAY - Otis Redding (Volt)	B/M
5. PEOPLE GOT TO BE FREE - Rascals (Atlantic)	W/M
6. SUNSHINE OF YOUR LOVE - Cream (Atco)	W/M
7. THIS GUY'S IN LOVE WITH YOU - Herb Alpert (A&M)	W/M
8. THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY - Hugo Montenegro (RCA Victor)	W/M
9. MRS. ROBINSON - Simon & Garfunkel (Columbia)	W/M
10. TIGHTEN UP - Archie Bell & the Drells (Atlantic)	B/M
1969	
1. SUGAR, SUGAR - Archies (Kirshner)	W/BG
2. AQUARIUS/LET THE SUNSHINE IN - Fifth Dimension (Soul City)	B/BG
3. I CANT GET NEXT TO YOU - Temptations (Gordy)	B/M
4. HONKY TONK WOMEN - Rolling Stones (London)	W/M
5. EVERYDAY PEOPLE - Sly & the Family Stone (Epic)	MC/BG
6. DIZZY - Tommy Roe (ABC)	W/M
7. HOT FUN IN THE SUMMERTIME - Sly & the Family Stone (Epic)	MC/BG
8. I'LL NEVER FALL IN LOVE AGAIN - Tom Jones (Parrot)	W/M
9. BUILD ME UP BUTTERCUP - Foundations (Uni)	MC/BG
10. CRIMSON AND CLOVER - Tommy James & the Shondells (Roulette)	W/M
1970	
1. BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER - Simon & Garfunkel (Columbia)	W/M
2. (THEY LONG TO BE) CLOSE TO YOU - Carpenters (A&M)	W/BG
3. AMERICAN WOMAN - Guess Who (RCA)	W/M
4. RAINDROPS KEEP FALLIN' ON MY HEAD - B.J. Thomas (Scepter)	W/M
5. WAR - Edwin Starr (Gordy)	B/M
6. AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH - Diana Ross (Motown)	B/F
7. I'LL BE THERE - Jackson 5 (Motown)	B/M
8. GET READY - Rare Earth (Rare Earth)	W/M
9. LET IT BE - Beatles (Apple)	W/M
10. BAND OF GOLD - Freda Payne (invictus)	B/F
1971	
1. JOY TO THE WORLD - Three Dog Night (Dunhill)	W/M
2. MAGGIE MAY - Rod Stewart (Mercury)	W/M
3. IT'S TOO LATE - Carole King (Ode)	W/F
4. ONE BAD APPLE - Osmonds (MGM)	W/M
5. HOW CAN YOU MEND A BROKEN HEART - Bee Gees (Atco)	W/M
6. INDIAN RESERVATION - Raiders (Columbia)	W/M
7. GO AWAY LITTLE GIRL - Donny Osmond (MGM)	W/M
8. TAKE ME HOME, COUNTRY ROADS - John Denver with Fat City (RCA)	W/M
9. JUST MY IMAGINATION (RUNNING AWAY WITH ME) - Temptations (Gordy)	B/M
10. KNOCK THREE TIMES – Tony Orlando and Dawn (Bell)	MC/BG

TOTAL:	
WHITE	28
BLACK	9
MULTICULTURAL	4
MULTIETHNIC	0
MALE	30
FEMALE	3
BI-GENDER	7

Table 4-3. Modern era demographic breakdown

2002

1 HOW YOU REMIND ME - Nickelback (Roadrunner/IDJMG)	W/M
2 COMPLICATED Avril Lavigne – (Arista)	W/F
3 WHEREVER YOU WILL GO - The Calling (RCA)	W/M
4 A THOUSAND MILES - Vanessa Carlton (A&M/Interscope)	W/F
5 HOT IN HERRE - Nelly (Fo' Reel/Universal/UMRG)	B/M
6 DILEMMA - Nelly Featuring Kelly Rowland (Fo' Reel/Universal/UMRG)	B/BG
7 GET THE PARTY STARTED - Pink (Arista)	W/F
8 AIN'T IT FUNNY - Jennifer Lopez Featuring Ja Rule (Epic)	MC/MG
9 U GOT IT BAD - Usher (Arista)	B/M
10 IN THE END -Linkin Park (Warner Bros.)	MC/M

TOTAL:

WHITE	19
BLACK	15
MULTICULTURAL	4
MULTIETHNIC	2
MALE	22
FEMALE	10
BI-GENDER	8

2003

1 UNWELL - matchbox twenty (Atlantic)	W/M
2 I'M WITH YOU - Avril Lavigne (Arista)	W/F
3 IN DA CLUB - 50 Cent (Shady/Aftermath/Interscope)	B/M
4 BEAUTIFUL - Christina Aguilera (RCA/RMG)	ME/F
5 BRING ME TO LIFE - Evanescence Featuring Paul McCoy (Wind-up)	W/BG
6 WHEN I'M GONE - 3 Doors Down (Republic/Universal/UMRG)	W/M
7 WHERE IS THE LOVE? - Black Eyed Peas (A&M/Interscope)	MC/BG
8 IGNITION - R. Kelly (Jive)	B/M
9 CRAZY IN LOVE - Beyonce Featuring Jay-Z (Columbia)	B/BG
10 ROCK YOUR BODY - Justin Timberlake (Jive)	W/M

2004

1 YEAH! - Usher Featuring Lil Jon & Ludacris (LaFace/Zomba)	B/M
2 THIS LOVE - Maroon5 (Octone/J/RMG)	W/M
3 THE REASON - Hoobastank (Island/IDJMG)	W/M
4 HEY YA! - OutKast (LaFace/Zomba)	B/M
5 BURN - Usher (LaFace/Zomba)	B/M
6 SOMEDAY - Nickelback (Roadrunner/IDJMG)	W/M
7 THE WAY YOU MOVE - OutKast Featuring Sleepy Brown (LaFace/Zomba)	B/M
8 MY IMMORTAL - Evanescence (Wind-up)	W/BG
9 SHE WILL BE LOVED - Maroon5 (Octone/J/RMG)	W/M
10 I DON'T WANNA KNOW - Mario Winans Featuring Enya & P. Diddy (Bad Boy/UMRG)	B/M

2005

1 WE BELONG TOGETHER - Mariah Carey (Island/IDJMG)	ME/F
2 HOLLABACK GIRL - Gwen Stefani (Interscope)	W/F
3 LET ME LOVE YOU - Mario (3rd Street /J/RMG)	B/M
4 SINCE U BEEN GONE - Kelly Clarkson (RCA/RMG)	W/F
5 1, 2 STEP - Ciara Featuring Missy Elliott (Sho'nuff/MusicLine/LaFace/Zomba)	B/F
6 GOLD DIGGER - Kanye West Featuring Jamie Foxx (Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam/IDJMG)	B/M
7 BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS - Green Day (Reprise)	W/M
8 CANDY SHOP - 50 Cent Featuring Olivia (Shady /Aftermath/Interscope)	B/BG
9 DON'T CHA - The Pussycat Dolls Featuring Busta Rhymes (A&M/Interscope)	MC/BG
10 BEHIND THESE HAZEL EYES - Kelly Clarkson (RCA/RMG)	W/F

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

To return to the adage expressed at the very beginning of this paper, the concept of age is probably what is most important to keep in mind when analyzing pop music. It is easy for someone who has matured past adolescence and young adulthood to discard the current pop music as uninspired, plastic, or vulgar noise with no culturally redeeming qualities, meanwhile believing that it is rotting the brains of the young. What is not as simple is for such people to bracket their own history of experiences and understand why the music defining the era of *their* youth also produced similar reactions among the older generations. New pop music is not *supposed to be* enjoyable for the majority of adults. If it were, then the youth culture would not have such an identifiable means to distinguish itself and reject the aspects of adult life they find worthy of criticism. In the late 1960's, the youth were critical of the stodgy businessman mentality of society and puritanical repression of sexuality characteristic of the 1950s, and they were critical of the war and draft. The pop music was fun, lighthearted, and upbeat, or challenging to social norms and political policy. What criticisms is modern pop indicating that today's youth have? It would appear that they are debating the necessity of rules, particularly rules about language and rules about monogamy. Is defiance to adult rules and regulations unique to modern pop? Certainly not. To reiterate, age-specific concerns are key in the production of pop music, regardless of era. It is also easy for the mature observer to pass judgments on youth culture and predict a worst-case-scenario for the future those young persons will help create. And again, what is not easy for said observers is to realize that they helped enable or create the cultural climate, social norms, and regulations that the new batch of young people is responding to.

There have indeed been some distinct changes in pop music that could be considered alarming to older persons. Subject matter, language used, and aggressive delivery of modern pop in particular are in sharp contrast to the more peaceful themes in the music of the classic era. At the same time, there have been changes in culture as a whole that unsettle younger persons, even if they have not been alive long enough to see them as changes. Youths are still expected to excel and achieve in American society when they become adults. But today, the manifestation of that success may appear to youth, through the example of their parents, as a ceaseless dedication to work at the expense of their amplified sense of self that Twenge (2006) asserts modern culture cultivated. They are essentially trapped between contradictory ideals: "Should I follow my dreams as I've been told I'm entitled to, or do I sacrifice my individuality in order to work and be successful within this system?" Through it all, the music industry has been insightful enough to market acts that young persons can identify with, and thus will purchase. If they do not feel it, they do not buy it. The industry knows this and will cater to those desires, having no qualms about the repercussions, if there truly will be any. As we know, the young will mature and begin to dislike the newest material being released, and perhaps even grow out of much of the material they did enjoy.

So what else can we learn about modern culture from the manifestation of young desires through pop music? What are their values? For one, it would appear that the implications of war and the demand for peace are not as great a concern as they were for young people in past generations. Again, this may stem from misinformation or the lack of a military draft. If the war does not directly affect them, why should they care? Instead, personal difficulties and troubles with relationships seem to be the focus, which follows from the heightened emphasis on the self. The temporary relief of those difficulties is found in the distraction of partying and dancing at

clubs. It is at these clubs and parties that the undertones of sexuality flourish, in part because of the content of the music. Is modern culture more fixated on sex than prior generations? That is hard to say for certain, but it would certainly appear so by the way it is so openly discussed in these songs. These details seem to exemplify that our culture has yet to decide upon the "best" way to prepare youth for the potentially harsh realities of sex and love. Young people can almost expect to have their hearts broken, given the themes of some of these songs. Nevertheless, the pursuit of relationships is still an ideal of youth. That itself has not changed since the classic era, even if the idealized characteristics of relationships have shifted to self-fulfillment versus concern and/or admiration for the partner. How have parents who grew up in the wake of the sixties described dating to their children? Did they? What has the increasing prevalence of divorce told those children about long-term commitment? Given some of the other themes of modern pop music, the way to safeguard oneself against the hazards of commitment is to seek only cursory outlets to satisfy urges. What is ironic is that this occurred in the sixties as well, with the popularized concept of "free love." However, since the cultural climate of young persons was more based on peace and acceptance, the way that sex was conceptualized then is likely much different from the way it is now. Many modern pop songs also emphasize status symbols. Money, cars, and recognition are discussed with far greater frequency than they are in classic pop. Could this be alluding to an incline in and celebration of conspicuous consumption? If one were to examine the difference in popular clothing styles between these two eras, would the modern era exhibit a greater value placed on expensive, name brand attire and accessories? A potential future study could examine the intersection of pop music themes and consumer patterns among youth.

The point that emerges through all of this discussion is that, like an individual human, our culture and society is growing and learning, and every cross-sectional analysis of a particular era will reveal that change in style is just a means for society to avoid stagnation. We may experiment with new wardrobes, but the body we wrap in those clothes is much less subject to alterations. Will pop music still be predominantly about relationships 50 years from now? Probably. But as long as there are music and clothing industries for profit, pop culture will continue to be-bop, hip-hop, rock, roll, and get funky. Can you dig it?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in Massachusetts, Chad moved to Florida before forming coherent sentences and has been slowly cooking since. By virtue of his own humanity, he became interested in people and their intricacies by middle school, but did not realize the science thereof until halfway through his undergraduate studies. Originally an engineering student, he heard advisors and professors sing of the “slippery slope” of engineering, where the intensity of the program would send students tumbling into the Liberal Arts. Chad inevitably supported their statistics, but not for meager grades; the field’s cold rigidity turned him away. Sociology melded his intrinsic people studies with a structured learning environment. But throughout it all, his true passion has been music.

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