

WHEN LOVE CRIES: POPULAR 1980s LOVE SONGS EXAMINED THROUGH INTIMATE  
PARTNER VIOLENCE

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WHEN LOVE CRIES: POPULAR 1980s LOVE SONGS EXAMINED THROUGH INTIMATE  
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## ABSTRACT

Romantic love and intimate partner relationships are themes that dominate popular music. As cultivation theory suggests, music cultivates attitudes and beliefs regarding romantic love and relationships modeled by the narratives evident in music. Women are particularly drawn to popular music and, thus, romantic love narratives. However, what happens when a real-life romantic love narrative is afflicted by abuse? What do such narratives cultivate in regards to the acceptance of intimate partner violence (IPV)? Research on battering and battered women raised awareness about battering. Lenore Walker's *The Battered Woman* published in 1979, perhaps the most comprehensive research to date regarding IPV, revealed the common dynamics of an abusive relationship and introduced the Cycle of Violence (COV), a repetitive cycle consisting of three phases. As such, a narrative analysis of top 1980's love songs was conducted to first, identify common narratives of romantic love between intimate partners present in the lyrics and then examine these narratives through narratives of abuse, including the COV. It was determined the song narratives depicted particular phases of love: courtship, honeymoon, love's decline and love's end; featured mythical ideals: Cupid's Arrow, love saves; love is forever; and one and only love and the themes self-control, conflict/blame, hanging on and moving on. These narratives examined through a narrative of abuse, which were guided by a cultivation theoretical perspective, symbolically annihilated the notion of sexual abuse,

affirmed myths regarding IPV, as well as learned helplessness, isolation, and other battering behaviors within the COV, normalized stalking and blaming, legitimized dark romance and fairytale narratives commonly referenced by women and encouraged male dominance in the relationships. Overall, the narratives of love emboldened battering behaviors and batterers' manipulations of love.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Music is a medium that gives rhythm, melody and harmony to the human experience. Music played in the car on a first date or during a candlelit dinner enhances the mood. A movie saturated with melodramatic love songs confirms the notion that falling in love is beautiful. The break up song that reminds broken hearts of love lost and brings people to tears: music permeates our daily lives in a way other media does not. Accordingly, the theme that dominates the air waves is romantic love (Carey, 1969; Dukes, Borega, Lobato, & Owens, 2003; Horton, 1957; Wilkinson, 1976). As such, music provides “a medium or reference point for the constitution of individual experiences of love” (Denora, 2003, p. 265). However, the research shows this reference point is marred by myth (Galician, 2004) and an ideal that a woman’s main goal in life and only means of upward mobility is to find a husband (Frith, 1981). Subsequently, music can cultivate unrealistic expectations about romantic or intimate relationships (Galician, 2004).

One expectation that presumably all people have entering a relationship is it will not become abusive. The reality is, however, male violence against women, typically referred to as domestic or intimate partner violence (IPV), is a common phenomenon and one in four women can expect to be abused by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). From a perspective of IPV, it is no surprise that males prefer

music rife with sexist and violent undertones (Baxter, De Riemer, Landini, Leslie, & Singletary, 1985; Greeson & Williams, 1986; Hansen & Hansen, 1990; Strouse, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Others, 1995), while females indulge in the polar opposite: music flowered with romantic prose and narratives detailing romantic conquests (Christensen & Peterson, 1988).

Thus, popular music conveys narratives of romantic love and relationships which has influenced listeners, more specifically female listeners, since the 1950s when popular music began saturating radio air play. Times have certainly changed since then. American culture, including popular music, has evolved in response to social movements, while popular music has blatantly or indirectly given voice to these very movements. The Feminist Movement was one of those movements that thrust the notion of gender equality and women's rights into the public discourse. It also spawned related movements, such as the Battered Women's Shelter Movement in the 1970's. Lenore Walker's *The Battered Woman* published in 1979 capped off the 1970's and is perhaps the keystone research and literature of the movement. Based on several interviews of women who were abused by their husbands or boyfriends, Walker distinguished common myths about IPV and detailed the Cycle of Violence (COV) and its three phases.

Yet, the proverbial question, "Why does *she* stay?" so embedded in our perceptions about IPV, still blames the victim. Some scholars point to myths regarding IPV which contribute to victim blaming and ignorance (Meyers, 1997; Walker, 1979). While IPV arguably is misconceived by myth, what can lay the foundation for IPV to occur are our misconceptions and unrealistic expectations about romantic relationships often cultivated by media. Some research has examined how narratives of love in media



shape our expectations about romantic relationships (Galician, 2004; Segrin & Nabi; 2002; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991; Signorielli, 1997; Wood, 2001). However, the research has yet to examine how narratives of love found in popular music influence perceptions of IPV or narratives of abuse. The intention of this study was to examine what narratives of love in popular music, which is a medium intertwined in the dating process (Frith, 1981; Lull, 1985) of healthy, as well as abusive relationships, provide with regard to the acceptance of IPV and abuse. Since the 1980's was the first full decade to experience a world where battered women's shelters existed and domestic violence was a term present in the public discourse, this study examined popular love songs of the 1980's. Because popular music ultimately conveys narratives about romantic love and intimate partner relationships which cultivate our expectations and perceptions of relationships, cultivation theory will guide this study. A narrative analysis will be used to determine the sample of top love songs from each year and then to identify what narratives of love are evident in the lyrics. Lastly, the prominent features of an abusive relationship and COV, i.e., narratives of abuse, will be compared to narratives of love found in top 1980's love songs to determine what these narratives of love represent with respect to narratives of abuse.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Music

“There is probably no other human cultural activity which is so all-pervasive and which reaches into, shapes and controls so much of human behavior,” (Merriam, 1964, p. 218), Merriam asserted about music. Congruently, music has the ability to represent and induce emotion and is thus, considered a “musical contagion” (Scherer & Zentner, 2001, p. 369). Music, “awakes us, arouses us and engenders specific emotions in us” (Popescu, 2011, p. 273). Music combined with messages of love can stimulate euphoric feelings, “the chills” (Panksepp, 1995) and cultivate attitudes and behaviors about romantic love and relationships.

Several studies have demonstrated how musical melody, harmony and rhythm can elicit emotional (Budd, 1985; Krumhansl, 1997; Lundqvist, Carlsson, Himersson, & Juslin, 2009; Scherer & Zentner, 2001; Sloboda, 1992), as well as physiological responses (Kellaris & Kent, 1993; Nyklicek, Thayer, & van Doornen, 1997; Vaitl, Vehrs, & Sternagel, 1993; Witvliet & Vrana, 1996) in listeners. In particular, Hevner (1936) found that listeners associated differing emotions such as happy, sad or serene with certain variations in major-minor scales, harmony, melody and rhythm of classical music. However, many studies examining harmony, melody and rhythm’s effect on listeners has primarily examined classical music. Tagg (1982) acknowledged that the study of popular

music is often not taken seriously in academic circles. According to Shuker (1994), a source of contention in academe is that defining popular music is as difficult as defining popular culture, phenomena that are constantly evolving and redefining themselves. Still, Shuker (1994) delineated that popular music “consists of a hybrid of musical traditions, styles and influences, with the only common element being that it is characterized by a strong rhythmical component, and generally, but not exclusively, relies on electronic amplification,” and its “dominant characteristic is a socio-economic one: its mass production for a mass, predominantly youth, market. It’s an economic product which is invested with ideological significance by many of its consumers” (p. 7). Still, this definition confines popular music, which is influenced by a broad range of genres, styles and production techniques. Shuker (1994) argued what is popular to some may be unpopular with others and what is unpopular to others may be popular to some. Connell and Gibson (2003) declared there is no standard definition of popular music. If defining popular music is a challenge, then considering musical structure, performance, listener and context or “listening situation” (Scherer & Zentner, 2001, p. 365), as well as text or lyrical content and its effect on listeners is even more challenging.

What many scholars agree on is that music communicates symbolic messages regarding cultural values and information about a culture’s institutions (Wallis & Malm, 1984). Subsequently, Merriam (1964) identified 10 cognitive, emotional and social functions of music in his assessment of music anthropology, including emotional expression, physical response and enforcing conformity to social norms. Hargreaves and North (1999) concluded that social functions of music manifest in three primary ways for an individual: self-identity, interpersonal relationships and mood management. Lull

(1985) demonstrated the social utility and communicative power of music particularly during adolescence and accompanies private relationships (Hamm, 1983). Unlike television, film or novels, music is directly integrated into the courtship and dating process, as well as dancing, (Frith, 1981; Lull, 1985) and enhances social gatherings, love-making and encourages movement such as dancing, singing or mouthing lyrics that subsequently “amplify message content” (Lull, 1985, p. 368). As such, music plays a role in cultivating social realities of people.

However, it is necessary to study popular music since we spend a quarter of our lifetime “registering, monitoring and decoding” (Tagg, 1982, p. 37) messages found in popular music. Technological advancements throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century have contributed to popular music’s omnipresence (Frith, 1996) and the bulk of scholarship devoted to popular music has given much attention to music videos and rap and heavy metal music’s relationship to attitudes about sex, gender roles and violence (Baxter, De Riemer, Landini, Leslie, & Singletary, 1985; Greeson & Williams, 1986; Hansen & Hansen, 1990; Strouse, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Others, 1995). While these studies suggest music that degrades women through violent, sexist and sexual innuendo contributes to male violence against women, the majority of popular music features themes about romantic love and intimate partner relationships.

Horton’s (1957) study on early popular music supports the notion of love’s plot or narrative distinguishing 83.4% of 196 songs sampled represented romantic love and intimate partner relationships in one of five phases of a relationship: the prologue, courtship, honeymoon, downward course of love and all alone. Another 3.8% of songs sampled conveyed a narrative or description of love. While Carey (1969) discovered

64.7% of popular songs sampled were love-themed songs, the narratives conveyed about romantic love and relationships had evolved to champion promiscuity, less permanent relationships, personal autonomy and mutual partnerships actively pursued by both (Carey, 1969). Wilkinson (1976) distinguished descriptive verbs and adverbs to describe men and women in popular songs from 1954-1968 that ascribed gender roles. The most frequent phrases that described men were “cries,” “needs,” “submissive,” “faithful” and “lonely.” “Cries,” “pretty,” “heavenly,” “unfaithful” and “sweet” were most often used to describe women. Dukes et al. (2003) analyzed 100 of the most popular songs between 1958-1998 and gleaned that more sexual references were used to describe love by women during 1976-1984, while male use of sexual references was most prevalent from 1991-1998. Women also were more selfish in their description of love in later years but the quality of love expressed across the sample remained constant.

However, Galician (2004) ascertained that the quality of love portrayed in popular music and other media is rooted in myth and identified seven distinctive myths describing romantic love found in media: (1) everyone has one and only one perfect partner; (2) love comes as a result of being struck by Cupid’s Arrow and thus falling in love is out of an individual’s control; (3) if a partner is meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful; (4) to attract or keep a man, women should be beautiful; (5) women need to be rescued by a man or that the love of a woman can transform a beast into a prince; (6) that all relationships have barriers and battles to overcome and if men and women fight a lot, they actually passionately love each other; and (7) women should be captured by a hyper masculine hero. Galician concluded that “higher usage of certain mass media is related

to unrealistic expectations about coupleship, and these unrealistic expectations are related to dissatisfaction in real-life romantic relationships” (p. 5).

Overall, popular music has been found to be preferred by females (Fox & Wince, 1975; Roe, 1984; Warner, 1984). Frith’s (1981) examination of youth culture revealed gender differences in male and female’s musical orientations and contended that the cultural norm is women need to be concerned about attracting a husband and marrying, which is the main avenue for upward mobility. Thus, women prefer more romantic, softer music. Men, on the other hand, have more freedom, are the experts on music and, thus, prefer what Frith calls “cock rock.” Congruently, other research has delineated that popular culture as a whole is sexist and preserves traditional female and male roles by encouraging female dependency on men (Brake, 1980) and informing females that their goal above their career is attracting a husband and raising a family (Lott, 1987). “For boys, music provides an avenue (however misguided) for the exploration of personal identity; for girls, music is a means to social and romantic ends” (Brake, 1980; Christensen & Peterson, 1988). Ultimately, Christensen and Peterson (1988) concluded that gender differences in music preferences are evident by late grade school. Preferences of males are “central and personal” and “macho aggressive” (p. 299) and they avoid mainstream, romantic music. In contrast, females’ musical orientation is “instrumental and social” (p. 299), meaning the music typically plays a role in mood management or in their connection with people, specifically, the courtship process.

#### Love & intimate partner relationships

Studies regarding love and romantic relationships show that in the early stages of infatuation, people experience a physiological response that evokes euphoric feelings

(Liebowitz, 1983). Accordingly, other studies support the notion that eros, physiological arousal or passionate love, is essential to developing romantic relationships (Berschied & Walster, 1974; Lee, 1973; Sternberg, 1986). Passion is often thought to be most intense during the early phases of relationships and is a function of intimacy (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999).

In order for this euphoria and passion to develop into love, Sternberg (1986) surmised that three components must exist: passion, intimacy and decision/commitment and he devised the triangular theory of love. This theory suggests there is more due process to love than just idealization. Building off of this concept, Csikzentmihalyi (1980) concluded love requires investment and “attention in another person with the intention of realizing that person’s goals” (p. 313). Other research has demonstrated that mutuality, interpersonal discovery, increased disclosures, investment and shared experience are required in order to have intimacy, which is gained gradually in the process (Berg & McQuinn, 1986; Levinger & Snoek, 1972). Once there is investment in a relationship, research recommends that couples practice positivity, being open with each other, giving each other assurances and supporting one another, being empathetic, sharing in responsibilities, having a social network for outside support, engaging in joint activities, openly communicating by sending cards/letters or calling their partner, negotiating autonomy and having the ability to make each other laugh (Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993).

Knee (1998) found that those who were idealistic about love demonstrated longer-term relationship survival. However, those holding this belief were more likely to respond to inter-relationship conflict poorly. Similarly, researchers, counselors,

psychologists and the like have identified that unrealistic expectations about love and intimate partner relationships, as well as sex, foster dissatisfaction in coupleship (Crosby, 1991; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Epstein & Eidelson, 1981; Frohmm, 1956; Lazarus, 1985)

Furthermore, Peck (1978) determined that love is not about succumbing to falling in love and losing one's self but rather is about choosing to nurture one's self, expanding beyond your own egotistical boundaries and being able to nurture another. More simply, Peck asserted that to love another, you must love yourself and love is a choice, not some condition that consumes a relationship. These realistic expectations and relationship maintenance strategies support what Levinger (1977) defined as walking a fine line between "counter dependency and over dependency.....between interpersonal enmeshment and personal isolation" (p. 155).

### Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV), or domestic violence, is defined as "a pattern of abusive behaviors including a wide range of physical, sexual, and psychological maltreatment used by one person in an intimate partner relationship against another to gain power unfairly or maintain that person's misuse of power, control, and authority" (A.P.A. Presidential Taskforce on Violence and the Family, 1996). In order to maintain this power and control, those who batter, i.e. batterers, will often resort to stalking, harassment, sexual assault and physical, emotional and financial abuse; essentially any means to intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate and cause their victim harm (Domestic Violence Facts, 2007). Although IPV can be perpetrated by men and women who seek power and control over their romantic partners, women account for 85 percent of victims



of IPV (Domestic Violence Facts, 2007; Intimate partner violence, 1993-2001, 2003). Research suggests that four of five victims of IPV are women (Catalano, 2012) and one in four women will experience abuse in their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Thus, IPV, specifically male violence against females, is rooted in our socio-cultural values (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980) and realities in which love and intimate partner relationships are concerned.

Through in-depth interviews of women who experienced battering, Walker (1979) identified the dynamics of an abusive relationship and placed those dynamics within the context of the Cycle of Violence (COV), a repetitive cycle consisting of three phases. In the tension-building phase, which typically lasts the longest, there are minor incidents of battering and battered women try to appease their batterers. “If she does her job well, then the incident will be over; if he explodes, then she assumes the guilt” (p. 56). Battered women are constantly distressed, confused, psychologically tortured and fear an explosion through the duration of this phase. The tension-building phase escalates to a point where the tension must be released by batterers, which transitions into the acute-battering incident referred to generally as the explosion phase. This short, yet intense phase is where batterers accept they have lost control and intend to teach their battered partners a lesson. It can result in physical or sexual violence or can be an extreme emotional and verbal assault leaving battered women feeling torn down. Batterers often justify their battering by recounting things their battered partners did during the first phase of the cycle.

Immediately following this phase is what is often referred to as the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1984), characterized by “loving, kind, and contrite behavior by the

batterer” (Walker, 1979, p.65). The victimization is complete; batterers promise to not batter again and reward their battered partners with loving behavior, possibly even shower them with gifts. Battered women often believe the men treating them kindly in the honeymoon phase is more representative of the person they love than the batterers who abused them in the first and second phases. Even though batterers choose to abuse, battered women are to blame. “Since most battered women adhere to traditional values about the permanency of love and marriage, they are easy prey for the guilt attendant on breaking up a home, even if it is not a very happy one. “They have been taught that marriage is forever, and they believe it” (pp. 66, 67). As a result, battered women feel a great deal of burden to maintain the relationship forever, despite the victimization they suffer. They believe that if they stand by their men, this will demonstrate their everlasting love and the abuse will improve over time. What also characterizes the honeymoon phase is battered women have the belief that the bond and love they share with their batterers can conquer the world and battered women “see themselves as the bridge to their men’s emotional well-being” (p. 68).

As for batterers, they are possessive, jealous of their partner’s family and friends, seek to isolate their battered partners and force battered women to become emotionally and financially dependent on batterers (Martin, 1976; Walker, 1979). Essentially, batterers do not want their girlfriends or wives to have mutuality, exercise autonomy outside of the relationship and develop or maintain plutonic relationships, dynamics that are present in healthy relationships (Berg & McQuinn, 1986; Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Levinger & Snoek, 1972). Batterers begin isolating their partners from family and friends early on in the relationship (Neilson, Endo, & Ellington, 1992)

because their goal is to render their battered partners helpless and gain their compliance and dependency to prevent them from trying to change their circumstances or leave (Walker, 1979). Subsequently, a batterer's repeated abuse induces battered women to experience learned helplessness, a perception that individuals have no control over affecting an outcome (Seligman, 1972).

Paralyzed by learned helplessness, it can be difficult for battered women to break the cycle and leave the relationship. Combined with possible economic hardships and with nowhere else to go, as well as feeling love and having the belief batterers will change, women remain in their abusive relationships (Strube & Barbour, 1984). The reality of the failed relationship and their unattained ideals often sinks them into a major depression (Walker, 1984). Additionally, batterers typically behave as if they are addicted to their battered partners (Peele & with Brodsky, 1985; Tennov, 1979) and do not relinquish their control easily if battered women try to end the relationship. Spawned by an addiction to their battered partners and fear of losing their control, batterers become consumed with knowing and monitoring the activities of battered women (Walker, 1979). Consequently, battered women who suffer more verbal and physical abuse are more likely to be stalked by their batterers once they leave the relationship (Coleman, 1997). Studies have demonstrated that support from family and friends, as well as access to various resources, is crucial for battered women to leave an abusive relationship (Gelles, 1974; Rhodes & McKenzie, 1998). However, because battered women are isolated from their family, friends and resources that enable them to leave abusive relationships, they often remain in the relationships. Research focusing on battered women leaving an abusive relationship found that 60% of women who entered battered women's shelters

returned to their batterers (Snyder & Fruchtman, 1981). In another study, 78% of battered women were still living with their batterers at follow-up (Gelles, 1974).

Even though there is a great deal of research revealing the true realities and dynamics of IPV, the discourse of IPV is often dominated by victim blaming and the overarching question: “Why does she stay?” As such, the onus of responsibility to stop or deter the abuse is on the victim. “Imbedded in this question is the assumption that there is something about battered women that makes them want to be abused” (Rhodes & McKenzie, 1998, p. 391). Instead of asking why the batterer chooses to batter, society blames the victim and, thus, IPV is sanctioned by society (Dobash & Dobash, 1978).

Myths reify ill-conceived ideas that contradict actual battering dynamics by cultivating perceptions about abusive relationships such as they can improve over time; battering will stop once a couple marries and IPV affects only a small portion of the population, specifically poor, uneducated and unskilled women. Unfortunately, abusive partners do not discriminate; IPV does affect a significant amount of the population; abusive relationships typically get worse over time even if a couple does marry and the COV repeats itself over and over again (Walker, 1979).

Victim blaming and other myths are reinforced in mass media. In news coverage of women who are murdered by an intimate partner, scholars have found battering myths that perpetuate victim blaming, portray batterers as sick and battered women as the provocateur and reduce battering to an isolated incident rather than a pattern of behavior (Bullock, 2007; Meyers, 1997). The coverage does not treat IPV murders as a result of an abusers escalating behavior or as a broader social issue. In effect, these myths exonerate the abuser of blame (Meyers, 1997). Additionally, media’s representation of women

often preserves masculine hegemony, traditional female roles and the typical narrative views women through the context of their relationships with men (Brake, 1980; Lott, 1987; Meyers, 1999; Signorielli, 1997). Within their relationships to men, women are the “social-emotional specialists” (Morrow, Clark, & Brock, 1995, p. 378) who bear the responsibility of maintaining those relationships with men.

### Cultivation theory

Cultivation theory posits that long-term media use can influence our perceptions about social reality. Demonstrating the media’s power of socialization, Gerbner and Gross (1976) found that heavy television viewers were much more likely to possess perceptions about reality that are similar to the realities portrayed on television, regardless of what type of genre. While cultivation research has focused on the cultivation of views about violence related to television consumption, some studies have linked television consumption to attitudes and beliefs about love and relationships. Television has historically featured programming using narratives about romantic relationships and marriage (Greenberg, 1982; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980; Signorielli, 1985). Narratives, or stories told about the human experience, help us make sense of ourselves, which inform our values, including those values we attach to romantic love and intimate partner relationships. Narratives allow us to construct our own fragmented narratives into structured, sequential and cohesive stories. This enables the creation and recreation of individual identity and lives (Fisher, 1987; Gergen, 1997; Shotter, 1993). Popular music is dominated by narratives depicting romantic love and relationships. Presumably, popular love songs possess the power to help us construct

perceptions about romantic love and intimate partner relationships and the roles men and women assume within relationships through the narratives songs convey.

Jones & Nelson's (1997) study demonstrated that those who lack a salient relationship role model are more likely to accept ideals of love portrayed in media and more inclined to mimic relationships seen on television. Similarly, Shapiro & Kroeger (1991) determined that adults who were exposed to more popular media possessed unrealistic beliefs about romantic love and were less satisfied in their relationships, while adults who viewed more news and documentaries tended to have more realistic expectations about love. Segrin & Nabi (2002) found a positive association between media consumption and romanticized, unrealistic expectations about romantic relationships and marriage and that media began influencing children's perceptions about romantic relationships and marriage before they were old enough to act on the assumptions. These assumptions, based on luxury and leisure, eventually are contradicted by the realities of love (Bachen & Illouz, 1996).

In regards to music, cultivation theory has been employed to examine how music videos cultivate attitudes about sex. One key finding is that exposure to MTV was linked to teen premarital sexual permissiveness (Brown & Newcomer, 1991; Peterson & Khan, 1984; Strouse, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Others, 1995). Additionally, Greeson & Williams (1986) demonstrated in an experiment that teens exposed to just one hour of music videos were more likely to endorse premarital sex than those not exposed and was supported in later research (Calvin, Carrol, & Schmidt, 1991).

While research on music has not typically been examined through a cultivation theoretical framework, studies do suggest that music preference is associated with

attitudes and behaviors regarding romantic love. Gibson, Aust & Zillmann's (2000) study of male and female high school students' musical preferences discerned that highly lonely females enjoyed love-celebrating songs more than less lonely females, suggesting lonely females have a hope to fall in love. Additionally, the majority of students reported they would choose music that was congruent with the mood they were in. Other studies have suggested romantically satisfied men and women enjoy love-celebrating music while romantically dissatisfied men and women prefer love-lamenting music performed by artists of the same sex (Knobloch & Zillmann, 2003, p. 2). Yet, another study found that women, in what they considered happy relationships, favored music denouncing love (Knobloch, Weisbach, & Zillmann, 2004). This suggests that the women in the study either weren't truly happy or had a distorted perception of romantic love. In another study, it was observed that when 18 to 20-year-old single female participants were exposed to love songs, they were more likely to give a male confederate their phone number than women who heard music that was neutral (Gueguen, Jacob, & Lamy, 2010). Another experiment revealed that male customers exposed to love songs were more likely than men not exposed to romantic music to spend more money on flowers (Jacob, Gueguen, Boulbry, & Sami, 2009).

Based on these studies, it can be ascertained that a link exists between actual attitudes and beliefs regarding romantic love and exposure to narratives of love common in popular music. Within the context of IPV, narratives of love enable battered women to reconstruct their relationship's identity, a sense of themselves and their self-worth as a strategy to change or cope with violence (Lempert, 1996). Congruently, Wood (2001) examined how traditional gender narratives that normalize women's dependence on

superior, dominant men provide a distorted narrative enabling battered women to make sense of the IPV they suffer. Based on the interviews of 20 battered women, it was found that all the women weaved such narratives into their own perception of the abuse, as well as fairytale and dark romance narratives that draw on many of the same myths identified by Galician (2004). This finding is also consistent with previous research reflecting women's preference for romantic love songs (Brake, 1980; Christensen & Peterson, 1988; Frith, 1981). These particular narratives were often referenced by women to make sense of the abuse and, consequently, legitimize it. Wood asserted these narratives "constrain the options open to individuals for making sense of threats and acts of violence, as well as to the relationships in which they occur" (p. 241).

Therefore, it is plausible that romantic love and intimate partner relationship narratives prescribed in popular 1980's love song narratives could be incorporated into narratives of abuse and normalize IPV within heterosexual romantic relationships. As such, it is important to examine the relationship between narratives of love and narratives of abuse to glean insight into the acceptance of IPV. Thus, the research questions are as follows:

Research Question #1: What narratives are represented in popular love songs of the 1980's regarding romantic love and intimate partner relationships?

Research Question #2: What do the narratives about romantic love and intimate partner relationships represented in popular 1980's love songs provide with regard to the acceptance of intimate partner violence?



## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The sample of 1980's love songs was derived from the *Billboard Magazine's Hot 100 Chart*, which compiles weekly chart rankings based on sales and radio play. Songs ranking on the *Billboard* charts were mainstream hits, reached a broad audience and the narratives of the songs were heard repeatedly. Each year, the *Billboard* chart also compiles a year-end chart that ranks songs based on the overall weekly rankings for the entire year, which represents the songs that reached a broad audience. It was decided that the top-ranking songs featuring narratives of love would comprise the sample. More specifically, it was decided that in order to provide a balanced sample, the top-ranking love songs performed by a male vocalist and a female vocalist for each year from 1980-1989 would be included in the sample. Thus, the song lyrics of the highest-ranking love song performed by a male vocalist and the highest-ranking love song performed by a female vocalist from each year-end *Billboard* chart from 1980-1989 would be analyzed.

Once the sample of songs was compiled, another narrative analysis of the sample was performed to glean more specifically what the narratives revealed about romantic love and intimate partner relationships. To answer RQ1, the song lyrics were examined through the perspective that the vocalist singing the song represented the protagonist of each song's narrative and the song's protagonist sang about his or her object of affection.

For this stage of the analysis, the singer or protagonist was referred to as the “lover,” while the lover’s object of affection was referred to as “partner.”

To answer RQ2, it was necessary to view the love song narratives through the perspective of IPV or narratives of abuse. Because IPV has traditionally been viewed as male violence against women, gender becomes a factor. Therefore, instead of using the gender neutral terms “lover” and “partner” to describe the roles in the narratives, males were denoted as “batterers” and “battered women” was used to reference the women who are victims of these batterers.

### Sampling

To distinguish the top-ranking love songs performed by male and female vocalists from each year-end *Billboard* chart from 1980-1989, a narrative analysis was used to initially establish whether or not the song narratives featured a narrative of love. This approach was applied to the *Billboard* year-end rankings from 1980-1989 starting with the #1 song, then #2 from each year. If the #1 and #2 songs were not performed by one male vocalist and one female vocalist or did not exhibit a narrative of love, a narrative analysis was applied to subsequent songs ranking on the year-end *Billboard* charts until there was a top-ranking song performed by a male vocalist and a female vocalist distinguished.

What also became clear upon the initial narrative analysis was male/female duets ranked near the top of the charts. Male/female duets exhibiting a narrative of love provided a narrative that is shared by males and females and represented a balanced male and female perspective. Therefore, it was also decided to include in the sample any

male/female duets that featured a narrative of love and ranked within the top 10 of each year-end *Billboard* chart from 1980-1989. See Table 1 for Top love songs of the 1980s.

In total, 24 songs, including 10 songs performed by male vocalists, 10 songs performed by female vocalists and 4 male/female duets, featured narratives of love and comprised the sample.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS NARRATIVES OF LOVE

In order to answer RQ1, what narratives are represented in popular love songs of the 1980's regarding romantic love and intimate partner relationships, eight distinctive themes regarding romantic love and intimate partner relationships were distinguished in the narrative analysis: physical/sexual stimulation: sex is easy and wonderful; Cupid's Arrow, self-control, love saves; love is forever and one and only love; conflict/blame, hanging on and moving on. The themes of physical/sexual stimulation: sex is easy and wonderful; Cupid's Arrow, love saves; love is forever; one and only love, and conflict/blame are consistent with Galician's (2004) examination of popular media's representation of romantic love and intimate partner relationships. However, the themes of self-control, hanging on and moving on were additional themes identified in this study.

#### Physical/sexual stimulation

Many of the lovers expressed that they felt physical and/or sexually stimulated by their partner. Many lovers wanted to share such feelings with their partners or wanted to physically or sexually stimulate their partners. Some female lovers got the "chills" (Abdul, 1989; Heart, 1987), when they thought of their partners. One lover felt a "thrill" and her "pulse react," fully aware of the "physical" response she had about her partner (Turner, 1984). Two male lovers wanted to "touch" (Abbott, 1986; Michael, 1987) their partners, while another lover wanted his partner to "touch" his stomach (Prince, 1984).

One female lover wished she did not like to be “touched” by her partner because of how she feels “so emotional” (Houston, 1987). Madonna’s reaction to being touched made her feel “like a virgin, touched for the very first.”

Much like the song *Like A Virgin* boasted, some lovers were more explicit. One lover wanted her partner to “cover me in kisses” and “roll me in designer sheets,” (Blondie, 1980). Another repeated “let’s get physical....animal” and said she only wanted to talk if it’s “horizontally” (Newton-John, 1981). One male lover fantasized about seeing his lover in negligee and when her clothes were off (Band, 1981).

Inherently, along with physical/sexual stimulation, lovers expressed the need to have their partners physically close to them. Some wanted to hold or be held by their partners in some fashion or thought about holding their partners, have them “near” or “beside me” and “put my arms around you” (Austin & Ingram, 1981; Madonna, 1984; Mister, 1985; Richie & Ross, 1980; Rogers, 1980). Likewise, in the Patti Austin and James Ingram duet *Baby Come To Me*, both declared in unison “got to have your love around me.”

While most song narratives containing physical and sexual reference and representing love’s early phases celebrated love, not all lovers were convinced that indulging in their physical and sexual stimulation would result in positive outcomes or equated love. “It’s physical. Only logical. You must try to ignore that it means more than that” (Turner, 1984), one female lover concluded. Another male lover believed even though he needed to be held, he would “wait for something more” (Wham, 1984).

Once the relationship was ending or had ended, some lovers longed for their partners to “hold” (Tyler, 1983), “embrace” them (Police, 1983) or be “holding me”

(Chicago, 1988), while others wanted to hold or take their partner's hand (Mister, 1985; Wham, 1984). Prince referenced physical interaction with his partner: "the sweat of your body covers me," which induces "the heat between me and you". This was in an attempt to maintain the relationship and persuade his partner not to leave him (Prince, 1984). Even though the relationship had ended, one lover thought she would always "be lying here beside" her partner (LaBelle & McDonald, 1986). Another lover, referenced in third person, favored sexual and physical gratification over a committed relationship thus, lamenting love. The narrative warned that this lover would "tease you" and then "lay you on the throne" and "take a tumble on you" (Carnes, 1981).

These narratives imply male and female lovers desire having some sort of physical or sexual interaction with their partners. Along with these physical and sexual feelings, the lovers, with a few exceptions, celebrated this feeling and often associated this stimulation with love. Overall, these references are positive in nature and consistent with the myth that sex is always easy and wonderful (Galician, 2004).

### Cupid's Arrow

In songs that celebrated love and depicted the early phases of love, lovers declared that there is "magic" or a "magical" regard for love and relationships (Austin & Ingram, 1981; Band, 1981; Jackson, 1979), implicating the Cupid's Arrow myth that love happens to people based on love's magical powers. Since love is magical, lovers and partners are powerless to stop love. Accordingly, a male lover warned his lover "don't try to fight it. There ain't nothing you can do" (Jackson, 1979). Another male lover had trouble resisting his partner's "charm" and was a "fool" for his partner (Richie & Ross, 1981), while another lover proclaimed he was "so lost in your love" (Rogers, 1980).

Likewise, a female lover felt “emotions come I don’t know why” (Blondie, 1980) and another female lover was “lost, in a dream” (Abdul, 1989).

Time, which lovers have no control over and supports the notion of powerlessness, is personified in songs sung by female artists: “I hear the ticking of the clock....and the night goes by so very slow” (Heart, 1987) or “time’s standing still” (Abdul, 1989). Along with time, some female lovers anxiously awaited their lovers to call them on the phone (Heart, 1987; Houston, 1987).

In songs where the relationship was in decline or had ended, the magical feeling or power love had over lovers gave way to hoping love had the power to reunite the lovers or maintain the relationship. Some lovers wished they could reunite or still be with their partners (Chicago, 1988; Klymaxx, 1985; LaBelle, 1986). One female lover thought the union she shared with her partner was “meant to be” but when the relationship ended, prayed to God that her lover would be there when she turned around (Klymaxx, 1985). Similarly, one male lover wished his partner could hold him again (Chicago, 1988) and another male lover believed that if “broken wings” were fixed, the “book of love would let us in” (Mister, 1985). Another female lover in *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* felt powerless to make her relationship improve by proclaiming that there was nothing she could do or say to stop having “love in the dark” and a “total eclipse of the heart.” However, she did believe that if her partner, who was “magical” and “wondrous,” held onto her, they would be “holding on forever.”

The Cupid’s Arrow theme aligned with Galician’s (2004) assessment of media and was evident in songs that depicted each phase of love. Cupid’s Arrow was praised by lovers, regardless of their gender, and represented as something lovers viewed as a super-

natural force they could not control. Thus, it can be inferred that men and women conceive that Cupid's Arrow or fate will bring couples together, keep them united and even have the power to reunite them.

### Self-control

While some lyrics indicated lovers found themselves powerless, others attempted to have control over their emotions. Tina Turner in *What's Love Got To Do With It* understood that the emotions, the "thrill" she is feeling is not love but lustful feelings: "You must try to ignore that it means more than that" and opined "what's love but a second-hand emotion" to the physical feelings she had. Turner recognized that being around her potential partner makes her feel "confused" and she does it for her. Still, she chose to take on a "new direction" and now has her "own protection" in mind and is "scared to feel this way." George Michael in *Faith* proclaimed he would show love the door if "love comes down, without devotion" because he can't help but "think of yesterday" when his past lover "tied me down to lover boy rules." Michael likened the current bond he shared with his partner to a "river" that he has reconsidered before it "becomes an ocean" that he will have faith and "wait for something more."

Kim Carnes in *Bette Davis Eyes* took on a different approach and the lover, who was referred to in third person, clearly did not intend to find love. Instead, this female lover's intentions were to use her looks, such as her "Harlow gold" hair and her "Bette Davis eyes," to take control over her multiple partners and seduce her partners only to "expose you when she snows you off your feet." This song served as a warning sign to potential male partners to in turn practice discretion with a female lover like this.



Two lovers attempted to have some control over whether the relationship continued. One realized she shouldn't get "so hung up on you" but still felt "so emotional" about her lover every time she thought about him (Houston, 1987). Another lover assumed control by demanding that her partner decide whether or not they would be together forever so she didn't get her love "caught in the slamming door" (Abdul, 1989). When love had ended, one lover exuded a sense of reclaiming herself stating that "it's my time again" (LaBelle, 1986).

Self-control was not a common theme in the song narratives studied and was evident in songs describing early phases of love. The song narratives in *What's Love Got To Do With It* and *Faith*, as a whole, promoted the concept of having self-control over their physical and sexual responses to potential partners and love's power. However, both Turner and particularly Michael inferred that as a result of past relationships, they have learned various lessons and don't want to make the same choices only to be hurt again. The message in *Bette Davis Eyes* served as a warning to men to be careful of beautiful women who use their looks and charm to seduce you and use you for their own satisfaction only to then to "expose you." Female lovers in *What's Love Got To Do With It*, *So Emotional* and *Straight Up* practiced self-control and it seemed female lovers had more self-control than male lovers in the song narratives. However, even though *So Emotional* and *Straight Up* contained references to self-control, these two songs also featured examples of the Cupid's Arrow myth, which is a contradiction to self-control. Therefore, despite the control these women desired, ultimately, the power of love triumphed.

## Love saves

Many of the song narratives revealed that both male and female lovers believed love had the power to save them or save their partners. When love was celebrated, Kenny Rogers in *Lady* boasted “I’m your knight in shining armor” and conversely, his partner made him “whole.” One female lover felt she was “beat; incomplete” but her partner made her “feel shiny and new” (Madonna, 1984), while another felt she “never really cared until I met you” (Heart, 1987). A male lover felt he had “all the loving you need. ...I’ve got the remedy” (Abbott, 1986). Lionel Ritchie and Diana Ross crooned to each other in *Endless Love* that “our lives have just begun” and that their love is the “only thing that’s bright.”

Once the relationship was souring or was over, many lovers felt that if love returned, they would be saved. One lover believed that his partner was “half of the flesh and blood that makes me whole” and that if “broken wings” are taken, he and/or the love he shared with his partner, will “learn to fly again” and love would return (Mister, 1985). One lover was “a little bit terrified...” until she saw “the look in your eyes” from her partner who was once “the light in my life” (Tyler, 1983). One lover told his partner he turned her “into something new” (League, 1981) in an attempt to remind her of what he once meant to her.

While lovers believed love did or would save them, losing love, conversely, had the power to ruin lovers. One male lover wondered, “what am I without your love?” (Wham, 1984). Another male lover declared he was “lost without a trace” (Police, 1983). A female lover said she did not know what to do, was “falling apart,” had “only love in the dark” and, thus, had “a total eclipse of the heart” (Tyler, 1983). In the Patti LaBelle

and Michael McDonald duet *On My Own*, they proclaimed that “losing you cut like a knife; you walked out and there went my life.”

Across the sample, songs promoting the concept that love saves seemed to be common among all lovers despite their gender and was evident in every phase of love depicted by the song narratives. The lovers perceived love as a means to not only save the relationship, but save themselves as individuals. The idea that love saves was celebrated by lovers in early phases of love and love was sought by lovers to save their relationships when they were ending or had ended. Lovers feared without love, they would lose a sense of themselves. Thus, love saves is an ideal consistent with Galician (2004) and the concept that our lives have meaning if we have love (Swidler, 1980).

#### Love is forever; one and only love

When the longevity of the relationship was referenced in the early phases of love, “forever” (Abdul, 1989; Jackson, 1979; Richie & Ross, 1981; Rogers, 1980), often described the terms of the relationship. Other metaphors also were used that meant forever, such as in the title of the duet *Endless Love*; “I’ll be yours til the end of time” (Madonna, 1984), “always stay” (Austin & Ingram, 1981) and “just take it slow ‘cause we got so far to go” and “love survives” (Jackson, 1979).

For songs that demonstrated love could and does end, there was little reference to how long romantic love or how long the relationship would last in these songs. If “forever” or metaphors meaning forever were mentioned, it was referred to in the past tense, such as “we could have been so good together; we could have made this dance forever” (Wham, 1984), or “I never dreamed I’d spend one night alone” (LaBelle, 1986).

Bonnie Tyler in *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* repeated out of desperation that “forever’s gonna start tonight” in hopes the relationship wouldn’t end.

If love was meant to last forever, then so was the relationship and each lover by default had one and only love. Male and female lovers proclaimed in songs that celebrated love in the early phases of love that there’s “No one else but you...you’re the love of my life” (Rogers, 1980); “gonna give you all my love...been saving it all for you” (Madonna, 1984) and “there’s only you in my life” (Richie & Ross, 1981). Both males and females assumed possession of their partner by describing “my love” or “my lady” (Rogers, 1980), “my endless love” (Richie & Ross, 1981) and “you’re mine” (Madonna, 1984). One male lover likened the feeling he and his partner shared to being the only ones on the dance floor (Jackson, 1979). Male and female lovers also expressed having a “need” for their lover (Austin & Ingram, 1981; Richie & Ross, 1981; Rogers, 1980).

The songs depicting failing or failed love, not surprisingly, lacked much reference to the ideal that we have one and only love. However, one male lover believed he would not find anyone else like his former partner in *Careless Whisper*. This lover swore he was “never gonna dance again; the way I danced with you” (Wham, 1984). Another male lover felt his partner “belonged” to him and could not be “replaced” (Police, 1983). One female lover alleged “there’s no one in the universe as magical and wondrous as you” (Tyler, 1983).

Male and female lovers alike believed that the love they shared with their partners would last forever in the early phases of love. The ideal of forever is celebrated and strived for particularly in song narratives highlighting the early phases of relationships. The ideal of forever was not evident as much in narratives depicting the decline or end of

love because the relationship had ended or there was a chance it was going to end.

However, lovers referencing forever and/or one and only love in love's decline or end used it as a means to maintain the relationship, were in disbelief and stricken with despair that the relationship wasn't going to last forever or feared they would never find another like their former partner.

The concept of one and only love was often associated with the ideal of everlasting love in songs that portrayed early phases of relationships. When one and only love was evident in song narratives demonstrating love's decline or end, male and female lovers claimed their partners as their one and only love, although it was referenced by male lovers more. Thus, male lovers in songs portraying a relationship's decline or end still held on to the notion that the love they had for their partners would never be matched, suggesting males are more likely to believe that love will last forever no matter what and their partner will always be their one and only love.

### Conflict/blame

Songs that demonstrated a narrative in which the relationship was declining or ending referenced conflict. Conflict, however, was absent in song narratives that celebrated love and depicted the early phases of love. When conflict was referenced in narratives depicting relationships ending, a reason for the conflict or tension wasn't always stated. Conflict, with no explanation, was evident in songs like *Broken Wings*. In this song narrative, the lover wondered why he and his partner couldn't "hold on to each other's hand" but hoped they could make "what was wrong and make it right" (Mister, 1985). Another lover, also describing conflict, declared the relationship she and her

partner had was a “powder keg giving off sparks” (Tyler, 1983) but provided no explanation for why their relationship was explosive.

Some lovers indicated that there was tension and they did reference the source of the conflict. Prince spoke of how he and his lover “screamed at each other” but accepted the reality that he was “too bold” like his father and his partner was “never satisfied” like his mother. Some lovers suggested mutual responsibility for the conflict, which was the impetus for the relationship ending. For instance, one lover recalled how he and his former partner agreed “we were better off as friends” (Chicago, 1988). The lovers in the LaBelle/McDonald duet believed their conflict was precipitated by “so many promises.” In other song narratives, male lovers placed responsibility for the relationship ending on their female partners. One male lover blamed his female partner’s “success” for the relationship ending (League, 1981). Another male lover did not specify the source of conflict other than stating that his female partner is now “gone” and it is causing him to feel “lost” (Police, 1983). Another male lover knew the relationship was ending because he cheated but minimized his culpability by saying he “should have known better not to cheat a friend” (Wham, 1984) but still pleaded with his partner to realize how much he loves her and stay. While some of the song narratives that referenced contributing factors to the conflict suggested that the lovers and partners shared responsibility in creating the conflict (Chicago, 1988; LaBelle & McDonald, 1986; Prince, 1984), one male lover deflected blame from himself (Wham, 1984), while other male lovers blamed their female partners for leaving (League, 1981; Police, 1983).

The theme of conflict and blame was congruent with the myth all relationships have their barriers and battles and the more couples fight, the more they love each other

(Galician, 2004). As such, conflict and blame does not seem to be viewed negatively by the lovers because it was often coupled with mythical ideals such as Cupid's Arrow or love saves. Love itself is not lamented by these narratives, which counters other research of love songs (Knobloch & Zillmann, 2003; Knobloch, Weisbach, & Zillman, 2004). Instead, male lovers lamented their female partners in some narratives depicting later phases of love and themes of conflict and blame. Male lovers typically defined the conflict while female lovers did not. If male lovers assigned blame for the relationship ending, blame was either disassociated from the male lover's actions or associated with the actions of their female partners. The only female lover to have some say in describing the source of the conflict was Patti LaBelle in *On My Own* but again, the source of conflict was mutual. Therefore, the song narratives demonstrating conflict and blame suggest that males are more prone to identifying conflict and assigning blame for the relationship ending to their female partners.

### Hanging on

When the relationship was declining, some lovers wanted to hold on. One lover took a logical approach and wondered if she and her partner could "ever change our minds?" (Klymaxx, 1985). Many of the lovers also reminded their partners of better times or of the intense bond they shared. Prince wanted his partner to think of "you and I engaged in a kiss," and their physical and sexual interactions they once encountered. Both male and female lovers referenced how they believed or still believed the relationship would last "forever" (Tyler, 1983; Wham, 1984). The male lover in *Don't You Want Me* reminded his partner of how he "picked you out; I shook you up and turned you around; turned you into someone new," thus, demonstrating how his love saved his

partner. These lovers employed such references to entice their partners to stay or reunite with them.

However, some lovers were desperate to hang on to their partners, such as Tyler repeatedly pleading “I really need you tonight” (Tyler, 1983). A male lover said to his partner “oh can’t you see, you belong to me” and described his obsession, vowing to watch every “step you take,” “move you make,” “vow you break,” and “smile you fake.” Otherwise, he felt “lost” (Police, 1983). Another male lover warned his partner that if she didn’t choose to come back to him, he could put her “back down too,” refused to believe the relationship was over and repeated “don’t you want me, baby?” (League, 1981), despite his partner making it clear in her response that she did not want him. Some lovers drew on their partner’s sympathy, such as begging the question “how can you just leave me standing? Alone in the world so cold” (Prince, 1984).

Hanging on was a theme associated with male and female loves. Most of the lovers who demonstrated desperation as they hung on to the relationship were male and typically, the male lovers believed that the loss of their partner would result in a loss of self or would justify their attempts to reunify with their partners. The theme of hanging on did not seem to have a negative connotation attached to it, even when lovers seemed desperate and exuded stalking behavior in *Every Breath You Take*. If conflict and blame is viewed in a positive way, then it is logical that so would the concept of hanging on.

### Moving on

Many lovers, in their attempt to cope with the relationship ending, asserted some sort of action or reaction, such as blaming or hanging on. Others expressed a spirit of wanting to move on from the relationship in a healthy way. Some wanted to “be strong”



(Klymaxx, 1985; LaBelle & McDonald, 1986) and “carry on” (Klymaxx, 1985) or “find where I belong again” (LaBelle & McDonald, 1986). One lover, even though he had tears in his eyes, he promised he would be “happy” for his former partner if he saw her walking by (Chicago, 1988). The female response in the duet *Don't You Want Me* responded to her male counterpart stating that the five years they had were “such good times” and she still loves her former partner, but living on her own is what she must do.

When the theme of moving on was represented by the song narratives, male and female lovers accepted this as their fate and were hopeful that moving on was possible even though they may have had lingering feelings. Overall, lovers associated emotional pain due to their partner's leaving them but positive meaning to the idea of moving on and viewed their former partners in a positive light. However, female lovers were more likely to seek moving on in a healthy way than male lovers. Thus, it can be surmised that males tend to not deal well with relationships ending compared to females and as evident by the theme hanging on, tend hold onto the relationship.

### Implications

The findings for RQ1 suggested love song narratives, as a whole, demonstrated how romantic love progresses from the courtship and honeymoon phases to love's decline and subsequent end. However, romantic relationships in the early courtship and honeymoon phases are characterized by myths such as physical intimacy or sex is easy and wonderful, Cupid's Arrow, love saves, love is forever and one and only love. Therefore, love is celebrated. The theme self-control was also evident in these early phases but was not as prevalent in the narratives. When it was not the dominant theme,

self-control was coupled with mythical themes like Cupid's Arrow and love is forever negating the concept of self-control.

The later phases of love, love's decline and end, also denoted many of the same mythical themes depicted in the early phases of love as well but they are framed within the context of the themes conflict and blame and the notions of hanging on or moving on. While love was celebrated in the early phases of love, it was not determined that love was lamented in songs depicting love's decline or end. What was identified is that male lovers lamented their female partners in *Don't You Want Me* and *Every Breath You Take*. In *When Doves Cry* and *On My Own*, both male and female lovers lamented their partners and themselves for jeopardizing or ending the relationship.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS NARRATIVES OF ABUSE

To answer RQ2, what do the narratives about romantic love and intimate partner relationships represented in popular 1980's love songs provide with regard to the acceptance of intimate partner violence, popular love song narratives were examined through the context of intimate partner violence (IPV), a phenomenon that is typically viewed from a male violence against women perspective. In other words, the narratives of love identified in popular love songs of the 1980's were compared with the common myths and dynamics of an abusive relationship, i.e., narratives of abuse. Because the phases of love and intimate partner relationships progress in a similar manner to how the COV progresses, the narratives of love, as a whole, will be compared to the COV.

#### Physical/sexual stimulation

Initial feelings that two people feel for one another romantically are characterized by a physiological response (Liebowitz, 1983) that is physically and sexually stimulating. For battered women, sexual intercourse is stimulating and pleasurable, especially in the beginning of the relationship (Walker, 1979). Similarly, physical and sexual stimulation displayed in song narratives, particularly in the early phases of love, were also viewed as pleasurable and positive. Early in relationships, battered women equate sex with intimacy and a loving relationship. As relationships progress, sexual stimulation that battered women feel disintegrates into batterers coercing the battered women to engage in kinky

and bizarre sexual acts that they are not necessarily willing to have. Batterers prey upon making battered women feel guilty and use manipulative tactics to obtain sexual compliance by projecting their own digressions and sexual short-comings onto their partners. Despite the abuse, battered women still intermittently experience sex that is pleasurable, especially in the honeymoon phase of the COV, but their sexual pleasure is often associated with the batterer's sexual pleasure (Walker, 1979).

In the narratives of love, physical and sexual stimulation was often referenced within song narratives that depicted all phases of love. Some of those references were as benign as lovers mentioning embracing their partners, dancing or wanting to be next to their partners. In early phases of love, the lovers in the song narratives primarily associated feelings of love with the desire to have long-term committed relationships with their partners as they described physical and sexual stimulation and encounters evident in *Like A Virgin* and *Shake You Down*. Physical and sexual stimulation, as well as love, were celebrated in these narratives. With the exception of *Bette Davis Eyes*, *What's Love Got To Do With It* and *Faith*, where the theme of self-control is encouraged, positive consequences were associated with physical and sexual references. Hence, most of the song narratives celebrated and consequently, normalized physical and sexual intimacy within a romantic relationship.

When the song narratives depicted interrelationship conflict in a relationship's decline or end, physical and sexual references were cited as reasons for the relationship to sustain or for a partner to reunite with their lover. Even when love was declining or the relationship had ended, all physical and sexual references in these song narratives were still positive in nature. Battered women, despite reporting being raped and sexually

abused by their batterers, also reported that they still had pleasurable sexual experiences with their batterers (Walker, 1979). However, as Wood (2001) concurred, this incoherent narrative where the batterer goes from Prince Charming to batterer forces women to either champion the gender narrative that they are women who stand by their violent men or accept the violence as part of their own romantic narrative, consistent with the myth that if couples fight, they really love each other (Galician, 2004). Popular love song narratives bolstered this narrative by depicting sexual stimulation as almost entirely positive in nature and effectively symbolically annihilated sexual abuse from the narrative. Because battered women intermittently feel sexual pleasure similar to that depicted in these popular love song narratives, the sexual abuse is minimized or ignored by the narratives, which enables battered women to construct narratives that champion what little physical and sexual pleasure they experience while minimizing and ignoring the sexual abuse they also are experiencing.

#### Cupid's Arrow versus self-control

The Cupid's Arrow myth was employed in narratives that celebrated love in the courtship and honeymoon phases of love to emphasize a lover's inability to overcome love's magical powers. As love was declining or had ended, lovers believed love's omnipotent attributes held the power to mend ailing relationships or reunite lovers with their partners. A common dynamic within an abusive relationship is that battered women feel like they have little control over what transpires in the relationship and are in a state of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972; Walker, 1979). This feeling is most pronounced in the tension-building and acute-battering phases (Walker, 1979). Song narratives in *Broken Wings* and *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* suggested conflict is present but the

resolution to the conflict is love. The chorus of *Broken Wings* exemplified the notion that when tension is present, love will mend a troubled relationship or an abusive relationship: “Take, these broken wings, and learn to fly again, learn to live so free. When we hear, the voices sing, the book of love will open up and let us in.”

The outcome of enduring the COV’s tension-building and acute-battering phases is the honeymoon phase, where the batterer becomes loving and caring again, i.e., Prince Charming (Wood, 2001) and the couple becomes a “symbiotic pair” (Walker, 1979, p.68). Similar to what is suggested by the narrative of *Broken Wings* and *Total Eclipse Of The Heart*, batterers and battered women believe that together and only together can they conquer the obstacles of an abusive relationship. Consequently, batterers may feel they are damaged, or have a broken wing, as the song narrative implied, but take little or no responsibility for their actions. Batterers too have a sense of learned helplessness regarding controlling their own actions. Batterers and battered women believe, congruent with the Cupid’s Arrow myth, that their omnipotent love will propel their relationship through the COV to ultimately arrive at the honeymoon phase where love is good.

In spite of narratives discovered in love songs like *Rock With You* or *Endless Love* endorsing the omnipotence of love, female lovers in *So Emotional* and *Straight Up* referenced wanting to have self-control. However, these lovers also referenced Cupid’s Arrow and other myths. As such, these lovers still believed love’s power trumped their attempts to have self-control, which is still consistent with a sense of learned helplessness common among battered women. The narratives in *Faith* and *What’s Love Got To Do With It* suggested the magical feelings revered as love are really just physical responses, not love, and they will not concede to this feeling. Instead, the song narratives cultivated

behavior promoting practicing self-control and due diligence before concluding that love exists. According to the lovers in these songs, loving and committing to another is a choice (Levinger, 1977; Sternberg, 1986), not a result of destiny, and through their own volition, a relationship will either endure or end. These two narratives featuring a male and a female lover challenged the Cupid's Arrow myth and learned helplessness, which is often felt by battered women in regards to ending the abuse or relationship. These narratives also countered the notion that batterers do not have control of their behavior.

### Love saves

Because of its omnipotence, love ultimately had the power to save people when love was being celebrated in *Like A Virgin* or *Shake You Down*. When love was on the decline or had ended, both male and female lovers in these narratives felt a loss of self, as expressed in songs like *Every Breathe You Take* or *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* and their partners' love was the only thing that could save them. This is congruent with the idea that pursuing and obtaining romantic love is "the meaning of adult life" (Swidler, 1980, p. 123) and that without love, men and women are doomed to be lost, even if the love was shared within the context of an abusive relationship. This is a particularly influential narrative for women who adhere to the traditional gender myth that they are only complete once they obtain the love of a dominant man (Wood, 2001), while batterers manipulate battered women into believing this myth (Walker L. E., 1979).

Another common dynamic in abusive relationships during the honeymoon phase is for batterers to attempt to make battered women feel guilty for leaving, breaking up their home, and destroying batterers (Walker, 1979) despite the batterer's behavior being the impetus for battered women leaving. In other words, the batterer's emotional well-

being is the battered woman's responsibility. Women also adhere to the traditional marriage perspective that marriage is permanent (Walker, 1979). While love song narratives validated the notion that women are complete with a dominant man, they also endorsed the idea that women have the power to save men. Consequently, the perception that the well-being of batterers and the relationship is in the hands of battered women is affirmed by love song narratives.

The idea that love saves portrayed in the song narratives normalizes abusive behavior exhibited in the tension-building and explosion phases because the outcome is the honeymoon phase, where the batterer is very loving and not violent. The overarching message proclaimed by male lovers in *When Doves Cry* or *Broken Wings* was that if women endured the conflict, love will return and save the relationship. This notion of redemption is consistent with the narratives accepted by battered women, which enables them to minimize the violence, believe that the violence is part of their romance narrative and that they need to stand by their violent men to maintain their own identity as women (Wood, 2001). Therefore, the myth that love has the power to save people cultivates a belief that women should remain in the relationship to be their batterer's savior, be the traditional women who saves their batterers and believe love will save the abusive relationship. The narrative that love saves also corroborates the myth that abusive relationships will improve overtime.

### Love is forever

Because love had magical powers to save lovers, love also had the power to last forever in the stories these songs relate. Many lovers in narratives describing early phases of love conveyed that they believed that the love would be forever by specifically stating



that they hoped it would be forever in *Straight Up* or were assured it would last forever in *Lady*. In other songs, metaphors meaning forever like “we’ll go all the way to heaven” (Abbott, 1986) were evident. In narratives where the relationship was ending or did end, lovers often described once having the belief the relationship would last forever (LaBelle & McDonald, 1986; Tyler, 1983; Wham, 1984).

According to Walker (1979) and IPV myths, battered women who are truly being abused leave relationships. If they are battered and do not leave, battered women are viewed as masochists who instigate and enjoy the abuse. Similarly, the presumption is that if a relationship is abusive and the couple marries, the abuse will cease or long-standing battering relationships will improve over time. Despite the occurrence of premarital abuse, battered women hope abuse will subside once they marry, thus, demonstrating their ever-lasting love for their men. However, the abuse typically worsens. Because women believe love is forever, battered women feel a great deal of burden to maintain the relationship forever, despite the victimization they suffer. As evident in this analysis and supported by Wood (2001), popular love song narratives glorifying the notion of forever bear some responsibility in cultivating and perpetuating a myth that love is forever.

With regard to batterers, they cannot fathom life without their partner. The ideal of love that does not end or the false love syndrome (Katz & Liu, 1988) is consistent with the song narratives in the analysis, and cultivates an “illusion so powerful that it becomes difficult even to imagine any more realistic kind of love” (pp. 3-4). Batterers adhering to this illusion, promoted by song narratives, are more likely to ignore the efforts of battered women to end the relationship and accentuate the notion of forever to manipulate battered

women into remaining in the relationship. Consequently, these love song narratives cultivated the ideal of love that lasts forever and perpetuated the myth that long-lasting abusive relationships will improve over time or once a couple marries because there is no recommendation to refute the ideal of forever.

### One and only love

Along with notions of forever, lyrics in the narratives suggested possessiveness by pronouns such as my or mine, the singular object of affection in *Lady*, *Endless Love* and *Like A Virgin* and the mythical ideal that people have a one and only love in life.

Typically, batterers are possessive, jealous of their partner's family and friends, seek to isolate their partners and force them to rely solely on batterers for emotional and financial support (Martin, 1976; Walker, 1979). Essentially, batterers do not want their girlfriends or wives to have mutuality, exercise autonomy outside of the relationship and develop or maintain plutonic relationships, dynamics that are present in healthy relationships (Berg & McQuinn, 1986; Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Levinger & Snoek, 1972). Instead, they seek to maintain the symbiotic bond (Walker, 1979). However, batterers begin their efforts to isolate their partners before the battering begins early in relationships (Neilson, Endo, & Ellington, 1992). This coincides with the early phases of love depicted by the song narratives in which we have one and only love.

Song narratives depicting the ideal of one and only love, such as *Like A Virgin* and *Endless Love*, implied that women, as well as men, need not venture outside of the relationship because all anyone needs is their loved one. Subsequently, a batterer's need to isolate his wife or girlfriend and maintain his battered partner's dependency is affirmed by the myth that love is exclusive to one person represented in the song narratives. This

exclusive tendency encourages an unhealthy dependency (Levinger, 1977) and essentially, the symbiotic pair is emboldened by the one and only love myth found in the narratives of love.

### Conflict/blame

When love was new in the courtship and honeymoon phases and celebrated in the song narratives, physical and sexual stimulation was easy and wonderful; love had magical powers, lasted forever, saved people, and was exclusive to one and only one. In other words, the romantic relationships were free of conflict and they were viewed as perfect. This illusion essentially recommended the belief that you and your romantic partner will never fight, will have constant romance, are always going to be extremely attracted to one another, and will never need anyone else in your lives (Katz & Liu, 1988). While these beliefs are associated with relationship survival, those holding such beliefs may deem that all outcomes, good, bad or indifferent, “may lead one to judge negative relationship events particularly strongly, and thus, disengage and withdraw from the relationship” (Knee, 1998, p. 367).

When there was conflict in the song narratives, lovers feared the relationship would end or did end but still thought the love they shared with their partners could reach mythical ideals or reflected upon the past when those mythical ideals seemed to be attained. As such, the song narratives across the sample perpetuated mythical representations of love, which is the impetus for love and the means at which to resolve conflict. These prescriptions cultivated unrealistic expectations about sex, love and romantic relationships (Jones & Nelson, 1997; Segrin & Nabi, 2002; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991). Consenting to such falsehoods about love can lead to disillusionment (Crosby,

1991; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Epstein & Eidelson, 1981; Frohmm, 1956; Lazarus, 1985) and maladaptive coping techniques when there are relationship hiccups (Knee, 1998). Love's celebration in song narratives featuring the early phases of love encouraged the belief that when love is good and feels euphoric, there is no tension or conflict within a relationship, consistent with the false love syndrome and disillusion of love (Katz & Liu, 1988).

However, any relationship will have tension, conflict or disagreements.

Interrelationship blame, dynamics present in an abusive relationship that are amplified in the tension-building and acute-battering phases, were referenced by song narratives. The few reasons stated for inter-relationship conflict between lovers and their partners were only present in songs highlighting love's decline and end, mostly in the songs that depicted the end of the relationship. The source of the conflict was typically defined by male lovers as well, which promotes male dominance that is consistent with Wood (2001). When the source of the conflict was stated, such as cheating (Wham, 1984), being better off as friends (Chicago, 1988) or too many promises made (LaBelle, 1986), the conflict was also the reason given for the relationship ending. In *Don't You Want Me*, the male lover blamed his partner's success for the relationship ending. When blame was assigned to a partner, it was male lovers assigning blame to their female partners for wanting the relationship to end or actually ending it (League, 1981; Prince, 1984; Police, 1983). This aligns with abusive behavior where battered women are responsible for maintaining the relationship and if the relationship ends, it is their fault (Walker, 1979). However, conflict, cultivated by these narratives, does not occur within the power and control dynamics of an abusive relationship. Conflict, instead, is a result of other

mitigating factors not necessarily associated with abusive behaviors exhibited by batterers.

Prince explained in *When Doves Cry* that the conflict within the relationship stemmed from him being “too bold” and his lover never being “satisfied,” which was a mirror of his parents’ relationship. *When Doves Cry* represented the only song in the analysis that demonstrated conflict and tension coming to a boiling point as Prince described how he and his partner “scream at each other.” However, he also does not understand why his partner left him standing alone, implying she is ultimately the one at fault. Essentially, this narrative described the COV. First, the honeymoon, where the metaphors of “violets in bloom” and sexual references are used by the lover to remind his partner of the idealistic love they share; proceeded by the tension-building and explosion in which interpersonal differences ascended to escalation of screaming. Other than this song narrative, there was no evidence of tension escalating into an explosion, followed by the honeymoon phase, in any other narratives.

Much like the lovers in these songs indicated, batterers often place the onus of responsibility to maintain the relationship and their own emotional well-being on battered women, which contributes to the unhealthy dependency formed between batterers and battered women. Batterers often beg for forgiveness and behave lovingly in the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1979), consistent with the romance narrative in which he transforms from frog to Prince Charming (Wood, 2001) and affirmed by several of the song narratives. Batterers believe the explosion in the acute-battering phase will teach battered women a lesson which will prevent battered women from leaving or doing something to trigger violence in the future (Walker, 1979). However, the notion of abuse

as a source of conflict is conspicuously absent from the song narratives. According to popular love songs other than *When Doves Cry*, conflict does not arise within a romantic relationship as a result of a batterer who seeks power and control over battered women. It arises because women want the relationship to end or because they cannot get past their man cheating (Wham, 1984) or too many promises (LaBelle, 1986). Male lovers more often than women prescribed the resolution for conflict which consisted of resorting back to attaining mythical ideals such as encouraging the ideal that love saves and we have one and only love that lasts forever, which is normal behavior in the COV's honeymoon phase. Thus, the honeymoon phase in the COV is affirmed by the narratives of love identified in the analysis because conflict is resolved by striving for mythical ideals.

#### Relationship's ending or end: Moving on or hanging on

The myth that battered women can simply leave their batterers is common. Similarly, song narratives indicated that the end of relationships could be positive. The lover in *Look Away* reflected positively on the relationship realizing they "were better off as friends." Other lovers may still have had lingering feelings, but were ready to move on and be strong (Klymaxx, 1985; LaBelle & McDonald, 1986) suggesting that leaving the relationship was possible and it didn't create more conflict. Other narratives depicting the relationship's end cultivated the message that relationships end because of cheating or because women choose to end the relationship, which affirms the existing insecurities batterers impose on their battered partners in fear they will leave. Other narratives demonstrating a relationship's end provided no reason for relationships ending. Overall, the implication is abuse is not a reason to end the relationship and leave.

However, abuse can certainly be a source of conflict and the impetus for relationships ending. Still, leaving an abusive relationship is typically difficult for battered women and can be even more dangerous than remaining in the relationship. The reality is abusive relationships do not end easily as batterers assume their honeymoon-phase self, make empty promises to end the battering, blame their battering as a reaction to the non-compliance of battered women, and ascribe to ideals associated with traditional conceptions of marriage such as it lasts forever (Walker, 1979). In fact, the majority of battered women return to abusive relationships (Gelles, 1974; Snyder & Fruchtmann, 1981). This can partially be attributed to manipulations that occur in the COV's honeymoon phase. Honeymoon-phase manipulations are, in many respects, modeled by lovers in love song narratives who proclaimed their love for their partners and attached mythical meaning to the symbiotic bond they shared with their partners, much like the grand gestures batterers typically make in the COV's honeymoon phase.

Consistent with common honeymoon-phase behaviors, male lovers in *Don't You Want Me* and *Every Breath You Take* did not react well to their partners leaving. In *Every Breath You Take*, the lover reacted by vowing to watch everything his partner did because since she left him, he was "lost without a trace." This unhealthy attachment, evident in this song narrative, resembles addiction (Tennov, 1979; Peele & with Brodsky, 1985), a dynamic present in abusive relationships, which induces batterers to monitor (Walker, 1979) and stalk their battered partners (Coleman, 1988). This lover's desperate act in *Every Breath You Take* mirrors stalking behavior of batterers. Applying a narrative of abuse to this song, the message is that batterers will be lost without their battered partners and their stalking behavior is justified. *Don't You Want Me*, on the other hand,

blamed the female partner's success and also resulted in him telling her she would be sorry if she didn't change her mind. Viewed through a narrative of abuse, the implication is that women are to blame for failed relationships and they deserve to be stalked and threatened.

While *Every Breath You Take* and *Don't You Want Me* cultivated messages resembling stalking and blaming, i.e., battering behavior, the connotation of these song narratives romanticized the behavior and normalized such behavior as part of the relationship narrative, which was consistent with the findings of Wood (2001). Additionally, male lovers failed to address their own culpability for the relationship ending, other than in *Careless Whisper*. Female lovers, conversely, did not blame their male partners in the narratives of love. The narratives of love, as a whole, representing love's decline or end did not convey any messages suggesting that leaving relationships could have negative consequences for women; that abuse is why the relationship is ending or the end of an abusive relationship is usually tumultuous.

#### Phases of love and the Cycle of Violence

Love song narratives in the sample, as a whole, resemble the progression of the COV. The overall sample of songs demonstrated the progression of romantic relationships from the courtship, honeymoon, decline of love and ultimate end of the relationship (Carey, 1969; Horton, 1957). The early phases of love are characterized by infatuation, intense euphoria and passion (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Frohmm, 1956; Liebowitz, 1983).

Likewise, battered women typically reported that abuse was not present in the early stages of the relationships and spoke favorably of the batterer and the relationship,



at least when the relationship began (Walker, 1979). Therefore, it can be ascertained that early in abusive relationships, just like any relationship, passion is high and both partners are in a state of euphoria and infatuation, not necessarily in love. The lovers in *Faith* and particularly *What's Love Got To Do With It* specifically referenced this physical feeling and distinguished it from love as they each described an experience congruent with the courtship phase. However, most love song narratives depicting early phases of love celebrated love and exhibited the themes of physical/sexual stimulation, Cupid's Arrow, love saves, love is forever and one and only love essentially glorified that euphoric feeling. As songs portraying a relationship's decline or end suggested, the euphoria inevitably erodes (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Frohmm, 1956), love comes into question and the relationship may end or did end, much like real-life romantic relationships, abusive or not. While lovers who celebrated love referenced this euphoria and portrayed the courtship and honeymoon phases in songs like *Shake You Down*, *Call Me* or *Baby Come To Me*, lovers describing their relationships' decline or end still reflected upon the euphoria that they once felt in the earlier phases of love in songs like *On My Own* or *I Miss You*.

As abusive relationships progress past their initial courtship and honeymoon phases, investment in the relationship occurs and the euphoria begins to wane, batterers begin their minor acts of battering such as preventing their partners from exercising autonomy outside of the relationship and criticizing their partners. At this point, the relationship transitions into the tension-building phase, followed by the acute-battering phase and then the honeymoon phase; thus, beginning the repetitive COV (Walker L. E., 1979). While most song narratives as a whole depicted the progression of relationships,

with some of them showcasing the courtship and honeymoon phases and others portraying love's decline or relationship's end, the song narrative distinguished in *When Doves Cry* paralleled the transgression of the COV from honeymoon to tension building to an explosion.

Often, batterers will tell battered women in the COV's honeymoon phase that they are sorry for their behavior, ask for forgiveness, promise to never batter again and behave in a loving and charming manner, reminding her of their symbiotic bond which can withstand the abuse (Walker, 1979). In an attempt to make sense of the cyclical transition among the battering during the tension-building and acute-battering phases and the honeymoon phase, battered women are likely to refer to fairy tale and dark romance narratives that normalize and legitimize battering (Wood, 2001) or believe that if they fight with batterers frequently, that really means that they passionately love each other (Galician, 2004). Battered women want to believe the batterer is the loving, caring, sensitive man present in the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1979) or Prince Charming (Wood, 2001) common in romance narratives such as the ones depicted in popular love song narratives. Therefore, women adhering to narratives rife with myth and romance narratives that justify the abuse are less likely to believe that they are being battered by a boyfriend or husband who fits the mold cast by popular love songs during the honeymoon phase. Thus, the narratives of love in the songs examined validate the existence and the cyclical nature of the COV.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

Cultivation theory suggests that media, including popular music, influence people's perceptions of reality. Under that assumption, the implications of this narrative analysis suggest, in regard to romantic love, that men and women can expect a thrust of physical/sexual stimulation when relationships are new or committed and then maintain some level of that stimulation if the relationship declines. This stimulation is easy and wonderful. If it is really love, they will feel as if they are struck by Cupid's Arrow and are under love's magical spell; that the relationship will last forever; that lovers will be saved by their partners and that lovers have one and only love. Men and women are encouraged to practice discretion early in the relationship, but typically, unless the lovers experienced love that ended and were hurt in the past or male lovers are warned about a female seductress, all lovers are still powerless to stop Cupid's Arrow from striking them. Once there is conflict in the relationship, men are more likely to define the source of the conflict, not women and men are more likely to persuade his partner to stay by reminding her of the intense physical bond they share or the mythical ideals they achieved earlier in their relationship. If the relationship decline, lovers, particularly men, fear they will lose a sense of who they are and subsequently, do lose a sense of who they are when the relationship does end. Men typically do not want the relationship to end and when they do not want it to end, they blame women for leaving. As a result, men are usually in

disbelief, look for responsibility for what or who caused the relationship to end, will sometimes blame their female significant others and will even resort to desperate measures to dissuade women from leaving. Despite men behaving in this way, women can still leave a relationship and can do so without much resistance.

Thus, the popular love songs examined cultivate attitudes and behaviors, often based on myth, regarding what people in love should feel while they're in love; how to behave while in love; how to resolve inter-relationship conflict; what causes relationships to decline and how to respond to relationships ending. What is cause for alarm is even though *When Doves Cry* and a few sporadic references that mirror dynamics of abusive relationships and the COV exist in the narratives, popular love song narratives are not framed within an IPV context and lack references regarding how abusive relationships develop, let alone how we should perceive or react to abusive relationships. Overall, romantic love and interpersonal violence are two phenomena, according to the analysis. The reality is that even abusive relationships do not begin with abuse and are built upon the same perceptions of romantic love that healthier relationships are built upon. These perceptions are influenced by media, including popular love songs (Jones & Nelson, 1997; Segrin & Nabi, 2002; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991), that promote unrealistic expectations about romantic love and relationships (Crosby, 1991; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Epstein & Eidelson, 1981; Frohmm, 1956; Lazarus, 1985).

These prescriptions encourage battered women to incorporate abuse and violence into their own narratives and disassociate the battering man from the man who can be kind and loving in the honeymoon phase (Wood, 2001), much like the adorning lover in these song narratives analyzed. Assuming that love is forever encourages battered women

to suffer through the abuse, embrace learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972), become dependent on their batterers and adopt the attitude that the abuse isn't that bad or the good outweighs the bad (Wood, 2001), while allowing batterers to abuse with no limits because love is forever.

Because all sexual and physical stimulation is positive in love song narratives and battered women experience pleasure consistent with those narratives depicting love's honeymoon phase, the pleasure trumps or at least minimizes any sexual abuse. In fear of the emotional or violent consequences they may suffer if they do not have sex, which according to love song narratives, is easy and wonderful, battered women concede to engage in sexual activity. If they don't voluntarily engage in the activity that is celebrated in song narratives, they are prudes, not victims of sexual abuse (Walker, 1979).

A couple can endure tension that escalates to an explosion because they share magical love that can conquer all and deliver them back to the honeymoon phase where love is good. That magical love can also save individuals and, subsequently, maintain the symbiotic pair. Essentially, a woman's status in life improves once she obtains a committed partner or husband (Brake, 1980; Christensen & Peterson, 1988; Frith, 1981). "The motivation to gain love may be so strong that it somewhat mitigates the abuse endured to obtain it," (Theodore, 1992, p. 398). Unsurprisingly, battered women, in turn, believe it is their responsibility to tend to their man's emotional needs (Morrow, Clark, & Brock, 1995; Walker, 1979) and make their men "whole" so they can become Prince Charming again (Wood, 2001).

Because women often are the ones who leave the relationship, they are also the ones who create conflict, according to lovers in the narratives of love. Hence, if battered

women do leave their batterers, song narratives condition them to believe batterers will become “alone in the world so cold” (Prince, 1984) or “lost without a trace” (Police, 1983). If a battered woman does muster up the courage to leave an abusive relationship, her support system of family and friends, which can be a determining factor in her not returning to the relationship (Strube & Barbour, 1984), may not be there for her because her batterer successfully undermined her relationships with family and friends (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998; Lempert, 1996; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), which is affirmed by the myth that we have one and only love defined by narratives of love. Consistent with Wood’s (2001) scrutiny of romantic love narratives, battering tactics can be essentially excused and promoted by popular love song narratives cultivating mythical ideals regarding romantic love and sex.

In reaction to love declining or a relationship ending, the narratives cultivated a wide-range of reactions such as male and female lovers reminding their partners of their former idealistic and symbiotic bond. However, male lovers were much more likely to identify the conflict and/or blame their female partners. Battered women typically accept a great deal of blame for any issues in the relationship (Wood, 2001), including ending an abusive relationship, while batterers prey upon battered women’s guilt they feel about not being able to sustain the relationship and save their batterers (Walker, 1979). Couples in abusive relationships often have an unhealthy attachment or dependency on one another (Walker, 1979) that sets up a couple for disappointment. Battered women are also more likely to be stalked by their former partners after ending their relationships (Coleman, 1988). While Sting in *Every Breath You Take* seems so affected by losing his female partner that he is determined to watch every breath she takes, it is very possible his

female partner left him because he was abusive. Perceiving this dark romance narrative that legitimizes abusive behaviors (2001) from a battered woman's perspective emulates stalking more than genuine love. With that being said, it would be misguided and dangerous for battered women to think that if they end the relationship, batterers will relinquish their control, not blame their battered partners, end their battering ways and instead favor moving on and reflecting positively on the relationship.

*When Doves Cry* represents the only song narrative that contained dynamics similar to the COV where tension builds, explodes and then returns to the honeymoon. However, it is not certain whether a listener would identify the features of the COV conveyed in this song. The rest of the love song narratives, whether they celebrated love's early phases or displayed a relationship's decline or end, depicted specific dynamics that are evident in the honeymoon phase of the COV, while a few songs depicted conflict that was similar to tension-building dynamics.

What is not cultivated by these song narratives is healthy relational cues that can help people make a more logical decision to commit to another person and maintain a relationship, not a decision that is based on mythical ideals or lust. Positivity, being open with each other, giving each other assurances and supporting one another, being empathetic, sharing in responsibilities, having a social network for outside support; openly communicating and negotiating autonomy (Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993) are not ascribed to romantic love and intimate partner relationships represented by these popular love songs. Furthermore, there was no mention that perhaps the lovers or their partners were abusive. Hence, relationships do not end because of abuse and/or a lack of healthy relationship elements such as mutuality and negotiated autonomy. Instead,

these song narratives cultivate the idea that relationships end because women cannot overcome their man cheating; women become successful and grow out of the relationship or just decide to leave their man alone. Therefore, if people are going to move on in a healthy way, women should agree with their men that too many promises were made or they both knew they were better off as friends than lovers. As such, the myth that abusive relationships can improve over time and the idea that women are to blame for inter-relationship conflict is bolstered by these love song narratives.

In summary, these love song narratives cultivate the belief that those in love must attain mythical ideals, while healthy relationship cues are unnecessary. Within the context of IPV, romantic love narratives are congruent with the fairy tale narratives conceived by mythical ideals or the dark romance narrative that legitimizes blaming, stalking or screaming at each other (Wood, 2001) as acceptable means to handle conflict. Inadvertently, male abuse and violence towards women is sanctioned by these love song narratives.



## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The myth that batterers are not loving and caring partners is what formed the foundation for this study. In reality, batterers can be extremely loving and caring, particularly during the honeymoon phase, and their behaviors often mirror the mythical standards cultivated by the love song narratives examined. This particular myth has a broader meaning suggesting that IPV and love do not co-exist in the same relationship, which is what makes the process of experiencing abuse and trying to make sense of what is occurring so confusing. Some friends and family members who see how the abusive relationship has affected their friend, sister, daughter or mother act in congruence to the myth that battered women can just leave and encourage battered women to leave. On the other hand, society and other friends and family, bound by cultural norms promoted by music, encourage battered women to believe the myths representing romantic love and act in accordance to them. Both approaches marginalize battered women and in large part, the issue of IPV.

Incidentally, there is a great deal of middle ground between these two ends of the spectrum that are absent in these song narratives. Acknowledging that middle ground can improve our collective understanding of abusive relationships because conceptions of love cultivated by myth distinguished in these popular love songs are not the building blocks of real love. Rather, they are idealistic goals that are extremely difficult to attain,

let alone maintain. Beginning a relationship under the guise that love is forever is backwards and encourages people to determine their future with another before taking the time to get to really know that person and how intimate partners should treat one another. Believing that love from another saves people encourages dependency, dissuades people from looking inward and learning to love and save themselves first. The idea that we have one and only love can encourage isolation from our supportive networks of friends and family who are necessary to help us nurture ourselves and find balance in our lives.

In actuality, real, genuine love was not idealized by the song narratives. Real love was deluded. The song narratives instead championed unhealthy relationship cues which create unrealistic expectations that instigate insecurities and a sense that people, particularly men, have no power and control over their behavior. To mitigate this lack of security, men must act out of jealousy and possessiveness to maintain power and control. Hence, the foundation for abuse to occur is laid. In contrast, the building blocks of loving and healthy relationships are mutual respect, trust, support, autonomy and conflict resolution skills. The notion that conflict will not occur in a relationship, which is evident in the song narratives depicting early phases of love, is unrealistic. Conflict and disagreement is inevitable. However, the narratives in this study recommended striving for mythical standards, acting out of desperation by pleading with a partner, blaming or stalking or ending the relationship instead of relying on healthy relationship cues when conflict does arise. The song narratives affirmed many of the same dynamics common in abusive relationships such as the idea that love will save the relationship and the batterer and the relationship will endure forever. The narratives legitimized, as well as romanticized, behaviors like stalking and blaming as part of the dark romance narrative,

while the narratives symbolically annihilated the notion of an abusive relationship from narratives of love.

As the issue of male violence against women has gained awareness, research has focused on power and control dynamics, patriarchal values, psychologies of battered women and batterers to understand this phenomenon. Certainly, this has been and continues to be necessary. However, our misconceptions about romantic love are where abusive relationships begin, which is highlighted by this study. Any woman who falls in love and commits to a man does not expect to be battered, deserves to be battered or asks to be battered. Women expect to love and be loved just like love songs project. Yet, when the relationship does become abusive, women still bear the burden of proof with the question “Why does she stay?” or, even, “What did she do to deserve this?” This study intended to explain how popular love songs play a role in cultivating reasons for battered women to remain in an abusive relationship. However, the main purpose of this study was to emphasize that batterers who exact violence, manipulate battered women to maintain their power and control and keep the COV churning, mostly manipulate romantic love itself. Batterers are enabled to manipulate romantic love by acting in accordance to the authoritative voice of popular love songs and other media, which are saturated with mythical narratives of love. These prescriptions can become a tool batterers use to enhance their powers of manipulation and solidify their control, not provide women with a healthy perspective about love and relationships.

While cultivation theory has been applied to research on television and music videos, this study is one of the few that applied the theory to music and IPV. There is no doubt imagery in television and music videos are a powerful source of persuasion

affecting beliefs and attitudes about romantic love and relationships. Ultimately, music's integration into the courtship process combined with an audience's ability to play songs at-will due to technological advancements or sing along with the songs implicates music's power to persuade. Hence, song narratives and their link between cultivated beliefs, attitudes and behaviors regarding love and relationships could provide a better understanding of why people adhere to unrealistic or mythical ideals about romantic love, remain in abusive relationships and/or justify violence in their romantic relationships.

Thus, what can be explored through a cultivation theoretical perspective in future research are what narratives of love in other genres or eras of music, as well as other media, provide in regards to the acceptance of IPV. The difference between narratives performed by male and female performers or the song writer's sex can be specifically examined in subsequent studies. While the gender of the partner was not usually identified in the narratives, this study adopted the cultural norm of heterosexuality in identifying the relationships depicted in the song narratives and viewed them through a heterosexual perspective. Thus, applying a homosexual perspective could be applied. Lastly, the impact melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo and other musical properties contribute to effecting listener's perceptions about romantic love or how musical properties and aesthetics coupled with narratives of love influence listeners could be the focus of future research.

Future research abound, if we want to stop IPV and the COV from churning, we must understand the whole picture of IPV that is framed by romantic love. We must understand that lofty ideals dominating love songs also dominate abusive relationships and empower a batterer's manipulative ways and narratives of abuse instead of a battered

woman's ability to distinguish between real love and abuse. We must understand that love is not a love song even though the artist serenading listeners can emote such intense emotions. Lastly, we must understand love narratives can encourage women to excuse battering and put their desire for this deluded love above their own well-being, as long as the battering is followed by the illusion of love cultivated by popular love songs.

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APPENDIX

Table 1 Top love songs of the 1980s

Year	Song	Artist/Band	Vocalist's Sex	Year-end Billboard Chart Ranking
1980	Call Me	Blondie	Female	#1
1980	Rock With You	Michael Jackson	Male	#4
1981	Bette Davis Eyes	Kim Carnes	Female	#1
1981	Endless Love	Lionel Richie and Diana Ross	Male/Female	#2
1981	Lady	Kenny Rogers	Male	#3
1982	Physical	Olivia Newton- John	Female	#1
1982	Centerfold	J. Geils Band	Male	#5
1982	Don't You Want Me	Human League	Male/Female	#6
1983	Every Breath You Take	The Police	Male	#1
1983	Total Eclipse Of The Heart	Bonnie Tyler	Female	#6
1983	Baby, Come to Me	Patti Austin and James Ingram	Male/Female	#8
1984	When Doves Cry	Prince	Male	#1
1984	What's Love Got To Do With It	Tina Turner	Female	#2
1985	Careless Whisper	Wham	Male	#1
1985	Like A Virgin	Madonna	Female	#2
1986	I Miss You	Klymaxx	Female	#3
1986	On My Own	Patti Labelle and Michael McDonald	Male/Female	#4
1986	Broken Wings	Mr. Mister	Male	#5
1987	Alone	Heart	Female	#2
1987	Shake You Down	Gregory Abbot	Male	#3
1988	Faith	George Michael	Male	#1
1988	So Emotional	Whitney Houston	Female	#6
1989	Look Away	Chicago	Male	#1
1989	Straight Up	Paula Abdul	Female	#4