

## The Representations of Self-Love in Justin Bieber's *Love Yourself*

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### ABSTRACT

The song of *Love Yourself* by Justin Bieber talks about the importance of self-love and acceptance by encouraging any audience to prioritize their own needs and well-being, rather than seeking validation from others. Through the lyrics, Bieber emphasizes the idea that love and respect start from within oneself. Self-love should be focused by letting go of toxic relationships and negative influences and to pay more attention to each person's own growth and happiness. By answering the question of how may self-love be represented on Justin Bieber's *Love Yourself?*, the song's message is particularly relevant in today's world where social media and external pressures often dictate how people perceive themselves. *Love Yourself* serves as a powerful reminder that self-love and acceptance are key to mental and emotional well-being. In conclusion, *Love Yourself* is a powerful song that promotes self-love and acceptance including pushing out any negativity and toxic influence.

**Keywords:** Justin Bieber; *Love Yourself*; Self-Love; Content Analysis

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### INTRODUCTION

This study aims deeper into the representations of self-love in Justin Bieber's *Love Yourself*. By analyzing the song's lyrics, musical composition, and emotional impact, the researchers unravel the layers of meaning behind this influential piece of music. Moreover, the researchers aim to explore how the song's message of self-worth and personal growth resonates to the audiences and contributes to the broader conversation surrounding self-love in contemporary society. The lyrics of *Love Yourself* are a strong narrative that tells a story about self-discovery, empowerment, and the complexities of romantic relationships. The structure of the song resembles that of a short story or a poem, with its lines unfolding like chapters, each contributing to the overall plot (GeniusMedia, 2015; LyricInterpretations, 2020). The song was released as a single from the album of *Purpose* in 2015.

This paper answers the question of how may self-love be represented on Justin Bieber's *Love Yourself?*. By doing so, various interpretations of self-love are attained to emphasize the meanings implied in the song. Self-love is understood in the lyrics of the

song as how everyone should always pay more attention to him/her own self. It should be done to keep it intact so that any kind of pain could be handled and not be worsened from time to time. The lyrics also show that being individual to some extent of senses are necessary to build such internal defense for any bad things that may come.

## METHOD

This research aims to analyze the lyrics of Justin Bieber's *Love Yourself* that speak of the importance of self-love. The research method used is content analysis with qualitative approach. The data used in this research are the lyrics of the song *Love Yourself* written by Justin Bieber, Ed Sheeran, and Benny Blanco. This data was obtained from Justin Bieber's official website and online music platforms. The first step in the content analysis is to read the song lyrics as a whole to understand the context and the message Justin Bieber wants to convey. Next, the researchers analyze keywords and phrases related to the concept of self-love. The results of the analysis show that the lyrics of the song *Love Yourself* tells about the importance of loving self and not relying on others to feel happy.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Love, Song, and Past Memories in *Love Yourself*

The song *Love Yourself* sung by Justin Bieber tells the story of an ex-lover who was too selfish when he was in a romantic relationship. Although the romantic relationship has ended, it turns out that the ex still disturbs his life (GeniusMedia, 2015; SongTell, 2020). The woman's behavior finally made the man feel annoyed and told him to just leave. Because of this, the man also understood why the relationship he had with his ex-girlfriend had to end. He remembers how she treated him when they were still together. The ugly nature of the ex is not only felt by the man, but also by his mother. The ex was self-righteous, manipulative in her behavior by accusing her friends, and only used the man's success for her own benefit (NME, 2020; SongTell, 2020).

The full lyrics of the song are as following:

#### **[Verse 1]**

*For all the times that you rained on my parade  
And all the clubs you get in using my name  
You think you broke my heart, oh girl, for goodness' sake  
You think I'm cryin' on my own, well, I ain't*

#### **[Refrain]**

*And I didn't wanna write a song  
'Cause I didn't want anyone thinking I still care  
I don't, but you still hit my phone up  
And baby, I'll be movin' on  
And I think you should be somethin' I don't wanna hold back  
Maybe you should know that*

**[Pre-Chorus]**

*My mama don't like you and she likes everyone  
And I never like to admit that I was wrong  
And I've been so caught up in my job, didn't see what's going on  
But now I know, I'm better sleeping on my own*

**[Chorus]**

*'Cause if you like the way you look that much  
Oh baby, you should go and love yourself  
And if you think that I'm still holdin' on to somethin'  
You should go and love yourself*

**[Verse 2]**

*But when you told me that you hated my friends  
The only problem was with you and not them  
And every time you told me my opinion was wrong  
And tried to make me forget where I came from*

**[Refrain]**

**[Pre-Chorus]**

**[Chorus]**

**[Bridge]**

*For all the times that you made me feel small  
I fell in love, now I feel nothin' at all  
I never felt so low and I was vulnerable  
Was I a fool to let you break down my walls?*

**[Chorus]** (GeniusMedia, 2015)

The song *Love Yourself* focuses on the power of self-love and self-care. The lyrics show how important it is to love oneself and take care of oneself before trying to build relationships with others. When someone loves and takes care of his/her own self, he/she is able to build healthy and happy relationships with others. The lyrics of the song also show how hard it is to let go of someone (GeniusMedia, 2015; SongTell, 2020). However, in the end, it can be best for both sides to go through different directions.

## **Self-Indications and Its Continuations in Self-Love**

The meaning of self has been known since philosophy came to the world. When people ask about surrounding things, they will always automatically ask about the existence of who they really are. It is in line with knowledge that always makes an effort to give wider perceptions to self. Modern aspect sees self as being while postmodern perspective understands it as matter of becoming (Maurer, 2019; Taylor, 2021). The being is also named as essence while the becoming is about existence. In many ways, both may contrast to each other but the intersections between them are undeniable as well. It is because self is loosely defined. It may be defined but the unlimited definitions will never be able to capture the wholeness of meanings of self.

One of the main aspects in understanding self is through how emotion and mind work. Indeed, the psychological aspect could be the one that may show indications of self and its various continuations. In this sense, self-indications are how the self is explained in a rational aspect. It should be logical that could explain why human beings could give reaction to former action in various interactions (Henschke & Sedlmeier, 2021; Taylor, 2021). In this matter, self-indications are so communicative in the sense of symbolic interactionism. By showing how individuals could know, understand, and do something based on the values, self-indications emphasize the matter of being self and others as well.

In other words, self-indications are how meanings may be attained in humans' life. There is no single definition that could give the whole aspects of self. Yet, self-indication may correlate more to the psychological mind of self (Banks, 2022; Yoshino, 2020). The sense of self-indication could mean various aspects. One aspect is about such valuation to the matter of self itself. The self is considered valuable and should be approached and appreciated by any means. It should be proclaimed as the ultimate aspect of someone's life. There is nothing more important than your own self. Though someone may apply altruism, the tension to always take care of oneself is always intact in the following.

Another aspect gives foundations to the idea of pointing out the self. By appointing the self, all fingers are going towards their own self. In this aspect, the one who is responsible is the self itself (Maurer, 2019; Taylor, 2021). Anyone may do something wrong to him/herself. However, the main focus is how one's own self may react to such wrongdoing. If revenge arises, the self is lost since it only follows the law of action and reaction in causal effect interaction. If someone could forgive, it widens perspectives of self since it always needs a bigger heart to accept anyone's apology.

Further aspect shows that self-indication is stating or declaring the importance of self here. By stating the crucial aspect of self, people may accentuate themselves through who they really are. Someone may say "This is who I am" if he/she could declare that him/herself is the one that is fully doing the things based on his/her own awareness (Deniz & Yıldırım Kurtuluş, 2023; Maurer, 2019). In this aspect, declaration of one's own self also underlines such self-consciousness in the sense of self-definition. In the self-definition, it does not mean that the self is already defined in various given statement, but it slowly defines who he/she really is by looking at how

he/she performs identities in everyday life (Banks, 2022; Deniz & Yıldırım Kurtuluş, 2023). This one also correlates that self-indication is a process of defining self itself; not to reach the ultimate one, but to always take care of abundant variables in the process.

From the various aspects above, self-indication is a matter of automatic and intentional action towards self. It is automatic since any external deed may always show inner self-indication. It is also intentioned since people could always do something more positive by indicating what he/she really wants to shape with any deed done (Aulia et al., 2022; Deniz & Yıldırım Kurtuluş, 2023). The continuation of self-indication is a matter of self-love. It is such a positive impact of self-indication since any person who always re-examine his/her life will always get better knowledge to direct life to any better condition widely.

Self-love is a positive deed in accepting and appreciating oneself. This aspect is closely related to mental health since the perspective contributes to best ways in treating one's self. This idea is better being seen in its practical contexts. By emphasizing love, people should not drown in any sadness and keep the self-commitment intact (Akbar et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2023). No one should think that he/she is useless since any human is considered imperfect. Therefore, self-love also gives understanding to human beings to always raise self-appreciation no matter what (Pasopati, et al., 2023; Pujimahanani, et al., 2023).

One important thing of self-love is self-appreciation. This idea may reflect two main aspects. The first idea is about the usual deed that is done to take care of self. It is usual since appreciating is the most important aspect in living. It is also the best medium to communicate with other people (Karaşar, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2023). If applied to other people, it could also result in further self-appreciation either. For instance, in matters of broken-heartedness, someone should always be careful to take care of it. Anyone in a relationship must always be ready to forgive each other. It is because that action is the way for self to move forward (Smarandreeha et al., 2023; Yuliasuti et al., 2021). By doing so, both aspects of self are appreciated and amended as well.

The second part is not usual but underlines such higher indication towards what self has been done. It is usually related to daily routine in which self is forgotten (Djanarko & Pasopati, 2019; Pujimahanani et al., 2023). People are not taking care of themselves and bodies and tend to work, to study, or to do any other thing in routines. This aspect emphasizes self-love that is more extraordinary. An example of this action is giving more time to re-examine what self has been done in a period of life. Doing hobbies or having vacation may be such aspects to raise self-love to appreciate such self-achievement. It is usually done as a matter of self-motivation to always love own self better than any other thing (Pasopati, et al., 2023; Pujimahanani, et al., 2023).

Moreover, the matter of self-love is not about being selfish, narcissistic, or even hedonism. Those three aspects could only degenerate rather than raise self to higher values (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Pasopati, 2016). Self-love is about self but also about how anyone should be tolerant to other people. In this sense, self-love is also an active mode that pushes anyone to always re-examine life. By stating so, self-love does not mean to

dominate other people by prioritizing oneself (Henschke & Sedlmeier, 2021; Yoshino, 2020). It rather underlines that self-love is used to reach such a *vis-a-vis* balance between self and otherness.

### **Reflections of Self-Love in *Love Yourself***

The lyrics of *Love Yourself* indeed show indication of self-love. In the lyrics, self-love is not mentioned as its intrinsic meaning. It is about such protest to anything that the partner does may hinder self-love to the main person (GeniusMedia, 2015; LyricInterpretations, 2020). The main character is directed not to be his own self, but to always nod to anything that the other person does. The full analyses of the lyrics are listed below:

#### **[Verse 1]**

*For all the times that you rained on my parade  
And all the clubs you get in using my name  
You think you broke my heart, oh girl, for goodness' sake  
You think I'm cryin' on my own, well, I ain't*

In the Verse 1, the singer addresses his former partner, recounting the negative experiences he had with her. The phrase "rained on my parade" suggests that the partner consistently brought negativities and difficulties into the singer's life. The line "all the clubs you get in using my name" implies that the partner used the singer's fame or influence to gain access to exclusive places or social circles (GeniusMedia, 2015; SongTell, 2020). Indeed, she has broken his heart by deeply hurting the singer. However, the singer contradicts this assumption by stating that he is not as devastated as the partner might think.

The lyrics above also underline that the character does not want another person to dictate him at any cost. He does not want to be intervened in his own life. He prefers to stay on himself to love others, but first he has to love himself first. The lyrics also imply that he is quite strong though the partner has destroyed him by giving bad influence to him. He wants to be firm in his own self. His self-love keeps refusing the prolonging shadow of the partner in his life (GeniusMedia, 2015; Henschke & Sedlmeier, 2021). Therefore, self-love in this part of lyrics is not about affirming, but to tell what should be done in any relationship.

#### **[Refrain]**

*And I didn't wanna write a song  
'Cause I didn't want anyone thinking I still care  
I don't, but you still hit my phone up  
And baby, I'll be movin' on  
And I think you should be somethin' I don't wanna hold back  
Maybe you should know that*

In the refrain, the singer explains that he initially had no intention of writing a song about the breakup. He did not want people to believe that he still has feelings for the ex-partner. Despite this, the partner continues to contact him, indicating that she might be unwilling to let go of the past (NME, 2020; SongTell, 2020). The singer asserts that he is moving on with his life and suggests that the partner should do the same. He also does not want to hold back as it implies that the partner deserves someone who can fully reciprocate her feelings, which the singer feels he could not do. He urges the partner to be aware of this fact.

The song that he does not want to write is a symbol of his rejection to shape such memories regarding the past relationship. He totally would like to forget the relationship. It is also shown in his intention to always avoid any call from the former partner. Furthermore, by moving on and refusing to hold back, the singer would like to accentuate the matter of self-love that has been lost since he has been in that relationship. To attain further and deeper self-love, he must be able to reach himself again by saying no to any thing that keeps giving him negative feelings toward himself and others (Henschke & Sedlmeier, 2021; SongMeaningsandFacts, 2020).

***[Pre-Chorus]***

*My mama don't like you and she likes everyone  
And I never like to admit that I was wrong  
And I've been so caught up in my job, didn't see what's going on  
But now I know, I'm better sleeping on my own*

In the pre-chorus, the singer references his mother's disapproval of the partner. He emphasizes that his mother typically likes everyone, but she makes an exception in this case. This highlights the partner's negative impact on the singer's life (LyricInterpretations, 2020; NME, 2020). The next line reveals the singer's difficulty in acknowledging his mistakes. This could imply that the partner's negative behavior might have been overlooked for some time. Yet, he could not do much since both of them are still in love with each other. The singer's busy lifestyle and preoccupation with work also causes him to overlook the issues in the relationship (Henschke & Sedlmeier, 2021; SongMeaningsandFacts, 2020). However, the singer has come to a realization by expressing that he is better off being alone. Indeed, it is suggesting that the relationship was toxic and that he is always better without it.

The existence of mama in this lyric is such emphasis on the relations in inner and outer meanings. Parent is where someone could say anything and retain any self-love. If any relation is bad, family will be affected too. Moreover, he does not want to admit that he was wrong since he does not know any of his faults (Karaşar, 2021; NME, 2020). The lyric indicates that he is the victim and he wants to attain his own self again. He must be alone in his life to re-examine what effect the relationship brings to his own life. He is intended to find further self-love by denying any bad thing that has happened in the memories of past relationships.

**[Chorus]**

*'Cause if you like the way you look that much  
Oh baby, you should go and love yourself  
And if you think that I'm still holdin' on to somethin'  
You should go and love yourself*

In the chorus, the singer delivers a powerful message of self-empowerment and self-love. He addresses the partner's preoccupation with own appearance and self-image. He suggests that if the partner values herself so highly, their relationship will be better (LyricInterpretations, 2020; NME, 2020). The last two lines serve as a response to the partner's mistaken belief that the singer is still emotionally attached to the relationship. The singer asserts that he has let go of any lingering feelings and advises the partner to do the same.

It is quite interesting to see the direction of intention shown in the Chorus. In a way, the lines are directed to the partner. He tells her that she must love herself. This idea gives meaning that she has been dictating the relationship and makes her unable to be free than before. She is used to dictating the other person in the relationship. The other way emphasizes on himself to reach better self-love. By loving himself, he could always hold on to himself and leave any dependence to the other person (NME, 2020; Yoshino, 2020). It is interesting to see both aspects of self-love as invitation and advice to any individual and his/her particular relationship with anyone.

**[Verse 2]**

*But when you told me that you hated my friends  
The only problem was with you and not them  
And every time you told me my opinion was wrong  
And tried to make me forget where I came from*

In Verse 2, the singer provides more details about the negative aspects of the relationship. The partner expresses dislike for the singer's friends, which the singer sees as a reflection of the partner's issues, rather than a problem with his friends (NME, 2020; Sarmi et al., 2023). The partner's habit of invalidating the singer's opinions further also demonstrates the toxic nature of the relationship. Additionally, the partner's attempts to distance the singer from his roots or background indicate a lack of respect for his individuality and origins.

The lyrics also show emphasis on the relationship that directs the character away from his self-love. He is pushed to love the other person, but he never loves himself anymore. That is why he is also pushed to be away from his own circumstance. She never gets involved in his own opinion as she always rejects his opinion. Though the opinion may be wrong, he is not told to speak on his own behalf (Henschke & Sedlmeier, 2021; Taylor, 2021). He is the one who should re-examine his own deeds. However, he is always told to go forward and forget his own self. This is what makes

him hate the partner and directs himself away from her. He thinks that it is always better for him to stay alone rather than to live but without any sense of self-love.

**[Bridge]**

*For all the times that you made me feel small  
I fell in love, now I feel nothin' at all  
I never felt so low and I was vulnerable  
Was I a fool to let you break down my walls?*

The last part of the lyrics underlines the importance of forgiveness and learning from mistakes (GeniusMedia, 2015; LyricInterpretations, 2020). The song also shows that even though relationships can end badly, one can still learn from the experience and grow as a stronger individual. It is also about self-care that any feeling should begin from self before going out to other people. Anyone must be aware of his/her own self so that any vulnerable mental health could be avoided (Henschke & Sedlmeier, 2021; NME, 2020). By underlining self-care, the main focus is the self and all matters related to self should always be intended towards that main idea. The song shows that understanding the importance of self-love and self-care can help one build healthy and happy relationships with others.

## CONCLUSION

*Love Yourself* tells the story of someone who feels betrayed by his partner. In the end, he realizes that he should love himself first before loving others. The lyrics also emphasize on the importance of loving oneself and not relying too much on others to feel happy. Any dependence is needed, but its total condition must always be avoided. Loving oneself means accepting and appreciating self by knowing that self has the right to be happy without letting others put their own self down and harm it. It is important as a crucial intention to feel happy and to live peacefully.

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