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# Mesmerized by MTV: Youth's Contemporary Yin Yang

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**MESMERIZED BY MTV:**  
**YOUTH'S CONTEMPORARY YIN YANG**


*A Rhetorical-Critical Study of MTV's First Decade and its  
Relative Impact Upon American Youth Culture*

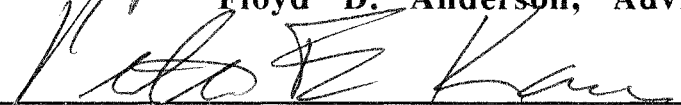
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David A. Livermore

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Faculty of Communication of the  
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Master of Arts  
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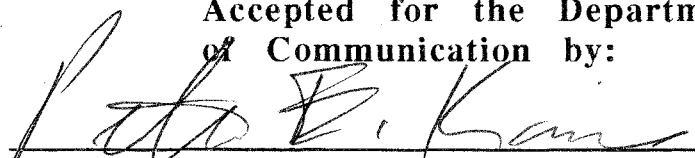
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# *MESMERIZED BY MTV: Youth's Contemporary Yin Yang*

## *A Rhetorical-Critical Study of MTV's First Decade and its Relative Impact Upon Youth*

By David A. Livermore

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## *Introduction:*

Proposal: A rhetorical-critical study of MTV's first decade and the rhetorical motives of MTV videos. This thesis sets out to research the rhetoric of MTV through the use of Kenneth Burke's cluster analysis and the potential impact of these messages upon adolescent culture.

Overriding Research Question: What are the conscious and subconscious rhetorical motives of MTV videos and how do they impact today's youth?

Now look at them yo-yo's--that's the way you do it

You play your guitar on the MTV

That aint workin'--that's the way you do it

Money for nothin' and your chicks for free

I want my, I want my, I want my MTV!...

(Rock group Dire Straits in "Money for Nothing")

This thesis project has sought to conduct a rhetorical-critical study of MTV videos. The study has attempted to analyze the messages being communicated through MTV to youth. While taking into consideration the past ten years of MTV programming, the project focuses on current programming on MTV and its relative impact upon the adolescent culture.

## *Rationale for Study:*

Having worked a great deal among the adolescent culture and having spent many hours and classes studying the field of communication, I was intensely interested in researching the popularity of MTV among adolescents and the messages it presents. Though MTV is only one aspect of the mass media world which is so pervasively affecting youth, it is indeed a very significant part of both the media and youth cultures.

Though there are many books which allude to or make mention of MTV and a number of articles warning about the potential long-range effects of the videos, there seems to be very little written which thoroughly focuses solely on the rhetorical messages of MTV. It was my hypothesis as I began to study that a great deal of the material addressing MTV looks only at the conscious and overt messages communicated and my interest was to research the subconscious messages and motives.

Because of the dominant position MTV continues to have in both the mass media field and the adolescent culture, it seems that some thorough study and reporting on the industry is needed. It is an ideal time to conduct such research with MTV just completing its tenth year of programming.

### ***Method for Study:***

The methodological approach I chose to rhetorically-critique MTV was Kenneth Burke's cluster analysis of key terms. A cluster analysis seeks to discover what words and which images accompany specific themes and why. "Essentially, it is a way of finding out what something means by finding out what the terms are associated with in the poet's [rhetor's] mind" (Rueckert 86, 1963). Whenever he or she portrays subject "A", what are the images of "B", "C", and "D" that the rhetor introduces? "By charting clusters, we get our cues as to the important ingredients consumed in 'symbolic-mergers'" (Burke 233, 1937). As this method relates to MTV, not only the words of the content were analyzed, but more importantly, the visual images accompanying the words. Burke's method suggests that the charting of these clusters will eventually reveal how thoroughly the synthesis of the words and images manage to avoid the "law of excluded middle," central to argumentative thought (Burke 1937).

Chapter four of Section II is devoted entirely to explaining the method of cluster analysis and its application to the research conducted. To my knowledge, no cluster analysis of MTV content has ever been published and it appears to be an excellent way to critique the rhetoric of music videos.

## *Summary:*

This thesis project endeavors to define the predominant rhetorical messages of MTV. MTV has made a drastic impact upon the media field, the youth culture, and the world. By use of a cluster analysis, I have suggested some of the overriding themes propagated.

I have approached this by dividing the thesis into three sections. Section I provides an overview by looking at some of the research previously conducted on MTV. It examines the history, a brief look at the content, and the responses to MTV.

Section II is the substantive portion of the project sharing the results and findings from the cluster analysis. Each of the five most frequent and intense images and clusters are fleshed out in a chapter respectively.

Finally, Section III serves to draw some conclusions from the cluster analysis presented in Section II. Based upon the information revealed through the clusters, and with the help of some further research of others' findings in relation to youth and MTV, the final chapter comments on the role of MTV in the value formation of contemporary youth.

MTV's celebration of its tenth anniversary brought many "decade specials" as well as numerous articles and documentaries analyzing the decade. In seeking to be as



objective as possible, I have set forth to critique the messages being communicated to MTV's primary audience, teenagers.

Section I: An Overview of MTV:  
History, Content, and Response

In seeking to understand the rhetorical messages being communicated through MTV rock videos, it is important to understand some of the background of the network. Chapter one provides an overview of the history of MTV over the past ten years since its debut in August 1981. Chapter two gives a succinct look at some of the content of the channel. Content will be covered much more thoroughly in Section II of the thesis. Chapter three represents some of the response to MTV from viewers, old and young, and MTV's response to that input.

Chapter 1--History: A Decade of Decadence?!

Chapter 2--Content: What You See is What You Get?!

Chapter 3--Response: Creating Raping Murderers or Artists?!

## Chapter 1--History:

### A Decade of Decadence?!:

#### *A Channel "for" the Youth of America...*

On March 3, 1981, WASEC (Warner-Annex Satellite Entertainment Company) announced its plans to launch a twenty-four hour video music network, with plans to begin on August 1. In their announcement, they stated that a body of young people were being ignored, that body being the adolescents of America who appeared to be the group with the least interest in television! This new channel, to be labeled "MTV," would focus its attention on this demographic group (Denisoff 1989).

Targeting specific cable audiences for an entire channel was a relatively new concept. In January 1979, there was no such scientific targeting of cable audiences. By the end of 1979, three basic cable services were offered to specific groups: ESPN for sports-viewers, C-Span for coverage of United States Congressional sessions, and Nickelodeon, WASEC's children's channel. WASEC soon added a paid channel, the Movie Channel, shortly after which, other companies added the Home Box Office channel and Showtime (Lewis 1990). When WASEC introduced MTV in 1981, it is said to have been the most thoroughly researched new channel venture in American television history (Levy 1983).

The emergence of MTV can be credited primarily to three men at WASEC. As mentioned above, MTV was an addition to the already successful Nickelodeon and the Movie Channel that Warner operated. John Schneider, president and chief executive officer of WASEC, oversaw the whole idea behind MTV seeking to tap into the ignored audience range of 12-34. John Lack, executive vice president, had been a rock music devotee himself since his own teens and he was the conceptualizer for the network. He hired Bob Pittman, perhaps the most well-known name in relation to MTV, in October 1979. Pittman was part of the target audience age span. Pittman's experience included a successful career as a program director for radio stations, moving in from Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago and New York City. While his ratings climbed, Pittman was frustrated with formatted radio; he saw it as excessively conservative and as a major part of the ongoing lethargy in the music industry. Although Pittman was already reported to be the highest paid program director in the nation, he moved to WASEC for an offer he could not refuse (Denisoff 1986). He would now serve as program director for "radio you could see."

### *A Channel for the Music Industry of America...*

MTV debuted during a time when record sales were reporting a loss of four hundred million dollars in three years. Sales went from 4 billion dollars in 1978 to 3.6

billion dollars in 1981 (Lewis 1990). Few artists were selling albums prolifically like Elvis, nor with the longevity that the Beatles sold theirs. While teenagers were still listening to the radio, it had faded as a potent cultural and economic force in their lives. MTV presented itself to the record companies as the cure for what radio could no longer do--sell their records (Pareles 1983).

The premiere MTV video was from a relatively unknown British rock group called the Buggles. The video was entitled "Video Killed the Radio Star." Though the group was somewhat obscure, the video presented a very strong message, the essence of which is captured in the title. This set the trend for what MTV would end up doing...kill the radio star (Denisoff 1988).

Six weeks after MTV went on the air, record sales rose for artists receiving heavy play on the channel (Lewis 1990). By 1983, a Nielsen survey commissioned by Warner showed that MTV was influencing sixty-three percent of its viewing audience to buy certain albums. People such as Polygram Record's vice president, Lee Eband, and Jim Mazza, president of Capitol Records and EMI Records, cited MTV as the most powerful selling tool their industry had ever seen (Levy 1983).

MTV employed an exceptional set of commercial strategies. It united rock music and television in order to

capture the "most desirable" group of consumers. WASEC's cost was minimized by getting record companies to regard the channel as their personal advertising vehicle (Lewis 1990). This did not result in a totally free channel for WASEC. Each video clip cost MTV about 1000 dollars to clean up the audio, to transfer it to one inch tape, and for a 14 cent air play licensing fee (Denisoff 1989).

From the evidence presented thus far, it is very evident that MTV is quite profit-oriented! MTV has big sales at the heart of its commercial being. As mentioned earlier, a survey conducted just six weeks after MTV debuted showed a dramatic increase in record sales. The network has continued to play a big part in helping record companies sell cassettes, discs, and records. For example, playing Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video on MTV boosted weekly sales of his album from 200,000 to 600,000. This power of MTV to sell has further spread into the field of film. Such movies as *Top Gun*, *Dirty Dancing*, or *Terminator 2* exemplify this power (Denisoff 1986).

As one *Billboard* writer, Lauri Foti, emphasized, "Their sole reason for being was not art, self-expression, or entertainment, but sales"(Lauri Foti, quoted by Doherty 357, 1987). MTV convinced recording executives that video time was equivalent to commercial time; they persuaded them that, in fact, videos were "free" commercials. Appropriately then, most American rock videos are produced and directed by

advertising personnel rather than by recording artists (Schultze 1991).

When we say some teenagers watch an average of two hours of MTV daily, we are saying more or less that they are watching two hours of advertising (Kaplan 1987). E. Ann Kaplan states:

More than other programs, MTV positions the spectator in the mode of constantly hoping that the next ad segment...will satisfy the desire for plentitude...MTV is more obviously than other programs one nearly continuous advertisement, the flow being merely broken down into different kinds of ads (1987, 143).

### *A Channel with "Great Success?!"...*

MTV was very successful with its use of the "I Want My MTV" campaign. The campaign centered on Dire Straits' song "I Want My MTV" from their album *Money for Nothing* and served to unite youth throughout America. Without doubt, MTV's strongest selling point to record companies was and continues to be the demographic distribution of its audience (Denisoff 1989).

Seeing the success WASEC had with MTV, others tried to build upon their idea. Ted Turner debuted CMC (Cable Music

Channel) in October 1984, saying it would play a wide variety of music without being "degrading like MTV". Turner described MTV as excessively violent with degrading portrayals of women. He said, "What good is it if you win the ratings battle and wreck your country by polluting the young people's minds" (Denisoff 188, 1989)? Turner's CMC began October 26, 1984 (Denisoff 1989).

The 1985 Nielsen ratings caused an uproar for Pittman and MTV as a whole. The ratings dropped 35.5 percent from 1984 to 1985 (Lewis 1990). Was this a result of the lull in singles being produced in the record industry, Turner's CMC being a great success, or some other cause. It certainly was not the success of CMC. In fact, CMC was not nearly as successful as predicted and shut down on November 30, 1985.

Just two days before CMC's shutdown, Pittman and MTV announced the debut of VH-1 (Video Hits-1) on New Year's Day, 1986. VH-1 was geared for an older audience who liked music videos, but disliked the content of MTV. As VH-1 expanded, the focus of MTV narrowed to its "rock n' roll" roots and welcomed back heavy metal (Denisoff 1989).

In addition to creating VH-1, MTV did other things to seek to improve its ratings. It introduced specialized shows such as "Sixties' Classics" programs geared for the Yuppie nostalgic crowd and initiated "Dial MTV," a viewer request call-in program. Ratings continually improved in



1986. MTV spokesman, Tom Freston, said, "It's a tremendous challenge to stay hip and cool and up to the minute without getting hokey!" (Denisoff 336, 1989).

Ironically, another promotional strategy used in 1986 was developing the channel's self-promotional spots through the clever satirization of objections made about MTV. One spot shows a man watching MTV for 24 hours, taking its own advertisement literally. He becomes increasingly disheveled and ill until a voice comes on and says, "MTV is bad for you." Another logo consists of interviews with people describing the evil things that occur on MTV. The appeal here is to the illicit. While these satirical logos are still used occasionally, the content has changed extensively again. They now usually exist in some sort of colorful, varied, and imaginative fashion. Some are animated, comic spots, while others are abstract and patterned. The letters "MTV" are arranged in imaginative ways which constantly engage one's attention. One of the logo clips from the sample used in my research shows a back view of four naked men jumping up on a wall creating the MTV logo ("Best of Autumn..." 1991).

Ten years later, MTV has continued to grow in popularity. WASEC's narrowly geared channel has not only had a great impact commercially, it has also become a major

part of the lives of most adolescents (Schultze 1991). Because of the degree to which many adolescents idealize "MTV," it is important to look at the content of the channel.

## Chapter 2--Content:

### What You See is What You Get?!

Examining the content of MTV requires looking at rock music itself, the images that accompany the music, and along with this content, the style used to present it. This chapter will attempt only to look at it from an all-inclusive view, realizing the cluster analysis which follows in Section II deals with content much more accurately and specifically.

### *The "R" Words (Rock and Roll!!)...*

In choosing rock music as its focal point, MTV evoked the specific, pre-existing ideological discourse of rock and roll. On the surface, "rock and roll" is a neutral label that distinguishes a particular kind of music. However, when examined more closely, it also comprises a set of ideological assumptions about music creation and social life. Rock and roll did not emerge solely as a musical genre, but also as a means through which the effects of commercialization of music and industrialization of musical production could be negotiated. Furthermore, social inequalities can be addressed in this cultural arena (Lewis 1990).

In the thirty years of its existence, rock music has dominated America's musical taste. Rock is popular music

that consciously borrows from the American rhythm-blues tradition. Robert Pattison in his book about rock music, *The Triumph of Vulgarly*, writes, "Rock is the aesthetic of romanticism vulgarized" (1987, 188).

Rock's discourse brings about apparent contradictions. The rock industry holds an anti-commercial stance encouraging a position of political opposition to capitalistic organization of cultural production. At the same time, it denies the extent to which its own creations are objects of capitalistic enterprises. It is highly dependent upon commercial success, though that is not cited as a criterion for authenticity (Lewis 1990). I will look at this aspect much more thoroughly throughout the development of the research for the thesis.

Rock music is not married to any single medium. It began on vinyl and on AM radio. It now dominates FM programming and of course a variety of cable television channels. Rock videos demonstrate the ease with which rock music habituates itself to film. It is not so much that rock adapted to film as film adapted to rock (Pattison 1987).

### *The "F" Word (Form!!)...*

MTV functions as a continuous twenty-four hour advertisement in that nearly all of its short segments are advertisements of one kind or another. The content and form of these MTV segments duplicate the production situation of advertisements. The typical video averages four minutes in length. Most consist of illogical image changes, avant-garde techniques, free-lance crews, and omission of the production credits. The financial tie-in to record companies is pervasive throughout the production. In fact, a great deal of tension exists for the artists in desiring to maintain the creative element of their videos and yet the artists sensing that MTV perceives itself as an institution in and of itself. Many directors object to the song being written first and adding the visual images thereafter. Directors want the two to be done simultaneously. Many artists however, fear doing that will make their songs glorified advertisements (Kaplan 1987).

The informal, easy, and relaxed style of veejays is intended to conjure up a natural ambiance of teens gathered in a room to listen to music with a group of peers. There is no news other than music news which further ensures the absence of adult authority figures (Kaplan 1987).

Pittman and associates were looking for a structure that was "irreverent" so veejays are not permitted to use

scripts. They are encouraged to ad lib and be themselves! "Goofs" now and then are both expected and encouraged. The job of a veejay consists of filming "filler spots" days in advance, and to do their spontaneous programming, that is the intros, outros, and fillers. Most all the veejay filming is not live. They do that for fourteen hours a day, five days a week and spend weekends doing promotional work, such as public appearances among fans (Denisoff 1989).

Tom Freston, president and CEO of MTV networks says, "When you get down to it, the only thing we have is image." (Schultze 178, 1991). MTV emphasizes mood and image above statement and reason and is made up of incessant images of sex and violence. It has brought the ultimate personal recognition of rock stars into every home, everyday. The American teenager must no longer stare at his/her favorite star through binoculars at an annual concert but can drool over every nook and cranny of every hot body on MTV (Menconi 1990).

### *An Hour of MTV...*

One hour of MTV programming is exemplified by a minute-by-minute synopsis of what aired on the morning of February 15, 1990:

- 9:00:00 Video: The Fine Young Canibals sing and dance to the tune "I'm not satisfied" from their album, *The Raw and the Cooked*. Key Lyrics: "There must be more to life."
- 9:03:40 Video: Legendary rock guitarist, Eric Clapton, plays and sings "Bad Love" while popular singer/songwriter Phil Collins plays the drums in this black-and-white performance video. Key Lyrics: "I've had enough bad love/I need something I can be proud of."
- 9:08:10 Promo: The channel plugs its own Sunday night video program, "Unplug," which features acoustic performances.
- 9:08:40 Promo: MTV serves up its own "Awake on the Wild Side" promo, complete with sunrise images of African animals in the wild.
- 9:08:50 Veejays: Morning veejays Jonathan and Lisa plug a new movie and play with a small ceramic dog. When Jonathan touches the dog's mouth to Lisa's, she complains, "You don't dog on my lipstick."
- 9:11:35 Video: Jane Child sings "Don't Want to Fall in Love" while sitting, standing, and dancing in a variety of locations. The camera returns repeatedly to her face, and the viewer sees the three delicate chains that extend from a ring in her nose to her ear. Key Lyrics: "Love is just like a knife/You made the knife feel good/I'll fight you to the end/You have started sinking in."
- 9:15:38 Promo: Rock star Neneh Cherry plugs MTV.
- 9:15:48 Video: Young MC performs the rap video "Bust a Move," which shows one close-up after another of female dancers' undulating hips and bouncing breasts. The lyrics say that guys should "bust a move" on girls.
- 9:20:07 Promo: The channel promos its own "Ben Stiller Show."
- 9:20:27 Promo: MTV promos the upcoming "HA Comedy Network," which is owned by MTV Networks.
- 9:20:54 Ad: A local advertisement comes on, hyping an upcoming professional wrestling pay-per-view program.
- 9:21:34 Promo: The channel runs a promo for reruns of "Murder, She Wrote" on USA Network.

- 9:22:00 Promo: The channel promos the upcoming Janet Jackson world tour, listing dates and places.
- 9:22:28 Veejays: Jonathan and Lisa offer a childish imitation of Janet Jackson dance moves.
- 9:23:22 Video: Janet Jackson, sings and dances to "Pleasure Principle," imitating many of the dance steps popularized by her brother, Michael.
- 9:23:29 Promo: The channel runs another safari-like promo for its "Awake on the Wild Side" morning program.
- 9:28:42 Video: Billy Joel, singer/songwriter/pianist, sings and plays "I Go to Extreme" in a performance video. Key Lyrics, "Darling, I don't know why I go to extremes."
- 9:32:43 Video: The group Junkyard sings "Simple Man" while standing in front of an old Western ranch house in the middle of nowhere. Women magically appear on the ranch during the video. Key lyrics: "Lord, I'm a simple man/Aint too much I need/Aint asking for all of your love/Gimme whatcha can and set me free."
- 9:37:07 Promo: The channel runs yet another "Awake on the Wild Side" promo.
- 9:37:18 Veejays: Jonathan and Lisa answer a letter from a viewer in California who wants to know such things as where MTV's main office is, where MTV veejay Julie Brown gets her clothes, and whether viewers receive free tickets for concerts.
- 9:39:15 Video: The group UB40 performs "Here I Am." Key Lyrics: "Here I am, baby/Come and take me by the hand/Ooooh show me."
- 9:42:28 Video: Rock star Peter Gabriel sings "Big Time" while his face is transposed from one scene to another in a "claymation" video. Among other things, monsters' faces grow out of simulated earth and moss.
- 9:46:56 Promo: Rock Star Richard Marx plugs the channel
- 9:50:59 Veejay: Lisa sits alone at a desk, telling viewers about a newspaper article on aphrodisiacs. In the article one person suggests that sex requires only two warm bodies and a cold bottle of champagne. Lisa complains that that might promote drinking. After a hand



from off-camera offers Lisa some bananas, she says, "Maybe there's some other things you could do with the champagne bottle."

9:52:38 Promo: the morning show promotes is "Wild Side"

9:52:43 Ad: A local ad for auto shows at malls comes on

9:53:13 Ad: A local ad for a vocational school is featured

9:53:45 News: MTV's hourly news show runs a few clips from films nominated for Academy Awards. That is the extent of the news.

9:57:00 Promo: The channel plugs itself (so to speak)

9:57:08 Video: The group "Whitesnake" performs, "The Deeper the Love" on stage with an elaborate light show; interspersed with footage of their performance are scenes of a woman taking a bath. Key lyrics: "The deeper the love, the stronger the emotion / And the stronger the love, the deeper the devotion." (Schultze 184-85, 1991)

As MTV celebrated its tenth anniversary, viewers saw a predominance of rap and heavy metal on the channel. There is some talk about MTV further targeting channels specifically for rap and heavy metal audiences, respectively. More feature programming is taking place such as the "MTV's Most Wanted" which airs the ten most requested hits from the day. Additional feature programs include "Like We Care" interviewing "average" teenagers about issues facing them, "Remote Control," an MTV game show, "Headbangers Ball," featuring heavy metal videos and comedy hours. One of the newest feature programs is "The Real World." It is a cross between a soap opera and a documentary

of seven post-adolescents racially and demographically mixed who live together (Leland 1992).

  / This chapter has served to give a brief overview of the content. Central to the content of MTV is rock music which is controversial in and of itself. Added to that common thread is an emphasis upon the mood and images of rebellion, sex and violence rather than upon statement and reason. The research that is reported in Section II shall give a more comprehensive representation of the content from a sampling of videos.

### Chapter 3--Response:

#### Creating Raping Murderers or Artists?

##### Society's Response...

To talk to many parents, or most adults for that matter, one would think that MTV is one continuous pornographic channel. The public has a great deal to say about the content they observe on the MTV channel.

I conducted an informal survey outside Drake Library at SUNY-Brockport, where I expected more receptivity and open-mindedness to MTV, and the results were as follows: Of thirty students asked, "What do you think about MTV?" only three said it was "Okay," and the rest responded negatively with such comments as, "It's garbage!" "It stinks!" "It's sad!" "It needs supervision." "It's too sexually explicit." "Horrible!" "It's not real music and it's hurting the music world." "It's too commercial." "There's too much rap and heavy metal." (SUNY College at Brockport... 1991).

These are not unlike many objections MTV receives daily. A typical letter reads, "MTV is completely disgusting and a waste of our money. If people want to watch it they should pay extra. It is suggestive and offensive for young children. It is a negative influence in our home. We must have some moral guidelines for our adolescents!" (Denisoff 1986).

Concerns are voiced about women being depicted as "bitches," teases, castrators, and all-around "sex-things." Even female artists themselves, are often expected to play these roles in order to market their videos. Examples throughout MTV history include Hall and Oate's "Maneater," Stray Cats' "Sexy and 17," Duran Duran's "Girls on Film" and Billy Idol's "Dancing With Myself" (Denisoff 1986). Sue Steinberg, MTV's former set-designer and executive producer noted, "The emphasis on certain images contributes to the illusion of violence and sexism. They seem to see how far they can go. And it's getting worse" (Levy 1983,33). Others argue that this, in fact, is a result of the "liberated woman" movement; numerous options exist for her (Denisoff 1989).

NCTV (National Coalition against TV Violence) denounced MTV for "sexually sadistic violence of a very intense nature." NCTV claimed that more than half of MTV's fare was at least covertly, and often overtly violent. They found that in one hour of programming, 18 violent acts were portrayed, most of which were sexual (Denisoff 1986). This is in addition to the growing concern that already exists regarding television violence as a whole. NCTV conducted a survey of high school students; among these students, sixty-three percent could readily identify Freddy Krueger from the horror series, *Nightmare on Elm Street*. Only thirty-six percent

of the same students surveyed could identify Abraham Lincoln as a former president of the United States (DeMoss 1991).

<sup>Use</sup> The Reagan administration was vocal against MTV. In May 1984, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said, "Violence and pornography are at a crossroad now. One place they are crossing is in these rock video cassettes that have become so popular with young people." He went on to say that young people have become "saturated with what I think is going to make them have trouble having satisfying relationships with people of the opposite sex...when you're raised with rock music that uses both pornography and violence" (Denisoff 1989, 292). Koop added that it is already very challenging for young people to develop adequate relationships with the opposite sex and equated vidclips with tuberculosis and communicable diseases ("Watching Rock Videos..." 1984).

Five senatorial and cabinet rank wives formed the PMRC (Parents Music Research Center). This was headed by Senator Albert Gore's wife, Tipper Gore. PMRC launched a strong media campaign and began to lobby for a bill to print "ratings" on records (Denisoff 1989).

President Reagan himself supported PMRC. At the Republican Party's rally in 1984, Reagan said, "Music and media flood their children's world with glorification of drugs, violence, and perversity--and there is nothing they

can do about it, they're told, because of the First Amendment (Denisoff 1989, 307)."

A great deal of attention was given to the decision to ban MTV for patients at the Institute for Living, a mental hospital in Hartford, Connecticut. This decision was made based upon the observation that MTV was having ill-effects on certain patients. Hospital executives concluded these effects were a result of the patients watching MTV and it was said to be too inciting, causing hallucinations and regurgitating (Denisoff 1989).

Of course teenagers as a whole, do not respond nearly so negatively to "their" channel. Teenagers in the small community of Emporia, California for example, are delighted to have something in common with their peers in "real" cities. Teens strongly object to parents who get the channel blocked and to bills and petitions to ban the network from the basic cable package (Denisoff 1989). Section III will look further at the response of teenagers and the implications of MTV upon the period of adolescence.

### ***MTV's Rebuttal...***

MTV maintains that what many do not realize is that MTV does edit and censor the tapes submitted to it. (Denisoff 1986). Les Garland of MTV defined their standards:

As in an art gallery, MTV presents explanatory and imaginative art forms, the interpretation of which may occasionally generate honest disagreements among individuals who respond differently to their messages. The review process demands difficult, subjective judgements which reflect sensitivity and concern. Yet, clearly it will be impossible for everything to appeal to all people at all times" (Denisoff 1989, 304).

Since its inception, MTV has maintained a "no gratuitous sex or violence" rule. Of course objectors argue that defining what is "gratuitous" is highly subjective (Denisoff 1989).

MTV has a standards and practices division that generally considers "R" and "X"-rated vidclips unacceptable. Examples of edited segments include David Bowie's "China Girl" from which the naked women running on the beach scene was edited, or Tubes' "White Punks on Dope," rejected for its depiction of throwing babies out of trucks. Commercials for cigarettes, hard liquor, drug paraphenalia and, until recently, dating services and birth control devices have been rejected (Denisoff 1986).

Pittman himself responds that the songs "are unhappy. Some have a dark message. It's the essence of rock." However, he refuses to change the format in response to the accusations aimed at MTV (Denisoff 1986). Pittman is backed

by journalist Tom Ford of the *Toledo Blade*. Ford summed up the controversy over rock images by writing, "Those who criticize the violence and sexual suggestion in the videos are committing the first cardinal sin of rock and roll appreciation. They are taking things much too seriously" ("Rock Music..." 1984).

This final chapter of this section has sought to examine the response of society to MTV and MTV's rebuttal thereto. This entire polemic over the effects of MTV is summed up well by child psychologist Robert Jay Lifton. He says, "If anybody says he or she knows, I don't believe it, it's too new" (Denisoff 1989, 315). It is true that a decade of programming is a pretty short time-period from which to draw dogmatic conclusions as to MTV's effect upon its audience. However, a more in-depth study of the rhetorical messages of MTV's artists can provide clearer insight into the impact of MTV upon our youth and upon our society as a whole!



## Section II: A Cluster Analysis of MTV

In seeking to analyze the rhetorical messages of MTV, it is next important to have a means of looking more concretely at the content of the rock videos. This section serves to cite my observations after carefully viewing ten popular rock videos on MTV in the Fall of 1991. This section accomplishes that through the following: Chapter four explains the method of research and rhetorical criticism that I chose and explains the choice of my sample. The other five chapters, chapters five through nine, each flesh out respectively, five images that consistently permeate the ten videos in the sample.

Chapter 4--Methodology: Burke's Cluster Analysis

Chapter 5--Cluster #1: Black/White Images

Chapter 6--Cluster #2: Sex Images

Chapter 7--Cluster #3: Violence Images

Chapter 8--Cluster #4: Nature Images

Chapter 9--Cluster #5: Street Images

Chapter 4--Methodology:  
Burke's Cluster Analysis

*The Process...*

The methodological approach I chose for this rhetorical-critical study of MTV is Kenneth Burke's cluster analysis. Cluster analysis is a method of "noting what subjects cluster about other subjects" (Burke 1937, 2:76). It requires an analytical and descriptive study of the object's structure and seeks to determine what goes with what and why. This is a method to identify the conscious and subconscious rhetorical motives of the MTV artists. Burke writes:

By charting clusters, we get our cues as to the important ingredients consumed in "symbolic mergers"...The charting of clusters will eventually reveal how thoroughly the synthesis of poetry manages to eschew the "law of excluded middle" dear to argumentative thought (1937, 233).

The first step in doing a cluster analysis is indexing. Ordinarily, the method identifies "key terms" in the rhetoric by noting the frequency and intensity with which they occur. In making use of this method with the rhetorical messages of music videos, I focused more upon "key images" rather than "terms" since the rhetoric with

which I am dealing is highly visual. The method looks at the images "b", "c", "d" the artist introduces whenever he or she portrays with engrossment, subject "a". The first step is indexing, or identifying images with high frequency and/or high intensity of usage. Images with high frequency are those which occur most commonly while images of high intensity are those that are naturally charged or that are particularly significant in the videos being examined (Foss 1989). Burke describes naturally charged words or images as "mystical" in the sense that they encompass conflicting orders of motivation, not by outlawing order, but by finding a place for order in a developmental series. Burke claims that these ultimate terms require circumstantial interpretation because the ultimate test of their meaning is extralinguistic (Burke 1969, 183ff).

Richard Weaver, a student of Burke, further developed the study of "ultimate terms." Weaver divides ultimate terms into god-terms, devil-terms and charismatic terms. God-terms are those terms to which all others are subordinate. They have the greatest blessing attached to them. Current examples of god-terms would include fact, modern, technological, and American. Devil-terms are antithetical to god-terms but are also naturally charged. They are terms of repulsion related to the greatest evil and curse. Examples of such terms would presently include terrorist, drugs, pornography, AIDS, recession and Iranian.

Charismatic-terms are independent of referents and possess innate power. Terms such as democracy, freedom, or New World Order are charismatic-terms. These terms need not be defined explicitly or they lose their charisma (Weaver 1953, ch.9).

All of these types of ultimate-terms are examples of naturally charged terms. Commenting on the inevitability of mystery of the hierarchic of terms, Burke writes, "let us, as students of rhetoric, scrutinize its range of entrancements, both with dismay and in delight" (1969, 333). Images and themes in the videos which fall into this category of ultimate or naturally charged terms, would merit consideration for the index of the cluster. The index is primarily statistical and descriptive and is selective in nature(Rueckert 1963).

After indexing, the next step is to make a concordance. The concordance consists of the key images that constitute an examination of the context in which those key images implicitly or explicitly appear. Unlike the index, the concordance seeks to be exhaustive. By discovering what context is repeatedly associated with specific key images, the critic is able to formulate an equation to help explain the meanings of the key images. As Rueckert explains, cluster analysis "is a way of finding out what the term is associated with in the poet's [or rhetor's/artist's] mind" (Rueckert 1963, 86).

Essentially, cluster analysis is a means of finding out what something means by finding out what the term or image is associated with in the mind of the rhetor. Therefore as a result of cluster analysis, the critic can arrive at an interpretation of the unique intentions or meanings of the artists. The critic is then able to locate the conflict or opposition in the principles and images of the rhetorical object.

### *Choice of Samples...*

Since this critical study focused on the content of MTV ten years after its debut, I focused on videos that were current in the Fall of 1991, the months immediately beginning MTV's eleventh year. In order to narrow the study, I chose a sampling of ten videos, choosing nine of them from the "Best of Autumn Top 20 Countdown" as aired on November 30, 1991. A number of factors go into MTV's narrowing of all the fall's video into the top twenty. They begin by looking at album sales throughout the nation. Next they consider which videos received the most airplay and closely related to that, the videos requested most by the viewing audience. Finally, MTV conducts extensive research all throughout the country to arrive at what MTV researchers truly believe is an eclectic collection of all the fall videos. ("Best of Autumn...", 1991). Based upon that, I

decided that the top twenty videos were an accurate representation of what was being communicated most strongly and effectively at the close of MTV's first decade.

From the top twenty videos, I narrowed the sample to nine. Only excerpts of some videos were played so I came up with an analysis sample of the top nine videos that were aired entirely. Consequently, my resulting analysis sample consisted of the following: "O.P.P." [#12 of 20] from Naughty by Nature's album *Naughty by Nature*, "Runaround" [#11 of 20] from Van Halen's newest album *For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge*, "Motown Philly" [#10 of 20] from Boyz II Men's *Cooleyhigh Harmony* album, "The Promise of a New Day" [#8 of 20] from Paula Abdul's latest--*Spellbound*. The next video was by the controversial Prince and the New Power Generation, "Cream" [#6 of 20] from *Diamonds and Pearls*, then Mariah Carey's "Emotions" [#4 of 20] from her album *Emotions*, "Enter Sandman" [#3 of 20] from Metallica's newest album, *Metallica*, "Wildside" [#2 of 20] by Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch from their album *Music for the People*, and finally, "You Could Be Mine" [#1 of 20] on the album *Use Your Illusion 2* by Guns N' Roses. In addition to these top nine, it seemed appropriate to include in the analysis Michael Jackson's "Black or White" from *Dangerous*. Jackson is the acclaimed "king of pop" and among the most famous artists on MTV currently, as well as throughout the past decade.

I searched for key images and clusters in all ten of the videos collectively. The chapters that follow will examine all of the videos in the sample, each chapter considering one of the five images I observed consistently. I watched the ten videos in the analysis sample several times for a couple months. As I viewed them, I logged the images which appeared the most, how much they appeared, for how long, and whether they were naturally charged images. My indexing found that the images that appeared with the most frequency and intensity were black/white, sex, violence, nature, and the street. The remainder of this section will examine the clusters accompanying these images. In chapters five through nine, a chapter is devoted to each image existing in the clusters. Each chapter looks at the context and associated themes each time the respective image appears. I have chosen however, to refrain from making conclusions about the rhetorical messages communicated through the clusters until looking at all five of the images collectively. Therefore, the inferences about the persuasive intent of the artists are left to be drawn in chapter ten.

The lyrics along with a brief description of each of the videos from the sample are as follows:

"O.P.P."--Naughty by Nature: *Naughty by Nature*

This video focuses upon sexual unfaithfulness, O.P.P. standing for "Other People's Pussy/Penis" depending upon whether the consumer is male or female. Most of it takes place out on the street and portrays a celebration of the common bond they share in being "down with O.P.P." ("Down with..." is a slang expression communicating support rather than opposition or resistance to O.P.P.) The lyrics are as follows:

Harm me with Harmony  
 Dave--Drop a load on 'em  
 O.P.P.--How can I explain it?  
 I'll take it frame by frame it  
 To have you all jump and shout and sayin' it  
 O is for others  
 P is for people  
 Scratch your temple  
 The other "P", well that's not that simple, Huh--  
 It's sorta like another way to call a cat a kitty  
 It's 5 little letters that are missing here  
 You get it on occasion if the other party isn't gamin'  
 It seems I Gotta start the explainin'  
 Bust it  
 Ya ever had a girl and met her on a nice hello  
 You get her name and number then fill a rim a low  
 You get her away today she's what you want to know about  
 But you call up and its her girlfriend or her cousin's house  
 It's not upfront, F to the R to the O to the N to the T  
 It's just her boyfriend's at her house  
 It's O.P.P. some other people's but you get it  
 There's no room for relationships there's just room to hit it  
 How many brothers out there know just what I'm gettin' at  
 Who think it's wrong cause I was splittin' and cohittin' at  
 Well if you do that's O.P.P. and you're not down with it  
 But if you don't, here's your membership

You down with O.P.P.?  
 Yeah you know me  
 You down with O.P.P.?  
 Yeah you know me  
 Who's down with O.P.P.?  
 Every last homie  
 You down with O.P.P.?



Yeah you know me  
 You down with O.P.P?  
 Yeah you know me  
 Who's down with O.P.P.?  
 All the homies!

For the ladies, O.P.P means something different  
 The first letter's the same but the last is something different  
 It's the longest, loveliest, lean, I call it the leanest  
 It's another five letter word rhyme  
 And with cleanest, the meanest  
 I won't get into that I'll do it oh, sorta properly  
 I say the last "P" Hmm--stands for property  
 Now lady here comes a kiss  
 Blow a kiss back to me

Now tell me exactly  
 Have you ever known a brother who had another like a girl or wife?  
 You just had to stop the toast he looked just so nice  
 You looked at him he looked at you and you knew right away  
 He had someone but He was gonna be yours anyway  
 You couldn't be seen with him at all but still you didn't care  
 Cause in a room behind a door no one would tell her there  
 When y'all are finished and leavin only I would know  
 Y'all can throw that skeleton bone right in the closet door  
 Now don't be shy cause if you're down I want your hands up high  
 Say O.P.P., I like to say with pride  
 Now when you do it do it well and you make sure that it counts  
 Your now down with a discount

You down with O.P.P.?  
 Yeah, you know me!  
 You down with O.P.P.?  
 Yeah, you know me!  
 Who's down with O.P.P.?  
 Every last lady!  
 You down with O.P.P.?  
 Yeah, you know me!  
 You down with O.P.P.?  
 Yeah, you know me!  
 Who's down with O.P.P.?  
 All the ladies!

This gal tried to O.P.P. me  
 I had a girl and she knew that  
 Matter of fact, my girl was partners then  
 Had a fallout, disagreement, yeah an argument  
 She tried to do me so we did it in my apartment  
 Bust it  
 That wasn't the thing it must've been the way she hit the ceiling  
 Cause after that she kept on comin' back and catchin' feelin's  
 I said "Let's go. My girls comin' so you gotta leave."  
 She said, "Oh no, I love you, toots."  
 I said, "Now Chill please!"

"You gots to leave come grab your coat right now you Gotta go"  
I said "Now choose the stairs or stair window"  
"This was a thing, a little thing, you shouldn't've put your heart."  
"Cause you knew I was O.P.P. hell from the very start."  
C'mon C'mon now let me tell ya what it's all about  
When you get down you can't go round runnin' off at the mouth  
That's rule number one in this establishment  
You keep your mouth shut and it won't get back to her or him

Exciting isn't it  
A special kind of business  
Many of you work at this same sorta O.P.P. bizawit  
Him or her--we're sure goin' to it-----  
When O.P.P. come damn, skip the-----

You down with O.P.P.?  
Yeah you know me.  
You down with O.P.P.?  
Yeah you know me.  
Who's down with O.P.P.?  
Every last homie!  
You down with O.P.P.?  
Yeah you know me.  
You down with O.P.P.?  
Yeah you know me!  
Who's down with O.P.P.?  
All the homies!

Runaround"--Van Halen--For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge

This video talks about the game of a male in pursuit of a female and receiving the "runaround" from her. The setting of the video is on stage with the band singing and with television screens in the background flashing silhouettes of girls. The band appear to be on a continuously revolving stage furthering the "runaround" theme. It is no coincidence that the album is entitled what it is. Notice what word the first letter of each word in the album title spells. Historically, "F.U.C.K." was printed across stocks for someone being hanged who had been "Found Using Carnal Knowledge" and thus the close innuendo with this album's title. The lyrics to "Runaround" are as follows:

She don't like it when it's cut and dried  
 I don't like her makin' future plans  
 She don't want me tryna pin her down  
 She ain't about to give an inch of ground  
 Now-Now

She can take me for a little ride  
 Just as long as she drives me home  
 Around the block maybe once or twice  
 And then some lovin' wouldn't that be nice?

I want but I want it  
 Old world fool believes  
 I got her in my sight, but just outta reach, Wow--

Here we go round, round, round  
 Run, Runaround  
 Here we go round, round, round  
 She's given me the run, runaround

Now just enough to keep me hangin' on  
 She knows exactly what I need  
 And right down to the nick of time  
 I'm chasin love tryna find a ride

I want but I want it  
Old world fool believes  
I got her in my sight, but just outta reach, Wow--

Here we go round, round, round  
Run, Runaround  
Here we go round, round, round  
She's given me the run, runaround

Yeah--Hey Yeah, Oh Yeah  
Ooh--Ahh--It goes like this--Listen Baby  
Ooh--Ahh--Ahh--Ooh

Oh man it's hot enough  
Yeah, and you make it hotter  
Fill me up and I'll be satisfied  
Oh-She owns it

Here we go round, round, round  
Run, Runaround  
Here we go round, round, round  
She's givin' me the run, runaround

"Motown Philly"--Boyz II Men--Coolleyhigh Harmony

This video is about a group of guys reminiscing about the days when they first formed their musical group back in Philadelphia. The song takes place on the streets of Philadelphia, at their high school and in a home. The theme of reminiscing is further enhanced by the video beginning and ending with a picture of a scrapbook which says "The East Coast Family." The lyrics are as follows:

Boyz II men  
Boyz II men

Motown Philly back again  
Doin' a little East Coast swing  
Boyz II Men, goin' on  
Not too hard, not too soft

It's long overdue but now Philly's slammin'  
Boyz II Men, ABC, BBD, the East Coast Family  
Never skipped a beat  
While coolin' on South Street  
Jet black van and plenty of friends  
And all the Philly steaks you can eat

Back in school we used to dream about this everyday  
Could it really happen or do dreams just fade away  
Then we started singing and playin' sounded smooth  
Then we started a group and here we are  
Kickin' it just for you

Motown Philly back again  
Doin' a little East Coast swing  
Boyz II Men, goin' on  
not too hard, not too soft

Boyz, Boyz

Yo-these boyz our Jack is really smooth on a harmony chip  
My shine to one  
You know the mentality  
Keep flipping the gift

The spotlight is on us now,  
Watch us do this--Ba dub...  
Live and direct from Philly town  
The rap and hype and we can get down  
We are ready to roll so now the world will know that we are born

Back in school we used to dream about this everyday  
 Could it really happen or do dreams just fade away?  
 Then we started singin' and playin' sounded smooth  
 Then we started a group and here we are  
 Kickin' it just for you

Motown Philly back again  
 Doin' a little East Coast swing  
 Boyz II Men, goin' on  
 Not too hard, not too soft

Boyz II Men, Boyz II Men, Boyz II Men, Boyz II Men.....

Now check this out  
 One day back in Philly  
 Four guys wanted to sing  
 They came in the lunchroom and they said, "What's your Name?"  
 What's your name, you know what I'm sayin'?!  
 Then I said, all right fella's  
 Let me see what you can do  
 Then they smiled at me and said, "Yo Mike,  
 Check this out, See if this works for you."

Motown Philly back again  
 Doin' a little East Coast Swing  
 Boyz II Men, goin' on  
 Not too hard, not too soft

Boyz II Men  
 Boyz II Men, ABC, BBD

"Promise of a New Day"--Paula Abdul--Spellbound

This video addresses taking care of nature and looking ahead to our future. It has some interesting visual aspects such as times the water falls and falling leaves reversing the direction they are going (they fall "up"). The video takes place out in a beautiful wildland with mountains, waterfalls and long grass. The preservation of nature theme promoted throughout is made directly with the words on the screen at the end of the video. They read, "The Indians say--'When the forest dies, we all die. Leave the jungle alone.'" The lyrics are as follows:

Eagles calling and he's calling out your name  
 Tides are turnin' bringin' winds of change  
 Why do I feel this way?  
 Promise of a new day  
 Promise, promise of a new day

As through time the earth moves under my feet  
 One step closer to make love complete  
 What has the final say  
 Promise of a new day  
 Promise, promise of a new day

And so time over time  
 What will change the world  
 No one knows  
 So the only promise is a day to live, to give  
 And share with one another

See the wisdom from mistakes in our past  
 Hear the younger generation ask  
 Why do I feel this way?  
 Promise of a new day  
 Promise, promise of a new day

We can make it better, baby

And so time over time  
 What will change the world?  
 No one knows  
 So the only promise is a day to live, to give

and share with one another

Eagle's callin' and he's callin' your name  
Tides are turnin' bringin' winds of change  
Why do I feel this way?  
Promise of a new day  
Promise, promise of a new day

As through time the earth moves under my feet  
One step closer to make love complete  
What has the final say  
Promise of a new day  
Promise, promise of a new day

See the wisdom from mistakes in our past  
Hear the younger generation ask  
Why do I feel this way?  
Promise of a new day  
Promise, promise of a new day

Eagle's callin' and he's callin' your name  
Tides are turnin' bringin' winds of change  
Why do I feel this way?  
Promise of a new day  
Promise, promise of a new day

Why do I feel this way?

Eagle's callin' and he's callin' your name  
Tides are turnin' bringin' winds of change

{Screen reads at the end: "The Indians say--'When the forest dies, we all die. Leave the jungle alone.'"} }



"Cream"--Prince and the New Power Generation--Diamonds and Pearls

One need not be extremely insightful to quickly discern that this video insinuates sexual orgasm. The images are very sexual and portray an orgy-like atmosphere. The setting is on stage with numerous lights and bars from which to hang. Both the words and the images fail to be very subtle in singing about achieving orgasm. The lyrics to the song are as follows:

This is it  
 It's time for you to go to the wire  
 You will hit  
 Cause you've got the burnin' desire  
 It's your time  
 You've got the horn so why don't you blow it?  
 You are fine  
 You're filthy cute and baby you know it

Cream, Get on top  
 Cream, you will cop  
 Cream, Don't you stop  
 Cream, shoo boogie, bop

You're so good  
 Baby there aint nobody better  
 So you should  
 Never ever go by the letter  
 You're so cool,  
 Everything you do is success  
 Make the rules  
 But break them all cause you are the best  
 Yes, you are

Cream, Get on top  
 Cream, you will cop  
 Cream, Don't you stop  
 Cream, shoo boogie, bop

Look up in the air  
 It's your guitar

Do your dance  
 Why should you wait any longer  
 Take your chance  
 It could only make you stronger

It's your time  
You got the horn so why don't you blow it  
You're so fine  
You're filthy cute and baby you know it

Cream, get on top  
Cream, you will cop  
Cream, don't you ever stop  
Cream, shoo boogie, bop

Cream, cream, cream, shoo boogie bop  
Cream, cream, cream, don't you stop  
Cream, shoo boogie bop  
Boogie

"Emotions"--Mariah Carey--Emotions

The theme of this video revolves around a girl very much in love. She expresses that love by singing about it and riding around in a convertible. It has a very fun-loving, happy feeling about it and basically goes back and forth between two scenes. Those scenes depict Mariah Carey riding through the country on a warm summer day in a convertible and the other shows her flashing back to a party at a house with everyone hanging out and having fun together. The lyrics are as follows:

You've got me feelin' emotions  
Deeper than I've ever dreamed of  
You've got me feelin' emotions  
Higher than the heavens above

I feel good, I feel nice  
I've never felt so, satisfied  
I'm in love, I'm alive  
Intoxicated  
Flyin' high  
Feels like a dream  
When you love me to the end  
I don't know if it's real  
But I like the way I feel inside

You've got me feelin' emotions  
Deeper than I've ever dreamed of  
You've got me feelin' emotions  
Higher than the heavens above

In the mornin'--when I rise  
You are the first thing, on my mind  
And in the middle of the night  
I feel your heartbeat next to mine

It feels like a dream  
When you love me to the end  
I don't know if it's real  
But I like the way I feel inside

You've got me feelin' emotions  
Deeper than I've ever dreamed of

You've got me feelin' emotions  
Higher than the heavens above  
You've got me feelin' emotions  
Deeper than I've ever dreamed of  
You've got me feelin' emotions  
Higher than the heavens above

You know the way to make me lose control  
When you're lookin' into my eyes  
You make me feel so good, Oh, Baby

You've got me feelin' emotions  
Deeper than I've ever dreamed of  
You've got me feelin' emotions  
Higher than the heavens above  
You've got me feelin' emotions  
Deeper than I've ever dreamed of  
You've got me feelin' emotions  
Higher than the heavens above

"Enter Sandman"--Metallica--Metallica

"Fear" is, without doubt, the central focus of this heavy metal video. It is about a boy who has a nightmare about the "Sandman" who is a scary looking old man who continually pursues him. The dream includes everything from being chased by an eighteen-wheeler to having his bed full of snakes. The lyrics are as follows:

Say your prayers little one  
Don't forget my son  
To include everyone

Tuck you in, warm within  
Keep you free from sin  
Till the Sandman comes

Sleep with one eye open  
Gripping your pillow tight  
Exit light  
Enter night  
Take my hand  
We're off to never-never land

Something's wrong, shut the light  
Heavy thoughts tonight  
And they aren't of Snow White

Dreams of war  
Dreams of liars  
Dreams of dragon's fire  
And of things that will bite

Sleep with one eye open  
Gripping your pillow tight  
Exit light  
Enter night  
Take my hand  
We're off to never-never land

Now I lay me down to sleep  
Pray the Lord my soul to keep  
If I die before I wake  
Pray the Lord my soul to take

Hush little baby, don't say a word  
And never mind that noise you heard

It's just the beast under your bed  
In your closet, In your head

Exit light  
Enter night  
Grain of sand

Exit light  
Enter night  
Take my hand  
We're off to never-never land

"Wildside"--Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch--Music for the People

This is a video about the effects of living on the "Wildside." True to the lifestyle it is describing, it is a rather depressing video. The video goes through four different episodes of life on the "Wildside." The images complement the scenes and episodes described in the lyrics which follow:

America the beautiful--Huh! Yeah!  
 Let me introduce y'all, to the Wildside  
 Annie was a high school cheerleader  
 Pom poms, and bobby socks, and no girl was sweeter  
 Come prom time, everybody was on the line  
 All the fella's singing nickel and dime  
 Tales about love and lust and trust  
 But Annie took it all in stride  
 Because deep inside, Annie had aspirations  
 Besides that, she had expectations  
 Wanted to be a chemical engineer  
 Makin fifty to fifty-five thousand a year  
 Her first year of college was a success  
 But along comes Billy--possessed and obsessed  
 He took Annie on a fatal date  
 And showed her things that made heartbeats accelerate  
 Annie took a hit, breathed two short breaths  
 One for life, the last for death  
 Now she's gone from a valedictorian  
 Ended up becomin' a topic for historians  
 Washed up dreams, shattered pride  
 All because Annie took a hit on the Wildside

Ron had enough of bein' broke everyday  
 Sayin' to himself there's gotta be a better way  
 Cause 9 to 5 wasn't worth the headaches  
 So Ron figured out a faster way to make money  
 Before you know it, he's a rich man  
 Gold on every finger of his hand  
 A brand new BMW, a condo  
 Ron ended up a John Doe  
 A body found in an alley but never claimed  
 Full of bullet holes with none to blame  
 Ron became another victim of homicide  
 Because he chose to walk on the Wildside

Charles had everything goin' for him  
 A top payin' job, a good life, a good wife

A baby boy on the way anyday  
A gentleman attitude is all he displayed  
Carol was the wife and loved and adored  
Her family and friends treated him like an ambassador  
One night on the other side of town  
Police dispatcher picked up a weird sound  
Charles in a car, askin' for help  
Claimin' a burglar who shot his wife and himself  
His pregnant wife lay slumped over  
Her dreams corrupted, a young life over  
Extensive search throughout the projects  
Put a lot of people through misery and wreck  
Everyone a suspect 'til someone was found  
Interrogated cause their skin was brown  
Then there was Bennett, guilty until proven so  
But soon as the case started movin' slow  
What do you know, as sure as a seagull gets web-toed  
Charles was the culprit, the whole plot was an insurance scam  
Charles and his brother, came up with a plan  
Kill Carol, collect the big checks  
Blame it on a black man--what the heck?!  
Just before the story was known  
Charles had a feelin' that his cover was blown  
So he jumped off a bridge, committed suicide  
This is how it is--on the Wildside

Little Tiffany, only 13  
Came to the city, to place some big dreams  
Visit her family and friends for the summertime  
Sittin' on a mailbox,  
Watchin' the boys climb trees and the girls play hopscotch  
So far her vacation was top notch  
Outa the blue a Mercedes at top speed  
Gangbangers chasin', robbers on a stampede  
Quick as a blink, shots rang out loud  
And, hell, a bullet zipped through the crowd  
One hit Tiffany and instantly she died  
Innocently--on the Wildside



"You Could Be Mine"--Guns N' Roses--Use Your Illusion II from the movie--  
-Terminator II: Judgement Day

This is a very intense video which uses the song that was the theme song for the horror movie, *Terminator II: Judgement Day*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. The video consists of clips from the movie and Guns N' Roses in concert, with the Terminator going after its newest target--Guns N' Roses. All throughout the video, the Terminator is seeking to blast away the band as they perform before their fans. The lyrics are as follows:

I'm a cold heartbreaker  
Fit ta burn and I'll rip your heart in two  
An I'll leave you lyin' on the bed  
I'll be out the door before you wake  
It's nothin' new Ta you  
Cause I think we've seen that movie too

'Cause you could be mine  
But you're way out of line  
With you bitch slap rappin'  
And your cocaine tongue  
You get nothin' done  
I said you could be mine

Now holidays come and then they go  
It's nothin' new today  
Collect another memory  
When I come home late at night  
Don't ask me where I've been  
Just count your stars--I'm home again

'Cause you could be mine  
But you're way out of line  
With your bitch slap rappin'  
And your cocaine tongue  
You get nothin' done  
I said you could be mine

You've gone sketchin' too many times  
Why don't ya give it a rest  
Why  
Must you find  
Another reason to cry

Hasta la vista, baby (said by Arnold Schwarzenegger)

While you're breakin' down my back  
And I been rackin' out my brain  
It don't matter how we break it  
'Cause it always ends the same  
You can push it for more mileage  
But your flaps are wearin' thin  
And I could sleep on it 'til mornin'  
But this nightmare never ends  
Don't forget to call my lawyers  
With ridiculous demands  
And you can take the pity so far  
But it's more than I can stand  
'Cause this couchtrip's gettin' older  
Tell me how long has it been  
'Cause five years is forever  
And you haven't grown up yet  
You could be mine  
But your way out of line  
With your bitch slap rappin'  
And your cocaine tongue  
You get nothin' done  
I said You could be mine  
You should be  
You could be mine

Yeah!

"Black or White"--Michael Jackson--Dangerous

This video addresses the whole issue of discrimination, specifically, between blacks and whites, and their relationships with each other. The video has numerous settings: jungle, city street, Russia, a conglomeration of major world cities, etc. The video culminates with a variety of faces and nationalities phasing in and out, each one superimposed over the preceding one. The following dialogue occurs before the song actually begins...

Dad: Turn that noise off!

Dad: I thought I told you to turn that thing off. It is too late, and it's too loud!

Son: But dad--This is the best part.

Dad: You are wasting your time with this garbage. Now go to bed!

Son: Okay... (Moves speakers into living room and says--)  
Eat This!

After music is blaring and father has burst through the roof in his lazy chair mother says...

Mom: I'm afraid your father's going to be very upset when he gets back!

The lyrics of the song itself are as follows:

I took my baby on a Saturday bang  
Boy, is that girl with you?  
Yes we're one and the same  
Now I believe in miracles and a miracle has happened tonight  
But if you're thinkin' about my baby it don't matter if you're black or white

They print my message in the *Saturday Sun*  
I had to tell them I aint second to none  
And I told about equality, and it's true, whether you're wrong or you're right

But if you're thinkin' about my baby it don't matter if you're black or white

I am tired of this devil  
 I am tired of this stuff  
 I am tired of this business  
 Sew when the goin' gets rough  
 I ain't scared of your brother  
 I ain't scared of no sheets  
 I ain't scared of nobody  
 Girl, when the goin gets tough

(Rap Section)

Protection, for gangs, clubs and nations  
 Causin' grief in human relations.  
 It's a turf war, on a global scale,  
 I'd rather hear both sides of the tale  
 You see, it's not about races, just places, faces  
 Where your blood comes from is where your space is  
 I've seen the sharp get duller,  
 I'm not going to spend my life being a color

Don't tell me you agree with me  
 When I saw you kicking dirt in my eye  
 But if you're thinkin' about my baby it don't matter if you're black or white  
 I said if you're thinkin' of being my baby it don't matter if you're black or white  
 I said if you're thinkin' of being my brother it don't matter if you're black or white

Ooh, ooh  
 Yea, yea, yea, now  
 Ooh, ooh  
 Yea, yea, yea, now

It's black, it's white,  
 It's tough for them to get by  
 It's black, it's white, whoo  
 It's black, it's white  
 It's tough for them to get by  
 It's black, it's white, whoo

Chapter 5--Cluster #1:Black/White Images

One does not have to watch much MTV to observe that a great deal of the videos are on black and white film. Some videos are black and white in their entirety; some have clips of black and white portions throughout; some have faded color clips close to a black and white image. Even the color clips often make use of the black and white "colors" if I may call them that.

The black/white image was most definitely a predominant one among the videos in my sample and was associated with a variety of themes. I was perplexed by the lack of attention I have ~~seen~~ given to the black/white image in the MTV-related literature I perused. At first, I assumed the black/white image was nothing more than an artistic use of black and white to add variety. However, as I began to observe the pervasive and extensive use of the image, I was determined to analyze it further and remain open to considering it for one of the predominant images with rhetorical influence. While the artistic use of black and white may, in fact, be the only intent of some or all of the artists and producers, closer study of its use brings me to believe that the rhetorical messages sent in the videos with black/white images, are affected thereby.

Based upon researching my sample, the following themes clustered around the black/white image:

dreaming/reminiscing, concert scenes, attire, interracial, depressing/mourning, and accentuation and interrelation of opposites and contrasts.

### ***Dreaming/Reminiscing:***

We have observed television programs and movies for many years that depict dreams in black and white. While most of us probably contend that we dream in color, this has become an accepted means of telling the audience that the actor/actress is dreaming and/or having a flashback. A few of the videos make use of this. Boyz II Men's "Motown Philly" uses a faded color type of film as they remember their days back in high school when they were first forming as a group. They depict the young men hanging out in the alleys of Philadelphia, innocently singing and dancing together.

Mariah Carey's "Emotions", also makes use of this function of black and white. None of the video is in "vivid color". It continually switches back and forth between two scenes. The first scene is of Mariah riding through the country in a convertible and the color has a brownish-red cast to it. It gives the image of watching an old, colored movie. The other scene takes place inside a house, with a party atmosphere of a number of people dancing and having a good time together. This scene is in black and white.

Since the video begins and ends with the first scene of her riding in the car, it appears that, as Carey sings about the emotions she is feeling deeper than ever before, it brings back a memory related to the people at this house. With this in mind, "Emotions" makes use of the reflective aspect of black and white.

While there are undoubtedly many reasons for the exhaustive use of black and white in Metallica's "Enter Sandman," it also falls into the dream category. The entire song is about a nightmare a young boy continues to have and thus again its tie in here with black and white. I shall later address some of the other potential reasons for the sole use of black and white in this video.

### *Concert Scenes:*

Two videos from the sample look almost exclusively like concert footage, although there are certainly some other very important images interspersed which I shall address later. Van Halen's "Runaround" and Guns N' Roses "You Could Be Mine" show their respective bands in concert before large crowds throughout most of these two videos. Both videos have some color in them, but many of the concert images are in black and white. "Runaround" is filmed completely in black and white except for an occasional glimpse of color seen in the clothes of the band members or on the guitars.

The lead singer, Sammy Hagar, is wearing a shirt with the word "RED" written largely in red letters across the bottom. The black/white image is accentuated by an almost strobe light effect from the spot lights on stage and the incessant spinning of the band on what appears to be a revolving stage. The girls that are portrayed on television screens on the backdrop of the stage are seen in black and white and appear as silhouettes.

There is much more color in Guns N' Roses' video "You Could Be Mine." However the black and white clips that do occur are of the band as they perform before their audience. Perhaps depicting the bands in black and white in the presence of their fans centers around some type of desire to zoom in on opposites and contrast which is so characteristic of rock bands and their messages. I shall address this further in the final theme clustered around this black/white image.

#### *Attire:*

Shop in any store or view any fashion magazine and it is obvious that the "colors" black and white are "in." But is this the only reason they have carried over into the attire of many of the MTV characters/performers?



Many of the characters and singers in the "O.P.P." video are wearing the colors black and white. This is especially evident when the main singer has one of his "O.P.P." exploits and he is wearing all white contrasted against his black skin and she is wearing a sensuous black slip. This seems to bring out the controversial aspect and the seductive nature of their activity.

The women portrayed in "Runaround" on the television screens on the back drop of the stage are wearing all black.

This use of black and white apparel is continued and further supported by Prince and his singers in "Cream." By having the dancers predominantly wearing black, it seems to further contribute to the "evil" feeling associated with the video as a whole.

Mariah Carey wears black and white shorts and a black and white halter-top with a white shirt in the convertible scene. She is wearing a sexy, black, summer dress in the house scene.

Michael Jackson's "Black or White" obviously focuses a great deal on this entire black/white image which is further reinforced by his white shirt and black pants. The faces of some of the natives in the jungle scene are painted so that they are "decorated" with black and white.

Perhaps none of these clothes are chosen to consciously send out any message in relation to their color or lack thereof. If nothing else however, this dominance of black and white in the clothes of the singers further supports the extent to which this image shows up on music videos.

### *Interracial:*

Not surprisingly, perhaps one of the strongest clusters apparent with the black/white image is the theme of non-discrimination and unification of all cultures and colors. This is, of course, the pre-eminent message throughout Jackson's "Black or White." Both the audio and visual components serve to propagate that message. Words such as "it don't matter if you're black or white," "it's not about races, just places, faces, where your blood comes from..." "it's black, it's white..." and, in fact, all the text, as printed on page 50, serves to further that message. The video portrays an Indian scene, "barbarians", Russian dancers, black and white cars passing by in the background as Jackson reads the black and white newspaper, the snow falling at night, the black baby and the white baby sitting on top of the world, the interracial mix of kids during the rap scene, and clips of KKK members with burning crosses. The video culminates with Michael singing from a replica of the torch of the Statue of Liberty and in the background we

see buildings from cities all over the world, such as Paris, London, Athens, and Rome. That leads into the final chorus of "it's black, it's white..." This utilizes morphing, a video technique which produces a phenomenal visual effect with a montage of images. The images are of a variety of faces of people and nationalities which fade in and out, each one superimposed over the next.

Other videos subtly convey this same message of interraciality. "O.P.P." is almost entirely made up of black singers and dancers except for one white girl that continues to appear. There is also one image shown where a black female hand is placed over a white male hand. Apparently, practicing O.P.P. can allow one to cross racial distinctions.

Prince's "Cream" has black and white singers and dancers, and Mariah Carey is driven by a black driver with a white girl next to him in the front seat as she rides around the country in the back seat. Abdul's "Promise of a New Day" includes a variety of nationalities among its characters.

"Wildside" also uses a variety of nationalities and one of its episodes of life on the "wildside" deals with the susceptibility of blacks being "framed" for crimes committed. "Blame it on the black man. What the heck!"

***Depressing/Morbid:***

Another element strongly clustered around the black/white image is a depressing, morbid, somber mood. In making an analogy to music, I would compare this use of the black/white image to the minor key. This somber mood is most evident in two videos from the sample, "Enter Sandman" and "Wildside." These are the only two videos which are almost entirely filmed in black and white. It is interesting that these two videos are performed by two totally different types of groups. It was my preconceived notion that heavy metal groups were the groups more likely to create an entirely black and white video. While that is fairly consistent for many Metallica videos, Guns N' Roses, the other heavy metal band in the sample, uses a great deal of color in their video. Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch who perform "Wildside," are a "pop" group and use no color.

The stories of both these songs are very mournful and the black and white film further creates and intensifies that mood. "Enter Sandman" is mostly dark and is filmed almost entirely in black and white. There are frequent flashes of skulls and crossbones in black and white which makes it that much more frightening and when viewing the video in the dark, one experiences the effect of watching a strobe light. No matter how many times I watched it, I felt a little "depressed" which most likely was an intention of the video's creators.

"Wildside" had much the same effect on me. It is filmed entirely in black and white and gives one that feeling experienced on a cloudy day when everything looks "grey." The characters move in slow motion and, again, the black and white film most definitely contributes to the eeriness of what it means to live on the "wildside."

### *Opposites/Contrast:*

Usually, when one refers to black and white, opposites or contrasts are being described. This presupposition and the frequency and intensity with which the black/white image appears throughout the sample leads me to the conclusion that, to some extent, clustered around this image is the theme of opposites and contrast.

Black and white were used in "O.P.P." to show both the "Club Cheatin'" sign and to show the letter from a wife, "My husband just ran off with my best friend." All of the black/white images discussed in the above themes of this cluster relate at least indirectly to looking at opposites and their interrelation to one another.

It is interesting that the black/white image is not only pervasive throughout the videos themselves. As veejay Adam Currey hosted the "Best of Autumn Top Twenty Countdown," he was dressed in a black leather jacket, a

white t-shirt, and a grey dress shirt. The background behind him and the MTV promotional clips throughout the entire program were almost exclusively black/white and grey images. This contributes further to the opposites and contrast and the interrelation thereof throughout the viewing of the videos.

Nothing is purely black or purely white but may be predominantly one or the other while cyclically interacting with its opposite. Despite my initial impression of the use of black and white solely for aesthetic contrast, I would assert that the viewer's perception of the image is greatly affected by the use of the black/white images and the themes clustered thereabout. This may be conscious or subconscious. Again, I shall reserve inference upon the persuasive intent of the artists and the affect upon American youth for chapter ten.

## Chapter 6--Cluster #2:

### Sex Images

An entire thesis could be written solely on the sex images that occur in MTV. It does not take a very perceptive viewer or listener of MTV to determine that sex is a predominant theme throughout MTV.

Sut Jhally of Simon Fraser University in Canada asserts that MTV is a form of pornography. He admits that it does not exist in a vacuum, but, rather, draws upon existing themes within the culture. While it draws upon male fantasy, Jhally says it also serves to create it. He finds MTV images almost more frightening than pornography because it is not called that and is much more subtle. He sees the sexual images on MTV as almost becoming invisible and such that we begin to not even notice them; this makes it a much stronger force than pornography (Pelka 1991).

Jhally has put together a video, "Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Rock Video," in which he has removed all the audio components from more than 150 rock videos and has spliced together sex scenes from these videos. From Jhally's fifty-five minute video, he concludes that MTV, systematically use women's bodies in ways that ultimately help to foster a social context which encourages violence against women. Jhally finds this to be especially true in heavy metal videos aimed at adolescent males.

Jhally claims that women on MTV are most often used as props, used to entice male viewers. The women usually center their lives around men and are always seeking sex, but they often say "no" when they really mean yes. Included in his video are clips from singers who simply flash images of women's bodies at random while singing their hit. He also adds a clip from Rod Stewart's video in which Stewart's face is framed by anonymous, sexy, female legs while he jams his microphone up between them. Other clips display the manniken women of David Lee Roth. Jhally consistently finds women being treated as objects with no identity beyond their sexual function to men. He says, "Women's sexuality is at once duplicitous and obsessive (Pelka 1991, 23)."

Incidentally, after the distribution of his video, Jhally got a letter from MTV telling him to "cease and desist from what [he] was doing, to destroy all the videotapes [he] had, to recall everything [he'd] sent out (Pelka 1991, 41)." They told him that if he did not do this within seven days they would consider taking appropriate legal action and equitable remedies. Jhally immediately published a press release which focused upon MTV's desire to censor rather than to call what he did a trademark violation (Pelka 1991).

In addressing the Speech Communication Association at their annual convention in 1984, Barry Sherman stated that the sexual emphasis in MTV is pervasive. He cited a study



which found that over seventy-five percent of rock videos depict sexual intimacy. This same study found that over half of all the women in videos were dressed provocatively (1984).

The treatment of characters in MTV videos dependent upon their sex is another complete topic in and of itself. Though it could be studied exclusively, I found it necessary to include it briefly as part of my analysis of sex images on MTV videos. Lisa Lewis, in her book *Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference*, has studied exclusively, the portrayal of women on MTV. She takes on a surprisingly strong defense for MTV in favor of feminism. Many feminists have condemned MTV for portraying women solely as sex objects to be used at the discretion of men. Artists such as Madonna and Tina Turner are often cited as examples of this. Lewis argues to the contrary, saying that some of the most popular MTV artists, such as Madonna, Tina Turner, Cindy Lauper and Pat Benatar, have done the opposite. She suggests that these women appear on the street which would usually portray a prostitutional image. Lewis argues however, that the presence of these women on the street serves to liberate the image of women (Lewis 1990). Chapter nine looks at this further in examining the "Street" image cluster.

There are many, of course, who would disagree with Lewis. More common is the view that MTV portrays women

enjoying mistreatment and suggesting that women can be reduced to their body parts.

I could write many pages merely summarizing and analyzing the many viewpoints, most of which are negative, on the way sex and sexuality are portrayed on MTV. While reading those viewpoints was helpful to my own understanding and research, I must stay within my objective of analyzing my sample and finding what clusters formed around the image of sex in those ten videos.

Despite having read a plethora of perspectives on this and linking my viewing with my personal beliefs regarding sex, I have sought to remain as objective as possible as I viewed the prevalent sexual images in the videos of my sampling. As I did so, I observed the following clusters: unfaithfulness, emphasis on the physical act of sex, blatant boldness, liberation and exploitation of women, love, and sex without consequence.

#### ***Unfaithfulness:***

The first video in my research, "O.P.P." was definitely full of sexual images and themes. Actually, the images were rather subtle and only a careful listening to the words and critical viewing of the video would tell you the actual message of the song. In fact, I recently had a friend who

has a teenage son, approach me and say, "Hey, Dave! Drop a load on 'em. Are you down with OPP?" Let me explain that this mother has a very conservative view of sex and not only believes in sexual faithfulness but in sex only after marriage. I looked at her and said, "From where did that come?" She laughed and said, "Oh that's one of my son's favorite songs and videos and, I have to admit, I really like it, too. It goes so fast that I'm not really sure whether the words are good or bad but it is catchy." I did not know whether or not I should become her son's enemy by explaining to her that she just asked me if I was into "Other people's pussy?!" I might add that I have little doubt that her son knew precisely the message of the song that he and his mom enjoyed.

Images of unfaithfulness are communicated blatantly through signs such as the "Club Cheatin'" sign shown throughout, the "cheap motels" that frequently show up, and the hiding act as they have one-night stands. A very powerful image for this message is the first one of the video in which a man's hand is seen taking off his wedding band and dropping it to the ground. The song communicates that the "in" thing is to be "down with O.P.P." "Who's down with O.P.P.?--All the homies/ladies!" It's interesting that women are allowed to be unfaithful just like men. A verse is devoted to the ladies. "Now for the ladies, O.P.P. means something different" such that the last "P" stands for

penis. As they sing about ladies being down with O.P.P. they show a woman sucking up and down on her finger with further sexual messages. The emphasis certainly is not on what you can give and express to another person through sex but, rather, emphasizes what is enjoyed personally. This overlaps with another theme in the cluster, sex as a physical act/sport. That is the theme addressed next.

"Runaround" makes a reference to treating faithfulness within marriage rather lightly. As the guys sing together about this girl giving them the "runaround," a couple of frames zoom in on guitarist Eddie Van Halen's wedding band. This almost seems to gloat over the fact that he is a married man in pursuit of this other woman giving him the "runaround."

Prince's "Cream" doubtlessly fails to promote monogamous sexuality. "Cream" is overtly sexual both visually and in the words which accompany the visual images. Though all the singers and dancers are fully clothed, the song gives a very strong orgy-like atmosphere. It appears that Prince is having sex with all of the women in his harem and is obsessed with his penis and desire for orgasm.

Prince uses his guitar as a sexual extension of himself. At times, he appears to "masturbate it" as an extension of his penis and at other times he straddles it conveying other very sexual messages. This again all

contributes to a very promiscuous, unfaithful, selfish message of sex sent through these images.

*Sex is All Physical:*

If a teen were to draw all of his or her sex education from many MTV videos, he or she could think that sex was not much more than a physical act or sport which male and female perform. Interestingly, I did not observe any homosexual images in any of the videos in the sample.

"O.P.P." sends the message of sex as all physical through the underlying theme of unfaithfulness that pervades this video. The message of "O.P.P." does not treat sex as a highly sacred, intimate act to be shared by two people deeply in love. As the song begins, there are many women's hands all over the lead singer and throughout, there are ongoing grunts and groans of "Oh's" in the background emphasizing the physical orientation of sex. When discussing sex, the words read, "She wanted to do me so we did it in my apartment." This again brings forth a very physical emphasis.

"Runaround" contributes to this cluster as well. The singers talk about wanting "it" and continuing to get the runaround from this woman or women in general. It may not be reading too much into the video to see the words "fill me

up" as being sexual too. The focus is all on what the "self" wants.

As I shall discuss more later, Abdul's "Promise of a New Day" is very provocative in the way it almost connotes her making love with nature. The images make this video very sexual and lusty. None of the words send that message, but her hands and body and all the singers move in a very sensual way. As she and a male dancer move together beneath the waterfalls, the scene is very steamy and makes sex appear very physical and natural as it relates to the environment.

As already stated, Prince's "Cream" is overtly sexual through the music, images, and words. Little is left to the imagination with words like "Cream, get on top..." Even the music sounds sensual. All the people involved and the hedonistic presentation of sex make it very physical. Oral sex is insinuated through some of the images as well, such as the women on their knees before the men. The touching their legs and groins by all the performers, further accentuates a very physical aspect of sex. This clusters in very closely with the selfish nature of the previous theme of unfaithfulness.

The emphasis of MTV videos upon sex as physical is contrary to the message educators and many adults are trying to teach adolescents. Society is crying out that teenagers

must grasp the need for commitment along with sex. Sex is not being portrayed as the ultimate form of intimacy and communication between two people through the physical emphasis as apparent in this cluster. Comment as to the implications of this contradiction shall be reserved for Section III.

### ***Boldness***

Most of the sexual images in the videos in the sample address sex very boldly. This is consistent with what is happening in the Nineties. Even ten years ago, *Newsweek* no doubt would have been greatly condemned for putting a picture of condom on the front page of their magazine as they in Fall 1991. While it may still be offensive to some, even the candidness with which I am addressing sex here would have been deplorable to many more people not too many years ago!

As previously addressed in the cluster, the boldness with which sex is used in "O.P.P." and "Cream" is very visible. "O.P.P." asks people to become members of the club and proudly acclaim their common bond to sexual unfaithfulness. The movements of the performers in "Cream" are blatantly sexual in everything from the pelvic thrust, which is even seen in "Motown Philly" but much more pronounced in "Cream," to the imitation of sexual

intercourse on the floor. Women are hanging upside down in the video with their legs spread apart and Prince very boldly makes many sexual gestures and movements.

Abdul, Carey, Van Halen, Boyz II Men, Guns N' Roses, and Michael Jackson are much more subtle with their sexual images but all of these artists still include sex somewhat boldly through images. Abdul is quite bold through the way her body is exposed and portrayed very sexually and Jackson is often seen seizing his groin throughout "Black of White."

These videos certainly do not portray sex, and certainly not sexuality, as something to remain behind closed doors. It is very much a part of all the images of the videos in the sample except for "Enter Sandman," where sexual images are almost nonexistent, and "Wildside," where essentially, they are downplayed.

### *Women--Sexual Objects or Liberated*

As addressed in the introduction of this chapter, portrayal of women by MTV is another complete topic in and of itself. Because gender is so closely tied to sexuality however, I found it necessary to consider briefly the treatment of women on MTV videos as part of the sex images cluster. My sample indicated that MTV portrays women both



as sexual objects to be used by men as well as liberated women in control.

"O.P.P." certainly represents the "liberated woman" by "allowing" her to be unfaithful as well as the male. That of course assumes a very liberal definition of the "liberated woman."

"Runaround" definitely portrays a woman in control. The male wants the woman but cannot win her and she continuously gives him the "runaround."

"Promise of a New Day" deals with two very contemporary issues, the liberated woman and the preservation of nature. Abdul's response to the nature in her surroundings certainly makes her appear to be a woman who is liberated and in control.

Mariah Carey represents a woman who appears very liberated. Her freedom is communicated through her country drive in a convertible with her hair blowing in the wind. The entire video possesses a blithe spirit.

Women are also treated as physical, sexual objects through some of the images in the sample. Though it gives women the same option of unfaithfulness to their lovers, the light treatment of the sexual act in "O.P.P." and "Cream" reduces women to sexual objects. "Runaround"'s flashes of sexy silhouettes treats the woman's worth as dependent upon

her body. Furthermore, all the women portrayed are very sexy and physically fit.

I watched "Motown Philly" numerous times, convinced that it was an entirely "innocent" video lacking any negative images in relation to women. When I watched exclusively for their presence, I discovered several. A couple of times, for no apparent reason in connection with the text of the song, a pair of sexy legs were interjected into the footage. Only a zoomed, fast flash of long, sexy legs are seen. Later, a sexy photographer and dancer are seen. While this may not seem so degrading to women, it does use the woman's body solely for her sexual appeal.

Interestingly, while Abdul's video strongly portrays the liberated woman, she also presents a very sexual image. The video begins by emphasizing the long sexy legs of Paula and two other dancers as they "dance in the clouds." A great deal of attention is focused on her breasts because of her attire and the angles of the camera. The men with whom Abdul sensually interacts, are shirtless. Both she and the men are in great physical shape.

Prince's "Cream" most definitely reduces women to physical sex objects. They seem to enjoy his promiscuous relationship with them and respond to him very sexually.

Guns N' Roses "bitch slap rappin'" text is accompanied by a sweaty "bitch" working out. Her physique, rather than her personhood, is the emphasis.

"Black or White" begins with a scene of interaction among mother, dad, and son. The mother is depicted as a submissive, ignorant wife/mother. She is reading a tabloid newspaper entitled the *Scooper*, the lead article of which is "I Was Abducted by a UFO." Instead of telling her son what she wants him to do, she says, "I don't think your father will be happy when he gets home." This degrades women in a different way.

Jackson's video also mildly alludes to women as physical objects by the attention given to the moving breasts of the last woman in the video. Some feminists may complain about his reference to being my "baby" and the model-like attire of the little girl in the rap scene. He also has women frequently surrounding him (as does Prince in "Cream") only the women are not nearly as sexual in their relationship to him.

"Wildside" uses women as sexual objects once as well; however, this is seemingly done with the purpose to downplay this image. When talking about the first episode of the video involving the cheerleader "Annie," a pair of long, slender, female legs are shown walking through an alley, almost giving the image of a prostitute. While the image in

and of itself portrays women as physical objects, the words which accompany it actually communicate the opposite message.

***Love:***

Though the themes of unfaithfulness and the degradation of women are very evident in these videos, "love" is occasionally associated with the sexual images portrayed. After all, it is with "love" that our society most commonly associates with sex.

Mariah Carey seems to be very much in "love" and having fun as she sings her song. The sexual act is never brought out blatantly in this selection but without doubt, Carey demonstrates her sexuality while seeming very much in love.

"Wildside" talks about Charles and Carol. They appear to be an innocent, happily married couple who are very much in love. They are expecting a baby. Sex is equated here with love, marriage, and family.

***Sex Without Consequence:***

Are these videos addressing the pressing sexual issues of our time, particularly sexual diseases and unwanted pregnancies? Despite the concentration of sexual images and

blatancy of sex, not one showed any negative consequences of sex. Quite the opposite message is conveyed through the videos in the sample. Other than a minor exception in the "love" theme of the cluster, all the clusters seem to revolve around sexuality and selfishness. The focus is all upon a hedonistic pursuit of doing what feels good.

It is ironic that during Adam Currey's veejaying of the "Best of Autumn Top 20 Countdown," he makes mention of and mourns the death of singer Freddy Mercury of Queen due to AIDS ("Best of Autumn..." 1991). Further irony exists in that MTV was one of the first networks to air contraceptive advertisements. At the same time, as demonstrated from this sample, sex is portrayed as happening without consequence.

Undoubtedly, the sexual nature of MTV shall continue to be an area of controversy as these images are viewed by youth. Many of the criticisms of MTV as represented in Chapter 3 revolve around sex. As previously stated, inferences as to the relative impact of these images rhetorically upon youth have been reserved for Section III.

## Chapter 7--Cluster #3:

### Violence

"When we come back, we'll lose control of our emotions, have a few nightmares about runaway eighteen wheelers and snakes. You know, the usual stuff. So I don't know where you're going, but it better not be far" ("Best of Autumn..." 1991). That is a quote from Adam Currey delivered before one of MTV's commercial breaks. As with sex, violence is a theme which permeates MTV, especially among the heavy metal groups. Is violence being condoned or condemned? Just as with the sex that is on MTV, there are a variety of perspectives of the violence on MTV and its impact, both good and bad.

Violence in rock music was of concern long before MTV existed. In W. J. Albert's study of perceived violence in rock music, he found intensity and violence to constitute the most important factors discriminating among rock songs. He found that evaluations of beauty, "interestingness," and goodness played very minor roles (Albert 1978).

In their study of violence and gender participation in MTV, Kalis and Neuendorf found aggressive cues to be less prominent than they thought. They differentiated between violent "events" and violent "objects." They defined "events" as the implication of an initiator and recipient, while "objects" can't have an initiator but may have one or

more recipients. Examples of aggressive "events" include a police with a gun and nightstick who throws a boy to the ground, a motorcycle gang chasing a teen boy and cornering him in an alley, or an eighteen wheeler chasing a little boy. Examples of aggressive "objects" are a spiked glove, a human head on display in a case, or a corpse. As Kalis and Neuendorf studied a variety of videos, they found that among the top four videos with the most aggressive/violent content, three of the four used violent themes to convey pro-social messages (Kalis 1989).

What does my sample indicate about the use of violence? The following themes clustered about the violent image: fear, entertainment, sex, and innocent victims. These were displayed through a variety of violent events and objects, including explosions, crashes, fire, guns, drowning, running, falling, eighteen wheelers, snakes and the timbre of the music and lyrics.

**Fear:**

While "O.P.P." flaunts the freedom to cheat on one's lovers, there still remains a sense of fear of being caught. The lead singer becomes a bit violent with his "lay" when his girlfriend is coming and the "O.P.P. lay" will not leave.

Fear is without doubt the dominant theme and feeling I perceive when I view Metallica's "Enter Sandman." The little boy is afraid to go to sleep for fear of the "Sandman" and then he dreams about being pursued by him in many violent ways. The music itself communicates fear. The young boy is continually in a state of falling, running away, or drowning. To a certain extent the viewer has the awful sensation of falling through a bottomless pit while viewing his fearful nightmare. Violent images of angry faces continually plague him resulting in the boy praying fearfully. The lyrics talk about sleeping "with one eye open, gripping your pillow tight," another cue to the "fear" clustered about this violent video and theme. Obvious fear is connoted when there are snakes crawling all over the young boy in his bed. When you see him pursued and his bed smashed by an eighteen wheeler, the emotion of fear is elicited again.

"Wildside" is full of violent images, although the messages sent are pro-social in nature. Regardless of the intent, there is still a great sense of fear associated with the images. Perhaps the group makes good use of instilling fear of the consequences of involvement on the "wildside." Violent images include gunshots, a gun pointed at the viewer, shattered glass, Charles committing suicide, roses thrown down at a tombstone and violence from the police toward the alleged criminal.



Fear is a natural theme within "You Could Be Mine". There are many violent clips from the movie *Terminator II* involving a guy jumping from a moving truck, explosions, murders, fights, and another semi chasing a child. Arnold's movement through the concert crowd with a machine gun induces fear as well.

There is even an element of fear present in "Black and White." The images of racial discrimination portrayed communicate a great deal of conflict, tension and fear.

While fear is a very dominant theme around the violent images, this is perhaps very subconscious to most chronic viewers. There is a sense in which the emotions are numbed to the fear-inducing violence. This was the very concern raised by Marshall McLuhan again and again alerting us to the potential of our becoming serviomechanisms of the machines we have created. McLuhan wrote and taught a great deal about the ability of the media to "massage" us and thus numbing us to its subtle effects (McLuhan 1967).

### ***Entertainment:***

Diametrically opposed to the theme of fear is that of entertainment as associated with violent images. At the same time, perhaps the two are not polarized responses. Much of the "entertainment" of violence is centered around

watching another's fear. At any rate, entertainment as clustered around violence was very evident in the videos from my sample.

"O.P.P." commences with this sense of violent entertainment through the choice of words. "Harm me with Harmony" are harsh words with which the rap begins and later has lyrics such as "throw that skeleton bone right in the closet door." Other "musical cues" throughout include "Bust it" and "Hit it" which seem to be nothing more than expressions yet have a sense of violence in them.

To some degree, Van Halen's mere performance of "Runaround" on stage is violent. The violence is not overt with blood and gore but there is a great deal of aggressive action on the part of the band members throughout the performance. I do not state that as a pro-social or anti-social use of violence, but merely an observation of its presence.

"Cream" also takes on a subtle violent mood. This clusters around the theme of sex as related to violence which I shall address next but it does seem to be done with the intent of entertaining. While the sex is not forced, the violent way in which the sex act is portrayed seems to be entertaining to the dancers and all involved.

"Black or White" begins with some violent words from the father to his son. After this reprimand, the dad slams

shut his son's door and breaks a glass picture of Michael Jackson, all seeming to center around the entertainment of violence and destruction. The son turns up the volume to decibels so loud (to the point on the dial where it says "Are you nuts") that his dad is torpedoed from his lazy-boy chair, through the roof and out into the jungle. This is all very "entertaining" violence.

In a sense, all the videos with violent events or objects in them could be included here (which from our sample is all the videos except "Motown Philly," "Promise of a New Day," and "Emotions"). That is not to say that entertainment is the only intended purpose of all these other videos (especially in a video such as "Wildside"), but if it did not have some element of entertainment, the consumers would not view it. With that in mind, as a whole, "Enter Sandman" and "You Could Be Mine" as they flash just one violent scene after another most definitely fit into the cluster of entertainment around violence!

## Sex

Much of the sex portrayed in the video samples is accompanied by violence. It is now that the preceding cluster, clusters in with this image.

Considering again "O.P.P.", where sex is treated "lightly" yet violently, this is represented right from the first image where the wedding band is dropped apathetically and violently to the ground from the man's hand. I commented earlier that the reference to having sex as "She wanted to do me so we did it" makes sex solely physical, but it also connotes a violent component of sex.

"Cream" is perhaps where this theme clusters around violence the most strongly. Prince treats his women like exploits in a rather violent manner and they appear to enjoy it. They all seem to be consenting to the promiscuity. The words even express a somewhat "rough" treatment of women and sex. "You're filthy cute and baby you know it..."

### *Innocent Victims:*

The innocent victims affected by violence is the other theme clustered about violent images. This is of course the core meaning of "Wildside." "That's how it is, on the wildside." Annie gets pulled in by the wrong crowd. She is pictured as an innocent teenage girl who had it all going for her and after one date with Billy, she takes a hit and dies. Ron just wanted to make a better income and so as a result of dealing drugs, ended up full of bullet holes. Charles wife, Carol, the baby she was expecting and the framed black man are the innocent victims in the story of

Charles trying to collect on his wife's life insurance claim. Perhaps the last episode accentuates this theme the most. Little Tiffany, who is only thirteen, goes to the big city to visit some family for the summer and a gang shoots her for no apparent reason and she dies. This video sends a very strong message about the effects of living life on the wildside and what it does to innocent people.

"Enter Sandman" certainly shows the effects of violence upon the innocent little boy, even if it is all in his imagination. Perhaps the fears and images he has in his dream are consequential to things he observes in "real life."

"You Could Be Mine" has violent images effecting the innocent. That is the whole basis of the Terminator movies. The Terminator chooses the targets and they are the victims who will inevitably lose their lives. The little boy on the bike fleeing the semi certainly portrays this theme.

"Black and White" most definitely demonstrates the effects of violent discrimination against the victims thereof. Other conclusions could be drawn about the faithful lovers who are hurt by the violence of their O.P.P. mates, the effects of the promiscuity propagated by "Cream," but that may be reading a little too much into images and themes that do not necessarily exist in these videos.

Regardless, violence against the innocent is a pervasive theme clustering around the violent images in these videos.

The discussion of the motives for the use of violence in music videos is very subjective. Whether violence is used in videos to entertain, to be artistic, or to counteract violence, it is very obvious that MTV is inundated with violent images. The question which comes to mind is whether or not that is indicative of real life. How many of us would have ever seen someone get killed without television? Is that a worthwhile education? What is the effect of exposure to "violence set to music?" Are even the pro-social uses of violence functional or do they further numb teenagers to violence that does not directly effect them? These are all questions we need to consider as we acknowledge the vast amounts of violence on MTV and as we approach section III looking at the impact of MTV's rhetoric on American youth.

Chapter 8--Cluster #4:Nature

Recycling is now mandated by law in Monroe County and that is representative of many other counties around the nation. Many Americans are very concerned about man's misuse of nature, including the effects of our products on the ozone layer, the tearing down of forests to build cities, the use of animals for food and clothing, and other environmental issues. At the same time, natural disasters continue to make man think that nature is more his foe than something he should be concerned about preserving. This paradox can be seen in MTV. Many MTV videos have outdoor scenes and involve animals and/or vegetation. There appears to be two overriding extremes throughout the use of nature in the images from my sample. Those extremes are the preoccupation with man's dominance over the natural world in which he lives and of which he is a part, and the other extreme of man's preservation of nature. In addition to this theme of abusing/using nature versus preserving nature, other themes which cluster around these images include the use of night versus daytime, the use of the "sky" image, natural versus fabricated settings, and nature as a friend or a foe.

### *Using/Abusing or Preserving Nature:*

There is a great deal of diversity in the themes clustered around this nature image. Even the same video may use both the abuse/use of nature and its preservation.

While I did not for the most part include the human body as part of nature, it certainly does play a part and is included so we must look at the "sex" images once more as it relates here. When using the body solely for the physical, sexual aspect, as in "O.P.P." or "Cream" or more latently in "Runaround," that is using it as a part of nature for selfish motivation.

Mariah Carey certainly seems to enjoy nature as she drives through the country side. The nature in the setting's background really contributes to the carefree feeling created in the video.

Roses are used to send a message in a two of the videos. In "Wildside," they are thrown at the grave site. "You Could Be Mine"'s Terminator carries a box of them in one hand with the machine gun in the other then ends up dropping them and trampling them as he pursues his target, "GUNS N' ROSES!."

Abdul's "Promise of a New Day" centers around preserving nature. As included in the description and lyrics of this video, it closes with the inscription across



the screen, "When the forest dies, we all die. Leave the jungle alone." Abdul's video most clearly and consciously promotes the needed preservation of and care for the nature in which we live.

### *Night/Day--Sky:*

Closely related to the Black/White image I addressed initially, is the use of night versus day settings in the videos. The mood and messages communicated can be drastically communicated through this choice.

It seems interesting to me that the vast majority of "O.P.P." takes place under a "night scene." The sky is dark creating a mood of "hiding" what is being done. "Promise of a New Day" on the other hand begins with Paula and two other dancers dancing in the middle of a very blue sky with some fluffy clouds.

"Motown Philly" takes place mostly during the daytime and the sunlight further presents the happy/positive message represented in this video. The same is true for "Emotions."

There is no natural light however, present in "Runaround," "Cream," and there are limited amounts in "Enter Sandman" and "You Could Be Mine." The majority of light used in these videos is fabricated light and it is often quite dim. Again, this overlaps into the cluster of

Black/White to some degree in serving to bring out moods, contrast and opposites. As stated before, "Enter Sandman" gives the strobe light effect as one watches for a glimpse of sunlight.

The grey skies and rain strongly contribute to the ominous mood of "Wildside." "Black or White," consonant with its overall theme, makes use of both day and night. Sunlight or the lack thereof certainly affects people's moods and that is utilized in these videos' rhetorical messages.

#### *Natural versus Fabricated Environment:*

Overlapping a great deal with this cluster around nature is the setting of the videos in a natural environment or a fabricated one. Most of "O.P.P." takes place outside but in the midst of a street environment, which is very much man-made. Some dancing scenes and contacts with potential "O.P.P.'s" occur indoors.

"Runaround" is all indoors in the concert scene. It is very much a fabricated environment, as is "Cream," and most of "You Could Be Mine."

"Motown Philly" also occurs primarily in a man-made environment which coincides with the guys growing-up years in Philadelphia. While they are outside a great deal, the

outdoor setting includes alleys, city streets, and school yards. The indoor scene is in an old home.

I have mentioned the two scenes in the video "Emotions" several times previously. The contrast between the two scenes is seen again in the use of natural and fabricated environments. The video goes from Mariah riding in a fabricated creation (the car) but very much appearing to be enjoying the natural creation of the countryside and breezes. The indoor setting employs touches of nature as well through the scenes of the muskrat-like animal, the bird, and the children playing with a dog.

Much of "Wildside" occurs outdoors but as with many of the preceding videos, most of it is in a fabricated environment, most commonly, the street. This again is consistent with the setting typical of life on the "wildside."

"Enter Sandman" has a diversity of outdoor and indoor scenes which further develop its message of fear. The scenes in nature include fleeing the truck, drowning, and falling as a result of gravity through nature's air from man's skyscrapers to his cement sidewalks.

"Black or White" takes place outdoors for the most part. It begins with a very natural environment in the jungle among the animals. It ends in a conglomeration of many of man's largest and most important cities.

It is no surprise that "Promise of a New Day" takes place exclusively in a very natural environment. The tall grass, waterfalls, birds, and beauty of the setting is all very natural.

*Friend/Foe:*

Throughout the videos in my sample, nature seems to take on the role of either "friend" or "foe" to the main character. The settings and objects of nature involved in the videos either portray an adverse or a propitious relationship with the characters.

Little of this friend/foe with nature theme is evident in "O.P.P." There is a sexual analogy made between the female genitalia and "another way to call a cat a kitty."

"Promise of a New Day" sends a message of a very intimate relationship between nature and Paula. It is so intensely intimate that Abdul could almost be said to be "making love" with nature itself. As characters bow down in the tall grass, doves fly out from above.

The characters in "Emotions" seems to be "friendly" with nature. Carey very much enjoys soaking in the summer rays and breeze as she rides through the country. The animals in the house demonstrate a congenial relationship between man and nature.

"Metallica" most strongly demonstrates nature as the foe of the young boy. The very label of the man pursuing the boy in his nightmare represents a negative connection with nature--the Sandman! This foe-like relationship with nature is further heightened through the snakes crawling in the boy's bed, the boy drowning in water and his falling through the air to jagged mountain tops.

Perhaps the only scene from which I can draw a theme of friend versus foe around the nature cluster in "Wildside," is in the suicide scene. Charles uses gravity and a river as a means to ending his life thus making nature a foe. Throughout the rest of the video, the nature images serve more to set the mood and tone of the greater foe--the "wildside."

"You Could Be Mine" could be said to put man against nature from the number of explosions and fires that occur. However, as in many of these videos, man is his own greatest foe.

"Black or White" uses the nature theme in both roles. Nature surely does not appear to be an enemy as Michael and the "jungle men" are situated out in the jungle/wilderness. Likewise, the snow falling at night serves to further enhance the "Black or white" theme developed throughout. At the same time, the explosions during times of racism make nature adversarial to man; but then again, it is man

himself who causes that. The black and white babies sitting on top of the "world" could possibly further demonstrate a friendly relationship between man and nature.

The very label of "nature" on images is rather nebulous but as described above, is another one of the key images frequent and intense throughout the sample. As clustered around these themes, and with the growing popularity of giving attention to nature, I would expect to see more and more inclusion of images and themes pertaining to nature on MTV.

Chapter 9--Cluster #5:Street

Perhaps one of the most interesting key images to me has been the number of episodes throughout the sample that take place on the street. The street may be a "party scene" or dangerous place. With males, it is typically seen as a cool hangout, whereas with girls, it is connected with prostitution.

Clustered around the numerous street images in the sample, I observed the following themes and events: the hangout, the non-city streets, the prostitute versus the liberated woman, a site of violence and the pseudo-reality often depicted in the street scene. Consider what is communicated through this frequent and intense key image and the cluster formed about it.

***The "Hangout"***

Several of the videos show the street as the place to hang out. I begin with this because it overlaps with many of the other themes presented.

"O.P.P." certainly communicates this idea about the street with the majority of the video taking place out in the street. It looks like the place to be! The guys and girls are enjoying each other's company and singing out in

the street. I shall discuss the false reality presented here in the final part of the street image cluster.

The major portion of "Motown Philly" also occurs out in the street which is the "hangout." The guys appear to cruise innocently down the streets of Philadelphia. They hang out together outside "Geno's Steaks" and they do some dancing together in a plaza-like atmosphere. Though there is some graffiti in the background of some of the streets where they hang out together, this seems to be a real antithesis of the "gang-image" usually associated with a group of black guys hanging out together in the streets. The street appears to be a very positive "hangout" place for these adolescents.

"Wildside" gives a contrary image of the street as a "hangout" site. This clusters around the violent themes on the street I shall approach later but fits in here as well. This is the opposite of what is going on in "Motown Philly." As youth hang out on the street, it is the setting for gangs, drugs, and murders. It is the setting for many innocent deaths.

### ***Non-City Streets:***

There is a definite difference in the image conveyed through streets outside the urban setting. The street, or



perhaps rural road is a more appropriate name, is the dominant setting for Carey's "Emotions." It is a means to a care-free, relaxing, warm drive through the country. There is a sense of safety and serenity associated with the street here.

"Black and White" begins with an image of a residential street in a stereotypical, North American subdivision. It appears very calm and safe as well, other than a typical argument between the boy and his father inside the one house which serves to introduce the video.

"Enter Sandman" does include some street images outside the city but they further promote the theme of fear found throughout that entire video. The boy has run from the city and is continuing to run in fear through the country-setting as he is pursued by the Sandman and the eighteen wheeler.

### ***Prostitute or Liberated Woman?***

Some of the analysis here will be redundant with what I covered in this part of the cluster around the sex image, but for the sake of comprehensiveness in addressing this street image cluster, I shall mention some of it again. This aspect is one of the most interesting parts of the cluster around the street image which as mentioned earlier, was researched by Lisa Lewis in her book *Gender and Politics in MTV*.

Lewis sees Madonna, Benatar, Lauper, and Turner as revolting against the all too common prostitutional image of women portrayed in music videos. She suggests that these female artists rebel against this image, by acting in control through their presence on the street. Lewis supports her argument by Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to do with It?" Many have condemned this song in the way that Turner seems to be promoting sex without commitment nor love. Interestingly though, Turner states that her video and song is in fact a satire on the whole idea of sex without love. Lewis argues that these women in their videos try to go out on the street and "take charge" without lowering themselves to being solely a physical object (Lewis 1990). The real question to me however, is in understanding how the viewers perceive it. If in fact these are the rhetorical motives of these four female artists, is that the message they are communicating? While none of the videos in our sample are cuts from these women, it was interesting to look for the placement of women on the street in the sample videos.

Although sexuality as a whole is lowered to solely a physical sport/game in "O.P.P.", the women are placed on the street image consistent with the way the men are. A whole verse and portion of the video is contributed to women who wish to be unfaithful as well. Women therefore, are not depicted as prostitutes here, but rather as having the same

"freedom" as men to cheat on their mates and to enjoy sex with whom they wish.

Despite it occurring in the innocence of the "non-city setting," Carey indeed portrays the image of the liberated woman in "Emotions." Riding through the country side with a carefree attitude, dressed in her sexy skirt and halter, she very much appears a liberated woman.

As explicated before, "Wildside" does portray a prostitutional image of woman in one scene. The context is when they are singing about Annie, the high school cheerleader. Flashed on the screen is a pair of long, sexy legs walking slowly down the street. In a sense, this could be argued to be against the prostitutional image because of the negative association put with it.

"Black and White" does not portray the liberated woman with the women in the street setting who are "bowing" to Michael. He is the focus and center of attention wherever he goes. On the other hand, the prostitutional image is not presented either.

It seems then that in the sample, the prostitutional image is not perpetrated favorably. The "liberated woman" on the other hand is a dominant theme clustered about the street images.

## *Violence*

As alluded to before, the street is a common scene of violence. Watching the evening news would seem to indicate that if MTV communicated this, it would be simply a reflection of reality. The videos clustering this theme around the street image are of course the three most overtly violent videos, "Enter Sandman," "Wildside," and "You Could Be Mine."

There is a never a time the street is anything but a place of violence and fear in Metallica's "Enter Sandman." The street scenes include the place where the boy is running as he is pursued by the Sandman and specifically the eighteen wheeler, the place where his bed is smashed by the Mack truck, and the destiny to which he looks as he sees himself falling through the air from skyscrapers. The street serves to reinforce strongly the message of fear so common to this video.

The street is almost always the site of violence in the video, "You Could Be Mine." It is on the street where the truck chases the boy on his bike, the place where many explosions and gun shots occur, and the place where the Terminator targets the band as they walk out of the concert hall amidst their many fans.

As throughout their entire video, "Wildside" gives a realistic message about the violence that occurs on the

street. As portrayed in the video as the "hangout" place, the street is the home of the gangs and the location where the vast majority of their crimes occur. The message sent is one to avoid being out on the street. The street is the prime location for the "Wildside."

### *Is the Street Real Life?!*

A pseudo-reality is created by many of the street images. The street is often the setting for a party-like scene, unlike any party I have ever observed or heard about out in the middle of the street. This is contrary to the unfortunate but likely more realistic violent setting as indicated in "Wildside." Many street images in the sample show it as the "cool" and "hip" place to be, closely related to the "hangout" theme of this cluster. Several of the videos depict people singing and talking together in a setting where that rarely takes place.

"O.P.P." is a prime example. The street seems to create the place of unifying the O.P.P. gang. There is a sense of solidarity created for them as they sing, dance, and celebrate together their life of promiscuity.

"Motown Philly" clusters in here too as the guys frequently are seen singing and dancing together up and down the alleys and streets of Philadelphia.

Carey and Jackson, while not in a "party scene" so much, also choose to structure vast parts of their videos out on the street setting. Carey sings as they drive through the country and Michael does all kinds of dance moves, reads the paper, and stands in the torch of the Statue of Liberty looking down on the "streets" of London, Paris, Rome, New York and other cities.

For the most part, if a video does not take place on stage, what rhetorical message is being communicated as a result of this consistent use of a pseudo-reality created by the street-image? Is it merely a more interesting "stage" for the videos or are there deeper messages being sent? If nothing else, it serves to communicate a false picture of reality.

The use of streets when looking at the themes clustered around it as an image bring about some interesting rhetorical themes. As indicated in the sample, the street image appears frequently and with great intensity throughout many MTV videos. Should one assume that it is simply a more interesting stage?

### Section III: Conclusions Based upon Research Findings

Having conducted all this research, both perusing that which was done by others and from my own cluster analysis of these ten MTV videos, I must ask the question, "So What?" Based upon the analysis conducted, what inferences can be drawn about the persuasive intent of MTV artists and producers? What does all this mean, specifically as it relates to the adolescent culture, the group impacted most by MTV. This last section serves to try and draw it all together. Chapter 10 seeks to make inferences about persuasive intentions, to suggest some conclusive findings from the cluster analysis and to examine an overriding, common thread throughout the rhetorical messages found. Chapter 11 briefly reviews some of the other research reporting the impact of MTV and adolescents. Based upon the research of these, Chapter 12 wraps up the thesis by looking specifically at the impact on youth from the MTV rhetoric deduced through this research project and sample.

Chapter 10--A Yin Yang Message?!: An Overview of the  
Rhetorical Messages seen through the Clusters

Chapter 11--A Shaky Marriage!--Youth and MTV:  
Review of Other Research Analyzing Youth and MTV

Chapter 12--Thesis Finale...: The Impact of Paradoxical  
Messages upon Youth

## Chapter 10--A Yin Yang Message?!

### An Overview of the Rhetorical Messages seen through the Clusters

The videos from my sample display the key images of black/white, sex, violence, nature, and the street. It is interesting to observe the way the clusters interrelate. Based upon these clusters, I would like to examine the rhetorical messages being sent through MTV. Much of that has already been fleshed out through a close analysis of the videos and the themes related to the clusters as detailed in Section II. It would seem helpful however, to draw out some underlying rhetorical messages throughout in serving as an overview of the content of the videos.

Ten years into the industry, what are the rhetorical messages communicated through MTV? That is what I set out to answer at the beginning. The messages throughout the videos are full of contrasts and opposites which serve to contradict each other and yet often end up relating together. In one sense, it seems that there are no absolutes communicated, while at the same time, contradictory absolutes are presented. This makes the black/white image the one which embraces all the other four. As in the contrasts communicated through the black/white images, the other four all indicate messages of opposition and contrast. The message of cyclical interaction with opposites presented through MTV videos closely resembles the yin yang. The yin yang has become an increasingly popular



symbol over the past several years and perhaps the heavy use of black and white in MTV seeks to build further upon that.

The yin yang stems from the teachings of the philosophy of Taoism. Chinese thinkers perceived all phenomena as having two opposites yet related "energy-modes." The yang is defined as the positive, bright, active principle in nature while the yin is the negative, dark and passive principle. A few examples of the way they differentiate things in accordance with these categories would be as follows:

<u>Yin</u>	<u>Yang</u>
Cold	Hot
Female	Male
Wet	Dry
Space	Time
Soft	Hard

The yin yang phenomenon then, looks at the way things dynamically interact in a cyclical way so that the predominance of one or the other alternates across time (Melton 1990).

This concept includes everything from independence to uniting together regardless of colors and races, good and bad and the consequences thereof, and the maleness that is in everyone woman and the femaleness in every man. Women as well as men can be unfaithful. Man is seeking to preserve nature yet destroys himself through nature. This theme of conflicting ideas is being presented over and over again

throughout contemporary culture and seemingly throughout MTV videos.

I would not be so bold as to assert that MTV artists and producers are setting out to foster a philosophy of Taoism throughout their videos. I do, however, see the use of the contradictory messages as evident in these clusters, being congenial with the yin yang phenomenon in our contemporary society.

The black/white image suggests a yin yang concept through its very nature. Consider the yin yang element present within each of the other four clusters:

SEX

Love

Unfaithfulness

Statement of  
Sexuality/liberated Woman

Exploitation of the Female  
Body

We have some scenes and songs promoting the love and commitment that accompanies sex while others flaunt cheating on one's mate. The death of an AIDS victim is mourned minutes after the airing of a video capitalizing on the causes of AIDS--promiscuity. The woman wants equal rights and to be treated for her intellect and the person that she is yet seconds later she uses her body to capture the

attention of the audience and entertain. Interwoven through both the yin and the yang are the selfish motivation of doing what is best for "SELF!"

Aufdherheide suggests a degree of yin yang influence at least in terms of philosophy by his arguing that MTV has no anchor in giving a real sense of a community. Gender is not even fixed. Male and female are fractured into a kaleidoscope of images (1986).

Yin and yang have very sexual origins from the Taoist movement. The semen is the essence of the yang and is most effectively nourished by the orgasm of the yin (Welch 1966). I reiterate again that I am not necessarily suggesting that MTV artists and producers are consciously seeking to promote Taoism but it certainly serves as an interesting analogy of what is going on in the paradox of messages presented.

#### VIOLENCE

Innocent Victims/Fear

Entertainment

A song such as "Wildside" tries to use the seriousness of death to curb youth from life with drugs and gangs. Yet one questions the potency of the message when so many other songs treat violence, destruction and death lightly. It does not seem that any great sense of fear is instilled when violent acts and events are commonplace to the viewer. In

fact, the viewer may become immune and numb to violence from the nearly incessant exposure to extreme violence. It must be questioned whether the use of violence can halt the practice of violence in real life.

### NATURE

Preserve it

Source of Destruction

Friend

Foe

Nature needs to be preserved and yet nature destroys nature. Nature can serve as an escape from the pressures or can plummet mankind to a destiny of doom. The suicide victim uses it as an escape from the pressures of life by jumping off a bridge into a river, and yet it ends up leading to the doom of man's greatest enemy, death. Nature is being destroyed and is destroying us. Or is it simply allowing us to destroy ourselves when we choose to do so?

### STREET

Hangout Place/Party Scene

Scene of Violence

Liberated Woman

Hooker

The street is a fun place to hang out with friends and sing and dance together. On the other hand the street is the setting for violence, drugs, and death. However the next video will show a series of unrealistic images of

trucks driving off the edge of highway bridges down onto another road.

Then as already analyzed with the sex image, the street can also be the location where the liberated woman can exercise her freedom. Or the street can be the site where the woman is a victim of promiscuity.

It is these yin yang messages that permeate the videos from the sample. Since I have viewed these top-rated videos from Fall 1991 numerous times, as well as hundreds of other current MTV videos, I feel confident in stating that these are some of the predominant rhetorical messages being sent out to teens.

## Chapter 11--A Shaky Marriage--Youth and MTV

### Review of Other Research Analyzing Youth and MTV

Today's youth are most definitely captivated by MTV and their lives are greatly influenced by the network. "At MTV, we don't shoot for the 14-year olds--we own them. We will reach 90% of them!"(Williams 1981, D1). That was what Robert Pittman, chairman of MTV told the *Philadelphia Enquirer* confidently in the first year of MTV being on the air. Since then, adolescents have continued to be the primary targets of MTV programming; therefore it seems appropriate to examine at least briefly, adolescents and the findings on their relation to MTV and then to infer further effects based upon my research through the clusters.

#### ***Adolescence: A Period of Change***

"Adolescence," from the Latin word "adolescere," means to grow into maturity. It has been defined from everything as a time of "storm and stress," to the psycho-social period beginning with the arrival of sexual potency and extending until economic and social independence is achieved. Another definition describes it as the period of development in humans that begins with an awareness that adult privileges are due but not given and ends when the full power and social status of adulthood are granted by society (Smith 1992). In the United States, adulthood is generally

considered to be an achievable state through a series of biological changes known as sexual maturity and through the social assumption of roles and responsibilities, known as social maturity (Lewis 1990). While there are a variety of opinions about the perimeters of adolescence and its extending further into the mid-twenties, adolescents of all ages are becoming more and more of an entity in and of themselves. Yet they are being expected to confront life and its challenges with the maturity once expected only of the middle-aged, without any time for preparation (Elkind 1989).

The adolescent experiences the world differently than an adult. He or she experiences a drastic change in how the people in his or her world view him or her due to the physiological changes that occur. Secondly, as a result of the intellectual changes that occur, he or she begins to view his or her world in a whole new way. As adolescents experience these changes, they long for security, they long for impact, and they thirst for love that will not let them down (Huggins 1989).

### ***Adolescents and Media:***

Perhaps more than any other modern-day scholar, Marshall McLuhan has sensitized us to the influence that the various modes of communication have in the forming of personalities. In his book, *Understanding Media*, he makes

clear that the character of teenagers has been dramatically shaped by the mass media (McLuhan 1964). Television is an exceedingly strong force in communicating values to them. It has been suggested that many teenagers would feel more the loss of TV from their lives than they would the loss of their fathers (Campolo 1987). A contemporary McLuhanesque view was expressed in the *New York Times* a few years back. The article read:

You're dealing with a culture of TV babies...What kids can't do today is follow things too long. They get bored and distracted, their minds wander. If information is presented to them in tight fragments that don't necessarily follow each other, kids can comprehend that ("TV Culture Babies," 1983).

In describing MTV's format to Americans when interviewed on ABC's *Nightline*, Pittman said, "As opposed to conventional television, where you rely on plot and continuity, we rely on mood and emotion. We make you feel a certain way as opposed to you walking away with any particular knowledge" ("Music Video" 1984).

Bob Pittman is said to have designed MTV to "mirror the issues of people moving from adolescence to adulthood" (Levy 1983, 76). Pittman considers that purpose to be the central goal and essence of rock music. This is characteristic of



the ideological terms with which adolescence is typically regarded.

The degree to which adolescents, and anyone for that matter, are affected by the media remains highly controversial. At the very least, they are going to think about what they view. In addressing teens and their viewing of MTV, author and speaker Al Menconi asks guys in his seminars, "Guys, how many of you watch a sexy video, jump up as soon as it is over, call your girlfriend, and invite her over to your house to hug her, smooch her, and get all sweaty" (Menconi 1990, 83)? He goes on to explain that almost no one believes that watching a sexy video will make anyone get pregnant or get raped and for the most part they are right. Menconi then asks a second question, "How many of you guys watch a sexy video and daydream about being with your girlfriend--dancing with her or going out on a date? Even if you don't do anything about it, have you had those longings" (Menconi 1190, 83)? He finds that many more admit to this response but reply that they would still never do anything solely based upon watching a video. Finally, Menconi asks, "How many of you, while watching a sexy video, are at least thinking about sex and romance" (84)? If honest, everyone must admit, Menconi concludes, that when they watch a continuous stream of sensuous images, they're going to have sensual thoughts.

Young people's music is very personal to them and they become very defensive when challenged that it may be unhealthy for them. The viewing of MTV is one of the leading areas of debates in many American homes.

*Adolescence...A Period of Generational Conflict:*

Most every teenager has heard their parents or some other adult express their lack of appreciation for popular music. While not all young people prefer popular music, they certainly remain the major consumers. This often leads to a great deal of generational conflict. While the styles have changed, the points of contention are remarkably similar. The Jitterbuggers, whose music in the 1930's was termed "syncopated savagery," would three decades later, label rock as a "destructive force in society" (Denisoff 1986).

While there are many areas of generational conflict among teens and their elders, the music issue is intensified because of its significance to teenagers. Actually, Pittman himself says it well; "When you're dealing with a music culture--say people aged 12-30, music serves as something beyond entertainment. It's really a peg they use to identify themselves. It's representative of their values and culture" (Denisoff 1989, 244-45).

The authors of the book *Dancing in the Dark* create a vivid analogy for the generational differences and battle that lives on between teenagers and adults over popular music. They write:

Imagine a crowded subway train on a snowy night in Toronto. It carries high-brow folks who have just attended a symphony concert at Roy Thompson Hall. Their dress is elegant, their conversation subdued. At the Maple Leaf Gardens stop, the train is invaded by a noisy wave of teenage rock fans who have just come from a heavy metal concert. Their dress is wild, their banter loud. As the train leaves the station, the two groups eye each other with suspicion and disdain (Schultze 1991, 111).

Parents can opt to have MTV blocked from their cable package at no charge. Greater Rochester Cable reports that few customers request having that done. My personal experience has shown that most teens who do not have MTV at home find ways to view it at their friends' homes. Perhaps a more sensible approach for parents is to remain open and be sensitive to the value their teens may place upon MTV. That does not mean the parents have to agree or promote everything that is presented but the videos can serve as an

excellent springboard for discussion about many life-impacting issues.

*The Desire for a Family Without Authority:*

In creating the format for MTV, Pittman capitalized upon a common desire for a "rock and roll family." He wanted to create much the same atmosphere as programs like *Good Morning America* create only this family of peers would deliberately lack adults. This is the major attraction of MTV to teenagers asserts E. Ann Kaplan. She concludes that MTV constructs a false sense of identity for teens by addressing a unified teenage rock "community" fulfilling their desire to belong to a world without parents (1987).

By combining the desire for identity and intimacy with a climate devoid of authority, MTV has been extremely successful among youth. Youth are the consumers most susceptible to peer pressure and to suggestions about how to spend their time and money. MTV built programming around this desire for intimacy with "revealing" videos, informal veejays, fantasy promotions, homey sets and local MTV tours. "Once the TV was turned on, MTV credibly meshed with the ambiance of the typical middle-class or upper-middle-class household"(Schultze 1991, 195).

MTV unites adolescents across many cultural boundaries by including teenagers from all over the world in this "anti-authority family." MTV Europe began in 1987 and aired in 13 countries to over 7 million viewers. 40 percent of the homes in West Germany were wired to MTV, and 33,000 viewers in Budapest Hungary (Kelly 1989). MTV was available in 24 countries by 1989 (Robins 1989).

Veejays relate to viewers with a personal touch by dressing fashionably but casually, thereby selling the consumption-oriented lifestyle of the channel. Within a year of MTV's debut, MTV was receiving 100,000 letters monthly, many of which were written personally to veejays (Levy 1982).

Youth are being told that they can decide who they are and what life is all about and that the easiest way to do so is through consumption. Unlike others trying to influence youth, MTV's approach is established with no moral obligations, no educational accomplishments required and no parental rules nor obligations (Schultze 1991). At the same time, the individual has little worth on MTV other than as a viewer and consumer. Donald Davis' study, "Nihilism in Music Television," concluded that nearly half of all concept videos depict nihilistic images such as sacrifices, murders, self-destruction, brutality, theft, drug use and skin punctures. While youth need and search for much more real

to life lessons, all they get from MTV is a chance to tune in and buy. Then even at that, the styles and products change so quickly that even the wealthy and savvy cannot keep up with them (Davis 1984).

The generation that MTV seeks to influence is the perpetual national youth culture. While not a community in any geographical or organizational sense, the world of teenagers resembles a community in terms of age, lifestyle, and prevalent ethos. MTV is the cheerleader for this new "community" of young consumers who dance to the same music, wear similar clothes, and chant common shibboleths about life (Schultze 1991, 200).

While much more has been researched and written about youth and MTV, this chapter has served to overview some of the more overriding themes and concerns printed. This represents only some of the opinions and hypotheses that exist in relation to youth and MTV. One must realize however, that there is little empirical data to prove conclusive claims about the effects of MTV upon youth. Regardless, the assertions reviewed in this chapter deserve careful consideration as valid possibilities!

Chapter 12--Thesis Finale:

Impact of Conflicting Messages Upon Youth

While I cannot make scientific conclusions based upon empirical data, because of the conflicting rhetorical messages that I saw emerge in the sample, I have some major concerns about the ever increasing influence that MTV plays upon youth. It appears that youth are being presented with all opposing messages in a non-authoritative setting. Youth are allowed to watch videos and draw their own conclusions for their personal lives and belief systems. Many writers do not believe that youth are capable of being presented with such conflicting and divergent values to derive their own value system.

The assumption that teenagers can be presented with these two opposing viewpoints and draw their own world view is based upon the premise that values are developed through reason. Allan Bloom writes, "Reason cannot establish values, and its belief that it can is the stupidest and most pernicious illusion (Bloom 1987, 194)."

David Elkind in his book *All Grown Up and No Place to Go*, writes that teenagers have trouble making decisions. He talks about the agony they experience deciding what to wear, eat and say much less choosing among values that give them life-direction. Teenagers lack the experience that adults have as they make decisions and they undergo continual rapid

emotional swings making decisions that much more difficult (Elkind 1989: 38-40).

As this relates to values, Elkind writes:

Teenagers need a clearly defined value system against which to test other values and discover their own. But when the important adults in their lives don't know what their own values are and are not sure what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad, the teenager's task is even more difficult...The process of constructing an identity is adversely affected (Elkind 1989, 9).

In order for adolescents to form a subculture in and of themselves, they need to establish common values and norms amongst themselves. These usually consist of neither adult nor child standards but of some unique set of standards that further strengthen their identity as a group in and of themselves (Ausubel 1954). Based upon the research reviewed in the previous chapter, there is little doubt that MTV does in fact mold a certain set of values for their "community" in terms of dress, materialism and anti-authority. Yet looking at the contradictory messages indicated through the clusters, there is a great deal of confusion communicated regarding some of the overriding issues of everyday life.



Professor Allan Bloom asserts that since values are not rational, they must be imposed. "Authentic values are those by which a life can be lived, which can form a people that produces great deeds and thoughts (201)." He exemplifies this through men such as Moses, Jesus, Homer, and Buddha; men who founded the Jewish, Christian, Greek, and Indian cultures. "It is not the truth of their thought that distinguished them, but its capacity to generate culture (Bloom 1987, 201)."

I fear that the majority of adolescents do not even listen to nor view MTV critically much less attempt to weigh the values that will form their personal set of beliefs and values systems. Rather, they sit passively and consume the collage of images and contradictions flashing at them continuously.

Consider the picture Bloom paints when addressing rock music and adolescents in his book *The Closing of the American Mind*:

Picture a thirteen year-old boy sitting in the living room of his family home doing his math assignment while...watching MTV. He enjoys the liberties hard won over centuries by the alliance of philosophic genius and political heroism, consecrated by the blood martyrs; he is provided with comfort and leisure by the most productive

economy ever known to mankind; science has penetrated the secrets of nature in order to provide him with the marvelous, lifelike electronic sound and image reproduction he is enjoying. And in what does this progress culminate? A pubescent child whose body throbs with orgasmic rhythms; whose feelings are made articulate in hymns to the joys of onanism or the killing of parents; whose ambition is to win fame and wealth in imitating the drag-queen who makes the music. In short, life is made into a nonstop, commercially prepackaged masturbational fantasy (1987, 75).

Perhaps Bloom's picture is a bit extreme but causes one to question the justification given the themes of MTV as merely entertaining and artistic. By presenting a message laden with an emptiness of any consistent values, natural facts become the ends in and of themselves. Many musicians cry that there is no proof of direct effect between MTV content and adolescent behavior. Perhaps more destructive than the potential literal modelling of violent and sexual behavior is the destruction of creativity, critical thinking skills, and the passionate relationship to art so needed for a liberal education!

The alleged "Left" are often defensive of MTV based upon the argument of freedom of expression and as an

appreciable form of art yet they ignore the capitalistic element that drives it. One cannot deny the commercial motivation that drives MTV artists and executives. MTV claims to "serve youth" by presenting them with "all the options" on pressing issues such as sex, violence, and environment. Yet as a result, the "storm" and "stress" of adolescence are only heightened.

Does MTV give youth that needed peg of identity within their own community? Having spent many months seeking to be as objective as possible in my research of the rhetorical motives of MTV after its first decade of existence, and how those motives relate to the youth culture of America, I must echo again the authors of *Dancing in the Dark!*:

If MTV actually met the deepest personal and social needs of youth, there would be little need for constant innovation or, for that matter, competing social institutions like the family and the church. MTV could raise the "television babies" on its own. Nothing would please the channel more, but nothing is less likely. MTV will be plagued by the same social instability and cultural flux that it has found so profitable to exploit and promote (Schultze 1991, 209).

I should say however that the authors are careful to clarify this statement by suggesting that MTV will more than

likely read the changes of society and culture as they occur and adapt. They write, "MTV, like rock and roll, is here to stay" (Schultze 1991, 209).

What is all this to say? That MTV is propagating the Taoistic yin yang philosophy? Perhaps not intentionally but in effect, yes. That may be rather dogmatic. The cluster analysis did however, bring about a strikingly interesting comparison with the opposites found in each key image and their interrelation to the yin yang mindset. An hour of MTV is an hour of contradictory messages.

The other social institutions which exist for youth, parents, schools, churches, and other youth organizations must continue to challenge youth to see through the conflicting message pervasive throughout MTV. It seems practically useless for parents to attempt to ban MTV from their teens. As mentioned before, most of those teens will view it at friends homes so perhaps it would be more beneficial to watch it with them and talk about some of the issues that are addressed. Without condemning their music or the videos they like, discussing with them the inconsistency of the negative consequences of violence as fleshed out in one video and the use of it to entertain in another may be a very effective discussion tool to get them to actually think through their own value system.

My biggest concern as a result of the rhetorical messages seen from my sample then lies in the obvious contradictions presented throughout MTV to youth. Frank Sciacca in his book *Generation at Risk* identifies the birth of this "living with paradox" from the sixties. He talks about how it took an entire decade for the activists in the sixties to realize they had "shouted 'murder' only to discover blood on [their] own hands" (Sciacca 1990, 66).

Allow me to conclude by quoting Stuart Goldman who uncovered the true politics beneath the obvious contradictions rampant in rock music:

So, if rock is neither conservative nor Marxist nor liberal, that leaves the anti-authority doctrine of anarchism. This is nearer to the mark; rockers routinely denounce 'the system'--the governments, parents, teachers, etc. However, they usually do this while driving around in limos, talking on car phones with managers, lawyers, and accountants. Ask any young rocker his dream and you'll find it involves wealth, fame, and power.

Rock politics, in short, is a sort of parasitic anarchism. Rockers are comfortably aware that the hated system will doubtless outlive them, continuing to provide its despised benefits.

At the heavy-metal extreme, this becomes a form of hypocritical nihilism in which all the normal values of civilized decency are sneered at and--in everyday business transactions--relied upon (1989, 31).

Is MTV a channel "for" the youth of America? Over the past decade, MTV has undoubtedly become greatly valued by the vast majority of teenagers across America as well as many other countries. As to whether the programming and production is done "for" the best interest of American teenagers is a much more subjective question. Through the analysis of clusters which were predominant in the MTV videos at the close of MTV's first decade, it seems that the contradictory values presented in MTV programming may have done more to destroy the youth of our nation than to better them. MTV truly mesmerizes a vast majority of its audience! MTV needs to continue to be watched critically for its rhetorical impact upon our nation as a whole.

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