

VIOLENCE AND SEXISM



MUSIC VIDEOS



PARTICIPANT'S
GUIDE TO
THE IN-SERVICE
SESSION

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VIOLENCE AND SEXISM IN MUSIC VIDEOS

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE TO THE IN-SERVICE SESSION

Coordination à la condition féminine

Lisette Bédard, Director

Research and Writing

Francine Duquet

Coordination

Louise Roux

Translation

Phyllis Aronoff, Shelley Gaffe

DDPLA (Direction du développement pédagogique en langue anglaise)

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VIOLENCE AND SEXISM IN MUSIC VIDEOS:
IN-SERVICE SESSION

Francine Duquet, Sexologist
BA, MA in Sexology
Lecturer at Université du Québec à Montréal
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Coordination à la condition féminine
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INTRODUCTION

From here on, the media will always be part of our cultural universe. We cannot escape their influence. Over the years, television, the darling of our consumer society, has gained astonishing popularity and credibility. Most of us passively watch soap operas, news reports, advertisements, quiz shows, music videos, documentaries, movies, and so on, without really analyzing their intrusion into our daily lives. Television has gradually become the pastime of the majority of the population. Young people, for example, spend an average of 24 hours a week in front of the television, and 18½ hours listening to the radio.¹ It is estimated that, by the end of secondary school, today's adolescents will have spent an average of 11 000 hours in school compared to 15 000 or even 25 000 hours in front of the television.² By the time they reach 65, these young people will have spent over nine full years in front of the TV screen.³

In a recent survey, children commented:

I'm crazy about television; it's like a cage containing all my idols. (Adrien, age 13)

I couldn't do without it, it's like an obsession. When I get home from school, I have to watch television right away. It's my best friend. When there's a power blackout, I miss it. (Marie-Ève, age 9)

I'm all for television. I watch it nine hours a day, and on the weekend, 12 hours a day. (Daniel, age 11)

I wouldn't like to do without it, because I couldn't talk about it with my friends. (Joëlle, age 12)⁴

The children of today are born into homes where, for the first time in human history, they are told more stories by a commercial institution than by their parents, their school, or even the church.⁵ This shows the extent to which television has become the cradle of real social changes. In fact, a report by Réginald Grégoire on television and values in the school's educational project states that television dictates a reorganization of our use of time. It goes on to say that this simple fact is also the source of profound upheavals in our social and personal lives. This phenomenon means that other activities and values are pushed to the foreground, and this, in itself, constitutes an important factor in a polarization toward different values.⁶

Through this rapid procession of visual images every second, the mind's eye registers models of behaviour and attitudes which are sometimes noble and admirable but which, unfortunately, are often stereotyped or idealized. Furthermore, it is astonishing to realize how little some of these television programs reflect reality in the eighties and

nineties, especially in their portrayal of the roles of women and men at work, at home and in the family.

In the early eighties, a new medium was born: the music video, or rock video. Music videos are directed specifically at young people, expressly for the purpose of profit: their function is to persuade young people to purchase the music albums of their favourite artists. A study carried out by the Conseil du statut de la femme among young people aged 12 to 17 showed that a minority (8 out of 281) did not watch videos.⁷ In 1987, one out of six young people spent between three and four hours a week watching music videos. It is likely that the average watching time has increased since then, due to much improved video production technology and greater variety in music videos.

Music videos differ from other media genres in many ways, but unfortunately, they are far from innovative in their presentation of women and men. Sexism in music video scripts is flagrant. Their images of women, and also of men, often resemble those which feminist groups and other social and political groups involved in promoting sexual equality have been fighting against for so many years. In a study carried out in 1991 for the Conseil du statut de la femme, one out of two music videos (55%) was judged to be sexist, and one out of seven (14%) showed a violent relationship between a man and a woman.⁸ Originally considered merely promotional material or advertising, the music video is much more than "radio with pictures." The juxtaposition of these images can give rise to visual stimulation which enhances and intensifies the emotional dimension of the song. The speed with which the images are presented encourages consumption rather than reflection. Sex and violence are strangely intertwined, leading young people to make various interpretations. *Since the majority of music video fans are between the ages of nine and thirteen,⁹ it is important to develop their critical judgment with regard to the sexist and violent messages to which they are exposed.*

The Coordination de la condition féminine of the ministère de l'Éducation is concerned about the scope of this phenomenon and its influence on young people. This is why teachers are being asked to reflect on this subject, and to sensitize young people to the as yet unsuspected effects that music videos may have on them as viewers.

Exercise 1

1. Answer each of the following questions on your own. Then exchange your answers with another participant.

- Name three singers you loved when you were young.

- What made you admire them so much?

- What were your favourite hits?

2. Continue working in pairs, but this time the questions deal with more contemporary music. Name:

- a heavy metal group

- a punk group

- a rap group (anglophone or francophone)

- a jazz group (Québec)

- a country music artist (anglophone or francophone)

- a new-age music artist

- a Québec pop singer (female)

- the name of her latest album

- a Québec composer-singer (male)

- the name of his latest album

- the country that Sinead O'Connor comes from

- what is special about the group Hart Rouge

- the Madonna song that created a scandal in the United States and whose video was censored

1. POP MUSIC AND POP MUSIC STARS

Since the early fifties, popular music has been the main vehicle for expressing young people's values and consciousness. Highly emotional, music is part of "their" culture. Besides reflecting the moods of adolescence, it echoes their search for identity. Robert Pittman, the founder of MTV (Music Television), says that young people around the age of 18 define themselves through music in the same way that people in their 40s define themselves through material possessions such as their home or car.¹⁰

The adoption of a particular style of music goes far beyond a simple musical preference; it reflects a lifestyle, an ideology. Andrew Oldham, the assistant managing editor of *Rolling Stone* magazine, said in 1965 that popular music was replacing religion, and that parents had better realize it.¹¹ Twenty-two years later, in a study of the epistemology of music videos, Bennet and Ferrel speak of a veritable "conversion": certain videos transport listeners from everyday life into a world of eternal singing, dancing, and partying.¹²

Young people are "faithful and grateful fans." For example, these popular music enthusiasts are better informed in their field than most adults. These same teenagers who we say cannot remember anything in the classroom know the entire repertoire of their stars by heart. Hungry for information on their idols' lifestyles, touring schedules, new releases, style of dress, back-up musicians, or recent publicity posters, they know all there is to know about them. There are many magazines that feed this hunger for gossip. Teenagers are fascinated by the star system, and the music business machinery feeds their imagination and gains entry into their secret world.

Every successive generation has had its stars, its fans, its fashions, its special styles. Rudolph Valentino was the biggest of the romantic stars of the twenties. His death in 1926 sparked a series of suicides among his fans. His funeral was a national event.¹³ In the 1946 movie *Gilda*, Rita Hayworth, in unabashedly erotic sets and costumes, went from vamp to sex goddess and was a spectacular success. Many years later, after many disappointments in love, she remarked that all the men she had known had gone to bed with Gilda, but had woken up with her.¹⁴ In 1949, in France, Line Renaud sold a million records of her song, "Ma cabane au Canada." At that time, sales of 5,000 records were considered a major success. In the mid-sixties, it was said that Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton were more famous than the Queen of England, and that the Beatles were more famous than God.¹⁵

The creation of stars is the result of perfect orchestration in which many people play a part. The glorification of the artist's talent, physical appearance, and social image takes for granted that the audience is in a very receptive psychological state. We too have experienced shivers of admiration for our idols, including such stars as Joni

Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot, Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, the Beatles, the Band, Aretha Franklin, the Rolling Stones, Simon and Garfunkel, and others.

A recent American study of 60 elementary (fifth grade) and secondary (second and fourth year) students, showed that there were two distinct ways in which young people related to their idols. The first was romantic, or a desire to be in a love relationship with their idol. The second was a relationship of identification, a desire to be like their idol or to become a celebrity. Furthermore, it was found that boys tended to identify with the male stars whose distinguishing characteristics, such as strength or aggressiveness, they perceived favourably. Girls, on the other hand, tended to relate romantically to male stars whose expressive qualities they admired, such as physical attractiveness or an outgoing personality. The authors concluded that the teenagers' love for their stars, including their imaginary attachment, reflects their concerns with respect to their own identity and sexuality.¹⁶

Music has a deeper impact on teenagers than television; when listening to music, adolescents reported higher motivation and greater excitement¹⁷. Listening to music is, in their eyes, the best way to express their rage or their pain.¹⁸ Popular music, then, is a great deal more than a mere musical pastime. Enjoying music and being able to talk about it are crucial for adolescents, because these activities allow them to join the world of their peers. For this reason, teachers should never speak negatively about the adolescents' music or their stars. There already exists much heated debate among young people on the virtues of one star and the "uncoolness" of another. The approach of the in-service sessions will focus on the reasons for the students' preferences, even their devotion, and the images and messages in music videos that elicit such responses. On the basis of these observations, we will attempt to bring to light any violent or sexist messages in order to allow for an analysis of their repercussions.

Exercise 2

Answer the following questions on your own.

1. Making a music video costs:
 - a) between \$10,000 and \$20,000
 - b) between \$20,000 and \$40,000
 - c) between \$50,000 and \$65,000
 - d) more than \$70,000

2. The most expensive music video ever produced was:
 - a) *Too Legit to Quit* by Hammer
 - b) *Thriller* by Michael Jackson
 - c) *Black and White* by Michael Jackson
 - d) *I'm Not Perfect* by Grace Jones

3. The most common element in music videos is:
 - a) violence
 - b) dancing
 - c) sex
 - d) visual abstraction (unusual depiction of reality)

4. Music videos show images at a rate of one every:
 - a) 3 seconds
 - b) 2.38 seconds
 - c) 5.38 seconds
 - d) 20 seconds

5. The number of music videos produced in Québec is:
 - a) 50
 - b) 150
 - c) 300
 - d) 700

6. The first music video was made in:
 - a) 1965
 - b) 1975
 - c) 1981
 - d) 1983

2. THE MUSIC VIDEO PHENOMENON

The object of a music video is to promote the artist. Using all the artistry and technique of cinema, it provides the images to accompany a song and tries to seduce the public into buying the album.

The music video was originally considered a minor creative tool which made it possible to reproduce and broadcast shows and other events at relatively low cost. The sudden craze for music videos gave a great boost to the recording industry, whose sales are close to \$6 billion in North America alone.¹⁹ These days, the success of a song is closely linked to the popularity of its video: "no video, no sale". In an interview on *Musique Plus*, Jim Corcoran even claimed that for a certain generation of young people, the lack of videos could damage an artist's credibility.²⁰

The quality of these productions varies widely, as do their budgets. It costs generally between \$6,000 and \$120,000 to produce a music video.²¹ In Québec, it costs between \$20,000 and \$40,000. But a video can increase the sales of a recording by 10% or more.²² Michael Jackson's *Thriller* cost an extraordinary \$1.1 million, a budget equal to that of some feature films. It was worth it, however, because over 10 million copies of the recording were sold in the United States, and ten months after its release, it was still selling at a rate of 200 000 copies a week.²³ The cost of the video for *Too Legit to Quit* by Hammer, formerly M.C. Hammer, has been estimated at \$3 million. But the most expensive music video to date is Michael Jackson's *Black and White*, which cost a cool \$4 million. Although these videos are exceptions, they reflect a trend which is popular and growing.

Most record production companies pay the cost of producing music videos, and most of the major television networks broadcast them free of charge as part of their regular programming. The *Musique Plus* network, broadcasting in Québec since 1986, *Much Music*, broadcasting in English in Canada since 1984, and *MTV*, broadcasting in the United States since 1981, make music videos the basis of their programming and present them continuously. This free advertising for music groups and their recordings fills the coffers of the record producers. Music videos are not only broadcast on the television sets in our living rooms; they have also invaded discotheques, brasseries, bars, boutiques, and department stores.

In addition, for some time now, multinational companies like Coke and Pepsi have been fighting to try to get the top stars to associate their names and their music with these companies' products. Pepsi-Cola was going to use scenes from Madonna's video "Like a Prayer" in its advertising. But public ire was aroused by scenes in the video showing a murder and suggesting sexual activity involving a religious object. Informed that the American Family Association was preparing to organize a boycott of the video, Pepsi cancelled its advertising campaign, worth an estimated \$5 million.

The fashion market and the music video market are also closely connected. Marie-Josée Desmarais of the magazine *Clin d'oeil* stated recently that the music video has almost become like a fashion magazine.²⁴ Through the images in videos, artists promote various styles of dress, to the delight of their admirers. Madonna's most fervent admirers enjoy dressing like her--wearing gloves, black lingerie and a crucifix like hers. This kind of craze has positive economic consequences for the garment industry: a 20% rise in sales of women's lingerie has been recorded in Canada since the rise of the Madonna phenomenon.

One of the most obvious characteristics of music videos is their aversion to realism. A team of American researchers analyzed the content of 62 videos broadcast by the MTV network. The element that recurred the most frequently was that of visual abstraction, that is, the use of special effects to provide an unaccustomed depiction of reality.²⁵ The images in videos aim to defamiliarize, by means of both the symbolism of the visual language employed (for example, a close-up of lips, suggesting sensuality) and the technical effects used to create a fantastic universe (for example, montages without any apparent logic). They are constructed solely to attract the viewer's attention. In little time--only three minutes on average--videos transport viewers into a world of direct, immediate experience and strong sensations. Fast cuts contribute greatly to the overall effect. In fact, the speed of successive images is dizzying: a new image every 3 seconds, compared to every 2.38 seconds in an advertisement, every 5.38 seconds for American quiz shows, and every 20 seconds for soap operas.²⁶

Thousands of music videos have been produced; 300 of them are Québec-made. Before *Musique Plus*, however, only 26 were produced in Québec. Some are veritable works of modern art and aesthetics. Others seem crude, vulgar, aggressive or simply boring.

The formula for music videos is rather predictable: presenting the artist lip-synching the song and dramatizing the lyrics with a series of images. The songs may express political visions, ecological philosophies, social concerns, romantic sentiments, rebellious rhetoric, and so on. Whatever the initial message, the video's images help to reinforce the primary theme of the song. Since time is limited, it is important to use strong, gripping images, often stereotyped images, to arouse the public's interest. Sometimes the images enlarge or transform reality, confuse the situation, or even fail to create connections with the song or style of the video. For example, Billy Idol's *Eyes Without a Face* is a ballad that's pleasant enough to hear on the radio. In the video version, however, viewers can sense the menacing attitude beneath Billy Idol's scornful pout, his leather and chains, and his overall heavy metal, sadomasochistic image. Whatever the case, the stars remain the symbolic, inviolable heroes of the music video. The power and magnetism surrounding them make them all the more inaccessible to fans. In *Beat It*, Michael Jackson plays the role of a "saviour." With a simple gesture, he manages to separate the leaders of two rival gangs, who are

ready to fight. Then, the members of both groups join him in a uniquely choreographed dance.

Often, too, the lives of the stars are presented as blissful, relaxed, luxurious:

In the process of conveying the never-never land of the pop star, rock videos complete the process begun by the recording industry in the middle seventies. They turn the artists themselves into two-dimensional constructs: they become the product itself. Thus rock videos can make it difficult for consumers to perceive recording artists as real people, capable of experiencing pain or personal growth. Instead, the medium consistently blurs the distinctions between fantasy and reality.^{27*}

But images can convey false information. Viewers are seduced by the sensuality, seductiveness, sex appeal, affluence, and instant intimacy that music video personalities often project. Who among us, at one time or another, has not wanted to be like that woman or this man in the video, have their body, their wardrobe, their lifestyle? The trap remains the same: downgrade our everyday life and lose sight of the true perspective of the things that really matter.

* Translators' Note: Footnotes refer to free translations based on the works cited, except where indicated by an asterisk (*), in which case they refer to exact quotes.

Exercise 3

Two music videos will be presented, but without sound. Try to imagine the themes of the songs based on the images, and write them down.

- First music video:

- Second music video:

After the screening, as participants you may want to indicate to the other members of the group the themes you have associated with the images of each music video. Pay attention to the different interpretations and ways of understanding the same piece.

Now look at the same music videos, but this time with sound.

Does the theme you associated with the images correspond to the essence of the song? What do you notice?

3. CAN MUSIC VIDEOS BE USED TO TEACH SEX EDUCATION?

For most people, *sex education* refers to the education about sexuality that is taught in schools or at home. In fact, the family and the school are not the only places where young people learn about sex education. Their friends and the media also have an influence on their understanding of sexuality. Learning appropriate or inappropriate behaviours regarding sexuality in fact takes place when young people observe adult behaviour, participate in discussions and sexual experimentation with their friends, and also through media images. In this way, television, film, radio, magazines and advertising offer a certain unofficial form of sex education.

To better understand the role of music videos in sex education, it is important to explain the context of a sex education situation. Sex education may occur in various learning situations.²⁸

Official situation: sex education generally takes place at school because school is a highly structured environment with specific programs. Furthermore, the teachers and students are there expressly to take part in the educational process.

Example: the Sex Education course prescribed by the ministère de l'Éducation du Québec is offered as part of the Personal and Social Education program.

Unofficial situation: only one of the two parties is interested in the educational process, meaning that the messages transmitted or received are selected according to the student's or the teacher's interest.

Example: Inez, 14, watches music videos so that she can be up to date on the latest fashions.

Chance situation: results are produced following an unrelated activity. Neither party is interested in the educational process, but learning can nevertheless occur.

Example: even very young children can learn about sexual roles by observing how adults enter into relationships with the opposite sex.

Two means can also be identified:

Explicit sex education: the case where the message used and expressed bears a clear, unequivocal meaning.

Example: George Michaels evoking his desire for his lover in one of his songs. In the music video, the two lovers can be seen embracing, getting ready to make love.

Implicit sex education: the message contained in the language bears meaning, but this meaning is not formally expressed.

Example: In her song, *Bye, bye, mon cowboy*, Mitsou wears a cowgirl costume (hat, boots, gun) and dances to the rhythm of the music, but simultaneously handles her gun in a provocative way, sliding it between her breasts, over her legs.

To sum up, merely showing music videos has the potential to communicate a great deal of information that is sexual in nature. The videos are not limited to presenting sexually explicit behaviour, but also include implicit information on sexual roles, family life, physical attraction, body image, seductiveness, friendship and love relationships.

As has been noted above, in their analysis of the content of 62 MTV music videos, American researchers²⁹ identified 23 elements of content with different frequency rates. Only those whose frequency rate appeared most eloquent will be discussed here.

Table 1

Analysis of the Content of MTV Music Videos

Elements of Content	Rate of Frequency (%)
1. Visual abstraction (special effects creating an unaccustomed depiction of reality)	90
2. Sexuality (sexual rhythms or sensations)	60
3. Dancing	57
4. Crime and violence	53
5. Celebration (depiction of festivities)	45
6. Friendship (relationships showing mutual affection and respect)	42
7. Solitude (a person alone or away from others)	42
8. Wealth (affluence, possession of objects)	38
(...)	
18. Maturity (stages of development)	13
19. Death	10
20. Health	2

It can be seen that music video portrayals relating to the theme of sexuality more specifically concern sexual actions (see Table 2). The portrayals relating to themes of violence are more explicit than implicit (see Table 3).

Table 2

Elements of Content Relating to the Theme of Sexuality

Elements of Content	Rate of Frequency (%)
1. Provocative clothing	31
2. The action of entwining oneself with another, or other physical contacts	31
3. Dance movements suggesting sexual behaviour	27
4. Non-dance movements suggesting sexual behaviour	21
5. Romantic rendez-vous	15
6. Kissing	11
7. Seduction (male chasing female)	11
8. Using musical instruments in a suggestive manner	8
9. Sadomasochism	5
10. Homosexual romantic rendez-vous	2
11. Sexual bondage	2

Table 3

Elements of Content Relating to the Theme of Violence

Elements of Content	Rate of Frequency (%)
1. Physical aggression toward people	26
2. Physical aggression toward objects	16
3. Dance movements imitating violence	15
4. Destruction	15
5. Using offensive weapons	11
6. Physical aggression against oneself	8
7. Hunting	7
8. Murder	3
9. Crimes not involving victims	2

What can be deduced from these audiovisual representations evoking certain attitudes and models of behaviour and attitudes?³⁰

Video Content and Sexuality

- Music videos show their viewers how to be sexy, but they do not indicate how to feel at ease with themselves, or at least comfortable with themselves in expressing their sexuality. The risk is to create a sexuality based on image alone. Music videos emphasize how to appear in the know rather than how to be in the know. Furthermore, the youth mystique is very prevalent: most of the characters are beautiful, young and happy. It is not difficult to understand why: the music video is a medium that directly targets young people.
- Sexuality becomes a consumer product. The expression of sexuality is very much based on performance. Sexuality is a natural and important component of the personality, but in music videos, it is usually passionate and exaggerated.
- The focus in music videos is adult sexuality rather than adolescent sexuality. In adolescence, the first love relationships are more often associated with the two adolescents' being together, having fun, gaining their group of friends' approval of their girlfriend or boyfriend, talking, confiding in each other, getting to know each other, all of which includes making sexual discoveries. The element of progression is very important. Romantic and sexual learning require a certain kind of adaptation on the part of young people. In the various music video scenarios, however, this adaptation seems to take place easily and quite quickly.
- Music video images seem to reaffirm the idea that it is normal and natural to be spontaneous in a sexual relationship. It is therefore useless to plan sexual relations. The scenes suggesting a sexual relationship rarely show a person using a method of contraception or methods for preventing AIDS and STDs. The main problem arising from this type of sex education is that it may keep young people from developing responsible sexual attitudes.
- Sex is used for personal gain: to achieve one's goals, use the other person, have power over another person. It is the favourite, not to say inevitable, means of being in a relationship with another person. The suggestion of explicit sexual relations is directly linked to the total meaning of love, whereas in fact, making love is not the only way to become close to another person, to express tenderness and affection for him or her.
- Violence is often associated with love and sex. In fact, sexual aggression or rather suggested sexual aggression is sometimes portrayed as an act of passion rather than an act of violence and domination.
- The body is idealized and overly exploited. The physical dimension is presented in terms of the use of the body, and not in terms of knowledge of one's body. The body, especially but not solely the woman's body, is still represented as an object.

Video Content and Interpersonal Relationships (Couples, Friends, Family)

- In music videos, seductiveness is pervasive. Most of the time, it lacks subtlety and simplicity. Seductiveness has a very explicit goal and leaves no room for failure. Otherwise, possessiveness, jealousy and other such emotions come into play.
- It is imperative to be part of a couple. Or, at the very least, it is necessary to have friends, preferably happy ones, for the solitary person is looked down upon. The couples shown are usually childless.
- Few music video couples seem to experience their intimacy simply and affectionately, while demonstrating an ability to communicate their feelings to each other. Rather, they seem to experience only great love or unbridled passion. Under these conditions, everyday life naturally appears mundane by comparison.
- In music videos, there is little true complicity and humour demonstrated, whether in relationships involving friends or family members. There is, however, much laughing and sometimes even vulgar behaviour. Parents are usually represented as uninteresting and outmoded characters.

Exercise 4

In teams of 3 or 4, answer the following question:

How do you distinguish between the terms SEXY, SEXIST, SEXUAL and SENSUAL?

SEXY:

SEXIST:

SEXUAL:

SENSUAL:

For further reading on the subject, see the following bibliographical references:

Arcand, Bernard. *Le jaguar et le tamanoir: vers le degré zéro de la pornographie*. Montréal: Ed. Boréal, 1991.

Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

Bruckner, Pascal and Finkielkraut, Alain. *Le nouveau désordre amoureux*. Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1977.

Dorais, Michel. *Les lendemains de la révolution sexuelle: le sexe a-t-il remplacé l'amour?* Montréal: Éd. Prétexte, 1986.

Flandrin, Jean-Louis. *Le sexe et l'occident: évolution des attitudes et des comportements*. Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1981.

Exercise 5

- Instructions to be read before screening the music video:
 - Pay attention to the messages contained in the two music videos that will be shown to you, particularly regarding father-daughter relationships, sexual roles, adolescent sexuality, and so on.
- Screening of the two Madonna music videos: *Papa, Don't Preach* and *Open Your Heart*.
- Identifying the messages conveyed in each video:
 - *Papa, Don't Preach*:

- *Open Your Heart*:

- What messages do you think these music videos convey to young people?

- Reactions, comments from the group.

Presentation of the results of the study done by Jane D. Brown and Laurie Schulze on young people's interpretation of these two music videos in relation to their race, sex and the magnetism their favourite star has for them.

- Group discussion.

4. WHAT MESSAGES DO MUSIC VIDEOS CONVEY TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

Research on the music video phenomenon is necessarily recent given that the first videos appeared on a major American network as recently as 1981. This research describes the content of music videos and analyzes young people's consumer habits and the motives underlying their consumption. The research concludes that young black people watch more television (including music videos) and listen to more radio than young white people.³¹ It also indicates that young white women and both young male and female blacks are more inclined to admit that they watch music videos in order to see the latest dances and fashions than do young white men.³²

Yet to date, the interpretation of music video content still remains a largely unexplored field of research. Studies on the type of messages young people retain from music videos show that several variables come into play: the subject's sociocultural environment, individual sensitivity, imagination, sex, and so on. Two researchers, Jane D. Brown and Laurie Schulze,³³ wanted to experiment on the subject using two Madonna music videos as the basis for their research.

Madonna seems to be an interesting subject for this type of analysis, since she generally elicits very different reactions from her audience. Some people praise her force of character, her nonconformity; others denounce her provocative nature and sense of marketing. *Spin* magazine states that Madonna is not selling sex, but represents power.³⁴ *Playboy* mentions that Madonna's onstage contortions and her "Boy Toy" voice have helped to bring sex back where it belongs, front and center in the limelight,³⁵ while *Événement* considers that Madonna is a lewd woman who wears her underwear as outerwear and uses irony to emphasize her point of view.³⁶

Academic critics have gone as far as presenting Madonna as a model that counters traditional feminine ideals of dependency and reserve. E. Ann Kaplan³⁷ insists that in her music video *Papa, Don't Preach*, Madonna is presenting a postmodern feminist image. The heroine of the video is a stubborn adolescent, in love with her boyfriend, and once she becomes pregnant, is determined to keep her baby at all costs. Her refusal to conform to social norms by giving up her child, as her girlfriends suggest, and her insistence on not giving in to her father's request so that she can exercise her own will, give this adolescent depth. Madonna thus becomes simultaneously strong and feminine, sexy and innocent. Young women who have grown up in the wake of the feminist movement find these apparent contradictions rather seductive.

Kaplan's theory was far from universally accepted. The Planned Parenthood Association of New York condemned the video whose message to teenagers promoted the "glamour" side of sex and pregnancy.³⁸ Ellen Goodman thought that this video was nothing more than a commercial for teen-age pregnancy.³⁹ As for prolife groups, they saw in the video a very positive message encouraging young girls not to choose abortion. Young pregnant girls who were shown the video found an ally

in Madonna. Madonna herself suspected that her video would elicit such diverse interpretations. Despite its references to pornography, *Open Your Heart* engendered much less public controversy than the video *Papa, Don't Preach*.

Whether criticism stems from public opinion or university researchers, it consists essentially in reacting to the upsetting of social norms unleashed by Madonna's lyrics and videos. One thing is certain, both the admiration and the aversion that she inspires only serve to inflate her popularity.

Brown and Schulze's⁴⁰ study on the influence of race, sex and star appeal ("fandom") on young people's interpretation of the content of Madonna's two music videos *Papa, Don't Preach* and *Open Your Heart*, is enlightening, even though it was done on a small scale. The people who answered the questionnaire were between 18 and 34 years of age and were considered MTV's target audience. They had to answer a series of open-ended questions such as the following: "How did this video make you feel? What images stick in your mind? What do you think this video is about?" In addition, some questions involved the exact theme of the video. For *Open Your Heart*, the respondents were asked: "Who is this woman and why is she dancing? Who are the people watching her and why are they there? What do you think is going to happen to the woman and the young boy? Is the video trying to tell you anything? If you could give this video to someone who you think would like it, who would you give it to and why?"

Regarding the other Madonna video *Papa, Don't Preach*, (see Table 4), almost all the young white female subjects (97%) and young white male subjects (85%) said that this video concerned teenage pregnancy, compared to 73% of young black female subjects and 43% of young black male subjects. Some of the young black students thought that the "baby" Madonna was singing about was her boyfriend and not her unborn child.

Among white subjects, 63% of the women and 56% of the men believed that the video's main theme was clearly designated as teenage pregnancy, whereas fewer young black subjects (women: 40%; men: 21%) believed this to be the case. Rather, 50% of the young black women and 43% of the young black men felt that the main theme was the father-daughter relationship, as opposed to young white subjects (women: 25% women; men: 22%). As one black male wrote: "This video is about a father's desire not to let anything come between him and his daughter. That is why they are arguing about her boyfriend." Only a small percentage of young people viewed the heroine of the video as did E. Ann Kaplan, as an independent young woman, capable of making her own decisions: young black women: 5%, young black men: 14%, young white women: 8%, young white men: 7%. It is also difficult to speak of the romanticized view of teenage pregnancy which many young people hold, as the Planned Parenthood Association maintained. The quarter of participants who mentioned that the young woman was pregnant (except the young black men)

indicated that abortion could be an alternative. When asked to imagine the couple in the video in the future, more young women (53%) than young men (41%) indicated that the two partners would probably not still be together. The young white men had a greater tendency to see the couple as living together away from the family home; the young black men were the least inclined to anticipate this outcome.

Table 4
Reactions to *Papa, Don't Preach* by Race and Sex

	Black Women (n = 40) %	Black Men (n = 28) %	White Women (n = 64) %	White Men (n = 54) %
Mentioned:				
• pregnancy	73	43	97	85
• abortion	21	8	29	28
• marriage in future	54	25	51	65
Primary theme:				
Teenage pregnancy	40	21	63	56
Girl-boy relationship	5	21	5	15
Father-daughter relationship	50	43	25	22
Independent girl	5	14	8	7

In total, 62% of the young people in this study said that they more or less liked Madonna. Those who claimed to like her very much, however, were totally dedicated to her ("Madonna is God") and the others who said they did not like her, veritably hated her ("I like Madonna about as much as I like slamming my fingers in the car door"). The true "fans" were essentially composed of young black men (33%), compared to 16% of the young black women, 9% of young white men and 6% of young white women. To the question: "What did you like best about the video *Papa, Don't Preach*?", the comments of the young black men are very explicit: "Madonna is sexy and she is a good performer," "Because she's sexy," "The part where Madonna dances, because I like her body movements."

By contrast, the video *Open Your Heart* (see Table 5) received less enthusiastic reactions, even from the fans. Most of the people who answered the questionnaire felt confused when asked to describe what the video was about. Several claimed to be angry or disgusted. The sexual content of the video reinforced their reaction of discomfort, coupled with the fact that the experiment required that they view the video as a group. Even Madonna's costume bothered them; they found it in poor taste.

Almost half of the young white women and men indicated that they felt the main theme of the video was pornography; sexual perversion or woman as sex object, compared to one-fifth of the young black women and men. In addition, 13% of all the viewers mentioned sexual love as the main theme; one-fifth spoke of platonic love between the dancer and the boy; and finally, one-tenth described Madonna's character as a working woman.

Table 5

Reactions to *Open Your Heart* by Race and Sex

	Black Women (n = 40) %	Black Men (n = 28) %	White Women (n = 64) %	White Men (n = 54) %
Felt:				
• Nothing, confusion	45	50	34	25
• Disgust	24	8	36	23
• Happy	13	21	14	15
• Turned on	4	4	3	16
Primary theme:				
Pornography/sexual perversion/women as sexual objects	22	21	50	43
Platonic love	29	13	22	18
Sexual love	9	17	12	16
Working woman	11	--	9	10
No clear theme	29	50	8	14

Among the young people who participated in the survey, two separate groups could be distinguished: the faithful admirers of Madonna and those who were not. In the same proportion, the two groups liked the finale, when Madonna and the little boy leave, dancing, seeing this part of the video as a return to innocence. Some respondents (18%) identified the boy as being Madonna's son while others (10%) thought that he was her brother. The majority, however, (37%) saw the young boy as one of Madonna's fans.

The young women who claimed to be Madonna's admirers had particular difficulties in reconciling the singer's image as a sexual object. To extenuate this situation, they gave more credit to the dance through which they felt Madonna expressed her thoughts. One of them explains it this way: "I love the way she dances. I watch her to learn how to move like her, not to be excited by her." The men, however, were much more inclined to express their erotic reactions to the video. Most spoke of the pleasure they felt in watching Madonna's body. One young man stated that this video gave him the sensation of sleeping with his girlfriend and that he would have loved Madonna to take off her underwear. Others spoke of "sexual excitation," "being turned on," and so on.

Fans of both sexes have different ways of analyzing the story. The young women hesitated to present Madonna's character as "a bad girl": "She is a lonely woman and has needs--she needs to be loved and not just desired for her body"; "Not everyone in that type of business is there because she wants to be or is a slut"; "The dancer is the little boy's mother or sister and she needs money to raise him." The young men, however, had a tendency to justify the attitude of the male characters in the video: "Guys who can't open their hearts to their wives or their girlfriends so they go to peep shows." Only one man claimed to feel uncomfortable with the image of men presented in this video: "The video degrades men...it makes them look desperate and dirty."

Almost without exception, Madonna's female fans indicated that the only people to whom they would show this video were men: "A frustrated male friend"; "A perverted old man"; "My friend Michael. He thinks she's hot." On the other hand, most of the viewers would have shown the video *Papa, Don't Preach* to females, because women could learn something that might apply to them if they ever found themselves in a similar situation.

It is interesting to note the difference in interpretation of the messages conveyed in these two music videos. Some images even provoked discomfort or confusion in the viewers, who were young adults, as has been stated. If that is the case for young adults, it is not hard to imagine the difficulty teenagers and children would have in grasping the subtleties of the messages and the supercharged images.

On this subject, the study by James S. Leming⁴¹ is very eloquent. Three songs that were hits at the time were presented to young people 11 to 15 years of age. After listening carefully to the words, the respondents had to explain what the songs were about. The songs were as follows:

Physical by Olivia Newton-John: the song suggests sexual activity with no reference to any form of commitment, sensitivity, or status of the relationship (marriage, for example).

Material Girl by Madonna: the song clearly infers that the only men who deserve a woman's attention are those who are wealthy and who are prepared to buy their girlfriends jewellery, furs, and so on. In other words, interpersonal relations should be based not on the personality of those involved, but rather on the worth of their possessions.

I Want a New Drug by Huey Lewis and the News: the song evokes the desperate search for a new drug that would have no negative repercussions or side effects, and that would induce the same feeling of closeness as that between lovers.

The results of the experiment revealed the following:

For the song *Physical*:

- 36% of the young people said that the subject was sexual relations;
- 36% explained that the purpose of the music was to encourage people to do physical exercise;
- 28% said they were not sure how they would interpret the song's theme.

For the song *Material Girl*:

- 67% perceived that, according to the song, materialism was an important factor in interpersonal relations;
- 9% felt that materialism was not being considered an important factor in interpersonal relations in this song;
- 24% said they were not sure how they would interpret the song's theme.

For the song *I Want a New Drug*:

- 26% said that the song encouraged drug use;
- 45% stated that it was a love song;
- 29% said they were not sure how they would interpret the song's theme.

Highlighting the values at stake in a song is not necessarily enough to incite viewers to adhere to these values. The acontextual images in certain music videos may certainly contribute to viewers' lack of comprehension, but it is nevertheless important to recognize that language constitutes an additional stumbling block for young people who do not speak English (and even for some who do speak English!), who, for the most part, can understand the story in English-language music videos only through the images.

Only rarely do the images in music videos directly illustrate the song's lyrics. According to François Baby, the great majority of music videos are created using the technique of parataxis, and not using the rules of syntax. He says that the videos are made up of an assemblage of visual or sound elements that are simply juxtaposed with no regard for how they relate to each other or to the video's theme.⁴² Like surrealism, this type of construction consists in appealing directly to the viewer's unconscious, stimulating the viewer to make diverse associations: those that the video producers created deliberately, as well as those that were inadvertently triggered in the viewer's imagination.

5. FOR AND AGAINST

Some people accuse music videos of every possible evil, while others praise this new form of artistic expression. The following examines more closely the arguments of both sides.

Between Dreams and Reality

- **Against**

In the end, all music videos are the same. They are "ready-to-dream," imagination for sale. They make it so easy for us to digest. With mouths wide open, eyes glazed, there's nothing more to do but take it all in, the visual gymnastics of the video producers. (Adapted from Philippe Barbot.)

- **For**

Music videos are the dream of a veritable rock cinema finally coming to pass. By their very energy, they are forcing television to come out of its trance, to shake itself up. (Adapted from Christian Sorg.)

Over and Over

- **Against**

Music videos are so repetitive. Just for a laugh, you can list the clichés: broken glass, ceiling fans, mirrors, old familiar tunes, smoke, brick walls, swimming pools, classrooms, and so on. The tried and true formulas are multiplied ad infinitum. (Adapted from Philippe Barbot.)

- **For**

The music video is an art in its embryonic state--as film was in the early twentieth century. Let's give it a chance. (Adapted from Christian Sorg.)

Sex and Violence

- **Against**

The images portray too much sex and violence. (National Coalition on Television Violence.)

- **For**

The degree of violence contained in music videos is comparable to that portrayed in television dramas. (Adapted from B. L. Sherman and J. R. Dominick.)

Young and Not So Young

- Against

The lyrics in rock music are aggressive and damaging to young people. (Adapted from Gantz and Gartenberg.)

- For

It is simply a question of indicating the recommended minimum age for buying or viewing this material. (Adapted from U.S. Congress.)

Images

- Against

The abundance and distortion of images in music videos could block the viewer's creative imagination. (Adapted from Levy.)

- For

A new art plugged in to the times, a new means of popular expression, a new medium that explodes all frontiers--that is certainly not common. Rock videos opened the door. Today, anything is possible: videos on painters, videos on writers, sports videos, travel videos, thriller videos. (Adapted from Christian Sorg.)

It is evident that music videos are the subject of varied criticism, each more plausible than the next. From the moment they first came out, skeptics have been asking: will music videos stand the test of time? People said that they were only a passing trend, like so many others. It seems, however, that this form of expression is here to stay. Besides, the music video concept has spilled over into the world of advertising, soap operas and even film.

For several years now, various governing bodies have been regulating the representation of sexist messages in the media, be they explicit or implicit. The new medium of music videos must be subject to the same standards, for it makes lavish use of stereotyped images that are sexual and violent in nature. These images have been added on to the visual dimension of music videos, whose origins were entirely non-violent and non-sexual. It is important to assess the repercussions.

Exercise 6

One music video out of two is considered sexist.

You will be viewing highlights of videos that explicitly illustrate this fact.

Also, pay particular attention to the implicit sexist or violent messages.

6. VIOLENCE AND SEXISM IN MUSIC VIDEOS

Some people feel that speaking about sexism and violence in music videos may be exaggerated, even puritanical. It is not a question of raising a debate based on a prudish and reactionary point of view. Nor is it the representation of sexuality itself that is being examined here; rather, it is the type of exploitation of sexuality, and the restrictive perception of sex roles. In other words, it is not Madonna's stylized body or her sensuality that cause us to react, but rather the repeated image of "woman as vamp" that she projects, in conjunction with a series of confused, provocative, sometimes degrading messages that are so enticing to her young audience. If we do not take action to regulate the production and distribution of certain music videos, temperance leagues and fundamentalists will surely take up the challenge. Our case concerns the exploitation of women as sexual objects, the abusive and gratuitous use of violence to boost music sales. The so-called sexist images and situations are becoming more refined and increasingly subtle; yet they remain just as harmful.

The present individualistic age tends to oppose any form of censorship and to value freedom of expression, which, in the opinion of the authors, is completely valid. However, this theme of freedom and objectivity may sometimes implicitly guarantee the proliferation of music videos that are considered sexist and violent. It cannot be denied, however, that messages with sexist and violent overtones have a definite influence on society.

At the request of the Council on the Status of Women, François Baby and his colleagues⁴³ carried out a research project on sexism and violence against women in music videos. This is their second project of this type for the Council; the first was done in 1988.⁴⁴ It is thus very interesting and particularly revealing to be able to compare the results of these two studies, both of which concern music videos broadcast in Québec by various television networks. Some people in the field suspected, or at least hoped, that there would be fewer manifestations of sexism in 1991 than in 1988. On the contrary, there were even more.

Of 223 original music videos analyzed, 55% contained sexist images (46% in 1988). The percentage rises to 60% if reruns are taken into consideration, not counting the fact that the average rerun rate for sexist music videos is 67%, while it is only 33% for those which are not sexist (see Table 6).

The percentage of music videos considered very sexist, namely, those whose sexist references count for at least 50% of the total time, has more than doubled in three years.

Table 6

Distribution of Music Videos According to Level of Sexism

Level of Sexism	1991 %	1988 %
Very sexist	38	15
Sexist	25	55
Somewhat sexist	37	30

In the 1988 study, though there were fewer music videos made in Québec at the time, they were generally less sexist than others. These days, the Québec-made videos are reaching levels of sexism comparable to those in other countries: United States (65%), France (61%), Québec (55%), Canada (outside Québec, 42%), Great Britain (39%).⁴⁵

The details of the research done by François Baby and his team will be examined after a discussion of the parameters. In this study, the team focused on explicit or noticeable manifestations of sexism, namely to those that are directly expressed or formulated in music videos, leaving aside those that were only implicit or by nature exclusively symbolic--and there were many--and that would require a completely different type of study.⁴⁶ Hence, it may be suspected that there is a much greater incidence of sexist episodes in music videos if the implicit manifestations of sexism are also considered.

In this study, a sexist episode was registered every time the video featured one of the following elements:

- an unfavourable portrayal of women simply because they are women;
- discriminating against the female sex simply because it is the female sex;
- showing prejudice against women's abilities simply because they are women;
- categorizing women in terms of prolonged abusive description of their biological differences;
- legitimizing the differentiation in social roles allotted to women based on their gender;
- judging women's potential, interests, capacities and roles based on their gender;
- restricting women's social interactions or interpersonal relations to strictly sexual activities
- objectifying women or devaluing feminine sexuality
- showing unequal representation of women and men;
- promoting or devaluing behaviours based on the character's female gender;
- using or promoting stereotypes or prejudices concerning women.

Thus, in the case of the 204 videos considered sexist, the following statistics have emerged:

- 78% of the women in the music videos seem between 18 and 25 years old (77% in 1988);
- 88% of the women between 15 and 35 outwardly seem generally seductive and chic (87% in 1988);
- 66% of the women belong to wealthy or middle-class society (62% in 1988).

The last three data do not render the videos "sexist," but are presented here rather for the reader's information, although connections could be established in certain cases. On the other hand, the following results indicate rather overt negative connotations regarding women and their sexuality:

- 75% of the women aged 35 and over are depicted in a negative way: ugly, badly dressed, not well taken care of, and so on;
- in 70% of cases, the female characters' gestures have sexual connotations;
- in 28% of cases, these gestures are linked to autosexuality (autosexuality is taken here to mean a number of behaviours geared to achieving for oneself sexual satisfaction, such as masturbation, certain kinds of caresses, and so on. Some refer to this as autoeroticism);
- 94% of the female characters other than the singers display attitudes or behaviours that depict them in a negative way (85% in 1988);
- only 1% of the women are presented as happy and fulfilled (7% in 1988)
- 1% of the women symbolize the "feminine mystique," the "romantic" woman, the dreamer, and so on (5% in 1988);
- 33% of the outfits may be described as scanty (18% in 1988), 4% of the outfits are usually described as provocative (6% in 1988) and 4% qualify as suggested or visible nudity (2% in 1988);
- 16% of the music videos present scenes of explicit and blatant violence toward women (27% in 1988);
- 40% of the male-female relationships involve submission (34% in 1988) and 14% are relationships depicting physical aggression by men (27% in 1988).

It is virtually impossible to speak about relationships between or among women in the music videos analyzed in 1991. Indeed, only 4 out of 204 videos touched on this subject. It is as if woman has become a solitary object who has no relationships with other women. In the 1988 study, 65% of the relationships among women were characterized by competition or rivalry, and 20% by domination over other women. The later statistics certainly do not show any marked improvement over the 1988 study.

Sexism in music videos is therefore far from being eradicated; in fact, new manifestations associated with female sexuality have appeared. It should be

recognized, however, that overt scenes of violence toward women have decreased. Once the research team had finished its analysis, the members wondered if certain symbolic manifestations of violence were not likely to be just as detrimental as those that were more explicit.

An American study⁴⁷ of 166 music videos revealed the following:

- men were featured twice as often in videos as women and whites were featured four times more than blacks or members of ethnic groups;
- violent episodes appeared in 56.6% of the sampling, with three out of four men being the aggressors and victims;
- men were more often wounded in the videos than women and body combat was the most common form of aggression;
- sexual episodes occurred in three out of four music videos and were more implied than overt;
- men played an active sexual role; women were portrayed as provocative and often presented as objects.

As has been seen, for young people, music is the prime source for their emerging or expressed strong emotions. Do all the sexist and violent messages alter the pleasure of listening to "their" music, or diminish their devotion to the feature artist? According to an American study,⁴⁸ sexual stimuli intensify young people's enjoyment of music, and violent stimuli have a tendency to produce the same effect. What is surprising, however, is that the combination of both has the opposite effect, meaning that the combination of sexist and violent images does not contribute to a person's enjoyment of the music, nor does it contribute to a person's lack of enjoyment of the music. In this study, males considered that the sexual images made the music more sensual, more romantic. Females were more strongly opposed to these types of visual images, but oddly enough, this in no way altered their enjoyment of the music.

All these new data therefore justify action on the part of educators so that teenagers are better able to detect these sexist and violent messages; so that they can take a stand as to the influence of these messages on individual and group behaviours and attitudes; and finally, so that these young people can eventually take action on their own.

7: WHY TAKE ACTION?

Given that the majority of children and teenagers are left to their own devices when choosing music videos and interpreting their messages, it is only logical to wonder what might be the consequences of this type of consumption? For music videos are an integral part of the media world and therefore play an important role in the perception of social phenomena.

In addition, given their current popularity, music videos have a tremendous potential in the area of education. For example, if the sexuality shown in music videos were presented in the more savory context of interpersonal relationships, it would constitute a valuable form of sex education. Videos considered sexist, however, further exploit the image of adult sexuality by means of a complex, even troubling pattern of emotional relationships, such as emotional blackmail, casual sexual adventures, sexual violence, treating people as sex objects, coarse humour or vulgarity, and so on.

It thus becomes important to analyze these influential yet stereotyped patterns of behaviours and attitudes. Parents and educators alike can use music videos to stimulate a discussion on the relevance and realism factor in the stories presented, so that the young people can profit from a more accurate and relevant picture of what sexuality can mean in their lives. Similarly, it is important for adolescents to be able to distinguish between the repercussions of gratuitous violence, and the reality of learning to control their aggressive tendencies.

The authors are not suggesting that parents and educators take a moralistic stance, but rather that they adopt an instructional attitude: develop in young people a critical mind and help them make connections by questioning them on the behaviours and attitudes that they see in the videos. First, however, young people should be reassured that their parents and teachers are there for them, to guide them, and especially to watch the videos with them. Ironically, only 24% of adults concerned by the songs' negative influence on children actually listen to their children's music. Of the parents who find the lyrics of songs offensive, 71% did not take the records or tapes away from their children.⁴⁹

Understandably, it is difficult, even for parents, to manage or control the number of hours young people spend listening to music videos. However, developing teenagers' critical judgment of these sexist and violent messages will help them see music videos in a different light. Here again, education will have played a part. Young people's media literacy will help them make competent judgments in other areas for years to come.

During a lecture at the 25th congress of the Conseil québécois pour l'enfance et la jeunesse, Micheline Bouzignou speculated that it might be the appropriate time to

provide young people with the tools to help them temper their acceptance of the media with objectivity instead of being overwhelmed by this technological environment.⁵⁰ In any case, it is strongly recommended that people embrace the media with discernment.

8. OTHER TEACHING ACTIVITIES

The teaching activities in this chapter suggest various levels of intervention. For example, you could first distribute the questionnaire to your students (see number 1) in order to get a better idea of their listening habits and their taste in music. All the activities primarily constitute a stimulus for reflection through extracurricular activities such as information stands, "Lemon Prize" and "Orange Prize" contests, surveys in the school and petitions. The activities could easily, however, become a catalyst for action. (Some of these activities have been adapted from the document *Media Literacy*⁵¹ produced by the Ontario Ministry of Education).

1. The following questions may prove useful for breaking into the popular music and music video world of young people.

Music

- How much time do you spend each day listening to music?
- Where do you listen to music?
- Do you listen to music on the radio, on records, on tape, on CD?
- Do you usually listen to music alone or with friends?
- Do you like the volume to be loud or soft?
- How does the music make you feel? What are some of the things you have learned from music?
- How much money do you spend on records, tapes or CDs in a month?
- Where did you hear your favourite singer or group for the first time?
- How did you hear of him/her/them the first time?

Music Videos

- How often do you watch music videos? How much time per week do you spend watching them?
- Why do you watch them? How do they make you feel?
- Do you watch them alone or with your friends?
- What are some of the things you have learned from watching music videos?
- Do music videos have an influence on your personality, or on your personal style (for example, your hairstyle or clothing)? In what way?
- If you had to choose between your walkman and music videos, which would you give up? Why?
- What are music videos usually about?
- In your opinion, what would happen to the world of music without music videos?
- Have music videos already been censored? In your opinion, are there any music videos that should not be shown to young people of your age or younger? Which ones? Why?

Shows

- Do you ever go to rock concerts? How many times a year?
 - Is the experience of a live concert different from listening to a record or tape or watching a music video?
2. Ask the students to draw up a list of their **10 favourite hits/albums** and explain the reasons for their choices to the rest of the class. Then draw up a list of the class's 10 favourite hits/albums. Are the girls' lists different from the boys' lists? Why?
 3. Ask the students to draw up a list of their **10 favourite music videos** and explain the reasons for their choices to the rest of the class. Then draw up a list of the class's 10 favourite music videos. Are the girls' lists different from the boys' lists? Why?
 4. Ask the students to do an analysis of music videos using several exercises:
 - a) Rock stars cultivate or create a complex image for themselves, which is reinforced by their costumes, the technical effects and the media campaigns. Using the technique of brain-storming, the students draw up a list of myths, qualities and values associated with two or three of the most popular rock stars. Discuss with the students each star's personality traits and the effects on the students and on the audience.
 - b) Ask the students to choose a popular song for which there is a music video. Ask them to analyze the lyrics, then listen to the song again and discuss the way in which the tune affects their impressions. Then have the students watch the music video and continue their discussions by trying to determine at each stage which elements were added and how they influence the song and their own psyches.
 - c) Ask the students to name a music video that is well known in their group. Ask them to recite its lyrics and to reconstruct the images from memory. What are the elements that they remember best? Why? How were women and men each portrayed in this music video?
 - d) Ask the students to select and do a detailed analysis of two music videos in each of the following categories:
 - videos that portray values which the students do not share

- videos that portray values that they share
- videos that are exceptional from an artistic point of view, avoid clichés and stereotypes and use visual techniques in an original way
- videos that resort to clichés, and portray sexist and violent situations.

Do the music videos that belong to these categories always use the same type of images? Are they specific to a particular style of music? For example, the heavy metal style portrays violence, while the popular style is based on romanticism.

- e) Ask the students to determine which music video they consider the most sexist and the most violent. In teams of four, the young people try to adapt the original video:
- Are the lyrics of the songs sexist? What words could be changed?
 - Which images are considered sexist and violent?
 - What modifications could be proposed to turn this video into a non-sexist and non-violent one?

Also ask the students to decide which music video they think is non-violent and which they think portrays a non-sexist image of women.

5. Ask the students to comment on the following statements on music videos, giving examples that support or refute them:
- Music videos are the death of rock and roll.
 - Music videos are broadcast on television day and night. Young people will soon become saturated with them and the videos will disappear in three years.
 - In May 1988, Paul King said in Ottawa that the lyrics of heavy metal music instills in young people hatred, violence and evil, and that it constitutes a veritable negative energy capable of changing adolescents' very lives.
 - Desire is more readily accepted than love on television.
 - Parents detest music videos because they do not understand young people's music.
 - Women and men are not portrayed in the same way in music videos. Women are often portrayed as sexual objects who think only of seduction.
 - Heavy metal music may incite young people to suicide.
 - Young people watch music videos to have a better idea of the latest fashions.
6. First, show the students a music video that is considered non-sexist and non-violent. Then, show another one with sexist and violent content. Ask the young people to give their comments on each video:

- Are there any elements that cause one video to attract our attention more than the other one? (for example, sexy or violent scenes, close-ups of women's bodies, and so on)?
- Indicate the advantages of promoting a song using a non-sexist and non-violent music video.
- Make a list of singers that never use sexist or violent scenes in their music videos.

NOTES

¹ Larry E. Greeson and Rose Ann Williams, "Social Implications of Music Videos for Youth: An Analysis of the Content and Effects of MTV," *Youth & Society*, 18, No. 2 (1986), pp. 177-189.

² Suzanne Strutt, "Apprendre à décoder les médias," *Évaluation-Médias Bulletin*, 2, No. 1 (1988), p. 1.

³ Nancy Signorielli, "Children, Television and Gender Roles--Messages and Impact," *Journal of Adolescent Health Care*, 11, No. 1 (1990), p. 51.

⁴ Sylvie Louis, "Un peu, beaucoup, passionnément... Les 8-12 ans et la télévision," *Magazine Enfants*, September, 1991, pp. 8-10. This inquiry on television was carried out with over 200 children from Elementary 3 to 6 in various schools in the Montréal metropolitan region.

⁵ Signorielli, "Children," p. 50.

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Translators' Note: Footnotes refer to free translations based on the reference works cited, except where indicated by an asterisk (*), in which case they refer to exact quotes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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EVALUATION OF THE IN-SERVICE SESSION

Date: _____ Region: _____ School Board: _____

You are: a teacher (f.) a teacher (m.)
 a professional (f.) a professional (m.)
 an education consultant (f.) an education consultant (m.)
 an administrator (f.) an administrator (m.)

Attainment of the Objectives

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. How would you rate the in-service session in terms of helping you become aware of sexism and violence in music videos?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. How would you rate the in-service session in terms of providing you with suggestions of educational aids for dealing with sexism in music videos?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. How would you rate the in-service session in terms of encouraging you to pursue or initiate various types of teaching activities for developing your students' critical judgment with respect to the female-male models promoted in some music videos?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Assessment of the In-service Session

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Value of the related content.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Connection between the related content presented during the in-service session and the courses you will have to prepare.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Time given to participants' input.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Consistency between your expectations and the actual in-service session.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Rating for the leader of the session.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In your opinion, what was the most important thing you learned during the in-service session?

Do you have any suggestions or changes that you would like to make?

Briefly give your impression of the session:

