Kanye West Is Heading South

A Senior Project Presented to
The Faculty of the Communication Studies Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements of the Degree
Bachelor of Arts

By
Clifton A. Sammet

Richard Besel Senior Project Advisor	Signature	Date
T.C. Winebrenner Department Chair	Signature	Date

©2011 Clifton A. Sammet

Table of Contents

Introduction: Kanye West Disses Taylor Swift	3
Overview of Project	7
Looking at the Media through the Lens of Ideological Criticism	8
Review of Media Coverage	12
Solution to Media Hegemony Ideology	19
Works Cited	21

Introduction: Kanye West Disses Taylor Swift

At last! The moment has finally come and you are about to watch your favorite awards show of the year. The MTV Video Music Awards 2009 are about to begin and you cannot wait! Many of your favorite artists are going to have live performances during the show. You are also excited to hear all the funny hosts, the acceptance speeches, and of course, to find out who wins the awards for best male and female videos.

They begin the show by announcing one of the biggest awards of the night for best female video. The finalists are named, and Taylor Swift is thought to be an underdog, going against the likes of Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, Kelly Clarkson, Pink and Beyonce for the honor.

When the winner's name was announced it was in fact that of the 19 year-old country music singer Taylor Swift, who would win the award for best female video for her single titled, "*You Belong With Me*". She had done it! After walking onto the stage, she would begin here acceptance speech. "I always dreamed about what it would be like to maybe win one of these some day, but I never actually thought it would have happened. I sing country music so thank you so much for giving me a chance to win a VMA award." Those would be the only words that she would say before being interrupted by none other than the infamous rapper Kanye West, who would silence the crowd with an untimely act that is still being talked about two years later.

After grabbing the microphone away from Swift, Kanye proceeded to announce to Swift and the audience, "Yo Taylor, I'm really happy for you, I'm going to let you finish but Beyonce had one of the best videos of all time...one of the best of all time!" After

saying this, Kanye then walked back stage. Kanye had just shocked not only the audience at Radio City Music Hall, but he had sent shock waves throughout the whole country. MTV would later report that the events that took place affected a lot of people. "From fans to Kelly Clarkson, Katy Perry, Pink and Paramore's Hayley Williams, reaction to the stunt was universally negative. 'American Idol' runner-up Adam Lambert, rarely one to criticize anyone, also tweeted about it, writing, 'Kanye needs to chill. He freaks out every year. It ain't that deep man'" (MTV NEWS).

Was this just another pre-meditated advance by Kanye West at an award show in hopes of attracting more attention for himself and his image? Or maybe we should buy what New Music Express sarcastically presents in their article titled, *Kanye West's VMA Stage Invasion – Just Another MTV Publicity Stunt?* Or maybe it really was a "spontaneous" and "controversial" happening at an MTV event "that garners acres of excitable coverage the morning after" (NME). Although much speculation has been put into those two conclusions as being the actual motives for this dramatic event. *New Music Express Magazine's* writers seem to think these types of things always happen. "Whether it's Eminem getting a face-full of Bruno's ass earlier this year or Britney kissing Madonna, in each case it's painfully obvious that said 'controversy' is entirely stage-managed and rehearsed in a bid to generate the maximum online coverage for MTV - yet every time the blogosphere colludes in the absurd fantasy that this is a wild, freewheeling rock'n'roll event in which anything could happen."

There has been much speculation over this controversy since the award show broadcasted on September 13, 2009, in New York. There is still news coming out about the incident days after the 2010 VMA show. Elena Gorgan, who writes for

softpedia.com says "Taylor Swift refused to do a duet with Kanye West for the 2010 Video Music Awards, and chose instead to perform a song she'd written with him in mind. MTV executives were not at all happy with her decision." This makes me wonder why Taylor would choose to leave this conflict unresolved when given the chance to have closure with the rapper. *Rolling Stone's* writer Daniel Krep reports that during the 2010 VMA's Swift premiered a new ballad titled "Forgiveness," while Kanye unveiled his new track "Runaway." Could it be this incident is turning out to be the perfect story line needed to write a hit song?

This situation is important because it has affected the lives of millions of people who follow pop culture. This conflict could give us some very valuable insight when it comes to the possibilities that pre-meditated plots for conflict are being scripted into live television programming in order to persuade, or influence profit. There has been some discussion about this in the media, as writer Brian Moylan from gawker.com stated. "The whole thing seems too good to be true, and too many people benefit. Everyone has sympathy for Swift, everyone loves Beyoncé (more), everyone thinks Kanye is (more of) a dick, and everyone is talking about MTV for the first time in a long time. Sure, it was not as obviously planned as Madonna kissing Britney Spears, but with a little bit of acting and canny planning, this is a publicity masterpiece" (Gawker). Another writer, Tim Morehouse, also believes the events at the Video Music Awards might have been staged. "You couldn't have asked for a more perfect dramatic event to boost ratings and PR for Kanye West, Taylor Swift and Beyonce" (Timmorehouse). He then goes further into the controversy by explaining how the conflict helped MTV. "It happened early in the show and the action of Kanye West would leave a plot line running through the

show…would Taylor Swift respond or would someone stand up for her? What would happen? You had to stay tuned to find out!"(Timmorehouse).

What are the main ideas, and beliefs that attempt to be communicated to us about the incident, and how have these ideas, and beliefs about this incident transformed over that past year? If you think about how many conflicts arise daily in our media regarding people in the news, celebrities, and athletes, we begin to realize that conflict is a useful tool. It is a prime mean for attracting audiences in our culture, as negative messages have allowed media outlets to construct our world views, and make room for consumers to fill the void made by these message through trying to sell us stuff. Barry Marcus from Helium.com claims that "reporting almost exclusively on negative news provides a distorted view of the world." (Helium). As the world becomes more complicated, and as our technology continues to evolve, it will become increasingly difficult to find accurate information that does not have any bias attached to it. It is now more important than ever for people to start creating their own opinions about things, rather than letting biased, profit minded media outlets to shape opinions for you.

I am going to look at the media covering this conflict, and make observations as to how the conflict was and is being communicated to the general audience. I will be doing this using the ideological criticism method. In this process I will give the origins and procedures that will be used. I then will give you a description of the artifact, the rhetor, occasion, and audience. Then I will describe the method I used to analyze the chosen artifact. After that I will apply my method to the event with sources to support my audience. I will then conclude by writing a review of my findings.

Overview of Project

When describing the artifact, I will be talking about the articles and events that were created by the incident, and not the actual incident itself. The rhetors are going to be the reporters who have written about the incident. And the occasion specified is the 2009 Video Music Awards conflict between Kanye West and Taylor Swift. When it comes to the audience, it includes anybody who was affected by the incident. This includes the people who were at the awards show, those who heard or read about it, or, of course, those who watched the event transpire on television.

I collected data for this project by exploring various online sources. I started by doing a web search that related to the event between Kanye West and Taylor Swift. Next, I searched for online videos of the conflict for commentary about the interchange. After that, I explored academic databases, such as Academic Search Elite, to find scholarly analysis of the incident at the awards show. After conducting the search, I gathered multiple relevant articles and printed them out as sources for my exploration. I read the artifacts and highlighted key insights that linked to my thesis. After building an understanding of the conflict, I started to explore stories of similar incidents and tried to get a deeper insight into other events that drew public attention to conflicts between high profile participants. I tried to expand my search to find a pattern of this type of disruption in similar situations on awards shows. I looked at the history of MTV and how conflict is often exploited as a tool to draw audiences into a narrative that parallels the content of the shows that are produced.

Kanye West is a popular rapper from Chicago, Illinois. He emerged as a star and then moved into producing records and developing and promoting other talented artists.

He came out with his first record in 2004 and soon skyrocketed in fame to become a household name in hip hop. His songs were adopted in advertising and as theme songs. His unique style comes from an eclectic set of influences including hip-hop, electronic or synthesized sounds, and traditional musical genres. Kanye West quickly infused his sound into mainstream popular culture and became a well known figure.

Taylor Swift is a young and talented country pop singer and songwriter. In 2006, she released her self-titled debut album, *Taylor Swift*. Her music is an expose on the inner world of an innocent adolescent girl, who has common sense and a voice to share her stories of love and self-determination. In 2009, she produced a second album, *Fearless*, and it had instant success. At a very early age, Taylor Swift became a music icon.

The host of the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards, Russell Brand, is a popular comedian. He is an English comedic actor who stars in sophomoric, slapstick comedies such as *Get Him to the Greek* and *Forgetting Sarah Marshall.* His brand of humor involves setting up controversy between his character and his costars. He was responsible for setting the stage for the surprise interruption by Kanye West when he challenged Taylor Swift's right to the award she had just won.

Looking at the Media Through the Lens of Ideological Criticism

Ideological criticism is a type of rhetorical criticism, "that looks beyond the surface structure of an artifact to discover the beliefs, values, and assumptions it suggests" (Foss 209). Examples of artifacts that can be critiqued with this method include the following: advertisements, television shows, basketball games, concerts, coffee houses, computer games, lawn ornaments, films, web sites, and songs. Looking further

into the ideological style of criticism Sonja K. Foss also concludes in her book: *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* that "an ideology is a pattern of beliefs that determines a group's interpretations of some aspect(s) of the world" (Foss 209). An example of this pattern of beliefs might include the set of beliefs one might have when discussing issues such as abortion, or the death penalty. These beliefs are called evaluative beliefs, and they are the main ingredients when it comes to an ideology; these beliefs are thought to "serve the foundation for the knowledge, attitudes, motives, and predilections of groups" (Foss 209).

When looking at the origins of ideological criticism, other scholars who have had a large contribution to the development of this form other than Foss include: "Teun A. van Dijk, Phillip C. Wander, Micheal Calvin McGee, Raymie E. Mckerrow, Janice Hocker Rushing, Thomas S. Frentz, Lawrence Grossberg, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Dana L. Cloud" (Foss 211). The group was very diverse when it came to their views, and according to Foss their research and findings have greatly contributed to the "development of ideographic criticism in the communication field" (Foss 211). A good way to think about ideological criticism is by seeing it as a mental framework. Scholar Teun A. van Dijk believes ideology is comprised of "concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation"(Dijk 39), which a given group will create to make sense of any given aspect of the world. Other influences that have built the foundation for ideological criticism include structuralism, feminism, semiotics, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and articulation theory.

The method of ideological criticism I will be using is hegemonic ideology. Foss says "hegemony is the privileging of the ideology of one group over that of other groups"

(Foss 210). Scholar Stuart Hall says that when an ideology becomes widely accepted within a community and becomes hegemonic, it collects "the symbolic power to map or classify the world for others" (Hall 44). Another expert, Alan O'Connor, describes hegemonic ideology as an invitation for "us to understand the world in certain ways, but not in others" (Downing 36). In a book written by Louis Althusser titled *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, he talks about why so many individuals choose to take on the roles orchestrated for us by the belief systems put in place by the media. He insists that if "the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right: Amen—'So be it'"(Althusser 303). In addition he states that, "if subjects act according to their beliefs, participating in the practices of dominant Ideological State Apparatus's, they are assured a place in hegemonic society." Dominant Ideological state apparatus's (ISA) are what he named the method by which organizations propagate ideology. By following these you could be apart of a social norm, and be accepted into your culture.

I also read a piece by Richard Fiordo that relates to hegemonic criticism titled: *Semiotics and Hegemonic Criticism: Worldviews with Faith, Intellect, and Ethics Illustrated.* Fiordo states that: "hegemonic criticism constitutes a standpoint from which to interpret and appraise human affairs, competing ideologies, and communication. Since domination may shift continually in any situation, hegemonic critique may beneficially be construed as a discipline or an orientation" He then continues by discussing his thoughts on "the role of hegemony in human symbolization, communication, and motivation" (Fiordo). This connects to my incident because it is dealing with human affairs that have competing ideologies such as race and media

propaganda. In another article written by Fiordo titled; *Hegemony Criticism and Argumentation*, he addresses the dual roles of hegemony and counter-hegemony in contexts of argumentative conflicts. He states that, "hegemony is analyzed as a concept of key significance in suitably analyzing a situation to engage or avoid conflict through argumentation." This is an example of relating literature that will help me apply hegemonic ideology.

Another example of literature that relates to hegemonic ideology is a book written by David Altheide titled; *Media Hegemony: A Failure of Perspective.* He states that "a central issue underlying much of this research is control and dominance of the news process"(Altheide 467). The conflicts at the VMA's are a great example of how a minor incident is getting more publicity in comparison to many global issues that are of greater concern. The major global media outlets are deciding what Americans should be concerned with, and many of these outlets are making sure that we are concerned with issues that can be profitable when there is increased interest.

I will be using Sonja Foss's four-step procedure to analyze my artifact. The procedure consists of: "(1) identifying the presented elements of the artifact; (2) identifying the suggested elements linked to the presented elements; (3) formulating the ideology; and (4) identifying the functions served by the ideology" (Foss 214). The artifact I will be using consists of numerous media sources, which I will analyze with an emphasis on finding any hegemonic ideological traits located within the sources. Then by comparing and contrasting my thoughts with those of published writers, I hope to give the reader an improved view on hegemonic ideology.

Review of Media Coverage

One of the first articles covering the event was produced by MTV.com writer Jayson Rodriguez, titled, *Kanye West Crashes VMA Stage During Taylor Swift's Award Speech: Kanye continues his history of onstage award-show rants.* Rodriguez begins his coverage by stating; "This year, Kanye West picked the beginning of the Video Music Awards to deliver one of his famous rants" (Rodriguez). Right from the start you see how MTV picks at Kanye West's ethos, by acknowledging that this is somewhat of a norm for him at these types of events. This also sets the tone for how the audience will direct their blame towards Kanye when making judgments, instead of MTV acknowledging that they had some responsibility when it comes to the events taking place under their telecast.

This approach to manipulating audiences by using shock and awe captures the popular conversation in media. By dictating a story and molding the opinions others hold, MTV colonizes the viewer with a schema for understanding and thereby molds opinions for those viewers. Another example of how MTV steers the blame is found later in the article: "Kanye's rants are usually in support of his own work. He memorably took the stage at the American Music Awards in 2004, declaring he was robbed of the Best New Artist nod" (Rodriguez). This is another example of how MTV directs the blame away from itself, even referencing other events produced by MTV, which had facilitated similar types of behavior. MTV remains an invisible force that quietly guides the American conversation. This is similar to the current debacle in reality television with

the Kim Kardashian Wedding and E Entertainment. In the case of the Kardashian Show, for weeks audiences anticipated every step in Kim and Chris' courtship. They watched and waited for Chris to pop the question with rose petals spelling out "Will you marry me?" The real choreographer, MTV, cashed in on an attentive audience while Kim is portrayed as a fickle and fake newlywed.

MTVnews.com continued its coverage a few days after the incident with a story titled "Taylor Swift On Kanye West's VMA Tirade: An MTV News Exclusive." Jocelyn Vena reported that "when Kanye West jumped onstage with Taylor Swift while she accepted her award for Best Female Video, the singer was initially excited. That excitement faded, however, when the MC took the opportunity to champion Beyoncé during the time that Swift should have been giving her acceptance speech" (Vena). All you have to do is read the title of this article to see how MTV is already capitalizing on conflict that transpires on their program. Three days after the incident, MTV has already scripted exclusive interviews by Taylor Swift regarding the issue. On top of that they acknowledge that Kanye was given an "opportunity" under MTV's production of the event to make these remarks. You can see how MTV trusts that their initial coverage of the event had injected a public opinion about Kanye West being fully responsible for the conflict happening. It also illustrates how MTV attempts to influence the labeling of roles in this event by characterizing Kanye West as the villain, and Taylor Swift as the victim. Vena later writes about how "Kanye later apologized on his blog for the interruption, saying, 'I'm sooooo sorry to Taylor Swift and her fans and her

mom’"(Vena). By covering the event in this manner you can see how MTV portrays the event in a way that is favorable to MTV and their image. MTV also quotes passages from Kanye West’s blog that support the opinions MTV wants the public to have regarding this event. By including Kanye's blog in the article, it is a good way to weaken the ethos of one of the few outlets that Kanye has in order to clean up the biased portrayals that are being made by the media. If MTV had, in fact, acknowledged that they had some responsibility in then matter, than it would be another story. Both these articles show how hegemony is used to manipulate the public’s opinions about who is responsible for this event. MTV could easily have responded to West’s blog with positivity and closure to what happened and closed this negative chapter relating to both of the artists, as well as the awards show’s existence. Instead, they chose to keep pulling at the band aid Kanye put on this conflict because they know this conflict happened on their channel, thus giving them the entitlement to be the catalyst for how this conflict is resolved.

After the events took place, MTV continued to give the Video Music Awards conflict media coverage, publishing articles that fueled more debate and insight into the topic. In the article titled; “*Should Kanye West Lie Low After Taylor Swift VMA Incident?*” MTVnews.com writer Shaheem Reid discusses how Kanye West should react to his outburst at the awards show. “But speaking for myself and fellow MTV News Hip-Hop Brain Trust member Rahman Dukes, we feel that staying active may be West's best rehabilitation” (Reid). This shows how MTV wants to restore Kanyes image as

quickly as they tore it down because MTV knows that Kanye will not be as profitable in the future if they continued to damage his public image, which would not only hurt West's wallet, but also MTV's.

Looking at the coverage that followed months after the incident, you can begin to see how MTV not only was making a good storyline for the next year's show, they were also able to influence the two artists' upcoming albums. Jame Dinh states in a article done by MTV.com titled, "Taylor Swift On Kanye West: 'It Was Important to Write a Song to Him'"(Dinh), Swift is quoted saying, "I think a lot of people expected me to write a song about [West]." She says her ballad "Innocent," was just one of many confessional songs on her new album, *Speak Now*. "But, for me, it was important to write a song *to* him" (Dinh). This statement makes one start to wonder if MTV's use of hegemony not only benefited the network, but also the success of the artists involved with this controversy. She even uses the role created by MTV and its coverage of the controversy as the title of her hit single "Innocent." Later in the article Dinh brings up how Taylor has used other publicly documented controversies into her country music hits. "Another track included on her open diary-esque album, *Speak Now*, is the rumored ode to ex-boyfriend Lautner called 'The Story of Us.'" Reminiscing on events that inspired the cut, the 20-year-old singer says, "It was at an awards show, and there had been this falling-out between me and this guy" (Sinh). Analyzing examples like these help to illustrate how there is a correlation between the media's coverage of the controversy, and how it has created profit for those involved which includes MTV, Taylor Swift, and Kanye West. This type of analysis opens your eyes to the reality of pop culture, and how much of it is fabricated with profitability in mind without regard to

how this type of mentality affects the audiences that are absorbing every second of it. This makes you think about how different our culture might be if pop culture's motives were not money motivated. Why not shift pop culture's attention to more constructive and progressive things such as world peace, or the environment? Are we scared that we might begin to step on the toes of those corporations and the people we have been covering currently, as well as in the past, that have been contributing to these controversies?

In a story written in the Houston Press, by Craig Hlavaty titled "*Taylor Swift's Top Nine Future Fueds,"* Havlaty discusses Tayor Swift's use of feuds in her efforts to make platinum records. "Still the No. 1 album in the country, Taylor Swift's *Speak Now* is awash in lyrics bashing her former flames, friends, lovers and Kanye West." "Here are the imaginary beefs (beeves? beefes? beefi?) we can see the Swifty getting into in the next few years and beyond, including someone all too close to her" (Hlavaty). He then goes onto to predict other feuds that Taylor Swift might be able to make songs about. Kanye West has also decided to take notes from Taylor Swift, writing his own song about the controversy as reported by contactnews.com, "I wrote a song for Taylor Swift that's so beautiful and I want her to have it. If she won't take it then I'll perform it for her. I would never ever again in a million years do that. It is distasteful to cut people off as a general rule. What's the point of dressing tastefully if I'm going to act the complete opposite? When I woke up from the crazy nightmare I looked in the mirror and said, 'Grow up Kanye'. I'm sorry Taylor"(Contact News). This illustrates how Kanye has not only accepted his role as a villain as portrayed by the media, especially MTV. MTV is helping him capitalize on the huge amount of public interest that his actions had

attracted from the past award show. Nothing is going to stop him from making things right. Regardless of if she accepts the song, or if he has to perform it regardless of her wishes to perform the song, this puts the pressure on Swift, and sparks more controversy leading into the release of his new album, as well as for the upcoming Music Video Awards show. This type of scenario is what the public feasts on as viewers, and generates the interest necessary for media to make maximum profit on events. Instead of corralling our collective consciousness towards fabricated conflict, we should shift our awareness to things that our more constructive.

Now that we have analyzed how MTV, as well as corporate owned music label artists Kanye West, and Taylor Swift have used hegemony as a device to influence public opinion, let's now look into the stories regarding how the 2009 incident affected this years' VMA show. In an article that came out following the latest VMA award on September 12, 2010 titled, "Taylor Swift's Kanye West-Focused VMA Set Lights Up Twitter," MTV writer Taylor Schwartz writes, "Taylor Swift's surprise VMA performance Sunday night (September 12) had everyone talking, though reactions ranged from supportive to irritated that Swift would perform a song about Kanye West -- who infamously interrupted her acceptance speech at last year's show -- more than a year after the incident occurred" (Schwartz). MTV had decided to include a 'surprise' performance by Taylor Swift, so she could sing her song regarding the incidents from the year before. All of the controversial coverage that had transpired a year following this event had fueled enough public interest, as to make the controversy yet again the main topic of debate for the awards. In an article done by *People* magazine before the event titled "Taylor Swift – and Kanye West – Will Perform on VMAs," writer Marisa Laudadio sets

the stage for how the 2010 award show should be looked at. Will there be another showdown? Both Taylor Swift and Kanye West are set to perform on Sunday's MTV Video Music Awards, a source tells PEOPLE. But the stars are not expected to share the stage during the ceremony at L.A.'s Nokia Theater" (Laudadio).

I finally wanted to look at an article that critiques how these events have been portrayed by the media, as well as how the incidents have been handled by the artist. The article titled, "A lesson from West: Don't reward bad behavior" by author Dr. Sonya Friedman, formerly on CNN, who maintains her practice of psychology in the Birmingham has accepted MTV's portrayal that Kanye West is the villain when it comes to this controversy. She states that "he is demanding respect but doesn't show it. He doesn't want any distraction from his 'performance' but thought nothing a year ago of embarrassing a young woman and ruining her moment of celebration. The more the public sanctions this type of behavior by blessing it in the form of celebrity worship and the purchase of products, the more of the same you can expect" (Friedman). I believe that she is right in standing up against Kanye West, although I think it is unfair to put all of the blame on him, given the lack of discretion he has involving the media coverage portraying his actions. The major media corporations, including Viacom, need to be held more accountable for their unethical method of manipulating the public's worship of celebrities for profit. This article does a great job at identifying this common problem within American pop culture, and I hope that more people start to look for 'grass roots' resources that offer an unbiased critique when covering events.

If you choose to use news resources that have self-interest in the news they are covering, you should be careful to pick apart the information affected by hegemony. This

is important because many of our cultural perceptions are formed by narratives depicted in mainstream news. The stories are told again and again, through a variety of media. Because of this variety, there is competition to highlight the dramatic in an effort to draw audiences. It pushes some news organizations to speculate and judge events, rather than simply reporting them. Examples of this are news organizations that take a bias towards one political affiliation, such as Fox News and its tendency to have more of a conservative belief pattern than other networks.

Solutions to Hegemonic Ideology

In review, I went over the controversial events that occurred at the 2009 Video Music Awards between Kanye West, and Taylor Swift. I have examined how hegemonic ideology can be a valuable tool for transforming news into profit. I will now go over the solutions I have found for the question I asked in the first part of the paper. What were the major media groups focusing on regarding the events that occurred involving Kanye West and Taylor Swift during the 2009 MTV video music awards from when they happened to a year after the incident?

These findings contribute to rhetorical practice in finding hegemonic ideology in the media surrounding the 2009 VMA controversy. I was able to examine the ways the media involved in the incident persuade and shape audience's perceptions of these understandings into social realities through their own forms of media for profit. In my application section I found that the media tries to persuade the audience a certain way, in order to make favorable opinions that supplement the given media source. Because a majority of the people lack the time to find sources of media that are not laced with bias, I feel like it is necessary to bring up this issue, pose questions, and focus interest towards

such a huge issue in today's internet-based culture. By illustrating how looking beyond the story to find facts about the source communicating this information. I hope that one can learn how to liberate oneself from the corporatocracy that is occurring in our nation by being able to slay the pop culture monster that is distracting many of us from looking at current issues of greater meaning and importance.

When analyzing my findings that may contribute to rhetorical theory, I see how it directly connects to media persuasion. My findings closely relate to studies that involve the art of persuasion by showing a series of media releases that have misleading or biased based information. In this way I am assisting in exemplifying how media can be deceiving and misleading in the way they cover controversy. My findings help rhetorical theory because they assist people in better understanding how media uses persuasion to steer people's hegemonic ideologies of the world.

My final thoughts about this topic are that hegemonic ideology is going to become more and more relevant as we continue down the road of information overload. As more and more grass root news sources pop up online everyday, we will start to see more and more contradictions amongst different news sites regarding news stories. The Wiki leaks are a current example of how mass media will begin to start making huge strides towards the truth. This may assist us in turning away from the ignorance, self-interest, and greed that is leading to the downfall of our American Dream today.

Works Cited

"Adam Lambert, Donald Trump, Joe Jackson Slam Kanye West's VMA Stunt - Music, Celebrity, Artist News | MTV." *New Music Videos, Reality TV Shows, Celebrity News, Top Stories | MTV*. Web. 01 Nov. 2010. <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1621475/20090914/swift__taylor.jhtml>.

Altheide, David L. "Media Hegemony: A Failure of Perspective — Public Opin Q." *Oxford Journals | Social Sciences | Public Opinion Quarterly*. 1984. Web. 08 Dec. 2010. <http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/48/2/476.short>.

Althusser, Larry. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses by Louis Althusser 1969-70." *Marxists Internet Archive*. 1971. Web. 5 Dec. 2010. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>.

Dijk, Teun Adrianus Van. *Ideology: a Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage Publications, 1998. Print.

Downing, John, Ali Mohammadi, and Annabelle Sreberny. *Questioning the Media: a Critical Introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995. Print.

Fiordo, Richard. *Hegemony Criticism and Argumentation*. 2009. MS. Chicago, IL, Chicago.

Fiordo, Richard. ""Semiotics and Hegemonic Criticism: Worldviews with Faith, Intellect, and Ethics Illustrated"" 2010. MS. Chicago, IL, Chicago.

Foss, Sonja K., and Sonja K. Foss. *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2009. Print.

Friedman, Sonya. "A Lesson from West: Don't Reward Bad Behavior | Hometownlife.com | the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and Hometown

Weeklies. "*Hometownlife.com | the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and Hometown Weeklies | Suburban Detroit News, Community, Entertainment, Yellow Pages and Classifieds. Serving Suburban Detroit, Michigan*. Web. 08 Dec. 2010. <http://www.hometownlife.com/article/20101114/LIFE/11140374>.

Gorgan, Elena. "VMAs 2010: Taylor Swift Dissed Kanye West in New Song - Softpedia." *Latest News - Softpedia*. Web. 01 Nov. 2010. <http://news.softpedia.com/news/VMAs-2010-Taylor-Swift-Dissed-Kanye-West-in-New-Song-156360.shtml>.

Hall, Stuart. "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-structuralist Debates." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 2.2 (1985): 91-114. Print.

Hlavaty, Craig Craig. "Taylor Swift's Top Nine Future Feuds - Houston Music - Rocks Off." *The Houston Press Blogs*. Web. 08 Dec. 2010. <http://blogs.houstonpress.com/rocks/2010/11/still_the_no_1_album.php>.

"Kanye West - West Writes Song For Swift - Contactmusic News." *Contactmusic.com - Music Videos and Reviews, Photos, Movie Reviews and Entertainment News*. Web. 08 Dec. 2010. <http://www.contactmusic.com/news.nsf/story/west-writes-song-for-swift_1163765>.

"Kanye West Storms the VMAs Stage During Taylor Swift's Speech | Rolling Stone Music." *Rolling Stone | Music News, Reviews, Photos, Videos, Interviews and More*. Web. 01 Nov. 2010. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/17842/102865>.

"Kanye West's VMA Stage Invasion - Just Another MTV Publicity Stunt? - NME Video Blog - NME.COM - The World's Fastest Music News Service, Music Videos,

Interviews, Photos and Free Stuff to Win." *Music News and Reviews, Concert Tickets, Videos, Pictures and Free MP3s - NME.COM*. Web. 01 Nov. 2010. <http://www.nme.com/blog/index.php?blog=121&title=watch_kanye_west_s_vma_stage_invasion&more=1&c=1&tb=1&pb=1>.

Kreps, Daniel. "Kanye, Swift Debut New Songs at Video Music Awards | Rolling Stone Music." *Rolling Stone | Music News, Reviews, Photos, Videos, Interviews and More*. Web. 01 Nov. 2010. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/17386/202744>.

Marcus, Barry. "The Importance of Seeking a Balance in Positive News to Combat the Negative - by Barry Marcus - Helium." *Helium - Where Knowledge Rules*. Web. 6 Dec. 2010. <http://www.helium.com/items/997998-the-importance-of-seeking-a-balance-in-positive-news-to-combat-the-negative>.

"Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (Open Library)." *Welcome to Open Library! (Open Library)*. Web. 01 Nov. 2010. <http://openlibrary.org/books/OL14998871M/Marxism_and_the_interpretation_of_culture>.

Morehouse, Tim. "Was Kanye West and Taylor Swift VMA's Incident Staged? « Tim Morehouse." *Tim Morehouse*. 14 Sept. 2009. Web. 7 Dec. 2010. <http://timmorehouse.wordpress.com/2009/09/14/was-kanye-west-and-taylor-swift-vmas-incident-staged/>.

Schwartz, Terri. "Taylor Swift's Kanye West-Focused VMA Set Lights Up Twitter - Music, Celebrity, Artist News | MTV." *New Music Videos, Reality TV Shows, Celebrity News, Top Stories | MTV*. 12 Sept. 2010. Web. 6 Dec. 2010.

<http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1647669/20100912/swift__taylor.jhtml>.

Vena, Jocelyn. “Taylor Swift On Kanye West's VMA Tirade: An MTV News Exclusive - Music, Celebrity, Artist News | MTV.” *New Music Videos, Reality TV Shows, Celebrity News, Top Stories | MTV*. 14 Sept. 2009. Web. 06 Dec. 2010. <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1621421/20090914/swift__taylor.jhtml>.

“Was the Kanye West-Taylor Swift Moment Staged?” *Gawker — Gossip from Manhattan and the Beltway to Hollywood and the Valley*. Web. 08 Dec. 2010. <http://gawker.com/5359109/was-the-kanye-west taylor-swift-moment-staged>.