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The Sex Pistols: Punk rock as protest rhetoric

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THE SEX PISTOLS: PUNK ROCK
AS PROTEST RHETORIC

by

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Bachelor of Arts
Arizona State University
1997

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree
Hank Greenspun Department of Communication Studies
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ABSTRACT

The Sex Pistols: Punk Rock as Protest Rhetoric

by

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This thesis examines the punk music of the Sex Pistols as protest rhetoric. Seven of the songs on the album Never Mind the Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols are analyzed for their content. The analysis utilizes the theory of symbolic convergence and its coinciding fantasy theme analysis along with ego-function of protest rhetoric. Through the analysis it is found that punk rock is in fact protest rhetoric as defined and explained by the theory of ego-function. The guides of this theory explain the emergence of punk music and the resulting culture. Symbolic convergence theory and fantasy theme analysis examines the messages within the text and how they express the ideas, beliefs, and values of the punk culture. This provides a better understanding of punk culture and the messages communicated in the songs of the Sex Pistols.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

Music is an important rhetorical element in modern culture. Music and its messages have become a means of uniting people. As David A. Carter explains “A song tells the story simply. Heroes and villains are identified, struggles and crisis are amplified, and hopes for salvation and nirvana are shouted. Songs become means of uniting against and coping with a common enemy” (365). Whether aware of its stories and messages or drawn by the aesthetics of music, one can identify with a particular culture by defining the genre of music as pleasing or reflective of opinions and beliefs. Music and its stories influence us unconsciously, particularly in the mass media. Music is also an important part of our culture; it influences how we dress, with whom we associate, and where and what we do for entertainment and leisure. The stories it tells can inform us of the battle of good versus evil. A specific music genre can even define a person’s status or cultural identity within a society. Often the particular genre of music a person associates with and becomes a fan of is reflective of that person’s views, attitudes, and beliefs. If the music genre has developed its own culture, a fan can also become an insider in the culture. Many genres of music have developed into or stemmed from a culture. One of these is punk rock.

Punk music's roots extend from the subculture created by alienated lower class adolescents during the early and middle 1970's. Punk as a genre of music reflected the strong political beliefs held by the subculture. These attitudes and ideas were often expressed in the lyrics of the music, at times ambiguously or metaphorically, but most often literally.

Music during the twentieth century has developed into an important influence in the lives of adolescents; punk became just this for a select group of British and American teens (Gullifor 1). As Paul F. Gullifor's (1992) study of radio and music suggests, it has become apparent that the lyrical content of music is influential and informative to adolescents in addressing such important issues as politics, social codes, and economics (1). Bloodworth (1975) states that through the music of specific artists the young "counter culture were provided with a valid form of communication and an expression of their values and noncommitment to their parents' society" (309).

There has been relatively little research focused on the content of punk music, its reflection of ideological elements of the subculture and the important role it played within the culture. Tricia Henry (*Break all the Rules! Punk Rock and the Making of Style*), Lawrence Grossberg (*Is There Rock After Punk?*), and Craig O'Hara (*The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise*) have analyzed punk culture and the sociological aspects of the music and culture but the lyrical content has not been addressed. The fact that the lyrics and the messages in them have been neglected is surprising since the music played such a vital role in expressing the ideologies, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes of punk culture. The goal of this research is to begin to fill this void by uncovering the ideological foundations of the punk culture that are expressed in the lyrics, the primary

mode of communication that punks used in order to deliver their message. The lyrics as text can also reveal beliefs and emotions, giving us an insight into punk culture.

This analysis extends the understanding of the genre of punk music as a form of protest rhetoric as discourse that presented a shared fantasy and provided ego-function for the participating adolescents. The body of material I have chosen to assess, that is the lyrics of the punk rock band the Sex Pistols, is chosen in an effort to find some answers to the questions: Did the music of the Sex Pistols truly encapsulate the belief system of punk culture. Did this music provide alienated youth group more than just entertainment?

The songs that will be used in the analysis are the songs contained on the album Never Mind the Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols. The songs include Holiday in the Sun, Liar, Problems, God Save the Queen, Anarchy in the UK, Pretty Vacant, and EMI.

Method of Analysis

This analysis will utilize fantasy theme analysis, a method of rhetorical criticism developed by Ernest G. Bormann. Fantasy theme analysis (FTA) looks at the mode of public communication that a group such as punks utilizes and adopts as its unique form of rhetoric. The definition of “fantasy” that Bormann uses in his method of analysis is “creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need” (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 130). He found that the use of a fantasy created by a group of people often mirrored the “here-and-now situation and its relationship to the external environment” (Bormann *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 397). When analyzing punk rock lyrics it becomes apparent that this is in fact what the lyrics

project. Therefore, the fantasy theme analysis and symbolic convergence theory are useful tools in the analysis of the lyrical content of the music of the punk rock band the Sex Pistols.

The goal of Bormann's FTA is to explain "the appearance of group consciousness, with its implied shared emotions, motives, and meanings, not in terms of individual daydreams and scripts but rather in terms of socially shared narration's or fantasies" (*Symbolic Convergence*, 128). It is important to understand that the term fantasy as used by Bormann is not the conventional or widely used definition of the term. He believes "fantasies" developed by the group in their rhetoric may be fictional; however, real people and real events are usually involved and often documented by the media (*Symbolic Convergence*, 130).

A fantasy theme is created by a group dramatizing events and by creating heroes and villains within these dramatizations. This selection process is the central activity of the act of fantasizing (Bormann *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 398). These fantasy themes are important in the organizing and shaping of the fantasy of the group and are often "mirror images of the group's here-and-now situation and its relationship to the external environment" (Bormann *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 397). Fantasy themes play the role of sparking the chain of reactions and feelings in group members through the dramatic message (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 131).

Fantasy theme analysis is based on two principles of communication. First, people use communication to formulate a reality. Second, humans use symbols to communicate and share these symbols, creating a sense of reality that has salience and holds true for the group (Rybacki and Rybacki 87). The punk culture and music is

imbedded with a plethora of symbols both nonverbal and verbal. FTA is based upon the interpretation of narratives or dramatic aspects of the rhetoric of a group. A dramatistic message is one that “contains a story about people, real or fictitious, playing out a dramatic situation in a setting other than the here-and-now” (Bormann *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 397). Groups such as the punks communicate about conflicts they have had in the past or foresee in the future; this becomes the dramatic message (Bormann *Fantasy Theme Analysis*, 451).

The punks, like other groups or cultures, develop their own style of rhetoric as people began sharing the same fantasies and began to integrate them into a “coherent rhetorical vision” (Bormann *Fantasy Theme Analysis*, 453). Bormann describes rhetorical vision as a “unified putting-together of the various shared scripts that gives the participants a broader view of things” (*Fantasy Theme Analysis*, 453). Rhetorical visions help to shape the social reality of a group, reaching a “level of symbolic maturity such that its members can make cryptic allusion not just to details of fantasy themes and types but to a total coherent vision” (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 97). Contributors to this rhetorical vision form a community that can bring about an emotional response from one another by alluding to the fantasy themes they have “chained through” the group (Bormann *Fantasy Theme Analysis*, 453). These themes are “slanted, ordered, and interpreted” to provide a means in which groups can explain the same situation or happening in different ways (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 134).

Punks were considered shocking in their rebellion and although they received mass media attention, aspects of their rhetoric were in fact censored. The Sex Pistols music was banned on the radio and in stores, in turn they relied on an alternative mode of

communicating their rhetorical vision. This corresponds to Richard Gregg's suggestion that protest rhetors rely "upon obscene gestures and sheer body force to make their points" (73). The music of the Sex Pistols encouraged and promoted such behavior and through this message the punk community adopted a fantasy of anarchy. Those who accepted and identified with such fantasies became active members of the punk community.

The punk culture and rhetoric received mostly negative response from the general public. Although the general response to punk was negative, the community did grow and continues today throughout the world. Bormann states that selected rhetorical visions or fantasies can be shared by a small community of people for short periods of time and other visions such as punk are so "all-encompassing and impelling that they permeate an individual's social reality in all aspects of living" (*Symbolic Convergence Theory* 133). Some may argue that punk was small and short-lived but there are still groups of people throughout the world that identify with the fantasy and rhetorical vision of punk. The longevity of the culture is proof that punk expresses rhetorical visions that resonate among those who identify with the fantasies of punk.

Organization

This project will be organized as follows. Chapter 1, introduction and background, introduces the study and history of punk culture and the Sex Pistols. Chapter 2, review of literature and methodology, reviews the literature relevant to this study. Chapter 3, analysis of text, the rhetorical analysis of the seven Sex Pistols songs

using Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis. Chapter 4, conclusion, summary and discussion of the findings of the research.

Background

The historical puzzle of punk rock and the Sex Pistols is somewhat of a challenge to piece together. Punk was not only a genre of rock music but also a subculture strongly rooted in political, social, and economic beliefs. The culture was basically derived from a do-it-yourself ideology and drew strongly from the disposable influences of society in fashion, art, and communication. According to Peter Wicke:

They stood there dressed up in the discarded fashion of the previous decades, in pieces of uniforms and ladies' underwear cut into rags and held together with safety pins, with their hair dyed green, red, or purple, hung about with razor blades, bicycle chains, and toilet chains, wearing iron-studded dog collars around their necks, out-sized safety-pins through their cheeks and multi-colored make-up on their faces (136).

Much like society, punks were products of the growing effects of the disposable element of mass production, industrialization, and capitalism. Because much of the punk culture was disposable, there is little left today of their printed communication. The fan magazines, often referred to as fanzines, were printed and written by members of the culture in a very simple do-it-yourself manner. They were printed on very inexpensive newsprint paper that was not durable and was consequently disposed of after reading. The early punk band performances, if recorded at all, were recorded

using very inexpensive means. Therefore, the quality of remaining recordings is poor if they exist at all.

So with the challenge of piecing together this historical puzzle it is necessary to rely on those historians who were part of the culture or witnesses to the culture. With historical background providing an understanding of where the punks came from, socially, economically, geographically, and ideologically we can further understand their culture. With this understanding we can assess what their music said, both literally and metaphorically about the culture and their beliefs. The culture created a space for disillusioned youth to find solidarity amongst themselves. Punk was the manifestation of adolescents who felt alienated and disaffected by society and the establishment. The subculture pushed the limits of acceptability within the realm of cultural expression, specifically in the music industry. The punk culture was clearly a “system of action” where teens collectively acted in response to the social boundaries and economic repression (Melucci 4).

The focus of this project is the British punk subculture that emerged during the middle 1970's. Britain at the time was in great strife; people were out of work, on strike, and facing grim economic conditions. By 1975, Britain was in a full-blown recession. July provided the highest unemployment rate since World War II, and those fresh out of school and out in the working world were the most vulnerable to the poor employment opportunities (Savage 108). The situation worsened in November of the same year when Chancellor Denis Healey proposed cutting public spending by 3 billion pounds (Savage 108). As a result of the damages and losses Britain sustained during the Second World War, Britain had lost its status as a leading world power. Britain

owed the United States three billion pounds due to lend-lease, tying it both economically and strategically to the U. S (Savage 108). Other countries such as Germany and Japan had overhauled their manufacturing economies but Britain's manufacturing had been poorly organized and was persistently under-invested since the 1880's (Savage 108). The people of Britain had overlooked the need for change and consequently vindicated the status quo (Savage 108).

A large majority of the middle class felt as if their "backs were against the wall" with feelings of fear and revenge they began to lash out against the system forming radical freedom groups such as the National Association for Freedom, which was formed in 1975 (Savage 9). The entire post-war ideal of "mass consumer enfranchisement" promoted by prime ministers seemed to have been a sham (Savage 109). The disintegration of social life and the idea of a "consensus" that had been a dominant element after the war brought even more strife to the already troubled British society (Savage 109). The anger toward the government and the economic decline fostered a sense of guilt. The British have always been known for their loyalty to their country and suddenly they were showing signs of disloyalty. Graffiti became a mode of expressing this turmoil; slogans began appearing, providing a "window into the world of the culturally and socially dispossessed" (Savage 111). Phrases such as "dada is everywhere" and "words do not mean anything today" provide this window into the mindset of many British citizens at the time (Savage 111).

Victims of Recession

Punk culture in Britain was a result of a several elements related to the declining economy and recession. The working class was hardest hit by the declining economy, and out of the working class youth erupted feelings of disillusionment and alienation. The people of Britain felt that the government had made big promises after World War II but had delivered little on these promises of economic prosperity and growth (The Filth and the Fury). There were no jobs for adolescents and therefore no money and no sense of a positive future. By the middle of the 1970's, Britain was experiencing the highest unemployment rates since World War II (Henry ix). In essence, the socioeconomic climate in England in the middle to late 1970's was almost to the point of boiling. According to punk historian Jon Savage, "England wasn't free and easy: it was repressed and horrible" (9). The price of sterling slipped to 40 cents on the dollar, luxury items (cigarettes, alcohol, etc.) were taxed 25%, wages were frozen, unemployment was at one million plus, consumer spending had crashed, and the government had made drastic cuts in health, education, and state services (Bromberg 99). With the contracting of the economy the innocence and freedom of the 1960's had curdled into cynicism during the 1970's (Savage 60).

According to Craig Bromberg, there was seemingly no way out of the poor economic state, no hope for a brighter future, and no solution to adolescent anger: "No jobs for you to go to, no money for you to play with, nothing to do even if you had some" (Bromberg 100). The working class struggled under the rising cost of living to provide necessities; this only exacerbated their discontent and unrest (Henry ix). These poor economic conditions produced a platform of discontent that created feelings of

disillusionment toward the government (Gimarc ii). The previously unstable economy was pushed further into recession in 1974 when the OPEC raised oil prices (Savage 77). Nineteen seventy-four proved that the long “post war party” had come to an end, the optimistic “lights were going out” (Savage 77).

To add fuel to the smoldering adolescent fire, rock and roll and its stars had become corporate entities. The music business had become an industry; it was no longer the music of common working class youth (McNeil and McCain 245). Teens no longer had anything to relate to in music; as they saw it, nothing exciting or new and interesting had happened in music since the 1960’s (Henry 45). The sense of rebellion previously linked to rock and roll was increasingly lost as music became commodified. The rebelliousness and energy had left the music. Popular bands were not viewed as unusual or interesting, they were boring to this emerging adolescent culture (Henry 45). One historian of the movement felt that “the punk revolution erupted out of disgust over the pathetic state of rock’n roll” (O’Hara. 160). Put simply, rock had become big business, corporate capitalism in action, “rife with consumerism to a frightening degree” (O’Hara. 160). The dominant issue that can be said to define punk and the object of their rebellion centered on the adolescents reclaiming rebellious rock and roll. By reclaiming this adolescent domain they were also creating a space for expression and making the big business of rock and roll irrelevant (O’Hara 165). In essence rock and roll became a part of the “system” that punks and their music rebelled against.

Working class adolescents were the hardest hit by the change in the music industry. Previously, it had been the rebellious aspect and it had been the commoner who presented and expressed this rebellion that attracted teens. As of the middle

1970's, millionaire rock stars that no longer identifying with the youth culture or their experiences performed the music. (Gimarc ii). The music that had become popular during the 1970's failed to resonate with the British youths' experiences. This youth culture had developed the view that "political corruption and economic exploitation" had infiltrated and was abounding in both the government and the music industry (Larson 224). Thus, these teens were hungry for something new that reflected their culture and discontentment. James Lull states that music is a voice, "an agent of expression to the outside world" for those members of the culture (235). There is the "seemingly paradoxical notion that rock music occurs as a cultural enactment by groups that often consider themselves alienated and who seek identification and empowerment through their roles as consumers" and punk was a prime example of this notion (Medhurst and Benson. 288). Punk emerged at a certain time into a specific context making it a cultural event; the music spoke for and was the result of a nihilistic counter culture anchored in the disaffected and alienated British youth (Grossberg 51). This conjuncture of social changes created the basis for punk culture and archetypal artists such as the Sex Pistols. The Sex Pistols were four teens who were products of this disenchantment and alienation, and lived the notion that "power corrupts; privilege perverts" (Larson 224).

Punk musicians, such as the Sex Pistols who gained potency among the members of the punk movement were not highly skilled or formally trained musicians. Making music was something they felt anyone could do on a low budget. The music was loud and simple, played on inexpensive -sometimes even stolen- equipment at small crowded low-budget venues (Henry 3). One of the central philosophies behind

punk and punk rock music was a do-it-yourself attitude that guided numerous aspects of the movement (Henry 3). Punk philosophy held that anyone had the ability to pick up a musical instrument and express his or her frustrations, hostility, and need for solidarity (Henry 108). The music, the performance, the style of dress, the literature was all done with minimal cost and a do-it-yourself attitude. This attitude reflected the ideology behind early “pure” rock and roll that had welcomed the spontaneity and experimentation of performers, the rebelliousness of which punks felt missing in the current popular performers.

Punk rock was simple and expressed the aggression and unrest that the adolescent subculture was feeling toward the political and corporate establishment. These teens saw the corruption and decadence in government and the music industry; the people in power were “rotting at the top,” (Larson 224). The Sex Pistols made it clear that they stood for chaos, anarchy, and anti-government, not only in their music and behavior but also in the statements they made and the symbolism they used (Bromberg 101). This emerging subculture accepted the message of the punk musicians and adopted them as their representatives. As Johnny Rotten, vocalist for the Sex Pistols, made clear, their main goal was to express their grievances in action; “I want people to go out and do something, to see us and start something, or else I am just wasting my time” (Gimarc 26). Reaction was not to be routine politics, “but anti-politics, chaos, antagonism, and anarchy. Not sound but fury and strident aggression. Not music but noise- loud, fast, and speeding” (Bromberg 101). The music was their mode of communicating the rebellion against the establishment, society, and the music industry.

British Society and the Foundation of Punk

The history of punk has two distinct bases one British and one American. The subculture and music emerged in the middle 1970's and reached its zenith during 1976 in Britain and the U. S. (Lull 225, Henry ix). The culture was primarily British based. However, the music that inspired the British punk music was the new style of simple raw rock and roll that was evolving in New York (Henry ix). This new musical style was simplistic in composition and structure. The ideology behind this new music was that anyone could be in a rock and roll band, that talent and formal training were not a requirement; all that was necessary was a rebellious attitude. Many of the musicians that formed these rock bands both in the U.S. and Britain learned to play their instruments as they formed the bands (The Filth and the Fury). The music became the primary form of communication for punks and the venue for expressing the ideologies, rebellion, and grievances.

Adolescents in Britain were in search of a voice to express their feelings of alienation and disillusionment toward society; riotous, violent, raw rock and roll music proved an outlet for these feelings and aggressions. The new style of music that was evolving in New York lent itself well to the rebelliousness of the developing British punk culture. Craig O'Hara, in The Philosophy of Punk, credits the New York music scene for the creation of the musical style and the British punks for the political attitudes and colorful appearance (25). Through the music, performers as well as audience members could vent frustration while expressing ideas, beliefs, rebellion, and frustration. The British punks utilized the style of New York music and took it to a self-

consciously proletarian level where the content of the music was as important or even more important than the aesthetics (O'Hara 27). The adolescents that attended the live performances were not strictly fans; they were also participants. The live shows created a new environment for these disaffected adolescents to become individuals, break away from the norm, and think and act in alternative ways (The Filth and the Fury). "It is different from an average music concert because there is a goal of removing the audience/performer separation" (O'Hara 15).

The first step in comprehending punk is understanding that British social structure and society. It was highly static with a strongly defined ruling class and a narrow definition of acceptable behavior and attitudes (Savage 12). In the film The Filth and the Fury, Johnny Rotten stated that the adolescents of the period felt that under these conditions it was not acceptable to question any form of establishment, even in the education system. Punks rebelled by questioning all prevailing modes of thought and held very little respect for authority of any kind (O'Hara 28). In doing so, they exacerbated their rebellious and nonconformist reputation (O'Hara 28). At the time there was a distinctive feeling among the youth culture that they were powerless, and as a result they began to grab at any power available to gain self-respect (The Filth and the Fury). These actions came at a time of wide-spread social and political action in Britain. During the 1970s, riots and strikes were common as the working class were also striving to gain a sense of power and control of their lives (The Filth and the Fury). The working class and its youth were fed up with the "old way." It was clearly not working and they took steps to gain the power to change this "old way" (Johnny Rotten, The

Filth and the Fury). Punk was a backlash against the systems that created cultural constraints to individualism and self-expression.

The punks were direct descendants of the Teddy Boys, a tough working class group that dressed in a very distinctive style and were fans of early American rock and roll. The early 1970s had seen a revival of the Teddy Boys, yet they had really never stopped reproducing (Savage 10). Teddy Boys were the “straight ahead rigidly working class” males who had “hung on to the style as an act of cultural faith and class solidarity” (Savage 10, Savage 50). The Teddy Boy culture evolved and branched out into a more rough and tough biker style by 1972 and adopted the black leather jacket as a visual symbol of delinquency and rebellion (Savage 51). From there the evolution continued and produced the early punks. Punks were the result of several issues; rebellion against the establishment (government, society, church, and the music industry), alienation, a search for solidarity, and the economic crisis that was facing Britain.

Rebellion and Anarchy

The element of rebellion was probably the most obvious and memorable characteristic of punk. In order to rebel they had to be more extreme and outrageous in their actions, style of dress, and language than prior groups in order to get attention. This explains the violent behavior that was part of the punk persona as well as the style of dress, hair, music, and art. In British society, the extremely rigid class structure created such intense pressure to conform and remain in the social realm that these adolescents felt stifled and alienated from society. This pressure to conform was “interwoven in everyday

life” and therefore not an issue that these teens could ignore; they felt the insurmountable pressures daily (Buechler 446). There was pressure to conform to their roles in society as laborers, yet there were no jobs. This contradiction created a crucial element of anger and disenchantment toward societal definitions.

Adolescents rallied together to “rage against the status quo” and in doing so created a culture and a genre of music that sought space to express their belief system (Henry 114). With the static nature of British society also came the rebellious desire to move away from the mass. Once a culture was widely adopted the grass root members and others begin their search for something new, less commercialized, and more shocking. “Each successive group wished to define itself from its predecessors” (Henry 71). One of the most despised elements of society was the person who was willing to conform and become a voiceless member of the masses (O’Hara 27). Punks rejected conformity and this rebellion was a key element of their culture. They set out to denounce and rebel against conformity in every possible aspect, to seek the truth and simply shock people (O’Hara 27).

Anarchy was a major influence in the movement, a formidable form of rebellion against the systems that dictated their being. Anarchism is a long-standing western political tradition discussed for centuries (Nurse-Bray 97). The punks adopted the word itself as a symbol of their movement and belief system. The punks relished the fact that autonomy was the central idea in which anarchism was based (Nurse-Bray 97). Through anarchy, the right to self-direct and impend moral and political judgment was left to the individual (Nurse-Bray 97). The punks believed in the notions behind anarchy: no official government or rulers and the valuing of individual freedom and

responsibility (O'Hara 71). In some aspects the anarchistic school of thought paralleled some fundamental ideas in Marxism, (e.g. the nature of hierarchies in general involves the oppression and exploitation of people living within the power structure) (O'Hara 74). This parallel is substantiated by the fact that the punk movement formed in a capitalist society in which labor was the form of oppression and exploitation.

These ideas can be seen in Steven M. Buechler's and Alberto Melucci's discussions of striving for control over the direction of one's life, cultural autonomy, and identity. Buechler states that the life of the modern individual has become colonized, becoming regulated not only economically and politically but also in the formation of one's identity (Buechler 445). Punks reacted to the colonization by defying regulations posed upon them by society, the government, and the record industry. They created a space for themselves that provided a sense of cultural autonomy among members. Melucci explains, "autonomy arises where each system has developed processes and rules of its own, and each has the capacity to create constraints on the system upon which it depends" (28). The rules of the punk movement are less identifiable but can be seen in the necessity of the members to deviate from the norms of society in dress and behavior and to shun the restrictions placed upon them by authorities. In order to be accepted as a punk, one must follow the rule of the culture by not following the rules of traditional society and government. When addressing the problems modern society has created in the development of an individual's identity, Melucci feels that cultural autonomy can be achieved by distancing oneself socially, based on "lifestyle, behavior, and language" that contrasts elements of the dominant culture (157). By distancing themselves from the

dominant culture with their contrasting individualism. Subculture, punks began the process of identity-formation and the creation of a cultural autonomy.

The adolescents that became punks felt that they were politically and socially manipulated and their form of anarchy denounced the control of hierarchies and supported their right to live life according to personal choice (O'Hara 83). These adolescents were against the idea of treating people as objects, the result of a capitalist society which emphasizes material possessions (O'Hara 83). Under anarchy there would be no government interference between individuals and their moral considerations and actions (Nurse-Bray 99). Considering the feelings that the British punks held toward their government, feelings of broken promises and the treatment of the working class, it is not surprising that they denounced the political system.

Punks put individuality and freedom before organizational necessities. The punk movement was never an organized movement, following the basic beliefs of anarchy. Anarchists emphasized the "importance of the primary group and its individual members, and de-emphasized the formal organization" (Bass 214). Bernard M. Bass gives one of the most profound statements on anarchism that provides an explanation and understanding as to why the punks adopted the anarchistic philosophy. "The anarchists represented a movement in which enthusiasm, interpersonal acceptance, mutual support, individual freedom, and cohesiveness of membership were maximized..." (214). This statement defines the punk movement in several ways. The members were enthusiastic about their culture, and this was particularly visible at live performances where the audience became physically involved. There was a strong sense of collective identity among members of the movement. Women, minorities, and homosexuals were openly

accepted and were received equally within the community, providing the solidarity these adolescents sought (O'Hara 102 and 115). Individual freedom was an important issue to punks who relished their individuality and thus they took extreme measures in their individual appearance (dress, hair, and piercing). Their beliefs, quest for individuality, taste in music, film, clothing, etc., and their feelings of alienation and disillusionment united the members of the movement.

The establishment that became the primary target of punk anarchy was the record industry. As Johnny Rotten stated, they were about "musical anarchy" (Henry 114). Through industrialization, the music business had become a community that was enmeshed in capitalist structure. Those with property and money had the power and authority. Whether it was the artists making large sums of money for themselves and the record companies, or the managers at the record companies, these were the people who dominated the industry leaving no room for new music. This was a microcosm of capitalist society and once again these common adolescents had no power. What the punk movement strove toward was a more creative diverse musical society where different genres of music would have a space to exist. Such a space would allow for music that had meaning and represented the people and culture that created it. The musical anarchy that the punks created was a freedom from the "government" that controlled who received representation by the big business of music. Anarchy, as they saw it, was the freedom to express themselves through their music without censorship and to create a musical community where diverse cultures and classes could co-exist. Paul Nursey-Bray summarizes this goal:

“It is not simply the removal of the state or centralized authority that is the task, difficult in itself as this may seem. It is, rather the creation of a viable community, in diverse aspects, social, political, economic, and cultural. The free individual exists within the free community” (105).

Punk rock did succeed at this by receiving representation. Several punk bands received contracts with large record companies’ (i.e. the Sex Pistols and the Clash). There was also a resurgence in the small independent record labels as the demand for punk music increased (O’Hara 156-57). The independent labels that emerged are products of the do-it-yourself attitude that was an important element of the culture.

Alienation and Marxism

Punks attacked government and political practices through elements of culture such as music, dress, and general defiance of “the system.” Tricia Henry quotes Johnny Rotten summarizing the Sex Pistols and their role in the subculture: “the Pistols are presenting one alternative to apathy... It’s not political anarchy... it’s musical anarchy” (114). Despite the highly political content of the music the research on punk does not address this component. The research done on the history, philosophy, and the culture of punk reference Marxism and the Marxist ideas in punk yet does not provide an explanation for the Marxist elements of the culture and why it can be viewed as Marxist. This is an important characteristic, and understanding how the punk culture was Marxist will be useful in the overall analysis of the context of the lyrics of the Sex Pistols music.

Another key issue behind the emergence of the punk movement was alienation. Alienation was a crucial element that drove punks and the development of the punk subculture. One theorist frequently mentioned in studies of alienation and in studies of punk is Karl Marx. Marx's theories on alienation provide the foundations for punk analysis of social problems that were plaguing Britain. Marxist theories are complex; therefore the basics and grass roots ideas and theories are discussed.

First, it is essential to define what exactly was meant by the term alienation according to Marx. He defined alienation in terms of the relationship of "man and the product of his productive activity" (not only material items but intellectual products and social institutions) (Schaff 57). According to Marx, alienation is the separation between the person and the product of his/her labor. Marx's theories of alienation centered around the notion that due to the industrialization and resulting capitalist society people, particularly those in labor, produced products that did not belong to them (Schaff 38). The laborer was fundamentally becoming estranged and alienated from himself with the sale of his labor before the process of production even began (Schaff 38). The laborer had been incorporated into capitalism with the creation of a commodity that was not of his possession or control (Schaff 39). The laborer was then mutilated "into a fragment of a man", he was degraded to the level of an "appendage of the machine", every "remnant of charm in his work" was turned "into hatred and toil" (Schaff 39). As a result, the laborer became estranged from the intellectual process of his work, and therefore, detached from the process itself (Schaff 39). "The division of labor not only isolates every man from the community, it also cuts man in two: into someone who works with material and someone who works in the mind" (Axelos 57). The outcome of such production was the

transformation of the products of labor to an independent force inimical to the laborer (Schaff 41).

As capitalism became a more prominent force in industrial society, the capitalist became the powerful agent (Schaff 39). Through the process of capitalism the concentration of wealth fell into the hands of those who held the mode of production (Axelos 60). The result was a breakdown in the relationship between labor and the labor of a single individual (Schaff 39). The lack of social power between the worker and the product emerged with the worker becoming an “alienated, independent, social power, which stood opposed to society as an object, and as an object that is the capitalist’s source of power” (Schaff 39). The question then became how did man become a slave of his own creation? Punks did not attempt to answer this question but they certainly asked it and asked it blatantly.

Marx’s theories of alienation are rooted heavily in the divisions of labor and deal primarily with the laborer and his role in production. With the civilization of man the scope of wants and needs increase and change. With development of society, man’s “realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants” (Schaff 40). In conjunction, the forces of production increase due to the increase in needs. According to Marx, freedom then becomes an issue and plays a part in alienation. Within the capitalist society freedom can only exist in the socialized man, one who can “rationally regulate their interchange with Nature,” bringing Nature under their control instead of blindly allowing oneself to be ruled by its forces (Schaff 40). Marx believed that the break between man and nature, between producer and consumer, established the division of labor “which becomes in a way the principal and single cause of alienation” (Axelos 58).

Marx contended that freedom can “blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis” (Schaff 40). This was a widening burden to the working class as society and industrialization grew, further alienating them from other elements of society and natural human needs. Clearly, this can be seen as one element that created the feelings of alienation felt by the adolescents of the working class. Yet this concept explains only one facet of that alienation.

The adolescents involved in the punk culture were working class members of the labor element of a complex capitalist society. The Marxist theories seemingly fit and aid in explaining the social history and the feelings of alienation of punks. Kostas Axelos interprets one basic Marxist conception that “the essence of labor is social” (53). He further elaborates that labor “is a community, human society in some historic form, that it struggles against nature to gain subsistence” (53). But as a result of such a complex society as the twentieth century there are other aspects that contribute to alienation as well. Although these adolescents were in fact members of the working class many of them were unemployed and living off the “dole” (British welfare) and few of those who held jobs were actually laborers.

The punk movement was clearly class-based and rooted in the working or labor class of a class system society. The class system is a hierarchical structure that produces feelings of exploitation, alienation, and restriction in the lower class due to the actions and power of the higher class. Because of the strict social structure of Britain, these youths were raised working class with a deeply imbedded attitude that this was their inevitable destiny. During the middle 1970’s, when punk emerged as a subculture, unemployment was an issue that faced many of those at an age when they should be

entering the work force. With no jobs and no hope of escaping their poverty, they realized the cruel reality that they were facing a bleak future. Punks were rebelling against the class system and their knowledge that there was little hope of escaping. Punks were known to destroy their gathering places, which is reflective of the underlying ideals of destruction of the restrictive class system in which they were confined. It is well known that they also defaced images of prominent political figures such as the Queen of England, thus symbolizing the destruction of the government and the system of hierarchy the Queen represented. Many punks also dispelled the idea of having material objects and a "home." Out of both poverty and rebellion they lived either as squatters, in the stores where they were employed, or on the streets.

Considering these theories of economic based alienation, it seems highly possible that the adolescents participating in the punk culture inherited their parents' feelings of alienation, not in the genetic or natural science sense of the term "inheritance" but in the social class sense and in the experiential sense. These adolescents witnessed their parent's feelings of alienation as they worked in the labor industry. They saw first-hand as their parents worked long hours at menial jobs for little pay with no opportunity to advance. Punks did not want to be caught in dead end boring jobs that offered little chance of a better life. Modern society encourages us to "better ourselves," to advance in careers and social-economic status, yet these teens were aware that their chances of achieving a better life were minimal. The media played a key role in the plethora of images they produced that described how one is to be "successful." High unemployment had produced a large number of adolescents who were "on the dole," reiterating the fact that their future was bleak and that they had not succeeded in fulfilling their parent's or

society's expectations (Henry ix). This produced feelings of alienation that were ingrained or learned and an alienation that was an outcome of their status economically and socially.

The Sex Pistols

On November 6, 1975 the Sex Pistols played to their first live audience at St. Martin's School of Art (Matlock and Silverton 75). The band consisted of Paul Cook on drums, Steve Jones on guitar, Glen Matlock on bass, and vocalist Johnny Rotten. This group of teenagers known as the Sex Pistols began in a clothing store on Kings Road several years prior. Former art student Malcolm McLaren and his then wife Vivian Westwood owned the store. Glen Matlock was an employee at the store, then called Let it Rock. While working at the store he was introduced to Paul Cook and Steve Jones (Matlock and Silverton 35). Matlock was born August 27, 1956, to white collar parents and grew up in a working class suburb of London, Hammersmith. When he met Cook and Jones he was a student at St. Martin's Art School (Savage 79). Cook was also born in 1956 to laborers and raised in the Hammersmith, as was Matlock (Vermorel 234). Jones was reared in the same suburb and began life on May 5, 1955 (Vermorel 234). After this meeting, the three began hanging out and learning to play instruments with friend Warwick Nightingale (Wally) at his home in London (Matlock and Silverton 37). The band, the Swankers, existed for about two years beginning in 1973. During this time they learned to play their instruments and became members of a new and growing subculture (Butt 18). Glen Matlock states that the guitar that Steve Jones played was stolen, illustrating that not only were these teens in the midst of a recession and could not

afford to buy their equipment, but that they were also rebellious delinquents (38). This habit of stealing or “nicking” equipment continued and became the main source for outfitting the band with what they needed to perform. A drum kit was stolen from the BBC studio, a tuner from Roxy Music, two guitars from Rod Stewart, amps from a reggae group, and other items from the Rolling Stones and David Bowie (Savage 75). During this time McLaren changed the store name to Sex and began carrying rubber and vinyl apparel, leather studded jewelry, and sexually explicit T-shirts. McLaren had also traveled to New York and had briefly managed the band the New York Dolls whetting his appetite and knowledge of the rock world.

The band began to take on a more serious approach and they became known as QT Jones and the Sex Pistols (Matlock and Silverton 64). Of course the QT was an intended pun and Jones referred to Steve Jones who was the lead singer at that point. The word Sex came from McLaren’s desire to promote his store Sex and the term pistol was used because it was a “strong, hard word” (Matlock and Silverton 64). While McLaren was in the U.S. the band dropped the QT Jones and became known as simply the Sex Pistols (Matlock and Silverton 65). Upon McLaren’s return to London, his insistence that Wally leave the band began the formation of the Sex Pistols that we know today (Matlock and Silverton 65). With Wally out of the band, Jones became both guitarist and vocalist. This became quite a challenge for the inexperienced musician. They then began their search for a lead singer.

John Lydon was introduced to McLaren and McLaren was impressed with his appearance and had him audition (Matlock and Silverton 71). McLaren liked what he saw and convinced the other Sex Pistols this was the guy (Matlock and Silverton 71).

When Lydon became a Sex Pistol, McLaren christened him Johnny Rotten due to his poor hygiene, fetid teeth, and frequent use of the word rotten (Butt 22). As the rehearsals continued the other band members began to question McLaren's choice of Rotten. Rotten could not sing but he had the look and attitude of New York rocker Richard Hell whom McLaren had become acquainted during his time in New York (Matlock and Silverton 71). Rotten's joining marked the beginning of the Sex Pistols, according to Matlock and Silverton:

Certainly John's arrival changed our attitude. Before he came along we'd certainly mess around with songs like Build Me Up Buttercup, with me fiddling around on a little clavinet that we'd found knocking around somewhere, and Steve singing. With John in the band we began to search out songs, which were really us (73).

Rotten brought to the band a sense of petulance and narcissism that created an intensity and performance level that the band needed (Dalton 77). With their new attitude and lead vocalist they began writing their own songs with lyrics that expressed their attitude and lives. They also rented a rehearsal studio and living space. It was here that they became a serious punk rock band and began to establish their unique sound. "From the beginning, the important thing was to get across the idea of the band in the songs of the band. We had to turn meaning into sound" (Matlock and Silverton 90).

The band felt ready to play in public and had been expressing to McLaren this desire. McLaren challenged the band to find gigs on their own. This led to the first live show at St. Martin's School of Art. Matlock arranged this opportunity for the band by using his attendance at the school and by being social secretary (Matlock 76). By sheer

tenacity, Matlock also booked them at the Central School of Art and it was there they played their first full set (Matlock and Silverton 76). The Sex Pistols were officially a band and were getting paid to play in various venues throughout Britain. It was during this time they received their first review of a performance at The Marquee. Neil Spencer wrote, "Don't look over your shoulder, but the Sex Pistols are coming" (Matlock and Silverton 81).

The increasingly large audiences that were made up of nihilistic adolescents were making it difficult for the band to play live. Eventually, venues were no longer welcoming them so alternatives became necessary. Seedy strip clubs allowed the band to play on their stages, which was very fitting considering their name. The members promoted the shows on their own by handing out handbills and posting fliers. Once again the performances were extremely popular with the growing punk subculture (Matlock and Silverton 81). The culture was beginning to become a real social community, and other punk bands came into existence. Bands such as Generation X, The Clash, The Damned, all socialized on Denmark street where the Sex Pistols headquarters was located (Matlock and Silverton 84). This street became the central site for the developing punk scene (Matlock and Silverton 84).

By July of 1976, the Sex Pistols had recorded six songs in their studio on Denmark Street. By October, McLaren had signed a contract with EMI for 40,000 pounds (Dalton 92). McLaren had successfully cashed in on the chaos surrounding the Sex Pistols; the tabloids had reported their exploits and had made them a phenomenon (Dalton 92). With the signing and the impending rock and roll success, McLaren set out to perfect the group. The band member who would take the brunt of this was bassist

Glen Matlock. McLaren saw him as too middle-class, thought his playing was too funky, and that he looked too healthy (Dalton 96). These characteristics went against all that the Pistols had come to symbolize. By January, 1977, Matlock was no longer a Sex Pistol (Butt 43). Matlock's presence in the band had created the main catalog of songs that were original compositions. He was the primary songwriter and most proficient musician in the group (Butt 46).

McLaren knew exactly whom the role of bassist belonged to. John Simon Ritchie, nicknamed Sid Vicious, had been a fixture on the scene and everyone knew about him and his violent antics. Born in May of 1957, his biological father soon left both Sid and his mother to fend for themselves (Butt 7). Vicious experienced much upheaval as a child, moving frequently with his bohemian mother, Anne. He never had a father figure and often lived in poverty in a single parent home. Vicious had created the punk dance the pogo, by jumping up and down with excitement and amphetamine adrenaline, and crashing into members of the audience (Dalton 38). McLaren had encouraged Vicious' violent behavior in order to promote the band's aura of intimidation and violence (Butt 27).

Although the contract at EMI had produced the successful single, Anarchy in the UK, the label announced the termination of this contract in January 1977 due to their concern over the band's riotous activities and the departure of Matlock (Butt 47). The central reason for the band's dismissal from EMI stemmed from a December, 1976, appearance on a local talk show (Bill Grundy's "Today") where they used foul language unacceptable for live television (Taylor 73). McLaren wasted no time in getting his boys re-signed to another record label. On March 9, 1977, with Vicious as an official member,

the Sex Pistols signed to A & M records (Taylor 73). They were fired from the record company on March 16, 1977 (Taylor 73). Again wasting no time, McLaren and the band signed to Virgin records on May 12, 1977, and released the single God Save the Queen (Savage 347). The record cover received negative response from conservatives, and the band celebrated the release by boating up the Thames playing the song, which eventually led to the arrest of McLaren and Westwood. The single was subsequently banned on most radio stations but still reached number one on the charts (Taylor 73).

On October 28, 1977, after Virgin dragged their feet and McLaren argued with Rotten that the hit singles should be on the album, the Sex Pistols released their only studio album Never Mind the Bollocks: Here's the Sex Pistols (Bromberg 159). The album sold 125,000 copies, instantly certifying it as gold. The Sex Pistols were a popular product (Bromberg 159). As a result of their profitability and canny business dealings, the band was named Young Business Men of the Year for 1977 by Investors Review (Vermorel 117).

The success of the Sex Pistols prompted McLaren to find another venue for them. McLaren sought out film director Russ Meyers to direct the Sex Pistols in their film debut. Work on the film began in July, 1977, with Russ Meyers as director and a script by McLaren and Roger Ebert (Bromberg 147-148). Due to lack of financial backing and disagreement about the script the film under the working title Who Killed Bambi?, was canned (Bromberg 157). McLaren persevered and eventually the film was produced under the title The Great Rock and Roll Swindle. By the time it was completed and released McLaren has disconnected himself from the film, and the Sex Pistols had disbanded. The film was released in Britain by Virgin Films in 1980 but has yet to be

released in the U.S. (Bromberg 199). The film had been a debacle from its first inception, plagued by financial problems, McLaren's desire for total control, lack of interest by the Sex Pistols, their break up, and subsequent lawsuits against McLaren (Bromberg 193-199).

The Sex Pistols had invaded the music industry, one facet of the capitalist system they so strongly protested. Their tours of Europe and the US caused raised eyebrows and uncountable cancellations. Their only world tour was plagued with problems from the beginning. They had planned to begin the tour in December, 1977, taking the band to Holland and the British provinces before continuing on to the US (Bromberg 168). They were forbidden to perform in Britain but managed to perform outside the country. The U.S. leg of the tour was a disaster from the start. The band members, due to criminal records, were not allowed in the country (Taylor 74). When they were finally granted entrance into the country they had already missed several dates of the tour and were granted only seven-day visas (Taylor 74). The Sex Pistols performed in Atlanta, Georgia; Memphis, Tennessee; San Antonio and Dallas, Texas; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and finally in San Francisco, California (Taylor 74). McLaren's idea of taking the Sex Pistols to the south was the epitome of punk chic (Bromberg 168). He insisted that the band avoid large cities, especially New York and Los Angeles, but upon the record companies insistence he agreed to tour dates in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Cleveland, Ohio; and Chicago, Illinois (Bromberg 168). These shows never transpired due to the problems with the band members' visas. This tour marked the demise of the Sex Pistols. Already besieged with problems among the band members, the final explosion happened at the final performance of the U.S. tour in San Francisco at the Winterland Ballroom. Vicious

had developed a serious heroin addiction, carrying around a “constant halo of anarchy” which had been encouraged by McLaren at the beginning but was at this point out of control (Bromberg 169). Vicious became the personification of punk rock to the American audiences, “A sharp, cartoonlike outline that caricatures punk nihilism and wretched excess to a T” (Dalton 134). Rotten was too British, too ironic, too complex, and took himself too seriously to be embraced by the American audiences (Dalton 134, Bromberg 169). Rotten had become what the Sex Pistols originally detested, career oriented and serious (Bromberg 169). Jones and Cook were now background figures to the ensuing drama between McLaren, the record company, Rotten, and Vicious. The San Francisco show was the last performance of the Sex Pistols concluding with Rotten asking the audience “A-ha! Ever have the feeling you’ve been cheated? Good night” (Monk and Gutterman 219).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter a review of the literature that inspired and fueled this research will be presented and the method of analysis and coordinating theories will be described. Fantasy theme analysis (FTA), symbolic convergence theory (SCT), and ego-function are the tools that this inquiry will utilize to support the contention that the music of the Sex Pistols expresses the belief system of the punk culture and proves to be more than simple entertainment.

Review of Literature

For this study it is imperative to view music as a form of communication or discourse that delivers a message to an audience. Within the discipline of communication rhetoric is the art of using language and/or symbols as persuasive discourse to present a message to an audience. In order to assess the communicative qualities of punk music it is essential to provide substantial evidence that music is a form of rhetorical discourse. Arguments supporting the thesis that music is or can be rhetorical is found in numerous scholarly work done on the subject. This is a reasonably new area of study but there is a steady growth of interest in the field.

Music as Rhetoric

The body of work discussing the rhetorical aspects of music is substantial.

Throughout the ages music has been “used to promote ideology, recruit supporters, and to create organizational cohesion” (Thomas 262). Cultures and groups have utilized music as communicative persuasion to convey messages to an audience for thousands of years. This analysis looks at the music of the Sex Pistols as such, a form of communication persuading and delivering a message to an audience. Punk music is a form of rhetoric that incited group support, promoted the belief system of the group, and created a cohesive community. The analysis of popular music as rhetoric began with the protest music of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many scholars looked at this music as a voice and a principal form of rhetoric for a specific movement. Popular music also plays a key role in providing a form of developing and maintaining the attitudes and values in contemporary culture (Irvine and Kirkpatrick 272).

Kenneth Burke defined rhetoric and its function as “the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents” (Burke 41). Under this definition music can be seen as a form of rhetorical discourse. The notion of song lyrics providing the verbal symbols that become significant acts from which humans are prompted into action can be explained by this Burkean notion of rhetoric (Brock 184). Burke based his arguments upon the propensity of humans to reject or accept the symbolism that is prevalent in a situation (Brock 185). The formulation and grouping of these symbols varies from rhetor to rhetor and from one form of discourse to another. The punk subculture can be viewed as a group of people reacting with symbols to their environment and situations.

The rhetorical qualities of music are further explored by scholars such as David A. Carter who looked at the work songs of the Industrial Workers of the World. He discussed music as a way of telling a story or working through a time of crisis or hardship (Carter 365). The adolescents that were involved in the punk culture were in fact living through economic hardship and crisis and their music was a reflection of this.

Martin J. Medhurst and Thomas W. Benson further substantiate music as rhetoric by tracing the relationship between music/song and the art of rhetoric even further back to the sixth century B. C. They discussed the correlation of terminology that was utilized in rhetorical study and the musical background of such terms as figure and trope. The origins of these terms are found in ancient musical theory (Medhurst and Benson 287).

Aristotle, the first great systematizer of the art of rhetoric, adopted many of the terms originally derived from music theory to explain the arts of rhetoric and poetic. In addition to figures and tropes, Aristotle wrote about movement, rhythm, and harmony- all concepts that originated with musical studies. (Medhurst and Benson 287).

A key characteristic recognized in music and its rhetorical qualities is its persuasiveness. Scholars such as Alberto Gonzalez have looked at specific albums such as Bob Dylan's Blood on the Tracks. Gonzalez focused his analysis on Dylan's power to promote feelings, reflect the restlessness and indignation of the audience, and develop an agenda and a vocabulary through music. Gonzalez's focus was to address, "what and how the music comes to mean in the socially constructed lives of rock audiences"

(*Rhetoric, Culture, Class, and Dylan's "Blood on the Tracks,"* 309). Gonzalez not only examined the lyrics of the songs but also discussed the musical elements and how they correlate to the message in the music revealing attitude, value, emphasis, and tone (Gonzalez 312). According to Gonzalez, music strengthens the message and insures retention.

Lawrence Chenoweth looked at the lyrics of both The Jimi Hendrix Experience and The Jefferson Airplane as a means of understanding adolescent behavior and retreat from society. He writes:

It is the assumption of this article that an understanding of at least a segment of the younger generation can be achieved through an investigation of rock music because such music often reflects and sometimes influences part of the contemporary youthful thought (Chenoweth 25).

Chenoweth concluded that although the messages in the music were searching for "transcendent fantasies," escape did not prove to be the protection they sought (44). He concluded that within a society that represses nonconformity, the fantasy of liberation was perpetuating their impotence and did not achieve the alleviation of their suffering; in response they resorted to abetting violence (Chenoweth 44). Punks by comparison endorsed anarchy and violence from the inception.

Punk as Protest

In addition to the rhetorical criticism of rock and pop music, studies in the area of protest music are also useful in researching and analyzing punk music. The literature and

analysis of protest music helps to formulate the argument that punk is protest music, which in turn verifies further that punk can be viewed as rhetorical discourse. One study conducted by Stephen Kosokoff and Carl W. Carmichael reported on the persuasive aspects of protest music. They found evidence that in certain situations “social-action-type” songs could be persuasive (Kosokoff and Carmichael 302). One characteristic they found prominent in protest song was that the musicians were often unskilled, and it was practice for the “entire membership” to join the singing (Kosokoff and Carmichael 302). These characteristics are definitive of punk. Songs of protest have the ability to move beyond presentation of rhetorical discourse and become rhetorical themselves (Kosokoff and Carmichael 302).

Elizabeth J. Kizer defined protest songs as, “expressions of discontent,” that “may be adapted by and utilized as ideological statements of social movement, whether originally written for that purpose or not,” “may inspire the creation of other rhetorical messages,” and “may serve to stimulate thought, reinforce, or modify attitudes” (4). Further Kizer suggests that protest music may vindicate change and exemplify the attitudes of an individual or group (4). Even more fitting to punk was the statement Kizer made regarding the lack of poetic voice and the “spontaneous outbursts of resentment lacking careful artistry” (6). She also found the music must parallel the lyrics in tone in order for the message to reach the audience (Kizer 7).

One essay that provided interesting insight to the language choices used in lyrics addressed the use of obscenity in protest. Haig A. Bosmajian claimed that young protesters use obscenity to appear as dissenters and provide evidence of liberation; to assure that their message will not be co-opted by the establishment; to label members of

the establishment and their actions as obscene; to have the power to define their adversaries; and to provoke response, release frustration, and mask the fears that plague adolescents (9).

The use of obscenities in music provides evidence of dissent from the establishment and liberation from such organizations. The use of obscenities made punk music unique and at the same time prevented co-option by both established musical groups and the establishment. The lyrics of punk music prompted responses not only from audience members but also from society. The lyrics seem to have provided an outlet for frustration while also masking the fears of this particular group of adolescents.

The numerous studies that focus on the rhetorical aspects of rock and popular music provide a plethora of inspiration and information. Artists such as Bruce Springsteen (Sellnow and Sellnow), Stevie Wonder (Weisman) and Joan Baez (Thomas) and their music have been the topic of analysis by scholars in the communication field, thus proving that the rhetorical analysis of rock and popular music is an informative vehicle of study that provides insight into a culture. There is, however, a lack of lyrical or rhetorical analysis of punk music. Punk was and is a very politically oriented subculture that utilizes music as the main avenue for communicating beliefs, ideas, and protest. An analysis of this music would provide insight into that culture and their belief system. It is surprising that such research has not been done to date. There is, however, a substantial body of work in punk culture, style, philosophy, history, symbolism, and ethnography. Among these are included, Subculture: The Meaning of Style by Dick Hebdige, Pop, Punk, and Subculture Solutions by Julian Tanner, The Philosophy of Punk by Craig O'Hara, Statements of Fear Through Cultural Symbols by Harold G. Levine and

Steven H. Stumpf, and Thrashing in the Pit: An Ethnography of San Francisco Punk Subculture by James Lull.

This literature provides a history of punk culture and an overview of the culture and its effects on society, its members, and the music industry but it does not address the most prevalent aspect of the culture, the music itself. Julian Tanner notes that punk culture consisted of working-class adolescents that were responding to changes in the music industry (69). He defines pop music as a reflection of working-class entertainment “providing a backdrop for drinking, meeting girls, and dancing” expressing the values and cultural concerns that established the “yardstick” by which specific forms of pop music were rejected or accepted (69). Harold G. Levine and Steven Stumpf conducted research concerning the symbolism used by punk bands in California to ensure their stature as punk bands. They found that punk embodied crucial elements, which define it as a subculture; “a characteristic style that sets members off from those in the main stream culture; a set of focal concerns that give this style its meaning; and a private code through which aspects of punk style (and focal concerns) are expressed” (Levine and Stumpf 432). Levine and Stumpf’s study also supports the theme of fear that Bosmajian addressed in his study of the use of obscenity in protest rhetoric. Levine and Stumpf write:

The punks seek to emphasize that fear is ubiquitous in the broader culture. By embodying the theme of fear in their dress, their music, and other symbols of the subculture, the punks reflect their perception of fear in the wider culture. In short, the functional role

of the punk subculture is to exist outside the main culture, while illuminating central features of it (433).

Both essays strongly support the notion that fear is an element of punk culture and music, especially a fear of no future, as their lyrics often report.

James Lull's ethnographic study of punk discusses the culture as a constant refusal to be included in a mainstream lifestyle. Within the punk culture monetary wealth "has negative ideological implications," supporting the fundamental belief that capitalism and mass production is a form of repression of the working class (Lull 232). Another key characteristic of punk is the conception of fighting violence with violence, which supports the conclusions of the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Jefferson Airplane studies done by Chenoweth. These two rock bands reverted to violence after more peaceful tactics proved fruitless. Punk seemed to learn from this and began fighting with a nihilistic intention from the beginning. Lull provides an in depth look at punk culture addressing such issues as sexism, personal relationships, and sex within the community. He illustrates the workings of the punk community on a social scale. Another excellent illustration of the punk culture is found in O'Hara's Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise, in which the belief system of the punk culture is examined. The social workings of the culture are interwoven with the belief system and the role each plays within the culture is examined. All of these works on punk are excellent sources for understanding punk as a culture, but again there is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled. The lyrics have yet to be addressed as a viable insight into the culture and this neglect is what has brought about the desire to perform this study.

Fantasy Theme Analysis and Symbolic

Convergence Theory

Ernest Bormann and a group of scholars known as the Minneapolis Circle developed fantasy theme analysis. Fantasy theme analysis is a method of rhetorical analysis that studies the process of communicating fantasies within a group. Bormann and the Minneapolis circle developed and tested the theory, utilizing it to study the communication process in which fantasies are portrayed to an audience. Bormann was inspired by Robert Bales' work on interpersonal communication in small groups (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 396). Bales' studies discovered "the dynamic process of group fantasizing" (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 396). Bormann's rationale for further developing a method of rhetorical analysis was to broaden the understanding of fantasizing in "group process and communication" (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 396). Bormann explained that dramatic communication can create social realities for groups of individuals and by examining these dramas there is an established insight into the "group's culture, motivation, emotional style, and cohesion" (Barman, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 396).

Bales argued that through rhetoric a group communicates a fantasy; Bormann further established that through the process of communicating to an audience the fantasy is spread. This spreading of the fantasy is referred to as chaining out. The chaining out of a fantasy indicates acceptance of the message and participation in a group (Foss and Littlejohn 319). According to Bormann this chaining out process includes both verbal and nonverbal modes of communication (*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 397). The

chaining out of the group fantasy allows members to gain motivation, respond emotionally, and proclaim commitment to an attitude (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 397).

Bormann and his Minneapolis colleagues provide an extensive catalog of work on the topic. In the article, Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality, Bormann provided an explanation for and definition of this analytical method. He provides a more in-depth look at FTA in Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Communication Formulation. SCT has been used to analyze political campaigns (Bormann, *The Eagleton Affair*), corporate strategic planning (Cragan and Shields, *The Use of Symbolic Convergence Theory in Corporate Strategic Planning*), novels of Barbara Cartland (Doyle, *The Rhetoric of Romance*), music of Tracy Chapman (Kosloski, *The Music of Tracy Chapman*), The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous (Ford, *Fetching Good Out of Evil in AA*), and the plight of the Native American (Lake, *The Rhetor as Dialectician in "Last Chance for Survival"*). SCT has also been scrutinized and criticized by many scholars (Swanson, *A Reflective View of the Epistemology of Critical Inquiry*, Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty*.) Bormann and his colleagues John F. Cragan and Donald C. Shields responded to this criticism with substantial evidence that the theory can prove effective in certain rhetorical situations (*In Defense of Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Look at the Theory and Its Criticisms After Two Decades*).

As a theory, SCT assumes that when individuals interact with others they create symbolic realities based on the dramas shared by the group members (Foss and Littlejohn 319). Within SCT, a group develops its fantasy by formulating a fictitious event,

happening, situation, etc. which then spreads to the immediate audience who in turn passes it on, developing a rhetorical chain. Part of SCT is the emergence of a group consciousness through the fantasies that are communicated within the group (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic Convergence Theory* 1). Joe Gow addresses “fantasy dramas” in his work on the rhetoric of song, defining the term as one category researchers have used in studying music (60). Identifying these “fantasy dramas” sheds light on the group’s fantasy theme and ultimately “discovers” how the group’s symbols converge. The punk community developed their “fantasy dramas” from their desire to gain some measure of control over their life, environment, and situation. FTA and SCT have proven to work well in analysis of the rhetoric of a small, centralized, bounded subculture because the rhetorical chain is sent out but comes back to the source of the rhetoric as an ego enhancer.

Symbolic convergence theory is a three-part theory upon which fantasy theme analysis is based. The first part deals with the “discovery and arrangement of recurring communicative forms and patterns that indicate the evolution and presence of a shared group consciousness” (Bormann, *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 129). The second part is the “description of the dynamic tendencies within the communication systems that explain why group consciousness arises, continues, declines, and disappears and the effects such group consciousness may have in terms of meanings, motives, and communication within the group” (Bormann, *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 129). The last part “consists of the factors that explain why people share the fantasies they do when they do” (Bormann, *Symbolic Convergence Theory* 129).

The content of the fantasies are often dramatizations, with characters partaking in a “dramatic situation in a setting removed in time and space from the here-and-now transactions of the group” (Barman, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 397). The fantasies offer a mirror of the group’s present environment and situation, leadership conflicts or task-dimension problems (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 397). Bormann found a parallel in the dreams of an individual and the fantasy chain of a group, in that both disguise repressed problems and contain hidden agendas (*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 397). Selected fantasy themes become accepted into the “shared dramatizations” or stories among groups of people, these are called rhetorical visions (Foss and Littlejohn 319). FTA provides the ability to participate in a rhetorical vision which enables one to experience vicariously a different way of life and broadened awareness, thereby becoming “more fully human” (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 407).

Bormann labeled the “composite dramas” that provide groups with similar ideas, beliefs, issues, etc. as rhetorical visions (*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 398). These visions are made up of the fantasies that become themes through the rhetoric and the chaining-out process (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 398). Bormann claims that the sharing of fantasies is present in all “communication contexts” and that there is a connection between rhetorical visions and the consciousness of a group (*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Ten Years Later* 289).

An important element that Bormann addresses is the ability for rhetoric to change and evolve as the community does, creating, raising, and sustaining consciousness. Rhetoric must deal with current issues, anxieties, circumstances, and social conflicts, and

therefore it is a functioning form of rhetoric that is problem-solving (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Ten Years Later*, 292).

There are three phases of rhetorical consciousness according to SCT that are characteristic of the life cycle of a group's rhetorical vision: first is the creating of the group consciousness, second is the raising of this consciousness within the group, and third is the sustaining of this level of group consciousness (Borman, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 2).

The first phase, creating group consciousness involves communicating the shared fantasies that generate a new symbolic base for the group (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic Convergence Theory* 2). Within the creation of group consciousness are three guiding principles "novelty, explanatory power, and imagination" (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic Convergence Theory* 2). The novelty principle postulates that if an established vision lags "behind the changing here-and-now conditions" of a group, the attraction of new members will decline (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic Convergence Theory* 3). The explanatory power principle is the idea, "when events become confusing and disturbing, people are likely to share fantasies that provide them with a plausible and satisfying account that makes sense out of the experiences" (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 3). The imitation principle is the idea that out of boredom or confusion individuals share fantasies that give "old familiar dramas a new

production"(Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 3). These principles help to explain why individuals are attracted to a group's fantasy and rhetorical vision.

The second phase, consciousness raising, leads the curious and the newcomers to accept and share the fantasies of the group (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 10). This tends to be a constant feature of the rhetoric once the vision has emerged and thus consciousness raising continues for the duration of the life cycle of the group (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 10). This relates to the principle of critical mass, which is when a rhetorical vision experiences rapid growth and reaches a mass audience (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 10). There are several factors that can play a role in the rhetorical vision reaching a critical mass. Fantasies may make sense out of confusing and troubled times for potential converts, or the psychodynamics and personal problems of individuals may coincide so there is a common predisposition to share the fantasies of the group's rhetorical vision (Borman, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 10). The rhetorical vision may also attract individuals who have the creativity to develop and dramatize messages in such a way that they are compelling, or the group may have members that are capable of continuing to propagate the vision, or there may be sufficient means and channels to reach critical masses (Borman, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 11). It is not necessary for all of

these factors to apply to a group's rhetorical vision and message for it to reach critical mass, but it is essential for some of these factors to be evident.

In the third phase, the consciousness sustaining is aimed at keeping members committed, since converts and original members may begin to lose interest over time (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 13). Needing to "pump new life" into an existing rhetorical vision proves to be a major challenge to the rhetors of a group (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 13). There are two types of visions in the consciousness sustaining phase and these are the flexible and the inflexible visions. The flexible visions are sensitive to the changing experiences of group members. Flexible visions follow the principle of rededication that allows for severe criticism and for the dramas to be kept fresh and vital to the group (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 15). The inflexible vision maintains "internal integrity" and remains impervious to these changes (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 13). These visions protect original visions by blocking opposing messages (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, *An Expansion of the Rhetorical Vision Component of the Symbolic convergence Theory* 13).

These three phases (consciousness creating, consciousness raising, and consciousness sustaining) that a group moves through as it develops help to explain the rhetoric of the group and changes to that rhetoric throughout the history of the group. These phases can also explain the success or failure of a group and its ability to sustain

itself as a rhetorical community. Punk culture clearly moved through these phases as will become evident in the analysis of their lyrics and is evident in the description of their history. The group began as a zero-history group that was based on geographical location (London) and socioeconomic status. Through the communication of a shared fantasy punk reached critical mass, extending to other countries and gaining commercial success as punk music became a popular genre of music.

FTA's basic claim is that within face-to-face interactions, "speaker audience transactions," and television and radio broadcasts, fantasy themes can chain out and construct a rhetorical vision for a group (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 398). As they chain out these dramatizations serve to establish a sense of belonging which compels action and reaction providing a "social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, and attitudes" (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 398). These fantasies test and legitimize attitudes, values, and beliefs (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 398). In Bormann's terms:

Small groups of people with similar individual psychodynamics meet to discuss a common preoccupation or problem. A member dramatizes a theme that catches the group and causes it to chain out because it hits a common psychodynamic chord or a hidden agenda item in their common difficulties vis-à-vis the natural environment, the socio-political systems, or the economic structure. The group grows excited, involved, more dramas chain out to

create common symbolic reality filled with heroes and villains. (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 399)

The strength of FTA is its power to examine the evolution, creation, and disintegration of the dramas that involve groups and alters their behavior (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 399). By utilizing FTA the critic can witness “how the people who participated in the rhetorical vision” relate to each other, how they became placed in a social hierarchy, how they achieved their goals, and how they became energized by the “dramatic action” and the dramatized personas in the rhetoric (Bormann, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 401).

Through FTA the three parts of symbolic convergence (discovery of recurring forms of communication, description of the dynamic tendencies of the communication, and explanation of how and when fantasies are shared) will help illustrate and explain punk discourse will be fully illustrated and explained. The angry nihilistic music and lyrics that is punk rock and the anger and anti-establishment views that fueled punk rock speak to recurring forms and patterns. The dynamic tendencies can be found in the forceful, energetic, and compelling music that was attractive to adolescents and in the lyrics that acknowledged shared experiences and group consciousness. The how and when of the fantasy sharing marks the scene in which the punk culture evolved. Punk members belonged to a socio-economic class suffering because of the state of the British economy in the middle 1970’s, and the commercialization of the music business that left them with no outlet for their aggressions. Bormann states, “when participants have shared a fantasy theme they have come to symbolic convergence in terms of common

meanings and emotions that can be set off by an agreed-upon cryptic symbolic cue” (Bormann, *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 131).

Within SCT, FTA is the method of analysis that depicts the dramatic elements of a rhetorical vision (Cragan and Shields 200). In addition to the fundamental principles described above, FTA assumes five elements construct a rhetorical vision: character, plotline, scene, sanctioning agent, and master analogue (Cragan and Shields 200). Recurring themes and fantasies become apparent when these elements are in place.

It is important to this analysis to establish the scene within which the action or plot takes place. Since the scene influences qualities “attributed to the personae or the plotlines generated within” rhetorical visions (Cragan and Shields 202). The scene is the basis for understanding the punk lyrics because it examines where these texts came from. The sanctioning agent is also important because the sanctioning agent legitimizes the message (Cragan and Shields 202). Without an effective sanctioning agent the message would not chain out and achieve symbolic convergence. The characters that are present in the rhetoric are important because they are part of the narrative and represent members of both the punk culture and their adversaries. These characters take on important roles such as villains, heroes, and supporting personae that give life to the dramas in the text. The plotline tells the story, narrating the events that are dramatized to convey a rhetorical vision or message to an audience.

Ego-Function of Protest Rhetoric

The preliminary ego-function study was conceived and executed by Richard Gregg (*The Ego-function of Protest Rhetoric* 1971). Gregg utilized studies of oral rhetoric and the manipulation of symbolic strategies by scholars such as Carroll C.

Arnold (*Oral Rhetoric, Rhetoric, and Literature*) and Henry W. Johnstone Jr. (*Some Reflections on Argumentation*). Gregg developed this theory of protest rhetoric out of three contemporary social movements that desired to reform the system: the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the student movement (Stewart 240). His argument was that the fundamental appeal of protest was the need for "psychological refurbishing and affirmation" for the protesters (Gregg 74). If this is the case, then rhetoric becomes directed toward the protester and becomes a fulfillment in the need for solidarity or ego enhancement. The notion of establishing solidarity is also evident in symbolic convergence theory and fantasy theme analysis. The chaining out of fantasies, according to Bormann's theory, serves to establish a sense of belonging and a social reality for individuals within the group (*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 398). This is only one similarity between ego-function and FTA/SCT; more similarities will become clear as ego-function is explained.

Gregg acknowledges much of his theory of ego-function is based on previous works by Don Burks, finding that self persuasion is essential to the process of persuasion in protest. Protest persuasion was the sum of the internal dialog plus the outer dialog of protest (Gregg 74). Gregg argued that a major element in the act of protest was ego fulfillment. Under this theory the preeminence of the ego was manifested "in the way the symbolic motif of personal confrontation is developed in rhetoric and in the emphasis on style" (Gregg 87). It is Gregg's theory that within all communication process there is the construction of order, weighing, evaluating, and orienting toward goals that create a symbolic hierarchy where individuals can find positive identification (Stewart 240). Disillusioned or disaffected people become protesters when their "self-perceptions,

conditions, and actions” place them in positions of symbolic defensiveness. They must alleviate this defensiveness before they can establish more positive identities (Stewart 240). These positive self-identities, or ego enhancement, are created by identifying the enemy thereby locating “themselves by contrast” (Stewart 240). This is also characteristic of symbolic convergence, The desire to identify and belong to a group with like issues and belief groups often formed because of disillusionment, similar to symbolic convergence.

Gregg’s theory includes the idea that “the communicator is attempting to draw his listener closer to him, and to do so he must, through appearance or reality, identify intellectually and emotionally with his target audience” (73). Within SCT, this is the role of the sanctioning agent.

Gregg also states that, logically, protest would seem to be aimed at those in positions of power or authority who seem responsible for what is being protested, but contemporary protest does not work this way (73). Modern protest addresses “a host of issues or demands” rather than pinpointing specific issues (Gregg 73). The majority of these issues or demands seem to exceed the power of an individual thus, demanding more revolutionary change (Gregg 73). Punk music appears to be one such form of protest, as they take on society in general and a capitalistic industry, the music business. Gregg’s argument is that people of power respond to the specific issues but contemporary protest leaders move to a more general scale and demand “sweeping revolutionary change” in the total social or economic realm (Gregg 73).

One aspect of the ego-function of rhetoric is that within the act of communication the self is the primary audience and others identify with him or her on the basis of similar

ego-concerns (Gregg 74). Another aspect is the “constituting of self-hood through expression,” that is, participation in a rhetorical act establishes, defines, and affirms ones identity. This bears some resemblance to the consciousness creating, consciousness raising, and consciousness sustaining elements of symbolic convergence (Gregg 74). The rhetorical act functions not only as the fundamental development of self-hood but also performs as the ego-maintainer and modifier (Gregg 75). In his analysis of protest rhetoric Ralph Knupp finds that the frequent use of pronouns such as I, you, we, and us supports the notion that this form of rhetoric is primarily concerned with social relationships and individual existence (387). It is through interacting with others that one “weighs, evaluates and orients toward goals so that a symbolic hierarchy is established in which” one finds his or her place (Gregg 76).

For Gregg, protest rhetoric provides affirmation of ego for protesters. This is seen in the way “symbolic motif of personal confrontation is developed in rhetoric and in the emphasis on style” (Gregg 87). The point of view that the rhetoric takes and reinforces brings about the following advantages to protesters (Gregg 87). It can encourage the maintenance of distance from the adversary; aid in the “protesters definition of the situation;” find symbolic control; generate attention, possibly fear, and respect in the adversary; and force the “counter-reaction” that can be gratifying to some (87).

Maintaining distance from the adversary accomplishes several things. The adversary becomes a symbolic enemy, which aids in the purging “the ills of self” while establishing identity by identifying others of contrast (Gregg 87). By defining the enemy as corrupt, evil, and weak an individual may “easily convince himself of his own superior virtue and thereby gain a symbolic victory of ego-enhancement “ (Gregg 82). This also

secures against the co-opting of the individual by others while enhancing self-identification by seeking out kindred spirits (Gregg 87). The advantage that protest has in defining the situation also helps in providing symbolic control (Gregg 87).

Symbolically reconstructing the situation allows the protester to deal with the enemy by constructing an image that allows for the rejecting, flaunting, and striking out against that image (Gregg 87). Establishing distance allows the protester to receive attention, in some cases fear or respect, from the adversary. This is achieved by the protester's ability to maintain an image and restrict communication with an audience (consciousness sustaining in SCT) (Gregg 87). This restricting of communication can be accomplished by ignoring styles of rhetoric that promote meaningful communication with the establishment (Gregg 87). The counter reaction can be gratifying to one's ego because it gives one credibility and establishes a sense of self-hood and symbolic victory, which is psychologically valuable to the protester (Gregg 87). Achieving credibility and becoming a sanctioning agent is a primary element of Bormann's theory and method of analysis. Here, Gregg's theory explains one method that protesters may take to become sanctioning agents of a fantasy or rhetorical vision.

Charles J. Stewart used Gregg's approach to protest in analyzing protest music of the 1960's. Stewart utilized Gregg's five points of contrast: "innocent victim versus wicked victimizer;" "powerful and brave versus weak and cowardly;" united versus divided; important versus unimportant; and virtuous versus immoral (241). By looking for these points in protest music Stewart drew the following conclusions: protest rhetoric is "self-directed rather than other-directed" and it is therefore necessary to "enhance feelings of self-worth and self-identity" (Stewart 251-252). He also found that it was

necessary for consciousness raising to take place in order for individuals to become aware of their plight and their ability to take action. This however, must be followed by enhancement of self-worth and identity (Stewart 251).

These theories seem to support and explain each other and work in unison to explain the phenomenon of protest rhetoric and the messages within the text. Bormann addresses how a fantasy is communicated while Gregg explains why the fantasy is communicated. In this analysis these theories will provide evidence that punk music did perform the ego-function of protest rhetoric while conveying a fantasy to its audience. Gregg's theory will explain why punks created these fantasies and rhetorical vision, and why they needed to express it in the way they did. Bormann's theory will tell us what these visions and fantasies say about punk culture and their belief system.

CHAPTER 3

TEXTURAL ANALYSIS

Setting Up the Contrast Between the

Protester and the Enemy

A rhetorical vision is typically indexed by a “key word, slogan, or label” (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 133). The word and symbol for anarchy, a circle with a capital A through the center is what the Sex Pistols and the punk culture adopted as their slogan/symbol (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 133). The use of this term/ symbol for anarchy that punks adopted offended outsiders and those unfamiliar or unsupportive of the culture. It caused controversy because it was viewed as obscene. Within the genre of punk protest music, the use of obscenities signals their dissent of the establishment and proclaims their liberation from such organizations (9). The Sex Pistols promoted the fantasy of anarchy, through obscenity, by using words such as fuck, piss, bullshit, and bollocks.

The Sex Pistols were labeled obscene not only for their lyrical content but for their actions and public behavior as well. The lyrics of the songs prompted positive responses from audience members but negative responses from society. This set up the contrast between “us” (the punk culture) and “them” (the establishment). The lyrics also seem to have provided an outlet for the frustrations and masked fears of this particular

group of adolescents. When a protest group such as punks establish slogans, chants, obscene gestures, and sheer body force to convey their messages, they become limited as protesters (Gregg 73). Once the punks, through the Sex Pistols, established these elements of their culture they further alienated themselves from opportunities to gain acceptance by a broader audience. One example of this is the parody of the national anthem in their version of God Save the Queen, which mocks the values and social codes which held meaning within English society.

It is curious that only one of seven songs chosen for this analysis contains obscene language. Anarchy in the UK contains the phrase “or just another cuntlike tenancy” in its defaming of the UK and its policies and practices. (Other songs that contain obscenities are songs on the album that are not included in this analysis because they are typically about more common adolescent issues). These obscenities illustrate stark dissent of the establishment and liberation from status quo. They also perform the role of expressing the fears of the protesters. In the case of Bodies, No Feelings, and Anarchy in the UK these fears include facing a bleak future. These adolescents realized life for them would not be significantly better than their parents’ lives. They had no hope of prospering and leading better lives.

Harold G. Levine and Steven Stumpf argue “punks seek to emphasize that fear is ubiquitous in the broader culture” (433). “By embodying the theme of fear in their dress, their music, and other symbols of the subculture, the punks reflect their perception of fear in the wider culture” (Levine and Stumpf 433). According to Bormann this defines a total rhetorical lifestyle. In short, the functional role of the punk subculture is to exist outside the main culture, while illuminating central features of it” (Levine and Stumpf

433). Punks dress outlandishly, wearing torn cloths held together with safety pins, dyeing their hair in vibrant crayon colors, piercing their faces with safety pins and wearing garish make-up. Fear is a central element of punk culture and music. Their lyrics often refer to the idea of no future, point to the establishment as the reason for this, and argue for anarchy as the solution.

The Sex Pistols limited their own opportunities for dialog with others by reducing their confrontational verbalization to slogans, chants, obscene gestures, and appearance to “make their point” (Gregg 73). A perfect example of this is the Sex Pistols’ appearance on Bill Grundy’s Today in which they spouted slogans of anarchy and antiestablishment, used obscene language, called Grundy a “fucking rotter,” and acted in a generally nihilistic way. They ostracized themselves further and alienated those they protested against. They could have used this opportunity on network television to promote and explain their plight, but instead, they refused to make an appeal to gain a receptive audience. By refusing to appeal to a larger audience and by mocking social values and behaviors, the Sex Pistols did as Gregg’s ego-function theory suggests; unequivocally identified the enemy (74). In God Save the Queen, for example, the enemy takes the form of the national anthem as well as the Queen, “God save the Queen she ain’t no human being” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

Developing Fantasy

Bormann argues that people share fantasies because they expect some outcome. One outcome is to appeal to audience members by providing fantasies that would probably differ from personal fantasies of group members. Dramatizations are, or lead

to, rhetorical fantasies or narratives. These “may include fanciful and fictitious scripts of imaginary characters, but they often deal with things that have actually happened to members of the group or that are reported in authenticated works of history, in the news media, or in oral history and folklore of other groups or communities” (*Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 130). An example of a dramatization that dealt with an actual event in the lives of the Sex Pistols is their song, EMI. The Sex Pistols dramatized their actual dismissal from a record deal with the record company of the same name, EMI. This dramatization was simultaneously being authenticated in the media. The dramatization chained out and became part of the history/folklore of the Sex Pistols and punk culture. This may explain why audience members found the song appealing; it was relating a narrative that most audience members could not share since most personal fantasies, in the music context at least, would generally have musicians thinking of dismissal as a failure rather than a success.

Escapism is part of entertainment; people seek entertainment to escape from problems of their daily life. However, SCT explains it as a psychological response. Being caught up in the excitement of drama leads to an emotional investment in the characters and story (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 130). The dramatization in EMI, is not one average members of the punk group can relate to; it is an event unique to the Sex Pistols. It is a dramatization that draws an audience into action. They make an emotional investment, become emotionally involved, look around and see other audience members engaging in the same action and a sense of solidarity is felt and formed within the group. Ego enhancement in such an instance happens not only for the audience but also for performers who find solidarity within the group by acceptance of their message.

But Bormann also argues that a second expected outcome of fantasies are “fantasies that are consistent with their personal ones” (*Symbolic Convergence Theory*, 130). In terms of punk culture I believe this is the most relevant of the outcomes Bormann talks about. It was the realization by audience members that others were dealing with the same issues, emotions, beliefs, and rebellion that enabled the Sex Pistols to become representatives of punk culture. This is found in all songs examined in this analysis. The Sex Pistols message was heard, accepted, and spread because it resonated with so many of the adolescents living with similar issues at the time. Many of the song lyrics expressed the anger and aggression that adolescents felt. The narratives were angry commentaries on their world and experiences. They attacked the repressive capitalist system.

In this analysis the expected outcome of the text will focus on the connecting of shared fantasies. The songs chosen illustrate the common fantasy of the culture, which chained out among members to produce a cohesive rhetorical vision. The Sex Pistols did this not only with lyrics but also with presentation.

Their songs were simple, loud, angry, and aggressive. “The music was all bite: you could reach out and touch every jagged note,” as Greil Marcus noted (74). Their appearance was also aggressive: torn clothing, leather, and the symbol for anarchy. Their music and lyrics were free in form. For example they did not follow the typical verse – chorus – verse. Clearly the Sex Pistols were not “interested in playing music as it has been traditionally defined; they create ruptures in society” (Young 37). In constructing their music in this way they rebelled not only against popular music of the time but also

against the music industry that pressured musicians to follow set codes of music production, composition, and presentation.

Thus, their music performed double duty (as ego-function theory suggests). Their lyrics protested verbally what they rebelled against and their musical form and presentation protested set formulas for musical success. This helped in establishing their music as unique, providing another element of individuality to set them apart from the identified enemy. Angry alienated adolescents could relate to the music and the message being chained out. The seemingly chaotic musical formula in punk music relates to the anarchy and rebellion that was constant in the lives of the Sex Pistols and their fans.

Bormann argues that the correlation between group fantasizing and individual fantasizing leads “to the dream merchants of mass media” (*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 396). From the perspective of the Sex Pistols and of punk culture, artists that received representation were catering to mass production, mass sales, and mass profit. In describing the Sex Pistols’ music as a protest of this music scene, Johnny Rotten stated “what’s happening now shouldn’t just *seem* like a strong reaction against the music scene. It bloody well is” (Brown 17). The problem for the Sex Pistols and their fans was that current popular artists no longer identified with the working class, angry, disillusioned, alienated youth that once had been the force behind of rock and roll. There were no longer revolutionary or controversial issues, images, people, actions, or events taking place in the music industry. The music business had become a mass commodity and a commercial revenue factory. As Brown has stated, “The business had taken music away from these kids and they are trying to seize it back” (17).

The Sex Pistols' manager, Malcolm McLaren made sure their rebellious acts and attitudes received press coverage, and he portrayed them as angry, nihilistic adolescents rebelling against anything relating to the status quo or the establishment. Even at the height of their popularity, when they might have been perceived to have "sold out," their fantasies continued to chain out. Their music found resonance in youth that felt alienated and symbolic convergence emerged. Arguably, proof of that symbolic convergence can be found in the sales or chart status of a top ten song and album.

Creating, Raising, and Sustaining

Punk Consciousness

A group develops their own unique "special communication events to meet their needs" at three points in the history of the group development (Borman *The Symbolic Convergence Theory of Communication*, 76). Bormann describes the initial creating of a group consciousness, the first historical point, as the meeting of a small group of individuals that are "drawn together by a common impulse" (Bormann *The Symbolic Convergence Theory of Communication*, 77). The punk culture did this in creating a unique form of music completely outside of the accepted norm. When group consciousness is created it is then up to the group to continue by raising the level of consciousness. This second historical point is done, as Bormann explains, by breaking up old ideas, values, and beliefs (*The Symbolic Convergence Theory of Communication*, 78). When another form of communication was needed in order for the punk culture to grow, develop, and adapt, they turned to the mass media for coverage of their nihilistic behavior and events, that is, for consciousness raising. Though negative, this attention

strengthened the culture at the same time that it raised the awareness level even of the record industry that chose to support the culture by accepting the Sex Pistols and producing their records.

The Sex Pistols were key figures in the raising of punk consciousness. They broke old emotional attachments to past “rhetorical visions” such as the prosperity of England. Their lyrics shattered past beliefs, ideas, and values that had once been embraced. Pretty Vacant illustrates this by referring to “illusions;” “I don’t believe in illusions ‘cos too much is real so stop your cheap comment ‘cos we know what we feel” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). In EMI they sing: “blind acceptance is a sign a stupid fool who stands in line” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The notion of being fed lies (illusions) by those in power is also the topic of the song Liar: “I don’t need it don’t need your blah blah blah should have realized I know what you are” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

Other songs pointed out the injustices practiced on the working class, and drew attention to broken promises of prosperity. In God Save the Queen the Sex Pistols repeat throughout the song, “no future” and “England’s dreaming” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The song makes reference to laborers as “your human machine” and to the Queen “our figurehead is not what she seems” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

Bormann explains there are two basic consciousness raising dimensions in groups: “knitting the neophyte into the community symbolically and motivating the newcomer to publicly act in behalf of the movement” (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory of Communication*, 81). In punk culture, these are fulfilled through symbols (the symbols, slogans, and logos of the Sex Pistols) and the public acting out of these symbols

by group members, and by replicating the dress and style of the Sex Pistols. These two dimensions are the result of breaking of the “old foundations” and the strengthening emotional commitment that is a result of the sharing of fantasies (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory of Communication*, 81). The emotional commitment is a key element. When individuals participate in the sharing of fantasies they reach an understanding both intellectually and emotionally that ties them to the group, in this case punk culture (Bormann *Symbolic Convergence Theory of Communication*, 81). In these ways, both the Sex Pistols and their audience enhance their ego. According to these consciousness elements the Sex Pistols succeeded in raising the group’s consciousness and bringing the punk culture to the point at which sustaining the consciousness became important.

Bormann defines consciousness sustaining as follows:

“Once a rhetorical community emerges with a coherent rhetorical vision and clear symbolic boundaries to discriminate the insider from the outsider, the members must face more or less severe rhetorical problems of holding the group together. Some rhetorical visions are unstable; they suffer from the continuous threat of spontaneous internal combustion

(*Symbolic Convergence Theory of Communication*, 84).

As consciousness creators and consciousness raisers the Sex Pistols can be deemed successful. But the Sex Pistols did not evolve as a band as the culture evolved. They wrote and recorded relatively few songs and as the punk culture grew, changed, and evolved the music of the Sex Pistols remained stagnate. They stopped writing songs that reflected the punk culture’s needs and expectations.

They stopped writing songs that reflected their own personal evolution. They combusted internally but they did play a prolific role in the creation and raising of punk consciousness that encompassed not only music and art but also lifestyle.

The Sex Pistols' album, Never Mind the Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols is a microcosm of consciousness creating, consciousness raising, and consciousness sustaining. The songs that are consciousness creating are Holiday in the Sun and Liar. Holiday in the Sun is a general condemnation of the capitalist industry that promotes "other people's misery" (Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious). The song criticizes the gap between rich and poor and searches for an answer to solve this dilemma "I didn't ask for sunshine and I got world war free I'm looking over the wall and they are looking at me" (Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious). This song and its plotline became the consciousness creating communication for the album by explaining and imitating the target of protest in a novel way. Bormann's three rhetorical principles of consciousness creating are novelty, explanatory power, and imitation (3). He describes the principle of novelty: "when established visions lag behind changing here and now conditions, they will often fail to attract members of the second and third generation of those who inherit them" (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields 3). Punk culture represents those who inherited established values and expectations that were perceived as unrealistic and unjust. Members of the punk culture were those "other people" in "misery."

The second song, Liar, attempts to make sense out of injustices around them that were products of establishment and of industries; both were built on a foundation of lies: "tell me why tell me why why do you have to lie should've

realized that you should've told the truth should've realized you know what I'll do," explains their awareness of the falsities they have been fed and as a result have turned to dropping out of society and living by the ideas of anarchy (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). They make sense out of their denouncing of social codes and adopting of codes of anarchy, "I don't need it don't need your blah blah blah" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

The next four songs on the album fall into the category of consciousness raising. The message in Problems is a little more direct: "you won't find me working nine to five it's too much fun being alive I'm using my feet for my human machine you won't find me living for the screen are you lonely all your needs catered you got your brain dehydrated" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). Consciousness raising is a complicated phase consisting of the sharing of psychodynamics, personal problems, and predisposition to shared types of fantasies that make sense out of troubled and difficult times (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields 10). The shared fantasy attracts those able to understand the rhetoric that narrates the messages, but there must be access to the channels the rhetor uses to reach an audience (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields 11).

Problems works at consciousness raising by making sense out of troubled times. By narrating specific events rather than a general disdain for establishment (as in Holiday in the Sun and Liar), this song provides a way to make sense out of the issues that specifically plague these adolescents. "Problem the problem is you what you gonna do with your problem I'll leave it to you problem their problem is you you got a problem oh what are you gonna do" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and

Rotten). Psychologically the audience identifies with the personal problems expressed in the narrative and therefore has a predisposition to share in the fantasies of the song. Through the process of repeating or singing along with the song, individuals adopt the message as their own.

The next three songs also raise the consciousness of the culture by pinpointing specific problems. God Save the Queen, Anarchy in the UK, and Pretty Vacant provide narratives of the Sex Pistols' views of these problems. God Save the Queen attacks the Queen and her role in selling out to tourism and preaching false promises of prosperity, "God save the Queen 'cos tourists are money," and "there is no future England is dreaming" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). Anarchy in the UK again condemns capitalism "your future dream is a shopping scheme" and lays ground rules for group membership, "I wanna be anarchy it is the only way to be" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). This formulating of ground rules coincides with the fantasies of the audience and their desire to live under the same code in an attempt to make sense out of troubling times. Pretty Vacant further defines the code of anarchy for the culture. It expresses feelings of the emptiness of society and not wanting to be a part of such a society: "oh don't pretend 'cos I don't care I don't believe in illusions 'cos too much is real" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). They promote dropping out of society and living according to the ideas of anarchy, "oh so pretty we're vacant ah but now we don't care" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

The final song on the album is EMI, the only song to be targeted at a specific participant in capitalistic industry. This song moves toward

consciousness sustaining since it narrates events that were unique to the Sex Pistols, not general situations that others could easily identify with as in the other songs. The Sex Pistols move forward in their rhetoric by defining a specific target of their aggression and disapproval. By explaining their views of the music industry EMI clarifies that the Sex Pistols target is the capitalism of the record industry. They have generally attacked capitalism and industry throughout the album but EMI specifically defines their target as the music industry and large record companies. The goal during consciousness sustaining is to keep members interested by giving new life to the rhetorical vision. The Sex Pistols gave a new dimension to their music by aiming their protest at a company with which they were directly involved. EMI uses the conservation strategy of consciousness sustaining. The song is an effort to keep the vision alive and to integrate changes without diluting it in such a way that it loses value and the ability to emotionally move people (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields 13).

Through this and other dramatic situations portrayed in the song narratives, group members “respond emotionally” and “proclaim some commitment” to the group (Bormann *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 397). The sales of the album Never Mind the Bollocks Here’s the Sex Pistols, their spirited musical performances, and the action and emotional involvement of audience members, provide proof that individuals did “respond emotionally” and did become committed members of the group. During these performances the Sex Pistols presented their “discourse” prompting group members to respond, chaining out the rhetorical vision of punk to others, and sustaining audience and

group membership. The collective identification to the message provided a sense of community, and impelled action.

Composite messages, termed rhetorical visions, become the main focus of the music as this analysis of the Sex Pistols and punk culture will show. The following song-by-song analysis (Holiday in the Sun, Liar, Problems, God Save the Queen, Anarchy in the UK, Pretty Vacant, and EMI) illustrates further the fantasy elements and the rhetorical vision based on messages using elements of scene, sanctioning agent, characters, master analogue, and plotline.

A brief reiteration of the definitions of the five elements of composite messages is provided here before delving into the actual analysis. Character is the element that gives life to the rhetorical vision, attributing specific qualities, taking action, or appearing in a particular scene (Cragan and Shields 201). These characters are identifiable as villains, heroes, or supporting characters in the drama (Cragan and Shields 201). The plotline supplies the action or situation of the rhetorical vision (Cragan and Shields 201). Plotline is the events dramatized in the narrative. Scene is perhaps the most important element of the five. It is important because it “influences the qualities attributed to the character or the plotlines generated within the vision” (Cragan and Shields 201-202). The sanctioning agent is the legitimizing factor of the rhetorical vision. It may be a higher power such as God or a leader, an accepted code of conduct, or a credible member of a group or culture to which the message is delivered (Cragan and Shields 202). Master analogue is composed of the deep-seated ideals within the rhetorical vision that are either righteous, social, or pragmatic, (Cragan and Shields 202). A righteous master analogue “emphasizes the correct way of doing things” i.e. its concern is right versus wrong

(Cragan and Shields 202). Social master analogues deal primarily with human relations such as friendship, trust, caring, family, camaraderie, and morality (Cragan and Shields 202). A pragmatic master analogue deals with efficiency, simplicity, minimal emotional involvement, and practicality (Cragan and Shields 202). In the case of the Sex Pistols and their rhetoric I argue that they primarily used a righteous master analogue since they dealt predominantly with the plight of good versus evil.

For the Sex Pistols the scene is comprised of two aspects: the album itself and the state of British society as explained in chapter 1. The first aspect of scene is the album itself. The physical record represents the product of the music industry, one of the main targets of their protest. Protesting the music industry while “using” it makes a sharp statement in their protest rhetoric. The Sex Pistols achieved popularity (high record sales that made them a revenue source for the music industry) and thus made punk a legitimate musical form. The popularity allowed them to reach a broader audience, bringing their message to angry, disillusioned adolescents throughout the world.

The second aspect of scene is the state of British society. The text of the album was a direct result of the society in which the Sex Pistols lived Never Mind the Bollocks Heres the Sex Pistols provides a cohesive structure of songs that are placed within the same “scene” and move through events and storylines. Whether scene is considered the album or British society both are the basic landscape in which the rhetoric evolves. The irony is that the Sex Pistols used capitalistic media to chain out their fantasy about the “evil” music world.

In this way, the Sex Pistols were the legitimizing factors that prove to the audience the rhetor is credible (Cragan and Shield *The Use of Symbolic Convergence*

Theory, 202). Malcolm McLaren, the Sex Pistols manager was also a sanctioning agent. As Brown reports, McLaren argued: “the only way to give the band credibility was to sign with one company every journalist was going to hate and the whole industry was going to be amazed by” (15). As a businessman, McLaren’s direction and guidance brought the music to mass distribution and popularity.

There is another sanctioning agent. With one exception (God Save the Queen) that sanctioning agent appears in the text as “I”. “I am the anti-christ” (Anarchy in the UK), “I tell you it was all a frame” (EMI), “I don’t believe in illusions” (Pretty Vacant), “I had no reason to be there at all” (Holiday in the Sun), “I don’t need to be me” (Problems), and “I wanna know why you never look me in the face” (Liar) (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten; Cook, Jones, Rotten and Vicious). Being directly involved in their fantasies provided substance for others to find them legitimate members of punk culture. The expression of their fantasies in terms of personal involvement in experiences familiar to audiences provided a strong argument for the Sex Pistols becoming sanctioning agents and providing rhetorical vision for punk culture. The fact that the Sex Pistols actually lived by the codes of punk, living in anarchy with a general disregard for those in power, was also appealing to those who fantasized about becoming members of the culture.

The “I” places the narrator directly in the action, circumstance, society, and culture. The music expresses feelings, beliefs, and grievances that were widely felt among members of the group. Identification with the lyrics perpetuated the chaining out of the dramas. The repetition of the lyrics and the pronoun “I” work to legitimize audience as well as band members thus making both agents of sanctioning. Members of the punk culture strongly identified with the music of the Sex Pistols because it expressed

shared feelings of disillusionment and alienation. The message delivered was genuine teenage anger and rebellion, rather than meaningless music delivered by millionaire rock stars.

The character of “I” also plays a role in the ego-function of protest rhetoric as Gregg claims. The principle attraction of protest is to the protesters themselves, “who feel the need for psychological refurbishing and affirmation” (Gregg 74). Gregg defines two aspects of ego function that prove fitting when considering the rhetoric of the Sex Pistols. First is the act of communicating in which an individual is his/her primary audience and others can identify with the discourse because they share similar concerns (Gregg 74). Second is the “aspect of the ego-function of rhetoric that has to do with constituting self-hood through expression” by “establishing, defining, and affirming one’s self-hood as one engages in a rhetorical act” (Gregg 74). By repeatedly using the pronoun “I” the punks expressed their desperate need for ego-enhancement to alleviate alienation through solidarity.

Ego-function helps to explain not only why the music of the Sex Pistols was conceived but sheds further light on the repetitive use of “I” in the text. The Sex Pistols expressed no interest in becoming rock icons; their behavior and attitude denounced being accepted by society or the music industry. They performed for themselves and also for the audience that identified and related to the music through their own feelings and shared views. The Sex Pistols were acting as surrogates in aiding the confirmation of the identities of others (Gregg 75). This need for ego fulfillment is a direct result of not only general teenage angst but the “scene” they were living in: recession, unemployment, strikes, and general upheaval.

The remaining codes that will be used in this criticism call for individual songs to be scrutinized independently. The characters and the plot of each song will be discussed. The songs will be analyzed in the order they appear on the album since this order exhibits elements of consciousness creating, raising, and sustaining as previously discussed.

Holiday in the Sun

The subject of tourism for profit appears in Holiday in the Sun. The lyrics assault tourism in the first line, “a cheap holiday in other people’s misery” (Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious). Not only does this phrase bash tourism but also references the gap between rich and poor that was so apparent in their lives. The adolescents involved in the punk culture were living through economic hardship and crisis and their music was a reflection of this. The Sex Pistols composed songs that told stories of their lives and the hardships they experienced. Holiday in the Sun was a commentary on the bleak economic future that the adolescents faced. The attack on tourism is followed by “I wanna go to the new belsen [sic]” (belsen is a German concentration camp) which seems to point to a kind of “death” strongly felt by members of punk culture who were working class, unemployed and living on the dole.

Throughout the song the narrator mentions new belsen [sic]: “I don’t wanna holiday in the sun, I wanna go to the new belsen [sic], I wanna see some history, cos now I got a reasonable economy” (Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious). Also mentioned is the Berlin wall, “at the Berlin wall, I gotta go over the Berlin wall, I don’t understand this bit at all, I don’t understand it” (Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious). Both the Berlin wall and new Belsen are symbols of totalitarian or fascist governments. The lyrics compare

the British government to a fascist system. The plotline of the song is the search for an alternative or answer to their oppression,

In sensurround sound in a two inch wall, I was waiting for the
 communist call, I didn't ask for sunshine and I got world war free,
 I'm looking over the wall and they're looking at me. Oh I got a
 reason, now I got a reason and I'm still waiting (Cook, Jones,
 Rotten, and Vicious).

The song portrays the dueling characters of good and evil that are found consistent to other texts analyzed. The "good" character, a member of punk culture, is waiting for "evil," the capitalist establishment, to perhaps fulfill the empty promises of economic prosperity that British government had been making since World War II. This drama of good versus evil illustrates the righteous master analogue that is present in the rhetorical vision.

The ongoing search and need for recognition has received no acknowledgment: "claustrophobia there's too much paranoia, there's too many closets I went in before and now I got a reason it's no real reason to be waiting" (Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious). It is unacceptable to be waiting, there is "no real reason to be waiting" for response or action on the part of the establishment. The narrator has given up hope in the establishment and is looking for alternatives: "they're staring all night and they're staring all day I had no reason to be there at all but now I got a reason it's no real reason and I'm waiting" (Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious).

The character is a member of the disillusioned working class adolescent community providing the credibility necessary in order for the message to be accepted

and to be chained out to members of this group. It is a search for a voice, an identity, a future, and a place in society.

Liar

Liar exposes the corruption seen within establishment entities thus exhibiting again the idea of good versus evil. The main character once again expresses unhappiness with society and the capitalist system. The plotline illustrates untruths the narrator feels are created by society and the establishment: “now I wanna know, know, I wanna know why you never look me in the face, broke a confidence just to please your ego, should’ve realized you know what I know” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The text of “Liar” is simple and straightforward, placing blame and exposing people in power for the broken promises and dreams of English society. The character knows he has been lied to and deceived and will not let these lies go unaccounted for. “I know where you go, every body you know, I know everything that you do or say, so when you tell lies I’ll always be in your way, I am nobody’s fool and I know all ‘cos I know what I know” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). This line also describes an awareness and knowledge of the world so it becomes impossible to deceive one who is not a mindless member of society. Here is the stated sense of self worth and ego-fulfillment, the individual with ideas, beliefs, and intelligence.

Liar seems to summarize the feelings of punk culture toward an establishment that has not been aware of, respectful to, considerate or truthful to the working class that are suffering as a result of the repressed economic state. The song also promotes an anarchistic point of view, “I think you’re funny, you’re funny ha, ha, I don’t need it, I

don't need your blah, blah" in essence rejecting and mocking rules and authority (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). Mocking the establishment or tradition is a key element of protest that Gregg discusses and it supports the notion of punk rock as protest rhetoric performing an ego-function for members of the culture.

Problems

Class structure, labor, and capitalism are all topics in Problems. The characters are generic members of the punk culture and those in power. There is no specified target of the rebellion in this song as it is a general lashing out at the establishment and those in power. The text begins by defining the problem of a strict, structured society that does not make provisions for a better future for those of lower socio-economic status,

Too many problems, Oh why am I here, I don't need to be me, 'cos
it's all too clear, well I can see there's something wrong with you,
but what do you expect me to do, at least I gotta know what I want
I wanna be, don't come to me if you need pity, are you lonely you
got no one, you got your body in suspension that's no problem,
problem, problem, the problem is you (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and
Rotten).

This is a sharp claim that the poor have little choice in bettering the quality of life. This clearly establishes these adolescents as members of a society, which promises them no hope for a better future. The lyrics repeatedly ask "what you gonna do," addressing this question to leaders and those in power (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

The song is an uncanny commentary of the lives of working class youth:

“you don’t do what you want then you’ll fade away, you won’t find me working nine to five, it’s too much fun being alive, I’m using my feet for my human machine, you won’t find me living for the screen, are you lonely, all your needs catered, you got your brains dehydrated” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

In this lyric lies the notion that due to the dead-end lives being led by members of the working class they no longer have dreams, thoughts, or opinions; they are mindless workers with no quality of life and no sense of individuality or identity. These lyrics also clarify that the character in the song is opting out of this lifestyle. Choosing to withdraw from society, the character is unwilling to work long hours for little pay with no chance of a better life. The character’s reluctance to participate is articulated in the lyric that promotes anarchy: “in a death trip I ain’t automatic, you won’t find me just staying static, don’t give me any orders, for people like me there is no order” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The rhetorical plot in Liar is the criticism of the establishment by claiming that “problems” creating hardships for the working class are brushed aside and not dealt with. The result was the lack of identity and solidarity with the larger society that fueled the feelings of alienation and anger.

God Save the Queen

God Save the Queen is perhaps the most well known song by the Sex Pistols. It is the one song in the analysis that does not contain the pronoun “I”. It does however, repeat “we” throughout the song which does perform the same ego-function as the “I”. This use of “we” is probably a spoof of the royal “we” used in addressing members of

British society. The characters in this narrative are the Queen, “we,” and God. The Queen is likened to the “fascist regime,” therefore the word Queen is not limited to the actual person but extrapolates to the idea of power, form of government, and general reference to the establishment. “Queen” is a constant presence in the text, mentioned by title or by the pronoun “she”.

It is common to find the testing and legitimizing of values and attitudes in the “process of group fantasy chains” (Bormann *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 398). This testing can include religious and political narratives (Bormann *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 398). God Save the Queen is an excellent example of this testing of leaders. Bormann notes, “if someone dramatizes a situation in which a leading political figure is a laughingstock and it falls flat, that particular attitude and value has been exhibited and not legitimized” (*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*, 398). In the case of God Save the Queen this did not occur, it did not “fall flat”; it became legitimized and the attitudes and values expressed chained out through the culture bringing the song exceptional acceptance and popularity within the punk community. In God Save the Queen the attitudes toward the Queen and what she represents to the group are tested and mocked. The qualities, system, and agenda that the Queen represents are questioned and found faulty. She is a fascist, only interested in money that can be made from industries such as tourism; she is basically selling herself as a commodity that promotes revenue. She is depicted as unaware and in denial of the economic state of her country, “and there is no future in England’s dreaming.” Within the context of this song the Queen and England become one.

The testing of attitudes and the mocking of the Queen and what she represents illustrates an element of protest music that Gregg discusses in his work on protest rhetoric as ego-function. Under this theory the mocking of people or beliefs that the protester finds faulty provides a sense of power. Mocking the Queen and what she symbolizes provides a sense of ego-enhancement for the Sex Pistols as protesters. When the song is then co-opted by members of the audience as they sing along or repeat the song, it provides the same ego-fulfillment for them.

Relating the Queen to a fascist regime was viewed by many as obscene, slanderous and disrespectful of a national figure and obscene. Portraying the Queen in such a way provoked dissenters of the punk culture and in effect brought about responses which is one purpose of using obscenity in protest (Bosmajian 9). Another key purpose is to label establishment leaders and their actions as their critics see them: obscene (Bosmajian 9). In presenting the Queen in an obscene way the Sex Pistols were also claiming the power to define her and the establishment as adversaries; they named their enemy. By defacing the Queen, the Sex Pistols achieved numerous goals. They made themselves heard, they defined their adversaries, and they placed a negative label on a respected leader. They also, according to Bosmajian's theory, liberated themselves from those that opposed them, released frustration and futility, and created a mask for their own fears by presenting an obscene message (9).

There is also another character in the text, God. This term is utilized as defining what is just and the hope that good will eventually save society and England. God represents the idea that the Queen/England is in need of saving: "God Save the Queen, we mean it man, we love our Queen, God saves" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

This slogan has been used as a hail to the Queen and national anthem but within the text it has been altered to mean something entirely different. The text not only calls for the Queen to be saved, but using this slogan in the context also lends itself to a mockery of the Queen and her government, “God save the Queen, she aint’ no human being, there is no future, and England’s dreaming” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

This illustrates good versus evil and the plight of those affected by evil and disregarded by society and establishment. This is evidence of the righteous master analogue within the rhetorical vision. The song lays blame on the Queen/England for their socially unacceptable lives and behavior by proclaiming “we’re poison in your human machine, we’re the future you’re future” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The Sex Pistols also describe themselves as “the flowers in the dustbin,” their potential as contributing members of society thrown away by a flawed system (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The plotline also alludes to false promises they have been fed that led them to blindly support the establishment: “God save the Queen, the fascist regime, they made you a moron, potential H-bomb”(Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). Later in the text they state that the leader they have believed in for so long is a fallacy: “God save the Queen, ‘cos tourists are money, our figurehead is not what she seems” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The Queen is not what or who they have been taught. She is more interested in foreigners and their money than her own people who are suffering economic hardship

God Save the Queen contains multiple layers of protest. The Sex Pistols co-opted Britain’s national anthem to fit their specific needs and situation. They appropriated the song to punk culture making it a sanctioning agent for the punk culture. The Sex Pistols

rendition of God Save the Queen was considered blasphemous and offensive to many. It was banned from stores as a single and did not appear on the charts in its number one position. Instead a black bar covered the title of the song and the artist when it reached number one on the popular music charts. It was horrifying to many that people held such disdain and disrespect for the nation and this caused quite a media circus that only allowed for punk culture to receive more outlets for their message. The concept of the song is protest; the content of the song is clearly protest. Through its mockery and testing of old beliefs, it provides a sense of ego-fulfillment for the protesters as the message chains out to the members of punk culture.

Anarchy in the UK

The Sex Pistols became relevant voices to alienated adolescents by creating a vocabulary and reflecting the views of the culture. Songs such as Anarchy in the UK developed the vocabulary that was to become synonymous with punk culture. “I am the antichrist. I am an anarchist” became a slogan for the punk culture and the fantasy of anarchy they advocated. Anarchy in the UK contains one of the most blatant critiques of capitalist society: “anarchy for the UK it’s coming sometime and maybe I give a wrong time stop a traffic line your future dream is a shopping scheme” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). In the eyes of punk youth, the primary goal of the establishment was profit on the backs of those working long hours for little money. For the working class youths, the future dream was anarchy and freedom from a dead-end existence, not the “shopping scheme” of capitalistic industry. Therefore to “give wrong time” on a time card was justifiable since the message they were receiving from the establishment was that their

time was less valuable than others (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). Many working class adolescents were unemployed or idle by choice, not participating in the capitalist “scheme” which they had been taught was a high value of their society. Too many of these youths saw the dead end drudgery and were not willing to take their place in society: “I don’t know what I want but I know how to get it” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

As in the other songs, “I” is the main character narrating the action from the point of view of rhetor as a credible member of the group. The text attacks the structure of society, voicing a desire for total freedom, “I wanna be anarchy, it’s the only way to be” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). It is interesting to note that instead of stating “I wanna be an anarchist,” the rhetor desires to personify the idea, school of thought, and practice of anarchy (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). It is the character’s goal to become a metaphor for anarchy which audience members could also assume by repeating the lyrics that provided them an identity. The character expresses the desire to be free from the restraints of society’s expectations by using anarchy and capitalist industry (e.g. the music industry) as a way to gain this freedom: “how many ways to get what you want I use the best I use the rest I use the enemy I use anarchy” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). Without a future, without a job, and afraid, anarchy seemed to be the answer to their dead end lives, “the only way to be” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The Sex Pistols became a symbol of punk culture and came to symbolize the fantasy of living an anarchistic life.

Within Anarchy in the UK is another attack against the English government: “is this the M.P.L.A. or is this the U.D.A. or is this the I.R.A. I thought it was the UK or just

another country another cuntlike tenancy?” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

Comparing the country to radical organizations illustrates disapproval of the structure and policies of the government system. The IRA was dedicated to ending Irish British rule and utilized terrorist tactics to oust British forces in Northern Ireland (Encarta). The M.P.L.A. was an organization backed by Cuba and the Soviet Union fighting for control of Oau after their independence from Portugal (Encarta). Both of these organizations were at opposite end of Britain on the political spectrum. This comparison makes a striking point, proclaiming British rule as terroristic or despotic.

To substantiate the fantasy of anarchy the act of destruction became a pronounced theme in the song: “I wanna destroy the passerby, ‘cause I wanna be anarchy” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). This aims criticism at those who judge and criticize the punks for their appearance, behavior, social, or employment status. The passerby could be a member of the establishment or justice system that were the targets of punk aggression or they could be everyday workers who still believed in the capitalistic dream. The song ends with the word “destroy”: “and I wanna be an antichrist, get pissed, destroy,” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). This leaves the audience with a strong and memorable last impression.

Anarchy was the punk culture’s slogan, its symbol a circle with a capital “A” inside. It was worn on clothing and seen in their artwork, literature, and graffiti. Members of the punk culture adopted anarchy as a life style. Anarchy in the UK plays an important role in establishing the connection with anarchy and it became the agent legitimizer for punk culture. The role the song played was underscored by its popularity. It sold 1800 copies upon its release in December of 1976 (Brown 17). The song chained

out its message to a larger audience and received acceptance within the punk culture and spread the beliefs of punk outside its immediate community.

Pretty Vacant

Pretty Vacant places the blame on the establishment for the anger, alienation, and disillusionment that has led to the rebellion: “there’s no point in asking you’ll get no reply oh just remember I don’t decide I got no reason it’s all too much you’ll always find us out to lunch” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The lyrics state that “they,” as members of a group are, “vacant.” The plot revolves around the group’s dropping out of society: “‘cos I don’t care,” “we’re out to lunch,” and “oh, just remember I don’t decide” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). This decision to pull back from society results from feelings of alienation and disillusionment. These feelings are manifested in the text of numerous songs included in this study, i.e. God Save the Queen, Holiday in the Sun and Problems.

Pretty Vacant blatantly attests to the philosophy of anarchism, living free from need to answer to a society or establishment that is undaunted by the problems of the less fortunate:

Don’t ask us to attend ‘cos we’re not all there, oh, don’t pretend
 ‘cos I don’t care, I don’t believe in illusions ‘cos too much is real,
 so stop your cheap comment ‘cos we know what we feel. Oh we’re
 so pretty, oh we’re so pretty vacant (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and
 Rotten).

The character in the song does not “care” to be part of society or “attend” to living in a socially acceptable manner. Although the narrator does not “care,” the group of which he is a part knows how they “feel” towards government and society. By knowing this they have chosen not to participate in the “illusion” that the establishment has created. “Too much is real” for the character, being members of a class of people that are oppressed and experience depressing reality everyday. The narrator demands that the “cheap comment” end because the lies and promises are no longer believed.

EMI

EMI is a direct rebellion against capitalism and the status quo. The song directs its disapproval at a specific entity- the record company EMI- rather than a general oppressive establishment. Previously the Sex Pistols had been signed to a record deal with EMI but due to their behavior and negative publicity EMI bought out their contract and let them go. This song responds to that event and creates the good characters (the Sex Pistols) and the evil characters (music industry).

The Sex Pistols claim that EMI was only interested in packaging and mass producing the Sex Pistols and by extension punk culture, turning them into a capitalistic commodity: “and you thought that we were faking, that we were all just money making, you don’t believe we’re for real, or you would loose your cheap appeal” (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). As in Holiday in the Sun and Pretty Vacant, “cheap” seems to refer to dishonesty for the purposes of making profit. The mass production described in the opening line is an example of the dishonesty: “there’s unlimited supply, and there is

no reason why, I tell you it was all a frame, they only did it 'cos of fame, who, EMI" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The Sex Pistols then reiterate their stance. They will not alter their belief system and lifestyle to join the establishment and profit financially: "I do not need the pressure EMI I can't stand the useless fools EMI" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The Sex Pistols will not be packaged and sold as something they are not: "with an unlimited supply that was the only reason why we all had to say goodbye"(Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

Individualism and being true to one's self are also major issues in EMI: "don't judge a book by just the cover, unless you cover just another, and blind acceptance is a sign, stupid fools who stand in line like EMI" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). EMI was described as a corporation that sought control over the Sex Pistols product yet because of size and capitalistic nature they could not execute this control in a productive manner: "to many people had the suss, too many people to support us, and unlimited amount, too many outlets in and out, who, EMI" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). EMI is portrayed as buying into the Sex Pistols music and culture for profit, thinking their behavior and beliefs were not genuine. But it was genuine anger and a nihilistic force that drove the group: "and you thought we were faking, that we were all just money making, you did not believe we're for real," (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The Sex Pistols pursued anarchy: "we are ruled by none never, never, never"; they withdrew from society: "I do not need the pressure" (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

They also expressed their disdain for those who buy into and work for such industries, labeling them "stupid fools" who practice "blind acceptance" of meaningless products, i.e. popular rock music (Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten). The fact that the

Sex Pistols denounced their involvement with an overtly capitalistic corporation further enhanced their credibility within the punk community. They were not interested in pure profit or in selling out. The Sex Pistols did not aim for fame or rock star status; they simply wanted a venue in which to express themselves, develop identities, and point out social inequities.

Summary

FTA, SCT, and ego-function theory supplied the methods of analysis and the elements that helped to examine the rhetoric of the Sex Pistols. Through the use of these it is possible to argue that the songs analyzed are a form of protest. The song narratives possess clear common fantasies, narrate events of punk culture, and establish the Sex Pistols as believable spokesmen for the culture. The music provided a forceful repetitive rhythm that helped commit the messages to memory. The Sex Pistols used specific rhetorical strategies to take on the role of sanctioning agents. They placed themselves directly in the plotline using pronouns such as “I” and “we.” They described themselves in situations that members of the punk culture could relate to and with which they could identify. Most importantly they expressed the shared fantasies of the group. Their messages were simple and easily understood by those who found them relevant to their own experiences, feelings, and beliefs. The Sex Pistols successfully chained out fantasies, not only to members of the immediate punk group but also to people globally through the use of mass media. Punk culture existed then and exists today in part because of the chaining out of the Sex Pistols’ original messages. Through their music they gave legitimacy to punk culture.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

The Sex Pistols are identified as a punk band and they are synonymous with punk music as well as punk culture. It is possible to argue that the Sex Pistols achieved symbolic convergence because they achieved popularity within the punk culture and because they propagated the slogan and symbol for anarchy. They also became analogous with the punk culture, although this does not seem to have been the primary aim of their rhetoric. Through their music the Sex Pistols encouraged anarchy and helped to establish it as the symbol and slogan for punk culture. This resonated with members of the group, as well as with outsiders. On a larger scale the popularity that the Sex Pistols achieved outside their immediate group, as well as the resulting chaining out of their fantasy and culture, provides greater proof of symbolic convergence achieved by the Sex Pistols. Anarchy resonated with individuals who heard the Sex Pistols message and their fantasy was accepted and spread through mass media. As a result of this symbolic convergence punk culture spread throughout the world and is still alive today.

Punk culture began as a small, centralized group of working class adolescents that felt disaffected and alienated by society and the establishment. This group was bound geographically and socio-economically. Through the emergence of a specific form of rhetoric the culture began to develop. The music of the Sex Pistols helped to create, raise

and sustain consciousness about the feelings, beliefs, and fantasies of this alienated group. Through their rhetoric the culture grew as their message found a larger audience that related to the ideas and fantasies expressed in the music. The music reflected key aspects that fueled the anarchist punk culture: anti-establishment, anti-capitalist, and general nihilistic disregard of social codes.

The music of the Sex Pistols provided an outlet for common attitudes and views of a growing group of adolescents and established solidarity among audience members as well as performers. Finding commonalities with others and establishing themselves as members of a group or culture enhanced audience members' egos. Therefore, the music of the Sex Pistols was foundational in the creation of punk culture. The culture grew out of the need adolescents felt for identity and solidarity, and punk music functioned as a means of ego fulfillment.

Gregg's theory of ego-function helps us understand why these adolescents began performing protest music and why the culture grew as a result. According to Gregg, performing protest music alleviated alienation felt by protesters by helping them find a sense of power and solidarity. Positive identities are created and ego enhancement fulfilled by locating one's self by contrast (Stewart 240). As Stewart argues: "the singing of protest songs allows movement members to affirm their commitments and intentions – and thus their selfhoods – publicly, and these public affirmations may affirm and maintain the ego of protesters" (245).

Understanding this helps to explain why punks chose to direct their protest at the music industry. In the past rock music had been the voice of adolescent rebellion and discontent. But this music had lost its voice and meaning, no longer expressing the issues

and views of adolescents. The protest music of the 1960's (and earlier) may have set a tradition of music as a protest instrument. It makes sense that punks would use music to communicate their views, beliefs, and ideas. In addition, music had been taken over by capitalist corporations making music part of the capitalist establishment. Punk culture (and the Sex Pistols) wanted their voice and their music back, and that is what punks set out to do.

The Sex Pistols' album allowed members of punk culture to have a voice. With the recording at their disposal, they had power: power to play their music at a chosen time, in a chosen location, and at a chosen level (the louder the more powerful) (Lull 369). This provided them with an opportunity to make decisions and to possess a sense of freedom. The act of playing punk music is in itself rebellious, and if it is played at a high volume it makes a stronger statement of rebellion and becomes a statement in itself (Lull 369). This is further supported by Lull's finding that music is a central part of adolescent life and is often used in creative ways to find excitement and meaning in their environment where "power seems to rest in the hands of the unknowing" (371). Punk culture and the Sex Pistols loudly panned the music industry because of its commercialism, but as time went on they became part of what they so strongly protested against; they became part of the mass media industry they so criticized. They did, however, redefine "popularity" to mean "notoriety" based on the negative press they received. It is important to note that the Sex Pistols album, Never Mind the Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols, was the only studio-produced album by the group. There have been countless albums released containing studio out takes, live recordings, and

previously unreleased material, this vast catalog of material is available today as evidence of the impact of the Sex Pistols protest rhetoric.

Never Mind the Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols is remarkable in another way.

The microcosm of the album presents the message to the audience in phases. It begins with consciousness-creating and progresses consciousness raising by defining and explaining their plight, goals, beliefs, and ideas. The final element of the rhetorical vision that pinpoints the actual target of their protest comes at the end when all other elements have been defined (consciousness sustaining in Liar). This tactic, whether deliberate or by accident, provides a strong foundation for the building blocks that come to define the rhetorical vision of punk and the Sex Pistols. The rhetorical vision is a gradual but complete one that is built with each song to the final song.

The Sex Pistols were instrumental in creating the fiction within which goals, values, and power could be found. In several instances Bormann seems to be talking about punk culture and music when describing FTA. As a result of “case study investigations of zero-history leaderless groups we discovered that members did on occasion plan dramatizations prior to a meeting and if these dramatizations were skillfully developed they could catch up others in the sharing of a fantasy” (Bormann *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Ten Years Later*, 291). He might have been describing the live performances of punk music. The Sex Pistols’ live performances were planned events in which the Sex Pistols’ protest rhetoric (music) would be delivered in a dramatized message that would chain out to audience members and, ultimately, to individuals outside the audience and the culture. It was within these case studies that Bormann “revealed that the technique was essentially that of intentionally dramatizing

highly emotional fantasies drawn from an established rhetorical vision to induce neophytes to share them” (*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Ten Years Later*, 291).

Presenting the discourse in such a dramatic way enabled non-members to be drawn into the fantasy. Arguably this is how the chaining out of the punk belief system occurred.

The phrase “the dream of salvation” suggested the possibility that punk music might be a “fantasy,” communicated to an audience that wanted to be saved from angst and isolation, even if, as Mary Harron suggests, punks were fully aware that they were fighting a battle they had little chance of winning (Chenowith 44 and Harron 203)

All the songs analyzed address some form of capitalistic agenda that is in opposition to the beliefs of the Sex Pistols. This critical view of capitalism places the establishment as “evil” against the “good,” honest working class that has suffered by the actions of the establishment. By suppressing the working class voice alienation is compounded and this alienation manifests itself in the need for solidarity. Hebdige explains: “no subculture has sought with more grim determination than the punks to detach itself from the taken-for-granted landscape of normalized forms, nor to bring down upon itself such vehement disapproval” (19).

An example of this is found in the recurring theme of selling out the British society (in the form of tourism) by a Queen with a false persona (God Save the Queen and Holiday in the Sun). These two songs protest that people are individuals not tourist attractions. God Save the Queen further illustrates the feelings of disappointment towards their government for selling their unique and age old culture to curiosity seeking tourists: “I thought it was the UK or just another country, another cuntlike tenancy” (Cook, Jones,

Matlock, and Rotten). The fantasy was to have their voices heard, to be contributing members of society instead of being identified as simple laborers.

Different views of “scene” identified by the analysis are also consistent throughout the discourse. Whether “scene” is the album or society, it provides a landscape from which to view the fantasies expressed in the lyrics. It really does not change the fantasies or the rhetorical vision of the punk culture if one or the other “scene” is chosen. Choosing one view of “scene” over the other does not alter the composite messages in the lyrics. Society as “scene” provides a place for the protester to belong. They are, after all, part of society, even though others perceive them as outcasts. The album “scene” gives the Sex Pistols a place and a voice.

The “plotline” of each song varies but basic themes are found throughout. The establishment is repeatedly criticized for placing too much importance on profit and for the centrality of lies and illusions in their rhetoric. The songs tell of the voicelessness of the working class and their demand to be heard. Alienation, angst, and “dropping out” are recurring “plotlines” throughout the album.

Events within the songs portray the fight of “good” versus “evil” (righteous master analogue). Good is represented by the characters that value individualism, anarchy, and acknowledgment of their worth within society. The characters value and live by the code or belief system that punks established within their culture. Evil is represented by the establishment/capitalism/industry that suppresses the characters that live by the codes of punk culture. These dramas are chained out through the group and become the fantasies of the group. The Sex Pistols represent themselves as members of

the culture through their protest rhetoric; they are the sanctioning agents for the discourse and culture.

Even within the songs there are good and evil characters. Some of these characters are specific people; others are generalized members of the culture, the band, or the establishment. Some of the characters within the context of the song become symbols for a larger idea, as does the text of God Save the Queen. Through the narrative, “Queen” symbolizes government and the establishment. Within the song EMI the character “EMI” not only defines the actual company but also comes to symbolize the music industry as a whole. It can also be said that the pronouns “I” and “we” (used as the royal “we”) are major characters in the songs and become composite representatives of members of the punk culture.

The elements of the Sex Pistols that became analogous with punk music were the qualities that eventually led to the demise of the band: anarchy, chaos, anger and pessimism. The individualism that fueled the Sex Pistols early in their career became lost in McLaren’s desire to control and orchestrate this quality into a marketable commodity. Although they were short-lived, the Sex Pistols succeeded in creating a rhetoric for a subculture that is still alive today. They helped in creating a space for the youth of working class Britain to meet, find solidarity, and express their grievances, ideas, and beliefs. They changed the face of rock and roll, proving that it was still an avenue for rebellion fueled by adolescent angst. McNeil and McCain write:

This wonderful vital force that was articulated by the music
was really about corrupting every form- it was about
advocating kids to not wait to be told what to do, but make

life up for themselves, it was about trying to get people to use their imaginations again, it was about saying it was okay to be amateurish and funny, that real creativity came out of making a mess, it was about working with what you got in front of you and turning everything embarrassing, awful, and stupid in your life to your advantage (334).

On a simplistic level, one can argue that punks achieved symbolic convergence because punk music achieved popularity within the group which led to a demand for the live performances which validated their acceptance within the punk culture. Bormann states that “group fantasizing correlates with individual fantasizing and extrapolates to speaker-audience fantasizing and to the dream merchants of mass media” (*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision* 396). This is a profoundly fitting statement for punk music. Its unique form of rhetoric was intended to attack the capitalistic system and mass media, yet in fact it was an element of the system and of mass media. Chenoweth refers to psychologist Alfred Adler’s notion that in order for an individual to gain control over his/her life and environment, a fiction, set of goals, values, or concept of self-power are necessary (27).

As the Sex Pistols gained representation in the music industry, their musical message was chained out beyond their original punk culture. But this is not the only level at which the music of the Sex Pistols reached symbolic convergence. By adopting anarchy and the visual symbol for it, the Sex Pistols converged or achieved union with those who co-opted this symbol as the symbol for their culture. This is an example of symbolic convergence in its highest form. This symbolic convergence allowed anarchy,

the Sex Pistols, and punk culture to become representatives of each other. In fact it can be argued that the transcendent fantasy that led to symbolic convergence was anarchy in the sense of extreme freedom of expression and individualism. In essence the Sex Pistols proclaimed “we are the flowers in the dustbin,” we are what society has created (*God Save the Queen* Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten).

Summary

Analyzing the “fantasies” in the Sex Pistols texts helps us understand how punk music answered the need for expression and rebellion called out by the disillusion of working class adolescents. Members of the Sex Pistols were products of the unrest and economic hardship of the working class.

Through the use of fantasy theme analysis (FTA) it has been illustrated that the text of the music of the Sex Pistols presents shared group fantasies that form a rhetorical vision for the culture. Bormann defines rhetorical vision as “a unified putting-together of the various shared scripts that gives the participants a broader view of things” (*Fantasy Theme Analysis and Rhetorical Theory*, 453).

The use of Bormann’s FTA and Gregg’s ego-function theory allowed a closer look and clearer understanding of the relationship between the Sex Pistols and the audience. Bormann’s FTA helped illustrate how a small group, (socio-economically and geographically) was defined and given life through chained out fantasies. Gregg’s theory substantiates Bormann’s method by illustrating why punks protested. The end result is a better understanding of punk culture and their beliefs, creating new questions and avenues of analysis for further study.

In conducting this analysis it was my goal to argue the point that punk music was protest music. It was my hope that this study would shed light on the protest rhetoric of a genre of music that is often considered to be socially insignificant. Social movements and cultures can have different faces, some pierced and painted, but they offer legitimate messages. This is, however, only a small step in understanding punk music and punk culture. There is a vast amount of music available that could, when analyzed, tell us even more about this unique culture. It is my hope that this project inspires more research on punk music, its culture, and other genres of music. Further research could, for example, focus on:

- the Marxist perspective of the Sex Pistols' punk music and culture.
- the songs of the Sex Pistols that address interpersonal relationships.
- analysis of other punk rock groups and their contribution to punk culture.

Limitations

Every study has its limitations. This particular had the following restrictive limits. First, not all songs contained on the album Never Mind the Bollocks were used because they did not coincide with the goal of this study, which was to focus on social protest. This limited the number of songs used in this study. Focus on the social aspects of the songs on this album required leaving out those songs that addressed adolescent interpersonal relationships. Second, another limiting factor in this study was the short career span of the Sex Pistols and their limited musical output. In spite of these limitations, it is possible to argue that punk music changed the lives of adolescents then

and now, whether punk followers/fans or not. The music industry has not been the same since the storm of punk swept over and turned the industry upside down.

THANK YOU Sex Pistols for the FIGHT and FURY that reclaimed rock for the
YOUTH.

APPENDIX I

SONG LYRICS

HOLIDAY IN THE SUN

(Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious)

A cheap holiday in other peoples misery

I don't wanna holiday in the sun
I wanna go to the new belsen
I wanna see some history
cos now I got a reasonable economy

Now I got a reason
Now I got a reason
and I'm still waiting
Now I got a reason
Now I got a reason
to be waiting

the Berlin wall

In sensurround sound in a two inch wall
I was waiting for the communist call
I didn't ask for sunshine and I got world war free
I'm looking over the wall and they're looking at me

Oh I got a reason
Now I got a reason
and I'm still waiting
Now I got a reason
Now I got a reason
to be waiting

the Berlin wall

They're staring all night and
they're staring all day
I had no reason to be here at all
but now I got a reason
it's no real reason and I'm waiting

at the Berlin wall
I gotta go over the Berlin wall
I don't understand this bit at all
I don't understand it

Claustrophobia there's too much paranoia
there's top many closets I went in before
and now I got a reason it's no real reason
to be waiting

LIAR

(Cook, Jones, Matlock and Rotten)

Lie lie lie lie liar you lie lie lie lie lie
Tell me why tell me why why d'you have to lie
Should've realized
that you should've told the truth
Should've realized you know what I'll do

You're in suspension
You're a liar

Now I wanna know know know know
I wanna know why you never look me in the face
Broke a confidence just to please your ego
Should've realized you know what I know

You're in suspension
You're a liar

I know where you go
Everybody you know
I know everything that you do or say
So when you tell lies I'll always be in your way
I'm nobody's fool and I know all
"Cos I know what I know

Lie lie lie lie liar you lie lie lie lie
I think you're funny
You're funny ha ha
I don't need it
I don't need your blah blah blah
Should've realized I know what you are
You're a liar
You're a liar
Lie lie

PROBLEMS

(Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten)

Too many problems
 Oh why am I here
 I don't need to be me
 'Cos you're all too clear
 Well I can see there's something wrong with you
 But what do you expect me to do
 At least I gotta know what I wanna be
 Don't come to me if you need pity
 Are you lonely you got no one
 You get your body in suspension
 That's no problem problem
 Problem the problem is you

Eat your heart out on a plastic tray

You don't do what you want then you'll fade away
 You won't find me working nine to five
 It's too much fun being alive
 I'm using my feet for my human machine
 You won't find me living for the screen
 Are you lonely all your needs catered

Problem problem
 Problem the problem is you
 What you gonna do with your problem

In a death trip
 I ain't automatic
 You won't find me just staying static
 Don't give me any orders
 For people like me there is no order

Bet you thought you had it all worked out
 Bet you thought you knew what it was all about
 Bet you thought you'd solved all your problems ...
 But you are the problem

Problem problem
 Problem the problem is you
 What you gonna do with your problem
 I'll leave it to you
 Problem the problem is you

You got a problem
Oh what you gonna do

They know a doctor
gonna take it away
they take you away
and throw away the key
They don't want you
and they don't want me
You got a problem
The problem is you

Problem problem
Problem the problem is you
What you gonna do

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

(Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten)

God save the Queen
 The fascist regime
 They made you a H-bomb

God save the Queen
 She ain't no human being
 There is no future in England's dreaming

Don't be told what you want
 Don't be told what you need

There's no future no future
 No future for you

God save the Queen
 We mean it man
 We love our Queen
 God saves

God save the Queen
 'Cos tourists are money
 Our figure head is not what she seems

Oh God save history
 God save our mad parade
 Oh Lord God have mercy
 All crimes are paid

When there's no future
 How can there be any sin
 We're the flowers in the dustbin
 We're the poison in your human machine
 We're the future your future

God save the Queen
 We mean it man
 We love our Queen
 God saves

God save the Queen
 We mean it man
 And there is no future in Englands dreaming

No future no future
No future for you
No future no future
No future no future for me

ANARCHY IN THE UK

(Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten)

Right!
Now ha ha

I am the antichrist
I am an anarchist
Don't know what I want
But I know how to get it
I wanna destroy the passerby
'cos

I wanna be anarchy
No dogs nobody

Anarchy for the UK
It's coming sometime and maybe
I give wrong time
Stop a traffic line
Your future dream is a shopping scheme
'cos

I wanna be anarchy
In the city

How many ways to get what you want
I use the best
I use the rest
I use the enemy
I use anarchy
'cos

I wanna be anarchy
It's the only way to be

Is this the M.P.L.A. or
Is this the U.D.A. or
Is this the I.R.A.
I thought it was the UK
or just another country
another cuntlike tenancy

I wanna be anarchy
I wanna be anarchy
Oh what a name

And I wanna be an anarchist
Get pissed
Destroy

2

PRETTY VACANT

(Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten)

There's no point in asking
 You'll get no reply
 Oh just remember I don't decide
 I got no reason it's all too much
 You'll always find us out to lunch

Oh we're so pretty
 Oh so pretty we're vacant
 Oh we're so pretty
 Oh so pretty
 Vacant

Don't ask us to attend
 Cause we're not all there
 Oh don't pretend cause we don't care
 I don't believe in illusions
 Cause too much is real
 So stop your cheap comment
 'cos we know what we feel

Oh we're so pretty
 Oh so pretty we're vacant
 Oh we're so pretty
 Oh so pretty we're vacant
 Ah but now and we don't care

There's no point in asking
 You'll get no reply
 Oh just remember I don't decide
 I got no reason it's all too much
 You'll always find me out to lunch
 We're out on lunch

Oh we're so pretty
 Oh so pretty we're vacant
 Oh we're so pretty
 Oh so pretty we're vacant
 Oh we're so pretty
 Oh so pretty ah
 But now an we don't care
 We're pretty
 A pretty vacant

We're pretty
A pretty vacant
We're pretty
A pretty vacant
We're pretty
A pretty vacant

And we don't care

EMI

(Cook, Jones, Matlock, and Rotten)

There's an unlimited supply
 And there is no reason why
 I tell you it was all a frame
 They only did it cause of fame
 Who?

EMI EMI EMI

Too many people had the suss
 Too many people support us
 An unlimited amount
 Too many outlets in and out
 Who?

EMI EMI EMI

And sir and friends are crucified
 A day they wished that we had died
 We are an addition
 We are ruled by none
 Never never never

And you thought that we were faking
 That we were all just money making
 You do not believe we're for real
 Or you would loose your cheap appeal

Don't judge a book just by the cover
 Unless you cover just another
 And blind acceptance is a sign
 A stupid fool who stands in line
 Like

EMI EMI EMI

Unlimited edition
 With an unlimited supply
 That was the only reason
 We all had to say goodbye

Unlimited supply EMI
There is no reason why EMI
I tell you it was all a frame EMI
They only did it cause of fame EMI
I do not nee the pressure EMI
I can't stand the useless fools EMI
Unlimited supply EMI
Hallo EMI goodbye A & M

Cari Byers
3280 Liahona Way
Las Vegas, NV
89121
cari@unlv.edu
(702)893-6068

Dear Mr. Steven Price

I am requesting reprint permission for the following songs by the Sex Pistols; *Holidays in the Sun*, *Liar*, *Problems*, *God Save the Queen*, *Anarchy in the UK*, *Pretty Vacant*, and *Emi*. The songs will be quoted in a masters thesis that is a rhetorical analysis of the lyrics of these songs. The thesis will be published for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas library where the degree originates. Included is the form I am required by the graduate college to have signed and included in the final copy of the thesis; *The Sex Pistols: Punk Rock as Protest Rhetoric*. I have also included sample pages from the thesis, if need be I can certainly supply the entire thesis.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

Cari Byers

Cari Byers
3280 Liahona Way
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89121
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(702)893-6068

Dear Ms. Juliete Perez

I am requesting reprint permission for the following songs by the Sex Pistols; *Holidays in the Sun*, *Liar*, *Problems*, *God Save the Queen*, *Anarchy in the UK*, *Pretty Vacant*, and *Emi*. The songs will be quoted in a masters thesis that is a rhetorical analysis of the lyrics of these songs. The thesis will be published for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas library where the degree originates. Included is the form I am required by the graduate college to have signed and included in the final copy of the thesis; *The Sex Pistols: Punk Rock as Protest Rhetoric*. I have also included sample pages from the thesis, if need be I can certainly supply the entire thesis.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

Cari Byers

Copyright request log

August 5, 2002	Phoned Warner Brothers Inc. to request copyright permission to reprint portions of lyrics used in thesis.
August 7, 2002	Faxed requested material and forms to Warner Bros. Inc.
August 12, 2002	Received email stating that Warner Bros Inc. could not help me with the copyright request to contact ASCAP.
August 16, 2002	Contacted ASCAP at 323-882-8386. I was told at that time that they did not deal with these issues to try the record company or BMI.
August 19, 2002	Contacted BMI at 212-586-2000. Once again I was told to contact another entity. This time they suggested BMG.
August 21, 2002	Contacted BMG at 212-930-4000. They connected to me to the government agency for copyright search. This was not helpful, as I already knew who held the copyrights for the music.
August 26, 2002	Left voice mail messages with people at Warner Bros Inc. and BMG. But never received and response.
August 29, 2002	Once again made several calls regarding this issue. Was given the name of Steven Price at BMG to contact and his fax information. Dave Olson at Warner Bros Inc. was also given to me as someone to contact.
September 2, 2002	Contacted Dave Olson at 305-620-1500. At that time he gave me his fax number and the information he needed to grant me reprint permission.
September 3, 2002	Faxed requested information and forms to both Dave Olson at 305-625-3480 and Steven Price at 310-358-4765. No response was ever received.
September 17, 2002	Refaxed information to above people after again calling to confirm fax numbers.
September 18, 2002	Made phone calls to both Dave Olson and Steven Price to confirm that they received faxes. Left message with Dave Olson's secretary. Left voice message for Steven Price.

September 23, 2002 Received response to the voice mail I left for Steven Price notifying me that my fax had been lost to resend it.

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Thesis Title: The Sex Pistols: Punk Rock as Protest Rhetoric

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