

Title

**A Critical Study Of The Role Played By Heavy Metal / Hard
Rock Magazines In The Development Of A Subculture.**

Report submitted in part fulfilment of the examination requirements for the
award of BA (Hons) Journalism awarded by the University of Lincolnshire.

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Abstract – The thing that should not be...

Heavy Metal as a subculture, an art form and a genre of music is ubiquitous with themes of rebellion and anarchy. The subculture's more successful bands are noted for their basic themes of violence, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, perversion, extreme rebellion and Satanism¹. In turn, the participants of the subculture are also heavily associated with such deviant and hedonistic themes.

The hypothesis of this study states that, unlike the relationships found between mainstream mass culture and its media outlets², there would be no significant link between the Heavy Metal subculture and its arguably largest media outlet, magazines. The lack of any real link is put down to the rebellious nature of the subculture, with the participants not wanting to accept or conform to any views, opinions, or dominant themes disseminated through the magazines.

Research methods included content analysis, of magazines, participant observation, of the subculture, a questionnaire, completed by 100 subcultural participants and informal and formal interviews.

The evidence collected through these various means highlighted that there was indeed a negligible relationship between the subculture and the magazines. It is more likely that the bands themselves are the principal affecters on the subculture because of their God like status amongst the fans³. And, that the magazines are merely conduits through which information passes from the bands to the subcultural participants.

¹ D, Weiss. (1994). The Relationship between Heavy Metal and Rap Music on Adolescent Turmoil: Real or Artefact? *Journal of Adolescence*. Vol. 29. pp1-10

² B, Jennings. (1994). *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Place of New Jersey USA.

³ J, Arnett. (1996). *Metal Heads: Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation* Westview Press, USA

Acknowledgements – Regular People, Conceit

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my mother and father for getting me where I am today and John Beveridge for being an excellent companion and learning aid.

I would also like to thank all the bands that I've listened to over the years and that I've used for chapter headings, without your inspiration I wouldn't be here today.

Watch it go!

Contents

Abstract

Acknowledgements

List of figures

Main body

1 – Introduction: Master of Puppets?

1.1 – Defining the Heavy Metal subculture: Its history and Participants.....1

1.2 – Heavy Metal magazines & Hypothesis.....5

2 – Methodologies: Methods of Mayhem

2.1 – The Magazines and Previous Research.....8

2.2 – Content Analysis Theory & Methodology.....10

2.3 – Participant Observation Theory & Methodology.....15

3 – Research Outcomes: Refuse, Resist

3.1 – Results: Content Analysis.....22

3.2 – Results: Participant Observation.....26

3.3 – Results: Interviews.....28

3.4 – Results: Questionnaires.....30

4 – Conclusions: Rage Against the Machine

4.1 – The Subculture and its Press.....33

4.2 – Further Research.....34

Appendices

Appendix A:.....36

Coding book.....37

Figures 5 – 7, Magazine extracts October 2004 – March 2005.....38

Appendix B:.....41

Diary of Participant observations October 2004 – March 2005.....42

Appendix C:.....53

Questionnaire example.....54

Questionnaire results from research locations A, B and combined.....55

Informal interview transcriptions, participants A and B.....58

Formal interview transcriptions, David ‘Ginger Walls, Ryan Primack.....63

Questionnaire and informal interview information sheet.....69

Observational notes taken at questionnaire research locations A and B.....70

Table 2, Data comparison between questionnaire questions 3 and 9.....72

Table 3, Pie chart showing which magazine sections paid most attention to.....73

Bibliography

Books

Website core addresses

Journals

Newspapers

Songs

Testimonies

List of figures and tables:

Figures:

Figure 1 – Typical front cover of Kerrang!

Figure 2 – Page 26, October 23rd 2004 Kerrang! Featuring: 80's Matchbox B-line Disaster

Figure 3 – Page 30, October 30th 2004, Kerrang! Featuring: My Chemical Romance

Figure 4 – Page 29, December 4th 2004, Kerrang! Featuring: Axel Rose

Figure 5 – Page 4, 16th October 2004, Kerrang! Magazine extract example featuring: Anthrax

Figure 6 - Page 11, 6th November 2004, Kerrang! Magazine extract example featuring: Bury your Dead

Figure 7 - Page 23, 26th February 2005, Kerrang! Magazine extract example featuring: My Chemical Romance

Tables:

Table 1 – Bar graph comparing Questionnaire questions 4 and 9

Table 2 – Bar graph comparing Questionnaire questions 3 and 9

Table 3 – A pie chart showing which part of music magazines subcultural participants pay most attention to

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Master of Puppets?

Title: A Critical Study of the Role Played by Heavy Metal / Hard Rock Magazines in the Development of a Subculture.

“Flaunting the life-style valued by the metal subculture – sex drugs and raising hell – with pride before its fans, the band romanticizes and idealizes that life-style and, even more importantly, legitimizes it. The signifiers of pariah status – everything that the respectable world condemns about metal’s audience – are endowed with the highest value. The pariah is transvalued into, as Ozzy Osbourne calls his own persona, ‘a rock and roll rebel’ ”. – Deena Weinstein, Heavy Metal, the music and its subculture.

1.1 - Defining the Heavy Metal Subculture: Its history and Participants

In general terms, a subculture is defined as a set of beliefs, values and norms which are shared and actively participated in by an appreciable minority of the people within a particular culture⁴. Heavy metal adheres to these parameters, being an individual, constantly evolving and, for the values and beliefs shared by its member’s, often-criticised subculture. Through its development, from conception in the late 1960s and early 1970s, its members have become notable through stylistic expression, particularly demeanour, music and dress⁵. These participants have created a distinct and powerful subculture that has established a relationship with its press and media that needs to be addressed.

Through its expansion, Heavy Metal has come to be seen as one of the most prolific and reviled musically based subcultures. Pre-conceived notions of the genre by mass or popular culture almost always paint a negative picture of the general conduct of its members, their dress and dance styles, as well as rituals. The genre is often linked with murders across the globe. During the three months, dating before and after the trial of Luke Mitchell who was convicted of murdering his 14 year old friend, Jodie Jones, it was revealed, through Lexis Nexis research that the Daily Mail produced 14 articles linking him with Heavy Metal super-star Marilyn Manson. They used quotes that showed his affiliation with the ‘shock rock’ singer regularly throughout the articles.

For instance, the David Herbert article quoted Luke Mitchell as saying(2005):

⁴ Jary, D. (1991) Collins Dictionary of Sociology. Harper Collins Publishers, Glasgow

⁵ *ibid.*

*"I love Manson! There's not one thing I like best 'bout him, just him! His attitude of Fuck you! This is me, I am!"*⁶

Additionally, Mitchell's obsession with sex was also linked with the seminal 90's Heavy Metal band Korn. The song A.D.I.D.A.S uses the name of the bands official sponsors as an acronym for 'all day I dream about sex'. The Daily Mail used Dr Ian Stephen, a forensic psychologist who was consulted on the hit TV shows Cracker and Prime Suspect, to further link Mitchell's psychotic behaviour with his Heavy Metal leanings:

Herbert quotes Dr Ian Stephen as saying(2005):

*"There's no remorse and indication of anything to do with the victim. Then he goes straight into the high-sex stuff. The sexual side is clearly an issue with him. The Korn track is a psychopath's song. It certainly sounds to me as if he's a young lad with a very, very serious problem. Very high risk and very dangerous."*⁷

Noted subversive cultural elements that rapidly came to the forefront of youth counter-culture during the 1960s, with the explosion of rock and roll, psychedelic music and the hippy movement were broadly accepted by the Heavy Metal subculture⁸. Traits such as rebellion, hedonism, violence and sexual freedom were not only accepted by Heavy Metal, but particular qualities, such as deviancy and rebellion, were to become its key concepts. At a United States Senate Committee hearing Dr. Joe Stuessy a professor of music at the University of Texas, San Antonio testified:

*"Today's heavy metal music is categorically different from previous forms of popular music. It contains the element of hatred and meanness of spirit. Its principal themes are extreme violence, extreme rebellion, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, perversion and Satanism. I know personally of no other form of popular music before which has had one of its central elements the element of hatred."*⁹

In regard to this study, it is necessary to acknowledge the attribute of extreme rebellion within the subculture in order to be able to assess the extent to which the subcultures magazines affect it. The principle aim of this study is to conduct research that will, to an appreciable level, be able show whether or not the subculture, branded rebellious, is or is not another puppet of its press.

⁶ Herbert, D. (2005). I am a vampire, boasts Jodi's killer in jail note. Daily Mail (London) February 28.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Weinstein, D. (2000) Heavy Metal music and its culture, revised edition. Da Capo Press, America

⁹ Testimony of Dr. Joe Stuessy , U.S Congress, *Recording Label (Senate Hearing 99-529)*, 117.

Rebellion is defined as, “dissent from an accepted moral code or convention of behavior, dress, etc”¹⁰. Such behaviour is typically inclusive of participants involved with the Heavy Metal scene. Unconventional dress codes, violent concert rituals, heavy drinking, drug abuse, aggressive and rebellious lyrics, encompass the entire subculture and those within it. For instance, the highly respected and seminal thrash metal band Slayer, are notorious for deviant, rebellious and sadistic lyrics. Lyrics from their song ‘Dittohead’ that featured on the Divine Intervention album of 1994 read:

*“Invitation to the game
Guns and blades and media tame
Every day more of the same
Murder, mayhem, anarchy
Now are all done legally
Mastermind your killing spree
Unafraid of punishment
With a passive government
There's nothing for you to regret
Nothing to regret”*¹¹

Inherent themes to the subculture are clearly denoted, topics of hatred, deviancy and rebellion regularly feature in bands that perform Heavy Metal. Further lyrics demonstrate themes of alcohol and drug abuse. The modern Heavy Metal band, The Haunted, show this with lyrics from the song Liquid Burns on their 2004 album Revolver:

*“It lingers. The taste of failure.
I Drink Drown.
The whisky burns away the pain.
A liquid clarity.
Through absolute corruption.
I reach a peace inside - I know what's mine.”*¹²

Lyrics with themes such as these are continuous and wide spread through the subculture, helping clarify the extent to which it is rebellious. Furthermore, the qualities set out by the lyrics are reinforced by a number of other typical subculture constructs. For instance,

¹⁰ Fowler, H.W. (2004). Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, Manchester

¹¹ Dittohead, performed by Slayer, Divine Intervention, 1994, Mercury records

¹² Liquid Burns, performed by The Haunted, Revolver, 2004, Centurymedia

the dress and dance of the subculture characterise themes of chaos and rebellion. Through being a participant in the subculture myself for a number of years and more recently involved in field research at an objective level, I have been able to witness this.

Participant observation conducted at both concerts and club venues hosting rock / Heavy Metal themed nights have enabled me to see and involve myself with, the subcultures typical dance rituals. These rituals revolve around themes of extreme violence, but also contain a high level of comradeship. The principal dance, known as 'Moshing', is defined as "knocking intentionally against another person at a rock concert"¹³, however, the actual event is much more violent. The 'mosh pit' where the moshing takes place involves crowds of up to 500 people continually running, punching, kicking, swinging and generally being violent for the duration of a song. The faster and heavier the song the more wild the 'pit' gets. During the course of this study I took a friend, whose choice of music is Indie, to a particularly heavy gig featuring the bands Poison the Well and Dillenger Escape Plan. He later concluded that "it looked like everyone was trying to beat the shit out of each other – it was one of the most violent things I have ever seen"¹⁴.

Styles of dress are typically seen as morbid, involving blacks or significantly dark colours and leather¹⁵. Accessories that are associated with the subculture also bear signs of violence and hatred, typically metal spiked attire with leather buckles will be worn on the wrists, forearms, neck and sometimes shins and shoulders. All this is used to create an image specifically for rejection by society, sadomasochistic themes are apparent, as Heavy Metal costume designer Laurie Greenman declares "S&M was Heavy Metal long before Heavy Metal was..."¹⁶

Through the evidence highlighted, it is clear to see that the subculture of Heavy Metal is rebellious. From its inception, participants have been involved in rituals and dress styles that signify everything that regular society rejects. Violence, rebellion, morbid styles of dress, alcohol and drug abuse are all rife within the subculture. Even music videos flout middle-class conventions to override the lack of sonic power brought about by a live stage presence¹⁷. It is because of these facts that it becomes pertinent to look at the subcultures press.

¹³ Hole, G. Hawker, S. (2004) Oxford English Dictionary, Sixth Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

¹⁴ Galbraith, R. (2005) Informal interview with participant A, Appendix C

¹⁵ Weinstein, D. (2000) Heavy Metal music and its culture, revised edition. Da Capo Press, America

¹⁶ Ibid

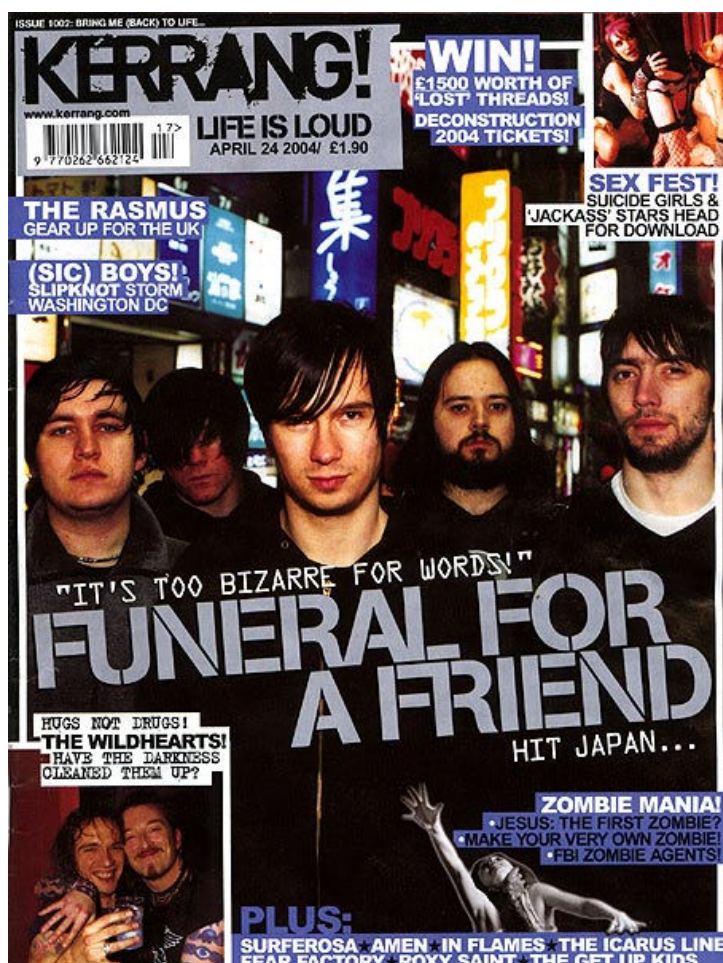
¹⁷ Ibid.

1.2 - Heavy Metal Magazines & Hypothesis

Magazines such as Kerrang! and Metal Hammer have been reporting on the subculture and playing a significant role for many years. Kerrang! first published in June of 1981, is currently the world's largest selling weekly hard rock magazine. Playing a major contributory role in the subculture, keeping it up-to-date and aware of what is taking place. It is highly respected, selling in excess of 60,000 copies a week¹⁸ and covering everything from live band reviews, band and band member interviews, latest band CD and DVD releases. It also plays host to discussion via a letters section in the magazine and via a large website that incorporates discussion forums.

¹⁸ Kerrang! Audit Bureau of Circulations. ABC Electronic. Accessed on 21 March 2005.
<<http://www.abc.org.uk/>>

Figure 1



Typical front cover of Kerrang!

Metal Hammer is also a forerunner in the distribution of information throughout the subculture, being a monthly rather than weekly magazine; it has a circulation of around 30,000¹⁹. Metal Hammer has the same basic elements as Kerrang! music reviews, both live and on CD, a letters section, band interviews, profiles and new up and coming bands, etc.

Ultimately, through their off the shelf sales as well as websites hits, Metal Hammer and Kerrang! have a commanding status, able to, one would say, manipulate the subculture, causing for instance the success or otherwise of a new album release through positive or negative reviews.

As noted, it is clear that the subculture does have rebellious tendencies, from dance to lyrics, to dress styles, the subcultures foundations revolve around creating an anti-society and anti-norm stance. The subcultures press, for the most part being Kerrang! and Metal

¹⁹ Metal Hammer. Audit Bureau of Circulations. ABC Electronic. Accessed on 21 March 2005. <<http://www.abc.org.uk/>>

Hammer, covers basically the entire subculture, its music and all its subgenres. In turn, it is the purpose of this study to research into whether or not the participants of a subculture distinct for its themes of rebellion, are puppets of their own press, thus opposing any apparent themes of core rebellion. Or, as the case may be, the subcultures press works for the people, informing, and highlighting current issues within it.

My hypothesis is therefore, that the magazines of the subculture, rather than acting as social primers for the subcultural participants, will act as outlets for information. In line with the rebellious traits of the participants, the magazines will report verbatim, not trying to influence, but acting as a conduit for information between the bands and their fans. In turn, their effect on the subculture will be small and coincidental, followers of any given band will take out and assimilate information as needed, or as the case may be, choose to ignore it entirely.

Chapter 2 – Methodologies: Metal Masters

Methodologies for Content Analysis of Magazines, Participant Observation of the Subculture, Questionnaires and Interviews Using Subculture Participants.

2.1 - The Magazines and Previous Research

As highlighted in my introduction, there are various reasons for choosing Kerrang! and Metal Hammer for research during the course of this study. First and foremost the magazines have a combined circulation of approximately 100,000²⁰, Kerrang! at 60,000+ and Metal Hammer hitting 30,000+. Furthermore, the results from the questionnaire research conducted show approximately 55% of subcultural participants regularly read a music magazine (see *Appendix C*). Through these statistics the conclusion that the magazines are respected within the subculture is inevitable, helping support the legitimacy of the magazines in this research. Metal Hammer, though having a smaller readership, is seen as more of an underground magazine than Kerrang! It will cover much more subversive elements of the subculture that fall under the umbrella term Heavy Metal, whereas Kerrang! will cover bands that are not necessarily considered to be Heavy Metal, such as the Stereophonics and the Mars Volta. The fact that Kerrang! is widely read and Metal Hammer has a 'core' readership helps cover as large an area as possible throughout the subculture, in essence highlighting, the greatest impact. The magazines also have a long history within the subculture itself, with a strong following that is supported by their longevity on the market. Kerrang! and Metal Hammers first dates of sale in 1981²¹ and 1982 respectively show a support and respect for them.

The fact that the success of persuasive attempts by the magazine is not only down to message factors, but also relies on the credibility of the source²² is further support for the use of these magazines. Although the study is not researching why there are effects brought about by the magazines, it is to see if there are. The fact that the magazines are highly respected and credible will either support or undermine the hypothesis by highlighting that they are a reliable benchmark from which to evaluate any subcultural changes.

It is essential to note that there are inevitable message effects within all text. All message models believe people take from what they read, favourably or unfavourably, and in turn

²⁰ Audit Bureau of Circulations. ABC Electronic. Accessed on 29 March 2005.
<<http://www.abc.org.uk/>>

²¹ Kerrang History. Kerrang Online. Accessed on 29 March 2005.
<<http://www.kerrang.com/nav?page=kerrang.about.history>>

²² Bradac, J. (1989). *Message Effects in Communication Science*. Sage Publications. London

this affects attitudes, beliefs, dress codes and such²³. The content of the messages, according to certain conditions, will stimulate these favourable or unfavourable thoughts in the reader in response to the issues and positions raised by the magazines. The evaluation of this information, whether positive or negative, will inevitably have affects on the subjects²⁴. Therefore, at the outset I have to assume that changes within the subculture are going to be seen and more importantly they are going to be seen in relation to the content of the magazines. However, the fact that the magazines do have an affect on the subculture is axiomatic; research performed by Hertog and Fan (1995) shows that news reporting does, almost categorically, affect the publics' opinion. The uniqueness of the subculture however, with its inherent rebellious traits, requires further detailed research into the extent of this affect.

As an example of the impact the media can have on public opinion, it is prudent to highlight the research of Hertog and Fan (1995) in their study, the 'Impact of Press Coverage on Social Beliefs'. In this study they set out to answer the question concerning whether or not news follows public opinion rather than leading it. They took the overall public opinion on one singular news story reported across four major US news papers, three magazines and the UPI Newswire²⁵. In order to gain the results they needed they collated the public opinion poll findings and then content analysed news stories on the same topic over the same period of time. This technique, to date, with a relationship and time ordering well established, came as close to establishing causality as has been seen in any content-analytic research²⁶. Using the Granger Causality Test, to examine over time relationships between the news coverage of AIDS and the public opinion, they found news content to predict later public opinion and that public opinion did not predict subsequent news stories²⁷.

In light of Hertog and Fan's causality study, my research will aim to establish the cause and effect between the Heavy Metal subcultures magazines and its participants. I will be able to produce a relatively accurate model of the relationship between the two through participant observation methods and content-analysing pages from Kerrang! and Metal Hammer magazines over the course of six months. The subsequent change from opinion polls, used in the Hertog and Fan study, to participant observation is for reasons associated with the rebelliousness of the subculture.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Neuendorf, K. (2002) The content analysis guide book. Sage publications. London

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

2.2 - Content Analysis Theory & Methodology

In order to extract the information contained within the magazines it is necessary to use varying techniques of content analysis. Content analysis is a quantitative and scientific method of research and in this regard issues are raised that include validity, reliability, sample representativeness and objectivity, all of which will be addressed during this chapter²⁸.

Fundamentally, the goal of a scientific study is to identify a causal relationship, a link between two things in which one causes the other. For the causal relationship to exist there should be a factual link between an event and a result²⁹. In regard to this study there is an apparent causal relationship between the magazines and the subculture, as is known, though inevitable mental message effects, the magazines affect the intrinsic characteristics of the subculture. However, finding a true and definite relationship, which is the final aim of this study, is ultimately very difficult to do because of the three criteria for causality. A relationship, a time ordering and the elimination of all other explanations has to be achieved. The time ordering and elimination of other explanations have to be addressed. The time ordering in respect of to X, the casual reactor, preceding Y, the outcome relies significantly on two factors, the release schedule of the magazines and the weekly attendance by people to rock nights, where, I will be conducting my participant observation. Kerrang! in particular, being the weekly magazine, has the most significance in this regard, being that it is released on the Wednesday of a week. It is plausible to assume, that by the Friday night rock event that I will be attending, the subcultures participants will have assimilated the information contained within the magazine. Any consequences of this information digestion will be integrated for their 'big night out', such as requesting songs, wearing band t-shirts, different styles of fashion and such.

The elimination of all other explanations of the causality, i.e. the other potential effectors of change within the subculture over the six month period, is absolutely unobtainable. The list of these other potential explanations is large. For instance, as well as being a magazine, Kerrang! also has a radio station, television channel, and as mentioned previously, a website. Any one of these three could affect a person into changing their style of clothes, buying one particular CD over another, or going to see a live band. These other media are significant within Heavy Metal due to the sonic aspects of the subculture, the music essentially being of importance over all other aspects such as

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid

clothing, life-style etc³⁰. Magazines overcome this milestone by featuring front cover CD's which will have tracks from bands featured in the magazine as well as other up-and-coming acts. This, however, fails to replicate the immediacy of a live television broadcast or radio news update. It is vital to list as many of these control variables as possible, although ultimately there are an uncountable range of resources because of the constant growth of the internet. Between dedicated television and radio broadcasts as well as various rock and Heavy Metal shows on other stations, such as Radio One's late night Rock Show or MTV's Headbangers Ball, the viewer has a vast arena of audio / visual information to assimilate. Furthermore the internet provides an immeasurable area in which the viewer can listen to bands' music, read reviews, watch music videos, see a recorded or live performance and read biographies and interviews. The information that all the specific mediums can broadcast, i.e. TV audio / visual, radio audio, magazines visual, the internet can provide free of charge. The constant proliferation of the internet means that taking into account all the websites is completely unrealistic. In turn, a broad ranging and all encompassing list of control variables is the only option.

These variables are as follows:

- Television programmes. e.g. MTV's 'Headbangers Ball'
- Dedicated Heavy Metal channels. e.g. Kerrang! TV, Scuzz TV
- Radio programmes. e.g. The Radio One Rock Show
- Dedicated Heavy Metal radio stations. e.g. Kerrang! Radio
- Internet based fanzines, magazines, band websites. e.g. www.drownedinsound.com
- All other magazines unaccounted for. e.g. Terrorizer, Rock Guitar

Due to these control variables, it is essentially impossible to reach a set casual link. Instead, it is appropriate to take a presumed cause and a presumed effect, these are my dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable being the magazine content and the independent variable being the subculture and all those within it. It is generally accepted that triangulation between various methods of study is the best route for testing hypothesised relationships between variables, which is the case in this study.

Quantitative experiment techniques will be involved with the independent and controlled variable, whilst within a survey it is presumed there is a randomisation of the sampling process to help raise external validity. Generalisability is implemented though the random sampling of the pages of the magazines that will be analysed. As is the case with most survey based research studies, there is a questionnaire involved, invariably used to

³⁰ Weinstein, D. (2000) Heavy Metal music and its culture, revised edition. Da Capo Press, America

measure dependent and control variables. In the case of this study, a questionnaire was used to create a sample study detailing the personality and behavioural traits of the subcultures participants. Ultimately creating for this study, an integrative model, linking content analysis with other data to show relationships with the source³¹.

As described above, the variables for this study are established and in order to collate the data held within my independent variable, the magazines, it is necessary to define the units of data collection that I will use. A coding book is needed to define these units, this code book is also used as the sampling frame for this study, which is essentially the list that identifies every unit within the analytical target.

In creating this code book there are many considerations to be dealt with. Firstly through questionnaire results obtained via the sample study it becomes apparent which parts of the magazine the general populous of the subculture read. A massive 40% of the total amount that took part in the questionnaire survey said they paid most attention to the gig adverts at the back of the magazine (*see Appendix C*). The gig adverts have to be discounted as there is no way of measuring their impact through the participant observation stage of the study. Instead the reviews section, interviews sections, letters sections and all other features that are in the magazine will be taken into account. The questionnaire results show approximately 26% of the participants pay most of their attention to the features within the magazine after gig adverts, this was the second largest result. The CD reviews coming third having 14%, gig reviews and letters each having 10% (*see Appendix C*). In order to analyse correctly the pages that are randomly selected they need to be broken down into measurable units.

For the units, or variables, to be identified for a study it is necessary to become grounded in the subject, if the subject matter was soap operas for instance it is necessary to become a soap fan³². In the case of this study, as mentioned, I am already deeply entrenched within the subculture having been a participant for almost a decade. In this regard the longevity of my participation within the subculture gives me the necessary background knowledge to legitimately choose the correct units of analysis.

Variables that need to be considered on a typical page are as follows:

- Main band featured on page: for example, 'Hatebreed'
- Use of photos

³¹ Ibid

³² Neuendorf, K. (2002) *The content analysis guide book*. Sage publications. London

- Unique but entrenched heavy metal imagery used, e.g. skulls (if so what of?)
 - Tattoos displayed (if so what of?)
 - Band logos displayed (if so what of?)
 - Piercings displayed (if so what of?)
 - Specific apparel adorned by band members (if so what is it)
 - Could propagate acquired image of metal
 - Other comments
- Use of text
 - Bands praised 1-5 (5 being heavily praised)
 - Bands criticised, 1-5 (5 being heavily criticised)
 - Information on band on a scale of 1-10 (10 being lots)
 - Specific band logos used in text
 - Powerful use of adjectives
 - Frequent use of nouns
 - Overall page content
 - Heavy on images and text (complex)
 - Lack of text (simple)
 - Lack of photos (simple)
 - Overall feel of page (subjective, objective)

These units are essentially the breaking up of communications into bits³³, the page of the magazine broken down into its core elements that can be taken into the field and matched up to observations made, or as the case may be, not matched up. In the case of this study, the breaking up of the page into words, characters, themes, photographs and such was an ‘Emic’ process. The units had to be discovered and created through an intuitive process so that they were legitimate for matching up to the subcultures notable changes³⁴. Through this process of discovery, some units that were noted, but rejected, were units such as, “are dark images used?”. The page chosen could have used principally dark images to convey the character of a band, propagating the trait of Heavy Metal listeners wearing dark clothes; however, this would have been impossible to measure, as most people at a Heavy Metal club wear black.

It is necessary to evaluate the quality of information from each component of this study, as with any study, in order to create reliable research. The links between the message

³³ Carrey, T. (1971). Content Analysis, a review essay. Historical methods news letter. Vol 23. pp21 – 22.

³⁴ Berry, J. (1989). Imposed Emics, Etics and derived Etics. Sage Publications. Newbury Park

variables also need to be taken into account. In this study it is clear there is first order linkage³⁵, this is according to the integrative mode of content analysis. Within the first order linkage evaluation model this study falls under 'Type A' one to one linkage, in that the messages analysed in the content analysis are the ones assessed by the receivers under study. In this regard, the articles that I come to analyse through random sampling will be the articles that the general populous of the subculture will be reading.

As mentioned previously, this study will be using a simple random sampling technique, this is seen as the best way to generalize to a whole population³⁶. The process will involve a hat filled with labelled numbers from two to thirty five, from these I will pick out five numbers for each magazine. These five numbers will each represent the page that will be analysed. After the five numbers for one magazine have been taken out, they will be replaced in order to make sure each unit, or page, has an equal chance to be picked out for each magazine. This will create a generalising effect, representing as close as possible the random selection of pages by the subcultures participants. This process will also have a degree of stratified sampling, this is needed in order to eliminate the gig adverts at the back, which as mentioned previously, are impossible to observe the effects of during the course of a night. In essence, the pages will be stratified according their likely influence on the subculture for the purposes of this study. Furthermore the sample size itself was already preset, as I knew the length of the study and in turn the amount of magazines that would be released, i.e. twenty four Kerrang's! and three Metal Hammers over the six month period of the study.

The measurement techniques for the coding scheme for this study are largely qualitative and not numerals, although some numeral evaluations are used. This is necessary for the second half of the research, the participant observation, to be successful. For instance, in order to observe any correlation between the magazine and the subculture, it is necessary to know what images were displayed within the magazine, e.g. band members, t-shirt designs, etc. Noting that there were, for example, six t-shirts displayed will be of no use during the active part of participant observation. It is necessary to note the exact designs of t-shirts, or other clothing, displayed within the magazine to see, in turn, if any members of the subculture have taken it upon themselves to copy their potential hero/hero's.

³⁵ Op.cit

³⁶ Gantz, D. (1996). Principles of environmental sampling, second edition. Oxford University press. Oxford

Inaccuracies can occur during the measurement process for several reasons, for instance, coder fatigue, coder misinterpretations, coder inattention and general recording errors³⁷. Generally though, these are more likely to occur within human coding if there are multiple coders, in the case of this study I am the only coder and in this instance, I can check levels of fatigue and such to make sure they are not a problem. To gain results that are as reliable as possible it is necessary to question if the measurement procedures would create the same results if conducted on multiple occasions. Regarding this study, given that the random sampling technique meant that the same page was analysed on two occasions, the coding book would ensure I gained the same results. Also, the fact that I am the only coder would ensure that the same results were achieved.

2.3 - Participant Observation Theory & Methodology

Participant observation is an indispensable research method to collect data in a qualitative fashion, it is a reliable and widely used method of obtaining information on groups in work settings, informal groupings in small communities, or the social life of groups of friends³⁸ and is one for the principle methods of research for this study. Through participant observation is it possible to describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur and why³⁹. The technique of observation is adaptable under extraneous circumstances. For instance, participant observation can allow for the researcher to include elements that are counted as separate methods in their own right, in the case of this research, unstructured interviews and observation of physical features of settings⁴⁰.

Roethlisberger and Dickinson discovered (1939) human beings, like animals, behave differently when they know they are being studied, especially when the researcher is obtrusively manipulating the environment. In this study I am a complete participant, creating as little impact as necessary through my role as an insider. This role is defined by my setting and previous knowledge of the subculture, the insider role also offers the distinct advantage of being, in all ways, a normal part of human interaction and therefore fairly unobtrusive⁴¹.

A common problem with observation is that the researcher has to remain an observer, or become fully involved with subculture. Becoming heavily involved with a subculture,

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lewis Beck, M. (2004). Sage Encyclopaedia of social science research methods Vol. 2. Sage Publications. London

³⁹ Jorgensen, D.(1990) Participant observation, a methodology for human studies. Sage Publications. London.

⁴⁰ Op.cit

⁴¹ Op.cit

may cause the researcher to 'go native', whereby they do not pick up on the details as they become mundane and everyday. Also, by the end of the research they may find themselves identifying strongly with the subculture and celebrating it, rather than critically reporting it⁴². As previously stated I have been deeply involved with the Heavy Metal subculture for a number of years. Prior to this study I was unaware of any theories relating to subcultures, so I was able to experience it without any of the 'restrictions and distortions of theory'⁴³. Now with my knowledge of the theories I will observe with a more critical eye, hopefully reducing the 'going native' effect. Laud Humphreys (1970) 'Tearoom Trade: a study of homosexual encounters in public places' takes an anthropological and ethnological stance, hypothesizing that it is only possible to fully understand a group by becoming one of them.

Participant observational methodology encourages the researcher to begin with the immediate experience of the human life in concrete situations and settings, making the most of whatever opportunities are present⁴⁴. For instance, Scott M. (1968) 'The Racing Game' took advantage of his long time interest in horse racing to conduct a participant observational study of horse racing. Depending on the nature and extent of the participant involvement, the researcher's immediate experience can be an extremely valuable source of data⁴⁵. In the case of this study, my long time involvement within the Heavy Metal subculture, interest in the music and its magazines gives me an advantage over a researcher who has no interest or experience with the subculture. I have relied on my in-depth knowledge of the settings, people, trends, music, etc to determine important research factors such as which environment to conduct the participant observation in.

The choice of setting is generally based on informed decision and, as is the case with this study, also sometimes based on opportunity and convenience⁴⁶. The city of Lincoln has a relatively small and close-knit alternative / Heavy Metal community and subculture, and for this reason there are not a plethora of venues to observe. For the duration of the participant observation I will be using non-probability sampling, this depends on the researchers ability to make decisions about what to observe based on constraints such as opportunity, personal interest, resources and, most importantly, the problem to be investigated. I estimate that through my personal experience with the subculture that these observations will be appropriate and representative of the phenomenon studied.

⁴² Milton, G. (1997). *The Concept of the Sub-Culture and Its Application*. Routledge. London.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Whyte, W. (1984). *Learning from the Field: A Guide from Experience*. Sage Publications. Newbury Park.

⁴⁵ Jorgensen, D.(1990) *Participant observation, a methodology for human studies*. Sage Publications. London.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

The two clubs that I will be using for this study are as follows:

- **Location 1: Sugarcubes Nightclub, 1 West Parade, Lincoln.**

Sugarcubes is the one main independent club that has no affiliations, with large chains or franchisees in Lincoln. Located just off the main strip of clubs and venues in the city centre it has a varied history of musical affiliations but has always been broadly associated with the alternative scene and biker culture. In the three years I have personally been frequenting the club I have become very familiar with its regular patrons, what type of person to expect and on what frequency they generally go to the club as well as their music tastes. Due to these factors I am able to gain a great deal of understanding of the subculture, note and record in detail what, if any, changes are happening over a prolonged period of time.

Sugarcubes will be the primary venue for conducting my participant observation. Weekly Friday nights are themed 'rock and metal' nights, which include a wide selection of music that falls under the umbrella term of Heavy Metal and also punk rock. The patrons on these nights vary in age and social standing, but on the whole are between the ages of 18 and 25, middle class students, or locals with a relatively large amount of disposable income for CD's, clothes and other subculture orientated accessories such as chains and belts. Primarily they fall into the economic bracket that allows them to purchase on a regular basis a magazine associated with the genre such as Kerrang! and they also have the funds to change their styles of dress and musical taste if they so choose, inline with what the magazine has published that particular week or month.

- **Location 2: Po Na Na, 280 High Street, Lincoln, LN2 1JG.**

Po Na Na is a franchised club located in the city centre of Lincoln. This is a backup venue for my research in case I cannot attend Sugarcubes on the Friday night. Not primarily a rock / alternative venue their main weekend nights involve a wide variety of chart music, popular with the student crowd. However, every Wednesday the venue holds a themed rock night called 'Barracudas' at which they play a varied play list of heavy metal, punk rock and other music types that are of Heavy Metal or punk orientation. I have been going to this venue for quite some time and know it is a popular 'haunt' within the culture for its midweek position on the calendar, cheap drinks and the fact that the venue often hosts local live bands.

As with Sugarcubes I am familiar with the patrons of this club on the themed rock night. Again, from going to this venue over the last three years I have built up knowledge of the

type of people that attend the rock night, their habits and such. As previously stated the Heavy Metal community within Lincoln is relatively small and thus on the whole the people who attend Po Na Na's mid-week are roughly from the same groups that attend Sugarcubes at the weekend. In this regard, I again know that they are 18-25 year old males and females with a degree of disposable income who read the subcultures magazines on a relatively regular basis. The selection of a setting is interrelated with the problem studied thus, Po Na Na and Sugarcubes are appropriate for my observations of changes within the subculture, held alongside my content analysis of the magazines

There is no absolute guarantee against inaccurate findings due to possibly having a limited sight or experience during the actual participant observation. I realise that the observation possible is sensitive to my role within the subculture and that it is often difficult or impossible to decide clearly and unambiguously what, if any, particular viewpoint is 'correct'⁴⁷. However, my role as a member of the subculture, a practitioner so to speak, allows me to gain a wide and comprehensive scope.

Ethical problems are an issue within the participant observational research of this study. Aside from physical harm to subjects, ethical codes generally prohibit violations of peoples right to privacy, confidentiality and freedom from exploitation⁴⁸. However, within participant observation, it is argued that the participant observer interacts with people under the ordinary conditions of their daily lives, much like any other participant and thus the research technique does not involve humans as subjects⁴⁹. The participant observer's interest in research, though different, is not unlike any number of special interests people have in interacting with one another. Consequently, the participant observer has no more or less of an ethical obligation to the people encountered in the course of research than he or she would have under other everyday life circumstances⁵⁰. This argument does not totally free me, as a researcher using participant observation, from all responsibilities. In relation to informal and formal interviews it is necessary to inform the participants of where their answers are going to be used and to reassure them they will remain anonymous. In the case of this study I have created a general guide, informing the participant of the type of research being conducted and issues raised, as well as, advising them to contact information me should they have any further concerns or general queries (*see Appendix C*).

⁴⁷ Silverman, D. (1997). *Qualitative research, theory method and practice*. Sage publications. London.

⁴⁸ Jorgensen, D.(1990) *Participant observation, a methodology for human studies*. Sage Publications. London..

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Robson, C. (1993). *Real World Research*. Blackwell Publications. Oxford.

In participant observation it is exceptionally difficult to establish reliability by the conventional process of repeated usage of the technique. If I were to re-enter a social situation and observe using the same methods of notation, my results would be entirely different, but given that it does not use measurement in the conventional sense, reliability is a false concept within the technique⁵¹. One cannot define reliability in a conventional sense based on dependable and trustworthy findings through different concept indicators, such as questionnaires and informal interviews, which, in the case of this study, are being used.

It is noted that the human memory is undependable, it is therefore vital during the course of participant observation to make notes and records of events attended, roles undertaken, etc, this is particularly relevant within this study because of its nature. The participant observations take place in fast paced arenas, where mass alcohol consumption and drug taking are usually rampant and although my role within the subculture would not necessarily make it a requirement to partake in such activities, it is inevitable that alcohol consumption will happen. The participation in drug taking is usually, as observed in certain instances, not necessary and at the outset it is essential to state that, I as an observer, will abstain from any such illegal activities.

Note taking will be done by hand with a pen and paper pad. Tape recordings are almost impossible in the field, as a precursor for a venue to play host to a Heavy Metal night is extremely loud music. Notes will then be typed up onto computer for easy future reference as well as safe keeping. Formal and informal interviews however, can take place at a specified location, for instance, an informal interview with a subculture participant can take place in a quieter area of the club where recording equipment is able to be used. Formal interviews, with a member of a large band for instance, conventionally take place prior to a gig or concert when it is quiet and with little distraction.

Informal interviews are part of this study's participant observation, unlike formal interviews it is not necessary to ask the same questions each time, I can adapt to the situation and my interpretation as to how I believe the participant is reacting to the questioning⁵². If they are significantly defensive and displaying traits of rebelliousness, in that they want to somehow sabotage the research, I can either try to coax them into answering by re-wording the general line of questioning, or walk away and conduct the interview with another person. Formal interviews are put into place within appropriate

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Jorgensen, D.(1990) Participant observation, a methodology for human studies. Sage Publications. London.

arenas of the metal scene. For instance, an interview with a rock star or member of a large band is particularly difficult to arrange because of tight tour schedules, in this case it is necessary to have a structured schedule of questions to run through in the limited time. If it were not for the rebellious nature of the subculture, it would be appropriate to ask many more questions during the course of the participant observation. The 'ethnographic interview', sets out a series of different questioning types⁵³. However, questions that would not necessarily cause people to state an evaluative judgement may naturally do so to the participants of the Heavy Metal subculture, mainly because of their intrinsically rebellious nature.

During the participant observation I will be making focused and unfocused observations. For instance, unfocused observations will include facts such as the people in general, any connection between attire worn and content of the magazines, any connections seen at all with their actions, tattoos, ages genders, general numbers of people. Focused observations will pick out and define clearly any connections. For example, what type of music is being played, the DJ's set and request lists, specific t-shirts being worn by people, suits, shirts ties, anything of that nature, or anything unusual or striking about the participants in respect of the magazines content.

⁵³ Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Rinehart and Winston. New York.

Chapter 3 – Research Outcomes: Refuse, Resist

Research Outcomes: Content Analysis, Participant Observation, Questionnaires and Interviews

3.1 – Results: Content Analysis

As highlighted in chapter 2 the information for this study was collated over a six month period, using a coding scheme developed with the concepts and phenomenon of the study in mind. The outcome was a comprehensive set of data that explored 120 pages of Kerrang! magazine and 24 pages of Metal Hammer over this time scale. The data extracted from the pages selected at random showed which bands are being covered, to what extent they are being praised or criticised, how much information is given on them and if they are displaying any specific clothing styles. It was proposed during the development of the coding scheme that if a page's contents featured the aforementioned criteria in a highly positive manner, such as a CD review with a high rating, or an interview in which the journalist praises the band, a possible effect could be seen within the subculture. For instance, the content analysis spreadsheet for the 23rd October 2004 shows that the '80's Matchbox B-line Disaster' featured on the second randomly sampled page, that being page 26 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



Page 26, October 23rd 2004 Kerrang! Featuring 80's Matchbox B-line Disaster

Strong adjectives and nouns are used in the text to give praise and a relatively high degree of information about the band, the page is also heavy on both text and images

to gain the attention of the reader. Furthermore, the band are featured wearing clothing of a specific nature, in their shirt and tie style, which, as will be discussed later, is one of the more significant changes that was observed during the six month research period. Previous research in respect of media effects have shown that the media can be as far reaching as to become a catalyst for indulgence in acts of violence. For instance, according to the dis-inhibition hypothesis, watching violence on television may legitimize the use of violence by the viewer in real life⁵⁴. Research performed by the Glasgow media group has also shown that even though people may 'resist' the dominant message of a television programme, it may still have the power to convey facts and to influence their ideas, assumptions, and attitudes⁵⁵. It is noted therefore that the media can affect people, in turn it is plausible to assume that a participant of the subculture may be influenced by the magazine. For instance for their 'big night out' of the week, they would perhaps show affiliation with a band extensively featured in the magazine through wearing specific band merchandise such as a hooded top or t-shirt. In addition, the high levels of information may give way to requests for the DJ to play songs by the band or in fact the band may already be on the DJ's set list for that night. Also, the specific 'look' of the band, tight jeans, shirt tie, could be replicated by their fans. Evidence from the magazines, such as that featured above, was taken into the field during the participant observational research to be analysed alongside the subculture itself.

There was one distinct theme established during the analysis of the magazines that was able to be applied during the participant observational phase of research. The theme revolved around the particular 'look' and clothing style of bands. As mentioned in the introduction, the clothing style of the Heavy Metal subculture as a whole generally revolves around dark colours, jeans, and a t-shirt that usually supports the logo of the participants band of choice, signifying allegiance⁵⁶. Throughout the content analysis phase of the research it became apparent that more and more bands were choosing to adopt a 'smarter' style, usually revolving around a shirt and tie and in some cases a suit jacket. The band, 'My Chemical Romance', which featured regularly in Kerrang! during the six month research period, are just one example of this style, see Figure 3.

⁵⁴ Bryant, J. (2002). *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. America.

⁵⁵ Eldridge, J. (1997). *The Mass Media and Power in Modern Britain*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

⁵⁶ Kotarba, J. (1987). *Styles of Adolescent Participation in an All-Ages Rock 'n' Roll Nightclub: An Ethnographic Analysis*. *A Journal of Youth and Society*. Vol. 1. pp398 – 417.

Figure 3



Page 30, October 30th 2004, Kerrang! Featuring: My Chemical Romance

'My Chemical Romance', although being popular and having a relatively wide following within the subculture, are a particularly young band on the scene. This lack of longevity may in turn reduce their potential influence on the subcultures participants. However, there were examples of more significant band members adopting the 'smart' look. For instance, in Figure 4 below Axel Rose, former lead singer from infamous metal band 'Guns and Roses', supports the abovementioned smarter look.

Figure 4



Page 29, December 4th 2004, Kerrang! Featuring: Axel Rose

These two factors combined, new and old Heavy Metal stars seemingly shifting to a smarter look, would suggest a possible change in the subculture. In turn it became vital to look for participants adopting this style amongst the younger sections in particular during participant observation.

Overall the coding scheme showed that bands featured were heavily praised with complex pages, featuring large amounts of both text and photos, to gain the readers interest. Rarely were the bands criticised, especially when in an interview or feature situation and although bands were given bad CD reviews, the journalist would generally offer reasons as to why the CD deserved a bad review, for instance, the production qualities being significantly worse than on previous efforts, etc.

Although my hypothesis states that I do not think that the magazines will generally have an impact on the subculture, there is room to assume, through the results of the content analysis that there will be. Pages designed for high impact and quick diffusion of information leads to the assumption that the members of the subculture will, once having assimilated the pages contents, use this information in anyway they see fit, more specifically through clothing, music requests and such.

3.2 – Results: Participant Observation

The participant observational section of research was conducted in an on going effort alongside the content analysis. As previously, mentioned the primary magazine for the content analysis, Kerrang! is released on a Wednesday and because of this the majority of the participant observation was carried out on the following Friday, at the primary setting, Sugar Cubes rock club in Lincoln city centre. *Appendix B* has the condensed and transcribed notes from the 24 weeks of research conducted.

The rationale behind the participant observational research was to see if there could be any relationship found between the content of the magazines and the subculture itself. For instance, the results from a page of analysis could show that a specific band was showered with praise, the assumption therefore would be that given band would perhaps be recognised by the subcultural participants through merchandise, music requests and such on their primary night out for the week. Although this premise is not infallible, there is scope to suggest that it is indeed possible. For instance, the powerful imagery used in magazines such as Kerrang! and Metal Hammer could act as a socializing agent. This visual imagery provided by the media can have a powerful impact on attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours, since it can contribute meanings and associations entirely apart and of much greater significance⁵⁷.

However, during the course of the observations it became apparent there was a major lack of correlation between the content of the magazines and the nature of the subculture. In my hypothesis I stated that this would perhaps be the case, primarily because of the rebellious nature of the subculture. The participants not wanting to be seen as, or to think of themselves as conforming would try to create a look as individual as they could, going against a popular image the magazine may be putting across.

However, the results from the content analysis showed the clothing of the subcultures bands gradually shifting to a smarter, tidier look. When attempting to observe if this shift in style had taken any affect on the subculture there were minimal but important findings. At the start of the research there was no observable evidence of this change having taken hold in the subculture, at least within the element that frequents Sugar Cubes night club. For instance, an extract from the diary states:

⁵⁷ Kang, M. (1997). The Portrayal of Women's Images in Magazine Advertisements: Goffman's Gender Analysis Revisited. In: Sex Roles: A Journal of Research. Vol. 37. pp1 – 24

“Although shirts and ties were again featured in the magazine on band members, there was no-one that I saw at the club following this seemingly increasing trend of rockers.” (Diary of participant observation – October 22nd 2004, see appendix B)

However, as the research progressed and the magazines continued to feature bands in a positive manner, who were also seen to be adopting the ‘smarter look’, there were members of the subculture that began to adopt this style. For instance, a diary excerpt, from a week where I was unable to attend the primary research location of Sugar Cubes and so conducted the research at Po Na Na’s rock night, states:

“Considerable amounts of people in Po Na Na trying to replicate his [Ian Watkins, Lostprophets lead singer] style. The ‘Emo’ style of smart shirt, sometimes with a tie, tighter jeans than usual and hair over one eye is becoming increasingly popular.” (Diary of participant observation – November 10th 2004, see appendix B)

According to the content analysis results for that week the band Lostprophets were heavily featured. This band is noted for its popularity and significant respect within the subculture, BPI chairman Peter Jamieson is quoted as saying “the UK music industry was going through a "strong patch" thanks to high sales of albums by rock bands The Darkness and Lostprophets”⁵⁸. The observation of an increasingly large fringe sector of the subculture choosing to dress in the ‘smarter’ style was the only constant correlation between the subculture itself and the content of the magazines.

This fact slightly undermines my hypothesis. The fact that content analysis results could be observed within the subculture in the form of a particular clothing style being adopted by its participants (even if it was notably small) does suggest some form of link. Further weeks observational notes bring up this correlation on a repeated basis. For instance:

“Even though ‘Judas Priest’ released an album that gained 5 K’s (Maximum rating in magazine) no one showed support for them through clothing or song requests. Mar Volta featured in the magazine looking ‘emo’ with shirt and tie, this was replicated by emo kids and other fans in the club.” (Diary of participant observation – January 7th 2005, see appendix B)

⁵⁸ “Downloads outsell DVDs and vinyl”. BBC News website, 10 February, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/music/3475337.stm>

Furthermore:

“Baggy trousers and a t-shirt are, on the whole, still a prerequisite for any discerning metal fan, however, for the fringe sections of the subculture such as ‘emo’ and ‘NuPunk’ a shirt and tie seem to be the fashion of choice. A connection between the magazines and music and attire of the subculture was minimal, but generally the ‘emo’ fringe section of the subculture is picking up.” (Diary of participant observation – January 28th 2005, see appendix B)

Overall however, as stated, the general correlation between the two was minimal. Throughout the six month period of field observations, extremely few instances showed a direct link between what featured in the magazine and the subcultures styles and preferences. In one instance when I thought I had my first direct link I questioned the participant in the club. He refused to acknowledge any link, as my diary notes show:

“A male approximately 18 years old was wearing exactly the same t-shirt as Slash (Ex Guns and Roses guitarist) was in the magazine. This could have been a categorical display of influence, but after asking the wearer where he got the t-shirt he said he picked it up in New York the summer before, he had failed to buy Kerrang! that week”. (Diary of participant observation – January 14th 2005, see appendix B)

3.3 – Results: Interviews

During the six month research period, a series of formal and informal interviews were conducted, not only with subcultural participants, but also members of large rock bands where possible. The result of this research proves valuable in supporting my hypothesis as well as the premise that the subculture is intrinsically rebellious.

The informal interviews were conducted with participants of the subculture as well as outsiders in order to establish their ideas, thoughts, attitudes and opinions⁵⁹. In line with ethical conduct, the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed at the time the interview took place. However, for reasons of validity, it is appropriate to state respondents were between the ages of 17 and 21, were male or female and were either involved with the subculture to an appreciable degree, or were outsiders with a certain amount of experience with the subculture, for instance they had friends who listen to Heavy Metal.

⁵⁹ Berger, A. (2000). Media Communications and Research Methods. Sage Publications. London

The interviews with outsiders to the subculture provided a good insight into how it is perceived from a different angle, particularly in regards to its rebellious traits. For instance, when asked if she thought Heavy Metal was rebellious or deviant when looking at it from an outsider perspective, a 16 year old female, answered:

“I think that stereotypically the heavy metal subculture does have a reputation for being rebellious. Personified really by the character of the criminal in [the movie] the Breakfast Club, it seems to be taken that heavy metal is the genre of music preferred by those more rebellious of people.” (Informal interview with an outsider to the subculture, 24/02/05, conducted at the Falcon pub / bar, see Appendix C)

The more formal and structured interviews performed with ‘rock stars’ and band members gave justified and experience based views on how they feel the magazines influence the subculture. One particularly notorious and outspoken band member was David ‘Ginger’ Walls, lead singer with The Wildhearts. As a band they have always been known for their decadent and rebellious behaviour. For example, after Kerrang! spread rumours of a band member leaving in 1995 they proceeded to break into the offices, destroy computers and generally cause a ruckus. When asked how he felt about the effect of the magazines on the subculture he responded:

“Well, depends on what magazine you’re talking about. Something like Metal Hammer know who they’re catering for and so write predominately positive stuff otherwise it won’t get featured in the magazine and that’s pretty cool...but the press can’t stop a band from making it, I mean just because for years they haven’t featured the Wildhearts they haven’t been able to stop us from getting popular. You can’t stop the kids from getting into something, they haven’t got that much power, people aren’t that blind... The magazines don’t really have that much control over people, because people do have a social life and magazines are only one day a week.” (David ‘Ginger’ Walls, The Wildhearts, 4/10/2004, conducted at Nottingham Rock City, see Appendix C)

The general attitude that came across from people who could be classed as the ‘academics’ of Heavy Metal, was one of indifference for the magazines, with the subculture continually taking a dominant role when being compared to them. However, there were opinions that suggest the magazines do have influence, for instance, Ryan Primack lead guitarist in the heavy metal band ‘Poison the Well’ said:

“I think they do have influence, but the only reason they have any is because kids let them have it. I think people are too apathetic to make up their own damn minds. People walk around saying, MTV is a demon, big record labels are the demon, but the demon is the people...everyone’s trying to sell the next big image.” (Ryan Primack, Poison the Well, 31/01/05, conducted at Nottingham Rock City, see Appendix C)

Overall the attitudes portrayed gave the impression that the magazines have little influence on the participants of the subculture. If indeed they do have influence, it is then the fault of the participant failing to correspond with the ‘individualistic and rebellious’⁶⁰ nature of the subculture and not because of intentional messages contained within the magazines.

3.4 – Results: Questionnaires

Over the six month research period a total of 100 questionnaires were completed by both male and female participants of the subculture between the ages of 16 and 21. The questionnaires were self administered⁶¹ at a selection of places with particularly high rates of Heavy Metal followers, comprising ten closed ‘multiple choice’ questions. From the start, it was apparent that due to the rebellious nature of the subculture questionnaires could not be relied upon to any significant extent. It was supposed the participants may intentionally answer the questions in a ‘negative’ manner, deliberately providing misleading data in order to remain within their rebellious state of mind. However, during the course of the questionnaire research I made observational notes regarding the participants behaviour, through this it became apparent that the individualistic nature of the participants meant they were quite willing to take part. For instance:

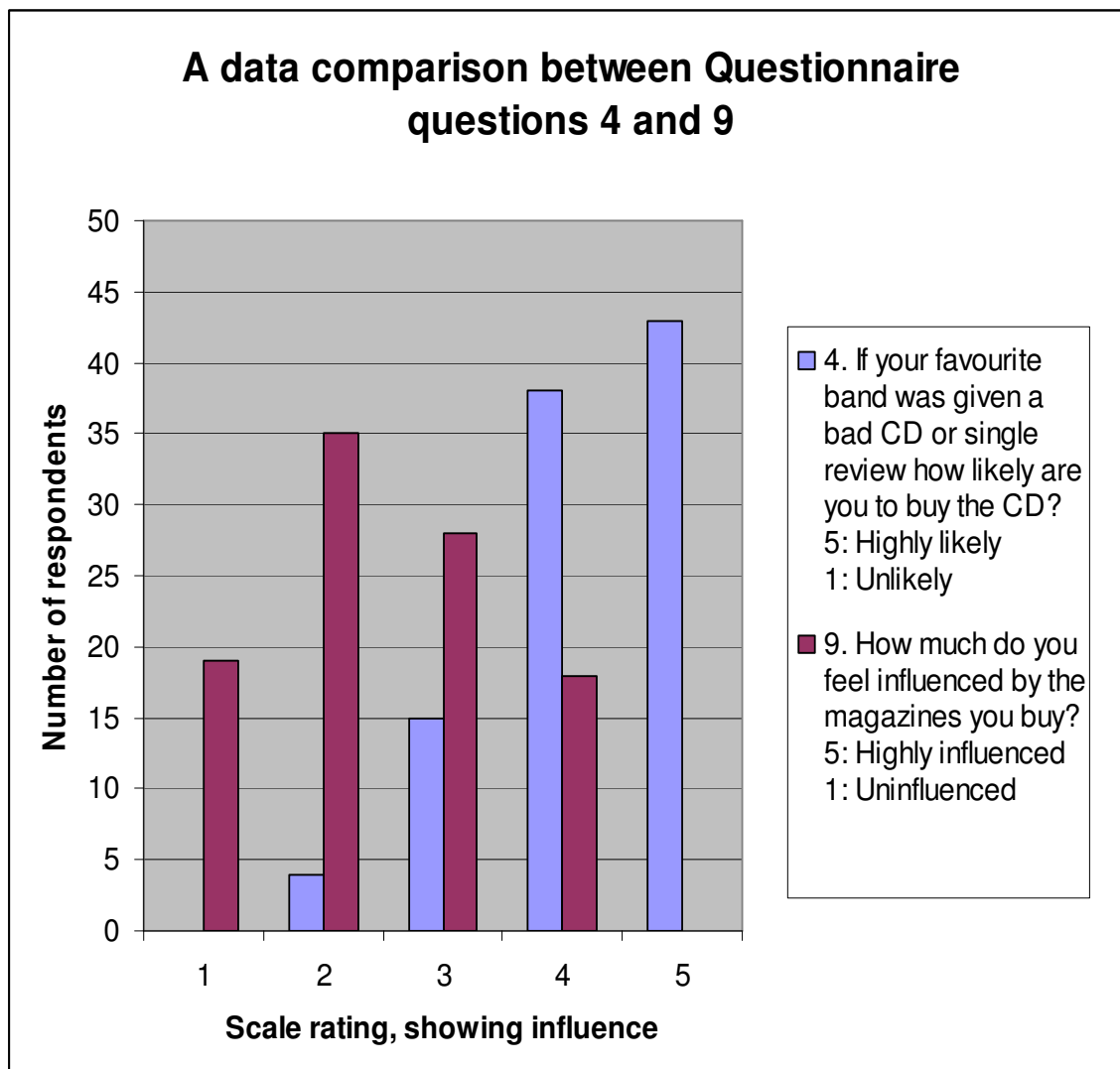
“Most commonly the setting for the completing of the questionnaires was in groups of two or three. During this time the participants do not and were not, seen to confer about the questions. Alongside rebellion often comes a sense of individuality. They do however talk about their responses after they’ve finished filling in.” (Observational notes made during questionnaire research, 21/01/04, undisclosed location, see Appendix C)

⁶⁰ Villeneuve, M. (2001). Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Suicidal Risk. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. Vol. 30, pp1 – 14.

⁶¹ Lewis Beck, M. (2004). *Sage Encyclopaedia of social science research methods* Vol. 2. Sage Publications. London

The overall results show interesting findings, for instance, when quizzed about which part of the magazine they pay most attention to 40% said the ‘Gig Advert’ section at the back of the magazine. This would suggest that the magazines are principally used for the distribution of information rather than being used to refine opinion and personal image, having little impact on the subculture other than letting the participants know which bands are touring. Further results from different questions highlight this further, for example, see figure 1.4 below:

Table 1



Bar graph comparing Questionnaire questions 9 and 4

The two questions compared in the above graph demonstrate how small the impact of the magazines is. For instance, the data that shows 82% of the participants feel considerably uninfluenced by the magazines they read, this is corroborated by the fact that the participants are still highly likely to buy their bands CD if it is given a bad review.

The overall results from the questionnaires, which can be seen in *Appendix C* alongside the full list of questions, show that the participants have little respect for the magazines. They tend to think the subculture is rebellious and feel they are, to a degree, uninfluenced by what they read and for the main part, choose to concentrate their reading of the magazine on adverts for touring bands.

Chapter 4 – Conclusions: Rage Against The Machine

Drawing Conclusions Based Upon the Results Collected Through the Various Research Methods Used Throughout the Study.

4.1 – The subculture and its Press

As has been shown through the research conducted in this study, subcultural change is a slow process. During the six months that the research took place very little change was actually noted within the subculture, at least in the section observed at Sugarcubes and to a lesser extent Po Na Na night club. This does not necessarily mean the magazines have absolutely no affect at all on the subculture. Indeed, there were incidences noted in which there was a correlation between what was analysed in a magazine, such as Kerrang! and what was seen within the settings I chose to conduct my research, such as Sugar Cubes on a Friday night.

The results of the research overall though are not surprising, the fact that on the whole there was very little relationship between the two was predicted in my hypothesis. The magazines were expected to be seen as outlets of information, reporting verbatim what happens, rather than social primers for shaping the subculture through the news they feature. As the research progressed this expectation was largely justified, highlighted by facts such as questionnaire participants reporting they used the magazines primarily to find out about concert information (*see Appendix C*). The intrinsic rebellious nature of the subcultures participants combined with the transcendent status of the bands and their front men⁶² prohibits, at a fundamental level, the magazines being anything other than conduits for information. Furthermore, studies specifically into advertising have shown that even if a message is sufficiently delivered, it is not clear whether the audience will actively absorb it⁶³. Heavy Metal magazines weighty in the use of images and text are very much like adverts for bands and music, the fact that there is little correlation between their contents and the subculture could be through a lack of ‘absorption’.

This helps highlight the fact that there are an impossible amount of variables associated with this research which may cause effects and changes within the subculture. As mentioned in the methodologies section (chapter 2) the Heavy Metal Subculture is covered by all major media types in today’s world, from the internet to radio. Due to a lack of resources available coupled with time constraints, it was

⁶² Weinstein, D. (2000) Heavy Metal music and its culture, revised edition. Da Capo Press, America

⁶³ Kusumoto, K. (2002) Affinity-Based Media Selection: Magazine Selection for Brand Message Absorption. Journal of Advertising Research. Vol. 42. pp12.

impossible to include these variables as a statistical control. It is known, without a doubt, that there may be other explanations for the apparent lack of relationship between the magazines and the subculture, the fact that the artists on stage are rock and roll heroes to the audience members tends to show that it is the bands themselves that are the effectors of change and not the magazines.

Indeed, the magazines act as signifiers for the subculture, allowing for the participants to learn and absorb its traits by studying what the 'in' style, fashion and argot is. The magazines reinforce rather than dilute the individuality of the subculture in that they project and objectify the subcultures standards⁶⁴. These standards are invariably set by the subcultures bands, from fashion to tattoo's the bands are what the subculture looks at to find out what should be worn, listened to or heard next. Although, the subcultures participants may never admit to this.

Overall it would seem the magazines have no affect on the subculture per se, this study failed to find any direct impact of the magazines on the subcultural participants. However, what is apparent is that the magazines can and do affect the subculture in a more indirect manner, they act as channel through which information from the bands, the cultural leaders so to speak, passes. It still seems the magazines are one of the most important means through which this subcultural information flows, even in today's world with Heavy Metal having television and radio stations in addition to countless websites.

4.2 – Further Research

The research conducted in this study could be helpful for future investigations regarding media effects and public attitudes. The intrinsic rebellious nature of the Heavy Metal subculture is a step apart from regular pop culture. This, in turn, could help researchers understand further why people chose not to, or try not to, let themselves be affected by the media.

Furthermore, I would deem it necessary to look at the relationship in the subculture, principally between the bands and the subcultures participants. Society is seen as a structured, differentiated and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating people in terms of more or less⁶⁵. The people with more, often dictating to those with less, the Heavy Metal subculture

⁶⁴ Op.cit

⁶⁵ Turner, V. (1967). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Aldine Publications. Chicago.

could be seen as similar in this regard. The band members and front men seemingly at the pinnacle of the subculture⁶⁶, dictating, albeit through a non-authoritarian manner, how the subcultural participants conduct themselves.

⁶⁶ Arnett, J. (1996). *Metalheads: Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation*. Westview Press. USA.

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