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Hidden Curriculum: The Radical Youth Punk Pedagogy of Propagandhi, A Case Study 1992-2017

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Hidden Curriculum:
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A Case Study 1992-2017

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirement for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Scott Michael Robertson

2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Hidden Curriculum:

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by

Scott Michael Robertson

Doctor of Philosophy of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Sol Cohen, Chair

The scholarly study of punk is a growing interdisciplinary field. Within that already specialized group, research into punk pedagogy is emerging as a vital component of punk scholarship. However, no study in punk pedagogy has narrowed its scope to any one influential punk band to determine what constitutes its punk pedagogy. This dissertation weaves diverse disciplines together to elucidate the hidden curriculum of the progressive Canadian punk band, Propagandhi.

An understanding of Propagandhi's punk pedagogy is formulated through textual analysis of the band's lyrics, a sonic investigation of their music, interviews with the band, and surveys of Propagandhi fans, all informed and supported by an auto-ethnographic fan and learner experience of the researcher. As self-proclaimed "failures in school," it is incredible that Propagandhi succeed in doing what so many schools wish to do: create critically engaged

students embarking on a journey of becoming global citizens. Resolving how this could be the case brings many fields of study to task. What is the hidden curriculum woven into Propagandhi's body of work that has effectively changed so many lives across the globe? Are they simply embodying a critical pedagogy, or have they crafted an approach unique to their brand of punk rock? Furthermore, this dissertation legitimizes the hidden curriculum found within informal educational settings. Propagandhi, ultimately, are able to strike a balance between reasonable critical thought and inquiry as outlined by Neil Postman's theories on education, while Propagandhi also focus on changing social issues that are relevant and crucial to a free society. Propagandhi show that pain and hope can both be utilized as fuel for creative production.

The dissertation of Scott Michael Robertson is approved.

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Thank you to everyone who helped with this dissertation. Special thanks to Molly Haigh at Special Collections, UCLA Library for your time scanning and uploading countless *Maximum RockNRoll* issues. Thank you, David Eso, for your insightful comments on the structuring of this dissertation. Greg and Keith at *Unscripted Moments: A Podcast about Propagandhi*, thank you for growing the Propagandhi classroom and for having me on to discuss Propagandhi's "Hidden Curriculum." Finally, thank you Professor Sol Cohen for your guidance and unwavering support.

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Schwartz, J. & Robertson, S. “Laughing all the way to the stage: Pedagogies of comedic dissidence in punk and hip-hop” *Punk Pedagogies: Music, Culture, and Learning*. New York: Routledge (2017).

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Scott Robertson, “Punk Rock Pedagogy: Bullshit and the art of crap-detection,” *Keep it Simple, Make it Fast Conference,* Porto, Portugal, July 2015.

Scott Robertson, “More than words: Music analysis in the punk classroom,” *Keep it Simple, Make it Fast Conference,* Porto, Portugal, July 2016.

Scott Robertson, “Hip Hop and Punk against the school to prison pipeline.” University of California, Los Angeles. Moore Hall. March 2015.

GUEST LECTURES

Scott Robertson, “Punk in the Prairies: A history of punk in Winnipeg, Canada,” University of California, Los Angeles, February 2016.

Scott Robertson, “The Book of Mormon: from South Park to Broadway,” University of California, Los Angeles, April 2016.

Scott Robertson, “A brief history of punk,” University of California, Los Angeles, November 2016.

PANELS

“Punk and Transformative Justice,” The University of Utah, *Friday Forums: Racial Equity & Philanthropy*. February 26, 2001.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"And so if our schools won't teach us, we'll have to teach ourselves to analyze and understand the systems of thought control. And share it with each other, never swayed by brass rings or the thought of penalty."

--Chris Hannah, "A People's History of the World" 1996

Introduction and Positionality

This dissertation is a study of the Canadian punk band Propagandhi, one of the most influential punk bands of the 1990s and 2000s. It analyzes Propagandhi's music, lyrics, and performance as a form of radical youth pedagogy, critically engaging youth on subjects such as racism, animal rights, feminism, sexuality, classism, and more. Rather than having a focus on punk, in its entirety, this dissertation focuses on the work of Propagandhi as they are exemplars of a type of politicized punk that galvanizes youth (and adults today) into critically engaging with the word and world. Furthermore, making generalized conclusions about punk can be challenging as the genre has many subgenres with different localities, styles, beliefs, customs, habits, and ideologies.[1] This dissertation demonstrates why Propagandhi are worthy of study for education and punk scholarship. If Propagandhi has been so influential in my life as well as numerous others, the first question is how. How is Propagandhi able to reach youth in ways many schools and teachers fail? What does their curriculum look like? Can we propose, for example, critical or transformative pedagogy as an explanation of how youth learn and engage with Propagandhi? On the other hand, will we discover a new pedagogy that is unique to Propagandhi that could fairly represent the best of political punk? Although having answers to

[1] Punk has its problematic sides, for example, with some scenes expressing white supremacist views. For a compelling view on this dark side of punk, see Ryan Falcioni's chapter "Nazi Punks Fuck Off!" in *Punk Rock and Philosophy*. Open Universe. 2022.

these questions will be fascinating, this will also undoubtedly provide potential tools for educators. How can a teacher utilize punk pedagogy in the classroom? What would that look like?

The research in this dissertation will also contribute to the body of research on informal education that happens outside of schools. There is a growing literature on informal education that takes place in sites such as museums, workplaces, and parks around the world.[2] Punk has long been understood as a site of learning and personal transformation, but research into this phenomenon is new. This dissertation goes further in that the work of Propagandhi itself is also a site for learning with its own unique methods and approaches. What Propagandhi describe in their song "Hidden Curriculum" has been acknowledged by scholars writing on the hidden curriculum of compulsory education.[3] Uncovering the hidden curriculum of Propagandhi's punk pedagogy is a task from which scholars, teachers, and students will benefit.

I have a personal reason for selecting Propagandhi. This band has affected my life greatly. Not only did Propagandhi inspire me to enter my local punk scenes in Long Beach and Orange County, California and model my punk band after them, but I flourished academically with their help, graduating with a Bachelor's in Political Science from California State University of Fullerton. I wanted to better understand the problems in the world that Propagandhi pointed out in their lyrics, so I took every political science class I could until, without planning it, I was on track for a degree in political science. Propagandhi helped change my core beliefs and

[2] Bekerman, Zvi, Nicholas C. Burbules, and Diana Silberman-Keller. *Learning in Places: The Informal Education Reader*. Peter Lang, 2006.
[3] Gatto, John Taylor. *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*. New Society Publishers, 2002. Loporchio, Anthony F. *The Hidden Curriculum: Life in the Public Schools*. Vantage Press, Inc, 2006. Newberry, Melissa, Andrea Gallant, and Philip Riley. *Emotion and School: Understanding How the Hidden Curriculum Influences Relationships, Leadership, Teaching, and Learning*. Emerald Group Publishing, 2013.

identity outside of formal education influences. I evolved from a teenager, listening to right-wing conservative radio hosts like Rush Limbaugh preaching the evils of homosexuality and social welfare, into a young adult taking the bus from Los Angeles to anti-war protests in San Francisco, attending anti-war lectures and panels, playing benefit concerts for striking workers, and arguing in my college classes for not only tolerance but love and appreciation for marginalized communities. Therefore, I am an insider, a participant in punk, and a loyal Propagandhi fan. It is this positionality that informs this dissertation.

Ever since the beginning of my senior year when my best friend Steve showed me Propagandhi's sophomore album, *Less Talk, More Rock*, I had been devouring their music.[4] This album seemed less about being shocking but was rather introspective, heartfelt, and sincere while also conveying the right doses of anger. Propagandhi became a gateway to ideas I had never encountered before. Their music helped me shed my Christian identity and conservative ideology. The first time I challenged a core conservative belief was when I questioned the merits of masculinity after listening to Propagandhi's "Refusing to be a man."[5] The first time I wasn't scared to proclaim myself an atheist was after listening to Propagandhi. Inspired by Propagandhi, I had flirted with veganism, but couldn't break my old habits. Steve, on the other hand, persisted and remains vegan today. Not only had I been learning how to confront the world around me, but how to confront my own prejudices.[6] Some lyrics helped awaken my consciousness, while others I refused to accept, but often, I simply didn't understand them. I was becoming aware that my

[4] Propagandhi, *Less Talk, More Rock* (San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords, 1996, CD).
[5] "Refusing to be a man" appears on *Less Talk, More Rock.* For more on gender and punk rock see Naomi Griffin, "Gendered Performance Performing Gender in the DIY Punk and Hardcore Music Scene." *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vol 13(2), 2012, 66-81.
[6] This anecdote of my personal transformation supports Ellis' view that autoethnography will "invite readers to enter the author's world and to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives." Carolyn Ellis. *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004). p.46.

high school didn't prepare me for this discourse. I detail this experience in my book chapter "Hero of War by Rise Against" in *Rebel Music.*[7] My relationship with school began to change. For the first time, I began to challenge the content of courses. Whereas before I had always had an inherent trust in teachers, I now began to question their methods. Punk was priming me for college. In addition, I was also able to inject what I had learned from punk into the classroom where I was able to cite lyrics in class discussions. Propagandhi helped me become an engaged student in the college classroom.

I had always questioned the efficacy of voting. After reading "One Dollar = One Vote," a brief essay written by drummer Jord Samolesky that was inserted into the album notes on Propagandhi's LP *Less Talk, More Rock*, not only were my beliefs upheld, but I was galvanized to become politically active in ways outside of the voting booth.[8] During the lead-up to the second war in Iraq in 2002/2003, I became very active in attending protests. My friends and I marched on the streets of Los Angeles and San Francisco, performed die-ins, and protected protestors from violent police officers.[9] The sense of solidarity that we had learned to appreciate at punk shows, paled in comparison to the sense of community and solidarity at these protests and rallies. If it weren't for Propagandhi, I wouldn't know this experience. Therefore, I am most curious about how Propagandhi effectively changes people, especially youth. In addition, punk has many stories to tell. I was given a political awakening and an awareness of the mistreatment of marginalized groups. For youth in those marginalized groups, punk can help them express themselves while also giving them safe haven.

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[7] Anthony Nocella, Priya Parmar, Scott Robertson, and Martha Diaz, eds., *Rebel Music: Resistance through Hip Hop and punk* (Charleston: Information Age Publishing, 2014).
[8] Propagandhi, *Today's Empires Tomorrows Ashes* (San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords, 2002).
[9] During an LA protest outside the Federal building on Wilshire Blvd near UCLA, a local news channel aired a clip of Steve being struck in the back with a police baton while he was helping an elderly woman get to her feet after a fall.

Why Propagandhi?

My dissertation is a study of the Winnipeg punk band Propagandhi, whom Tom Power of CBC Radio Canada argues, "is one of the most important punk bands ever."[10] Music journalists and critics Ron Knox and Josh Chesler are among the many punk fans that refer to Propagandhi as "legendary" in the punk scene.[11] Propagandhi can often be found on top punk album and top punk band charts as deemed by fans and critics.[12] In 2006, Propagandhi won the ECHO songwriting prize from the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers for their song "A Speculative Fiction."[13] Not only adored in North America, but the band is also an international success. More recently, two high school teachers began a podcast dedicating each episode to an exhaustive exploration of one Propagandhi song, aiming to cover every song in the catalog.[14] Through their 30-year history as a band, Propagandhi has sold out shows across North America, Europe, Latin America, South America, Japan, and Australia. Notably, one of their most confrontational concerts was recorded and became a popular underground bootleg recording. From bootleg albums and VHS tapes of live shows, the band became known for their

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[10] Tom Power, "How the punk scene, politics and activism have evolved over the years, according to Propagandhi." *CBC Radio, Q* on the CBC (October 16, 2017). (Podcast and Video Formats).

[11] Josh Chesler lists Propagandhi's *Less Talk, More Rock* as the 6th best political punk rock album of all time for Phoenix New Times, June 8, 2015.
Ron Knox calls Propagandhi "legendary" in his article on the 20th anniversary of the release of Propagandhi's second full studio album, "Less Talk, More Rock" *Noisey*.
https://noisey.vice.com/da/article/6x8jjw/propagandhi-less-talk-more-rock-20-year-anniversary
Music journalist Paul Blest of the Good Man Project calls Propagandhi's first album, *How to Clean Everything* legendary in "Back to the Motor League: A conversation with Propagandhi" on *goodmenproject.com* May 6, 2014. https://goodmenproject.com/arts/propagandhi-interview-pb/

[12] Josh Heller of the AV Club calls *Less Talk, More Rock* one of the best punk albums of the 90s. With Propagandhi leading the charge, punk in 1996 ran riot, https://music.avclub.com/with-propagandhi-leading-the-charge-punk-in-1996-ran-r-1798266676
There are simply too many accolades to list here. Any cursory search will reveal that Propagandhi are staples in most pop-punk or political punk best-of lists.

[13] See the SOCAN website for list of past winners and nominees: http://www.socansongwritingprize.ca/past-nominees-and-winners/

[14] *Unscripted Moments: A Podcast about Propagandhi* with Greg Soden and Keith Gough

antagonistic live shows.[15] Not only has Propagandhi succeeded as a band, but they also ran a successful independent music label, G7 Welcoming Committee.[16] As punk texts moved from print to online formats in the late 90s and early 2000s, Propagandhi also began multiple popular online podcasts.[17] Propagandhi has provided a multitude of texts for analysis from their music, album art, album liner notes, recorded live shows, record label publications, and podcasts, yet Propagandhi is often overlooked in punk scholarship. The dissertation analyzes Propagandhi's music, lyrics, art, text, and performance as a form of radical youth pedagogy, critically engaging youth on subjects such as racism, animal rights, feminism, classism, and more.[18]

Propagandhi was formed in 1986 in the small town of Portage La Prairie, just over an hour outside of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Lead singer and guitarist Chris Hannah formed the band with friend Jordan Samolesky on drums. During their formative years (1986-1991), the duo

[15] Music columnist Jeff Niesel interviews Propagandhi lead singer Chris Hannah and revisits the now infamous June 17, 1995, show at Gilman Street in Berkeley, California in his article "Punk Positive" published online for the Cleveland Scene website on March 1, 2001. The bootleg recording of this show is entitled "*Curse of the MTV Punks*" and will be utilized in the dissertation for a discourse analysis of their live performances, especially their confrontational approach with the audience.

[16] Putting their political beliefs into action, Propagandhi organized their record label G7 Welcoming Committee as a non-hierarchical worker collective inspired by Michael Parenti's book on 'participatory economics,' *Parecon: Life After Capitalism* (2003). Their label G7 Welcoming Committee will also become a home to many other political bands that also encompass the Propagandhi curriculum. Many of the bands on the label will be discussed in the dissertation, as they too have had a profound impact on me.

[17] Available on iTunes, the *G7 Welcoming Committee Podcast* has 85 episodes beginning 11/14/1997 and concluding 4/29/2008. In 2010 and 2011, Propagandhi recorded 2 podcasts entitled *The Propagandhi Podcast* for their website, Propagandhi.com.
Their follow up podcast, *Escape Velocity Radio* (also available on iTunes) has 29 episodes from 8/2/2012 to 3/12/2015. Notable guests include media analyst Jean Kilbourne, sport columnist Dave Zirin, and journalist Chris Hedges.
Singer, Chris Hannah currently hosts a subscription-based podcast *A Catastrophic Break with Consensus Reality* in which he devotes full episodes to explore individual songs as voted on by his subscribers.

[18] In an interview, Chris Hannah notes the inspiration for the band name. He was humored by pun band names like Ludichrist and felt the name PropaGandhi "was genius at the time." Greg Pratt "Propagandhi: Nazi Baiting and Hardcore Raging." *Exclaim!* (September 2012).

played with a couple of bassists[19] but finally stuck with one, John K. Samson, in 1991.[20] Over the years, the composition of the band has experienced few changes.[21] Most notable was the departure of John K. Samson in 1996.[22] In 1996, Todd Kowalski from the band I-Spy (of Regina, Saskatchewan) quickly replaced Samson on bass, marking a sonic shift in the band from a more pop punk orientation to a thrash or metal sound. The next significant change was the addition of a second guitarist, David "Beaver" Guillas in 2006.[23] The addition of Guillas helped evolve the sound of Propagandhi by adding more guitar texture and harmonies. Committed to teaching full-time, Guillas left the band in 2015 and was replaced by Sulynn Hago of Tampa Bay, Florida.[24] After 30 years, Propagandhi continues to record new music and tour. In 2017, Propagandhi released their seventh full-length studio album, and they continue to tour globally. Not only did the music of Propagandhi help define the skate-punk sound of the early 1990s, Propagandhi are often cited as a band whose lyrics have changed the lives of youth and other punk artists with

[19] Scott Hopper was the original bassist, who never recorded or played live with the band. Mike Braumeister played from 1989-1981. Braumeister never recorded, but he was a member for the band's first concerts. Propagandhi. *Where Quantity is Job #1* on G7 Welcoming Committee, Canada 1998 CD

[20] See Figure 1 for the actual bassist wanted poster that Propagandhi posted at a record shop in Winnipeg. Photo was posted on the Propagandhi.com website.

[21] This rarely changing band composition is an aspect of the band that Chris Hannah really appreciates (Chris Hannah interview in *American Music Press (AMP)* magazine, 2012).

[22] Samson recorded on two full albums and two EPs with Propagandhi. Subsequently, Samson started the critically acclaimed folk-rock band, The Weakerthans (1996-2015) (whose first two albums appeared on Propagandhi label, G7 Welcoming Committee).

[23] Guillas' band, Giant Sons also appeared on G7 Welcoming Committee.

[24] Propagandhi held open tryouts for their new guitarist position and broke a gender barrier in selecting Sulynn Hago, the first female member of Propagandhi. For an interview with Sulynn on joining Propagandhi, see Greg Pratt. "Propagandhi speak on how they are shaking up the 'Little Boy's Club' with new guitarist" in *Exclaim!* October 6, 2015.

effects well into adulthood.[25] For example, many punk rockers, like NOFX lead singer (Fat) Mike Burkett state that their main influence in becoming vegan was Propagandhi.[26]

Propagandhi is famous for its radical lyrics. However, Propagandhi is not just a group with radical lyrics; they also play beautiful, technical, and often melodic punk rock. Many of their fans are first drawn to their fast, melodic version of punk rock and are only later confronted with the lyrics. This has always been a battle for the band. They never wanted to be "just another faded sticker on a skateboard."[27] They wanted fans to critically engage with their messages. If it weren't for their skillful songwriting and musicianship, perhaps Propagandhi would have remained a small local band playing in the prairies of Canada. One does not have to take my word for Propagandhi's exciting musicianship. David Anthony describes the song "Night Letters" in his *AV Club* review of Propagandhi's 2008 album *Supporting Caste*, "Propagandhi takes those small harmonic leads and blows them up into full-on, acrobatic movements. Hannah and Guillas leap back and forth, wrapping their dexterous riffs around one another while drummer Jord Samolesky uses manic fills and cymbal cracks to accent each note of the

[25] See *A Fat Wreck*. Directed by Shaun M. Colon. USA: Open Ended Films, 2016. DVD. Documentary. This film contains interviews with many bands from the record label Fat Wreck Chords in which many popular punk bands (Rise Against, NOFX, Lawrence Arms) on the label credit Propagandhi as their biggest inspiration. Citations to Propagandhi's influence on personal lives can be found in chapters by Michael Loadenthal, Sarat Colling, and Lauren Corman in *Rebel Music: Resistance through hip-hop and punk* (Information Age, 2015); Warrick Harniess in *Punk Pedagogies: music, culture and learning* (Routledge, 2017). Jason Hall, lead singer of Western Addiction stated, "I respect them. I teach my children to be open-minded, loving people because of this band." https://www.loudersound.com/features/the-11-best-albums-released-by-fat-wreck-chords

[26] *A Fat Wreck*. Directed by Shaun M. Colon. USA: Open Ended Films, 2016. DVD. Documentary. The lead singer of NOFX, (Fat) Mike Burkett, became vegetarian after hearing Propagandhi. Until then, NOFX had famously been against animal rights activists, as heard in songs like "Vegetarian Mumbo Jumbo" from the album *Liberal Animation* (1988). The influence of Propagandhi is apparent on later NOFX albums and will be discussed in the dissertation. Also see Dave Johnson's article "Propagandhi: New album, new bassist, beauty, eh?" in *Hit List* magazine, Volume two, number 6 May/June 2001. Johnson concludes the article by stating he never ate meat again after going to a Propagandhi concert in 1995

[27] Lyric taken from the song "Anti-Manifesto" from the album *How to Clean Everything*, released on Fat Wreck chords in 1993.

guitarists' noodling."[28] This dissertation will show that the music is more than acrobatic feats of virtuosic playing. The music of Propagandhi also creates beautiful sonic sceneries that help support the lyrics and message of the songs. Fat Mike, lead singer of NOFX, and founder of Propagandhi's first record label, Fat Wreck Chords, praised Propagandhi, "I'm very proud of their first album. Musically and lyrically, it's a very good record, and to this day, I think no one still can touch them musically."[29]

Although Propagandhi has received scattered praise in published edited works, they have yet to receive an analysis of their entire body of work.[30] As a co-editor for *Rebel Music*, I devoted a chapter to Propagandhi.[31] In non-academic texts such as Craig O'Hara's *The Philosophy of Punk*, brief histories of bands and scenes are given which help flush out some of punk's tenets.[32] In O'Hara's book, Propagandhi are portrayed as an anarcho-punk band, infamous for their confrontational live shows. O'Hara includes a photograph of singer Chris Hannah in the nude with his guitar, preventing the photo from being illicit. Most recently, Propagandhi received a significant portion of a sociology dissertation on identity and ideology in punk rock in an analysis of art and performance through a neo-Marxist lens.[33] In 2010, lyrics from Propagandhi's "Dear Coach's Corner" were utilized in a journal article on militarism, video games, and popular culture by French theorist Frederick Gagnon.[34] Most recently, Gerfried

[28] David Anthony, "Propagandhi embrace full-body riffing on 'Night Letters'" *AVClub* October 10, 2014. https://music.avclub.com/propagandhi-embrace-full-body-riffing-on-night-letters-1798273088
[29] *A Fat Wreck*. Directed by Shaun M. Colon. USA: Open Ended Films, 2016. DVD.
[30] As mentioned before, see *Rebel Music, Punk Pedagogies, and Punkademics*
[31] Anthony Nocella, Priya Parmar, Scott Robertson, and Martha Diaz, eds., *Rebel Music: Resistance through Hip Hop and punk* (Charleston: Information Age Publishing, 2014).
[32] Craig O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk: More than Noise!* (San Francisco, AK Press, 1999).
[33] M.D. Daschuk, "What was once rebellion is now clearly just a social sect: Identity, ideological conflict and the field of punk rock artistic production" Doctoral Dissertation University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon (2016).
[34] Gagnon, Frédérick. ""Invading Your Hearts and Minds": Call of Duty®." *European Journal of American Studies* 5, no. 3 (November 27, 2010). doi:10.4000/ejas.8831.

Ambrosch analyzes multiple Propagandhi songs for their poetic merit in his recently published, *The Poetry of Punk*.[35]

Statement of Research

This study of Propagandhi contributes to the fields of education, sociology, cultural studies, musicology, and anthropology. This dissertation weaves diverse disciplines together to elucidate the hidden curriculum of Propagandhi. An understanding of Propagandhi's punk pedagogy is formulated through textual analysis of the band's lyrics, a sonic analysis of their music, an auto-ethnography of the fan and learner experience, an ethnography of punk subculture, and through an original oral history of the band. Propagandhi often incorporate self-reflective lyrics and promote critical engagement with other bands, fans, and journalists around the world. As self-proclaimed "failures in school," it is amazing that Propagandhi succeed in doing what so many schools wish to do: create critically engaged students, which builds a conscientious citizenry and ultimately a stronger democracy.[36] In an ironic twist, punk rockers who were often rejected by mainstream society may just be an antidote to the systemic failures in the West. Resolving how this could be the case brings many fields of study to task. In addition, the Propagandhi catalog of albums provides a thirty-year history in the lives and discourses of political activists since the 1990s. Each album is a marker in time that contains a history of how punk activists felt, and the changes across albums show how music activism adapted and evolved during global events like 9/11 and through cultural changes with the proliferation of the internet and digital media. Furthermore, this dissertation legitimates the hidden curriculum found within

[35] Gerfried Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics* (Routledge, 2018).

[36] Chris Hannah on the *Propagandhi Podcast* #1, 2010. Although Chris states that Propagandhi are "failures in school," drummer Jord received his bachelor's degree but chose to forgo graduate education in order to focus his time and effort into the band.

informal educational settings. Propagandhi, ultimately, are able to strike a balance between reasonable critical thought as outlined by Neil Postman's theories on education, while also focusing on changing social issues relevant and crucial to a free society.

Winnipeg: Punk in the Prairies

"My city's still breathing, but barely, it's true
Through buildings gone missing like teeth"
--John K. Samson, "Left & Leaving" 2000

Walking along Portage Avenue on a brisk October morning, I absorb the history of fading painted advertisements on the sides of brick buildings like palimpsests showing a time when Winnipeg planned to become a great North American city rivaling Chicago. Winnipeg feels like a city that has been searching for an identity for over a century. Some areas near Albert Street evoke feelings of Haight and Ashbury in San Francisco while some office buildings look as though they were dropped in from Seoul. The streets and sidewalks show their age with iron rods sprouting from broken curbs bordered by safety cones promising a fix soon. I'm not sure whether I'm in a big city or a small town. Pentimento doesn't just underlie advertisements on the sides or buildings, it undergirds the aesthetics of Winnipeg. With buildings all spanning across different decades for over a century, Winnipeg is deprived of a clear dichotomy between old and new, a charm one can enjoy in Kyoto, for example. Even though it is difficult to say what about Winnipeg is entirely Winnipeg, it becomes evident how much Winnipeg is a central character to the Propagandhi story. To finally be in Winnipeg, a city I've only heard about in song, is a magical experience, even if the first impression of Winnipeg is not magical.

	
Site of the murals referenced in 2005's "A Speculative Fiction" whose lyrics read, "We got a good 15 years left 'til the United We Stand murals on West Broadway finally fade and we wave good-bye to such sad, childish refrains"[37]	Here I am at the same location. Propagandhi had it wrong. The murals only lasted around seven years. They were long gone by the time I showed up in 2021.

I visited Winnipeg, Manitoba in October 2021. There I explored the places and venues where Propagandhi played or sang about. Jamie, who appears in the fan participant section of this study, was kind enough to drive me around Winnipeg on a Propagandhi treasure hunt. I was able to get a first-hand experience of Winnipeg which helped me understand the city's influence on Propagandhi. I briefly met all four members of Propagandhi before and after their three consecutive nights of concerts. I was honored to have been invited to a sound check before their third night's performance, where I spoke briefly to Chris and Jord. We had already been acquainted from our phone interviews, so I did not take up their time, as I knew they valued this rehearsal time. Propagandhi are very serious about their performance and strive for a tight, yet powerful show, arguably a big departure from early punk that exalted crusty and sloppy aesthetics.

There are many characters in this dissertation, and it would be a failure not to recognize Winnipeg's role in Propagandhi's story. My visit helped me understand the city in a way I likely

[37] Propagandhi. "A Speculative Fiction" On *Potemkin City Limits*. 2005

could not have experienced by any other method. It allowed me to view the city from my perspective, reflecting on specific memories of songs, and even album artwork. These perspectives are utilized throughout this dissertation and most often appear within the song analysis portion of this dissertation.

Theoretical Framework

"Tell you what—I'll call you on your shit, PLEASE CALL ME ON MINE. Then we can grow together and make this shit-hole planet better"
--Propagandhi, "Apparently I'm a PC Fascist" 1996

"Students should be taught to learn how to recognize bullshit, including their own."
--Neil Postman, "Bullshit and the Art of Crap-detection" 1969

One of the unique features of this dissertation is to recuperate the work of overlooked education theorist Neil Postman. Often misrepresented as a Luddite,[38] Postman has become a forgotten education critic, missing from the canon of critical pedagogy.[39] This dissertation aims to resurrect Postman's educational theories as it argues that Postman is the strongest bridge for understanding the juxtaposition of punk and pedagogy. Neil Postman was a prominent education reformer in the 1960s and 1970s. His book, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1969) helped launch a revolution in how educators approached pedagogy. After seeing the students' rights movement co-opted and absorbed by the anti-Vietnam War movement, Postman moved to counteract the radical reformers by writing *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* (1979). This act of balancing, as a thermostatic principle, disenfranchised Postman's followers. This dissertation will show the numerous occasions in which Propagandhi employed this thermostatic principle as

[38] Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995).
[39] James Kirylo, *A critical pedagogy of resistance: 34 pedagogues we need to know* (Rotterdam: Sense, 2013).

a tool to counteract movements happening in punk while also changing their approach, style, sound, and curriculum.

This dissertation introduces punk pedagogy to education scholarship as an emerging field of research. In addition, this dissertation, using Neil Postman's theories on education, connects how Propagandhi model good learners and teachers by how they challenge bullshit, ask critical and meaningful questions, and how they maintain a balance of ideas in the punk rock community. This helps us to fight the tendency found in punk scholarship to equate punk pedagogy with critical pedagogy. It may not necessarily be the case that, due to punk often aligning with progressive thought, it should be described as critical pedagogy. This is where the voice of Neil Postman is most needed. Punk does more than teach youth to question authority; it has the tools to help them critically engage with the world, tools Postman explicitly provides in his book *The Soft Revolution: A Student Handbook* (1972). Punk may lead its audience to lifestyle choices and identities within veganism, straight edge (a life without drugs and alcohol), anti-fascism, and so forth, but its greatest strength lies in its ability to challenge its own systems. I posit that this art of self-reflection and self-criticism might become absent among the critical Left if we continue ignoring Postman.

Postman's seemingly apolitical approach to education in *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* and *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* is extremely radical. Although Postman does not point to the many forms of oppression present in society, his pedagogy is just the tool for it. How is this so? Postman's theory responds to Paolo Freire's seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which demonstrated new ways for teachers to facilitate learning. Freire challenged the classroom practice he labeled the "banking method," a pedagogical approach in which teachers attempt to input knowledge into the students, who are seen as empty boxes waiting to be

filled. Freire exposed this method for its many shortcomings, namely its lack of free thought, or the process of meaning-making that students lose. Fortunately, Freire has affected schooling, and new teaching methodologies have risen. Consciousness-raising is one such technique, where teachers respond to student questions with more questions. This is an empowering process whereby the learning itself is central, and the goal isn't simply to know the correct answer right away. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire argues for continuing this process to the point when students find their own humanity and become able to see and name the systems of oppression that rule them.

Neil Postman goes even further than Freire in the direction of recognizing and resisting oppression. He warns that, even when teachers are raising questions, they are still leading their students to a target. In essence, the teachers are still playing a form of the banking game. Teachers who "cover ground" to reach a "terminal point," even if they are invoking consciousness-raising activities, are still tied to the curriculum and the idea that the teacher knows best. Postman wants to challenge these limitations; he envisions a pedagogy that creates astute learners who can approach any situation. Some of his tools include having a strong "crap-detector" and knowing how to ask critical questions. This dissertation will explore further Postman's varieties of bullshit as well as the "Inquiry Method," especially as it relates to the songs of Propagandhi. It will connect how Propagandhi model critical thinkers by challenging bullshit, asking critical questions, and maintaining a balance of ideas in the punk rock community. By analyzing this band's music in relation to Postman's educational theories, I suggest that Propagandhi may be seen as a high-quality education surrogate for youth disenfranchised from today's meritocratic, standardized test-driven education system.

Postman continued to critique the American education system throughout his career. His final published work, *The End of Education*, spells out the faults in American schooling and proposes solutions. This dissertation shows that Propagandhi follows Postman's recipe for confronting our amusement-based media landscape by cultivating critical thinking, media literacy, and civic responsibility. Andrew Postman, reflecting on his father's philosophy in his introduction to the 20th anniversary edition of *Amusing Ourselves to Death,* states:

> We must teach our children, from a very young age, to be skeptics, to listen carefully, to assume everyone is lying about everything. (Well, maybe not everyone.) Check sources. Consider what wasn't said. Ask questions. Understand that every storyteller has a bias – and so does every platform.[40]

Propagandhi echoes this sentiment: "And so if our schools won't teach us, we'll have to teach ourselves to analyze and understand the systems of thought control. And share it with each other, never swayed by brass rings or the thought of penalty."[41] This is just one of the many examples where the lessons from Propagandhi run parallel with Neil Postman.

A critic could argue that Postman doesn't provide the proper theoretical framework for an analysis of a radical left-wing punk band since his own work lacked a radically progressive ideology. Humorously, Jay Rosen noted that Postman "was the world's worst leftist and couldn't stomach the right.[42] A more extreme reading of Postman's Thermostatic Principle would argue Postman is against extreme viewpoints, possibly those that Propagandhi hold. For example, when Postman says, "when a culture is stressing autonomy and aggressive individuality, education should stress cooperation and social cohesion. Where culture is stressing conformity,

[40] Neil Postman. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public discourse in the age of show business.* Penguin Books. 2005
[41] "A People's History of the World" from the 1996 album *Less Talk, More Rock* [San Francisco: Fat Wreck]
[42] Jay Rosen, "Neil Postman: A civilized man in a century of barbarism" S*alon*. October 10, 2003

education should stress individuality," a skeptic could say Postman believes that both institutions should offset the other when their counterpart becomes extreme, thus initiating the thermostat. However, I argue, Postman is more concerned with there simply being a mechanism to stabilize or balance the relationship between education and culture, whether that involves needing to deploy an extreme measure to counterbalance the other. Considering that Propagandhi is critical of both formal education and mass culture, I argue Propagandhi behave as a sliding weight for improved accuracy on Postman's balance beam scale. Propagandhi can effectively do this because "the functional role of Punk subculture is to exist outside the main culture while illuminating the central features of it."[43] In this regard, Postman's Thermostatic Principle can illuminate how Propagandhi's brand of punk rock is an attempt to counteract the extremes of popular culture and education. On one hand, Propagandhi are aligned with Postman's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* as they critique formal education and embark on their own educational journeys by exploring topics out of reach in the classroom. On the other hand, I argue, Propagandhi's hidden curriculum also challenges popular culture just as *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* asks educational institutions to challenge mass culture. Not only is this a clear example of the Thermostatic principle in action, but this dissertation will also show how Propagandhi have evolved over the years, balancing their own views and adjusting their curriculum.

This dissertation combines a historical and content analysis of Propagandhi's music, lyrics, performances, and paratexts with auto-ethnographic reflections upon my own experience as a Propagandhi fan, student, teacher, scholar, and musician of punk. Through this combined approach, I analyze Propagandhi's body of work as a form of radical youth pedagogy, which

[43] Levine & Stumpf, "Statements of Fear Through Cultural Symbols: Punk Rock as a Reflexive Subculture" in *Youth & Society*, Vol 14. No 4. June 1983 p. 433

critically engages students on political subjects such as animal rights, feminism, classism, and more. Yet surrounding these themes is a hidden curriculum that provides a space for tackling philosophical, moral, psychological, and social concerns. For example, a song such as "Potemkin City Limits" may at first glance be a powerful song empathizing with the plight of a pig who has escaped the slaughterhouse. However, it's a song that explores the cognitive dissonance that is likely present in many other aspects of our lives, not just when the meat industry honors a runaway pig with a statue. For Propagandhi's audience, punk thus constitutes a form of nontraditional education that may provide practical methodologies that could be applied in traditional education.

Punk pedagogy is becoming a widely used term in punk scholarship, yet its parameters remain unclear. Most existing scholarship on punk comes from the disciplines of musicology, history, or sociology. Significantly, few scholars of education have engaged with punk.[44] Within this emerging body of research, one group of scholars seeks effective ways to teach punk history, utilizing case studies from their own courses to create a literature for future professors interested in teaching about punk.[45] Others, like Jessica Schwartz, have explored how schooling shapes the punk experience.[46] My dissertation extends this line of inquiry about classroom applications by theorizing a pedagogy of punk with an emphasis on non-formal education, youth culture, and lifelong learning systems. Rather than reducing punk to one definition or experience, this dissertation focuses on Propagandhi's brand of punk as an exemplary form of punk that has inspired and galvanized listeners to learn, explore, research, and debate.

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[44] Malott, Torrez, and Cordova.

[45] Rylan Kafara, "Here We Are Now, Educate Us: The Punk Attitude, Tenets and Lens of Student-Driven Learning," in *Punk Pedagogies: Music, Culture, and Learning* (Routledge, 2017) 109-127.

[46] Jessica A. Schwartz, "Listening in Circles: Punk Pedagogy and the Decline of Western Music Education," *Punk & Post-Punk* 4.2-3 (2015), 141-158.

Scholars who analyze punk pedagogy have tended to interpret punk as an offshoot of the tradition of critical pedagogy established by Paulo Freire. Curry Malott and Milagros Pena's *Punk Rocker's Revolution* was the first attempt by education scholars to define a punk pedagogy; another influential study is Estrella Torrez' "Punk Pedagogy: Education for liberation and Love," which connects the author's experience as a Xicana youth who embraced punk to her experiences as a teacher at university.[47] Like most early writings on punk pedagogies, scholars instinctually connect critical pedagogy with punk. On the surface, critical pedagogy may seem to align with punk values; both punk and critical pedagogy seek to evoke critical thinking in order to recognize power and inequality. However, I believe that the widespread association with critical pedagogy does not fully account for punk's distinctive educational strengths. My dissertation seeks to challenge this consensus and expand our current understanding of punk pedagogy by utilizing theories outside of the canon of critical pedagogy.

Scholars of pedagogy usually credit Paulo Freire for changing how we view education. Nevertheless, Postman's book *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* was written at the same time as Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.[48] Because Postman followed up that book with *Conserving Activity*, he fell out of favor. Through my discussion of punk pedagogy, I hope to show that Postman's apolitical approach to education is more appropriate. The thermostatic approach by its nature allows for schools and learning to remain flexible, whereas a critical pedagogy oriented toward Marxism can become inflexibly committed to leftist thinking. I revisit the path Postman charted for himself and show that his later writings were misunderstood. I then show examples of how Postman's idea of thermostatic activity is exemplified by Propagandhi.

[47] Estrella Torrez, "Punk Pedagogy: Education for Liberation and Love," in *Punkademics: The basement show in the ivory tower*, ed. Zack Furness (London: Minor Compositions, 2012), 131-142.
[48] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

Recuperating Postman's overlooked writings may be exactly what punk needs. The two may not appear to be bedfellows at first glance, but an analysis of Postman's progressive writings on education reveals that his ideal student is the punk student. I intend to show how many of punk's greatest pedagogical strengths, such as self-reliance (DIY), encouraging critical thinking, challenging authority, and deconstructing power structures, come directly from the Neil Postman playbook. Not only will this argument help bring back a forgotten and sorely needed voice on education; it will also contribute to the emerging body of literature on punk pedagogy.

I posit that, although similar to critical pedagogy, punk pedagogy has its own unique features and might be best described as a transformative pedagogy. O'Sullivan, Morrell, and O'Connor define this concept as follows:

> Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premise of thought, feeling, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awareness; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of the possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.[49]

The above quote captures the experience that many punk youths undergo. It is a common theme reiterated in the pages of punk scholarship and heard at punk conferences such as *Keep it Simple, Make it Fast!* held annually in Porto, Portugal.

Does punk rock, as evidenced in the body of work of Propagandhi, create cultural advance? Are punk rock bands like Propagandhi creating politically educated youth, or have they

[49] Edmund O'Sullivan, Amish Morrell, and Mary Ann O'Connor, *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 18.

simply helped create a counterculture devoid of meaning? If so, how is punk an effective pedagogy? Furthermore, in what ways is Propagandhi unique in galvanizing its audience? What hidden curriculum can be extracted by an analysis of Propagandhi texts and music? What can educators learn from Propagandhi's hidden curriculum?

This case study demonstrates how Propagandhi deploy many of Postman's best practices for educators. For example, we will see how Propagandhi employ Postman's Thermostatic View not only against mainstream ideologies, but also against dominant ideas within the progressive punk rock community itself. For example, Propagandhi challenge the corporate nature of large punk festivals, and they challenge sexism in the punk scene. I seek to harmonize Postman's non-ideology-centered and apolitical education theories with the challenges to sexism, racism, classism, and speciesism found in the music of Propagandhi. These two perspectives may at first glance appear to be an odd pairing, but if the thesis succeeds, the merger between Postman and Propagandhi will create a powerful tool for contemporary educators seeking to uphold traditional educational values like critical thinking along with current trends in honoring differences in our quest for equality and equity in the classroom.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

On the whole, punk scholarship is often focused on the cultural impact of punk. The literature on cultural studies is vast. The canonical books are Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society*, Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stuart Hall's edited collection *Culture, Media, Language*.[1] However, most helpful for this study are the sub-cultural studies works on punk. Dick Hebdige semiotic exploration of UK youth in his groundbreaking *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* is an essential tool in understanding the subversive aesthetics within a subculture.[2] Dave Laing in *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* is an important follow-up to Hebdige in that Laing provides a historical interplay between punk and culture.[3] For a contemporary primer of youth subcultures, Ross Haenfler's *Subcultures: The Basics* is an indispensable look at the history and debates within contemporary subcultural studies of youth.[4]

Autoethnography

There is a burgeoning literature on the relatively new genre of autoethnography. *Doing Autoethnography* is an excellent introductory resource for researchers intending to employ autoethnography.[5] Most enlightening are Leon Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography" for definitions of, approaches to, value, and issues in autoethnography especially the section on

[1] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958).
Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1993).
Stuart Hall, *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, 1972-79 (London: Routledge, 1992).
[2] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979).
[3] Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015).
[4] Ross Haenfler, *Subcultures: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2014).
[5] Sandra Pensoneau-Conway, Tony E. Adams, and Derek M. Bolen, eds. *Doing Autoethnography* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2017).

"Brief History of Autoethnography", and his concluding section on the value and critiques of autoethnography.[6] Above all, Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams, and Arthur Bochner's "Autoethnography: An Overview" is an indispensable resource for budding qualitative researchers seeking to combine their own positionality within their research.[7] Lastly, Jimmie Manning and Tony Adams help us bridge the tradition of cultural studies with the qualitative turn in of autoethnography in their article, "Popular Culture Studies and Autoethnography: An Essay on Method."[8] Manning and Adams offer useful warnings for auto-ethnographers.

Punk's International Scenes

Much has been written on the early years of Punk in the US, especially at its epicenter, New York. Some now canonical non-scholarly oral histories include Legs McNeil's *Please Kill Me*.[9] Stacy Thompson begins his important scene study of punk in New York.[10] An important book on early New York punk is Steven Lee Beeber's *The Heebie-Jeebies at CBGB's: A Secret History of Jewish Punk.*[11] These works provide a wonderful foundation for understanding the scene context of Winnipeg and its impact on Propagandhi's aesthetics and beliefs.

The first scholarly explorations of punk came from the UK. The most important book exploring the early years of punk in the UK is Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The meaning of*

[6] Leon Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. vol. 36, no. 4. (2006).
[7] Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams, and Arthur Bochner, Autoethnography: An Overview [40 paragraphs]. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 12(1), Art. 10 (2010).
[8] Jimmie Manning and Tony Adams, "Popular Culture Studies and Autoethnography: An Essay on Method." *The Popular Culture Studies Journal*. 3. 187-221. (2015).
[9] Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: the Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Groove Press, 1996).
[10] Stacy Thompson, *Punk Productions: Unfinished Business* (New York, NY: New York State University Press, 2004).
[11] Steven Lee Beeber, *The Heebie-Jeebies at CBGB's: A Secret History of Jewish Punk* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2006).

Style.[12] Arguably, the most important follow-up is Dave Laing's *One Chord Wonders* in which Laing expands upon Hebdige's study and adds a historical analysis to Hebdige's semiotic analysis of punk.[13] Currently, the early days of punk in the UK still receive academic attention as scholars begin to construct new narratives of the impact of the first wave of UK punk. Greil Marcus provides us with a foundational text in early UK punk history, but also provides one of the first in depth analysis of one particular band in the Sex Pistols.[14] For contemporary published academic books on early punk in the UK, see Alistair Gordon's *Crass Reflections*.[15] For an in-depth discussion of punk in the context of economic hardships in the UK, see Jon Savage's England's Dreaming.[16] For non-scholarly, insider oral histories see John Robb's edited collection *Punk Rock: An Oral History*.[17]

Stacy Thompson provides one of the first scholarly explorations of punk in California. He discusses the emergence of hardcore in Southern California and San Francisco. There are also well written non-scholarly histories of small suburban scenes in California.[18] Notably, Propagandhi label mates, NOFX published their co-written autobiography that gives a glimpse into a violent and drug filled punk scene in Los Angeles in the late 80s and early 90s.[19] For a history of hardcore in the US that spans from east coast to west coast, see Steven Blush.[20]

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[12] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The meaning of style*, (New York, Routledge, 1979),
[13] Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015).
[14] Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
[15] Alistair Gordon, *Crass Reflections* (Portsmouth: Itchy Monkey Press, 2016).
[16] Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991).
[17] John Robb, Punk Rock: An Oral History (Oakland: PM Press, 2012).
[18] Craig Ibarra, *A Wailing of a Town: "An Oral History of Early San Pedro Punk and More"*, 1977-1985 (San Pedro, CA: END FWY Press, 2015). Also see Dewar MacLeod, Dewar, *Kids of the Black Hole: Punk Rock in Postsuburban California* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010).
[19] NOFX, and Alulis, J, *The Hepatitis Bathtub and Other Stories* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2016).
[20] Steven Blush, *American Hardcore: A Tribal History* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2001).

Sam Sutherland writes an exhaustive history of punk in Canada in *Perfect Youth: The birth of Canadian punk.*[21] The documentary *Piss on You: Winnipeg's early punk scene* provides tremendous insight into the early years of punk in Winnipeg beginning in the late 70s.[22] Although the documentary does not discuss Propagandhi, it does provide wonderful context for the punk scene in which Propagandhi will emerge. Stephen Baron's article, "The Canadian west coast punk subculture: A field study" is useful because he details the political attitudes of Canadian adolescent youth in the 1980s.[23] One of the best oral histories on the Winnipeg punk scene is Sheldon Birnie's *Missing Like Teeth: An Oral History of Winnipeg Underground Rock 1990-2001*. This provides a terrific history of the early years of Propagandhi from their formation to their explosion on the melodic hardcore punk scene. A companion piece to Birnie's collected oral history is the edited volume *Call * Response: Present, Past and Beyond*, a 2011 collection of photos, stories, and poems from the Winnipeg punk scene.[24] Even Chris Hannah of Propagandhi contributes to this collection.

Punk was not simply a British and American phenomenon. In the late 70s, punk spread across Europe. University of Porto Professor, Paula Guerra's, together with UK punk scholars Mike Dines and Alistair Gordon collected important chapters on international punk in *The Punk Reader*.[25] Overall, there is very little on punk from Canada, especially punk that emerged during the punk explosion into the mainstream in the US around 1994.

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[21] Sam Sutherland, *Perfect Youth: The Birth of Canadian Punk* (Toronto: ECW, 2012).
[22] Kathryn Martin, *Piss on You: Winnipeg's early punk scene* (Documentary. DVD, 2015)
[23] Stephen W. Baron, "The Canadian West Coast Punk Subculture: A Field Study," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 14. No.3 (Summer, 1989): 289-316.
[24] Toone, J., Terin, N., and Michael Sanders eds. *Call * Response: Present, Past, and Beyond*. Vol I. Alchemical Press LTD. 2011
[25] Paula Guerra, Mike Dines, and Alistair Gordon, *The Punk Reader: Research transmissions from the local and the global* (Itchy Monkey Press, 2017)

Musicology of Punk

Punk is not only expressed through fashion or subversive lyrics. The music itself presents a powerful store of meaning and expression that musicologists attempt to decipher. Suggesting to break from western tradition of music analysis, Jessica Schwartz constructs an important analysis of the ways in which the music of punk expresses the desires and beliefs of those engaged in a punk scene in her forthcoming *Smashing the System: Punk Musicalities and the Myths of Resilience and Resistance*.[26] British punk scholar Pete Dale's *Anyone can do it: Empowerment, tradition and punk underground* is another useful book that connects the sonic features of punk with the ideas and beliefs of punk.[27]

Punk Identity, Philosophy, and Aesthetics

Craig O'Hara's *The Philosophy of Punk* has become canonical in punk scholarship even though this book began as a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) project written by a punk participant. Initially, printed, photocopied, and self-distributed, the book gained in popularity until it found a publisher.[28] Roger Sabin's edited volume, *Punk Rock: So What?* Contains many vignettes of an autobiographical nature that help express that power of DIY ethic expressed in punk rock.[29] Mike Dines and Matthew Worley present a history of early anarcho-punk in the UK in *The Aesthetic of Our Anger: Anarcho-Punk, Politics, and Music.*[30] Bands such as Crass helped

[26] Jessica Schwartz, "Listening in Circles: Punk Pedagogy and the Decline of Western Music Education." *Punk & Post-Punk.* 4.2&3 (2016): 141–158.
Jessica Schwartz, *Smashing the System: Punk Musicalities and the Myths of Resilience and Resistance* (monograph in progress).
[27] Peter Dale, *Anyone can do it: Empowerment, tradition and the punk underground* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012).
[28] Craig O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk: More than Noise!* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1999).
[29] Roger Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (London: Routledge, 1999).
[30] Mike Dines and Matthew Worley (eds.), *The Aesthetic of Our Anger: Anarcho-Punk, Politics, and Music* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2016).

reignite anarchist movements. Similarly, Propagandhi is a band that is active in political movements in North America. Dines and Worley's edited collection provides useful discussions that can be reworked for Propagandhi in the 1990s and 2000s. Regarding art and punk, books and articles by UK punk scholar Russ Bestley are an invaluable source.[31]

Punk and Gender

Helen Reddington utilizes her own experience in a punk band to discuss the role of women in punk rock in *The Lost Women of Rock Music: female musicians of the punk era*.[32] Kim Gordon's memoir, *Girl in a Band*, of her time spent playing in the band Sonic Youth is not only an important book on the female experience in punk, but it also provides a terrifically written memoir.[33] La punk pioneer Alice Bag's *Violence Girl: East L.A. rage to Hollywood stage: a Chicana punk story* is an excellent resource on the early Los Angeles punk scene from a unique perspective.[34] Riot Grrrl, a radical feminist movement in the punk scene of the early 1990s, not only empowered women in the scene, but also left an impression on many bands including Propagandhi. Sara Marcus details the Riot Grrrl movement in *Girls to the front: the true story of the Riot Grrrl revolution*.[35]

[31] Russ Bestley, "Art Attacks and Killing Jokes: The Graphic Language of Punk Humour" *Punk and Post Punk*. 2, 3. (2014).
[32] Helen Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock Music: female musicians of the punk era* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).
[33] Kim Gordon, G*irl in a Band: a memoir* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015).
[34] Alice Bag, *Violence Girl: East L.A. rage to Hollywood stage: a Chicana punk story* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2011).
[35] Sara Marcus, *Girls to the Front: The true story of the Riot Grrrl revolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010).

Punk Pedagogy

A relatively recent turn in punk scholarship has brought punk pedagogy to the attention of many punk scholars. Some of the first writings on punk pedagogy include Seth Kahn-Egan's 1998 dissertation, "Pedagogy of the Pissed" in which describes how punk pedagogy informs his teaching practices in a college writing course. [36] Marxist education scholars Curry Malott and Milagros Pena may have written the first academic book on punk pedagogy.[37] Malott and Pena attempt a quantitative approach to analyze lyrical content in punk songs. However, they do not propose a punk curriculum, or discuss how punk can be a replacement or surrogate for traditional schooling. For a deep consideration of the literature that influenced many punk songwriters see Brian James Schill's *The Year's Work in the Punk Bookshelf or, Lusty Scripts* in which he tirelessly connects Chomsky, Hegel, Dostoevsky, Rimbaud, and Kafka, among many others to punk rock.[38] British punk sociologist Mike Dines has written two definitive journal articles on punk pedagogy.[39] In his articles, Dines explores the ways former punks teach academic college courses by utilizing punk philosophies. Dines also provides an informative history of the term punk pedagogy and its emerging scholarship in the introduction to *Punk Pedagogies*. [40]

There is a tendency in punk pedagogy research to narrow the gaze to punk in the university from the perspective of graduate students or professors in works such as Zach

[36] Seth Kahn-Egan, "Pedagogy Pissed: Punk Pedagogy in the First-Year Writing Classroom." *College Composition and Communication* 49, 1: 99-104. (1998).
[37] Curry Malott and Milagros Pena, *Punk Rockers' Revolution: A Pedagogy of Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).
[38] Brian James Schill, *The Year's Work in the Punk Bookshelf or, Lusty Scripts* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017).
[39] Mike Dines, "Learning Through Resistance: Contextualisation, Creation and Incorporation of a 'Punk Pedagogy'." *Journal of Pedagogic Development* 5, 3: 20-31. (2015).
Mike Dines, "Reflections on the Peripheral: Punk, Pedagogy and the Domestication of the Radical" *Punk & Post-Punk* 4, 2&3, 129-140. (2015).
[40] Gareth Smith, Mike Dines, & Tom Parkinson (Eds.), *Punk Pedagogies: Music, Culture and Learning* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

Furness' *Punkademics* and Mike Dines and Laura Way' edited collection *Postgraduate Voices in Punk Studies*.[41] Estrella Torrez in her chapter, similar to Kahn-Egan, discusses the ways in which her punk upbringing color how she teaches university courses.[42] Lastly, Rebekah Cordova's book *DIY Punk as Education* is the closest punk pedagogy project that seeks to uncover the learning experience of punk participants in order to inform traditional schooling.[43] Cordova is more interested in the phenomenological experience of punk participants. In her interviews, she asks whether her participants were aware of the educative process of punk. She does not attempt to uncover the actual educative process of punk. Rather than investigating the critical aspect of punk pedagogy, Cordova examines the more sentimental aspects of belonging in a punk community.

Alternative Media and Punk Zines

Not only books and articles on the history of punk, subcultural studies, musicology, and education are sourced for the dissertation, but this review will call attention to an underground and amazing variety of zines like *Maximum RockNRoll*, *Punk Planet*, *Exclaim!*, and *Alternative Press*.[44] These zines (originally known as fanzines because they were self-written, published, and distributed by fans) are a valuable resource as they often contain interviews with punk bands as well as album reviews. The debates, trends, and history of punk lie within these pages. In

[41] Zack Furness (Ed.), *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower* (Wivenhoe: minor Compositions, 2012).
Michael Dines and Laura Way, *Postgraduate Voices in Punk Studies: Your Wisdom, Our Youth* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).
[42] Estrella Torrez, "Punk Pedagogy: Education for Liberation and Love" in *Punkademics,* edited by Zack Furness, 131-142 (London: Minor Compositions, 2012).
[43] Rebekah Cordova, *DIY Punk as Education: from mis-education to educative healing* (Charlotte: Information Age, 2016).
[44] Based in San Francisco, *MRR* has an online archive of all their issues dating back to 1982. *Punk Planet* was a bi-monthly publication based in Chicago that ran from 1994 to 2007. *Alternative Press* began in Cleveland, Ohio 1985 and is currently publishing monthly.

addition to archives of punk zines, there are many online music magazines like *Noisey*, and *Exclaim!.* Not only are there a plethora of online news sites devoted to punk such as PunkNews.org, but record label websites also host interviews and news related to their punk bands.[45] I also have my own saved collection of interviews with Propagandhi in zines including *Hit List*, and *AMP*. There is also growing literature on the history and archiving of punk zines. Cornell University as well as the University of California, Los Angeles both have punk archives housed in their libraries.

[45] Fatwreck.com and Epitaph.com are two websites that host Propagandhi content. G7welcomingcommittee.com the former record label of Propagandhi also had a message board with exchanges from Propagandhi and their fans (not only accessible through the way back machine).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

"Takes a dried up ballpoint, lemon juice and water, keeps a diary invisibly. In the kitchen corner of a basement bachelor's suite, there's a certain search for certainty, you know we'll never see her hands touch her childhood home in photos that she took. It's one more omission from a high school history book; how whole lives are knifed and pushed aside. To whom it may concern…"
--"Letter of Resignation," Propagandhi, Lyrics by John K. Samson

Autoethnography

What you may find especially interesting is my use of personal life writing. I make an original attempt to employ autoethnography; that is my story in punk as a fan, student, teacher, scholar, and musician in a punk band to help elucidate the process and function of the hidden curriculum of Propagandhi. This dissertation is partly personal, subjective, and autobiographical. I cannot write a dissertation on punk as an outsider. This first-person perspective is arguably one of auto-ethnography's biggest strengths as Teaching Fellow Sarah Attfield from the School of Communication at University of Technology Sydney (Australia) argues, "The writers have used their own experiences as musicians and fans to reflect on and analyze the music and scenes which arguably provided the reader with an 'authentic' and immediate insight."[1] Punk shaped my relationship with school, both teaching and learning, identity, and overall critical approach to understanding the world. Although there seems to be a contradiction in placing punk, which is so often anti-authority and anti-establishment, inside an academic setting (a process that most punks would describe as "selling out"), Attfield again resolves this dilemma by asserting that punk and hardcore music, "is potentially more useful to readers interested in understanding the music, the specific circumstances of its creation and how it has inspired and endured."[2]

[1] Sarah Attfield, "Punk rock and the Value of Auto-ethnographic Writing about Music" PORTAL: *Journal of multi-disciplinary international studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, January 2011. 2
[2] Ibid.

Autoethnography is a relatively recent, exciting development in anthropology. This form of qualitative research uses self-reflection, memoir, oral history, and autobiography to explore a writer's life, works, and personal experience to connect or contextualize those experiences to a wider cultural, social, and political context. Celebrated auto-ethnographer, Carolyn Ellis defines autoethnography as "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political".[3] Autoethnography differs from the norm in anthropology and ethnography in that it embraces the researcher's subjectivity rather than trying to limit it. Ellis further defines autoethnography by separating its roots: "Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)."[4] Ellis goes on to say that autoethnography deepens the human experience and broadens individual perspective.

There are many subgenres of autobiography. To understand the forms of autoethnography that I intend to employ, we again utilize Ellis et al.[5] Ellis describes what I intend to do in this dissertation when she writes, "[l]ayered accounts often focus on the author's experience alongside data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature." Ellis continues, "layered accounts use vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and inspections to invoke readers to enter into the emergent experience of doing and writing research."[6] My auto-ethnographic project is a blend of layered accounts and personal narrative. I will best do this on account of my personal transformations stemming from Propagandhi. In addition, my use of personal narrative, as Ellis

[3] Carolyn Ellis, *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004.) xix
[4] Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. & Arthur P. Bochner, Arthur P, "Autoethnography: An Overview [40 paragraphs]" *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1), Art. 10, 2010.
[5] Ellis et al, "Autoethnography: An Overview"
[6] Ellis, Carolyn; Adams, Tony E. & Bochner, Arthur P. (2010). Autoethnography: An Overview [40 paragraphs]. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 12(1), Art. 10. p4.

puts it, "propose[s] to understand a self or some aspect of a life as it intersects with a cultural context, connect to other participants as co-researchers, and invite readers to enter the author's world, and to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives."[7] Again, Doug Kellner's work in cultural studies aids us in understanding this aspect of identity creation.

Autoethnography is not uncontroversial. The sources, data, and evidence to be gathered, besides printed or published documents, are oral history, newsletters, photographs, artwork, e-mail, and blog posts. These sources are particularly valuable yet vast and problematic, raising important issues of quality. Thus, Leon Anderson's "Analytic Autoethnography" is an invaluable essay, especially since it includes a discussion on the problematics of memoir, which are highly relevant to autoethnography.[8] Anderson's reservations about autoethnography are answered in Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner.[9] Professor Heewon Chan of Eastern University in Pennsylvania warns of the pitfalls of an auto-ethnographic approach. These dangers include overly focusing on the self, placing too much emphasis on narration, and an over-reliance on personal memory. These problem areas arise at the expense of analysis.[10] Another perhaps, more relevant warning comes from Andy Medhurst in "What Did I Get? Punk, memory and autobiography" when life writing becomes a "badge proclaiming the authoritativeness of autobiographical authenticity." In other words, the fact I lived and experienced punk during this

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[7] Carolyn Ellis. *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004). p.46.
[8] Leon Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography", Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, August 2006, vol. 35, #4. 375-395.
[9] Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).
Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002).
[10] Heewon Chan, *Autoethnography as Method* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2008).

study does not preclude me from critical reflection, nor does it grant me an intellectual edge because "I was there."[11]

Jimmie Manning and Tony Adams help us bridge the tradition of Douglas Kellner and popular cultural studies with the qualitative turn in ethnography in their article, "Popular Culture Studies and Autoethnography: An Essay on Method."[12] As a novice in autoethnography, I have been influenced by Manning and Adams' five strengths of autoethnography for popular culture. Three that stand out include: "use personal experience to write alongside popular culture theories and texts, especially to show how personal experiences resemble or are informed by popular culture; use personal experience to criticize, write against, and talk back to popular culture texts, especially texts that do not match [the researcher's] personal experiences; describe how [researchers] personally act as audience members, specifically how they use, engage, and relate to popular texts, events, and/or celebrities."[13]

To conclude, we must heed Mitch Allen's advice that a credible autoethnography must "look at experience analytically." Allen explains that an auto-ethnographer's story is more valid because it is rooted in research that has "a set of theoretical and methodological tools and a research literature to use."[14] Furthermore, I am able to capture what is immeasurable. I can respond authentically when my own story provides perspective and context. Because I was so deeply impacted by Propagandhi, I am obligated to use my voice and to share my personal experience as I encountered Propagandhi's music.

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[11] Andy Medhurst, "What Did I Get? Punk, memory, and autobiography" in Roger Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock, so What?: The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (London: Routledge, 2003): 219-231.
[12] Jimmie Manning & Tony Adams, "Popular Culture Studies and Autoethnography: An Essay on Method." T*he Popular Culture Studies Journal* 3. (2015):187-221.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

Case Study

Compared to other methods, the strength of the case study method is its ability to examine, in depth, a case with its real-life context. Not only does this mean exploring Propagandhi as a vital example of a political punk band that has influenced a generation of punk youth, but it also allows for my own auto-ethnography to situate the fan experience within a specific time and place. By utilizing Propagandhi's body of work as a single case study, descriptive or explanatory questions that drive the dissertation can produce a first-hand understanding of punk and its relationship with learning, pedagogy, and compulsory education. Primarily this is the task of this dissertation.

According to Yin, a good case study design, at a minimum, involves defining your case, justifying your choice of a single-case or multiple-case study, and deliberately adopting or minimizing theoretical perspectives.[15] Propagandhi's history and discography are so expansive as to not need another band for contrast. I may use other bands to briefly provide context for the punk scenes Propagandhi work within. Often noting lyrical moments that reference other bands and movements. However, this dissertation seeks to describe Propagandhi's Hidden Curriculum. This focus permits a single case study.

The further I study Propagandhi, the more apparent they are the perfect punk band to study punk pedagogy. This further solidifies the choice for a single case study. Yin continues to argue that the case selection or screen goal is to avoid the scenario whereby, after having started the actual case study, the selected case turns out not to be reliable or to represent an instance of something other than what you had intended to study.

[15] Yin, R. K. (2006). Case Study Methods. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 111–122). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

In addition, because "investigators use a case study design in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved," the strategy of a single case study allows a richer and more complex understanding of punk pedagogy through a close examination of a single provocative punk band, Propagandhi.[16]

Discourse and Content Analysis

The dissertation not only examines the radical themes of Propagandhi's music and lyrics, but the paratexts that embody the entire Propagandhi fan experience. To fully uncover the hidden curriculum of Propagandhi, we must look beyond the music and explore all facets of the punk experience. For example, one key to understanding the work of Propagandhi as a site of learning is through an analysis of their album liner notes.[17] Along with the actual music, these liner notes provide fans with not only written lyrics, but they also contain elaborations or background information on specific songs through the use of epigraphs, drawings, photos, and mini essays. This is also an opportunity for the band to showcase their humor while drawing listeners into their worldview. These album liner notes, as well as the album artwork, help create and define Propagandhi's punk aesthetic, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 6. In addition, because bands often put their pictures in the album liner notes, this is the first-time fans outside of the local Winnipeg scene can put faces to the musical performers. Another perk of reading through an album's liner notes is the networking effect where listeners can learn about related punk bands,

[16] Merriam, Sharan B. 1988. *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

[17] In the dissertation, there will be a discussion of what constitutes a scene. Historically, scenes were understood as primarily location based (See Thompson), but with the rise of popular independent punk labels like Lookout Records, Fat Wreck Chords, and Epitaph records, as well as the growth of the internet, I will argue that scenes were not only location based but became national and even global scenes based on genre. This becomes most evident when we see that Propagandhi becomes a seminal band that helped define the So-Cal skate punk sound of the mid to late 90s. (This skate punk sound of Fat Wreck Chords bands including NOFX, Lagwagon, No Use For a Name, and Good Riddance is discussed in detail in *A Fat Wreck*. Directed by Shaun M. Colon. USA: Open Ended Films, 2016. DVD. Documentary.)

thus growing their punk catalog.[18] These notes are a treasure of information. Interestingly, long before online streaming services like Spotify, which utilize complex algorithms to show listeners related artists, youth listening to punk could use the liner notes to discover new punk bands. Not only did these liner notes help a listener discover new artists, but many bands like Propagandhi, not only printed their politically charged lyrics, but also left book recommendations, wrote brief essays, and added epigraphs to songs to help build context. To sum up, not only can the lyrics themselves present potent messages, but also the paratexts that surround the music, such as liner notes, artwork, magazine interviews, and recordings of live stage banter can add context to songs as well as create new meanings.[19] Taken as a whole, all these forms of interaction with Propagandhi create sites of learning that engage critical thinking and self-reflection.

Although I am not a trained musicologist, I have done my best to attend to the auditory significance of Propagandhi's musical compositions. Informed by my own experience playing in punk bands since 1999, and through exposure to two years of musicology courses as a Teaching Fellow in the Department of Musicology at UCLA, I attempt to make my sonic analysis comprehensible to the reader. In addition, I was fortunate to take a couple of guitar lessons with Propagandhi guitarist Sulynn Hago who was able to share their insider knowledge of Propagandhi's musical writing process. Sulynn was also very excited to answer my questions pertaining to song analysis during our interviews and through direct correspondence. Nevertheless, the analysis that follows will be predominantly text-based whether from lyrics,

[18] Propagandhi straddles two information eras. In the 90s, their album art and notes were vital punk texts; into the late 2000s and 2010, their website may have become a primary source for their younger fans, while older fans still purchase vinyl and CDs.

[19] Paratexts are the peripherals to a piece of art. These additional texts also add meaning to the art in question. Jonathan Gray. *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

interviews, websites, flyers, or album liner notes, but it does not overlook an analysis of music where messages and meanings are sonically presented.

Nevertheless, the music and lyrics are central components to understanding the hidden curriculum that defines Propagandhi's punk pedagogy. As I show, Propagandhi's music is potent and filled with so many lessons that even fans who do not participate in punk rituals such as attending concerts, reading zines, or creating their own band can have their lives changed through the music. In this dissertation's Propagandhi Fan Survey, we even see how these fan experiences can vary based on which album was the entry point for a new fan. So how expansive is the Propagandhi catalog? Propagandhi's discography contains seven full-length albums, multiple singles on vinyl, as well as releases of live and previously unreleased songs.[20] Throughout this discography, Propagandhi navigate social justice themes, evolving with each album. Therefore, social justice is a key component of their Propagandhi's very visible core. However, I organize Chapter Five not by these social justice issues but by how they are "taught" to unearth their hidden curriculum. This reflects one way we can apply Neil Postman's holistic approach to critical thinking and inquiry while also working within a social justice context. The passion for human rights and social justice is clearly heard in Propagandhi's music. What takes more effort is uncovering how Propagandhi has changed so many lives through their music. Most notable about Propagandhi's curriculum is the insistence for fans to think critically, even if that means challenging Propagandhi's own views. In fact, in the song "Apparently, I'm a PC Fascist," Chris Hannah pleads, "Tell you what-I'll call you on your shit, Please call me on mine. Then we can grow together and make this shit-hole planet better in time."[21] This expectation for

[20] For the full Propagandhi studio album discography, see Appendix 1. Contains album cover art and band members on recording.
[21] Lyric from "Apparently, I'm a PC Fascist" from *Less Talk, More Rock* (San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords, 1996).

dialog, wherein an authority figure's "banking" knowledge is absent, arguably makes it easier for listeners to think critically, and become skeptical when presented with controversial perspectives on feminism, nationalism, veganism, religion, racism, and a whole other list of "isms." This is also but a sneak peek of one of the elements of Propagandhi's punk pedagogy. This curriculum creates critically engaged students who are not only capable of finding faults in (or recognizing) oppressive systems, but also capable of finding faults in one's own thinking or a system in which they are a member.

The chapter on music analysis also explores the evolving discourses captured over 25 years and which will likely continue to change as long as Propagandhi continue writing music.

Interviews with Propagandhi Members

I interview past and present members of Propagandhi. This history of Propagandhi is an enormous contribution to punk scholarship as it will be the first academic and in-depth analysis of Propagandhi. My interview questions varied per band member, but all followed a similar guideline which I provide in the appendices.[22] This dissertation creates an in-depth oral history of the band as well as never before heard stories on the members' educational journeys. Along with participating in workshops at UCLA's Center for Oral History Research provided, I followed Ellis' useful guides for managing reliable participants/informants, knowing what to ask and how to collect oral history, as well as methods for taking field notes while interviewing for oral history.[23]

[22] Band member question outline is provided in Appendix 3.
[23] Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams & Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview [40 paragraphs]." *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1), Art. 10. (2010): p8.

I had several objectives for band member interviews. One goal with interviewing past and present members of Propagandhi was to create band member profiles that centered on their experiences in compulsory education as well as post-secondary education, when relevant. These interviews, along with other published histories, also help develop the history of the band. In addition to these band member profiles, I also expected to utilize the interviews for the content analysis of songs. Although a close reading analysis of lyrical content shouldn't rely on the original writer or author's intention, this analysis could only be improved by their personal recollections of the writing process as well as the significance of certain songs. In some cases, members provided their own musical analysis to parts that I would not have been able to decode myself. For example, Jord shared an image he was trying to paint with his drumming that I would not have been able to extrapolate without his help. In the powerful animal rights song, "Purina Hall of Fame" a lyric depicts the helplessness Chris feels to stop animals being shipped off to slaughter, "I just sit back and watch the boxcars roll by and wait." Jord helps sonically paint this picture by playing quick hi-hats that lead into a rolling snare that swells into an offbeat tom roll. Jord informed me that this drumming creates the idea of "a boxcar full of animals about to take off to their final destination, like a train firing up from a cold start. Finally, once in full gear on the tracks, we're just soldering along." These insights from the band not only help show the rich and dynamic songwriting, but they also exemplify that Propagandhi's message is told beyond the lyrics.

I conducted recorded phone interviews through Zoom during the global Covid-19 pandemic shutdown. I opted not to utilize video conferences for these interviews. Although doing online video conferences through applications like Zoom has been normalized during 2020-2021, I was also keenly aware of the fatigue elements many tend to experience when doing

online video conferences. I wanted the interviewees to be as comfortable as possible. Having to get prepared for the camera was not a chore I wanted to assign the participants. In addition, I wanted to honor their privacy by not having a camera peer into their homes or personal spaces. Further, I believed phones were a comforting medium with all the participants as they were born in the 1970s and 1980s and thus accustomed to the art of phone conversation. The calls lasted about one hour each but varied between interviews. In one case, I had to rely on email for the interview.

I had a general question list (see appendix) for all band members. However, I made individual changes and adaptations based on the member's role in the band. The question list was a general guide and usually only used when I felt a topic had been suitably covered, or a silence needed to be filled. One aim of my interviewing style was to create a safe and comfortable space for fluid conversation. In some cases, I may have sacrificed a line of inquiry because I didn't want to derail a participant's flow or rhythm on a topic they found interesting. Overall, I wanted this to feel like a natural conversation rather than an interrogation. I had no objective to codify answers for quantitative research. Therefore, I often let band members steer the conversation to where they felt comfortable. For some members, this came easy as they may have been naturally well-spoken and articulate and had already considered the topics discussed. However, in other interviews I had to ask many follow-up questions to keep the pace going. Because many of the band members were willing to meet for more interviews, I rarely felt a responsibility to get any particular question out. I would have the transcripts available to review before the next interview. In some cases, prior interviews helped guide follow up interviews.

I recorded and transcribed all participant interviews with permission. The transcription process proved to be laborious. I utilized a feature within Zoom that provided a transcript of the

recorded sessions. Yet, these were filled with errors. I needed to manually check all the automatically generated transcripts. In hindsight, this method likely proved to be more time consuming than if I simply began transcribing by ear on my own. However, the many hours spent on the transcriptions allowed for a closer reading and general familiarity with each interview.

All interviews were first transcribed verbatim. Next, I edited those further to create non-verbatim transcriptions. Blake Poland concisely details the benefits of both transcription styles.[24] The original transcripts were kept verbatim in order to capture natural and authentic responses. The verbatim transcripts include unnecessary filler words like, "um", "eh", "you know", "like" and other non-essential utterances. The verbatim transcripts also include sentences that are never finished, hesitations, and false starts that often make parsing a sentence difficult. Although these natural language cues may provide insight into a participant's thought process, it is not the task of this research project to interrogate their linguistic practices. These verbatim transcripts are, therefore, used as reference if ambiguities arise in the non-verbatim transcripts. I let each participant know that I was not going to analyze their language practices. I did not want to subject their speech to scrutiny. I was most concerned with their stories. Thus, I reproduce the non-verbatim transcripts throughout the dissertation. This allows for more clarity when sharing their interviews. When I feel it helpful, I refer to the verbatim transcripts to note participant attitudes, for example, if the participant was laughing or lost in reverie. The final edits used to create the band member profiles included removing all the questions, and organizing their responses into categories: early life, school, punk, etc. These edits include words that I may have added from the questions that were skipped in the responses. In doing so, I made sure to never

[24] Poland, Blake D. "Transcription Quality as an Aspect of Rigor in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry*, no. 1, vol. 3, 1995, pp. 290-310.

change the meaning of any responses. I've only made editorial changes to preserve a flowing and cohesive narrative.

To prepare for the interviews, I relied on experience taking oral history workshops at UCLA and previewed Irving Seidman's "Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences."[25] However, I imposed some challenges on myself due to the fact that the participants have a long history of being interviewed. Members of Propagandhi, such as Jord and Chris, have been routinely giving interviews to punk publications since 1991. I was able to find evidence of hundreds of fanzine interviews alone. Currently, with the explosion of online news mediums and especially podcasts, the interview counts are nearly impossible to tally. And so, I had the burden of not repeating typical questions. I was naturally able to do this since many of the questions leaned heavily on schooling and education. I could sense this was a breath of fresh air for many of the participants. Although some found it challenging to recall their early schooling years, I often heard excitement in telling narratives of their formative years. Of course, at times I slipped in between researcher and fan. When I did go off track with my own fan-driven curiosities, I often apologized for my excitement and returned to task. However, I think this kept the conversations genuine and fun. It was through this atmosphere that I hoped to break the participants from their stock set of answers. I could also sense they were relieved that the full audio was not to be released even though no participants shared any hesitation about the interview. It seemed they wanted to get their facts correct more than they wanted to entertain. This likely comes from the fact that they were interviewed by an academic rather than a commercial writer. John K. Samson told me that he had a heart for academics and was thus pleased to do the interview. John rarely does interviews. If he does, he

[25] Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*. 3rd ed., Teachers College Press, 2006.

often throws obstacles like only doing interviews through postcards. This desire to return to older mediums, like the written word, also solidified my choice not to require video feeds during the interviews.

Converting the interviews into first person oral histories was a creative challenge and joy. I was tasked to create flowing narratives derived from the interviews. At times this was an easy task, but often it was difficult as it can be a challenge for interviewees to answer a question how they want to the first time through. This means that there were plenty of sentences that were started, but not finished. Or a common occurrence that I found was the thesis or main idea of a point getting formulated at the very end of a response. In these instances, I would often move these to the front of answers to help make the narrative more logically cohesive. What's most enjoyable is seeing their narrative emerge without evidence of my editing. I almost felt like an engineer in a recording studio mixing a song, whereby an engineer would keep the heart and soul of what the artist intended but clean up the rough edges to make it sound tighter and more powerful. This is just one of the many ways in which my creative passions are painted throughout this dissertation.

Propagandhi Fan Surveys

At the conclusion of my guest appearance on the Podcast, *Unscripted Moments: a Podcast about Propagandhi*, I announced that I would be collecting surveys from the audience perspective for this dissertation. Several people reached out to help, I forwarded those respondents a survey, eventually ten participants completed the survey. The creation of the survey was challenging as I didn't find it compelling to reduce the audience perspective to statistics. Therefore, the survey mostly consisted of open-ended questions to elicit personal experiences fans had with Propagandhi. In particular, the survey seeks to understand the

relationship between school, punk, Propagandhi, and identity. The Appendix 2 contains the lists of questions participants had the choice to answer. The answers to these questions are utilized throughout the dissertation. Sometimes they are used in song analysis to get perspectives other than my own; they can also be found during the band's oral history to give fan perspectives on particular events. However, Chapter 6 contains their responses in an edited and cohesive narrative that follows the same pattern as the narratives found in Chapter 4. These experiences act as qualitative reference to the pedagogical impact Propagandhi has had on their fans. The following table includes the six participants chosen from the surveys received that best show a varied Propagandhi fan experience. Rather than requesting data on race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, I asked participants to share only what they considered to be important to their own identity. In addition, The study participants had the option to use their real name or a pseudonym. I do not disclose how participants decided:

Name	*Country*	*Age*	*Occupation*
Jamie	Canada	36-40	Artist
Ben	Australia	37	Architect
Nils	Germany	31-35	Special Needs Educator
Victoria	USA	41	Oncology Social Worker
David	Canada	36-40	Author
Steve	USA	31-35	Teacher and Graduate Student

Limitations of Study

One of the challenges of researching an active punk band is that their cultural production is still active and producing more content. Even though an album hasn't been released since 2017, the band remains active on social media with official band accounts on Twitter and

Instagram. Often, they may post about topical issues, other times they could post silly jokes. In addition, Chris Hannah has a Patreon page that provides subscribers with exclusive content such as rare photos of the band, unreleased Propagandhi demo song recordings, and Chris's *A Catastrophic Break with Consensus Reality* podcast. This podcast provides in-depth history and contextual background on a specific Propagandhi song (often voted in by subscribers). Chris' Patreon also has a vibrant community of fans engaged in discussion under each Patreon post. All of this new content makes it difficult to keep up with the latest insights to utilize in this dissertation. In Chapter 6, I discuss the importance of zines in the Propagandhi story. This dissertation emphasizes earlier forms of punk media which have recently become less significant in our shift to a digital landscape.

Although Chapter 6 provides six autobiographical vignettes from Propagandhi fan participants from Canada, USA, Australia, and Germany, it does not contain a complete global perspective. The survey was only accessible in English and promoted on the English-speaking fan podcast Unscripted Moments: A Podcast about Propagandhi. There are vibrant punk communities across the globe, but this dissertation cannot discuss Propagandhi's impact (although assumed) on punk youth throughout the world.

Finally, the responses from the band interviews as well as the fan surveys are personal, subjective, and vulnerable to errors of memory. However, should any of their details be incorrect, the larger narratives would remain unchanged. Regarding my own auto-ethnographic contributions throughout, I heed the warnings that scholars of autoethnography and history offer in order to be as objective as possible.[26] Yet, the life narratives within offer a beautiful glimpse

[26] Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams, and Arthur Bochner, Autoethnography: An Overview [40 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *12*(1), Art. 10 (2010); Heewon Chan, *Autoethnography as Method* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2008); Sol Cohen, "Memoir: A Mosaic of

into how punk and education shaped Propagandhi, and how Propagandhi shaped their fans. I borrow Neil Postman's framing that good social science research should be closer to a moral theology than a hard science.[27] This is why I have allowed the voices to flourish within this dissertation without categorizing or putting labels on their identities. The people who share their stories within choose when and where they feel their identities regarding race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality are of notable interest.

Memories" Leaders in the History of American Education. Wayne J. Urban, Ed. (Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, 2012).

[27] Neil Postman. "Social Science as Moral Theology" in *Conscientious Objection: Stirring up trouble about language, technology, and education*. Vintage Books. 1988.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROPAGANDHI MEMBER PROFILES

How has life, and particularly school life, in the Winnipeg prairies affected the music of Propagandhi? This chapter provides an oral history of the band and its members through interviews that were conducted in 2021. Unless noted, the content comes directly from interviews with Propagandhi band members, past and present. Band member responses have been edited into a flowing narrative. No changes were made to alter meaning or facts. This chapter focuses on early life experiences at home, school, and their entrance into punk. It also provides some backstory on the band's formation, or how later members joined. However, it is not a complete oral history of the band from its inception to the writing of this dissertation.

A Brief History of Propagandhi

The following history is meant to provide a simple overview of some key moments, places, events, and people in the Propagandhi story. Consider this also as a glossary of the many important terms used throughout this dissertation.[1] The band member biographies contain the more vibrant narratives regarding Propagandhi's history.

Jord Samolesky and Chris Hannah played hockey together on the outskirts of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Chris lived on the Royal Canadian Air Force Base just south of Portage la Prairie, where Jord grew up. After Chris returned to the base having lived in Ottawa for a few years, the two met up again in high school. It wasn't until the two of them had moved to Winnipeg that Propagandhi would begin.

Initially, the two wrote music together. They created their first demo cassette, We *Don't Get Paid, We Don't Get Laid, and Boy are we Lazy* in 1990 with Chris playing guitar and bass,

[1] For a more colorful account of the band's early history, read Chris Hannah's band bio that was written around 2008: https://smallmanrecords.com/bands/propagandhi/

while Jord drummed. From 1990 to 1991 they had a couple of bass players, but neither of them recorded bass on any demo tapes. In 1991, Propagandhi released *Fuck the Scene*. A young John K. Samson devoured this tape and even learned how to play a few songs. So, when an opportunity to try out for bassist in Propagandhi arose, John got a ride from his mom and went straight to Chris' house. John, the only person to try out, got the job. John's first show was opening up for the California punk band, NOFX. At this show, Fat Mike, lead singer of NOFX, took an interest in Propagandhi and left Winnipeg with that *Fuck the Scene* tape. Fat Mike, having just started his record label Fat Wreck Chords, offered Propagandhi to join the new label. Before releasing a record on Fat Wreck Chords, Propagandhi recorded and released their final demo tape, *Martial Law… with a Cherry on top* in 1992. This was the band's first three-piece recording as they now had a competent bassist with John K. Samson.

In 1993, Fat Wreck Chords released Propagandhi's debut studio album, *How to Clean Everything*. Shortly after, punk exploded in the US with bands like Green Day and the Offspring becoming radio staples. This helped propel Fat Wreck Chords and Propagandhi, as they had helped pioneer a wave in punk rock identified as California skate punk. It was an even poppier version of melodic hardcore that bands like Bad Religion had popularized. With the album's popularity, Propagandhi was able to tour the US, Europe, and Japan. To this day, *How to Clean Everything* easily remains the highest-selling Propagandhi record.

Feeling that their messaging may have been lost on many fans, the band returned to the studio for their follow-up album, *Less Talk, More Rock.* This album was designed to leave no doubts as to what Propagandhi were about. One way to do this was to emblazon the record with an anarchy symbol surrounded by the words "gay-positive * pro-feminist * animal-friendly * anti-fascist." For many like myself, this was a life-changing album as it challenged so many of

our unquestioned beliefs around religion, animal rights, sexism, racism, and classism. However, for other fans, the band went too far. Propagandhi's popularity within the skatepunk scene began to dwindle.

After the album was released, John K. Samson left the band. During this time, Jord and Chris put their efforts into building their own record label, G7 Welcoming committee. It had begun in 1994 as an unnamed operation that released some of John K. Samson's' solo work. They also released a split CD of Propagandhi and Todd Kowalski's band, I-. Since Propagandhi were admirers of Todd and I-Spy, they asked Todd to temporarily join Propagandhi on bass after John left. This temporary position slowly resolved into a permanent position with Todd still active on bass nearly 25 years later. While Todd was earning his spot in the band, G7 Welcoming Committee released a compilation album of Propagandhi songs that were written and recorded after *How to Clean Everything* and before *Less Talk, More Rock* and released on Recess Records. The 7" double record *Where Quality is Job #1* and the 10" record *I'd Rather be Flag-burning* were placed on the G7 release, *Where Quantity is Job #1* in 1998. Interestingly, this compilation album contains songs with John on bass as well as Todd. The album liner notes also contain photos of John and Todd, making this a confusing moment for Propagandhi fans like myself. "What happened to John?" This question was answered when G7 released John K. Samson's new band, The Weakerthans' debut album *Fallow*.

For many fans, the next Propagandhi release couldn't come quickly enough. For us, the chasm between 1996 and 2001 was immense. However, the band was working overtime with G7 Welcoming Committee and writing new Propagandhi songs. But, in 2001, Propagandhi released their third record on Fat Wreck Chords, *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes*. This was a complete sonic departure from *Less Talk, More Rock*. Todd brought a more aggressive and

passionate edge to Propagandhi. Whereas John wistfully sang with a tender charm, Todd was exerting so much force through his screaming that even he admits it was a physically painful experience. This album marked the new direction of Propagandhi, where Jord and Chris' dream to blend punk and metal into a chaotic and powerful, thrashy sonic bludgeoning would finally be realized. Propagandhi then toured North America in support of *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes.*

In 2005, Propagandhi released *Potemkin City Limits* on Fat Wreck Chords. It received an underwhelming response. Perhaps many of the punkers from the late 90s had aged out of the scene, or people were hesitant to get political after the events on September 11, 2001, and the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet, Propagandhi plowed ahead and toured in support of this album. However, this would be their last album as one of the greatest trios in punk rock history. In 2007, friend David "The Beaver" Guillas joined the band as the second guitarist. With this roster, Propagandhi toured at the end of 2007 and into 2008, even playing in Japan again. During these shows, Propagandhi debuted a few songs that would appear on their next record.

Having previously fallen out with Fat Mike and Fat Wreck Chords over a dispute on a *Rock Against Bush* compilation album, Propagandhi opted to release their 2009 album, *Supporting Caste* on their own. They used multiple distributors to get this record out, but primarily Smallman Records did the heavy lifting. As argued by many, this is Propagandhi's greatest achievement. The lyrics had matured while the music had found a way to remain fast and chaotic but also bring back some of the melodic and pop punk sensibilities found on earlier records.

In 2012, the band released *Failed States* on Epitaph Records, which was founded by Bad Religion guitarist, Brett Gurewitz. Epitaph was the template that Fat Mike borrowed for Fat

Wreck Chords; however, Epitaph was clearly the giant in the underground punk scene. *Failed States* ushered in one of the most technical and complicated Propagandhi records to date. Like all their previous records, *Failed States* demonstrated a remarkable improvement in style and technique over the last. If it hadn't been obvious before, fans clearly understood that Propagandhi were masters of their craft, people who relentlessly practiced and were devoted to their craft.

By 2015, David "the Beaver" Guillas had stopped touring with Propagandhi to pursue his career in education. In an unusual move, Propagandhi announced that they would be trying out new guitarists for Beaver's spot. Guitarists from across the world sent in videos of their guitar riffs in hopes of landing an in-person audition. After sifting through a glut of entries, the band found Sulynn Hago. Even through email exchanges, they all had chemistry. Sulynn was flown out to Winnipeg and auditioned with the band, playing songs like "Speculative Fiction." The creative similarities were apparent. Sulynn became the newest member of Propagandhi in September 2015. Sulynn later contributed to Propagandhi's most recent studio album, *Victory Lap*, which was released in 2017. The current lineup remains Chris, Jord, Todd, and Sulynn.

Chris Hannah

I conducted three interviews with Chris over the summer of 2021. It was sometimes a challenge to silence my questions that only served to answer fan gossip, but overall, Chris was so engaging and well-spoken that the interview was a breeze. As the band's leader and main songwriter/lyricist, it would be possible to conduct interviews every day for a decade and still not run out of things to talk about pertaining to Propagandhi. However, I allowed Chris to move in the direction to he felt comfortable going. Although I had a question guide, I felt no obligation to

adhere to it when I felt Chris was speaking openly while providing insightful background. What I found very interesting was Chris' natural inclination to discuss his early years living on air force bases. This made it almost unavoidable to not put his father's story as a fighter pilot a central component to Chris' upbringing. Like Jord, we get a glimpse into the life of a child living under nuclear threat in the Cold War Era and how he found his way out of the muck.

Early Life

I was born on an air force base in northern Alberta in Canada, called CFB (Canadian Forces Base, Cold Lake). It was a fighter pilot training base. My dad was a fighter pilot, and the next 16 years of my life were just moving around, following my dad's career trajectory throughout the Air Force. I was completely fascinated with the idea of what my dad did. Before I was born, he was part of a joint US Canadian nuclear strike squadron in Europe. So, his job as an 18 or 19-year-old man, in the event of the outbreak of war with Russia, was to fly an F-104 Starfighter to an undisclosed city somewhere in the Warsaw Pact that he would never reveal to me. He went to his grave without telling me what it was, and he was supposed to drop a nuke on this city, then barrel roll out of it hopefully surviving the shockwave and try to get back from a soon-to-be nuked Europe.

So, knowing this as a kid, I was fascinated from the idea of this very childish and regressive idea of a warrior. I was captivated by the power he held in that job, which was power over other humans, power over history. I found all that fascinating, but I was really frustrated with his complete lack of interest in it. He happened into that line of work and didn't have a jingoistic bone in his body. He had no interest in talking about the job, and he didn't come across, in civilian life, as somebody who was a fighter pilot. He grew flowers and built gardens in our backyard. That's what he did, and he read books. I think I found that frustrating as a kid who

wanted him to sort of leverage the image of his job of what I thought it would be, like this cartoonish idea of how that would be perceived in our community, whatever community we lived in. I'm still fascinated by that time in his life, but more in a horrified sense.

In his later years, he didn't want me to tell my niece or my son that that was his job when he was a kid. He was mortified by it, that he was willing to do that at some point in his life. In his mind, an 18-year-old boy brought up in our culture will do absolutely anything without regret. His idea was that governments and militaries leverage this. This is why armies are full of young people. It's not just because they're durable, quick, and agile, it's because they'll do anything. The older people get, the less likely they are to not have a crisis of conscience about some acts. This was his idea, and I grew to admire that in him as he got older. Yet, I was still fascinated that this person, this flower gardener, could have been a nuclear murderer. It's such a crazy thing for me to think about even now. He just wasn't that person. When I was a kid, that frustrated me, but as an older person, it fascinates me.

I was afraid of nuclear war because it was the Cold War era, and I lived on military bases which were targets. I went to a school on the base, and there would always be air raid drills. Out of nowhere, the air raid drill goes off. You're sitting in class and you're like, “Oh, my god, is this real?” Every kid's thinking the same thing and eventually, nothing happens, and the teacher yells after it that it was just a test. I wouldn't be surprised if some kids were traumatized by that. Everybody knew nuclear conflict didn’t have a winner; it was mutually assured destruction. Well, if we get to that, we're all gone. So, there wasn't really a comforting feeling of being on a military base at that point in my life.

My home wasn’t very conservative. One of my dad’s other strong beliefs was that nobody in a democracy has to ever reveal who they vote for, which, I guess makes sense. If you

had to tell somebody, then maybe someone could influence your vote. Anyways, sometimes I felt, in later years, that was a cover for him not voting conservatively. He was probably voting against the community interests of an air force base at the time, but I'll never know, but my parents definitely never came across as conservative. In fact, I would say we had wacko American military friends that were full, crazy, jingoistic conservatives. For example, the song "Stick the flag up your ass" with the lyric about the planes flying over and someone saying, "That's the sound of freedom." That was this American guy, a friend of my dad who came up from Florida or Alabama from some air force base. He came up to Winnipeg. I think an F-18 flew over the house, and I asked what kind of plane that was. This guy was like, "That's the sound of freedom, son." It was a real thing, and I just felt this culture shock because my dad is not like that. He's not that ridiculous. So, I think I would guess my parents were sort of middling, Canadian liberal-style voters.

The community on the base was white. These bases were de facto white enclaves, at least in the 70s and early 80s. We had one family, an exchange family from Jamaica. Beautiful family, but a complete anomaly on the air force base, but they made a real impression on me because I remember going to their house and hanging out, whereas in other households, parents just drank or whatever, but in their house, they would clear the living room floor. Reggae music would come on, the whole family would be dancing. I was like, wow, this is different. This is fun. The anomaly provided me with a tiny glimpse of what it's like when you don't live in a white enclave, and it seemed interesting. My experience on air force bases was largely that; I was living in a de facto white enclave.

Living on the base totally shielded me from observing racism. Or at least it partly did because I also played hockey in the adjacent town. The civilian town and adjacent to that town

are a couple of reserves, and indigenous communities, and I was lucky enough that I played on teams with the kids from reserves. When we would travel to other small towns, I got to see how indigenous kids are treated by the average Canadian settler. They were children being called racist names as we played hockey and that kind of thing. A military base, at least in my experience, is interesting because it shields you from a lot of realities. For example, nobody is homeless. There's a class structure, but everybody is provided for to some degree. There's infrastructure provided to every community member. You have some sort of sports plex, or an arena, swimming pool, things like that. To me, in a way, it was idyllic while problematic.

School History/Life

I was all in at school as a young kid. I was all in on everything they were telling me, about being patriotic, about how the world worked. I was full in on the whole thing because I didn't know there were any other ideas. Getting older, I started seeing the world for what it really was. It was noticed that these things do not match up, so what's going on here? And at that point, MDC stepped in. I was like, "Ok, now *that* looks more like the reality that I'm seeing."[2]

I was at Harold Edwards Elementary from grades one to four. I think I had a grade 4 teacher that I really liked, Mrs. Jackson. That was the one year of school where I ever felt in all my schooling that I was excelling academically and before and after that, I just didn't have much interest at all. So, I don't know what happened in grade four. Then, I moved back to that base again after living in Ottawa for a while, but I went to school in the civilian town (Portage la Prairie) that was adjacent to the base at that time.

[2] See Dave Dictor's, singer, lyricist, and founding member of Millions of Dead Cops, memoir *MDC Memoir From a Damaged Civilization: Stories of Punk, Fear, and Redemption*. Manic D Press. 2016.

Rather than missing something from my education, I actually objected to some of the things that I was actively being taught. It wasn't a matter of some ideas being absent. It was a matter that extreme ones were being shoved down my throat and that's partly because I grew up in a military family, schools on air force bases, and stuff like that, so the priorities were a little bit different. I think when I realized the realities of empire or patriotism, all this kind of stuff, I had the impulse that this has to be unlearned. I've got to unlearn it, and in that process, maybe somebody else wants to too. So, that's what we did with the band.

I don't think I had too many critical thoughts probably until the end of school when I was 16 or 17. I was aware of the critical thoughts through some of the bands DRI or Corrosion of Conformity, or MDC, but I didn't really apply them to school at that time. It didn't become this thing where I was challenging the teacher. It's hard to remember. I'm not sure. I feel that came after I was done in school, but I think partly because of my high school years. I was just silent. I didn't talk to anybody. I didn't engage with anybody else. I was just on my own, essentially. So, I think I had to wait until I was done with school and got involved in the music scene. I found a peer group that I was interested in that started to unleash some of my thoughts.

Metal Goes Punk

Jord shared that Millions of Dead Cops (MDC) record with me. He was the first guy to have it. I remember standing in his house and looking at the record. He's playing it, and I remember looking at the back and thinking, "What the hell is this? John Wayne was a Nazi? You've gotta be fuckin'… what are these holly freaks talking about?" I was actually offended in the moment. And I told him so, and then the first thing I did was leave his house, and I bought the record.

When Jord and I were first hanging out and talking about making a band, he was the punk guy. He had a fucking Mohawk and a D.O.A. shirt, and I'd be standing there, with hockey hair in a Kreator shirt. I was the metal guy, he was the punk guy, and we thought that was exactly what we wanted because we were interested in the crossover between those two scenes. That's what we wanted to do. Towards the late 80s metal was being bought up by the major labels, like the thrash metal scene was being killed by major deals, and bands losing that sense of being out of control. They started to seem like they were very under control. At that point, what seemed like it was out of control was the punk scene. I started to get interested more, not even so much in the music. Born Against, for example, just seemed like nobody controls them.[3] Like everything they do, they decide, and they either enjoy the glory, or they pay the consequences for what they're doing. But nobody's advising them or watering down what they're saying. That became what was interesting to me in that same sense that originally attracted me to the underground metal scene where it just seemed like nobody had control of us. We're making this up as we go along. There were no band managers, labels or PR people. There was nothing like that, nobody, squaring off the edges. So, I gravitated towards that, and it became the replacement for the metal scene that was being watered down by major labels. I didn't like punk music as much, but it was the aesthetic that I connected with.

I liked the spirit. I like the idea of a basement show. Again, nobody's controlling this. There are no bouncers here, there's no venue owner who's going to interfere with the show or tell us what we're going to say. So, because of all that, I started identifying more as somebody involved in the punk scene, if not as a punk. I probably did identify as a punk or something at one time. But that scene kind of dissipated as well.

[3] For more on Born Against see Born Against's frontman Sam McPheeters' punk memoir *Mutations: The many strange faces of hardcore punk.* 2020.

Punk Pedagogy

I think it's more where people first encounter the idea that makes it impactful. If people credit us that doesn't really have much to do with us except that we put out a record at a particular time that was unusual in the genre. It did the same thing for some other people. I always talk about MDC and their first record. I credit them for changing my life. But it's really just because it was the first place, I ever encountered a different idea. It's not that MDC, per se, went on to maintain this influence over me. It was just where I first encountered these very radical—compared to what I grew up with—ideas. I think people do that with us especially with the *Less Talk, More Rock* record because at that time in the genre, we were lumped into the California skate, snowboard, and surf genre which was completely bereft of any ideas except indulging oneself. It was a real eye opener for some people at that point. But for other people, it was a couple of years earlier with Consolidated or with a Noam Chomsky 7-inch that Bad Religion put out. There's just these different points people encounter a new idea and then they tend to remember that moment as being very special. Because it is, I guess. It is! But it has less to do with our effectiveness as "educators" and more to do with the ideas themselves. All we've done is taken them from somebody who impacted us with these ideas, and we're passing them on.

That Bad Religion 7" with Noam Chomsky was pivotal for me at that moment because I was interested in Bad religion and becoming interested in the political side of the music as well. I don't think they went on to obsess over the ideas as much as we did. I think they were kind of running a business and running a band at the same time as being socially conscious people and that probably softens the edge of a new idea. Whereas we were like, especially in the *Less Talk* era, the music was secondary to the ideas, and the business aspect was nonexistent. So, it kind of

became more of a focal point for our band whereas a band like Bad Religion, for the average listener, you were able to miss the idea if you wanted to. Whereas with our band, you just couldn't. You couldn't miss it on the record. You couldn't miss it in the live setting because we were fucking shooting our mouths off between songs all the time. [Goldfinger didn't even know what we were talking about] So, I think it was the aggregate of that and the band became more known for that, for the idea than actually being a band for a certain period of time.

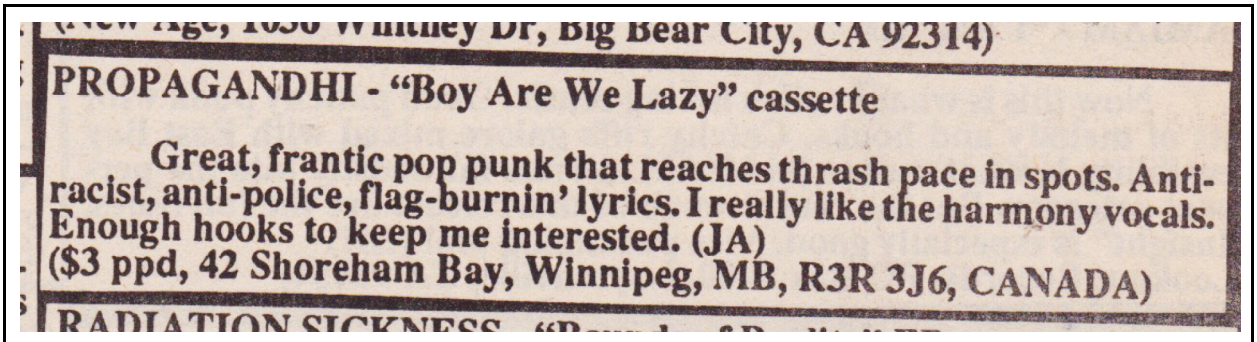
The MDC record was the wake-up call where I wasn't instantly transformed by it, but it was the first thing that was going to allow the transformation to happen. Then around 1990 in Canada, there was this event in the summer of 1990 where indigenous folks out east, Mohawks were protesting the building of a golf course on their sacred burial sites, and they closed down some major thoroughfares in Quebec, and the police went in, the Army went in. I'd never seen anything like it. It was also a galvanizing moment where I was like, "Yeah, ok." Now I can put into practice some of these private doubts I've had and see this for what it really is. This is a settler colonial government imposing its completely frivolous whim, a golf course on a sacred burial site. It was outrageous and it was very surprising and inspiring to see this relatively small group of marginalized people who had been written off; the war's over, we won, kind of thing, standing up against the settler government, and I think it kind of changed me.

Propagandhi Early History

After high school, I think I was just trying to figure out how I could do the least amount of work that wouldn't interfere with my being interested in music. I was basically just working janitor jobs, that kind of thing. I had no academic ambitions at all. I was fascinated that Jord had an interest and drive for college that I didn't. I think I was partly interested because I was hoping to learn vicariously through him somehow. I paid attention to what Jord was doing because part

of his classes involved Chomsky books and we were just learning about Chomsky through the punk scene and I was like, “Wow, you read that school?” But I had no interest in college. I might have been 17 but I was socially more like a 14-year-old. I wasn't preparing for the rest of my life in any practical way. I just wanted to play my guitar and listen to thrash metal.

I couldn't believe it when *MRR* published a review of our first demo cassette. I remember going down to Records On Wheels, which was the record store, the best record store in Winnipeg at the time, and seeing a new issue behind the counter and I was like, Oh, I wonder if our tape will be in there that I submitted and I bought it and I remember, I didn't look through it until I left the store. I walked out and I was near this theater in Winnipeg, I opened it up, and I was thumbing through, and I saw our name. I was almost dizzy. Like, “Wow, this is really happening. We're in here. Oh, my God!” It's a one-line review but it's positive.



(New Age, 1050 Whitney Dr, Big Bear City, CA 92314)

PROPAGANDHI - “Boy Are We Lazy” cassette

Great, frantic pop punk that reaches thrash pace in spots. Anti-racist, anti-police, flag-burnin’ lyrics. I really like the harmony vocals. Enough hooks to keep me interested. (JA)
($3 ppd, 42 Shoreham Bay, Winnipeg, MB, R3R 3J6, CANADA)

RADIATION SICKNESS

Maximum RockNRoll no.83, April 1990, pg104. Review by Jim Allison

I was so elated. I think I went straight to a payphone to call Jord, “Jord! You're not going to believe this!”

Jord Samolesky

It was a pleasure interviewing Jord as he had a remarkable ability to develop answers without any assistance. It felt like everything I threw at him was a softball that he would crush

out of the stadium. Jord also has the ability to take a small detail and find how it can fit into larger political contexts. Overall, I was excited to hear about Jord's experience in college and his one day of teaching experience that closed the door on his teaching career. Insightly, clever, engaging, astute, and funny are all ways to describe Jord's responses. It was an absolute pleasure taking our interview and finding a way to make a cohesive narrative straight from the horse's mouth. Where Chris may have not filled in the narrative on Propagandhi's formation, Jord helps fill the gap.

Early Life in Portage la Prairie

I was born in 1970. I did all my high schooling in the neighborhood, like in a small-town west of Winnipeg with about 12,000 people. I went to K-9 school, and then a high school that was just right beside it from 10-12. I walked to school every day from when I was five years old till when I was out of high school. It was a different era in the mid-70s; we just walked to school with the other kids. People wouldn't really lock their doors at that point, at least in Portage. And it was kind of "you're on your own." There wasn't really a problem. I remember being seven years old, just walking to and from school, walking home from lunch, and walking back to school. It was like a kilometer either way. There was no real concern for guys in white vans, or weird shit happening. Then, I witnessed the whole thing change over the course of my life in that same town; it's completely different now. Nobody used to be concerned about having alarm systems in their homes or anything like that. The doors were left open in your cars and the houses. It was an interesting societal shift with all that stuff.

When you're usually walking home with other kids, you're growing together, and part of your socialization is not only being involved in the school system but part of this thing, where you do have that independence. The role of play and just talking and making plans with your

friends continues on. The street was the playground for all the kids. You'd just go out. We did have independence, outside of obvious times, where we had to be in and go to bed. It seemed quite free. It really did, and part of that time was before all the free-trade agreements and all that kind of stuff started happening in the later 80s and mid-80s.

I remember before there was a McDonald's and a 7/11. All that stuff didn't exist in my childhood. That was more in the 80s, like my teenage years. We had all the ma-and-pa shops and all that kind of stuff. Now, I go to the same town, and the pizza places are all chains. Walmart has destroyed a lot of the family businesses, and that's like every town from 12,000 down to like 2000 across all the prairies, pretty much the entire country. Globalization and everything else have changed the economy and the social landscape.

The first political embryonic memories I have when I was 12-13 years old are when the US invasion of Grenada happened. I remember watching the news and seeing footage of it but not really getting it. I just watched in disbelief. I'd been to the United States a number of times; we're only 100 kilometers north of the border. I had been down there with my parents, playing hockey in Grand Forks [ND]. It just seemed weird like, "What's going on?" There's this armed conflict in little old Grenada way down there; see it on the map. I wasn't really understanding it, and then only about a month after that, this movie *The Day After* was broadcast on ABC or whatever. I think it was one of the most viewed television spectacles of the time. I remember it was funny because my parents were generally in control of what I could watch. So, there were certain movies that I wasn't able to watch, like *the Exorcist* or stuff like that. But I remember my dad was really encouraging us to watch *The Day After*, sort of this dramatic representation of a potential nuclear holocaust. I remember it as a coming-of-age experience. That really resonated

with me, and I had recurring nightmares. And I remember it was sort of my first experience in reckoning with a real existential threat.

In Portage, there were a lot of farmer kids from conservative families, and a lot of kids from the air force base from military families. A lot of those kids would be in and out like a couple years at the time, like Chris; they're on different rotations. They basically go to five schools where I went over the course of my childhood. So, there were the air force kids, the farmer kids, kids from the First Nations reserves, and eventually with the hockey culture, there were the kids that played on the junior hockey team and that whole sort of entourage. It was just wild. Once we got into our high school ages, and drinking was definitely a huge part of the culture, it ended up getting pretty fucking nuts at times.

I try to imagine what it would be like for other kids where you're with a guardian or with parents the entire time. It's like you're socializing through screens and premeditated, pre-organized playdates and stuff. A lot of agency is left out of a child's decision making of who they're going to interact with and stuff like that. Whereas you leave and you're just walking to school with the neighborhood kids. You're just sort of in your lot figuring things out.

School Life

The feeling of freedom while walking to school changed once in the classroom. I remember in the later 70s, by the time I was in grade five / grade six, we had an interesting mix of liberal and conservative style teachers. We had a few old garters that were on the way out--close to retirement, and they were fucking strict, like rulers on the hand and yardsticks slapping us down. There was corporal punishment in the 70s and in our schools. I didn't get it myself, but I was threatened with it a couple times. They were like you have to fucking stand for the anthem in the morning and, back in those days, "God Save the Queen" right at the end of the day. And

you had to stand at attention until the last note of the song rang out; they'd start freaking out if you started moving. It was ridiculous in retrospect. Oh, and the Lord's Prayer too. We had to recite that as well. They changed all that shortly or a few years after I left, probably in the early 80s.

There were a lot of students from a nearby First Nations reservation, and those are my first experiences of just an inkling of this idea of class and race and how that is introduced to the child mind and seeing aspects of racist behavior and in young kids and certain language that I didn't know. And then eventually in high school, we're not learning shit-all about anything in our colonial history or anything like that.

I think the issues that I had with my education growing up was that everything was kind of done with a certain degree of competence, but when I got into high school, I really realized that the quality of the teachers that I had really determined my interest in different subject matter. And that came to the detriment, unfortunately, of a very good understanding of history. Our history teachers were terrible and built on top of a really bad curriculum standard at that time, where it was rote memorization of different parts of Canadian colonial history, and that's all you're learning, and it was really badly done. I think they had other issues. Well, what can I say? They were bad teachers; they weren't cut out for the job.

And the classes were out of control, just Gong shows, and we didn't learn anything valuable about the history of our neck of the woods, or Canadian history, or anything for that matter. It was bad, but on the other hand, my English teachers were really great, and they really influenced the trajectory of my life. My English Literature class was influential and important to me. He had us reading some books like *Brave New World* and *1984* by George Orwell. It really guided my set of interests and seeking out explanations through music, literature, and then later

on in my university years, it really directed the stuff I was getting into in sociology and then eventually with our band. Yet, history class failed us. Richard Wagamese is an author that I've become aware of. He's a first nations Ojibwe author who grew up not too far from Winnipeg. I imagine if I had read those books, like some of them would be appropriate for junior high age, and some for high school. There is nothing contentious in the books at all in terms of things where some parents might get a little concerned about. There's nothing really dicey with them or have adult scenes. But his books would have done a lot if they were part of a curriculum now. They would have done a lot to help relations between kids. They provide an understanding of what happened in our history, and they're just really good and positive books. There's a few in particular that I would just strongly recommend any kind of teacher in Manitoba at this point or across Canada or anywhere really. It's really excellent material.

I did find fairly reasonable math teachers in grade 10 and 11 doing university entry level material. Then, I needed this grade 12 level math class to get into my university program. I had heard that a lot of people didn't like the teacher too much, and he was difficult, but I was trying to stick with the material, and he ended up having a heart attack. What happened in the aftermath of that really cost that entire class. There were some substitute teachers that came in a sort of revolving door approach. Understandably, it was complicated for an administration to cover those bases; there must be a lot of roadblocks or whatever. It was probably not an easy situation to deal with, but in the end, most of that class ended up having to take it again the next term, which happened to me and that came at the cost of sacrificing one of my electives. So, I didn't take my grade 12 band class. That was my one shot to be the lead trumpet player. I had played for about five years. Most of the trumpet players who were in grade 12 class had just graduated, so it was finally my shot. Unfortunately, I couldn't take band. I had no more room in

my schedule; I had to force in the Math 300 class my last semester of high school. You know, I've probably picked up the trumpet twice since I quit that class in grade 11.

When I enrolled into the Faculty of Education in 1988, I went down this path of taking courses that I'd done well in high school that weren't related to the social sciences. I was only interested in them because I liked the teachers. I felt if the teaching method was good, or people were engaging. My teachable subjects were going to be English, Biology, and Geography. Those were the things that I did best in school. Those were my best teachers. I wrote down a list of my teachers and those were the best ones. I responded well and got good grades. I ended up majoring in sociology after one year in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I basically came out of high school, went straight into university, and enrolled to learn how to be a teacher, but I only lasted one year of that. I switched to Liberal Arts and took Sociology. I think a guy taught about the Tuskegee experiments in criminology, just in a section of white-collar crime, state and human rights crimes. I completed a three-year Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, and then I did an extra year, a pre-master's honors year. I attached that on too, and that's where I left it. I was getting ready after *Less Talk, More Rock* to apply to go to University Minnesota or to Ottawa in Canada to start my masters, but I never got there.

Primarily my English teacher drew me to teaching along with the combination of coming to age with this idea that the world isn't what it seems. Then, realizing there's this thing called the Cold War; there's missiles 100 kilometers away, like right near the Canadian border; the Winnipeg airport is on the hit list. Everything can be fucked up at the press of a button. It's a weird thing, like a shift in your consciousness, and it haunted me. Then, I think the explanations that I'd found for that were in music and in literature, and I think the power of that made me think that's what I wanted to do; I didn't know what else to do.

I stopped university right around when we started touring for our album, *Less Talk, More Rock*. Actually. My last couple years were part-time, and I sort of finished up, actually. I remember doing a couple term papers in the back of the van and lying on this mattress, jotting these notes down. I finished a paper at some promoter's mom's house in Green Bay. She had a typewriter there and let me go there for about six hours before the show, crank out this paper, and then FedEx it the following morning to my roommate who was going to hand it in for me.

In that Faculty of Education, there was a course, the Social Foundations of Education that got into a lot of things like hidden curriculum and critical analyses of the institution. That course was pretty influential for me getting out of the Faculty, coupled with the fact that, back then, you had to start student teaching in your second term. I had just turned 18, and I found myself in a grade five classroom where my cooperating teacher basically had me going around trolling kids, making them stop reading their comic books hidden under the textbooks, and policing the playground. I remember it took me three buses to get over there, a two-hour ride within the city, and I had to leave at 5:30 in the morning to get there. It was the Winnipeg winter; it's the coldest month of the year. I'm going out in the dark and kind of ripping around an area of the city I'd never been to before. It was just an arduous thing, and when I met the cooperating teacher and saw everything, it just seemed like, "Do I really want to do this for a whole term?" It was too early in the morning. If I had done that my third year, it might have been a completely different experience. I might have been more up for the task; I might have had a clear picture and maybe more life experience and perhaps confidence to bring something else to the table or my own approach, but at that point, I was young. I just turned eighteen. Fuck. I was shaken by the whole experience. The voluntary withdrawal date to get your money back for the course was basically only a couple of days later, and I made the decision on that one

episode of student teaching to throw in the towel. I got my reimbursement check, probably bought a two-four [24 pack of beer] and fucking just drank it and thought to myself, well you're not going to be a teacher.

The experience I had with student teaching and the influence that the social foundations class had on me just led me into sociology. I'd taken an intro class in that as well. Then, I really got into a lot of very interesting stuff in that area after I realized which professors to avoid, and which sets of subject matter were more on the pop side of things. But I think effective teaching really helped me to substantiate a lot of questions that I had, and eventually led me down different paths that provided me with a framework of understanding the world critically.

There was a class in the town that I grew up in. They had a credit class that was about the history of rock and roll, and they had different speakers come in. A friend of mine that I used to play in a cover band, like a wedding band in Portage, later ended up being a guitar player for Crash Test Dummies. So, he was a guest speaker and then I was a guest speaker in that class. And I gobbled up the whole class. I think all these kids had questions like, "Have you ever met Blink 182?" But I was trying to portray the evils of the festival model for bands and this runaway sponsorship trail and mentioning Vans Warped Tour, and you know Vans sneakers may seem cool, but they went offshore, and they're being made in Mexico now where they can get away with certain glue adhesives that have been banned in the United States.

Musicianship Story

First of all I started taking piano. My mom was a piano teacher, like an out-of-home piano teacher. We had to as kids, as a rule, take at least like four years of that. I think I took maybe five or six and then by the time I was in grade seven, it was time to choose an instrument, and she didn't want me to play drums because she'd just got my dad a crappy set of drums. I was

getting interested in it a little bit and had a neighbor two doors down who had a decent drum kit. It was right around that time that I was learning how to play and just going over to his place after school, essentially. We'd switch one guy on vocals and one guy behind the kit and we'd crank ACDC records. Side A: one guy on the kit, one guy and vocals and then flip the record, and we'd switch spots. We'd do that once or twice after school, and that was kind of my introduction to rock and roll playing, so she wanted me to do something else, you know, expand my horizons, and basically forbade me to do any percussion stuff in junior high or high school band.

With my dad, it was kind of a lark because after a few [drinks] on Friday night, every once in a while, he'd get out this bongo drum and kind of whale on it, listening to tunes. But he never really took to the drum kit at all. I just picked up on it because it was there, this clunky thing. I was kind of learning over at my friend Bruce's place. By the time I was 15, that's when I bought my first drum kit. They loaned me money to buy the drum kit, and I had to pay them back and had to get a job to do that.

Punk Ideology and Pedagogy

When I was 15 or 16, I got a copy of MDC (Millions of Dead Cops) from an older kid down the street in Portage. That album is just so fucking over the top, and it showed me this critical cultural approach to dealing with all these things, like learning about the US military industrial complex, how Canada fits into all this. After that I saw D.O.A. play in 1987. But Chris was largely into metal at the time, like really underground stuff. I was into the ideas that were represented on that record and then I eventually discovered Dead Kennedys and Alternative Tentacles, the label. It seemed like the variety of stuff that they were putting out wasn't all genre specific and a kind of "milking the cow" sort of approach. It was interesting. There was a lot of

different stuff and spoken word stuff. I think the sort of "spreading the word" angle we learned from them. There are all those other bands and the pretty thriving, interconnected indie scene, and culture that was developing through the 80s. The stuff that we got inspired by was not just "spreading the word," but encouraging activism for a lack of a better word, but just that idea that "here's this stuff that doesn't get covered," and this is the un-sanitized version of reality in some of those authors, like Chomsky. And reading that stuff for the first time blows your mind a little bit, just at the level of the injustices and how it just completely runs contrary to the myths that we consume through commercial media. Through our basically non-teaching of history that I faced in high school. It was just like a void in that subject, and you're left trying to learn those either anti-capitalist or anti-colonial kinds of perspectives at your own initiatives. And I was first exposed to that kind of stuff through mid to later 80s punk bands.

You could spend all day defining what it is and what is not punk, but I'll just leave it to the stuff that inspired me. I liked the stuff that helped provide me with a bit of a framework with which to understand the crazy modern world in sort of late period Cold War, and the existential threats that I became aware of in my early adolescence. My interests in music got shifted towards punk rock partly because the sound, the aesthetic of it being raw and underground, partly by the sake of the commercial product, you just wouldn't ever think of it being on the radio in those days; it was kind of untouchable sonically because it was so rushed, and part of the sound was low budget. The music I was getting into and enjoying at that time was more rock stuff, and punk was even more raw and more extreme.[4] And the topic matter of the songs was

[4] During our interview Jord mentioned reading Kevin Mattson's book, *We're Not Here To Entertain: Punk Rock, Ronald Reagan, and The Real Culture War of 1980s America.* Jord found this to be an interesting read because it gave him the context around which he entered the punk scene. Note the title's striking similarity to the opening lyrics to Propagandhi's "Anti-manifesto" that go, "Dance and laugh and play. Ignore the message we convey. It seems we're only here to entertain."

addressing things that I was curious about, but there was no larger explanation for in pop culture, so I gravitated to the underground, and the stuff that I liked the most was the irreverent humor and the honesty of it.

Punk certainly gravitated me much more towards certain professors and into sociology while I was getting into liberal arts program. What spoke to me was the more political stuff and the stuff that is asking questions and providing social theory. Looking at some of the authors we put in *Less Talk, More Rock* like Ernest Becker and Peter Berger, these humanists--they're not radical by any stretch of the means--but thought provoking, social construction of reality ideas and then other stuff like Marx and all these anarchist theorists. I think we were just inspired by expanding your horizons and learning about stuff and it seemed like it was this healthy cultural expression of asking questions that appealed to me more than just the canned garbage. You see a few arena rock shows, and I think you've seen them all. It didn't really appeal to me; it was Okay, and I didn't hate it, but punk rock seemed like it was something that was open to your participation and within your means like, where the shows were, how they were constructed, it was just kind of like "OK, I could see myself doing this." You can't see yourself just being up on stage opening for Iron Maiden in front of 12,000 people at the hockey arena.

Propagandhi's Early History

I was in grade 10 when I met Chris in a science class; we had a typing class together as well. I ended up being his science lab partner. I knew him from hockey. I played on a hockey team with him at a younger age, and I knew he was friends with some other friends of mine that went to a different junior high in town, but he lived on the air force base, south of town. Up until then, I was getting into a lot of rock and hard rock and starting to get into bands like Iron Maiden and Judas Priest, kind of heavy metal. And I'd been to a couple of concerts.

My parents were quite supportive of any kind of musical interest at all. They let me tag along with some older brothers of some friends of mine to go see Iron Maiden when I was 13. I started going to some arena shows, but by the time I was 15 and I met Chris, I had learned the drums a little bit by playing in a local cover band that another friend's dad was a drummer in. His dad couldn't play anymore because he had an accident. So, I started learning by learning easy cover material. Then I met Chris when I was 15, and he started getting me into underground metal. Then about a year later I got introduced to punk rock stuff, and then some of my first punk rock shows were in the summer of 1987 when I was 16.

I think in '86 right when we were just about to start going to non-arena rock shows, we had this idea: okay I'm going to learn drums a little bit better, Chris is going to buy a guitar and learn how to play it. Our first summer of trying to get the band together was pretty comedic. We just had a fart around for 15 minutes and I got drunk but, I guess it very loosely started in '86 and then by the time I moved to Winnipeg in '88, that was my first year at university. We were trying to start to practice in earnest, and that again was very comedic. It's funny how many times we tried to establish an actual jam space with a firm schedule, and we kept getting booted out of everywhere we tried.

Chris left after the grade 10 year and moved to Winnipeg. He introduced me to Venom and all this crazy underground metal. Then, he moved to the city. We kept the idea of the band alive. When we were 16 or 17, I'd take the bus in or catch rides to go to the local underground record store where we'd buy fanzines and meet, go have lunch, and look at our new records and tapes and fuckin' fanzines and stuff like that. We were trying to jam and get things a little bit going at his parents' place every once in a while. Then, I moved to attend university in '88, and we tried to jam in three or four different locations in the student residence complex that I lived

in. I thought it would be a no-brainer; I didn't understand how sound carried in a large building. We had a hell of a time with that. We basically jammed in three different locations and got booted out of each one, the first two within five minutes. And then we ended up just practicing at Chris' parents' place again, which was an hour and a half, two bus journey for me. Fuck, it would've been easier to walk it.

We were working on trying to write music and trying to jam on riffs and stuff like that, just to get material together. I mean as early as '88, we kind of had this friend of ours [Scott Hopper] being roughed in as the bass player, and we tried jamming with him a few times. We had the plan on making it work. We were looking for other people to be in the band with us, but anyway, it took a few years to actually get going. We did our first show in 91 [with Mike Braumeister on Bass]. So, over 1988 to 1991, we would have been working on our demo material. So, I guess it took about three years of me being in Winnipeg and us working away at stuff until we actually got our first show going.

Winnipeg Punk Scene

There are some things about Winnipeg, like it's geographically isolated. For bands to get here it takes a little bit, especially coming from the States. Back in the 80s, the touring circuit was part of this Western Canadian run that a lot of bands would do, but it did exist, and for bands that would come out here, it was almost like this slightly larger than average for the size of the town. There was a big healthy scene, I think it was a little more diverse perhaps. By that I mean in terms of musical style; there was no real dominant trend here; I don't think in the 80s. I think for a lot of the bands that did come from out of town, before punk rock was run through the corporate ringer, there wasn't a carrot and stick approach yet. It wasn't like people were forming bands to be the pop-punk band that they saw on MTV. That hadn't happened yet.

Thinking back to the summer when I started going to shows, and there'd be large crowds of people going to see bands like Government Issue and D.O.A. from Vancouver and the following year all of a sudden, it was like Suicidal Tendencies and Corrosion of Conformity and bands like that were coming up and playing. In the earlier days I was drawn to the angrier kind of "in-your-face" stuff and really liked the Dead Kennedys. At a certain point, there was a blend with apolitical pre-indie rock stuff and that sort of thing and then just kind of really more intensely independent underground shows and stuff. But there were lots of bands here and with not much to go on in the winter months. I think a lot of people spend a lot of time playing music, and school music programs are sort of part of the public curriculum here too, so there's always been good musicians in Winnipeg, I'd say, sort of regardless of the genre. A lot of people can really play here.

The Rise of Propagandhi

We did our first larger scale release with Fat Wreck Chords at a time when all that stuff was taking off. I think it would have been significantly different had we worked with a different label from a different area of the world, or in Canada, but our lot was thrown in with the whole skate rock thing or skate punk. And just being on Fat determined much of our early audience when we were touring which was primarily Canada and the US, at that point. I think our experiences in those early 90s years on the road influenced some of the information that we wanted to help get out there. I think at that point, punk was becoming rapidly commercialized.

Part of our overt way of expressing our beliefs in the liner notes and stuff was a means of differentiating that we're not in this just to have crowds of white middle class males smashing each other in front of the stage. It really got sort of jock laden and the atmosphere at a lot of shows wasn't like celebrating independence and a thriving underground. It was sort of trendy. It

seemed to be going another way and the independent streak and the critical streak of it was going by the wayside, and for more apolitical, less interesting, more homogenous music. I'm thinking specifically in the melodic punk scene. A lot of it was pretty corny to us at a pretty early stage, and we were the outliers of that label. There wasn't really anybody else on it like us; we're just so far away from Southern California, and it seemed like we were outside observers of this weird process and early on, especially by the time we did *Less Talk, More Rock*, we had much more detailed recommended readings or "check out these thinkers" and that kind of thing. We felt the need to express that to differentiate ourselves from the more entrepreneurial side of music and just recognizing that we were getting in on a scene that was starting the early stages of grinding stuff out that seemed a little bit less genuine. And then the years after that just led to this wholesale acceptance of certain kinds of corporate sponsors, getting to larger scale shows, these big, huge festival style models where the payment schemes are more and more like the pyramid gets narrower and narrower and everything about it became this weird competition for limited resources and it's less about artistic integrity or having things to say than it is becoming or grabbing your space. The economic side of it all really took precedence. It became a kind of domineering principle for a lot of bands. I think back to the days when you'd see the calendar of releases at say Fat Wreck Chords headquarters, and you're just looking like, "What the fuck? Lagwagon's doing another album?" It's just this fucking cycle. They were just cranking it out and being on the inside and working at the same studio with the same "producer," but engineer, and assistants and all that. Everybody's super nice, easy to get along with, and enjoyable, but essentially, you're being packaged as a band along with this kind of cheese factory sort of approach. We had a unique experience going through that first decade, I think.

Stylistically, especially the first album is that straight ahead fast approach with the melodic stuff. It was very “Fat Wreck Chords” material. But I think we started branching off from that pretty early on. But I will say that first album has sold the most records of any one of our records, not just because it came out first; it has definitely sold way more than the others.

The band has been a large part of our lives to this point. I think going from that stage of school/work into your mid to late 20s and then at that point we're doing G7 Welcoming Committee and the band. We took on a lot of stuff. In some ways I cringe in regret at biting off so much and wondering what would have taken the place of that time. I always felt where would we have gone with it, had we had a little more time and energy just to focus on our music instead of calling up record stores and hassling them for paying us for nine Weakerthans records. But beyond that, you can't live with regrets. There's a lot over those years that we experienced and that shaped us into trying other things. I don't regret the years that I worked on the Canada Haiti Action Network project. It was something that I felt I needed to do to engage myself and try to use some of the experiences that I had taken from G7 and apply that to event planning, hosting speakers from Haiti, putting on films and stuff at the local indie Cinema House, and booking tours. I did that project because I felt pissed off enough about Canada’s involvement and the public understanding of our involvement with this this country, like the poorest country in our entire hemisphere and one that has a special relationship to Canada because there's a lot of aid money going down there, but people don't know what it's going towards. It's just a complete shit show.

The whole band experience and label experience led me to do that for a good five years and give that a really good go. At least over those years that wasn't just time being whittled

away. There was always something to do even though we were over stretched. At least we were able to take a ticket to Canada on a lot of those things and give it a good shot.

I'm proud of the work we've done with many local bookstores and organizations. We put The Rainforest Action Network on our list of activist organizations to contact on *Less Talk, More Rock*. Fast forward to 2005, we were doing some limited touring for the *Potemkin City Limits* record, but we had somebody from Rainforest Action Network a part of every show we did in the U.S., and that continued into the *Supporting Caste* years. We had a rep traveling with us and talking to the crowd in between bands. Eventually, that felt like being the kind of band that we were; we try to pull off some stuff musically as well, to try to distinguish us a little bit from the more banal side of the genre and to try to think of things to say and present them in a way that's intriguing or interesting to an audience. But it gets to be too much, and I felt like at a certain point it's our job to pass the mic to other groups of people. I think we started doing a better job of that over the years including the spoken word releases we did on G7 and working with people from different communities. That's what pulled me into the Canada Haiti Action Network project and getting outside of my comfort zone and not getting into the whole punk thing just because that in itself is some cool endgame. It felt like our small part was using that as a platform to extend to other parts of the world and understand things critically. I think recognizing that as an extension of the groups and labels that opened it up to us in the 80s. That was the initial inspiration and I think I got the most value out of being able to pass the mic to some people over the years and do some interesting things that way and supporting communities outside of the punk rock scene.

John K. Samson

I was fortunate to meet with John three times over Zoom during the spring of 2021. He was the first one of the members that I interviewed. Considering the difficulty most have in securing an interview with John, one might imagine that it would be a challenge interviewing John before the others. However, I have always felt a connection with John's music with the Weakerthans, his solo music, and especially his contributions with Propagandhi. I felt our energies were similar. Although he doesn't necessarily appreciate being reduced to being labeled a "nice guy," John had a sweet disposition that made my time with him feel like a blessing. In the following autobiographical profile, we learn about how John joined Propagandhi. How schools didn't provide him with anything very meaningful. And we get his take on what it was like being a punk in the 1990s Winnipeg punk scene.

Early Life

I was born in 1973 in Winnipeg, Manitoba where I was raised. My dad's a lawyer; my mom's a teacher. We grew up in a middle-class, sort of middle-class enclave close to Winnipeg's downtown [River Heights]. My father's side of the family is Icelandic, and that's a big immigrant settler community in Manitoba. So that was part of my upbringing, and I was in choirs and so on. All my life I've been in choirs. That's how I started into music.

My mother taught elementary school; she was mostly a sub. She spent a lot of time with me and my older sister. She was often a teacher's assistant. There was a little bit of home-schooling, mostly on the reading side. I learned to read really early; that was encouraged by her. She read to me all the time. I just remember really wanting to be able to do it myself and that was a huge excitement when I could.

It was quite a conservative household. But, I guess, a neo-liberal household is how it would be termed now. So, it was kind of socially progressive, politically conservative. I had an aunt and uncle who are artists, so they were like the first people I saw living in a different mode. I still look up to them. He's a painter, and she's an architect. They're in their 70s now, and they're childless like I am, and they have dogs, like I do. I've kind of modeled a lot of my life on them, I think.

At home the written word was really venerated. I always wanted to be a novelist, and that's because I saw both my parents reading novels with delight, and a lot. So, that's where that came from. I feel like becoming a novelist was definitely a thing to aspire to.

I was allowed to challenge their authority. During my teenage life, I was really unpleasant and that's where a lot of my regrets stem from. In my teens, I was a monster. I mean, there's a fundamental misconception about me. People who don't know me super well think I'm really nice, but people who know me super well know that I'm very loving, but I'm not always super nice. I think I was really angry and cruel and lashed out at people. Part of that might have been because I wasn't doing well, or maybe that's one of the reasons I wasn't doing well in school. I went through a kind of a crisis of faith. I grew up a fairly devout Christian and then around 14 or 15, I kind of had a traumatic break with that. I feel like sometimes people aren't equipped for that kind of psychological trauma of your worldview just being turned upside down. There wasn't a trigger to it. It was just reading, lots of reading, and lots of questioning. Yeah. And I never did well in school after elementary school; it was always something that I dreaded and didn't do well. I didn't thrive for sure, except in a few things.

School History

I had a real fraught relationship with school. I'm glad I got out. I feel like post-secondary stuff was always an impulse for me, and I still audit courses every once in a while. Last year, I audited three classes online of this really interesting prof in Toronto who's a Catholic communist, and he's teaching classes on Christian socialism. That sounded interesting, so I took a few of those. I like classes; I just don't like the grade part about it. I've always just hated that part. I think that's drifted into every part of my life. Like, I hate arts awards, and I hate things that are judged. I always refuse to take online class surveys and follow-ups. Judging things on a star system is like my worst nightmare.

I went to a public elementary school. It was a walkable distance from my house, so I walked home from lunch by myself starting in kindergarten. It was the early 80s. I do remember kind of loving those 11 to 12 minutes of freedom from adults. It's really the first time in your life having that sense of freedom. I enjoyed parts of elementary school, for sure. It was more creative than junior high and high school. There was more cutting paper, making art projects, and actual play. I enjoyed playing for sure.

I think I remember recognizing my sadness back then. I think I remember being sad and recognizing that other kids weren't as sad as me. That probably had to do with my parents being sad people as well, and depression being a part of our family life. My mom had a very difficult childhood and early adulthood. She's had mental problems her entire life, and I definitely saw those right away.

I had a lot of good teachers. I had a lot of good educational experiences, but also a lot of bad ones. My relationship to education is a little bit problematic. I was also kind of a terrible kid.

I really was. I was not generous or kind as a teenager. I feel I was angry and unpleasant and probably hard to deal with. I also thought I was really smart, but I recognize now that I wasn't.

I almost didn't graduate from high school because I couldn't do the math at all. Looking back, they probably should have figured out if there was something on there, like cognitively, because numbers still kind of look like mush to me. But it was the late 1980s. They didn't really clue into that kind of stuff. So, I felt a little bit alienated and mad in school.

I had some wonderful English teachers who saw potential in me. They encouraged me to write poems, read books, and do whatever I wanted. Because I was obsessed with books, I would read them in math class and stuff. I'd be reading a novel underneath my texts. Going back to elementary school, there were teachers interested in literature. So that whole thread of the educational system was really helpful and important for me. I don't want to downplay what the educational system gave me, but I'm mostly grateful for learning how to type in high school.

It took me a while to match the politics with my feelings. The unschooling movements of the 90s were interesting. There were a whole bunch of punks who were really into that. I'm blanking on names, but I remember there being zines and maybe even a book about why we should all quit school. It was also around those bad teenager camps that kids in the states would often get sent to, it seemed, like the scared straight kinds of camps. I feel there were some punks who had survived that. It was kind of eye opening for me, the whole school to prison pipeline, and the military underpinnings of it all. It all really interested me.

Musicianship Story

I started playing guitar when I was a kid. I took classical guitar and piano when I was in elementary school. My parents signed me up, but I was interested in the idea more than the actual execution of it. So that kind of faded. Then, when I was around 13, I got an acoustic guitar

and that kind of became my instrument. I wrote my first song when I was around 15. I thought the song was great! It was like 10 minutes long. I played it for everyone, like I'd make everyone listen to it, like sit them down, you know. I remember the first time I was able to sing and play at the same time, and it was to something simple I saw on Much Music, which is like Canadian MTV. I remember just how thrilling that was. I never really got an electric guitar until later, so I just had an acoustic guitar in my teens. And then I wanted to be in bands, so I thought about buying an electric guitar, but then I realized everyone I knew was better at it than I was, and no one really had a bass in our little high school scene. So, I picked up the bass because I wasn't good enough of a guitar player to get into a band, and I just wanted to be in a band.

So, in the summer of grade nine, I painted boards all summer for this cottage. I was paid like $4 an hour or whatever. I bought a Fender Precision bass guitar with it at the end of the summer for around $500. And then I just started being the bass player. With an amp, I could go and play with people.

When I was in Propagandhi, I felt like I became a better guitar player and figured out a way to play guitar that could be effective. I feel that was one of the things that I came out of that experience with: knowing how to make the sounds that are necessary to get the songs across. I think that was something that I learned from Chris and Jord, for sure. Bass-wise, I feel I never really figured out what it was. I think that was one of the things near the end where it was like: Are these two incredible musicians [Chris and Jord] going to be saddled with this rudimentary bass player for their entire careers? And looking back, that didn't make sense. I never really improved at the bass; I just hit a wall.

Propagandhi History

My political and musical formation is all in those five years that I was in Propagandhi. I joined when I was 18, and I left when I was 23 or 24. I think there was a poster up at the skate shop. I was the only person who tried out for the bass-player job. I think I was the only person who responded. I'm pretty sure there were definitely not people banging down their door. I felt the age difference which was three years. But when you're that age, it feels like a bit of a chasm, actually. I felt like the kid.

I lived with my parents, and Chris and Jord lived together in a rental house. I remember the first rehearsal; my mom drove me there with my little practice amp and bass. It was really fun. I remember learning all the songs on the tape, and then went over to their rental house and the living room was their practice space. Yeah. We just played the songs. I think my mom came and picked me up. I think it was pretty much like, "Yeah, that sounds good. Do you want to play a show?" kind of thing. I think we must have talked before, and I remember them saying that they had seen me wearing an Amnesty International shirt at a show when I was playing in another band. So, they had seen me. They knew that I knew how to plug in a bass and play it. There might have been some crossover with Toothpick Hercules. It was a high-school band, and everyone had started going to university, so it wasn't really going to last.

I don't recall my first Propagandhi show but it was probably really fun. It was probably at the Albert.[5] It was probably a Thursday because that was draft night, and that's when a lot of bands played. And draft was 50 cents a glass or something ridiculous. I'm guessing that's where it was. [Opening for NOFX]

[5] For more on this pivotal venue in the Winnipeg punk story and to hear Propagandhi's relationship with the Albert, see *CALL TO ARMS: The Story of the Royal Albert*, 2015. Directed by Randy Frykas. shttps://vimeo.com/125342828.

I had seen Propagandhi live. When I joined, I had joined as a fan. At that point, I had a cassette tape called Fuck the Scene, which I was just obsessed with and had probably already tried to learn all the songs before I realized that they were looking for a bass player. I felt like I was eventually fully indoctrinated into the band. As people grow, that kind of disintegrated a little bit over the years, ending as it did. So yeah, I think I did feel like a full member for a bit there.

I remember when we were recording *How to Clean Everything*, Fat Mike talking about how one of these records just sold a thousand copies and everyone was like, "Holy shit! A thousand copies?" That's kind of where we were all at. And that's kind of what we were aiming for, like this really small community. It was like we were standing around doing this thing and suddenly, it was the biggest thing in the world. Suddenly it was Green Day. It was really like the turn of a switch, and we just happened to be standing there, and all the lights came on. I was like, "What the fuck?"

That we are continually learning was instilled in me in those Propagandhi days. Like, the idea that people can sit in a circle together and hash out ideas and learn together. I think that one of the best gifts of that time was getting to experience that. It's definitely something that's never left me. I think that we were always shy about hierarchies, and still are, but I think that there's a difference between leadership and being a boss. I think Chris has great charisma and leadership. So, it's natural and not oppressive. I feel like it's built into the structure. As I recall, it was very collective-minded and respectful of workers. I'm assuming that's probably even more so now.

We went through a whole phase of where we had our own PA, and we would set up on the floor instead of the stage. We did that for a while, I feel like a few shows. I remember when J

Church came through. We were opening, and we set up on the floor of the venue because we didn't want to be on a stage. I loved that. That was really fun.

I'm pretty sure we passed out lyrics at shows. That was something bands did, and I enjoyed that. It was fun. We would also make a newsletter every couple months, maybe. That was fun and then we would respond to people who wrote because there got to be a lot of them. We would put a little personal note on there, but the rest would be kind of a newsletter.

I had radicalized. I went in a liberal and I came out an anarchist. I don't think I was vegetarian when I joined. I think that was something that happened soon after. I remember writing "Anti-Manifesto" in a basement here in Winnipeg. It was really fun as I recall that one. I mean, Chris was leading it musically, but I felt like that was the one where everyone contributed to the shape of the song. I didn't help with the lyrics. That's all Chris for sure. I don't think he needed much help, but I think that we would discuss lyrics. He's a great, I mean an incredible lyricist. But I think sometimes they emerged out of discussions that we all had and sometimes the other way around, like the lyrics would lead to discussions. Chris is the kind of driving voice, like the literal voice and the spirited voice of that institution. I think everyone would be comfortable with that idea, so I do think Jord offers a much deeper and maybe a little more intangible identity to the whole thing.

And that was really my university. I didn't go to university, really. I dropped out around four months in when I was 18. And so, that was kind of truly my education. I feel like we really fed off each other as writers, and I think I was a good foil for some of Chris' work. I feel like Chris always needed foils, like Jord is the biggest foil of his life. Jord is the kind of person that Chris writes off of and writes for and responds to, I think. Those two are so tight. They're

basically brothers. So, that was hard to kind of get in on as well. Flaky was the word that was most used about me by Chris in an endearing but also pointed way.

I feel the song writing direction was strongly his. But I would say that a lot of those songs genuinely grew out of discussions among the three of us. I feel like we practiced almost every day. It was like a serious job we had. We would practice a ton. We would also meet and talk a lot about how we felt about things politically. So, I do feel like it was actually class time a little bit where we would talk about what we were reading, talk about what we thought about. I think I clearly remember the discussions that led from vegetarianism to veganism as being super intense and super in-depth and interesting, and something that took a long time for me to kind of cotton onto.

For some of it, Chris kind of dictated the bass parts and some of them were already existing. So, I just learned them. “Anti-Manifesto” was always one of my favorite ones that we all wrote together in Chris’ basement. I would write my bass parts, but often they were just kind of root notes, and I was a terrible bass player. I was such a rudimentary bass player. And that was kind of the power of it too, I thought. I was like, I can be in the band, and I'm not very good.

I think we were feeling our way through a bunch of things. The kind of feminist education lacked a real actual feminist in the room. I feel there are some problems there. I believe my understanding of feminism has developed since then.

Punk Ideology and Pedagogy

One of those bands that I listened to sort of randomly was the Clash. I got pulled into that and then my friends and I would take the bus downtown every weekend starting when we were like 12. There were like four record stores, and one that specialized in punk music and sold

bootleg T-shirts. So, we would go down, get a donut, and then walk to all the record stores and then go home. That was really when I started learning about punk.

I think it was the record store itself that got us into punk. We all thought that record store was the coolest. It was called Records on Wheels. It was kind of a dingy spot. I kind of learned through T-shirts. I remember buying a Dead Kennedys T-shirt before I'd heard the Dead Kennedys. Then I heard them afterwards and that was like what led me into it, and then there was a scene here in Winnipeg. I recognized that there was a punk scene, and there were all-ages shows starting. The first show I went to was kind of amazing, like it thrilled me. It had Red Fisher, which was a Winnipeg band. So, my first punk show Jason [Weakerthans, Red Fisher] was playing at it. I was in grade eight or something and this band called Gorilla Gorilla played, who were older and went on to do other music things. The bass player [Kent] is the tour manager for NOFX. It was kind of a strange web of people.

So, I in grade 10 or 11, I started a band [Toothpick Hercules] with my friends. We played in bars before we were legally allowed to. I think we played a high-school gig, like in the high school auditorium, and maybe some parties. So, I would write some of the songs and my friend Conrad [Sichler] was the singer, so he wrote songs as well.

I wore the kind of punk outfit of the time, which was baggy shorts and t-shirts, like big T-shirts. I had big shorts, usually NOFX shorts that I got and Vans [shoes]. But otherwise, no piercings, none of that. I think that's kind of one of the reasons too that I fell in somewhat with Propagandhi, because they were not interested in the fashionable trappings of punk at all. I remember later when Fat Mike would complain that we didn't look punk enough, and I remember one time he offered to buy Jord dreads.

I would say punk, ideologically, was about breaking the rules in order to learn them musically. There was this idea that you didn't need a ton of training or skill to be in a punk band. What I thought about punk was the kind of DIY, do-it-yourself-ness of it, which we believed was a politically subversive way of doing business, of not working with large multinational corporations. So, that would have been my thing, and also just something intangible and also horribly clique-ish.

I feel like those conversations are what attracts me to the idea of punk. Like, that's where maybe it should stay, in that kind of tight community. Like, I feel Propagandhi was really speaking to about 200 people. When I joined the band, that was the conversation.

We would just wait for *Maximum RockNRoll* [*MRR*] every month and it was so important. I look back at those issues now and I'm like, "Wow, it's just kids talking to other kids!" But it was huge. Those first tours we went on were basically excuses to go to the Epicenter Record store in San Francisco, where we could just basically go record shopping. Well, that's what we did for at least three of the tours, basically.

Winnipeg Punk Scene

It was like this scene of kids, mostly white middle-class kids in Winnipeg, challenging them and pushing them towards a kind of political identity and a political reckoning. I know that Propagandhi has been important for lots of people, but I feel like when that slips out of a kind of smaller community into a larger one, there's just inevitably things that are lost in translation. I feel like I would have been a lot happier, and I think Chris and Jord would agree with this, if it had been a thousand people not 500,000 people that we were speaking to.

We appreciated the San Francisco or East Bay stuff. The New York scene never interested me. When we toured with Propagandhi, we never went to New York. It's weird, all

those years we were pretty focused on the East Bay. I loved Operation Ivy. That would have been another one of those stories where I saw the T-shirt and then got the tape. I got to work with Aaron Cometbus when Arbeiter Ring published his book six or seven years ago. That was one of the last books I worked on. It was so beautiful. That felt like a real full circle for me because discovering his zines was also important for me to recognize there could be really good writing that came out of the scene.

Todd Kowalksi

Artist, musician, and blackbelt in Jujitsu, talk is a humble but very accomplished member of Propagandhi. Todd's story is intriguing as it helps to explain how carefree Todd can be. Musically, he's free, unrestrained by convention, writing music from his heart while creating sonic paintings with his riffs. I find his experience in school fascinating. We get an interesting story of a child who is profoundly seeking creative outlets not getting that itched scratched at school. Rather, Todd, like many others in Propagandhi, finds his voice in the art and music of metal and thrash punk. Notably, we learn that we can credit his mother with allowing Todd's creative side to flourish, even if she found his interests a bit worrisome.

Early Life

I was born in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1973. And I grew up there until I was 17, then I split for Winnipeg. My dad was an x-ray technician, and my mom was just a stay-at-home mom for a while, and then way later she became a professional softball coach, actually. My mom is kind of an average mom for Regina. She grew up by herself on a farm almost, or just with her parents because all her brothers and sisters were older than her. She was smart and actually was a schoolteacher before my older brother and I were born. So, she was intelligent and smart, but

you know, all that general homophobia and that was around back then. I wouldn't say she was racist or anything, but just unwittingly homophobic just by general culture and that, but she's always trying to be smart and think for herself. My dad basically grew up really poor and with lots of alcoholism, so he's like a little more racist, well, a lot more racist and just kind of conservative if that's even the right word. He just likes to irritate people.

I remember asking my mom if she believed in God, and she wouldn't answer but said, "It doesn't matter what I think." I was really little, but I was starting to wonder why she didn't go to church. I used to even pray with my dad upstairs, kind of just shitty little prayers, you know. I'd say the Lord's Prayer and this other shitty little prayer. And then my dad would read me a tiny bit of this children's Bible, but he wasn't even religious; he was kind of Catholic growing up, so it was just part of his thing. I wouldn't even say he actually even believed in God, really. When he was older, he would talk to me and my mom and tell us we're going to hell just to be funny. I'm not even baptized but, he told my mom that he took me out and got me baptized just to make her mad. It's all that kind of nonsense. It was all basically chaos and nonsense. My dad did not actually care about religion, but I guess he felt a connection to his family and his mom. I remember one time in the car, we were all blabbing back and forth, and he conceded, "Okay there's no God. There's no God!" and then he said, "Yeah, but I'm going to heaven and you're going to hell."

I did not feel comfortable challenging my parents' ideas. I had a few neighbors alluding to the fact that I was going to hell, but I didn't care. I was into Dio and that. I was already listening to records like *Holy Diver* with Satan on it, and then around a year or two later I was listening to the satanic Venom records. I loved the idea of Satan. I just loved it. I'd draw Satan and think about Satan. I'd draw satanic comics where the characters go to hell. I just loved it.

The first time I saw a Venom record it gave me chills like, but chills in this way where I need that record right now. Me, and my friends, after a while, were making little pentagrams on the floor and fuckin' reading the satanic Bible and just having a good old time. How did my parents feel about me listening to Venom and the like? My mom wrote this 400-page book, so I know exactly what she's thinking now. It was a personal book about her life that she shared with my brother and me to let us know what was going on with her; how she dealt with the hard times and good times. She thought she was just keeping an eye on me and thought it's better if I'm into that than her not letting me do it and have me turn into some rebel. She felt I was different for a long time before that. She just didn't want to do anything that was going to stifle me or take away the things that I liked because I started listening to KISS when I was very little. I think people were already calling KISS satanic, and I was into that when I was about five or six, so by the time DIO came, she was just whatever, but she took me to KISS; took me to Alice Cooper. When we went to those, there was all the pot, there's all the swearing, and Alice Cooper was shooting blood over the crowd.

My mom took me to my first concert when I was in grade six. She was not into it and was slightly worried but didn't care. She'd buy me all the tapes; she bought me the first Death *Scream Bloody Gore* a little later. She bought me so many tapes with crazy covers, like Slayer tapes, everything, even for Christmas. In her book, she says that she thought Christmas is a time where the kid should get what they want. She must've looked at the covers and asked herself, "What am I doing?" Ultimately, she just wanted to make me happy.

As a family, we are always pushing ourselves to be better people. We grew up in Regina where everyone's homophobic, and I was the first one of us to try to break away from that. My brother thought of himself as a forward-thinking person. He's in university and doing all this and

then he wondered how his dumb little brother was ahead of him. He was in university, and I was starting to get mad at him for being homophobic. And he was getting mad at me for still being a little racist jerkoff. We kind of help each other along, and then my mom is always growing as a person, too.

I didn't feel the way my dad was acting suited who he should have been or even who I felt he was inside. My dad went to therapy, and he just lied to the therapist and all that. Pretty soon they were like, "We don't know what to do about this guy; he can't even tell the truth for like five seconds."

School Life

I attended public school where I definitely had bad teachers. Fuck, I got lined up on my knees with other kids in an execution style line. The teacher was slapping us in the heads and banging our heads into the lockers. Another teacher bullied that shit out of me, probably because I was a little asshole, but still, he was doing it. The schools were made up of white kids, aboriginal kids, and a few kids from India, and then a bunch of kids who were from different countries that I hadn't realized until I was older, like Peru and places like that. I remember teachers making fun of a kid about being a Jehovah Witness, and another kid because they didn't believe in Christmas and shit like that. I don't know if you call that racist or not. But there was a lot of that shit. I'm sure they were racist. It's Regina; everyone's a racist moron. But definitely the kids were, too. I know one hundred percent, and I can still see a lot of them, now older on Facebook still following the same path.

I walked to and from school from kindergarten through high school. In elementary school, I would stop at my friend Kenton's house, pick him up, and keep going. Sometimes, I had two other friends that had to cut through my yard to get to school, so they wouldn't have to

go around the block. If I'd see them, I'd sometimes come out and walk with them. Then in junior high, I'd say about half the time I walked with people and half the time not. Then in high school, I walked with my friend Spazz until he got a car, and I wouldn't pitch in for gas, and he'd drive by and wave at me. I'd be out in the field walking, and he'd drive by and wave at me. I'd wave back. I didn't have a job; he did. He got a job, so he could get a car. I thought why waste my time fucking having a job, so I can have a car? He's working four hours to afford this car, and all I have to do is walk half an hour to school.

I didn't really like my classes in school. I would've liked creative writing. I wanted to write my own stories but nothing much came of it at school because we kept doing boring stuff like other little assignments that weren't that interesting. There just never came a chance where we were actually writing something interesting, I found. I guess I liked art class a little bit. But I didn't really like doing all the crafty kinds of art. School just wasn't my thing. I can't think of any class that I really liked. History was all right. I like the idea of history and talking about it, but just retaining facts and dates was something I wasn't very good at. I liked the idea of biology. I was always interested, but me and my friend Kenton would just end up stabbing each other with pens and burning each other during the whole class. My hands are still full of scars from grade eight biology. We were just cutting the shit out of each other.

I had helpful teachers. I really like my kindergarten teacher. She was awesome. I say all my elementary school teachers up until grade six were good and then, once I got into junior high, that's when it was just like, "Who the fuck are these people?" Then, by time I got to about grade nine, there was one more dick. After that, I didn't mind. Everyone was all right.

I had a teacher from grade 10 to 11, maybe even grade 12. He was helping us play music a little bit. We even traveled in this little mandolin orchestra with him. He let us play a show in

front of the school, like our kind of music. It was almost like we were trading him letting us do metal stuff if we took a chance and did some mandolin. So, he was trying to help us. That was good. He is actually a pretty good painter too, but I don't know if I learned anything from him, but he was pretty nice to me. I also liked my kindergarten teacher; she was awesome. She gave me a wig that I could wear because I thought it looked like KISS's hair. She was like, "Oh, you can have it," and then I just put on the wig and wore KISS makeup. Oh, and there was Miss Driver, a teacher's assistant who helped me pass algebra. But even teachers I liked would give me a hard time, I remember I wrote "The Exploited" on my book cover and this teacher started insulting it. I thought that's a teacher I would like, but I guess I was wrong. I was either being slightly bad or often in my own world or not listening or thinking about metal. I didn't really talk to the teachers or think about them. They're just people doing something while I was doing something else, really.

I think teachers in schools have to somehow figure out how to make things worth learning. If I think of myself, I read a lot of history. I like history. But history at school was pointless by just having to remember statistics. And writing. I would have liked to write stories and novels, but that was ruined by these little exercises that you'd constantly do. Or art was made lame by not being able to draw what you wanted. In some ways, teachers don't even understand what they're teaching, like how's a teacher going to teach someone about art if they can't draw?

Why was being in school so unengaging? I don't really have an answer for it because I love learning stuff. I am always online taking courses; I go to workshops. The other day, this teacher said to me in my critique online, "The cool thing about you is every time I tell you something, the next week, it shows up in your work in a positive way." Whereas before, you're a

kid wondering if you have a learning disability. No, it was uninteresting. Sorry. That's all I can say. You're the teacher. I'm a kid. It's not up to me to make this fucking awesome.

Musicianship story

Guitar was my first instrument. This kid across the alley from me and his dad were super good guitar players. And they got me into it. But they were more into Stevie Ray Vaughan, funk, and old rock. But they actually had the first KISS records I listened to. So, they got me into that. But they weren't into KISS; they just had all the records for whatever reason. Maybe his dad was into it. I don't know how they got them or why, but they didn't care about those records, but I did. My dad was into Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson and stuff like that. And my mom was into ABBA.

I didn't play other people's songs because I did not know how to copy other songs. I had no idea. And my guitar was probably never in tune and, if it was in tune with itself, was never in tune with any records. I didn't have a tuner or anything. I didn't understand what was going on. I was just moving my fingers and playing whatever. I don't think I was in tune, and I didn't learn any songs. I was just making my own songs. The second I got the guitar, I was making songs, not learning them. I couldn't play and sing at the same time. But I had songs, lots of songs that were just lyrics, and I knew how they went. But they didn't have real music. And then I had songs on guitar with no singing. I'd listen to KISS records. And my songs were similar to theirs; I didn't realize it till later but take Iron Maiden's "The Trooper." I would write a song about war like "The Trooper," but it would be different.

I guess If you're going to sit around and play guitar all the time, you're going to get at least okay at it, hopefully. I guess our thing is just sit there and play your guitar until something sounds good. Play the best you can. The only thought in our heads is to keep writing words until

something is good. Keep writing music till something catches your ear and there's no other thought, I think.

Punk Life, Ideology, and Pedagogy

I don't think I have a definition of Punk. I know what I thought it was. I thought it was people trying to do something that was different, like I know nowadays, you can play folk music that doesn't sound heavy or have anything interesting about it. And it's called punk. I don't think I understand it. I don't think I ever did. So, I think I was wrong about what I thought it was. So, I can't even say.

Propagandhi is Punk the way I understood it or the way I thought I understood it. If I would have heard us as a kid, I would have thought "Fuck, I think this is awesome." If I would have heard some *Failed States* as a kid, I would have thought, "Okay, I fucking love it." And it is important to me that I would have made my young-self proud. But also, that kid couldn't have imagined the songs. Because it's beyond what I would have understood at the time. Like, it has pushed beyond what my imagination was at the time.

I liked Red Fisher when they started with this guy Jay singing. They were more skateboard pop rock or something. But Green Day and shit didn't exist yet to sully that pot. So, when you saw that kind of music, you thought of ALL and Big Drill Car, Reason to Believe, those kinds of bands. It wasn't sullied, so when you heard that you weren't barfing at that point. But as soon as Green Day and that all came out, I was like fuck, I can't listen to this shit ever again in my life. But before that, Doughboys were awesome. There were lots of good bands, even the first couple of Goo Goo Dolls records were really good. They were a punk band at some point, so all that was inspiring to me which all got into my tunes somehow. But when Green Day came, then NOFX, it all truly ruined it for me, not just for that period of time but forever. I've

never felt the same about punk or anything ever again; I just don't really care anymore. Well, I can't say that because I like RVIVR and some bands, but the true feeling where I felt like “I love this” was gone. But I feel the stuff that I loved when I hear it; I love it still, so despite everything that’s happened, it hasn't sullied my will to still want to do it the way that I want to do it. The fact of all these bands kind of ruined the spirit for me. It was really disappointing to me. It was like this big giant cash grab by all these bands. And then it just kept going; Warped Tour came and then everything's just about festivals and money. Before, when you started a band, especially a punk band, you didn't feel like it could be a success, really. So, everyone playing, it felt like they're doing it because they loved it. But once this weird trend like Warped Tour selling shoes arrived, I was like “I'm done.”

Sometimes these small bands will send me a tape. And I'll listen to it. And I'll be like, “Okay, I like that.” But then I just don't get as much out of it as if I were listening to Catatonia, that metal band. I want to like punk bands, but I can’t. I think that's too negative. But it's kind of true. There's something about punk where it doesn't seem to move ahead. Like metal bands are always constantly evolving and changing, whereas punk hardly is. The influences on punk are stuff that I don't like either, for example when college rock influences punk. I don't like college rock at all. So, when it influences punk, it may be spreading it out creatively, but it's in a direction I don't like. And then I find when punk bands try to get metal, it usually doesn't work out to my ear. And when you try to add folk to punk, I can't stand it. I'm really over listening to people who are really bad singers. Why would I listen to a really bad singer if I could listen to people singing amazingly, like Unleash the Archers. That’s what's good about RVIVR. Erica is a great singer. She's super good. So, it's like, “Okay, I'm in.”

Like Punk, Martial Arts is one thing that teaches you not to give up; that's for sure. I think that's what I got the most out of that. You're in a situation where your head is pounding, and you can't even hardly stand up, and you still have to stand there and keep fighting. But more importantly than that is seeing a big, strong fighter type come in. But then they quit. You're like, "Holy shit! This guy's going to be better than me in fucking no time. And then they quit, or they don't train as hard as you because they're lazy. Then five or ten years go by, and they're still not as good as you because you're getting better because you're training often. And then you apply that same thing to music and art. It's like, okay, well, if I sit here and practice in the morning, all day, or whatever, or however long you can, if you keep that up, it's going to eventually make the other people look like they're not trying very hard. Because that's what's happening.

There are people like Fat Mike saying, "punk is great music played by bad musicians." It's like, "No, it's bad music played by shitty musicians." That's not good. It doesn't sound good. And Fat Mike *is* a good musician. You listen to him play his bass. He's very good at it, in my opinion. People all think they're special inside, but really, no one cares. If Propagandhi put out a really bad record, everyone's going to bail. They don't care about our personalities; they're not going to say, "He tried his best," or if you have a song, you can imagine that it's this, but you can't put it out and say to everyone, "Okay, just pretend it's better than it is." Have some mercy on me and my feelings and just pretend this song is really good when it's not; pretend the singing is better. You have to do the best you can with what you have. And I think the singing is the hardest part because it's your actual body. I can't make my singing do what I want, ever. And I work hard at it. I take singing lessons, opera singing lessons to try to get better. At least I'm trying. I don't say we're the best. I don't say anything, but you have people who wake up every day and practice and are trying to get better and that's all you can ask from yourself. I find it

frustrating that people think that all this stuff just comes naturally, that it's talent or something. No. There are some bands where a kid will have been a piano player. For example, you just know that someone like Shawn Mendes, since he was a little kid, has been getting piano and singing lessons. By the time he's this age, he's already a professional. But not because he's talented. It's because he worked hard. A kid doesn't appear like that out of nowhere, same with Bieber. That kid was doing something while we were sitting around like a bunch of puds.

I think we are still putting out punk records, the way that I understood punk as a kid we are. But people nowadays will say, “This is a metal record.” Okay, but what I thought was punk when I started listening, like Dayglo and the Accused were actually almost metal bands. That’s what I thought was punk, but it's definitely not the Sex Pistols. It's definitely not the Ramones. It's definitely not like Bow Wow Wow or whatever, or the Clash. All those bands registered to me as just not music I like; it doesn't sound heavy. It doesn't sound exciting. It doesn't sound anything; it just sounds like pop music, but not good.

Propagandhi

I didn't know how to play any Propagandhi songs before I joined. I didn't play too many other people’s songs at all in my life. The only songs I remember were, like Metallica, Sacrifice, Exodus. If I listened to the Doughboys or something, I would hear what they were doing and then just instantly start making my own song based on the feeling of it, not the notes. And there was this whole Canadian band Bunch of Fucking Goofs, I learned their whole record. And then there were a couple Exploited songs I learned.

We’ll talk about stuff sometimes. Chris and Jord are interesting people. I don't think worldview things rarely are so much, but just in terms of music, I understand music better because of them. And the whole process of doing things and recording. I don't know. I think

Chris has grown more as a person since he had kids because he's trying to be a good dad; it's made him more interesting, I think, as a person. His kids are awesome. They are smarter than most kids, so he's doing something right.

David "Beaver" Guillas

I conducted my interview with "The Beave" through email correspondence. One of those emails got lost in the ether, and nobody will ever know what was written. However, Beaver was back at it and followed through with another email. Joining the band in late 2007 after Propagandhi had been well established, Beaver provides us with a new lens to view Propagandhi. The Beave also shares his experience as a student then later as a teacher. He offers some lessons that current teachers should borrow from Propagandhi's hidden curriculum.

The Early Years

I was born in Winnipeg but was adopted and grew up in rural Manitoba—first in Dauphin for a couple years, then we moved to a tiny town of about 1000 people (at the time) called Gladstone. We lived in town, but all my friends lived on farms. I loved living there. I spent all my time outside climbing trees, looking for birds' nests, biking around town, etc. Of course, many of the people in town were pretty close-minded and racist, but I didn't know this at the time. It was the only experience I knew, and I wanted to be just like them. When I was twelve, we moved to a suburb in Winnipeg. This is where the misery began. I did not fit in, and any confidence I had before the move quickly started to dwindle.

Home life was fine. I was adopted and always knew this. I suppose I felt a bit alienated due to this, but I had a good childhood. My brother, who was not adopted, is a year younger than me. My mom stayed at home with us until we moved to Winnipeg. Then, she worked in social

work. My dad was a lab and X-ray technician at the regional hospital in Gladstone. My parents always voted for the Liberal Party, no matter what. The Liberal Party, I guess, would be considered the middle ground between the left and the right here in Canada. I can't stand them, myself. By the time I was a teenager, I realized this. My opinions were valued by my mom. I'm not sure about my dad. He never got the whole vegan thing. Never even tried.

School

Academically, I suppose I "met grade-level expectations" pretty consistently. I fit the mold. I wasn't a genius, but I didn't really struggle either. I was definitely a people-pleaser, meaning I can't recall being intrinsically motivated to accomplish anything school-related. It was always because I *had* to do it, or I was looking for teacher approval. I think I was probably in about grade three when I first began to walk to school. We lived on the opposite side of town from school, so it was a 5-minute walk.

The closest thing to my favorite teacher and class would be Mr. Ladyman's Grade 9 English class. He wasn't exactly a great teacher or even a nice man, but for some reason I felt safe to let my creativity fly in that class. I wrote some weird shit, and he ate it up. This was the same year I was discovering creativity through guitar playing, so writing felt like an extension of this. I was discovering what it was to be creative for the first time, and it felt so good. I was always a painfully shy kid and was always so guarded and afraid to express myself. (Still am.) Music, writing, and also drawing were powerfully expressive outlets for me.

The school system worked for me, but it's bullshit. Much of the lasting learning I have achieved has been outside the walls of school. Through music, through my friends, and through my own pursuits driven by my interests and passions. That is huge. Being in a band with Chris, Todd and Jord was one of the greatest educational experiences of my life. That's no joke.

They've influenced and inspired me in countless ways. I can't say I ever felt inspired as a student in the education system, within the walls of a school. My experience in school is that it's all about compliance. And I was a compliant kid. Not all kids fit that mold. I had many peers that struggled, that thought they were dumb. They weren't dumb at all, but the education system made them feel dumb. They had talents that weren't recognized. That is a failure, in my opinion—a failure of the education system.

I don't think I ever really liked school. At a pretty young age I faked being sick a lot so I could stay home. In grade 6 I faked having mono and missed three weeks of school. In high school, I skipped class all the time. The aspects of school I did like had more to do with being with friends or playing floor hockey in gym class than anything else. By the time I reached high school it was definitely the social aspect I disliked most. I felt like a misfit and tried my best to be invisible. I was pretty isolated, and in hindsight my mental health was pretty poor, lots of depression and anxiety, little self-esteem. I was intimidated by my peers and the weird politics and hierarchies that go on at that age. So, I stayed out of it. Honestly, my self-isolation during high school fucked me up for many years and linger to this day.

I stayed at grade level the whole way through and didn't struggle, academically speaking. But I didn't thrive at school. I wasn't inspired at school. My mental health was not a consideration at school. Sure, I learned to read, I can function in math, I learned skills to survive in this capitalistic society—but much of the self-affirming learning in my life has happened outside of school. So maybe we should change how we as a society view education and its purpose. Is learning just the vehicle to become a productive and consuming adult? Or is learning the vehicle by which we come to understand ourselves and others, to value life and love, to question and reflect and adapt and grow? It doesn't feel like it is the latter right now.

So far, I've talked about myself and my own experience with school. I am a privileged-ass white middle-class cis man. The system was literally made for people like me. So much of the problem with our education systems comes down to poverty, something I have not experienced myself. If we really want to address barriers to learning, we need to address poverty.

I think school and report cards have a way of imposing a narrative on kids about who they are. For me, getting a report card with "good grades" imposed the narrative that I was a "good kid" and "smart." But that's not useful at all! And what about kids who get "bad grades?" What is their narrative? "I'm dumb." "I can't do anything." "I'm useless." Report cards also affect how we see each other. There are the smart ones and the dumb ones. I saw this as a kid, and I see this today as a teacher. Instead of helping us learn each other's strengths and talents, report cards categorize us based on curricular outcomes—outcomes that do *not* encompass the complexity of human talents. What damage we do to kids with these damn report cards.

Punk Experience

My first encounter with punk was through my friend Robbie, who introduced me to all those Epitaph and Fat Wreck bands, which I think he heard about through *Thrasher Magazine*. This was around grade 10. For a couple years we ate up anything released by those two labels and started a band of our own. Robbie and I ended up playing in a few bands together over the years, until he moved away for grad school. He's now a fancy-pants professor at Princeton.

I was a pretty isolated adolescent, and certainly suffered from depression and anxiety. I didn't know this at the time; all I knew was that I was afraid of everything, including people. But I did listen to a lot of bands from our local scene, like I-Spy, Propagandhi, Fallen Short, The Bonaduces, etc. And I did play in a few bands that were fairly active in the scene (March

December Swing, Giant Sons, and Rough Music). But, unlike my friends and my brother, I wasn't very active in the scene. Just on the fringe.

I have never identified as punk. My entry point into punk music was that whole Southern-Californian scene. I was a pretty cynical little dude back then, so my assumption was that anyone identifying as a punk defined the term as something like being able to drink as much as you want on the golf course with no shirt and tats showing. I mean, yes, that is a fuckin' good time, but is that an identity? No thanks. I'm still a cynical asshole, but I've come to learn that punk is a fluid term that can mean different things for different people. For me, punk is about social responsibility. It's also about art and creative expression. Bands like Fugazi, The Ex, and NoMeansNo taught me that. Today, I identify more with these bands than, say, Rancid or Lagwagon, but I wouldn't go as far to say that I identify as a punk.

Sonically, I'd say punk is earnest and visceral rock 'n' roll. Ideologically, at least as far as I've chosen to experience it through bands like the ones listed above, punk is about social responsibility. The punkers that are interviewed for all those documentaries tend to define punk as being able to do whatever the fuck you want with your life. Sure, that's nice. But that implies privilege, which in turn implies exclusion of those without such privilege. For me, punk should lift everyone up.

Punk and Learning

When I started teaching, I was lucky to have a mentor who turned me onto the inquiry approach to learning. In this approach, the learner is central to everything. Learner empowerment and agency are key. Questions and curiosity guide learning, and learning is not enslaved to curricular outcomes based on one's age. The knowledge and experiences of learners are honored, as is the fact that all knowledge is improvable. We can never know everything, yet there is a rich

journey of learning and wonder we can embark on where we grow together as a community. The inquiry approach is *not* about compliance and conformity to the status quo—it is the very opposite. What could be more punk than that? So, this type of pedagogy already exists and is being implemented and innovated by maverick teachers despite our current anachronistic education systems.

Life in Propagandhi

Propagandhi was one of the first punk bands I ever heard. As a young guitar player at the time, Chris' playing quickly became a huge influence on me. I would go on to form several bands over the coming years, and one of them, Giant Sons, caught Chris' ear. By this time Chris and I had become friendly as we frequented the same local bar, so we connected over beers, laughs, and music. We started talking about forming an AC/DC cover band, then we talked about forming an original band together. Neither of those happened. But one day, out of the blue, he emailed me and asked if I'd consider joining Propagandhi. This was a no brainer. Yes, obviously. So, we jammed for a few months, just the two of us. Then, in June of 2006, I jammed with the whole band for the first time. I guess everyone dug it because I ended up spending the next 9 years playing with those guys.

Propagandhi changed me. It must be said that, at first, their ideas hit a brick wall with me. I was stubborn and ignorant and comfortable in my privilege, so I was almost hostile to what they were singing about. But I loved the music, and ideas have a way of chipping away at you. In many ways I see myself as a late bloomer, so it took time for all those new ideas to percolate inside me before I was ready to express them honestly in the way I live my life.

I never contributed to lyrics or liner notes, but this was solely due to my own feelings of inadequacy. Like, what could I possibly have to say that would be of any use to anyone? But the

band was always open to any and all ideas from any band member. For a time, Chris was very active in supporting me to sing and write lyrics. He even convinced me to record a demo of me singing a song I had written lyrics for. I cringe the deepest of cringes thinking of this, but I'm so grateful Chris encouraged me to try. The lyrics and my singing were objectively terrible in the highest degree, but at least I tried, eh? (Incidentally, parts of the music of this song would end up becoming In Flagrante Delicto). I ended up contributing lots of musical ideas during my tenure with the band, but my lyrical ideas will remain on the darkest of shelves until the end of time.

The process of reworking "Beard" into "Tertium" was a wild ride. I felt like I was in the presence of greatness, the way the guys reinterpreted my ideas into something 1000 times better. And I was so honored that they liked that song enough to want to reinterpret it. I felt like not only did they value my ability to play whatever I was asked to play, but they also valued my creative ideas. For me, that was the beginning of feeling accepted as a full contributing member.

I did feel accepted, almost immediately. In hindsight, I can't quite understand why they accepted me so readily! They were one of the greatest trios of all time. There was nothing that needed to be fixed. Todd and Jord must have been skeptical when Chris out of nowhere brought me into the fold for consideration to join the band, yet from day one they made me feel accepted and valued. But, you know, sometimes I did feel like an outsider. They existed as a band for years before I joined and have many shared experiences as a trio. But that was really just my own hang ups and had nothing to do with how they treated me. I will forever cherish the time I got to spend with those guys.

Sulynn Hago

Sulynn offers a unique perspective to the Propagandhi story. Sulynn was and still is a Propagandhi fan. Sulynn is able to oscillate between being a band member and admirer. Sulynn

in this regard provides fresh ears, not only when provided feedback to the band, but also when sharing their insights into Propagandi's music. In Chris' interview for the dissertation, he noted an instant connection with Sulynn and a belief they connected on a creative level. The following may just answer how that is so.

Early Life

I was born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I lived there until I was nine. From there I moved to Tampa, Florida where I lived until I was thirty. Then I moved to Brooklyn, New York, where I live now. When I think back to my childhood, I was just outside every day of my life. I spent so much time outside. The first time I played guitar was outside on a patch of grass with a banged up rusty acoustic guitar that was missing two strings, and I played with a piece of Lego. I just banged it around.

My parents were disciplined. My mom was raised by her grandmothers, who were old school strict. My mom also went to an all-girls Catholic school and was taught by nuns. She's disciplined and strict. She was almost a helicopter parent in my younger years. I think she was just being protective. I used to fight with her saying, "I'm gonna be fine; I just want to do this." There was a bit of strictness with things. She's a mom; she wants to know things. My mom's religious too; we went to church. Sometimes after school I would have to go to the Catholic church school when I lived in Puerto Rico. But that all stopped when we moved to the States.

Politics wasn't really a thing in our house. It's crazy to think that. I remember not hearing about the American political party system like Republican and Democrat until I moved to the U.S. proper. Living in Florida, I remember my first year there hearing fellow nine-year-olds ask, "What party are you, Democrat or Republican?" And I was like "Huh?" I didn't even know what that was. So, it's weird because, in a sense, Puerto Rico is this small island in the Caribbean,

kind of distant from everyone. You're in your own bubble in a sense even though we had things that were very American. It was an Americanized place, but it's also Latin, so that's where the experience is different. But it was almost like our own little world that felt different. When I moved to the States, things felt different. So, when we think about politics, it's almost like there's a void.

Our upbringing wasn't perfect. The neighborhood wasn't the best. Funny enough, my mom talks about multiple times getting robbed. Cops even coming in thinking it was a drug dealer house and putting a shotgun to my parents' face. So, it wasn't actually the best neighborhood. I guess my parents just really wanted us to be happy. I feel really grateful for that. Even with all the things that would come up later on in my life. Opening up as being gay, trans, and non-binary hasn't been a discussion, but it's almost like an unsaid thing. Obviously, I look the way I look, and they're not giving me shit about it. That's where you don't discuss things, but it's said in the action.

Too much wasn't enforced, but roles were gendered. I think that's where I struggled a bit because I was born female. That was really hard; that didn't resonate with me. So, there were battles just because my mother was old school and believed "this gender does this, and this gender does that." So, I guess that's the extent of politics. It wasn't anything that was trickled down in conversation.

My parents' house was basically the party house. We'd always have a party there. My dad and work friends. They would basically turn our living room, which was only made up of beach chairs, into a dance floor. They're playing salsa, merengue, and everyone's dancing. Even the kids are dancing. If we didn't want to dance, we would just go to the bedroom where there's a Disney movie on. It was just music. It was a community of music.

School Years

Our school had a lot of cool things, like little performances. I was already performing in front of audiences. When I was in pre-K, they used to do plays. There was one play where we were all dressed up as a deck of cards, with faces painted. I was basically a deck of cards and dancing on state. It's crazy to think I've been performing for that long. I almost didn't think about it as a performance. The things you do at school are just thrown at you. It was part of being in your class; you did a class performance. Then, we did things like puppet shows where you have to speak in front of people.

I had a few memorable teachers at an early age. In pre-K, when I learned the alphabet, I remember dancing to learn it. There was so much dancing happening when I was a kid and maybe it's being Puerto Rican. My pre-K teacher was fun. In third grade, my math teacher was just great, and I feel like she taught it well. I really did well. Math was something that I really liked and was really good at. It was a fun way of learning and that was the subject that I latched onto. Later, I always got along with the English teachers. That kind of became my thing. I ended up studying creative writing. I have a degree in English, creative writing.

Punk Life

The first time I got into punk was while I was growing up in Puerto Rico. My neighbor across the street got me into punk, metal, and skating. He showed me bands like Green Day and Metallica. He was my sister's age, five years older than me. When you're a kid, that's a drastic age difference. I remember seeing his guitar for the first time. I remember his mom taking it out of the trunk. Back then, you used to order guitars from JC Penney catalogs and Sears catalogs. Just seeing it come out of the trunk I was like, "Holy fuck, it's here!" I used to just look at it in catalogs.

I really got into punk in high school. This is where my sister comes in. She got me into more of the underground punk scene. My neighborhood friend Frankie and I were just watching it on TV and almost acting like we had a band. The things I would sketch in class were music and band related. My drawing looked like a band on tour with a double decker RV with the fire pole. That's what I would draw in class, ridiculous. When I was in fourth or fifth grade, my sister, Melissa, would come home with CDs of bands that I never heard of because they weren't on the radio or TV. I was just the younger sibling observing and taking notes. And then in the car she would have mixtapes, and there would be some mixtape that got me excited, "Oh, what band is that?" and it would be someone like Strung Out. "Well, what band is that?" And then I would see the list of bands on the back of the CD. This is the era of compilations. This is how we started to find out about punk and punk bands. And then she started bringing flyers home. Those flyers were so colorful; they were like highlighter colors. I would ask about them, and then I got turned on. I was starting to take the CDs and listen to them.

When I was around 12 or 13, my sister and her friends were finally down to take me to a show. I think they took me to a No Use for a Name and One Man Army show.
I remember being there like, "Where the fuck am I? This is insane. It's packed!" It's funny because I remember reacting to band shirts and feeling, "Holy shit! I've seen all these band names on all these compilation lists and my sister's mixtapes!" There was a unique energy to seeing everyone with their band shirts, and I felt a camaraderie, "Wow, all these people know this stuff too."

Punk is an energy. It's like a spirit that takes on various forms. I think it's a place for outcasts to cope, to figure out their shit and realize they're not alone with other outcasts. It's also

raw. Here I am. This is how I feel. No matter what my gender, religion, or upbringing, this is who I am. I think punk is a place to let out all that shit.

Punk is interesting because it has different sectors, some good, some bad. There are the sectors where it is progressive, trans friendly, and gay friendly. But then there's that macho side of punk. I was very repressed growing up, and on top of that I was forced to wear dresses like a girl. It fucking tore me apart. There was a lot of self-hatred because I wasn't allowed to be who I wanted to be. So now, I can get to say that. I think Punk gave me the older brother influence or dad influence because punk was so male dominated. I didn't have this side because I wasn't seen as a boy. I wasn't allowed to be seen that way. I think punk shaped the trans and masculine side that I needed to express when I needed a place for it to be free. What's cool about these interviews is sometimes you have to dig for it. It's something that I feel like I've known, but when you don't verbalize you kind of forget. I don't want gender to feel that way. But you have to think of the era and the fact that, probably before the way we are now, it was a little bit more fluid. It wasn't as fluid growing up and it almost felt like you had to choose, and you even had to choose your behaviors and it fucking sucked.

Just growing up, girls are told they can't even be aggressive. You can't be crude or rude. You basically had to be this flower, like an ornament and behave and, "oh that's not ladylike." I felt like it wasn't honest, just even being human. For example, if I had to spit because I have to spit, well, I'm human. It's just awful. It has nothing to do with gender. Or if I said, "Fuck this" because I needed to defend yourself. I hated the ladylike thing because it can take away your humanity. You're like this frozen entity that has to follow the rules. But with guys growing up, it felt like there were no rules. I'm generalizing, of course. In terms of behavior, at least what I saw, guys' lives were not as enforced, having to be very put together and unable to respond, not

even stating your opinion. I think punk is a place where I was angry about it. For a while, I felt like it wasn't me. And so, I have all this anger about not being able to be the person who I really feel I am and able to be in spirit. So, it helped me release that. In a way, that felt like, “Hey, this is who I am.” I do have these kinds of tendencies.

Musicianship Story

I feel like my whole upbringing was surrounded by music, on one end punk and the other metal. I think it is the reason I’m into so many styles because I feel like it reflects how I grew up in my earlier years. My mom would play disco and pop music around the house, like records and on the radio. She did choir when she was 10 and she would just sing a lot. And another influence musically, was cartoons. *Looney Tunes* was my favorite thing, and I watched it religiously in those first years that I wasn’t going to school. I feel that's where my jazz interest is. I just feel like I absorbed that.

In terms of my parents, our house was the party house. You think when you're older you’re like, “Yeah, I guess my parents were like, 40.” You think they’re so much older when you're a kid. And they didn’t care. It's not like they're like, “Hey, some of the kids need a sitter.” In Puerto Rico there wasn't a noise ordinance. Everyone knew each other on the street and stuff.

It's funny, a friend of mine, he and I played punk together, we both got into jazz later; we got into classical guitar later, so you know my knowledge for music really formed punk songs. Then I learned how to read music, I taught myself how to do that. I learned all this theory, a pretty wealthy amount. My point is that we always say that we're happy that punk was our first step to music because that's the foundation. Even with the classic role and the jazz and the theory, it is just knowing how to write an honest and rip an energetic raw [song or riff]. Coming from an energetic raw place and an honest place that no matter what genre comes in, that's the

foundation of how I play. Funny enough I heard someone recently tell me, “When you play classical, you play like a metal head.” Well, it's in me. From a different perspective, but it’s the same thing. Even without those other genres, I see the story and the songs and the message, whether it's with words or without words, there's a story that’s being told; there’s a feeling that's being captured and delivered and passed on. Punk, that foundation of it, just helps to make sure that that's the priority. Even if you're doing classical guitar, you do this major7(9). You only use a major7(9) chord if it calls for it, if it means that that sound is going to fit the story you're telling. And that's where I think punk comes in. I’m so happy that it’s the first shit I did, and it will forever be the main thing, and I’ll never stop doing that.

Propagandhi History

It’s funny, when I first joined Propagandhi, I was like, “Alright, get ready” because the fan backlash might happen. I think early on within the first few months, there may have been a few small online comments like, “Cool, I’m going to miss Beave, though.” I wasn’t anyone in their eyes, yet. The possible negative response was lighter than I thought it’d be because Beave’s a cool guy. I was a fan of the band, and the personality and music dynamic were awesome. So, whenever a band has a split, it's scary from the audience's perspective. You want to make sure the band maintains its charm.

So, when you initially come in, and this is unfortunate, people assume things with gender. It almost bothers me that I even have to say this, but I think there was a comment about me redecorating the practice space. Like that's what we do, as in females. Things like that are an all-encompassing reaction based on very superficial things. And years later I’m like, “I’m trans, nonbinary.” Like that couldn’t be any more opposite of who I am, but that's the nature of being in the public eye.

Propagandhi is one of those rare bands who have had member changes, but every member never feels like they really left. But it adds to the era, like John K. Samson who's such a strong entity. I'm grateful because I'm the one who was chosen but I wonder, from their side if they would say, "Wow. It worked out." I know they've expressed that it was a wild idea to put it out in the world to try to find a guitar player. It's from somewhere else. The fact that it worked out is pretty wild. But there's a feeling there that you can't explain when you can tell the energies are right and aligned. There was something there with Chris and my email exchanges at the beginning; they felt it. It was part of the reason, when I read the auditions, I felt it. My heart was racing. I was pumping myself up, "I really fucking think I can do this."

Right before the auditions, I was at a low point musically where I felt my last hurrah with local bands got me stuck in the mud. I was basically at zero again. Just a few months prior, I had finished off a tour and quit the band because I was tired of member challenges. I remember feeling, "Fuck, I work so hard. I want to do this music thing so bad. Why is it so hard for me? Why can't I find the right people?" And I was writing a lot at that time. Journaling things like, "I still feel hope that this is what I'm supposed to do. I believe in it so much. I work on it so much. I feel like I love it so much." And then in a few months, which for a musician feels like a long time of nothing, that Propagandhi ad came up and I felt, "This is it! I have to fucking do it. This is my in." Sounds kind of crazy.

Julian Lage, the jazz player, and I are friends, and when I told him about my joining Propagandhi, he was excited, "It's like a movie!" All I could say was, "Yeah, they're one of my favorite bands and now I'm fucking up in it!" That was his response, and I thought it was funny because now that I'm in Propagandhi, I almost never forget it. That's so cool to get loving responses.

Propagandhi's Influence

I know a lot of people whose introduction to Propagandhi is *How to Clean Everything*--it typically tends to be-- but, *Less Talk, More Rock* with mine. This guy John-John and I became friends. One day we're hanging out at my house. We had just become like punk friends. He was in my room, and he grabbed my bass and then just started to play the beginning bassline of "PC Fascist." I said, "Hey, what's that?" And he replies, "Oh, that's this band, Propagandhi." So, that's how I first learned about Propagandhi, in that moment when he started playing the bassline.

Being a fan of Propagandhi brings me back to thinking of the songs in the original way. For me, when I'm performing, I try to hang onto that. I try to make sure that that part never goes away. It's almost the way I feel when I learn classical composer stuff, okay it's not my original music, but the songs are so well written and genuine. They're just so carefully nurtured, like the spirit of them.

Propagandhi has changed my life, but it's hard trying to keep up with the various impacts over different albums. Because different records obviously come out at different times of your life. You got one at 14; you got one at 20. One of the most influential lines, and I'm sure a lot of people feel this way, is "I'll call you on your shit, please call me on mine." That line is powerful especially when you're young and you're more stubborn than you should be and maybe there's pride and ego. You're figuring out your personality, then you hear that line in a song and someone else saying, "It's fucking okay to be wrong." There's that aspect from just being a person and questioning your behavioral traits. Experiences like that shape you. They make you think. Because if you're not hearing it from your surroundings, especially if you're hanging out with a bunch of other similar people, you're not changing. You're caught in this cycle of not

hearing any difference of opinion. And then you hear music like Propagandhi's that has the power to change you if you allow it. That's how I feel it did for me. I just sat there with something and thought, "How does that relate to how I'm handling my life and myself, and how I'm communicating with people?"

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MUSIC OF PROPAGANDHI

Introduction to themes and selections

One challenging aspect of trying to label or categorize Propagandhi songs was the realization that many of their songs are deeply layered and often rely on the listener to make connections. For example, a song may be overtly anti-war and military (America's Army), but in exposing the tools of the military, a song exposes cultural machines that shape ideology and indoctrinate youth. In doing so, a listener can then be tasked to apply such a lens to other situations or institutions, not just war.

So, do I categorize songs by their overt or clear messaging, or do I categorize them by the underlying lesson? Furthermore, many songs will touch on multiple themes while also presenting other larger lessons. Where do I place one song that could arguably belong in multiple sections? How do I weave narratives together between songs without ignoring key thematic aspects that might not relate in one narrative? For example, a song on police brutality can parallel a song against authority, military, and violence. Yet it is a uniquely domestic or local problem (in contrast to an invading foreign force controlling people). Police are tied to the state and can be viewed as a military arm (especially when looking at funding, weapons, and arms). Police brutality can also be directly connected to oppression of marginalized groups. So, should this song be an example when discussing racism? Police are often used to break up protests, so they are often a tool of capitalist elites (see Occupy Wall Street). Of course, police violence can also represent general violence in a country.

Similarly, war, especially as viewed from the US, is an event that happens "over there." It's an international occurrence. Yet the effects of war can be seen locally with changing communities as asylum seekers hopefully enter their new countries. Therefore, the mistreatment

of refugees and exiles has become a by-product of war. There is colonialism abroad, but there's also colonialism at home. Propagandhi's "Bringer of Greater Things" represents this beautifully. Likewise, their "Fuck the Border" song sheds light on the refugee experience. So, do I want a large category of geo-political themes? But surely this is too broad.

Regarding pedagogy, perhaps it is the methodology that should be presented in an orderly fashion, rather than the subject matter. In order to show a hidden curriculum by sifting through Propagandhi's music, I have decided to organize by the tools in Propagandhi's toolbox. Because it would be nearly impossible to omit the social justice themes of the music of Propagandhi, the dissertation focuses on the often unseen aspect of Propagandhi's brilliance to inspire their audience to become compassionate critical thinkers.

Ultimately, my own standpoint must inform how I categorize songs together. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge this difficulty and take ownership in piecing together Propagandhi's Hidden Curriculum. I am tasked with defining what I see as the apparent patterns. Yes, geopolitics is a huge theme with dozens of Propagandhi songs soundly falling into this category. So, this calls for further reduction within a group. I could continue with narrower themes: Exile/Border/Colonialism/War or I can break them down into narrative or curriculum categories like challenging culture/systems/institutions or their methods like crafting first-person narratives (often giving voice to marginalized groups), prose, essay, poem, or fiction vs non-fiction. Which songs ask questions, leave topics unanswered, ask for more inquiry, attempt to anger or rile up the listener, which seek to use compassion and emotion to make their cases? Hopefully, this predicament really shows the depth of Propagandhi's music.

The first songs that I began to analyze were songs that had always resonated with me, and which I felt were impactful. This could have been from my own experience, or just the

knowledge as a fan which were the canonical Propagandhi songs. This can sometimes be realized by knowing which songs are played live by Propagandhi, and which songs remain in the live set list over years. Fortunately, Chris Hannah often creates polls on his Patreon page asking his patrons for their opinions for which song he should create a podcast episode around. Finally, I listened to all the songs from the complete studio catalog with new ears and fresh eyes on the lyrics. In many cases, songs that I had not before really absorbed the messaging became vibrant and new again.

I wrote up song analyses that included my perspective on the lyrics and music, research into the context of the song, and what I saw as lessons or teachable moments. Sometimes I made connections between other songs in the catalog, but really each song analysis is an independent response to a particular song. Then, having those analyses (often five to ten pages per song, some reaching twenty pages), I began to categorize them into different possible organizations. First, I ordered songs into social justice themes. Next, I made another category for the form or method that informed the hidden curriculum. Which songs promoted inquiry, self-doubt, and reflection? Which songs used humor, poetry, prose, aggression, or empathy? Which songs featured compelling music that also crafted a message within its sonic features? Once the songs were connected, I was then able to craft narratives for Propagandhi's Hidden Curriculum. Note: when doing the music analysis, I utilized the printed sheet music for the songs from Sheet Happens (which were produced in conjunction with Propagandhi). When possible, I also contrasted the songs with any prior demo releases in order to hear any changes made to the final recording. In addition, not only do I utilize the official printed lyrics from the album liner notes, but also reference the website as Chris has made alterations to some of the lyrics in order to be appropriate for contemporary sentiments.

While discussing Propagandhi's song "Oka Everywhere" from 1994, Chris noted that the band's current songs don't stray far from the messaging of their early titles, but differ in aesthetics, "The premise, in some ways, is the same, but the method of delivery is different. I'm someone who is 30 years older and whose aesthetic has changed, in terms of wordplay and musical taste."[1] The following chapter, therefore, can be viewed as a discourse analysis of the changing methods and aesthetics of Propagandhi's hidden curriculum.

Shifting Perspectives: Lifting up marginalized voices

Throughout Propagandhi's body of work they show compassion and empathy for displaced groups of people. Propagandhi does this in many ways. The most striking may be lyrically, whether the song's narrative comes from the outsider wishing justice for the migrant, or from the narrative taking on the perspective of someone in exile. However, Propagandhi can also do this by adding audio samples to songs, and by including additional commentary and epigraphs in album liner notes. In addition, Propagandhi has had these voices speak at Propagandhi concerts. For example, Bella Galhos, a survivor of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, gave a speech at the University of Manitoba before Propagandhi performed. A clip of her speech was later used at the start of Propagandhi's 2001 album, *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes.* In addition to representing this care for displaced people, Propagandhi, as individuals, have dedicated their personal lives to justice for those who have suffered at the hands of Western imperialism and colonialism. This is evidenced with Todd's volunteer work at the Immigration & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM), and Jord's many years with the Canada Haiti Action Network. However, this section of the dissertation will dedicate its attention

[1] Carleton, Sean. "An Oral History of Propagandhi's 'Oka Everywhere'." *Canadian Dimension*. 2020. https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/an-oral-history-of-propagandhis-oka-everywhere

to the ways the music of Propagandhi empowers and honors the lives of those living on the margins.

"Fuck the Border"
Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes, 2001

Some peo-ple have to stay and fight for sur-vival in the coun-try they live in while oth-ers have to leave to sur-vive. Cor-po-ra-tions cross inter-na-tion-al bor-ders all the time in search of peo-ple to exploit for prof-it and no one stops them. They call it glob-al-iza-tion. On the oth-er hand, the vic-tims of cor-po-rate dom-i-na-tion are told that they can't cross bor-ders in search of bet-ter lives, and are forced to stay and deal with the social, eco-nom-ic and envi-ron-men-tal mess-es the com-pa-nies leave behind when they inevitably move their oper-a-tions to places with even more "favourable busi-ness cli-mates" (re: low-er wages, lax envi-ron-men-tal laws, tax breaks). Looks like cap-i-tal-ism and human-rights don't mix.

-- Epigraph to "Fuck the Border" lyrics printed in album liner notes

Todd makes his Propagandhi studio album debut with his song "Fuck the Border." The speed and thrash from the music as well as Todd's impassioned guttural screaming, mark a departure from the previous two albums with John K. Samson on bass. Todd's screaming doesn't simply serve as an aesthetic departure, but it alludes to the struggles of the body that one can endure from hard laborious work, or difficult migrations across borders.[2] His vocal delivery doesn't merely represent his sincerity and passion, but marvelously captures the pain and toils of the human body.[3]

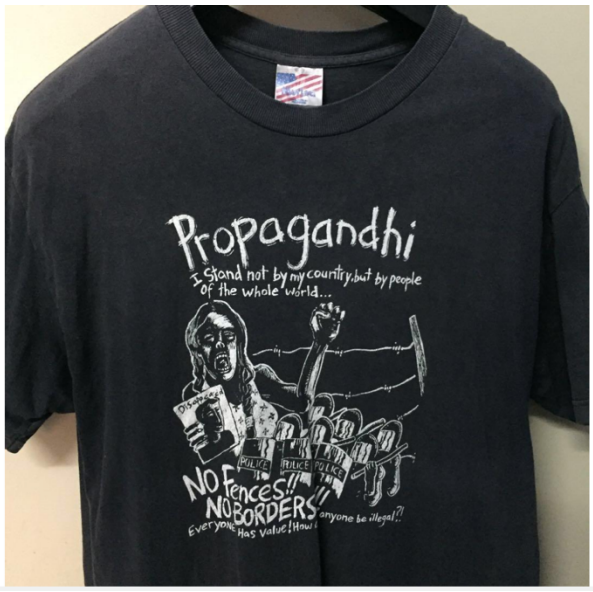
"Fuck the Border" is told from Todd's perspective as a friend of someone who moved to Canada from Mexico but was struggling to survive, so she fled south to the US. Todd asks, "You've got a problem with her living here, but what did you do to help her before she fucking

[2] Kelley Tatro, "The Hard Work of Screaming: Physical Exertion and Affective Labor Among Mexico City's Punk Vocalists" *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Fall 2014), pp. 431-453
[3] In Todd's interview on the "F**k the Border" podcast episode of *Unscripted Moments*, he described the pain he was in when he was recording these studio vocals. Todd tried to push his body to the limit and ended up with a throbbing cranium. He's since learned to take it down a few notches.

came? What did the country do? What did the people do?" Todd not only charges the institutions ("the country") but also implicates "the people." This critique of institutional powers along with one's personal duties is a powerful hallmark of many Propagandhi songs. It's simple enough to blame the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for a swelling in migration out of Mexico since 1994, but what is the individual doing at a personal level to help balance those institutional evils?

A central aspect of the song is its challenge to borders that have long helped define the boundaries between nation states. Todd regains the first-person perspective when he yells, "I stand not by my country, but by people of the whole fucking world. No fences, no borders. Free movement for all. Fuck the border." Simplified, Todd takes a humanist approach that rejects nationalism, challenges a state's ability to keep people in or out, and declares that it is a human right for people to move freely across the planet. Todd is pointing out the absurdity that goods can freely cross borders (often at the expense of economies, yet people cannot cross freely). Keith from the *Unscripted Moments* podcast noted that this section of the song reminded him of Thomas Paine's line, "The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion."[4] Todd's lyrics were notably etched onto an official Propagandhi shirt that he drew and designed from the *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes* era:

[4] Greg Soden & Keith Gough. *Unscripted Moments: A Podcast about Propagandhi*. "F**k the Border" Ep.70. 2022



"I Stand Not by My Country, But by People of The Whole World...No Fences!! No Borders!!! Everyone Has Value! How Can Anyone Be Illegal?!" Description: Hand drawing of a protester above police in riot gear in front of a barbed wire fence. Designed by Todd Kowalski.

This quick and menacing song at just one minute and a half concludes with a powerful chant that evokes the visuals of fists in the air, banging in unison. After an amazing drum roll helps conclude the hectic and brutal opening, we reach this moment of clarity where the guitars stop and it's only the drums supporting Todd's vocals, "It's about fucking time to treat people with respect." Then Chris' guitar comes in to ring out a solid chord that sustains over, "It's our culture and consumption that makes her life unbearable. Fuck this country, its angry eyes, its knee-jerk hordes. Legal or illegal," Then, the frantic pacing that brings the energy back up helps conclude the song as Todd emphatically sings, "watch her fucking go. She'll take what's hers. Watch her fucking go. Fuck the border."

Overall, "Fuck the Border" provides a first-person perspective of someone empathizing with an immigrant's plight while upset and angered by the institutions, policies, and general cultural malaise that has caused disruptions and displacement across the world to many innocent

lives. Propagandhi validate the experience of a refugee, exile, or migrant while also targeting those to blame. Todd's fury could be explained by this being a personal story of someone he knew, but we will see in further examples that this theme still resonates strongly when songs present on displacement more generally.

"Bringer of Greater Things"
Potemkin City Limits, 2005

They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one; they promised to take our land, and they took it.
-Red Cloud, Chief of the Oglala Sioux[5]

On December 4, 2005, I went to Chain Reaction in Anaheim, California to see Propagandhi perform live on tour to support their new album *Potemkin City Limits*. It was a memorable show because of on stage antics of road crew dressed as McDonald's items like fries and a drink. Jord had also shaved only the top of his head to resemble unfortunate male pattern baldness, but one of the most striking moments was Todd's introduction to "Bringer of Greater Things." Thanks to YouTube, we all can relive this moment:

Todd: Glad to be here in wherever the fuck we are right now!

Chris: Santa Cruz!

Todd: "I think Disneyland or something. Right now, in Winnipeg it's minus 25 below. I don't know what the fuck it is in Fahrenheit. Anyway, it's cold. But imagine if you were in Winnipeg right now…"

Fan: "I don't care!"

[5] Liner-note epigraph for "Bringer of Greater Things" on *Potemkin City Limits*, 2005

Todd: "and you were out on the street and the cops picked you up. Took you out, out in minus 40, minus 25 below and left you out of town to walk back. Well, that's what the cops do where we live to people who are actually indigenous to the area, and not white people. This song's called the "Bringer of Greater Things." It's for Rodney Naistus and Neil Stonechild who were fucking murdered by our cops. We can't help but wonder why people in Iraq don't trust occupiers. Look what happened here in the US, Canada, Mexico, everywhere, all the way down in South America. The Bringer of Greater Things. Thanks a lot!"

At this point of owning the album in 2005, the lyrics had not sunk in. It wasn't until Todd hit me with this song background that I opened the liner notes to read the lyrics as I listened to the song. I don't recall really even understanding Todd fully that night at Chain Reaction, but I remember the chill and calm in that moment, and the realization that he had just said something powerful in the face of a few hecklers. After listening to the song again, the introduction before the band plays also evokes the same feeling.

"Bringer of Greater Things" begins with a haunting Hammond organ playing a four-note pattern that evokes the Dies Irae (Day of Wrath) musical motif. This short, but haunting descending motif (F-E-F-D) historically denotes death. Created by Catholic monks around the 13th century, this Gregorian Chant was used for funerals. Musicologist Alex Ludwig of Berklee College of Music has a running list of movies that utilize the Dies Irae motif which creates an "ominous sense of dread." It is found in Mozart's *Requiem* (1791). Countless other classical pieces further popularize the Dies Irae. Contemporary cinema continues to use it. The horror film, *The Shining* utilizes the Dies Irae. The film's opening credits begin with deep brass instruments playing the Dies Irae with a reverb that evokes reverberations of a large empty church. This reverb effect also provides a similar depth in the Hammond organ introduction of

"Bringer of Greater Things." The climax of the film concludes with Jack Nicholson's character frozen in the snow still gripping his ax.

"Bringer of Greater Things" is a first-person narrative from the perspective of the colonizer, or police in this instance. It reads as a lecture or sermon filled with common tropes that parallel old colonial myths of the civilized coming to the new world to gift western ideals to the uncivilized. These platitudes rationalize the actions of the police taking indigenous Canadians just outside of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on "starlight tours" that ended the lives of Rodney Naistus, Neil Stonechild and Lawrence Wegner.[6] Their names receive dedication in the album's liner notes and the band's website.

Todd could have easily written from the perspective of the victims but instead wrote from the perspective of the perpetrator. Todd brilliantly juxtaposes the sentimental language of colonization with the harsh realities of oppression. In doing so, he also challenges the listener to challenge some of these myths and to explore how they too may participate in the persistence of colonial mentality. To fully appreciate the challenge put forth, I invite the reader to perform their own close reading of the full lyrics:

> Look at our collection of hands, heads, and feet to see where we've been. Embrace this parody: the ending of things you can believe. We'll drive you 'til you're skin and bones and when we finally reach the end, you'll fall into our open arms, accept our tears of sympathy. Make way for our emptiness. A descent that never ends 'til the one last living thing is the next thing to go. You should know by now that we never come in peace. Endure this tragedy, wrap yourselves in our fantasies. When you think of all you've lost, weigh it with what you've gained in trade. We've given the greatest gift: this savior that will never rise. The Bringer of Greater Things. Creator of Brighter Days. The city cops, a sub-zero night. A midnight ride out of town. The passenger was found frozen to the snow. Our enduring legacy. We bring a better way. Our handshake crushing bone. The blankets that keep you warm, we've soiled with disease. The Bringer of Greater Things. Creator of Brighter Days. The hollow songs you'll sing at the ending of your day.

[6] *This is Criminal*. "Starlight Tours" Episode 138. 4/17/2020 https://thisiscriminal.com/episode-138-starlight-tours-4-17-2020/

As stated in the introduction of Chapter 4, placing songs within themes and categories was a difficult task. For example, it should be apparent that this song also applies to the layering section as it connects a contemporary trauma with colonial trauma. It also invites the reader to do a close reading in order to make these connections. However, the emphasis on the first-person perspective of a perpetrator is distinctly powerful as it fails to evoke empathy with them, but rather an insight into a form of superior thinking that perhaps many of us have deep within. Perhaps a darkness that was always in the characters corrupted in the film *The Shining.*

One other notable song that takes on the perspective of the perpetrator is "Rattan Cane" in which a fundamentalist officer is abusing and dehumanizing punk youth in Indonesia and explaining to them why it's for their own good. It is interesting to note that John K. Samson took this spirit of writing from other perspectives to his songs in The Weakerthans. Sometimes, just providing voice for the marginalized is as strong of a political statement than a middle finger to the establishment.

Layering: A Close reading

One remarkable thing that Propagandhi has been able to do with their songs is layer in multiple narratives and lessons that contain larger philosophical or psychological phenomena beyond the main plot point. There are many songs that contain many valuable lessons, lessons that many are still discovering as they listen to the songs deeper. Here are a couple songs that I have found that best represent Propagandhi's ability to add depth to a song requiring a reader to engage in close reading in order to extract the most meaning from a song. These songs don't simply present examples of intertextuality that connect the reader to other texts. For example, "Rock for Sustainable Capitalism" answer's the NOFX's question "How did punk rock become so safe?" Gerfried Ambrosch uses Propagandhi's example in "Refusing to be a Man" with the

lyrics, “and do you know what patricentricity means? [...] It means male values über alles.” Ambrosch points out the double meaning that most punk listeners will understand. On one hand Propagandhi is connecting patriarchy to fascism while also referencing the Dead Kennedy’s song “California Über Alles.”[7] Intertextuality is a wonderful poetic device that can be discussed in the section on Propagandhi’s poetics. However, this section on layering represents a form of textual analysis that might be found in a novel, for example, rather than a poem.

“Potemkin City Limits”
Supporting Caste, 2009

By this 2009 release, Propagandhi had already written a number of heavy and profound animal rights songs. Some of these songs weren’t coy about the messaging especially when they proclaim, “Meat is murder, and dairy is rape!” The opening sound bite of a wounded pig getting beaten by workers left a mark on many listeners, especially as the song closed out with the sound of a beating heart. However, “Potemkin City Limits” takes a different approach to build sympathy for factory farm animals. This song could easily be categorized under the previous section because the main protagonist of the story is Francis, a pig that has escaped the slaughterhouse. Told from the perspective of the narrator who has access to Francis’ inner thoughts, this song anthropomorphizes Francis’ experience to conjure empathy from those that often turn their backs on learning about the factory farm process and the treatment of animals within.

[7] Ambrosch. p.40

This denial of the reality of the inner workings of a slaughterhouse is depicted in the artwork for the *Potemkin City Limits* record.[8] The booklet art, created by Sue Coe, shows the outer walls of a slaughterhouse painted with an idyllic landscape of a farm and animals joyfully living outside, while a little girl plays with her dog. However, the art shows what's behind these walls: Pigs getting whipped, beaten, and corralled into slaughter. Amongst the carnage there are glimpses of hope where it appears one pig is kissing another. Yet, we also have a picture of a solitary young pig sitting on her rump the way a puppy would, but bleeding from her stomach. Perhaps this would have been Francis' fate.

Inner artwork from *Potemkin City Limits* CD booklet.[9]

This becomes the scene from which Francis escapes in the song "Potemkin City Limits." The song begins, "Francis didn't give a fuck about the rollbacks, the overproduction, the reduced

[8] Though the song of the same name was originally intended to go on this 2005 record, it was eventually recorded and released on the 2009's *Supporting Caste*.
[9] Courtesy of Propagandhi, original artwork by Sue Coe.

demand. He never gave much thought to disputed contracts." Because the song begins with such heavy business jargon, many listeners imagined the song a dystopian nightmare in which a human escaped slave like working conditions.[10] This opening also provides some insight into the upcoming section on Propagandhi's word acrobatics where they are often able to take such dense and clunky writing and maneuver it into flowing song verse.

The song continues with the brutal realities of the slaughterhouse and moves along with Francis' escape. He survived for five months where "he ran free and replayed his only fond memory: just a warm and distant dream of his mother's loving eyes upon him. Francis made it farther than she did." It's clear how provocative this song is. It inspires people to research the story of Francis where they might also discover other similar stories of escape. Any cursory glance through social media referring to this song will turn up many testimonials describing how this song was the reason someone began vegetarian or vegan. However, there is more to this song as Chris as a couple more lines of verse.

Now that Francis has been honored in song, it is time to add another layer of complexity to the song with the conclusion, "There's a statue that the abattoir erected to remind us of all of their contributions. To me it marks Potemkin City Limits, this Francis cast in bronze. (Turn around, I'm gone)" Here marks a crucial juncture in the song. After Francis' story made headlines, the slaughterhouse commissioned a statue of Francis, not in honor of his escape, but in honor of the pork industry. Chris finds this statue deeply problematic. It can simply be understood as a marker to the entrance of a Potemkin village whose exterior resembles a fully functional and vibrant town, yet it is just a facade. Similarly, the statue of Francis represents a

[10] Keith candidly shared this story on *Unscripted Moments: A podcast about Propagandhi* on the "Potemkin City Limits" episode. Chris also noted this mix-up that some fans had during his *A Catastrophic Break with Consensus Reality* podcast on the same song.

compassion for animals without losing site of the irony. This cognitive dissonance is thus the central theme to "Potemkin City Limits." The public can be captivated a cheer on an animal that has escaped a slaughterhouse or escape from a transport vehicle. It can excite that drive to cheer on the underdog, yet moments later, those same people may eat a hot dog or hamburger without recognizing the contradiction.

Because this song's theme is cognitive dissonance, it's not only about challenging someone's eating habits or diet. Allow me to paraphrase Keith from the closing of the "Potemkin City Limits" podcast episode from *Unscripted Moments*. This song is a reminder to look beyond what we are told is important, and to investigate further how the world functions; there are facades all around us, not just factory farming. And if we feel like we've reached some level of harmony, we probably aren't looking behind the curtain enough; knowledge of the world is a terrible burden, it is oppressive, grating, and overwhelming, but ignorance is far more harmful. If we think we've reached a point of harmony between our convictions and actions, it would probably be wise to keep looking and reassess. And we should listen to that resonating dissonance in our heads, that is your humanity, spirit, compassion, conscience, whatever reminding you to put what you know into action, and even if you never fully extinguish that dissonance, doing as much you can to quiet it to a hum is far more important than ignoring it.[11]

Sonic Storytelling: Painting with music

Beyond the words, Propagandhi are adept at building landscapes, emotions, and narratives through the music itself. For example, Todd's aggressive screaming not only convey his passion, but they demonstrate an empathy for oppressed bodies. Another more common

[11] Keith Gough. "Potemkin City Limits" Ep.71. *Unscripted Moments: A Podcast About Propagandhi*. February 2022.

technique to paint sonic pictures is through word painting which are sonic elements that support the lyrics. The following section provides a few examples of how Propagandhi utilize their instruments to help evoke imaginative thought to visualize and "feel" the songs at a deeper level. Just the lyrics offer multiple layers of close reading, so too does the music that frames the lyrics. This section discusses other sonic aspects found in Propagandhi's music including screaming vocals, melodic choices, timbre (clean vs distorted guitars), and the technical aspects of the performance of each instrument.

The song "Night Letters" utilizes brilliant word painting to viscerally move the listener to feel the struggles an immigrant might face while living in Winnipeg. This song is another one of Todd's wonderful perspectives on lives affected by displacement. It is lyrically powerful and worthy of a deep exploration; however, the music itself can express the challenges of an immigrant living in frigid Winnipeg. To begin, before any notes are even played, the guitars and bass are adjusted to Drop-C tuning which is two full steps below standard E tuning. Dropping to such an odd tuning gives the song added depth and weight which parallel the theme of the song. The opening guitar rhythm section paints the image of someone trudging through snow, making strides forward but also getting knocked back by a blizzard. The imagery is set for the opening lyrics, "Your world was blown right apart on a night of sickening death. You went running for your life and never went home again." Interestingly, the opening hits of the song are of the person getting pushed back by a storm, then the rhythm provides heavy, powerful chunks to represent the pushing forward through thick snow, only to get hit back by that opening bludgeoning.[12]

[12] In my interview with Sulynn, they recalled that Todd shared this imagery of someone trudging through snow and constantly getting it back. This indicates that Todd wants the other band members to absorb this imagery as they play.

Sometimes Propagandhi uses work painting in less obvious ways. David "The Beaver" Guillas pointed out that, "there's a part mid-way through the song "Failed States" in which I tried to imply an image of the Challenger exploding after takeoff. I set my delay pedal to oscillate in a rising and explosive kind of way." This is such an ornamental detail but shows how cognizant the band is that the music should convey the message of the song. During the song "Cop Just Out of Frame" which depicts the self-immolation of a Buddhist monk in Vietnam, Beaver adds some guitar sounds that create an image of flames whipping up and around. Once a listener becomes aware of these sonic adornments, returning to old songs with a sharp ear adds a new thrill to listening to songs.

Word painting is limited to guitars. Jord is also proficient at this with the drums. An easy one for fans to spot is in the song "Human(e) Meat" when Jord bangs on the toms to sound like someone banging on the front door just at the conclusion of the lyrics, "Be careful what kind of world you wish for. Someday, it may come knocking on your door." And that's when Jord menacingly pounds on his floor toms. However, this isn't Jord's most unique sonic painting of a scene.

In "Purina Hall of Fame" there is a scene of a person stuck at a railroad crossing as a train full of box cars loaded with animals passes by. In the interlude after this lyric Jord took the opportunity to set the scene, "That whole thing was with the idea in mind of a shipping car full of animals about to take off to their final destination, like a train firing up cold or like a steam driven train firing up. And then finally, once it's in full gear, it's on the tracks and rolling, sundering along."[13] Jord builds this sound by moving from hi-hats to the snare in a very syncopated fashion to resemble the train starting to pick up steam. Interestingly, the band doesn't

[13] Jord Samolesky. Dissertation interview, Spring 2021

really discuss these creative choices with each other. They simply do their own parts to add to the imagery of the song.

Even the vocal melodies can carry the theme of a song. In my interview with Sulynn, they pointed out the lullaby-like melody of Chris' song "Devil's Creek." Chris takes us to a secret childhood spot near his home on the air force base where he found refuge and allowed his imagination to flourish. In a song that's not just autobiographical, but one in which asks the listener to relate their own "Devil's Creek" to his, the melody of the verses create a kid like energy that evokes melodies from our childhood.

These are a few examples that best represent Propagandhi's ability to create added context and meaning to the lyrics through the music. Arguably every song adds sonic storytelling in some way. But in keeping with Propagandhi's hidden curriculum, I invite the reader to find some more!

Word Acrobatics: Virtuosic Poetics

For whatever reason, new artists feel compelled to rhyme their lyrics. Perhaps this is a direct influence from school where we are first taught poetry. It's possible we pick it up from songs that we enjoy. Of course, there is simply a pleasure of congruence where our ears here a rhyme. Punk artists have also had an advantage in that they could alter their pronunciation a little to force in some rhymes. That's punk rock after all. However, it still sounds best without any manipulation. "Anti-manifesto," the opening of track of Propagandhi's debut studio album *How to Clean Everything* gives us a template for what the band is all about in beautifully written poetry:

Dance and laugh and play.
Ignore the message we convey.
It seems we're only here to entertain.

A rebellion cut-to-fit.
I refuse to be the soundtrack to it.
While we entertain, we're still knee-deep in shit.
There's something wrong inside.
We've played it safe, enjoyed the ride.
You won't like this but I've something to confide.
We stand for something more than a faded sticker on a skateboard.
Now we've rained on your parade and we're out the door.

There is clearly a satiating feeling to read the lyrics that rhyme. Chris Hannah has a talent for rhyming poetry that doesn't feel stretched and forced. Their message is clear: they do not want to be a punk band without a message. Strikingly, they make this statement before melodic punk takes off in 1994. Unfortunately, because of punk's explosion, they did become one of the faces of a new breed of fast, melodic, skate punk. This is one reason Propagandhi upped their political messaging on their follow-up record *Less Talk, More Rock*.

Inspired by Gerfried Ambrosch's treatment of Propagandhi's "Rock for Sustainable Capitalism," this dissertation too will provide an example of how Propagandhi's lyrics can be both clunky prose that appear to favor content over form, yet in song flourish with poetic elements.[14] Since we are now acquainted with Chris' upbringing on the Royal Canadian Air Force Base just south of Portage, let's see how his story appears in song. The following are the lyrics to "I Was A Pre-Teen Mccarthyist" from *Less Talk, More Rock*:

> At Harold Edward's Elementary you pay respect to Our God, Our Flag, Our Military. In grade three I had a written composition about the global threat of communism. And I was the luckiest 8-year-old McCarthyist of 1979. I spent spring break on the flight line of a base in the Carolinas where the U.S. version of my dad had signed us in. And twelve years later, the Gatling I'd touched was strapped to the nose of a U.S. A-10, separated flesh from bone and honed its skills on "lesser humans." And thus confirmed the suspicions earned in the seven years preceding about the lies I was told and if the truth be known, I'm probably better off believing (well, they said I'm better off believing… some-how-better off believing). But how could they do this to me? Born headfirst and brought up ankle deep. And maybe you're a lot like me, identified for 14 years without a

[14] Ambrosch p.34

> choice. Terrified the morning you woke up and realized that if and when you jump ship, you either swim for shore or drown. Don't let the fuckers drag you down.

To sing this song in a lyrical or poetic form will require one of punk's favorite tricks, enjambment. This is when a completed lyric or phrase doesn't end with the expected end of the musical sequence, often the measure. Enjambment breaks this expectation by continuing the unfinished lyrics into the next measure of the song. Re-arranging the lyrics will show enjambment in action in "I was a Pre-teen Mccarthyist." Notice that many of the rhymes are within the same sentences above, but in song, are patterned out to end the musical phrase. I encourage the reader to put the needle on the record (or stream it) and follow along:

At Harold Edward's Elemen**tary**
you pay respect to Our God, Our Flag, Our Mili**tary.**

In grade th**ree** I had a written compos**ition**
about the global threat of communi**sm.**

And I was the lucki**est**
8-year-old McCarth**yist**

of 197**9**:
I spent spring break on the flight **line**

of a base in the Carol**inas**-
the U.S. version of my dad had s**igned us**

(signed us in)

And 12 years l**ater**,
the Gatling I'd touched

that was strapped to the **nose** of a U.S. **A-10**,
separ**ate**d flesh from **bone**
and **honed** its skills on "lesser humans".

And **thus** con**firmed**
the suspi**cions earned** in the 7 years preceding

about the lies I was **told**
and if the truth be **known**,

I'm probably better off **believing**
(well, they said I'm better off **believing**…
somehowbetter off **believing**).

But how could they do this to **me**?
Born headfirst and brought up ankle **deep**.

And maybe you're a lot like **me**
identi**fied** for 14 years without a choice.
Terrified the morning you woke up and **realized**
that if and when you jump ship,
you either swim for shore or **drown**.
Don't let the fuckers drag you **down**.

Chris successfully manipulates the form of his dense prose and masterfully uses some tools often found in punk to present the lyrics in a more compelling poetic fashion. As shown sentences are split in order to end with rhymes. This is a beautiful example showing youth that poetry can be fun and manageable. Forget what your teacher told you about Shakespeare.

"America's Army™ (Die Jugend Marschiert)"
Potemkin City Limits. 2005

"America's Army" is one of those songs that could easily be categorized into every Propagandhi writing device. This song offers multiple layers of meaning. It is not only about how the military industrial complex manipulates youth into signing up, but it also represents how there are other "trojan horses" that people allow into their homes via the television, or more recently through their smart phones and computers. This song also has all the hallmarks of Propagandhi's humor with its biting satirical look at the institutional mechanisms of the public relations arm of the military branches. It also uses a musical breakdown to signal a shift in the

narrative. It's also a masterclass in telling a story from an outsider perspective. However, observe how Chris takes a very dry and structured narrative or speech into a flowing song:

> Welcome to the offices of Economic and Manpower Analyses here at our historic and sprawling West Point Academy campus! My name is Mindy! It is my distinct pleasure to introduce you to a loving father of three (and a champion of the sanctioned use of armed force in pursuit of policy objectives). Ladies and gentlemen, put your hands together for the project director of our newest recruitment strategy; our mission to staff future combat systems through current technologies. Without any further ado, I give to you Colonel Casey Wardynski!
>
> (warm applause)
>
> Thank you! Let me begin with some sentimental appeals to our national myths; assorted clichés coined by the state; the ideological shorthand meant to sweep your private doubts away of this virtual training course. This portal; this Trojan Horse that you living idiots paid for and actually uploaded to your own kids' rooms.
>
> (stunned silence)
>
> Oops, did I just say that out loud? Oh, well, it's not like it's something new. It's just the logical extension of the decades of bilge water that you've let us pump into your homes. The pink noise that hums away in the background while you run the gauntlet we force on you every day. The billowing candy floss that helps to soften the blow. Deep down you've always known that your children already belong to us, so why don't you cut the outraged parent routine, shut your mouth and get back in your seat. Your children already belong to us. What are you? You will pass on. And they won't know a fucking thing but this 'community,' this real life Ender's Game. Forget what you think you know.

This song is a dream to explore with Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. However, I simply want to point out the incredible song structure. The song begins with a moderator introducing a speaker. On the surface, it's nearly unimaginable that anyone could sings these in a moving matter. Rather than performing the same operation as above with the song, "I was a pre-teen Mccarthyist," I encourage the reader to find ways to parse through this introduction to find ways to create a poetic form with matching meter and rhyme. Consider this a possibility a

teacher could do in a classroom. Rather than having students write poems from scratch, see how they can manipulate texts into poems.

The brief interlude with the "warm applause" signals a narrative shift and our guest speaker, Carl, takes over at the podium. With humor, Chris doesn't continue the charade which Mindy began in her introduction. In what seems to be Chris' daydream that somebody would actually speak the truth, Carl expresses his true motivations and shows how the system works. After Carl lets the proverbial cat out of the bag, a long musical break begins as if it's allowing the audience to soak in what just took place. Then the song concludes with Carl's realization that he spoke without filters but stands by it. Even though, this could be Chris' beliefs projected through Carl's perspective, it makes this section more powerful. Unlike earlier albums, the listener won't get a sense that Chris or Propagandhi is preaching to them. It's almost like getting the feeling that we're witnessing an admission of guilt caught on camera. We're not actually getting insight into how Chris thinks, but how unscrupulous characters in public relations feel about manipulating the truth.

Personal Narrative: The value in "I"

Propagandhi are adept at writing songs from outside perspective. They may give voice to the marginalized and oppressed by situating songs around their lives from their standpoints. Propagandhi has also on numerous occasions positions the narrative from the standpoint of the perpetrator or the oppressor. However, some of the most stirring songs are from the first-person perspective of the singer. For example, this dissertation explored the song "Potemkin City Limits" which follows the escape of Francis, the pig from a slaughterhouse. Two albums later, on *Victory Lap*, Chris provides us with a first-person narrative of the events, such as going on a hunting trip as a child, that brought him to loving animals, and having enough empathy to change

his lifestyle to veganism. By shifting to this perspective, Propagandhi isn't forcing their beliefs on the listener, they are simply giving a moving account for the rationale behind their choice to defend exploited animals. The following example is one of my favorite Propagandhi songs because it helped me begin to challenge my understanding of the role of masculinity in my life. Chris won't preach or judge the listener. It's a first-hand account of his journey into feminism and his epiphanies regarding gender and sexuality.

"Refusing to be a Man"
Less Talk More Rock, 1996

> *I'm not going to try to tell you that I'm different from all the rest. I've been subject to the same de-structure of desire, and I've felt the same effects; I'm a hetero-sexist tragedy. And potential rapists all are we. But don't tell me this is natural. This is nurturing. And there's a difference between sexism and sexuality. I had different desires prior to my role-remodeling. And at six years of age, you don't challenge their claims. You become the same. (Or withdraw from the game and hang your head in shame). I think that's exactly what I did. I tried to sever the connections between me and them. I fought against their further attempts to convince a kid that birthright can bestow the power to yield the subordination of women, and do you know what patricentricity means? I found out just a couple of days/months/years/minutes ago. It means male values uber alles and hey! Whaddaya know… sex has been distorted and vilified. I'm scared of my attraction to body types. If everything desired is objectified, then maybe eroticism needs to be redefined. And I refuse to be a "man."*

After John K. Samson gave Chris a copy of John Stoltenberg's *Refusing to be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice*, Chris began to remodel his views on sexism. This song reflects those early moments where a new way of thinking was beginning to emerge. It's very interesting to see how often Chris uses the first-person pronoun. There are 17 instances of either first person case (whether singular/plural, or in subject/object/possessive cases). The moments that use second person, you, use this in the general sense in which arguably the first person also resides. This helps the listener put down their guards. In doing so, they might find moments they relate with. For example, the first time I heard this song, I was struck by the anti-slogan, "I refuse to be a

man." I had grown up with the catchphrase or slogan, "Be a man!" So immediately, just by being struck with a spin on what I accepted to be a standard refrain, I was drawn into the song. That begins to question all of your inner motivations regarding sexuality and sex. Why am I attracted to certain girls? Is this my innate desire, or has it been molded by external factors.[15]

By relying on the first-person narrative, Chris is not telling his listeners to do anything. He is the one who is vulnerable and perhaps you just might relate. He is modeling an experience that he's going through. He has stated, he knew nothing about feminism, and really didn't know much about feminism when he wrote this song. Which is one major reason for labeling the band as pro-feminist, because they were insightful enough to know they didn't have the right to call themselves feminists but wanted to convey their support.

To conclude, what might teachers be able to learn from this lesson? When I was a kid, I thought teachers, and especially subjects in school were immutable and fixed. Knowledge had been cemented into textbooks and teachers knew everything front to back. I wouldn't fathom that a teacher's beliefs would ever change. I didn't seem them as complicated beings who could still be influenced by new ideas. Perhaps then, teachers could allow themselves to be more vulnerable. They should express their doubts, express their fears, and perhaps the students will begin to relate.

Humor: Subversion through Laughter

Although Propagandhi songs are generally heavy in content and significance, the band has always brought a lightness and sense of humor to their project. The earlier albums and demo contain crass drawings and jokes that Chris felt were funny. He simply enjoyed the sloppy

[15] Robert Jensen in his book *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity*, discusses how porn cultures shapes the sexual preferences of young men, and which contribute to porn culture.

scribblings one might see on the sides of student's notebook. Sometimes these jokes are literally etched into vinyl. On a special episode of Unscripted Moments: A podcast about Propagandhi, special guest Todd Congelerie recalled the time when Chris visited California to help produce Propagandhi's 7-inch vinyl record on Recess Records called *Where Quality is Job #1*. At the pressing plant, Chris etched some drawings onto the master plates. Along with the message, "Hi jord!" is a stick figure leaning over to far, while the other record has a penis. You'll need to maneuver the discs in the right light to be able to see these drawings clearly. In addition to this playful way of making a center label, Chris also messed up one of the tracks to permanently skip. I guess they thought it would be funny to frustrate fans a bit.

However, this humor also finds its way into the songs. It's evident in the music for "The Only Good Fascist is a Very Dead Fascist"[16] where the bass bounces between octaves creating a very silly, almost cartoonish energy while the guitars repeat a four note climb that repeats over and over to create a monotonous yet dizzying feel especially. The music supports the mocking the mocking that happens within the lyrics. Often the band shows their humor in sounds bites, whether it's the odd conclusion to the *How to Clean Everything* that's an acapella outro of the band just saying "Fuck" over and over. What of my personal favorites is the introduction to "Human(e) Meat (The Flensing of Sandor Katz)" that begins with the sound of a saw working through something hard, and we hear Jord scream in pain, "Ah! My arm!"

One of the more brilliant uses of music to mock is, "A Public Dis-service Announcement from Shell" where a friend reads an excerpted from a Shell Corporation press release in 1995 responding to claims of exploitative practices. Propagandhi do not alter the content of the press release, but simply support the spoken word with music, like "The Only Good Fascist is a Very

[16] On *Less Talk, More Rock*, 1996

Dead Fascist" that brings to mind silly music one might hear at an old carnival or fair. This juxtaposition through humor is able to shine a line on the absurdity and hypocrisy of Shell's statement.

Humor is one of Propagandhi's greatest tools to not only allow the listener to relax and enjoy life, even if the world can be very unjust, but Propagandhi also use humor to make their points stronger, such as in the examples above. There are examples on every album, too many to provide here. However, some of my favorites include the band awkwardly singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" as if in church to open their song "Natural Disasters."[17] I always get a smile when Jord proclaims that Chris, "still has zits!" in "The Banger's Embrace."[18] Propagandhi has found a wonderful way to balance their Hidden Curriculum.

Confrontation: In your face and violent

In the 1990s, Propagandhi was known to be an abrasive and confrontational band. Their live performances were known to be contentious as the band would often row back and forth with the audience. One of their more infamous live shows was recorded in June 1995 at the Gilman in Berkeley, California. This show spread across the underground scene as the bootleg recording, *Curse of the MTV Punks*[19]. In this recording, Propagandhi goes back and forth with the audience in between songs. At one point, the band allows the audience to grab the mic for an "open-mic" session to air grievances. Propagandhi, believing the audience was mostly made up of youth privileged teens who had only recently learned about punk and Gilman from an MTV special, constantly berated the audience for their privileged lives spent watching cable television.

[17] on *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes*, 2001
[18] on *Supporting Caste*, 2009
[19] Propagandhi. *Curse of the MTV Punks*. [CD] Wentworth Records. 1995. At the moment, the direct recording can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oE3PzcYNrQQ Uploaded by OaklandCory who made the original soundboard recording.

This confrontation did not only exist in the live show setting. Earlier Propagandhi songs contain much more violent and confrontational imagery. Although the band has regrets about much of this, it still may have served a purpose to rattle some youth into recognizing the brutality of oppressive systems.

Propagandhi often expressed a desire to harm people who abused their power. Later we have seen them move away from this tactic. For example, recall how Propagandhi portrayed the police in Indonesia who were brutalizing punk youth. They didn't call for violence. However, in the 1993 song "Pigs Will Pay," Propagandhi make a clear statement that harm should come to police, "And you pigs will pay in a big way. You'll pay for the guns you've used, the minorities you've abused, you'll pay for the blood you've spilled and the innocent people you've killed." These are just the sentiments that can push youth to protest in the streets. In many ways, expressing can galvanize people into action. Going even further, Propagandhi expressed joy at an officer who was killed during the Oka Crisis in the song, "Oka Everywhere." The song begins, "The best thing I ever saw on TV was that S.Q. cop catching a bullet with his teeth. Condolence, madame canadiana, but your husband was a fucking stuck pig." When I first heard this line, I loved it. I didn't feel empathy for the fallen officer of his family. It felt as though justice was served. In the Systemic Destruction compilation 7" record, Propagandhi provide an acoustic version of "Oka Everywhere" and within the liner notes with the lyrics is an essay by John K. Samson entitled "Why I Smiled When a White Boy Died." The essay describes the racism that John observed in Winnipeg and explains why he felt solidarity with those effected in Oka. When I spoke with John, he didn't remember writing the essay, and wishes he wasn't so callous about the death of cop.

In addition, Chris no longer feels the same. In his podcast he stated, “I just wish I could have another chance at that first line, 30 years later. Just being flippant about someone being killed doesn’t sit well with me now. It’s too much for me now. I mean, I understand where it came from and why I wrote it that way, but there’s a part of me that just sees a callous, young, idiot.” In fact, we see this discourse shift when Chris takes on the perspective of a police officer watching Quang Duc immolate himself during the American war in Vietnam in the 2017 song, “Cop Just Out of Frame.” He humanizes the cop, even if that copy can’t live up to the ideals of Quang Duc.

Conclusion to song analysis

The chapter included some of the musical practices that support Propagandhi’s Hidden Curriculum. One of the biggest difficulties I had was categorizing certain songs into only one theme even though that song may utilize multiple techniques. There also needed to be some balance considering Propagandhi have written well over one hundred songs in their career. Every song has a story to tell and can add to this dissertation. However, it wouldn’t be manageable to utilize a deep analysis of every song. Fortunately, the following chapter continues the song analysis as textual or lyrical analysis. Therefore, what I felt pained to omit in Chapter Five, finds a new home in Chapter Six. If there is a lesson here, it is that one can never stop exploring Propagandhi songs and excavating for lyrical and sonic treasures.

CHAPTER SIX: A HIDDEN CURRICULUM

The influence of education and schooling mostly pervades the early years of the Propagandhi discography. They often critiqued school from the disgruntled student perspective. School, it seems, is just a necessary evil so ingrained in a youth's life. However, beyond a few generalized critiques and an overall ennui with school that paints some lyrics and album liner notes, Propagandhi hasn't expressed anything specific about their own experiences. Like most punks, education is simply blown off. In a 2001 interview in the zine *Hit List*, Jord sums up his high school experience, "High school's just such a fucked up time for everybody." (Hit List, May/June 2001, p37). On the back cover of Propagandhi's 1993 seven-inch vinyl *How to Clean a Couple O'Things*, is a typed note from John Samson retelling a disheartening exchange with his former shops teacher who said, "You aren't very smart... And you aren't serious about what's important, When are you gunna grow up." The cover of their 1995 seven inch *Where Quality is Job #1* has a black and white image from 1996 of Jord with a drawn on mohawk and hand drawn punk pins imposed on his jacket. He's standing in front of school lockers with a smug smile. On the back cover is a note from John to Chris about how summer has been going. The letter has the innocence and form of a pen pal letter we often are trained to write in elementary school. However, the hand drawn image of two boys sitting at their desks in schools with their private parts dangling cuts through the innocence of the letter. This record also contains the song "Hidden Curriculum." This is a fast punk song that levels a standardized form of hidden curriculum that limits student creativity and passion. Propagandhi's 1993 album *How to Clean Everything* contains songs with school as the context or setting. The lyric, "I'll never pledge allegiance" opened some listeners' eyes that it may be possible to not recite the Pledge of Allegiance at School. Greg Soden of the *Unscripted Moments* podcast shares this revelation in

his episode on the Propagandhi song, “Stick the Fucking Flag up Your Goddam Ass, You Sonofabitch#” On the same album, the song “This Might be Satire” revolves around a high school student whose romantic poetics turn into an aggressive satire of rape culture and the objectification of women. Here we have a critique of campus climate that goes well beyond curriculum. It brings up issues that were in fact happening around high schools in America at the time. For example, in a town neighboring mine, news broke in early 1993 that students were keeping score of the women they slept with. This push for points led some boys to be accused of rape.[1]

Less Talk, More Rock’s catchy anthem “I Was a Pre-teen McCarthyist” opens with the lyrics, “At Harold Edward’s Elementary you pay respect to Our God, Our Flat, Our Military. In grade 3, I had a written composition about the global threat of communism.” Lead singer Chris Hannah’s experience living on and attending school at an air force base reverberates through much of the Propagandhi catalog, and his childhood memory of having his own safe and private space on the base is the foundation of the 2012 song, “Devil’s Creek” on *Failed States*. However, schooling and classroom experience wane in the later catalog. Todd Kowalki’s song on 2001 *Today’s Empires, Tomorrow’s Ashes* entitled “March of the Crabs” is a narrative that chronicles the excitement of an after-school fight between two boys. The lyrical power is aimed to recount the danger and thrill of a big event such as a fight out in the prairies, but it subtly shows how irrelevant and non-exciting school was. The children become alive and galvanized to experience life, “We stood our ground waiting for the fight to begin… Get the caskets ready, we’re going to tear right through this city.” However, the song concluded, “The fight never happened.” Yet for all of those involved, “Mission accomplished.” It is in my interviews that I

[1]https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/23/us/7-of-9-california-youths-are-freed-in-a-case-of-having-sex-for-points.html

try to fill in some of the implied gaps. For example, what kind of lesson would have made students excited or accomplished? Although Propagandhi playfully and skillfully engage with the topic of compulsory education from multiple perspectives, the interviews allow a reflexivity on their experience that they have yet to share in their songs, album notes, or interviews.

The following sections outline the composition of Propagandhi's Hidden Curriculum. We discover the tools, methods, and rationale that drive the curriculum. We discover what skills are needed to critically engage the world and the word. We also conclude with Propagandhi fan vignettes that show the impact of Propagandhi's body of work. To start Chapter Six, I begin with an exploration of the concept of Hidden Curriculum by an exploration of Propagandhi's song, "Hidden Curriculum"

"Hidden Curriculum" by Propagandhi

I first heard this song in 1998 when I bought *Where Quantity is Job #1*. This compilation of rare and live Propagandhi songs was released by the band's own label, G7 Welcoming Committee in 1998 to help grow the label. For many it's an unremarkable album, but for me it played a special role as it was the first "new" Propagandhi record I ever bought. It also served to fill in a gap between Propagandhi's two studio releases from 1996 and 2001. Although there are many tracks that I adore, "Hidden Curriculum" seems to have fallen through the cracks. Perhaps being the last song on the record didn't help its cause. However, it serves as a useful signpost in Propagandhi's story, especially as it relates to schooling. Although this is a forgettable song to even the band, it's a testament to their insight as young musicians.[2] Remarkably, this song that has fallen out of memory from the beginning of Propagandhi's discography, I argue will go on to

[2] In my interviews with Chris, Jord, and John, they don't really recall this song. In fact, in Chris Hannah's Patreon episode on the *Fuck the Scene* demo, where this song originally appeared, Chris failed to mention the song when he read off the cassette's track listing.

inform their entire 30-year project: challenging schools' hidden curriculum by providing their very own counter hidden curriculum.

The song begins with an opening line, "knowledge dispels fear!" At first glance, it could be easy to assume this is an empowering slogan. It is very close to "knowledge is power" and this is something rarely disputed, if ever. However, "knowledge dispels fear!" is a slogan from the Canadian Royal Air Force. This is surely something Chris encountered while in school on the air force base in Portage la Prairie. In this context, this slogan could have a darker side as it's likely meant to show that knowledge in military tactics and weapons will make one safe during combat. Chris acknowledges this in the following lyrics, "yeah, i hear you loud and clear, just take note of where it's from. a reliable source? or educated by force in this hidden curriculum?" Chris recognizes the hidden curriculum, but how can we better understand it? What are the varied dimensions of a hidden curriculum? Elizabeth Valiance states:

> (1) Hidden curriculum can refer to any of the contexts of schooling, including the teacher student-teacher interaction…classroom structure, the whole organizational pattern of the educational establishment as a microcosm of the social value system.
> (2) Hidden curriculum can bear on a number of processes operating in or through schools, including values acquisition, socialization, and maintenance of class structure.
> (3) Hidden curriculum can embrace differing degrees of intentionality and depth of hiddenness…ranging from unintended by-products of curricular arrangements to outcomes more deeply embedded in the historical social function of education.[3]

First, how does Propagandhi's song can shine light on these three aspects? Next, how can we maneuver this understanding to support the conclusion that Propagandhi have their own hidden curriculum throughout their body of work? Does a hidden curriculum always imply a negative

[3] Henry A. Giroux and David E. Purpel, *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education: deception or discovery?* (Berkeley, Calif.: McCutchan Pub. Corp., 1983)., 10-11.

form of indoctrination, or can Propagandhi re-appropriate hidden curriculum and utilize it for a force for good, serving the aims of social justice with compassion and empathy?

Clearly, Chris recognized the military context of the school and classroom. After having visited Portage la Prairie, it isn't very difficult to see how the air force base has permeated the culture of the town. Throughout the town were monuments of old fighter jets raised upon monolithic supports to give the appearance of the jet in flight. An allegiance to country and military is palpable, and likely drove some lyrical inspiration from some of Chris' other lyrics that push back on these narratives, "I never have and never will pledge allegiance."[4] Or more clearly, Chris defines this culture at school, "At Harold Edward's Elementary you pay respect to Our God, Our Flag, Our Military. In grade 3 I had a written composition about the global threat of communism."[5]

A photo of the Golden Centennaires T-33 at the former Royal Canadian Air Force base from my trip to Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, October 15, 2021

[4] "Showdown (Greenest Eyes/Preamble)" from *How to Clean Everything*, 1993
[5] "I was a Pre-Teen Mccarthyist" from *Less Talk, More Rock*, 1996

Returning to the song "Hidden Curriculum," we can also see Valiance's second dimension of hidden curriculum, "obey all day and back from lunch by one." There is an intriguing aspect of socialization within this simple line. On one hand, there's the lesson to obey, which also harkens back to obedience to military authority; however, there's a glimpse into a type of freedom many youths had at school. Students were able to leave campus at lunch. In all my interviews with the band members, they all could leave campus at lunch. I wasn't this lucky when I was in school, so I can only imagine the sense of reprieve a student could get by leaving the world of school behind for an hour. Perhaps there was an unintentional consequence of bestowing a sense of agency or independence on students with this policy.

Lastly, Valiance's third dimension of the hidden curriculum strikingly appears at the end of Propagandhi's "Hidden Curriculum" song as perhaps an unintentional exasperation, "i'm dumb." What did the hidden curriculum ultimately teach Chris? One by-product of a question/answer education system that often closely resembles a quiz show, is that many students will feel left out. Former Propagandhi guitarist David "The Beaver" Guillas pointed this out in our email exchange, "I had many peers that struggled, that thought they were dumb. They weren't dumb at all, but the education system made them feel dumb. They had talents that weren't recognized. That is a failure, in my opinion—a failure of the education system." It's likely these lessons stick with many people as the hidden curriculum operates in the background. It's likely a young Propagandhi recognized Valiance's first two dimensions of hidden curriculum but failed to recognize the third. Yet, the Propagandhi project will go on to lift up their fans, encourage them to improve their lives by showing things are possible if you work hard. You don't have to be born a genius or with talent. Those are myths. As trite as it may sound, if you work hard, you can succeed.

The back cover of the insert inside the vinyl release for the 20th anniversary release of *How to Clean Everything* contains a wonderful collage that includes Propagandhi concert flyers with many having that notable childish aesthetic.[6]

Propagandhi's influence stretches beyond guitar chords and song lyrics. Their themes and messaging are also found within album art, show flyers, band t-shirt designs, and album liner notes which include drawings, essays, and jokes. In music scholarship, a paratext refers to any

[6] Album Art courtesy of Fat Wreck Chords. San Francisco, California.

text or material that surrounds a musical work but is not a part of the music itself, such as liner notes, album covers, titles, or promotional materials. These paratexts are often used to provide context, interpretive cues, or marketing information to audiences, and can shape the reception and interpretation of the music.[7] This can be observed in the many provocative band T-shirts that Propagandhi has sold on their tours and online. In addition, concert flyers also contain a theme and aesthetic that contributes to Propagandhi's message. These flyers not only capture the historical records of concerts taking place, but they also show a shift in a band's aesthetics. This section begins with a photo of a collage used on the record *How to Clean Everything*. It's possible to see a few different shifts in Propagandhi's aesthetic. Sometimes the band's name is written in a font similar to metal bands, while sometimes it has the energy of a child doodling on their book cover.

Propagandhi's message used to be spread in interviews for punk zines, while today this is more frequently done in podcasts. Perhaps the most significant paratext is the album sleeve which contains the album cover art, lyrics, essays, and drawings. For many fans, simply reading through a Propagandhi album is an experience all on its own. Fan survey participant Victoria pointed this out, "I could just have the liner notes and lyric sheet and be just fine. The music is the icing on the cake." It would be interesting to see future studies see what is lost when youth engage with music solely through online distribution and no longer have physical albums.

Some research for this dissertation included going through hundreds of zines from the 90s and early 2000s in search of Propagandhi content. There are bright moments exploring zines when it appears as though the punk stars align. Sometimes these searches bore no fruit, while

[7] Kivy, Peter. "Paratext and Genre in Popular Music." In *Music, Text, and Meaning: Collected Essays and Articles*, 191-204. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007.

other times little treasures emerged. Often an old advertisement would be a spark of joy as it wasn't only nostalgic, but a reminder for how youth used to find new bands. Today, it would appear as though algorithms deployed on streaming services are the current means to finding new bands. I'd argue some agency is lost when one doesn't feel as though they "found" a new artist or band. Returning to the zines, some of these little treasures I found include finding Fat Wreck Chords' first ad to promote Propagandhi's first full-length album, *How to Clean Everything*. Fat Mike wrote the description of the time Propagandhi opened for NOFX at the Royal Albert in Winnipeg.

Maximum RockNRoll #125, October 1993

Another golden nugget I found was an ad placed in *Maximum Rocknroll* for a bassist shortly after John left the band. Not even Chris remembers placing this ad, and he couldn't tell me anything about it. If you were a fan reading that Propagandhi was searching for a bassist, all you could do is speculate. Where'd John go? Will they keep Todd? This is how mystery creates myth and urban legends. This is much harder to do in today's digital information age.

Having many different textual forms found in one zine elevates the zine's importance for this research. So, unearthing *Punk Planet* issue 3 from Sept/Oct 1994 was a brilliant find. This zine not only contains an interview with Propagandhi, a Recess Records ad for the Propagandhi and I-Spy split 10", and a review for this split record, it also has some historical significance. Also featured in this zine is Jawbreaker, who John K. Samson told me was one of his top three bands of all time. Connecting even more dots, John's replacement on bass, Todd Kowalksi, has his former band I-Spy reviewed in this issue.

Finally, this issue's theme weaves with this dissertation as it is *Punk Planet*'s "Back to Skool" issue. This issue has a two-page article on student's rights. It seems the early issues of *Punk Planet* use *Maximum RockNRoll* as a template. However, it is interesting to note that Maximum RocknRoll's Issue 174 from November 1997 followed *Punk Planet* with their own education special (although much more insightful and in-depth than *Punk Planet*). Interestingly this *MRR* education issue has a mention of Propagandhi as well as an advertisement from G7 Welcoming Committee, Chris and Jord's own record label.

Publishing: G7 Welcoming Committee

Chris, Jord, and John began what would become G7 Welcoming Committee in 1994 with their homemade release split CD of Propagandhi and Todd Kowalski's band, I-Spy. They also released a split with Painted Thin and John K. Samson's solo work. However, it took a few more years for the label to find its name and take on a larger roster of artists. Chris explains, "Around 1997, we just thought we should do [G7 Welcoming Committee] for real, do a better job of it. And maybe thinking about how we should do our own records."[8] The label was able to release

[8] Birnie, Sheldon. *Missing Like Teeth: An oral history of Winnipeg underground rock 1990-2001*. Eternal Cavalier Press. 2015. p146.

The Weakerthans (John's new band after departing Propagandhi) debut album. The proceeding section is Jord and Chris' recollections of their time with G7, which closed its doors in 2008.

Jord speaks on his time with G7 Welcoming Committee

When you're working on different things, you're pulled in a bunch of different directions. And that's been my life. It went from school to work, to pay off school, to working with the band and trying to do proper amounts of touring to support records as we're feeling our way through that. There were different episodes where I would take part-time work, and eventually in the later 90s, we started our own record label. That just opened up a new era of new cans of worms. We struggled at that project for three years of volunteer labor, and at that point we were sort of eking out a low paid existence. We could work; we could live off the band to an extent. We were in our late 20s. We didn't have vehicles and stuff like that, but we didn't care. We were paying a meager amount every month to get by.

We created something that was interesting and fun to work on, at times, but over the progression, as it started getting bigger, and we needed to spend more time on the band getting closer to our *Today's Empires* phase of the record with Todd joining, we were so spread thin that it was just unbelievable! Looking at those day timers from '98 to 2001, we were ridiculously overcommitted on so many areas, and I think we really overdid it; we spread ourselves so thin, and there were issues within that record label project with another [member], it was a three-way project. It originally existed in an underground, super DIY phase with Chris doing a couple of limited-edition things. It was very single project intensive kind of stuff. Then, when we decided to take it above ground and working with a whole bunch of different bands and trying to do it in an above-the-table capacity, we really committed to it being around for a while, and then one of the guys we started the project with, he sort of just quit on us at a very inopportune moment

right before we were getting ready to release *Today's Empires*. There was just too much shit going on, and to do that responsibly, we were basically working days at that job and doing mail order in the morning and trying to do administrative stuff and everything else that needed to happen in the afternoon.

At that point, we were practicing where I was living and going straight over there and jamming and trying to hammer out a record; it was just fucked! So, that continued on. I stayed with that project until about 2003. We had managed to make it into something that could pay almost a minimum wage for a couple of years, but then, for a number of reasons, I wasn't interested in pursuing that project anymore. That's just a whole other can of worms right there.

But basically, I went from that point and into another activist project that didn't involve any mail order component, or following up with distributors, or record stores, or any of that kind of stuff. There's no material component to it at all. And I felt like getting out into something else that was outside of music and more community based. I left G7 and ended up in this activist project for a few years after that, and then that coincided with the band not being active for a while, after we did our fourth record [*Potemkin*], and I had to take on a job at that point, working in group homes. That kind of went on for a few years, and then the band started going again and all of a sudden, I'm balancing three and a half shifts a week at this job, doing an activist project, and then we're writing our fifth album [*Supporting Caste*] and trying to go with that. It's been just these endless sets of circumstances pushing and pulling you in different directions and never really actually having a clear picture of how long the band is going to go on for, different iterations of the band [Beave, Sulynn] and different timeframes and, all of a sudden, shit, you're 50 years old! And what comes next?

Every time we were in a creative phase and making music and stuff like that, I was just getting slammed on different fronts and different things and making the band operate. I wanted to play my instrument well. The amount of practice time we spent as a band was above average from what I understand of other bands that we played with on the road over the years. We practiced a lot; we prepped a lot with our stuff and the music side of it took up quite a bit of time and a lot of effort. We performed largely as a group that was not really managed by outside paid managers or anything like that. A lot of the nuts and bolts stuff fell into my lap, and I was fine with that, just rolling with the song writing, taking a lot of time in the practice space and hammering out a lot of ideas, talking with each other, and just practicing 4,5,6 times a week and having our activist side represented here and there, with the different projects that we did over the years, with the different albums, having some of our interests represented in those capacities. But that in a nutshell, is what my role has been in the band since the start and kind of the other circumstances in my life that came into play over the last 25 years.

It wasn't all pain in the ass. A lot of the pain in the ass side of it was the slow realization that we had gotten into a recording industry at a time when the digital world was unfolding and the funding of those sorts of organizations were just bottoming out completely. It wasn't an easy haul that's for sure. The more we took on, the more work it was. Eventually, we had a good stable run once we had a couple of really awesome people join the project, and it worked pretty good for a while. Ultimately, thinking back to those days when we'd come in, we bit off more than we could chew.

When we were dealing with Fat Wreck Chords, they allowed us to do our own sales in Canada, which we felt we could pull off. It's just a handful of distributors for the whole country, apparently independent distributors, back then. We can do our own mail order up here and a lot

of people from the States basically chose to just get it directly from us, and at that point, the exchange rate was at record high almost in the favor of the US dollar. So, we were selling these cheap records up in Canada. And that's what basically made it a feasible thing for a while, but we were sort of overwhelmed with all this task work of sending out one CD in the mail. At the time, we had these bins of mail going out every day, but the fun part of it was every time we sold a Ward Churchill book or Michael Albert book or something like that. We had a lot of AK Press titles and a couple other publishing houses. We had books that we featured and William Blum books talking about US State terror and stuff like that. And every time I'd stick one of those books in the envelope off with one the other bands on G7 or something like that, I felt like, "OK Yeah! This feels like all the compromises and all the stuff is worth it." I always got a kick out of that.

We joined Smallman Records and though that's the end of G7. Smallman Records did *Supporting Caste*, our fifth album. Up until that point we'd just done Fat Wreck Chords, and we left to be on a Canadian label with a bunch of different considerations around that. But over the course of the next three years, it was Smallman in Canada and about five other labels around the world doing their respective parts, and a lot of those outfits had folded, like the whole thing was tanking. And it seemed like "holy shit" we tried to go that route and that caved in, so by the time we decided to do another record, we were fully reassessing again, and we ended up with Epitaph who, like Fat, have done a good job with our comfort level that we've given them on stuff that we'll work with them on. Everything's regular and pretty upfront, honest and straightforward. One of the death knells to G7 was this realization the whole label thing is going down, and we had to learn the hard way the reality of a very structured and tiered existence for independent labels. At that time, since people could see what other bands were selling, we worked to a point

where our record label was dependent on Propagandhi B-side projects and the Weakerthans. The whole thing revolved around those two sources of income. At a certain point Epitaph just saw what the Weakerthans were selling and made them an offer that I could never blame them for taking, but it's something that G7 could never muster ourselves. After all of that effort and all those years of it being a labor of love and putting time into it, eventually, you're starting to get a little stable, and then it's just like, "Oh that band, they're doing much better than average. Make them an offer." And you're basically like a minor league team farming product for the majors.

Propagandhi and the written word:

"I always feel like Chris' handwriting was a huge part of the aesthetic, part of the band; it's immediately recognizable. I really like super kitchen table collage stuff. It's good stuff."
--John K. Samson, Interview #3, 2021

Whether handwritten or meticulously typed, the printed word plays a vital role in the Propagandhi story. Originally hand-written, the first albums had wonderfully chaotic liners notes. They contained the lyrics, they contained doodles and drawings, they had jokes, and extra epigrams. They were writing in the margins, upside down and sideways. It forced the listener to be tactile with the album sleeve. We would have to spin it, flip, and draw it closer to our eyes to read the smaller inscriptions. It made owning the record an even more worthwhile experience. It arguably even created an intimacy which perhaps helped us bond with the band even more. By the time *Less Talk, More Rock* went into production, the lyrics were overflowing, and the band had decided to add extra essays on relevant social issues. From a layout standpoint, this made the idea of handwriting everything difficult, so the band was forced to type everything out.[9]

[9] Chris discussed this transition with me in our third interview. It was either the label or layout designer John Yates who informed the band that the notes needed to be typed.

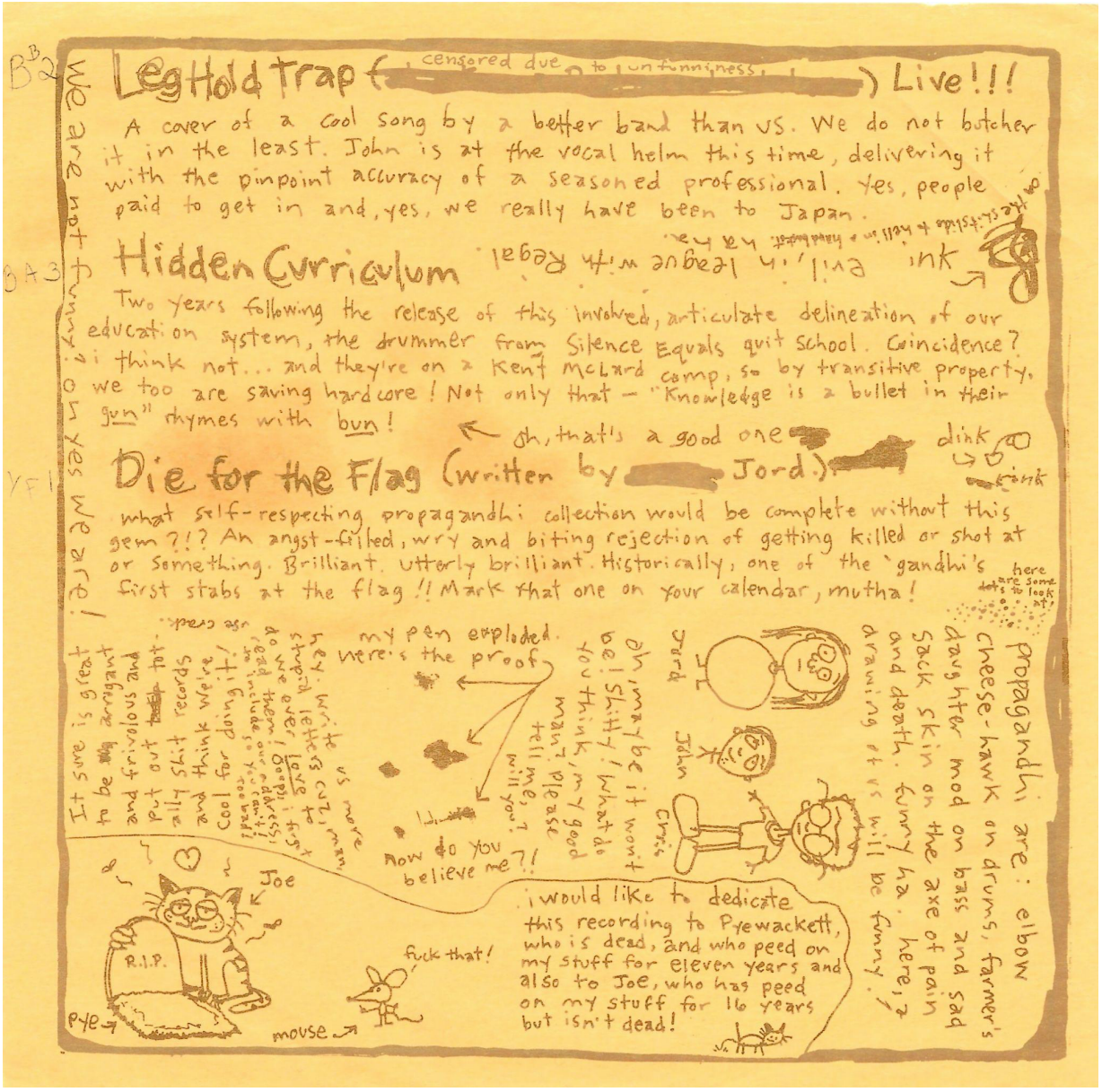
However, it opened up the possibility for longer entries. Starting from Less Talk, More Rock, the band began to insert mini essays about issues they felt passionately about. These essays were another way for fans to get acquainted with the band's "voice."

Here Todd talks about how Propagandhi's early handwritten aesthetic influenced his approach to the artwork for his records with I-Spy:

> I did like how the Propagandhi records looked handwritten. So, it's probably part of that. But it's also that I didn't, none of us had computers at the time or anything. And I didn't have a typewriter. So, I didn't really have much choice. But I did like how the Propagandhi records looked, I was like, Okay, here's something I can do with my pen on this piece of paper. So, I think the liner notes were written by me and James mostly, the drummer.

In addition to supporting the records with extra messaging on top of the lyrics. Propagandhi also passed out sheets of paper with lyrics to their songs at live shows in their early years.[10] This is not a practice I have ever experienced. Perhaps it was unique to the Winnipeg punk scene, but it does show their appreciation of the written word.

[10] While a guest on *Unscripted Moments* podcast episode 37. Lauren Corman referenced receiving printed lyrics at a show in Winnipeg. In my interview with John K. Samson, he confirmed this was an early practice that Propagandhi would occasionally do.



Propagandhi. *Where Quality is Job #1* lyric sheet. Recess Records. 1994[11]

[11] Album art courtesy of Recess Records, San Pedro, California.

Absolutely no regard for principle.
① Born. ② Hired. ③ Disposed.
display of class loyalties.
"our" leaders wrap it all up in a flag:
fucking shit-rag. Hooray!
Loving life but hating the world is what being in this band is all about. The exchange of ideas, constructive criticism and confrontation are absolutely vital if we as individuals intend to initiate or undergo any sort of genuine social/personal changes. This band and our music is the medium we have selected as the (currently) most effective means of producing and introducing critical observation and eliciting reactions. Having said all that, this band is also about having a healthy sense of humour + a good time in the face of this nightmare we call earth. Emma Goldman once said "I don't want to be part of your revolution if I can't dance." We don't want to be part of it if we can't laugh. We are dead serious about our beliefs + initiating change, but we've also got the insight to realise its' (and our) shortcomings, and satirize them... and then, hopefully, build
a few select song synopses or explanations...
Oka Everywhere

Propagandhi. *I'd Rather Be Flag-Burning*. split 10-inch with I-Spy. Recess Records. 1995.[12]

[12] Album art courtesy of Recess Records, San Pedro, California.

Bullshit Detectors

The rise of charter schools, standardized testing, metal detectors, teacher employment and pay linked to measured student achievement, common core, the school to prison pipeline, reduced funding in the arts, increase of technology, increase fear that schooling no longer leads to employment, and privatization of education among many other current problems have created a dysfunctional and unequal education system. Teachers and students have been caught up in what appears to be a dystopian nightmare straight from the pages of Orwell and Huxley. The mainstream television media is no reprieve. Mindless reality shows numb the public while most cable news continue the business of misinforming their viewers. Away from the "tube" people are becoming transfixed by their social media feeds, unable to click away, trapped by a constant barrage of entertainingly quick videos. Criticisms we see in many Propagandhi songs, and most famously in the work of Neil Postman. So, where can youth go to get the skills needed to critically read through the barrage of information that is constantly flung their direction? I found refuge in punk. More specifically, I found my way through the deluge of nonsense with Propagandhi as my guide.

There are many lenses and approaches with which one can analyze Propagandhi's contribution to learning, especially for youth. We have analyzed their lyrics, live concerts, album art and liner notes, and even podcasts to create a complete picture of their punk pedagogy. This cultural capital in punk pedagogy could be analyzed from Paulo Freire's pedagogical lens. Freirean educators could analyze the ways in which punk artists like Propagandhi challenge oppression in its many forms: sexism, racism, ableism, classism, and speciesism, among others. Educationists could also look at bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* to find the ways punk bands challenge the ruling oppressive hierarchies. However, this section utilizes the pedagogical

theories of Neil Postman. Although Postman rarely wrote about social justice education, nor were any of his stated goals to end oppression, his educational theories may be our best answer in doing so.

Known as a radical education scholar in the 1960s and 1970s until his release of *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* (1979), Neil Postman originally gained prominence with his *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1969). Perhaps Postman is most famous for his work in media studies. Postman's seminal work in media studies, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) is often required reading in many undergraduate courses in media, political science, history, communications, and journalism. Often misrepresented as a Luddite and over obsessed with books[13], Postman is becoming a forgotten education critic. Postman's work in education is missing from the canon of critical pedagogy[14].

Postman's apolitical approach to education in both of his counter balancing works, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, and *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* are extremely radical. Although Postman doesn't advocate for breaking free from specific forms of oppression, his pedagogy is just the tool for it. How is this so? Freire's seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* demonstrated new ways teachers could facilitate learning. He challenged the classroom practice that he labeled the "banking method." The banking method is a pedagogical approach where teachers attempt to input knowledge into the students. The students are seen as empty boxes waiting to be filled. Freire exposed this method for its many shortcomings, namely the lack of free thought, or the process of meaning making that students lose. Fortunately, Freire has had an effect and new teaching methodologies have risen. Consciousness-raising is one technique where teachers respond to student questions with more questions. Teachers guide students on a path to

[13] Kellner, Douglas. *Media Culture*. London: Routledge. 1995
[14] Kirylo, J. (2013). *A Critical Pedagogy of Resistance: 34 pedagogues we need to know.* Rotterdam: Sense.

discover answers on their own. This is an empowering process whereby the learning itself is focal, and the goal isn't simply to know the correct answer off hand. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, communities were able to continue this process to the point where they found their own humanity and were able to see and name the system of oppression that ruled them. This is wonderful. Neil Postman, on the other hand, goes even further. He warns that, even though teachers are raising questions, they are still leading their students to a target. In essence, the teachers are still playing a form of the banking game. Teachers that 'cover ground' to reach a 'terminal point,' even if they are invoking consciousness-raising activities, are still tied to the curriculum and the idea that the teacher knows best. Postman wants to create good learners who can approach any situation. Some of his tools include having a strong "crap-detector" as well as knowing how to ask questions. This chapter presents Postman's varieties of bullshit as well as the "Inquiry Method" especially as it relates to Propagandhi's hidden curriculum.

Because the musical analysis portion of the dissertation presented and discussed the radical themes of Propagandhi's music, this section explores further the pedagogy and hidden curriculum within that catalog through Neil Postman's pedagogical framework. Here we will see the ways in which Propagandhi model good learners by how they challenge bullshit, ask critical questions, and how they maintain a balance of ideas in the punk rock community. By using Neil Postman's educational theories, Propagandhi may be seen as a high-quality education surrogate for youth disenfranchised from today's meritocratic, standardized test-driven education system.

Crap Detecting and the Varieties of Bullshit

The ability to recognize bullshit in others and in oneself is a key skill for bettering the individual as well as society. In the liner notes to *Failed States* (2012), Propagandhi clarify the word coward in the lyrics to their song "Cognitive Suicide," "[It] refers to those who are afraid to

think, learn and look critically at themselves, not those who may hesitate, are afraid, or are too physically weak to "fight" in the traditional sense." Detecting one's own shit is just as valuable as recognizing it in others. When Hemingway was asked to identify a key trait for becoming a 'great writer,' he replied that a great writer must have a "built-in, shockproof crap detector."[15] Should this not be the function of schools? For many of us, we do not get a lesson in crap detection until we reach college and take critical thinking courses as part of our general education requirements. This is where I first became exposed to recognizing fallacies (technical term for different types of bullshit). Unfortunately, even these critical thinking courses are becoming simply watered-down versions of their more rigorous predecessor courses in Logic, also succumbing to biased perspectives. Before college, the best classes on crap detecting came from the songs of many punk rock bands. The most influential and life changing songs came from the group Propagandhi. The following sections will cover five forms of bullshit outlined in Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner's *The Soft Revolution: A student handbook for turning schools around*. In addition, the lyrics of Propagandhi are utilized to demonstrate how they are effective at recognizing and challenging these varieties of bullshit.

Pomposity

Whether you're an Occupy Movement protester being spoken down to by a Wall Street banker using American economics jargon bathed in capitalist rhetoric or a student of philosophy struggling to comprehend the linguistic gymnastics of French postmodernists, pomposity is employed to bring you down, and the speaker up. Postman describes pomposity as "the triumph of style over substance, and generally it is not an especially venal form of bullshit. It is, however, by no means harmless. There are plenty of people who are daily victimized by pomposity in that

[15] Postman, N., & C. Weingartner (1969). *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. New York: Delacorte

they are made to feel less worthy than they have a right to feel by people who use fancy titles, words, phrases, and sentences to obscure their own insufficiencies." It's important to note that Postman doesn't lay this claim on any one ideology or political viewpoint. Anyone can be the victim of pompous rhetoric. Anyone on the political spectrum is capable of masking their own inabilities with flowery rhetoric.

Propagandhi challenged such insufficiency in their song "Fedallah's Hearse" from their 2005 album *Potemkin City Limits*. With a clever title referencing the fruitless ambition of catching Moby Dick, Propagandhi question the intentions and means of other artists (perhaps mainstream) who dream of winning awards for their creative and perhaps intellectual achievements in music. The song begins, "As so many practiced diplomats, so too your vaunted laureates, whose access to the higher rungs of the cultural priesthood is hinged upon their flair for sophistry." It's as if Propagandhi could see the future and witness an American president in favor of perpetual war receiving the Nobel Peace Prize simply for his countenance and well-mannered speech. "Well, I vote you the best-equipped to shrink from speech that might suggest any thoughts your key target-market might not have already signed-off and ratified. And I vote you most likely to clutter your language with so much deadwood that no amount of pruning will reveal your intensive, protracted campaign of saying nothing at all." One can easily imagine a world-famous rock star using pompous language as a cover for empty catch phrases such as "War is not the Answer." Unfortunately for Bono of U2, he will forever bear the cross as the poster child of empty political gestures.

Sloganeering

Possibly one of the most serious forms of bullshit is sloganeering. What exactly is this harmful form of bullshit? Postman explains, "Sloganeering consists largely of ritualistic

utterances that are intended to communicate solidarity." Some common phrases included "Support the Troops," "Rock the Vote," and "Power to the People." Postman and Weingartner point out that these utterances could also take on meanings quite contrary to the sloganeer's intentions.[16] "Power to the People" surely means power to our people considering that there are others, say those who stand behind the Confederate flag, that would love to silence the voices on the radical left. Unfortunately, even if well-intentioned, the ambiguity behind a slogan can also become weaponized. For example, after the popular Black Lives Matter protests, counter groups began to spring up proclaiming that "All Lives Matter" and perhaps more problematic, "Blue Lives Matter." Propagandhi also illustrated this danger with sloganeering for a cause with their song "Rock for Sustainable Capitalism" from the album *Potemkin City Limits*. Mike Burkett (Fat Mike), the owner of Fat Wreck Chords, who released the first four major Propagandhi releases, assembled a compilation album entitled *Rock Against Bush*. The album title complemented the popular slogan before the 2004 presidential election of "Anyone but Bush." By "anyone", did these punk rockers mean Donald Trump would have been preferred? Propagandhi's song "Bullshit Politicians" which argued either presidential candidate was, well, bullshit, was eventually pulled from *Rock Against Bush* because of a liner note that Propagandhi refused to delete. The band mocked George Soros, a major donor to MoveOn.org. This conflict concluded with Propagandhi not participating on the album, and Propagandhi's release a year later, "Rock for Sustainable Capitalism" which turned *Rock Against Bush* upside down and lyrically challenged what punk rock bands, especially Fat Mike's band NOFX, were actually doing to promote real political change. Which, arguably, was indeed nothing as demonstrated by the fact that Bush was re-elected, and an "Anyone but" (Obama and Trump) have also come and gone as

[16] Postman. 1971. p39

well, right alongside the Fat Wreck Chords album which is now almost as forgotten as the purported "cause" NOFX and the other bands on the compilation claimed to stand by. Propagandhi on the other hand walked away, stuck to their laurels, and called out the bullshit happening in their own punk community.

Before Propagandhi were crap detecting the content of their punk peers, they have always been adept at confronting bullshit in the dominant culture. When Chris Hannah sings "Fuck the troops" he is not expressing a hatred for soldiers, but rather calling out the meaningless slogan "Support the Troops." This is clearly articulated, not in lyrics that are sung, but by an addition to the song in the liner notes: "Fuck the troops (Insert corny but relevant/ poignant catch phrase here)."[17] Clearly this means the listener can feel free to replace this line with any other slogan, vapid or not. This is yet another example of how a listener encounters many lessons when listening to Propagandhi. Throughout Propagandhi lyrics one can easily spot a concern for a repudiation of thought; sloganeering is one such device.

After September 11, 2001, the American public was inundated with new slogans as well as rehashed slogans, "These colors don't run," "United We stand," and of course, "Support the Troops." Propagandhi's first post 9/11 album, *Potemkin City Limits* addressed the sloganeering milieu in which many of us found ourselves drenched. On the opening track "Speculative Fiction" the song concludes, "We got a good 15 years left 'til the United We Stand murals on West Broadway finally fade and we wave good-bye to such sad, childish refrains. Replaced with other stupid lullabies like you can have my guns when you pry them from my cold dead hands." This represents an astute understanding that slogans will pass as new ones emerge, but what is constant is the sloganeering itself. Although Propagandhi chooses to reference slogans used by

[17] Propagandhi (1993) "Stick the Fucking Flag Up Your Goddamn Ass, You Sonofabitch (Not to be gender-specific, of course!)" on *How to Clean Everything*. San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords

conservatives or pro-war voices, they do not preclude a criticism of slogans used by leftists or progressives. Recall the lyric, "I'll call you on your shit, please call me on mine" from the song "Less Talk More Rock."

Inanity

Mass media and especially social media have given rise to another form of language bullshit called inanity. These new technologies have given a forum or soapbox to voices that one would not normally hear on public matters. Shows like *The View* with Barbara Walters and Whoopi Goldberg taking on such complicated issues as transgender identities. It's not that these voices aren't passionate or sincere. Postman explains, "The press and air waves are filled with the featured and prime-time sentences of people who are in no position to render informed judgments on what they are talking about and yet render them with elan and, above all else, sincerity".[18] People on the left will gladly point to talking heads like Tucker Carlson, while those on the right will just as passionately point out the inanity of Rachel Maddow. The point is to recognize inanity regardless of your political position. If you are only able to recognize the buffoonery of Tucker Carlson, but not Rachel Maddow or Keith Olbermann, your bullshit detector is only working at fifty percent.

Today, inanity permeates the media landscape to the point that it is no longer recognized. We're like fish oblivious to water. I would add that another more subtle form of inanity that is also prevalent in media and entertainment is jingoism. The media can entertain through means of patriotism. Just look at sporting events where fighter jets fly overhead as America the Beautiful plays on loudspeakers. Propagandhi tackle this head on in "Dear Coach's Corner." Why is it then

[18] Postman. 1971. p38

that professional sports clubs are political? Perhaps this is best left for Noam Chomsky, but for the sake of this paper, jingoism is more bullshit. In summary, inanity is a lack of substance or ignorance "presented under the cloak of sincerity."[19] It's a tricky form of bullshit to catch, especially if the inane comments confirm one's already held biases, which usually explains why progressives are so adept at recognizing inanity in their counterparts while completely failing to reflect on their own sources.

Propagandhi have always been skilled at challenging the media's ability to sway public opinion. On their 1993 album *How to Clean Everything*, Propagandhi blast the jingoism of the film *For The Boys* (1991) starring Bette Midler. Although recognizing how easy it is to get caught up in pro war rhetoric, Chris Hannah sings, "You carry their anthem, convinced that it's yours. Invitation to honour. Invitation to war. Bette Midler now assumes sainthood. Romanticize murder for morale. Tie a yellow ribbon 'round the old oak tree my friend and 'Gee, Wally. That's swell!'"[20]

In a clever twist of ironic metaphor, Propagandhi even show how the "sound" of authority from film can be used as the voice of authority for a news network. In "Name and Address Withheld,"[21] Using the analogy of empire and rebellion from Star Wars, Chris Hannah sings of being inspired by the Rebellion against the Imperial Army from Star Wars, but his "New Hope" is shattered when he hears Darth Vader's voice, "Somebody fed me too much New Hope for breakfast, cuz as the empire preemptively strikes back (again) and the voice of Luke's father baritones this is CNN I recall Arab kids slaughtered…" James Earl Jones, the voice of Darth Vader narrated the CNN announcement, "This is CNN." This juxtaposition between a strong,

[19] Ibid.
[20] "Stick The Fucking Flag Up Your Goddamn Ass, You Sonofabitch (Not to be gender-specific, of course!)" from *How to Clean Everything* (1993)
[21] *Potemkin City Limits* (2005)

familiar voice authoritatively presenting CNN and the imagery of a tyrannical imperialism leader demonstrates how sincerity can be misleading.

Superstition

If inanity is ignorance as sincerity, then superstition is ignorance as authority. Postman clarifies, "A superstition is a belief, usually express in authoritative terms, for which there is no verifiable, factual basis."[22] For example, the belief that America is the best country on earth. Or that your religion is the one true religion. Today, it may be more fashionable to hear superstitions like "Advances in technology have made the world better," or "All punk rockers want to do is party and get loaded." However, on a larger scale, class elites use cultural hegemony to instill such superstitions such as "immigrants are stealing our jobs" and that the poor are in their unfortunate predicament due to their own failings.[23] These superstitions keep the people from recognizing who the real culprits of inequality are. Propagandhi are well versed at spotting these cultural axioms that at their heart are simply superstitions.

Propagandhi often challenge the superstition that animals are here for human consumption. Although not a vegetarian, Alan Watts often illuminated how Western culture dominated nature and animals whether by religious or scientific reasoning. Propagandhi do the same in the opening track "Apparently, I'm a 'P.C. Fascist (Because I care about both human and non-human animals)" from their album *Less Talk More Rock*. Midway through the song Chris sings, "And I kinda thought we all shared common threads in that we gravitated here to challenge the conventions we've been fed by a culture that treats (living, breathing, feeling) creatures like (biological) machines. And if you buy that shit then how long 'till it's me who serves as your

[22] Postman. 1971
[23] Gramsci. 1971

commodity?" Then in a show of solidarity and in recognizing one's own limitations, Chris brings the listener in to cooperate, "Tell you what- I'll call you on your shit, PLEASE CALL ME ON MINE. Then we can grow together and make this shit-hole planet better in time." Challenging superstitions can further be seen as an ability to also critique metaphors such as a mechanical view of the universe. A metaphor which enables animals to be treated as "biological machines."

Fanaticism

It would see on the surface that fanaticism may be an easy form of bullshit to spot. I wouldn't blame you for thinking Propagandhi goes after fanaticism in songs like "Rattan Cane" which shows the totalitarian abuse of punk subcultures in Indonesia. As Postman points out, "The commonplace image of fanaticism is of an arm-waving hysteric preaching a mad and unholy doctrine. If this were all there were to it, we could discuss it in a paragraph." The fanaticism that Postman refers to is a more subtle trap people build for themselves. Postman explains, "Fanaticism begins with our falling in love, so to speak, with certain sentences." As we will see later, to break from this system, a thermostatic approach will be needed. So, how can compassionate, social justice advocates and activists succumb to fanaticism? Postman elaborates further, "Fanaticism is the internalization of sentences to which we are so attached that we have made them immune to criticism. Not only by others, but by ourselves as well."[24] In contemporary terms, we are often warned of the echo chambers we create on social media and how confirmation bias distorts reality.

In *Crazy Talk, Stupid Talk*, Postman utilizes the metaphor of scientific discovery to demonstrate that critical thinkers should not be seeking how to justify their beliefs, but rather how to challenge them. For example, more often than not, the history of science shows attempts

[24] Postman, Neil. *Crazy Talk, Stupid Talk*. New York: Delacorte Press. 1976.

to disprove the science that came before. Science, therefore, is not self-confirming in that it "proves" it is correct. This isn't to say that we should think and behave as scientists, rather we should constantly question our beliefs and ask how they could be false, rather than fighting for ways to prove they are correct. Let's return to the most cited Propagandhi lyric in this dissertation, "I'll call you own your shit, please call me on mine. Then we can grow together, make this shit hole fucking better."

Where do we see Propagandhi challenge fanaticism? They do so in "Human(e) Meat" as they challenge Sandor Katz' new post-vegetarian beliefs by which clumsily murdering an animal for soup is somehow viewed through a lens of beauty and wonder. Propagandhi do this when they cheekily answer NOFX's lament "How to punk rock become so safe?" in Propagandhi's song "Rock for Sustainable Capitalism." Further, to any Propagandhi fan, are you on social justice autopilot? Do you feel that you now have an ideology in place and deploy it at will? Recall how Propagandhi helped tear down your old ways of thinking. If that's still not happening, well, you might have created a comfortable living quarters for your fanaticism to rest and take comfort as you wave your arms and preach against the dangers of Fox News and other conservative voices. Let's keep learning, keep engaging, keep challenging ourselves, while not falling in love with the refrains we've picked up twenty years ago.

The Inquiry Method

"The inquiry approach is not about compliance and conformity to the status quo—it is the very opposite. What could be more punk than that?"
--David "Beaver" Guillas, former Propagandhi guitarist

Neil Postman had high hopes for the impact on education the inquiry method would have. It was thought to be revolutionary. It wasn't an improved form of "covering content" or as Freire

would define the teaching style as the "banking method," but rather a new medium of learning. However, what Postman feared most likely played out in schools across the U.S.. The inquiry method was only useful in how effective it was for upholding the previous standards and goals of compulsory education: students passing standardized tests, students retaining knowledge, and students coming up with correct answers. I experienced this myself in grad school. During my master's year at UCLA, we studied Paulo Freire and the liberatory potential of his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. On the other hand, while taking coursework for a graduate certificate in teaching English as a Second Language, I saw Freire's ideas reduced to cute teaching theories like "consciousness raising activities." The goal of a fully realized individual was stripped and a method for knowledge retention was put in its place.

So, if youth weren't fortunate to have schools and teachers who were fully committed to the inquiry method, where could youth experience this? I argue Propagandhi filled this void. To better understand this, let's further explore the inquiry method. Postman argues that the inquiry method essentially challenges the narrative or story of a syllabus. For example, California fourth graders must study California missions. This is built into the state requirements. The inquiry method would make this obsolete. Even if fourth graders are discovering facts about California missions on their own through field trips and research, they are still being told what's important to know. Those facts about missions haven't changed. My future children could easily recycle my report on the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa. Postman points out that "The older school environments stressed that learning is being told what happened. The inquiry environment stresses that learning is a happening in itself." Whereas the old model (and likely still current, sorry Neil) asks, "Who discovered America," the inquiry method asks, "How do you know discover who discovered America?" The inquiry method seeks to cultivate good learners. And

one way to do this is by building a student's confidence in their learning ability. The best way to do this is via inquiry. I recall as a student having most of my questions shut down as they were deemed off topic. Not only would I stop paying attention to a teacher as I began to challenge where their information was coming from, but I was also slowly developing anxiety and doubts in my own mental strengths.

I challenge you to read the following excerpt from *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* without thinking about Propagandhi:

> Good learners, in other words, prefer to rely on their own judgement. They recognize, especially as they get older, that an incredible number of people do not know what they are talking about most of the time. As a consequence, they are suspicious of 'authorities, especially any authority who discourages others form relying on their own judgement.[25]

This sentiment is echoed in Chris' recollection of school especially when he noted that he wasn't upset about what wasn't being taught, but rather by the bullshit that was. This is also present in some respects all of the other members' experiences. Postman and Weingartner continue, "Good learners are usually not fearful of being wrong… In other words, they can change their minds." In pointing to Propagandhi's influence before joining the band, Sulynn expressed in their interview with me, "You're figuring out your personality, then you hear that line in a song and someone else saying, 'It's fucking okay to be wrong.' There's that aspect from just being a person and questioning your behavioral traits. Experiences like that shape you." Perhaps Postman would agree that "good learners" inspire other "good learners."

So Propagandhi may appear to be what Postman describes as "good learners," but can they be described as effective teachers in the inquiry method? Postman notes what can be observed from an inquiry teacher, "The teacher rarely tells the student what he thinks they ought to know. He believes that telling, when used as a basic teaching strategy, deprives students of the

[25] Postman, Neil & Charlies Weingartner. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. Penguin Books. 1969. p41

excitement of doing their own finding and of the opportunity for increasing their power as learners."[26] Of course early Propagandhi, as we've seen, is more confrontational, but do they express what a listener "ought" to know? I argue no. What they effectively do is create wonder in the listener. We might ask, "How did Propagandhi get so passionate about animals?" or "Why are they so angry at the police?" I ended up majoring in political science as an undergrad simply because I was taking many courses to understand Propagandhi better. The entire *Unscripted Moments: A Podcast About Propagandhi* is a living, breathing testament to Propagandhi's ability to excite listeners into doing their own research into the songs. Propagandhi's song catalog is so dense and rich that the podcast is going to cover every single song ever written by Propagandhi. And these episodes are not short; most average around two hours in length. Even my own song analysis for Chapter 5 began as my own exploration into songs.

Propagandhi also have an advantage of the classroom teacher. Often, teachers ask questions to elicit answers. This is not the inquiry method. It's common for teachers to ask questions hoping to draw out correct answers from the students. Propagandhi's not in the situation to wait for answers, so their questions serve another function. For inquiry teachers, and I argue Propagandhi, questions are used "as instruments to open engaged minds to unsuspected possibilities."[27] Similarly, the teacher isn't asking to engage with the students, but rather creates an atmosphere wherein the students are engaged with each other. This reminds me of my own band practices where Cary, Steve, and I would discuss ideas in Propagandhi songs. Did Propagandhi go too far with their attack on religion? What is religion? Should we reduce the varied experiences of religion to one singular entity? What about veganism? Sure, the factory farms and the meat industry are horrible institutions, but is there really an argument that humans

[26] Ibid, p43
[27] Ibid. p44

shouldn't eat meat even if ethically harvested? To see this documented, again I suggest listening to the *Unscripted Moments* podcast where Greg and Keith discuss and debate ideas from the Propagandhi catalog of songs.

Perhaps Chris Hannah thought Propagandhi weren't as effective as classroom teachers because he has never felt that his band was "teaching." However, I argue, this just may be the magic behind the inquiry method. Postman has made the joke that one of the worst things overheard in a teacher's conference room is "I taught my students, but they didn't learn it!" For Postman, this is just as absurd as a salesperson saying, "I sold it to them, but they didn't buy it." If Chris Hannah had the old, ineffective classroom model in his mind, then it would make sense as to why he doubted the band's influence. I would argue that being a conduit for someone's learning is much better than being the teacher who is "covering ground" to get their students to a terminal point.

Thermostatic Activity

Just as a thermostat is regulated to add heat when it's cold, and provide cool air when it's hot, so too, Postman argues, should education be the counter to general culture. He presented this metaphor in the book *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*, aptly designed to counter his previous work on education, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. In an educational system where schools push for higher test scores at the cost of human growth, punk rock serves as a medium or surrogate of education capable of helping disenfranchised youth understand what is happening in the culture. Punk can be a great inoculation against society's oppressive status quo. Propagandhi gives us some of the most eloquent and creative punk counterarguments that make the arguments' deficiencies visible and make improvement and synthesis possible. Propagandhi

deploy Postman's thermostatic view not only against mainstream culture but from within the progressive punk rock community.

Propagandhi has counterbalanced the punk scene in numerous ways. As noted above, Propagandhi pushed back on the Punk Voter moment during the lead up to the 2004 election between George Bush and John Kerry. They were uncomfortable with the "Rock Against Bush" campaign because they were skeptical of any meaningful differences between the two-party system in the U.S. They also have pushed back on some of the male violence in the punk scene that is often expressed at live concerts in the mosh pits. This ethos of balancing out views also occurred many times in my interviews with Propagandhi. It could show its head when someone doubts the premise of this dissertation that Propagandhi were effective educators to punk youth. It also appears in the bands dedication to improving their musical skills and through their determination to craft eloquent and meaningful songs. They may have been the pioneers of a melodic skate punk sound that was easily digestible to the masses, but they abandoned that ship to focus on crafting a sound that made them happy which meant they would return to their metal roots. This is counter to early definitions of punk that define the music as easy to play, non-technical, and most often a challenge to virtuosic musicianship. However, Propagandhi have flipped that script to encourage their fans to work hard, practice every day, and to continually improve yourself.

One striking thermostatic principle was revealed in Chris' *A Catastrophic Break with Consensus Reality* podcast on the song "Potemkin City Limits." Chris discussed having an empathetic principle that could override his political will. For example, Propagandhi, as seen in this dissertation, are critical of police as an institution. They would be happy relegate the duties of police officers to those that get kittens down from trees, and help people locate their stolen

items. So, when there is a protest against police violence, Propagandhi will be on board. However, if a seen were to emerge where a protesting crowd overran a police officer and began to beat them person senseless, Chris would flip. He noted that he would then see that police officer as a victim, and would have a desire to protect that officer, like he would any of the lives the Propagandhi sing about defending.

Postman: punk or prophet?

"I'd rather be imprisoned in a George Orwellian world than this pacified society by little boys and girls"

--Propagandhi, "Head? Chest? or Foot?" *How to Clean Everything*. 1993.

Having never read Neil Postman, Chris comes awfully close to paralleling a crucial distinction between George Orwell and Aldous Huxley made by Neil Postman in Amusing Ourselves to Death." Postman warned that it wasn't the Orwellian future we should fear, but of Huxley's:

> What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy. As Huxley remarked in Brave New World Revisited, the civil libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny "failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions." In *1984*, Huxley added, people are controlled by inflicting pain. In *Brave New World*, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure. In short, Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us.[28]

[28] Neil Postman. *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. Penguin. 1985

This dissertation has shown how Propagandhi have resisted and shone a light on both dystopian possibilities. “America’s Army” showed the dangers of messaging that we allow into our homes through television while many songs like “Speculative Fiction” or “Stick The Fuck-ing Flag Up Your God-damn Ass, You Sono-fabitch” challenge slogans engineered by those in power to keep people in line. If schools are going to create critically engaged global citizens, they should take the script from Postman and Propagandhi that teaches how to first become aware of the scripts that shape our lives, then find the tools to dismantle those domineering narratives.

Propagandhi Fan Vignettes

In the punk community that sprang up in the 1990s around melodic hardcore and skatepunk labels like Epitaph and Fat Wreck Chords, it’s not uncommon to hear the refrain, “Propagandhi changed my life.” Simply browsing the comments section under Propagandhi songs on YouTube will demonstrate this thread. Even social media platforms like Instagram document the influence Propagandhi has had on listeners in the forms of reels, stories, and posts. Many of these comments have been utilized in Chapter 5 to provide how these songs were received. Rather than collecting these bits and pieces of Propagandhi praise, this dissertation has collected the voices of a few die-hard fans. The following are vignettes of six Propagandhi fans. They were asked to complete a survey on Propagandhi’s influence on their lives, especially regarding the educational aspects of Propagandhi’s music. I have edited their responses to read as a flowing autobiography.

Jamie

Introduction

Jamie is a Winnipeg native who has been a fan of Propagandhi since the mid 1990s. He offers a special perspective as a local fan. He's an avid fan who's been to at least fourteen Propagandhi shows. I was fortunate to meet Jamie during my October 2021 trip to Winnipeg. He was kind enough to drive me around town on our amazing Propagandhi treasure hunt. He showed me key locations in the Propagandhi story that I have utilized throughout this dissertation. I believe I also owe him a few photographer credits. It was apparent that Jamie was passionate about Propagandhi and extremely honored to be my tour guide. What made the tour even more exciting was a cooler filled with local beers from Sookram's Brewing Co.

What I really enjoyed about Jamie was is energy that projected a loving father and husband, and someone not worried about looking punk. I felt an immediate connection even though I was born and raised in Southern California. We may be divided by thousands of miles, and completely unrelated climates, but our love of Propagandhi makes us a community.

Autobiographical Vignette

I am Metis (although I am sort of a silent Metis because I rarely openly declare because I am visibly white and do not want to take opportunities away from others, and there are other social / political considerations wherein I do not wish to perpetuate racism through appropriation, misrepresentation, or opportunism.) I feel a sense of kinship with bi-sexual, and two-spirited individuals.

I was approximately 15 when I first heard Propagandhi. I can't recall if I heard the *Survival of the Fattest* compilation first or *How to Clean Everything*. I was in summer school for math, and a friend in a Guy Smiley shirt lent me *HTCE*. I was "bad" at school. My parents had a

difficult divorce two years before, and my relationship with my father was somewhat fraught. I was friends with bullies and criminals (as well as some good-natured suburban punks), I was casually racist and loudly very homophobic. I couldn't believe what I was seeing with Propagandhi's *Survival of the Fattest* picture, and what I was hearing with their lyrics. It was the first time that the notion of caring about things seemed cool. It broke my world, and the convergence of events made it irreversible and unforgettable.

My first concert was in December 1996 or January 1997 at the University of Manitoba seeing Propagandhi. It was my first time being on campus and thinking about what Universities were and what they represented. I had my first alcoholic drink, saw the first few pairs of boobs (other than my mom's), and I remember entering the "multi-purpose room" (I would later write several university exams in) hearing a soulful, righteous, and grieved Bella Galhos speaking on East Timor. A clip of that speech was used to start Propagandhi's *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes* LP. Dickheads were shit-talking, drinking, anxiously awaiting Propagandhi. I was struck, disoriented, and overwhelmed by a completely new world.

I feel Propagandhi are probably the "most" or only band that represents punk in a complete sense because of their passionate all-in deliveries, full cavity search for truth, for meaning, and for integrity. They embody a "we'll find our own way" attitude, a conscience setting out for a better world, ready to scream, yell, cry and laugh. They are very outgoing with their invitation to join them. But since they're punk they are "anti-manifesto": no dogma, no cult of personality (least not purposely) just ideas, action, and emotion.

Propagandhi has given me a sense of moral guidance. They are like someone who stopped me and talked me down from a metaphoric/philosophical/moral hostage situation and got me to put down the gun. Propagandhi also saved my educational journey. I was in summer

school. I directly trace Propagandhi (Weakerthans, and Bonaduces too) to ditching the druggies/ car thieving friends, half-dropping out of school, then realigning my academic priorities, taking pride in being and doing good and being nice to people. I switched schools indirectly because of them. I read about anarchism and read political magazines at my new high school. In university I began taking political science courses and funny enough in astronomy class, I was drawing my friend, amateur drummer Paul, when Dave (friend of the band, punk bass player, now in the Murder Birds) told me, “Hey, you should go into Fine Arts!” I said I'd thought about it, but I wanted to challenge myself with other stuff in university. But his comment stuck with me, and I switched the next year. If I could go to university for the rest of my life, I would. I credit Propagandhi with that complete 180 on my intellectual curiosity. I worked at the University Bookstore with Derek Kun (Guy Smiley/ Burnthe8track). Propagandhi also helped me think of art in terms of critical thinking, and art theory.

Propagandhi taught me that life is rich, complex, tragic, and sacred, and if you don't respect it, it may gobble you up, so you better pay attention. The systems of power are primarily concerned with preserving power, that all people are people, and they are all bestowed with potential. Even in newer records, I’ve learned that I matter, that life matters, and that life is beautiful.

Although I’ve learned a lot, there still are aspects to Propagandhi that I can disagree with. At times I have been turned off by their more extreme calls to action particularly regarding violence. "Why don't we strap bombs to our chests", or “felt like punching a goof on the street" etc. I understand it as art, and of a certain time as well, but in all honesty, the effectiveness of those lines is open to debate in my mind. On the one hand, it is great to express the high stakes, high emotions, and to burst the bubbles of the listeners. It certainly is part of the *Less Talk, More*

Rock era to be confrontational and exciting, but violence is not realistic, or popular, and it would almost certainly invite authorities to end any progress made.

School was tricky for me. I remember a kid trying to hurt me with a toy saw. I remember being in big trouble for eating crayons. I remember a teacher asking me if I should really be in a French school. I remember a teacher drawing attention to me and my parents' divorce and pulling me out of classes for counselling when I didn't understand it or want it, making me feel less connected to the other kids. I remember a teacher picking up my exam while I was still writing it, flipping through it then telling me "Well, at least you're a good person," then grimaced. I think Propagandhi gave me strength to laugh it off and curiosity to enable the reward of learning to take effect.

Schools should take Propagandhi's playbook and help students see the depth of people, the breadth of existence, the possibility of more than one thing being true at once. Promote a rejection of binary thinking, and that pluralism is inspiring, fun, and an important key to progress.

Ben

Introduction

Ben is an Australian architect in his late 30s living in Adelaide. Ben's entry into Propagandhi began in 2008 although he started going to punk shows in 2003. The first Propagandhi album that Ben hears is 2005's *Potemkin City Limits*, the band's last album as a three piece. By this point, Propagandhi had released three full length studio albums and toured globally. Therefore, Ben offers a unique fan perspective by entering his Propagandhi fandom at a point when Propagandhi is shedding their abrasive and in-your-face approach and were well on

their way to a more empathetic and thoughtful approach to songwriting. This could also explain why Ben isn't a fan of the first two Propagandhi albums which are most often cited by fans, including myself, as their most impactful albums. Yet, Ben's life was changed just as much as us that encountered Propagandhi in the mid to late 90's. Ben's entry here is unique because he also provides an email that he wrote to Chris Hannah expressing gratitude for the impact Propagandhi has had on his life. *Potemkin City limits* was written during the second Gulf War and this moment in time is etched into the music. However, by the time Ben finds the album, America had started to reduce its coverage of war and focus on a new cultural shift with Barack Obama as president.

Autobiographical Vignette

I'm a 37-year-old, straight white male. I say this because I feel I am your typical fan of punk rock and Propagandhi. I'm likely a person whom a lot of their songs are directed to. I first heard about Propagandhi through a website called killyourstereo.com. It was an online zine, and they had an article in late 2008 about a new album and upcoming tour from a Canadian band called Propagandhi. The article made them sound like an epic old school Fat Wreck band. I originally got into more mainstream pop-punk in the early 2000s. and was slowly getting into more punk hardcore and fat wreck bands as the years went on but hadn't come across Propagandhi yet. From the article it sounded like a band I needed to listen to. The photo of them was cool too.

I checked out their Myspace page and was intrigued by their statement - I think it was mostly made-up stuff. It said they had a band member leave the band and try to sue them. It was a very dramatic blurb. I think in true Propagandhi style they were just taking the piss. This intrigued me further.

I started listening to Propagandhi whilst studying my master's degree in architecture. I'm not sure what came first but around this same time I read some books and saw some ted talks on sustainability and this all influenced my mentality moving forward. I don't always get the chance to put my beliefs into actions when it comes to work but Propagandhi's core values are always close to my mind.

I bought *Potemkin City Limits*. I immediately loved Chris's voice. He sounded urgent and genuine. It wasn't too nasally either which I was starting to grow a bit old of. I didn't fall in love with the whole album straight away but loved the opening track and "Die Jugend" pretty quickly. I didn't get into the lyrics right away either, as they went over my head a bit. But I read the liner notes and liked what they were about. I was lucky enough to see them on that tour in early 2009 and *Supporting Caste* came out soon after. When I look back at University, I think about Propagandhi. As it was this time when *Supporting Caste* came out and I had a friend at Uni who was a diehard fan also. We listened to this album a lot together. To me it's a timestamp and brings back a lot of very fond and nostalgic memories of when I first got into the band.

I guess I would identify as punk although I wouldn't say that out loud. Punk is being true to yourself. It's critically thinking about the world around you, following up words with actions. It's activism. All of these I strive to do with mixed success.

When I first got into pop punk, I would try to dress exactly like the artists I was listening to like, Blink-182 and Good Charlotte. I wore Dickies pants and shorts, band tees, had spiked black hair, and I considered myself punk because I loved distorted guitars and was into these bands. The more and more music I listened to, I started to see bands dress more "normally," and I started to realize being punk wasn't about what you wore, or necessarily the type of music you listened to, but it was more about your mindset. I also thought being punk was about being

defiant against everything. This way of living just becomes exhausting. I still have a naturally mischievous side which questions a lot of things, but I realized a better way of living is being true to myself. If something doesn't feel comfortable don't do it. I should add that I don't put much weight on the word punk anymore. I use it very sparingly. I only use it when referring to what music I'm into. I feel it got a bit overused in circles I was in for a bit and got a bit sick of the whole who's punk and who's not argument.

When I think of punk now. I think of Propagandhi. They are the true benchmark of what punk is. They are my moral compass when it comes to being punk and life in general. Propagandhi have never followed any genre or scene. They are fast and loud because they love fast and loud music. They are punk through and through.

Propagandhi generally make my life awesome! The music is a release for me. I love singing along and dancing (air guitaring) to their music. It's so much fun. I never get sick of their music and can put on any of their albums from *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes* onwards and it immediately gets me energized. But then there is a much deeper love for them. They are a band that I constantly learn from. Their lyrics go so deep I have still only barely scratched the surface of what a lot of the songs mean. That's what I love about the Propagandhi podcast. I have tried to always check out all of the things they reference and now I see Chris Hannah's podcasts as an extension to his music which I find equally motivating and inspiring.

Allow me to share a message I sent Chris Hannah when I first signed up to his Patreon page a few years ago. I had been wanting to send him a handwritten letter for years, but the opportunity arose to send him a private message on his Patreon, so I took it to share with him how much his band means to me:

Nov 12, 2019

Hi Chris.

My name is Ben George. I'm 34 years old and from Adelaide, Australia. I met you after your last show here on the 12th May earlier this year. I shook your hand and said thank you for helping me to consume less. You looked me in the eye, and I could tell you felt my gratitude. I will forever cherish that moment. But if you don't mind, I'd like to expand on that a little more.

It is really hard to describe in words how much you have helped me in my life and how Propagandhi's music makes me feel. I look at you as a father figure and a point of reference of the values one should live by. This is coming from someone who grew up in a very Christian home. My father is a missionary, and we went to church every Sunday throughout my childhood. I love my family, but I never enjoyed church and began to start questioning the 'story' later in my teens. I discovered alcohol and punk rock after I finished high school and the Christian beliefs quickly faded away, leaving a hole of confusion, which I tried unsuccessfully filling a number of different ways. Thankfully I found answers in Propagandhi.

I got into Propagandhi in 2008 after reading an article about the bands' long-awaited return to Australia. I bought Potemkin City Limits and immediately fell in love with the music and your voice. I knew you guys were 'political', but it took me a while to really get what you were all about. I listened and enjoyed your older albums but when Supporting Caste came out everything stepped up a gear. That album blew me away and catapulted you to the top of my favorite bands list, where you have stayed ever since, with each new album getting stronger and stronger. Looking deeper into your lyrics I realized you guys were making a lot more sense than the religious beliefs I had grown up on. You, along with the authors and artists you recommend, opened my eyes to feminism (I still have so much to learn here), celebrating indigenous culture (again... a long way to go), questioning the oppressive system that governs us, letting go of the macho bro mentality, acceptance of others, and most importantly... veganism.

"For those of you that are nowhere near making the switch right now... just consume less" - Jesus H. Chris (Escape Velocity Radio [episode 10])

I told you at the show when I shook your hand that it was these simple yet powerful words above that really resonated with me and pushed me, along with watching Cowspiracy, to finally change my diet. I always admired and respected veganism but resisted following it as I thought it was too hard for me to do. I had an all or nothing attitude and this stopped me from even trying. After hearing you guys discuss Colleen Patrick-Goudreau and people making the next step I realized I didn't have to go vegan tomorrow, but I just

needed to start by consuming less. So, I did. I started halving the meat portions at dinner, got off milk (as Colleen suggested to do first), and looked for the vegetarian option whenever I was out to dinner. I am now 95% meat/dairy free with the goal of being 100% vegan in the near future. This makes me very proud of myself.

So, thank you Chris. Thank you for the music, and the podcasts (This Patreon page is truly a dream come true!). Thank you for your vulnerability and honesty, which has helped me open up myself. Thank you for inspiring me to be a better person. Be self-critical. Be willing to learn and seek knowledge. Open to new ideas. Stand up for what's right. Be kinder to the people around me. Be more respectful to women. More willing to learn and appreciate indigenous culture. Have a deep profound love for nature. And most of all: thanks for inspiring me to put actions into the things I believe in and care about. As well as changing my diet, I now also ride to work and have just started volunteering at the Australian Refugee Association.

Here's to the many years of headbanging to come. I look forward to learning more and more from you and your music; and I can't wait to get a load of what next you got planned motherfucker!!! ;)

Hope to hear from you.
Much love
Ben

"Nobody can do everything. But everybody can do something." - Gil Scott-Heron (Work for Peace)

Propagandhi simply remind me to constantly learn and evolve. I'm an architect. The biggest thing I love about architecture is the amount there is to learn. It usually takes a lifetime to become a really good architect and I associate that with how Chris Hannah and the band is. They are constantly learning. Constantly looking at ways of getting better. And I feel as though they're never truly satisfied with what they've done. Knowing that there's always room for improvement. I also know there's so many things outside of work that I haven't begun to learn which I look forward to in the future. I.e., Indigenous culture, feminism.

Propagandhi also influenced me musically. I picked up the guitar to learn, write songs, and start a band when I was 30. Although I am still very much an amateur, Chris always inspires me to push myself and not fall back on the typical way punk songs are. The music I write is much simpler musically than Propagandhi; however, I mix up song structures like they do. I feel like I'm not smart enough to write lyrics like they do, so I stick to writing heartfelt lyrics from my heart about my own personal experiences. I hope to one day record my music, play it live, and share it with Chris; however, I'm still plucking up the courage and skills for that.

I've appreciated how Chris has evolved his stance on religion over the years. Coming from a heavily Christian household, I see the problems with faith and the church, but I also see the good that it can do in people's lives. And my parents are strong believers and good people, so simply striking out religion as being a problem never really sat right with me.[29] However, hearing how Chris reflects on it now brings me a bit of comfort. I also appreciate his love for Chris Hedges. I will also say with the vegan stuff, I responded better to being gently guided towards that lifestyle rather than the punch in the face approach the band used to take. But now that I am 99% vegan, I do feel like punching people in the face sometimes with the truth so to speak. In general, I really appreciate Chris's self-deprecation and self-analysis that he constantly puts on himself. "I'll call you on your shit if you call me on mine!" I think at the end of the day, if we try to be better, that's all they ask. I seem to recall Todd saying something along those lines at a show once. "It's not hard to be a decent person."

Propagandhi really are a huge part of my life. They give me comfort when I'm alone. Hope when I'm down. They constantly challenge me to be a better human. They are an incredible

[29] Arguably this is one of the strongest criticisms of Propagandhi's earlier work. Is it appropriate to reduce all of humanity's experience with the multitude of religions into one all-encompassing word or idea as "religion?"

band, and my life is better for having them in it. Their fans are also great. I find great comfort in being part of the community on the Patreon page, feeling like us fans are kindred spirits.

School to me was mostly enjoyable. I was naturally pretty smart in primary school, so found it pretty easy and just spent the time enjoying myself with friends. I found high school mostly enjoyable, too. Again, the first few years were easy. Once I established that I wanted to go to University, I worked hard in my final year to get the grades I needed to get into Uni. I had to work hard against the grain at my particular school as it wasn't very academic, and I was surrounded by friends who didn't give a shit about grades or life after high school. So, I learnt how to be self-motivated during those final years. So, in general, I enjoyed compulsory education. I met good friends. And got good results.

Schools can learn from Propagandhi by promoting critical thinking over rote learning. Being open to new ideas and new ways of doing things, rather than only believing what you are taught at school. Their songwriting is also a lesson in itself. The way they usually structure their essays with a story and then wrap it up at the end with the moral punchline is something that we can learn a great deal from too.

Nils

Introduction

Nils is able to provide us with a perspective of a non-native English speaker living in Germany. He is a teacher working with children with special needs. Propagandhi was an important band in his re-education. However, Nils also offers some criticisms of some of Propagandhi's earlier work, which could be informed from his unique perspective in Europe. Nils also provides an insightful understanding of punk and how Propagandhi best represent the reflexive aspects of punk.

Autobiographical Vignette

I think growing up with Propagandhi matters most to me. I listened to them as a child, but I started understanding them by the age of 25 or so. My general education and my search for knowledge made it easier to dive into their work. So overall, my upbringing and socioeconomic status opened the door to the band.

I think I heard their cover of "True" or "Nation States" on one of those Fat Wreck Compilations that my brother brought home. But I never had an album until *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes* came out. I loved their songs on the comps, but back then I liked all the songs from the other bands. I was around ten years old and didn't understand anything concerning the topics because I am not a native English speaker. So, I didn't even understand the words. When I got a bit older, about thirteen, I started understanding more. The message from "Anti-Manifesto" message stuck with me because I was getting into politics and the evils of the world at that age. As I started understanding the lyrics, I felt understood but also challenged.

At the age of 14 or 15, I was into punk. I was wearing a mohawk and all my friends were punks or the like. Nowadays I am much more of a metalhead who identifies with progressive left-wing politics. Punk rock itself doesn't hold much value to me anymore. But I am thankful for all things punk made me question. But I also think it's difficult to define punk. There is a big difference between bands like The Offspring, Sex Pistols, Bikini Kill, Bad Cop Bad Cop, and Crass. Musically I was always drawn to the melodic side. But the more I grew up, the more I wanted a strong political message. But Alive (a G7 Welcoming Committee band) were a very important band to me as they had very intelligent political lyrics and thrashy side to their music. They were kind of the German Propagandhi.

If punk means reflecting on your thoughts and actions, and trying to be as progressive as possible, then Propagandhi represent punk well. Propagandhi forced me to research topics I was unfamiliar with. For example, I spent a long time diving into different forums on the internet learning about the song “Night Letters.” Years before the *Unscripted Moments* podcast told me all the secrets, I had to read and read to understand the songs better. What they also did to me is to accept that we have different views on some topics. The world isn't black or white but mainly gray.

I listened to Propagandhi while I was in school, but I really started to take a deep dive after finishing school when *Supporting Caste* came out in 2009 when I was 23 or 24. So, the band didn't affect my educational experience that much during school. At that time, it was more German punk bands like Slime or But Alive and crust bands like Aus-Rotten.

Propagandhi challenged me to dig deep into certain topics that I might have never been exposed to. “Night Letters” is a great example. What they also did for me is accepting that there is no black or white in life but mainly gray zones. I hardly disagree with at least one aspect of their political beliefs. But I admire them, and I can still love them for all the great stuff they do.

Propagandhi taught me that you can mix metal and punk and make it great without it becoming metal-core. You can be technical without sacrificing beauty. Propagandhi isn’t technical because they want to show off, it’s there because the songs need it.

Propagandhi isn’t perfect. They have promoted anti-Semitic messages veiled as anti-Zionism in the past. That was something I couldn’t stand. “Haillie Sallasse” is a good example for how little Chris and the band understood how anti-Semitism works. Thankfully, Chris updated the lyrics because he felt they were racist. Make a mistake and try to be better. I love that. But if you follow the origin of anti-Zionism, it’s pretty easy to see what the term really

means. There are some songs that deal with the topic of Israel and Palestine in a more reflective manner. But it's still sad to see that they post anti-Semitic writings by Chris Hedges and help to spread the "Israel murders children" narrative. They act extremely one sided and call it criticism against an "apartheid state." Not once have I seen them post anything about Turkey Bombing the Kurds, or Russia using Syria as a playground to try new weapon systems, or the yearlong dying in Mali, or the hundreds of other conflicts around the globe. But as soon as something happens with Israel, they post it. This is a double standard with demonizing tendencies. The modern definition of anti-Semitism makes that pretty clear. Also, never a word about Hamas and so on. It doesn't fit the band. That's what makes it even more sad.

The one thing I will always remember about school was when I was in 9th or 10th grade, and the US invaded Iraq. I was a teenage punk and was furious about the massacres I saw on the news. I compared Bush Jr. with Hitler. God I will never forget how my teacher put me in place. She helped me to understand how problematic and wrong such a comparison was. She did it in a very good way because she wanted me to reflect on what I said. She always tried to help us get into politics and find a way to understand the world more. She was strict but she was reliable and "real." I think this teacher will always stay as a role model for me.

I think Propagandhi can provide a musical journey to political education that goes beyond slogans. They usually dig deeper and let you dig deeper. So many nuggets of knowledge can be found and have to be researched. I would love to have the time and place to let a class analyze a Propagandhi song and hear what they uncover. They can also be used in language lessons for storytelling, especially some of Todd's Songs or "Potemkin City Limits" or "Without Love."

Victoria

Introduction

Self-described as introverted and indigenous, Victoria provides us with a story that I suspect is fairly common, of a person who struggled in compulsory education, but found their voice in Punk, and specifically in the music of Propagandhi. Victoria first found Propagandhi in the late 90's with Propagandhi's double seven-inch record *Where Quality is Job* #1 from Recess Records. She found her way out of addiction and began volunteering in her community, returning to school, and ended up with a bachelor's degree in social work.

Autobiographical Vignette

I'm naturally an isolated person, so my early experience with punk was being alone in my room listening to records and contemplating the concepts I was hearing. I was into Recess Records and randomly picked up *Where Quality is #1* and discovered Propagandhi. At 16, I ended up homeless with an addiction. Although I went to a lot of shows in San Diego and Tijuana and felt punk rock music and its values raised me, I am ashamed to admit that I was mostly a selfish person and did a lot of taking. It wasn't until I got sober that I made any contributions to my community. When I got sober, I began volunteering for the two agencies that outreached to me as a teenager and had picnics in the park for houseless folks with food gathered from dumpster diving.

When I was 14, I randomly ordered the *Where Quality is Job #1* seven-inch record from Recess Records because I thought it looked cool. I liked the handmade look to it which was standard for Recess Records releases and what made me love that label. I thought the record was fun and deep at the same time, and it made me feel hopeful.

I do not identify as punk, and identity has been a source of contention since I can remember. I have always felt like I lacked an identity or a home. I grew up in a dysfunctional home with addiction and fighting. I tried to do all I could to be quiet and not exist so as to not draw attention to myself. Punk rock was a voice and outlet to what was going on in my head. I could listen to it, and it was like I was able to speak. There was both a good and bad side of the punk scene as well. Women I knew, including myself, were taken advantage of by older men in the scene. The fact that sexism was tolerated to a certain extent deepened my desire to want nothing to do with "punk" for many years when I walked the line of sobriety. I still live in my head at 41 and find myself living in a world that I observe, and which is not my home. Listening to punk now is like sitting in a counseling session and coming to terms with the past.

I think Propagandhi absolutely represents Punk well. They have evolved in thought and music, and I have respect for that. Their catalog of music tells a story of the evolution of a group of people. *Less Talk, More Rock* will forever be one of the top albums I listen to that embodies the best of punk as a culture, fighting against racism, sexism, abuse, while questioning the world and its systems and ways of being, but also questioning ourselves and our own motives.

While I have listened to Propagandhi off and on throughout the years, I was most affected by them though listening to the *Unscripted Moments* podcast that had me looking and listening to the band in a different way. I have listened to the podcast and heard the theory behind songs, and it has made me listen to the music differently. Propagandhi teaches us that we are individuals within a community and there are different stories in that community to be told.

I dropped out of high school at 16 because high school was a terror for me. Up until I dropped out, I had experienced racism and bullying at school. I'd go home and listen to my

records on my shitty record player, and it kept me sane, I guess. It was the one thing I could control: the music I listened to; the values that grew.

I was very fortunate to have met a professor at community college who mentored me and showed me how to apply for grants and scholarships. I was able to pay for school through grants and obtained a degree in social work and have been in the field for 18 years and currently work in oncology. Propagandhi is one of those bands who provoke deep thought and memories of a different time, like being that scared girl alone in her room. Propagandhi has contributed to my life-long learning because I can listen to a song, read the lyrics, and it makes me pick up a book on a subject and learn more about it. My husband and I were just talking about a book I am reading on Indians of the Pacific Northwest, and my husband mentioned "A Speculative Fiction." It spurred this conversation about indigenous history and contact with the British.

School, like my home life, was a source of anxiety and fear. I did all I could to hide. Things decompensated from middle school to high school when the group I associated with turned on me because I was not white. I experienced racism and I was not a fighter. I went inward and that was a part of why I dropped out at 16. When I was 17, I was ordered by the courts to finish high school. I was still homeless at the time and the school I was enrolled in was like a home school. So, I would get a packet of work and have to turn it in once a week to these trailers that were in the back of the school yard of the middle school I used to attend. What stands out to me most about this time and why it's the most impactful is that my teacher for the school had a "smash your tv" sticker on his cork board. He knew I was homeless and would let me complete my packets in the trailer. I remember his kindness because I didn't really recognize adults or teachers as kind. He attended my graduation "hearing" for the school along with my juvenile probation officer and my grandmother. Then, I passed high school. My grandmother

was so proud of that diploma and that moment stood out to me. I get teary thinking about it because I accomplished something that someone I loved was proud of.

David

Introduction

David played guitar in a punk band in Vancouver, British Columbia in the late 1990s. He also participated in his scene by co-writing a zine called Stumped. The zine interviewed bands but also took on the challenge of trying to de-sexualize an emerging North American teenager identity. Currently, David is an author and editor with a PhD in education. He provides wonderful insight on the convergence of education and punk rock through Propagandhi.

Autobiographical Vignette

In grade 9 (1996), I moved from Calgary, Alberta to the Vancouver suburbs. In Calgary, my friends and I listened to grunge and alternative bands. I had not had exposure to punk bands beyond the Green Day / Offspring surface level. At my first party at my new school, a really cool guy named Jeff Lomax befriended me. He introduced me to the Fat Wreck compilations, and Propagandhi stood far above the other bands, to my ears. The music was so tough, so funny, and so heartfelt, it really absorbed me on a deep level, maybe for engaging so many different emotions (angst, sadness, and an itch to rock out hard).

I definitely identified as a punk and a member of my local punk scene during high school in the late ‘90s. During my 20’s, I probably wouldn't have used the term. But, as I turned 30, that music came back into my life in a big way. Today, I use the term lightly, but do feel punk values are deeply embedded in my personality. Punks do not accept dominant beliefs or ways of living

by default; they have a critical eye regarding societal expectations and methods of organizing communities. Punks like fun and laughter, because they are, to greater or lesser extents, weighted down with angst about the inescapable social ills that beset people. Punks love aggressive music (it's cleansing and energizing) but tend to be extremely kind--like the mosh pit that looks dangerous but is practically a kiddie ball pit in terms of actual risk.

Propagandhi represents punk very well. They understand and care about social problems, and they do the work to be knowledgeable about those issues (refugees, sexism, capitalism, government overreach, etc.). As passionately as they spread awareness about issues, the band doesn't seem to take itself seriously. Consider the level of humor and self-deprecation they present. I think that's important in punk because punk should resist hierarchical thinking and, thus, self-importance. Also, from a musical perspective, they bring an unexpected level of musicianship to the genre, one that matches the intensity and intelligence of Chris' lyrics.

Propagandhi have given me a release valve for the anger within me. The music interpolates my anger (to use an academic term) and burns it off. Here, I'm thinking of the music more than the storytelling and lyricism. There is a feel to the band that doesn't stop and my ears... I feel the songs with my whole body. In high school, Propagandhi gave me strong insights into social systems and exposed me to the wealth of underground resources available. They pushed that snowball off the top of the hill for me.

I find myself at odds with other fans sometimes, but not the band. What irks me about some of the fandom is the self-importance and piousness with which some progressives discuss issues. The band avoids that through self-deprecation, humor, and recognizing that they inevitably contribute to corporate and state power by playing along, no matter how far they might go in resistance.

From a classroom perspective, Propagandhi is on the fringe of everyday experience. Although they wouldn't qualify as extreme music within the punk/metal world, they would be extreme within most government-curriculum-inspired lessons. I could see them being used in Social Studies or Language Arts classes to show how negative feelings, pain points, fuel creativity and cultural production. A lot of the songs come out of feelings of dread, exasperation, and the urge to give up on the human-subjugated world altogether. But obviously, the members don't give up. They create art instead, and thus alleviate the shared pain of others. On a song-by-song basis, they would have a lot to teach about history and contemporary culture. Overall, I think the quality of the song writing and the specificity of topics would make them a good model for creative writing.

Many punk bands and albums tie me to my past, as a teenage punk that needed the music in the scene. Propagandhi is different because the band has grown up with me. Their music and thought have evolved over the years, so there's no nostalgia to it. This is living art. I'm so stoked to know that there's another album in the works! Hopefully the band has a few more left in them at least.

Steve

Introduction

Steve is a graduate student and teacher who relatively recently became a fan of Propagandhi. This creates a unique perspective in which we have a professional adult discovering Propagandhi, perhaps after their most impressionable years. Yet, Steve played drums in multiple punk bands, promoted shows (even promoting shows at schools) in eastern Iowa. As a teacher, Steve offers wonderful insights on Propagandhi and punk in the classroom. He provides a great example of how punk can influence teaching.

Autobiographical Vignette

I never really had an issue with school while growing up. I was an obedient and intelligent kid in general. My frustration with compulsory education manifested when I started teaching. On the educator side, I have a wider view of how students are treated in general, what grades actually look like, how they really only give information on how someone follows directions, and how much influence corporations have over schools. There is an endless list of issues embedded in schools that have nothing to do with learning and exploring individual interest.

Schools and educators can take a page from punk. Punk is born out of those students who aren't interested in standardized school experiences. Punks are the ones counted out and expected to fail. Why, though? We know these individuals can create movements and critique institutions with single lines in songs. How can schools discount individuals that go on to learn to play guitar from a zine or drums from watching others play at shows? Schools don't encourage learning; schools perpetuate obedience and rule-following. For me, punk is foundational for my own pedagogy in teaching. I want to foster the type of learning that punk perpetuates, the learning focused on individual student experience and exploration. Punk pedagogy is rebellion, critique, self-examination, exploration, and DIY.

I have identified with punk ever since I learned about it. Punk came to me in the 2000s with emo and pop punk, but I've extended my listening as much as possible. Punk is what comes from a community formed around creating music in a DIY method. I think naturally this comes from some type of rebellion. A need to go against the grain in defiance of whatever you don't agree with. Punk is the ability and ideal to stand up against the BS. I think a real punk community embraces anyone who wants to know what it is about.

I didn't know much about Propagandhi until only a few years ago. I was talking with my friend and tattoo artist about getting back into Anti-Flag. He and I are both vegan and so are the members of Anti-Flag. He then turned me onto Propagandhi. I started with *How to Clean Everything* and really loved it. A few songs stuck out as odd like "Ska Sucks," but overall, I really enjoyed their message and the way they very blatantly married punk and politics.

Propagandhi represent punk well. Punk is ever evolving and wide-ranging. As a singular representation of punk, I think Propagandhi fits well. They promote defiance and rebellion against that which they disagree with. Though their sound has evolved from strict punk to more challenging aspects of metal, they're rooted in punk. Their music has helped me explore bands with very clear political stances in their music and liner notes. Part of my own pedagogy as a teacher has been influenced by my own study of bands like Propagandhi.

While I didn't listen to Propagandhi in high school or college, I am a teacher now. Like with other bands rooted in punk DIY, Propagandhi is another testament to students willing to put their exploration and personal educational journey in subjects not traditionally linked to school. Schools in general have an issue of forcing curriculum that students may or may not be interested in. When I ask students if they enjoy school, learn about what they're interested in, or even have a chance to explore on their own, they always say no. Schools do not encourage learning, they're focused on training individuals toward workforce practices and obedience. Propagandhi is one of those focal points of punk rebellion and vocal critique for me, personally. They, and punk overall, really help me examine my own life and how I go about interacting with others and institutions.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Punk as Radical Youth Pedagogy

When I told Chris Hannah that the task of this dissertation was to uncover Propagandhi's hidden curriculum in order to see what made the band appear to be more effective at creating engaged critical learners, possibly more so than classroom teachers, he expressed doubt this was the case. He suggested that Propagandhi hasn't provided any new original ideas, but rather they were merely conduits for new ideas that people hadn't heard before. In other words, Propagandhi happened to present listeners with new ideas at the right time and place. Perhaps this was Chris' pushback on praise. In NOFX's song "One Celled Creature" targeting Chris' passion and methods in activism, Erik Melvin sings, "Maybe you are or could be the next Hoffman, Mahatma, or Chomsky."[1] Although NOFX appear to be giving a compliment in this verse, they fail to see Propagandhi and Chris' impact as teachers and conduits for ideas found in Gandhi's teachings or Chomsky's books. It's possible Chris thought this dissertation was doing a similar form of elevating the band's importance as potential iconic figures with unique philosophies. Rather, this dissertation treats Propagandhi's body of work as artistic cultural productions that confront societal injustices through its music. This dissertation shows the many ways in which Propagandhi do this. Furthermore, in doing this project, a hidden curriculum emerges so that listeners too can embark on the educative journey that Propagandhi had experienced and the aspects that they wished they had experienced while growing up.

One way to describe Propagandhi's hidden curriculum is through an understanding of a pedagogy of pain. This dissertation has shown the many ways Propagandhi utilizes and exercises pain to produce creative art that contests injustice while galvanizing youth to also confront

[1] NOFX, "One Celled Creature" on *Wolves in Wolves' Clothing.* Fat Wreck Chords. 2006

systems of oppression as well as internalized problematic beliefs. Pain is expressed in Jord's relentless drumming through his speed and intricate drum fills. Pain is felt through Todd's vocal cords being pushed to their physical limits. We can hear the pain in a soundbite of a pig being abused at a slaughterhouse. Pain shows itself through Chris' lyrics as he wrestles with his own cognitive dissonance. Pain fuels the intricate poetry of John experiencing loneliness within a mundane Winnipeg existence. As David brilliantly pointed out in his survey response, negative emotions and pain can be used in classrooms "to show how negative feelings, pain points, fuel creativity and cultural production." The angst many teens feel can be channeled for good. As we've observed in the stories collected from Propagandhi, they didn't have this outlet in school. None of them were engaged or felt connected to the aims of schooling. They found their voices in punk.

Propagandhi didn't simply want to convert anyone to their belief sets, rather they set to task challenging their fans to see the world differently. After Chris had the realization that he needed to "unlearn" the narratives he picked up at school, he thought that "maybe somebody else wants to too" and concluded, "So, that's what we did with the band."[2] In this sense, the fans get to feel like they are on the journey with the Band. Unlike a traditional classroom where students clearly understand that their teachers know all the answers, the Propagandhi classroom is a true collaboration between students and teachers. And perhaps this comparison is too loaded. Propagandhi, rather, create a classroom whose demographics is solely made up of learners. Of all the many lessons teachers can acquire from Propagandhi, perhaps this is one of the easiest and one that can help change the classroom climate. Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone continues to learn. This ethos even struck Sulynn as a fan when they recounted one of the most personally

[2] Chris Hannah Interview #1. June 28, 2021.

impactful Propagandhi song lyrics: “Tell you what--I’ll call you on your shit, PLEASE CALL ME ON MINE. Then we can grow together and make this shit-hole planet better in time.”[3]

Punk and Life-long Learning

“Much of the lasting learning I have achieved has been outside the walls of school. Through music, through my friends, through my own pursuits driven by my interests and passions.”
--David “Beaver” Guillas, former Propagandhi guitarist.[4]

This dissertation has shown that Propagandhi has continued to be an influential band throughout the duration of their career. They not only galvanized youth in the late 1990s into political action and to form new identities around compassion and social justice, but Propagandhi continue to create thought provoking music that still encourages contemplation, reflection, and debate.

John K. Samson confirmed that he left Propagandhi in the late 1990s as a vegan and anarchist due to the experience of being in Propagandhi. Yet Propagandhi would continue to influence later members well into adulthood. Beaver shared with me that, “Being in a band with Chris, Todd and Jord was one of the greatest educational experiences of my life. That’s no joke. They’ve influenced and inspired me in countless ways.” Beaver then continues with one of the key premises of this dissertation in which Propagandhi was able to do what schools could not, “I can’t say I ever felt inspired as a student in the education system, within the walls of a school.” This experience of life-long learning isn’t limited to solely those lucky enough to be in the band. Our six fan participants all show how the lessons from Propagandhi are with them today. Recall

[3] Propagandhi. “Apparently I’m a ‘P.C. Fascist’ (because I care about both human and non-human animals)” on *Less Talk, More Rock*. 1996
[4] Interview from email correspondence, Spring 2021.

how Ben approaches his career in Architecture with an approach inspired by Propagandhi. That approach is to continually improve, to continually learn and better yourself.

Lifelong learning is the self-motivated desire to continue learning.[5] For some, it could be working on a trade to improve employability, but in the context of Propagandhi and punk, it's about the constant drive to better the world and one's wisdom. It is not about collecting facts so you can dominate at your local bar's "Quiz Night." Todd captures this spirit in his drive to not only improve his guitar and bass playing, but in his passion to improve his art and paint skills. In our interview, he scoffs at the suggestion that he has a natural talent. He feels all the progress that he has made came from hard work. He even provides a terrific example of this in action in the world of Jiu-Jitsu where he used to be intimidated by bigger fighters, but after Todd was persistent in his training, it became easier to beat these opponents because they failed to work as hard as Todd. In this regard, Propagandhi's attitude of self-betterment through acquiring skills can be viewed as a counterpoint to Punk's original ethos, that anyone can play. Yes, anyone can play and start a punk band, but that doesn't mean you should work hard to improve and because skilled musicians. Likewise, this challenge remains for our learning spirit. It's not good enough to have form an identity around social justice and then remain in cruise control. One must continue to encounter new ideas, challenge your own beliefs, and constantly detect bullshit in all its many forms.

Punk and the Classroom

"I feel there might be an imagination gap in society where people who are either predisposed to having an active imagination or who have been permitted the time and space to indulge in imagining things, tend to be able to imagine themselves in somebody else's shoes, whereas people who are less imaginative are actually perhaps physically unable to do that."

--Chris Hannah, Interview #2, June 29, 2021

[5] Jarvis, Peter. *Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Human Learning*. Psychology Press, 2006.

One aspect that hasn't been discussed in much detail is the imaginative qualities needed to create music and lyrics. This dissertation has touched on the skills, artistry, compassion, and emotions that drive Propagandhi's music. If we follow Chris' hunch to cherish imagination not solely for its playful creations, but for its ability to create empathetic people, then perhaps we may have stumbled on another core aspect of punk pedagogy: unlocking imagination. This has been alluded to in prior sections. For example, the inquiry method's entire framework rests upon curiosity and imaginative thinking. The beauty in Propagandhi's hidden curriculum is the connection between using one's pain to fuel a creative and imaginative creation, such as a song or painting.

Teachers can model this by having their students create zines inspired by punk aesthetics. Not only are these zines imaginative in nature, but they are supported by emphatic challenges to injustice systems. Steven Andresen presents the impact of zine creation in the secondary arts classroom. He demonstrates how punk pedagogy can function in the arts to help students explore their own ideas and interests.[6] However, a punk aesthetic or a specific punk practice like zine making aren't necessary for utilizing Propagandhi's hidden curriculum. Afterall, not everyone will appreciate the punk aesthetic or sound. Would it be fair to make students endure music that pains their ears? What a sound punk pedagogy will offer is a place for students to utilize their own interests and apply them in the classroom without judgment.

If a teacher, therefore, can't teach punk, they can utilize the pedagogy of punk. Propagandhi provides a wonderful guide. Teachers can provide texts and sources from voices that are not often found in the classroom. Allow students to represent the voices of the

[6] Andresen, Steven. *Punk Pedagogy: Rebellion, Critique, Self-Examination, Exploration, and DIY in the Secondary Visual Arts Classroom*. Master's Thesis, The University of Iowa. 2023.

marginalized and oppressed so that they can build and cultivate compassion and global thinking. Teach students to also put themselves in the shoes of the perpetrator, like Propagandhi does in "Rattan Cane." Let students create texts with multiple mediums. Encourage that student who wants to create a graphic novel rather than a five-paragraph essay. While I was a teaching assistant in comparative literature, I had a student who was beginning to drop out due to a severe mental health crisis. Rather than demanding that student to write their final essay which they were struggling to do, I offered them a choice to express their ideas in a new form. That student accepted the compromise and wrote two songs that reflected on the books we had read that quarter. I wouldn't have been comfortable with the solution had it not been for my work researching Propagandhi and their hidden curriculum. Continuing through Propagandhi's hidden curriculum, allow students to share their own stories. Value their experiences. Furthermore, cultivate their ability to weed through bullshit in all its forms and from all its sources. Encourage inquisitive thinking. Allow them to challenge the syllabus, the curriculum, the test, the assignment, the teacher. Every day, teachers should ask how they can empower their students. As Postman would often say, don't ask how you can teach students better; ask how you can help them learn. Remove "teacher" from your vocabulary. Become an educator, a punk rock educator.

School's Influence on Punk

"I think a lot of people spend a lot of time playing music, and school music programs are sort of part of the public curriculum here too, so there's always been good musicians in Winnipeg, I'd say, sort of regardless of the genre. A lot of people can really play here."
--Jord Samolesky, Interview #2

Although Propagandhi, and punk in general, criticize compulsory education, there are numerous threads to follow that indicate how K-12 education in fact has nurtured punk, either through training children in music and instruments, or from inspirational teachers that promoted

poetry and creative writing. Propagandhi members discuss the occasional positive moments they've had in school. Todd was able to play KISS songs in his mandolin group at school, while an English teacher encouraged John to write poetry. We also learned that Jord played trumpet in the school band. Sulynn recounted the many school performances from her childhood as well. Therefore, this dissertation must acknowledge the positive effects arts education has had on youth. Perhaps, this could be one of the main reasons the arts are often under threat of closure in the U.S. to make room for more S.T.E.M heavy curriculum.

If schools taught Chris Hannah that he wasn't smart, they may have unwittingly provided him some tools for him to express himself creatively, even if he's falsely labeled himself as unremarkable. When I told Chris about this dissertation, I explained that one question I would try to answer was, "How was Propagandhi so effective at transforming lives more so than what's typically credited to a high school teacher?" He replied, "I don't know if that's true." This could be interpreted as him devaluing the influence of Propagandhi or elevating the value of schooling. I see it as a school's ability to make students feel inadequate. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 6's "Hidden Curriculum. David "The Beaver" Guillas describes this further in his takedown of report cards, "And what about kids who get "bad grades?" What is their narrative? "I'm dumb." "I can't do anything." "I'm useless." Report cards also affect how we see each other. There are the smart ones and the dumb ones." Although school's may have provided some fundamental musical training for youth starting punk bands, it would appear that much of the anger and angst at authority and establishments were first cultivated in the classroom.

Conclusion

Propagandhi's body of work acts as a recorded history of punk activists (and former students) reacting to a social and political landscape. As students disenfranchised with their

education, we have seen Propagandhi become instrumental teachers and role models to punk youth. This dissertation documents the artistry involved in challenging oppressive systems, confronting cognitive dissonance, mobilizing activism, and encouraging others to not only critically engage with the world, but to do so in compassionate and creative ways. Propagandhi have helped its listeners develop "crap-detectors" not only for challenging opposing viewpoints, but for also challenging their community's and especially their own bullshit. These lessons remain into adulthood, where the fan participants in this dissertation document the ever-present influence Propagandhi has on their lives.

The landscape of punk is ever changing. The Internet, social media and digital media overall have completely changed the punk landscape. Punk no co-exists in the digital realm. Physical zines have disappeared in favor of podcasts. How this will help or hurt punk is up to future research. This dissertation has shown how artwork, the printed word, and especially older forms of correspondence held an authenticity that reflected care and passion for Propagandhi and their fanbase. Therefore, this dissertation captures a special moment in the history of punk. Ideally, this dissertation has shown that no era, or medium is inaccessible to Propagandhi's Hidden Curriculum.

AFTERWORD

Scott Robertson

It's December 2016. My band and I load our equipment into an early 2000s Subaru Outback. Getting respite from the minus seven degrees outside, my guitars are stacked in the back seat inside hard cases, still bearing airport luggage tags. I've made the trek from a temperate Los Angeles to a seemingly polar Denver to record a full-length album for my band, Girlband. As my boots crunch the snow just outside Black in Bluhm Recording Studio, I reflect on how, ever since Propagandhi and punk music first changed my life 20 years prior, punk rock fueled my passion for learning and led me to graduate school and this very dissertation.[1] Somehow, where traditional schooling failed to make me a critical thinker, punk filled in and helped raise my consciousness. Punk shaped many aspects of my relationship with school: my ideas about teaching and learning, my academic identity, my interest in politics, and my overall approach to understanding the world.[2] Now, the roles have been reversed: my work in researching punk and education has reignited my passion for creating punk music. After a 12-year break from recording, I've brought the band back together to record our new 15-song album, *The Letdown*.

I grew up in the 1980s in Cerritos, California, a small Los Angeles suburb. As a child, I attended a private Christian school. Most of the students came from affluent families. I was aware, even from a young age, that my family was different. I recall flipping through the school

[1] How my punk identity permeates so many aspects of my life is not only a terrific illustration of Douglas Kellner's description of media forging identities, but also how these identities remain well into adulthood. Douglas Kellner. *Media Culture: cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern.* New York: Routledge. 1995

[2] The dissertation will also detail the influence punk has had on my classroom teaching during my years as an adjunct professor at community college, as well as two years as a Teaching Assistant in Music History in the Department of Music at UCLA.

directory with dread realizing that only my family's address contained an apartment number. My mother worked in the high school cafeteria to supplement the financial aid my brother, two sisters, and I were receiving for tuition. Later, my mother was hired as the part-time high school French teacher while my father kept long hours at a supply warehouse. Both parents worked hard to keep us in a private school, allowing us to have a quality education for as long as possible.[3] There were other signs that we were different too. My neighborhood friends were African American, Asian, and Hispanic, unlike the Caucasian children at my private school. This realization created a disconnection between my home and school life. As I grew, I became more aware that our lack of wealth separated us from the other families at school. While I had friends at school, I was wary of forging deeper friendships. I was afraid that I would eventually have to invite school friends to my small apartment, which happened to be located within a large auto mall. Yet, for the most part, I had a contented childhood.

Growing up as a kid in the 1980s, my musical tastes were influenced by my father and brother whereas my political and religious beliefs were shaped most by my mother. My musical interests were an amalgamation of my father's nostalgia for the Oldies of the 50s/60s, and romantic pop rock of the 70s. Roy Orbison, The Vogues, and David Cassidy were my introduction to popular music. My brother, Matt, the talented musician of the family, bestowed upon me an appreciation for classical, brass ensemble, jazz, and acapella.[4] When my brother wasn't home, I would sneak through his music collection and throw on Vivaldi, Glenn Miller, or Chuck Mangione. Regarding my mother's influence, I was taught to be a good Christian kid, wary of cultural evils. Punk, Metal, and even role-playing games like *Dungeons and Dragons*

[3] When the tuition became too much to bear, we finished private school in 1992. My brother, Matt graduated from the high school; my two sisters and I transferred to public school.
[4] My brother has been a music teacher and band instructor in the California K-12 system since 2003.

were all contrary to a Christian life. I remember calling into a Christian radio program and getting a free t-shirt for telling the audience that 'metal rots your brain'. My mother was central to our family's religious and political beliefs. As a former Catholic, turned fundamentalist Christian, my mother defined the family's Christian Conservative identity. As a 12-year-old, I openly tried to convince classmates to listen to Rush Limbaugh. When I was with my friends from the apartment complex, I would do my best to scare them about going to Hell if they didn't believe in Jesus.

So, when I first heard punk music, it was an attack on my pop music sensibilities as well as my conservative upbringing. Sonically, I was too distracted by the constant "Oom Pa, Oom Pa" interplay of the kick drum and snare to be able to recognize any noticeable melody. In 1990, I heard my first underground punk band Guttermouth, a fast and chaotic punk band from Huntington Beach, California.[5] Not only did their name leave a bad taste, but the repetitive drumbeat also gave me a headache that pounded in time with the snare. Further adding to my distaste were my fears that this type of music was Satanic. Along with my mother, I was caught in the Heavy Metal and Punk moral panic in the United States.[6] For example, when I first heard "Cop Killer" by Ice T's band Body Count during a heated game of *NHL 94* with my friend Steve Adamus on his Sega Genesis console, I was terrified. The fear went beyond hearing so many curse words. The idea that someone would want to kill the good guys (cops) was horrifying.[7] Jarring experiences like this are what can pull a kid into punk music. For example,

[5] It is quite possible that I had heard the Ramones or the Clash on the radio prior to hearing Guttermouth, but the former arguably had pop music sensibilities that Guttermouth was clearly upending.
[6] For a detailed history and discussion of moral panic, see Kenneth Thompson, *Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 1998).
[7] This personal account reaffirms Ellis' description of autoethnography as it connects my personal experience in order to understand a cultural experience. Carolyn Ellis, *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004).

Propagandhi's Chris Hannah was lured into punk rock because of such a jolting experience.[8] This did not happen to me. I followed my brother's lead and mocked punk music as talentless garbage. I preferred to shut the lights off in my bedroom and softly play Pachelbel's "Canon" by the Canadian Brass on my brother's stereo.[9]

I was happy listening to the curated music of my father and older brother. However, I slowly began to recognize the social capital that popular and underground music provided. I pretended to like punk, but only to appear cool. In 1992, I borrowed some of Steve's punk CDs and brought them to a 7th grade classmate's Halloween party. I gave Joey, the party host, a stack of CDs from bands like the Descendents and NOFX, but I hadn't given any of them a listen. In 1994 during my freshman year of high school, punk became very popular in the US. I enjoyed some of the punk songs now appearing on the radio like Green Day's hit song "Basket Case," but I remained too cynical to claim punk as a genre I truly enjoyed.[10] So through most of high school, I was my older brother's musical shadow. While many high school students were jumping on the new trends in music, I was still listening to what I could borrow from my dad and brother.

It wasn't until my senior year at Richard Gahr High School in 1996 that punk finally struck a chord with me. Perhaps the fact that I was gaining independence by having a job and a car helped make me ready for punk music.[11] A serendipitous moment arising from Steve's

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[8] In the forward to *Rebel Music* (2015), Chris Hannah discusses the first time listening to MDC (Millions of Dead Cops). He went home insulted and mortified by the content of an MBC album with lyrics like, "John Wayne was a Nazi." But something ate away at him, and he went to the record store and bought more from MDC. That was his gateway into punk.

[9] On Girlband's song "Cannon Fodder" from our album *One Disaster After Another*, we wrote an instrumental middle section around this famous Pachelbel Baroque piece and modeled the guitar melody after the arrangement by the Canadian Brass.

[10] With Green Day on the cover of *Spin*, November 1, 1994, the caption reads "The Year Punk Broke"

[11] I had worked as a telemarketer during the end of my junior year and into the summer. I then worked as a cashier at a large retail chain during the beginning of my senior year. After that chain went out of business, I

forgetfulness brought me to punk. Steve had borrowed my 1986 Dodge Daytona for the day, and when he returned it, he left a cassette inside the car's tape deck. From the opening moment when I turned the ignition and heard two blaring guitars, I was hooked. Now, punk was different. It was melodic, fun, and energetic. Not only were the guitars playing harmonies, but the songs also had beautiful backup vocals that would embarrass any acapella fan. Everything I had been conditioned at home to enjoy was present. I changed my mind; punk was no longer talentless. I was captivated by the songs of Millencolin, a skate-punk band from Sweden.[12] Their songs were light and fun with lyrics ranging from playing video games to not eating meat. These lyrics also did nothing to challenge my beliefs. Deceptively, punk was now safe. Listening to Millencolin, I could sense their youth and joy in the music. Millencolin had rhythm and lead guitars that often harmonized with each other while playing rhythmically focused riffs. I became enamored with the music. This visceral connection to the music made my heart race. This feeling inspired me to seek out more punk music. I was soon amassing my very own collection of punk. For the first time, I possessed my own music, not music curated by my father or brother.

Not only did punk music allow me to express my own musical tastes, but it also helped me craft an identity.[13] When I was first turned on to punk music, it was for the most part, a personal experience. I would listen to albums in the car, or in my bedroom. Nevertheless, I still shared my thoughts on bands with friends. Steve and I would share music with each other, and often go to record stores in order to discover new bands. I had gotten Steve to like California punk band NOFX, and he was trying to turn me onto Canadian punk band Propagandhi's 1993

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got my third job at Aaron Brothers Art Mart in December 1996. I had been able to save money from all three jobs and bought a used car in December 1996.

[12] Millencolin also becomes a big inspiration for me. They were signed under Epitaph Records who will later become one of the biggest underground punk labels in the world. They, along with Fat Wreck Chords (Propagandhi's label), help define the Southern California skate-punk sound of the 1990s.

[13] Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995).

album *How to Clean Everything*.[14] The most extreme we went with our appearance was bleaching our hair. We didn't wear studs and safety pins on our jackets or stitch on patches of our favorite bands to our clothing. In fact, we detested the imagery of the stereotypical street punk that people conjure up when they think Sex Pistols and other UK punk acts.[15] In hindsight, our subtle rejection of those early punk aesthetics could be traced from the denim jacket rockers The Ramones to early Southern California punk bands like the Descendents.[16] Although we didn't brand ourselves as punk rockers, the effects punk had on us was life changing. Author Gary Clarke pointed out that most young people never plunge entirely into subcultures but "draw on particular elements of subcultural style and create their own meanings and uses of them."[17]

Concert going marked the next stage of our evolution in punk. I had never been to a concert (or "show" as punks like to say) before and was extremely curious. Singing along to songs with a hundred other teenagers gave me a sense of community I had never felt. Although kids who were violently moshing perplexed us, the experience was life changing.[18] On the way out, I bought a shirt, and a new CD. On the following Monday, I wore the shirt to school. But this wasn't just a new shirt. For the first time in my life, the shirt I was wearing represented something in my life that I cared about, something that demonstrated an aspect of me. Steve and I went to more shows, collected more shirts, and made new friends. But the biggest changes were yet to come.

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[14] Propagandhi, *How to Clean Everything* (San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords, 1993, CD).
[15] For more on the Sex Pistols and UK punk, see Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber, 2011).
[16] For a nice video record of the Ramones' fashion aesthetic, see the documentary *Punk: Attitude*, dir. Don Letts (USA: Shout! Factory, 2011), DVD.
[17] Gary Clarke, "Defending Ski-Jumpers: A Critique of Theories of Youth Subcultures", in Simot Frith and Andrew Goodwin (Eds.), *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word* (London: Routledge, 1990)
[18] For a scholarly consideration of moshing see Bradford Scott Simon, "Entering the Pit: Slam-dancing and Modernity," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 1 (1997).

The Band and College Years

I owe my undergraduate and graduate education to punk. After graduating from Gahr High School, I started college at California State University, Fullerton in the fall of 1997. While my father did not attend college, when it came to education, I followed my mother's path by attending her alma mater. However, once in college, I had to navigate through the system on my own. I entered as a Computer Science major. Bad decision. Flabbergasted by coding, I quickly changed my major to Math, another bad decision. Once Calculus became too intense to follow, I conceded defeat and became undeclared. All along, I had been taking political science classes for fun. I took these courses to supplement what I had been learning from punk. For example, there is a Propagandhi song called "And We Thought Nation States Were a Bad Idea."[19] I didn't exactly know what a Nation State was, but fortunately, there was a class on that exact topic. So, I signed up eager to learn. The more I listened to Propagandhi, the more my consciousness was raised, and of course, the more questions I had. Soon, I was taking world politics, religion, political philosophy, as well as anthropology courses. Due to the combination of my courses and Propagandhi, my identity as a conservative Christian was quickly eroding. My position on homosexuality transformed from one of fear, to one of loving acceptance. I signed up for classes, not to fulfill requirements, but to learn more about the topics presented to me by Propagandhi. This zeal led me to my new major. One day I visited a Political Science student advisor to check if I was able to get a minor in Political Science. I was shocked to discover that I had long charted a journey to get a bachelor's in Political Science. Surprisingly, I was a few classes from fulfilling the degree's requirements.[20]

[19] Propagandhi, *Less Talk, More Rock* (San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords, 1996, CD).
[20] For more stories on punk's influence on the classes and degrees college students seek, see Zach Furness, *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2012).

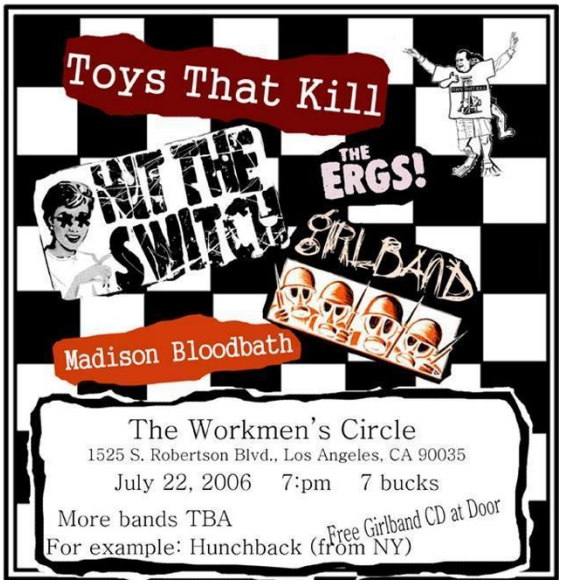
In 1998, after two years of consuming punk music, Steve and I shared the same epiphany; let's start a band. Punk made us believe we could create our own music because it was more about the music than the musician. We purchased guitars and began learning how to play. We taught ourselves to play by practicing along to some of our favorite punk bands. Soon we were lucky to recruit a drummer, Cary: a co-worker from my days at Aaron Brother's Art Mart. Now we were a band.

Back at Cal St. Fullerton in the fall semester of 1999, I was now a Political Science major. I was learning about politics and power, ethics, and morality. My courses helped continue my passion for punk and my band.[21] I also began taking music appreciation classes like the History of Rock, and the History of the Beatles. I remember as I sat in History of Rock, I dreamed of piecing together my own History of Punk class. Little did I realize that this someday could come true. I took what I learned from my courses and brought it to band practice.

As a band, we made and packaged our own 4-track demos, printed our own t-shirts, booked our own shows, and carried on as we thought a band should. We were doing it completely by ourselves; we were living the punk tenet of DIY.[22] We eventually paid for studio time and recorded our first album. We handed out this album for free out our shows. We may have been a little too extreme in our belief that we shouldn't profit from our band. Over the course of a few more years we recorded two more albums before calling it quits in 2006.

[21] For more on the ways in which schooling affects punk see Jessica A. Schwartz, "Listening in Circles: Punk Pedagogy and the Decline of Western Music Education," *Punk & Post Punk* 4, no. 2 (2015).
[22] For a cursory look at the Educative effects of DIY, see Rebekah Cordova, *DIY Punk as Education: from mi-education to educative healing* (Charleston: Information Age, 2017).

Flyer of Girlband's first show on Jan 27, 2000



The flyer that I created for Girlband's final show in July 2006.

Life After the Girlband: Living Abroad, and Graduate School

I taught in Fukuoka, Japan for two years as an assistant language teacher at a public junior high. In the fall of 2007, during my second year in Japan, I applied to the Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences at UCLA with a concentration in Social Sciences and Comparative Education. I wrote a statement of purpose expressing a desire to explore socio-linguistic features of rural Japanese students in contrast with their urban teachers. Clearly, I wasn't exactly sure what I was doing. I just knew that I had to join SSCE because their interdisciplinary approach resonated with me. I had a degree in political science and completed graduate coursework in Linguistics, so I felt I had the interdisciplinary background to fit the program. In the early spring of 2008, I read my acceptance letter from UCLA at my desk in the teachers' room at my Japanese junior high school. All the teachers were in class while I stayed behind. This was a common occurrence. My eyes welled up as I read that I was accepted into the Graduate School of Education. Alone in a large room filled with empty cubicles, I celebrated my proudest accomplishment. I was not going to renew my teaching contract for a third year; I had a new home to go to.

I began my master's program in the Social Sciences and Comparative Education division of the Graduate School of Education at UCLA in September 2008. Because punk, and specifically Propagandhi, had completely broadened my capacity and strength to challenge ideas and orthodoxy, I felt completely at home in my seminar classes at UCLA.

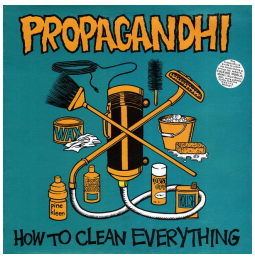
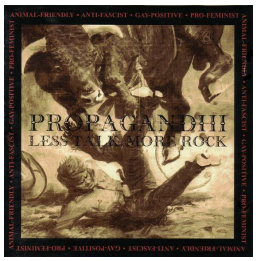
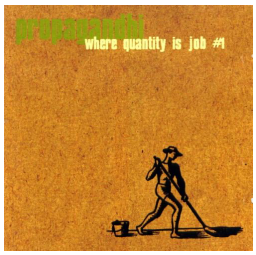
In the winter of 2009, I began to consider punk scholarship and punk pedagogy as a potential source of future research after taking a Cultural Studies course with Douglas Kellner during my first year of graduate school in the GSE&IS. Here I was introduced to the celebrated cultural studies icon Dick Hebdige and his seminal work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*

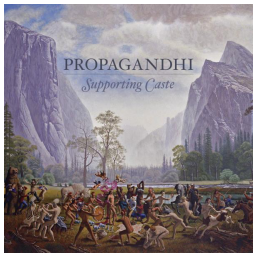
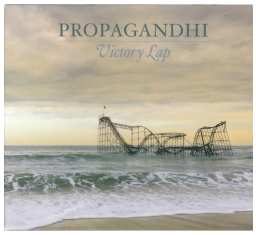
(1979). Hebdige's work on the youth subculture in the U.K. validated my belief that punk could be discussed in the academy. However, at this point, I hadn't considered punk pedagogy as a possible dissertation. Like Kellner and Hebdige, I saw punk as a subculture with its own cultural practices. In order to illustrate Hebdige's writing, I gave my student presentation on an episode of the hit TV show *South Park* in which the "goth kids" saw their identity being threatened by a new emerging subculture: "the vamps."[23] Kellner turned me on to cultural studies, but I was ultimately disappointed. Rather than seeing a curriculum in punk that can arouse critical thought, punk was lightly presented in terms of identity creation. This ultimately didn't inspire me, and I began to seek out other writings on punk. For me, punk changed how I viewed the world. So rather than attempt to further discuss punk in terms of a youth movement described in aesthetic terms, I sought to uncover the "curriculum" of punk. After co-editing *Rebel Music: Resistance through hip-hop and punk*, it became clear that I needed to explore a singular punk band that best represented punk pedagogy. There was little doubt that Propagandhi would be that band.

[23] *South Park*, "The Ungroundable." Season 12 Episode 14. Written and directed by Trey Parker, Comedy Central. November 19, 2008.

APPENDICES

*Appendix 1: Propagandhi Album Discography**

	*How to Clean Everything* (1993) Label: San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords	Members: Chris Jord John
	*Less Talk, More Rock* (1996) Label: San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords	Members: Chris Jord John
	*Where Quantity is Job #1* (1998) Label: Winnipeg: G7 Welcoming Committee	Compilation of previously unreleased material, as well as live songs. Members appearing: Chris, Jord, John, Todd
	*Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes* (2001) Label: San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords	Members: Chris Jord Todd
	*Potemkin City Limits* (2005) Label (world): San Francisco: Fat Wreck Chords Label (Canada): Winnipeg: G7 Welcoming Committee	Members: Chris Jord Todd

	*Supporting Caste* (2009) Label: Winnipeg: G7 Welcoming Committee and Smallman Records	Members: Chris Jord Todd "Beaver"
	*Failed States* (2012) Label: Hollywood: Epitaph Records	Members: Chris Jord Todd "Beaver"
	*Victory Lap* (2017) Label: Hollywood: Epitaph Records	Members: Chris Jord Todd Sulynn

*Cover art used with permission of Propagandhi.

Appendix 2: Fan Survey Question Prompts

Introduction: Thank you for participating in this survey about your personal experiences with Propagandhi. The information gathered here will be used in research for a UCLA Graduate School of Education dissertation conducted by Scott Robertson.

Section 1: Background Questionnaire

Name:

Email:

Preferred Pseudonym for dissertation reference:

Nationality

How did you hear about this survey?

Age range

Highest level of schooling completed

Rather than asking all participants to report different aspects of their identity (race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.), I'd like to give you this space to volunteer any aspects of your identity that you feel is relevant to your experience as a fan of Propagandhi. Please share what you think matters.

Did you participate in your local punk scene? If so, how did you contribute? When and where did this take place?

Section 2: Propagandhi Questionnaire

You're not expected to write more than a paragraph (5-10 sentences) per item, but feel free to write as much as you can. One of the best ways to truly convey your story is by providing detailed examples in your responses.

How and when did Propagandhi enter your life? What were your initial feelings?

Do you now or have you ever identified yourself as punk? If so, what defines punk for you? If not, what kept you from identifying as punk?

Do you feel Propagandhi represents Punk well? If so, how? If not, why not?

In what area of your life has Propagandhi affected you most? In other words, what aspect of your life has changed most due to Propagandhi's influence?

If you were a fan of Propagandhi during your school years, how did their music impact your education experience? (If you started listening to Propagandhi in college, then share their influence on your college experience)

If Propagandhi entered your life after formal education or they've continued to impact your learning after completing school, in what ways do you feel Propagandhi has contributed to your lifelong learning as an adult?

What is your favorite Propagandhi album? Why? What is your favorite Propagandhi song? Why?

Have you attended a Propagandhi concert before? How many have you attended? How would you describe a Propagandhi concert?

Has Propagandhi influenced you musically? If so, how has this manifested?

Is there a topic or stance held by Propagandhi (likely expressed through lyrics) that you currently disagree with? Were there past disagreements that have been resolved and which you now side with Propagandhi? What ultimately influenced you to change positions?

How important was it to have physical copies of Propagandhi albums? How has the ability to read lyrics and liner notes affected how you consume(d) Propagandhi's music and message?

Bonus: Is there anything further that you'd like to share that didn't come up in any of the above questions that you feel is an important aspect of your story with Propagandhi? Use this as your opportunity to fill those gaps.

What was your overall experience of compulsory education (K-12)? Feel free to focus on any years that may have had the most impact. For example, some responses might stick to high school experiences, while others focus on elementary. It's up to you to share what stage of schooling might best represent your memories of school.

What lessons can Propagandhi (or punk in general) teach schools?

Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Band Interview Questions conducted over phone

Minor alterations were made depending on which band members were interviewed in order to make the interview more personal. Often new questions arose based on how the conversation was going.

Early Memories
1. Where were you born and raised?
2. How was homelife?
3. Parent situation/occupation?
4. Describe your household politics.
5. Was creativity encouraged, free and open thought?

School
1. Describe your elementary school experience.
2. How did you get to school?
2. Describe your favorite class or teacher.
3. Please share any souring or traumatic school experiences.
4. What did you like or hate about school?
5. How do you think you've been shaped by your schooling?
6. Were you ever cynical of what you were being taught?

Music
1. What music was around you as a kid? Share your earliest musical memory.
2. What was the first music that felt like y*ours*?
3. How old were you when you received your first instrument, and what was it?
4. Was music encouraged at home?
5. Were you writing lyrics at an early age? What topics did you write about?

Punk
1. Describe your first encounter with anything punk (fashion, music, etc.).
2. What attracted or led you to punk (community)?
3. Can you describe this community? Key places? Key people? Key events?
4. Does/when does punk start to become an identity? Do you become a member of the scene?
5. What did you find interesting about punk (engaging, fascinating, inspiring)?
6. Why the pull or attraction to punk?
7. What was gained through punk?
8. Please share your definition of punk. (sonically and/or ideologically)
9. Do you currently identify as punk?
10. How might you present to others as punk? How might they "know" this aspect of your identity?
11. Describe the ways in which your punk involvement, to this point, has informed your current work as learner, educator, publisher, podcaster, parent, or partner.
12. Has punk changed your ideas on education/school/learning?
13. Discuss reading and interacting with M*aximum RockNRoll*, submitting demos for review, reading articles, etc.

14. Does punk have any lessons to offer schools/teachers/classrooms?

Propagandhi

1. What led to your involvement (creation or joining) of Propagandhi?
2. Share the first song you wrote or performed where you felt you were on to something.
3. Take me through a practice in 1993. Where, who, when?
   - what would you discuss?
   - any memorable songs where everyone worked together?
   - recall any meaningful conversations about the world (outside of practice?)
   - meaningful exchanges conversations with other bands or scene participants
4. How involved were you with album art/liner notes? Example LTMR essays. Book recommendations
5. What is your favorite song, writing process, why memorable. Are you still proud?
5. The aesthetics: what were the motivations for the layout? Handwritten, xeroxed, drawings, jokes, newspaper clippings. Who was the audience? Do you miss this?
6. Why try to reach out to the Winnipeg scene?
7. What was your involvement with fan, newsletter, or zine outreach. Was it fun, important, empowering?
8. Was there a financial high point? Need to work?
9. Original ideological or political beliefs? What personal changes have you undergone due to being a member in Propagandhi?
10. What was touring like?
11. Are there any problematic lyrics within Propagandhi's catalog? What faults do you see now?
12. How are you involved in each other's lives?
13. What are the memorable musical moments that sonically represent ideas or pictures?

Winnipeg Scene

1. What are some ands or zines that inspired you?
2. A-Zone, Mondragon Café, give me a tour: shops, people, atmosphere
3. How did the scene accept you? Especially after signing to Fat Wreck Chords..

G7 Welcoming Committee

1. What is your relation to the label?
2. Did the label ever feel or become more important than the band?
3. Did the label have more potential for impact

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