A Rhetorical Justification for the film *Pump Up the Volume*

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

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(April 30, 1992)

Expected date of graduation
May 1992
ABSTRACT

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This justification examines the rhetorical significance of the film *Pump Up the Volume* using Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's *Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric* and Alasdair MacIntyre's Theory of Rhetorical Conversation and Moral Action. Before drawing conclusions about the rhetorical impact of the film itself, I will briefly describe the film, and apply Campbell's and MacIntyre's methods. I will also define and explain "Generation X" and find similarities between the film and the generation. Finally, I will examine some tools for future research. By examining these methods and artifacts, I will underscore the importance of the rhetoric of film and the impact it had on a generation. This study examines the importance of film as rhetoric and *Pump Up the Volume*’s impact as a rhetorical tool.
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Part One: Introduction

Statement of Purpose

You ever get the feeling that everything in America is completely fucked up? The feeling that the whole country is just one inch away from saying "That's it, forget it!" Think about it. Everything's polluted -- the firemen, the government, the schools, you name it. I don't know, everywhere I look it seems everything is sold out.

Christian Slater addressed this speech to a group of 20-30 year olds in theaters across the nation in October of 1990 in the film *Pump Up the Volume*. Filmmaker Allan Moyle created a work which he felt would appeal to a teen audience. To cement this attitude, he cast Christian Slater, teen idol, as the lead. *New York* magazine of September 1990 states that Moyle was trying to "light a fire under the long-dormant American youth of the Reagan-Bush era" (59). Moyle himself declared that he hoped to reach a teen audience with a film about the problems of being a high school student. Instead Moyle's film appealed to an older audience, a group of people who are commonly called by today's media "Generation X," "The Lost Generation," "The Baby Busters," "The Twentynothing Generation," "The Twentysomething Generation," "The Nothing Generation," "Posties," "Yippies," and "The 13ers (thirteenth generation)."
Although the film was marketed as a teen film, the response was overwhelmingly that of a more mature audience. The mistake Moyle made was in presenting a message which appealed to one group of people and assuming that it would appeal to another. Many critics declared that while the film was entertaining, it just served as a money-maker which was full of worn-out, empty rhetoric (Stevens 6). However, in a time in which films are an increasingly viable source of rhetoric, it is important to analyze the rhetorical significance of *Pump Up the Volume* and the impact and appeal it had to those of Generation X.
Part Two: Description of Moyle's film

The film is set in a small Arizona town. Mark Hunter is a transfer student from California who feels lost in a new world. He is shy and in a new school -- a situation which causes him to create a separate identity. At this point the character of "Happy Harry Hard On" is born. "Hard Harry" is a raving sex maniac who pretends to masturbate over the radio waves and is the pirate DJ of Hubert Humphrey High School. He comes on-air every night at 10 p.m. Harry represents the alter-ego of many of the students, cussing, masturbating, and promoting an uprising within the student body. He also answers phone calls and letters which ask for advice for such items as sex, love, homosexuality, and suicide.

Harry's philosophy that "The truth is a virus" and "So be it" quickly infect the school, as the students of Hubert Humphrey High take up his cause, calling for changes in their school system and their own lives. One of the changes which is most necessary is an administrative change. The current principal, Miss Cresswood, is eliminating students from the system due to low SAT scores or less than average class work. The students at Hubert Humphrey High are constantly in fear of being kicked out of school for any small infraction. After the students are expelled, Cresswood keeps their names on the roster in order to secure funding for the school's efforts. The students realize that something is inherently wrong with a system which denies students an education.

Not only does Harry approach the problems within the school system, but he attacks the larger problem of freedom of
speech and teen angst. He urges his peers to create their own radio stations, to take over the air waves and "talk hard." His radio program is condemned by school officials and the FCC reacts strongly to his "pirating" of the air waves. However, Harry preaches a much stronger lesson than just that of education. The message which he is trying to instill in the students of HHH is that life will get better, and they have to fight. He explains:

We're all worried. We're all in pain. That comes with having eyes and having ears. But just remember one thing. It can't get any worse. It can only get better. I mean, high school is the bottom. Being a teenager sucks, but that's not the point. Surviving it is the whole point. Quitting is not going to make you strong -- living will.

This larger message is the one which appealed to Generation X. It is the idea of being in control of one's own destiny, of holding out for what could be better which appealed to a generation which feels they have no control over their own lives. The 20-30 year olds who came to see the film came to identify with the themes Christian Slater, as Hard Harry, extolled throughout.

These themes led to the eventual arrest of Hard Harry and his girlfriend, Nora. But although the long arm of the law plucked Hard Harry from the football field of Hubert Humphrey High, the students rallied behind Harry with cries of "We love you Harry," and "Talk Hard." It was this message of a "lost youth" faced with a worn out world which appealed to the "Twentynothing Generation," bringing in older audience members by the droves.
Part Three: Justification of film as Rhetoric

Description and Explanation of Campbell's Five Components

In order to understand the impact this film had on the "Twentynothing Generation" it is important to first analyze the film as an important rhetorical tool, and Harry's message within the film as an extension of this tool used by Moyle to bring a pertinent message to today's youth. After analyzing the rhetorical implications, it is then important to examine the impact this film had on Generation X and how it was indeed indicative of that particular age group.

In her book, Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell states that in defining rhetoric, five particular themes are used. If applicable to a certain medium, then that medium can indeed be considered a form of rhetoric. The five steps involved in the process are that it must be propositional, problem solving, public, practical and poetic. Using these steps as described by Campbell, any form of communication can be considered rhetorical.

In order to apply this to film, we must first have a more specific understanding of Campbell's terms.

1. Propositional means that the discourse is specifically designed to justify certain conclusions. Just as an individual creates words which announce their conclusions, so film makers create a discourse which brings an audience to a particular decision.
conclusions, so film makers create a discourse which brings an audience to a particular decision.

2. **Problem solving** involves the difference between what the situation is and what is wanted. This is the **advisory** aspect of rhetoric -- it should offer advice about solutions. In this manner, film depicts not only social problems, but proposes a solution to those problems.

3. The **public** part of rhetoric is addressed to others. It reaches out to those of similar views and calls them to collective action. Films perpetuate this by bringing together like audiences to create a mood which could incite collective action.

4. **Practicality** seeks to alter symbolic behavior, attitudes or behavior. In this sense, rhetoric involves the sharing of information for a purpose, such as to evoke concrete relevant responses. The intent is to produce further behavior. Again, films play an important role in disseminating information for a purpose, in many cases one other than mere entertainment.

5. The **poetic** qualities of rhetoric involve the aesthetic, dramatic and emotive aspects. Once the first four themes are in place, the **poetic** aspect brings the point home by evoking a response and celebrating cultural values. To explore this aspect with film involves examining the various aesthetic devices and emotive
responses portrayed on the screen to create a response within the audience, be it laughter, anger or tears.

Application to *Pump Up the Volume*

Now that we better understand Campbell's method, we can apply these five steps to the film *Pump Up the Volume* to define its rhetorical impact and then analyze the power of Harry's message using Alstaire MacIntyre's theory of counter revolution as created through the example of the speaker (Frentz 2).

Moyle created the film specifically to speak to an audience, and bring them to certain conclusions about the content. This fulfills Campbell's *propositional* aspect. The syntax and content were both designed for a particular purpose, to propose certain values and beliefs which Moyle feels should be inherent in the audience. As a film, *Pump Up the Volume* serves as an important rhetorical tool. His message is one which was meticulously planned to create an atmosphere and bring his audience to draw certain conclusions.

Campbell's second aspect is *problem solving*. *Pump Up the Volume* does indeed offer a solution to society's ills. By watching the film, the audience is receiving the advisory message which Moyle exhibits. In creating a film specifically to address certain problems, Moyle realized that it was important for him to then offer solutions. Such solutions can be found in the rhetoric of the main character, Harry. Harry expounds on the importance of playing an active role, demanding answers and creating a network of individuals who can support one another's goals. Moyle's
solution lie in the fact that the audience cares enough to go out and watch the film. Moyle's message is clear: If you watch the film, you will have the advice you need to solve your problems.

The third aspect of Campbell's method is **public** accessibility. The film serves as a public address to an audience about the problems that today's youth faces. Although he had hoped it would appeal to a different public, Moyle still maintains this point of Campbell's method. The film is a public forum which is addressed to a collective audience. As with most films, marketing strategies lump individuals into groups of particular wants and needs. By creating a film which addresses these needs, Moyle is creating a public forum for rhetoric.

**Practicality** is Campbell's fourth aspect. In order to be rhetoric, discourse must seek to alter behavior or evoke a response. Unlike many "teen angst" films which are made simply to create revenue, Moyle's work evokes an emotional response from his audience. The film was touted as another teen film about the same tired old themes (Stevens 6). In reality, however, Moyle's film is a practical response to the state of today's world. Moyle's characters view the world as a dumping ground for the older generations. This reflects the state of the country with which Generation X is faced. For Generation X members, the 1980s were a time of false prosperity and security (Barringer 26). Today, Xers are faced with the same type of problems Harry and his friends faced in *Pump Up the Volume*. For Generation X members, *Pump Up the Volume* is a practical illustration of life today, and an emotion-evoking work. Throughout the film, a
number of emotions are evoked from the audience ranging from laughter to anger to frustration.

The final step in creating rhetoric, according to Campbell, is to make it poetic. While a combination of the other four steps creates the rhetorical importance, the impact comes through the use of aesthetic and emotive qualities. The film offers a number of aesthetic moments which indeed reinforce the values of love, friendship, and respect.

Using the five aspects of Campbell's method, Moyle has created a film which indeed fits into each particular step in developing film as an important form of rhetoric. The use of propositional, problem solving, public, practical and poetic aspects develops the fact that film, when constructed using these steps, can function as an important form of rhetoric. More importantly, it is obvious that Moyle's work, specifically, fulfills the needs of Campbell's method and can be defined as rhetoric.
Part Four: Description and Application of MacIntyre's Method

Brief description of MacIntyre's Method

With a better understanding of the rhetorical value of Moyle's film as a form of communication, it is important to continue with an exploration of Hard Harry's message using MacIntyre's theory of counter revolution as created through the example of the speaker. MacIntyre's theory is loosely based on Aristotle's view of happiness by virtue and Nietzsche's Ubermensch. MacIntyre combines these ideals, relying heavily on Aristotle, to create an avenue to the "great man" as explained by Nietzsche (Frentz 2). Aristotle offers MacIntyre the eternal search for morality, using various aspects of communication to realize the "happiness" to which each man is entitled. It is this happiness and freedom in moral choice, states MacIntyre, which allows individuals the opportunity to become "great men" and realize a moral way of life.

Detailed explanation of steps of MacIntyre's Method

MacIntyre's method is explained by Thomas S. Frentz in the February 1985 Quarterly Journal of Speech as using three means to obtain counter revolution.

1. **Practice** is the cooperative venture of a speaker's society toward obtaining a goal. This cooperative venture is joined by various participants in society, regardless of societal stereotypes. This aspect involves
collectivizing a group to work toward a goal which has intrinsic value and rewards. Practice also involves regulated standards of honor which participants must value to extend and improve the goals of the collective good.

2. The use of the narrative is MacIntyre's second important point of analysis. Narrative is defined as a story in the process of unfolding. MacIntyre states than when attempting to create a moral action, one must tell one's own individual life in terms of a story in the process. In this manner, narrative closely parallels the conversation, and the audience sees the speaker changing before his or her eyes. This change gives the audience the hope for change in situation or his or her own life because of the example she or he have viewed.

3. The final aspect of MacIntyre's method involves moral tradition. This involves the use of historical moral examples with which the audience can identify to present a strategy for creating moral action. The speaker, who is to lead the counter revolution, maintains moral values in the tradition of other leaders which includes sustaining practices and examples of individual lives based on historical contexts. By using historical examples, as well as a personal narrative, the speaker can create a broader
base for the creation of moral traditions within a particular audience.

It is by using these particular steps that a speaker can create a counter revolution by means of communication. MacIntyre claims that by understanding the aspects of rhetoric, a speaker can create a counter revolution within any given group of people by appealing to certain strongly-held beliefs. Aristotle claims that it is these beliefs which lead individuals to make the moral choices they make, thus creating the idea of the "great man" as explained by Nietzsche.
Application of MacIntyre's Method to *Pump Up the Volume*

Using MacIntyre's steps, Christian Slater's character of "Hard Harry," creates a counter revolution in the students of Hubert Humphrey High School. This can be seen by examining examples of behavior exhibited by Harry which exemplify MacIntyre's method and his belief about the importance of communication in creating a counter revolution. In order to understand how Harry achieves this, it is important to now apply MacIntyre's method to the rhetoric of "Happy Harry Hard On."

**Step One: Practice**

MacIntyre's first condition, Frentz explains, is **practice**. This involves a blending of traditional lines in order to create a collective movement towards a given goal. In the case of *Pump Up the Volume* the goal is freedom of speech and the right to an education. Throughout the film, allusions are made to the fact that Hubert Humphrey High students are not receiving their guaranteed right to an education. In one instance Miss Cresswood describes malcontents as individuals with "... no interest in education." The response by the school commissioner is "Oh come one, that describes almost every teenager I know." Throughout the film, the students who are expelled exhibit a sincere desire to return to school in order to get an education. Harry helps these teenagers by urging them to fight for their rights. Not only this, Harry also states that freedom of speech is a right which no one can be denied. One of the songs which Harry plays in his program...
is called "Freedom of Speech" and talks about the right of every individual to that particular freedom. Harry himself urges his listeners to take over the air waves, and let their voices be heard.

Although the school includes a spectrum of individuals, ranging from nerds to yuppies to alternatives, these lines are crossed in order to reach the ultimate collective goal. The cooperative venture begins with one of the first scenes where people gather on the football field to listen to Hard Harry's broadcast. The blending of traditional lines is seen when a "punk rocker" notices a "coupla yuppies" sitting next to them in a car. Nothing negative is said between the groups, however, showing how the cliques began to blend at the very start of the movie. By refraining from verbal aggression, the "punk rocker" is observing the traditional standards of honor set by the group in order to reach the goal. This is obviously different from the "punk rocker's" normal behavior, because throughout the film he is seen as a verbally and sometimes physically aggressive individual. He addresses the principal and several teachers verbally in order to resume his activities at the high school. In this instance, however, he refrains from his normally aggressive behavior to observe the traditional standards of honor set by the group.

Throughout the film, the lines are continually crossed as cassette tapes of Hard Harry's broadcasts are brought to school where cliques known as the hip, the scum, and the nerds gather together to listen. For the students of Hubert Humphrey High School, the stereotypes no longer matter. This is a direct example of MacIntyre's idea of practice, or a cooperative venture. The
students have combined to fight a common enemy, just as explained by Frentz. It is only Harry's message of working together to fight the common enemy that is important. Harry declares "People always think they know who a person is, but they are wrong. How a person should be -- who cares? Who cares? That's my motto." The message he is portraying is that it does not really matter what kind of clothes people wear, or who they hang out with. In the end, everybody is just who they are. This message is taken to heart by the individuals who listen to Harry's show.

Throughout the film, Harry plays a variety of music, from rap to alternative. For him, "Music is the universal language for all people." Again, the traditional lines are being blended through Harry's leadership to include all of the students. This blending creates the atmosphere that MacIntyre states is necessary in order to build a collective strong enough to achieve its goal. This atmosphere shows the individual that the group's goal is the most important objective. It's the music and the message, not the individual, that matters according to Harry. Harry uses other beliefs to strengthen the students will to work together. He is particularly fond of talking about the future, and the role his generation will play in that future. Harry appeals to the students by reminding them of their current role, "Your purpose is to get a job, get accepted. No one wants to hear it. You know, being young is sometimes less fun than being dead." Through this rhetoric, he hopes to create within his audience a need to make a difference,
to bring home the collective goal so that each individual is aware of his/her power to change things.

Towards the end of the film, this combining of disparate forces is again exemplified when the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) is brought in to "close down" Harry's station. The students band together and surround the car of the "head honcho of the FCC" dancing, singing, and making faces at the overblown executive. The final combining of forces occurs when Harry is arrested. At this point, the students rally behind Harry with cries of "We love you Harry" "Talk Hard," and in the background voices of all kinds and ages take over the airwaves with their own pirate radio stations. This symbolic action is a final tribute to the power that Harry, through his practice, gave to the students of Hubert Humphrey High.

MacIntyre's idea of practice, or collective action, is used quite effectively by Harry. Not only do the students cross the traditional lines to work towards a collective goal, the students also realize that this collective goal is not a new toy, but an intrinsic good which will affect everyone. In the case of Moyle's film, the students work together towards a higher goal, realizing the importance of such rights as freedom of speech and the right to an education. Through the students collective action, Hubert Humphrey High becomes a better place for the students.

Step Two: Personal Narrative

MacIntyre's second theme involves the narrative, which requires a change in the speaker, which the audience watches as
this change unfolds. MacIntyre states that a message is more likely to be communicated by creating a story of one's own life. Harry does this in order to show his audience that they can make a difference because he did. Harry's audience sees a youth who has been moved around the country so much that he does not really have a home to call his own. What is so effective about his rhetoric is that while it establishes him as an individual, he faces many of the same problems as his audience. This exemplifies MacIntyre's proposal that in order to create an audience who understands and realizes societal problems, the use of the narrative is important. One of Harry's major problems is the fact that he feels his parents "sold out" to the system: "My dad sold out, my mom sold out years ago when she had me. They made me everything I am today, so naturally I hate the bastards." This discontent with parents is not a new theme to teenagers, and Harry's audience is able to relate to his experiences because of the narrative form he uses.

Another problem that Harry faces is the fact that he is unable to develop close relationships. Because he's been moved so often, he finds it difficult to talk to other people. When he's not on the air, Mark Hunter is a shy boy who "eats his lunch alone on the staircase." The use of the various names shows the particular character which is being analyzed. Harry is Mark Hunter's alias, and I use that term when discussing the character as the DJ. However, when Mark begins to emerge as an individual of his own right, I will use Mark. This shows the difference between the two characters which are the same person. Through the letters and
phones calls Harry makes on the radio, he learns to talk to other people. Again, his audience relates to this problem, because many of them face the same dilemma. For example, Malcolm Kaiser, a young student who commits suicide in the film tells Harry "I'm all alone." Harry's response is "It's ok to be alone. Everyone's alone." Harry's understanding of people problems, even if they are not his own, gives his audience a clearer vision of Harry as an individual, and not just some raving lunatic DJ.

Throughout his story, Harry talks about his anger of selling out. He feels that the older generation has sold out to the system, and he is trying to avoid falling into the same trap. Harry becomes the typical angry youth, a rebel without a cause. Harry's narrative thus is familiar to most of the students at Hubert Humphrey High. This use of the narrative allows Harry's audience to see someone else's life unfolding; a life which includes the same problems. But Harry does have a cause, and it's his ability to communicate that to the audience which makes the message so poignant. He says that in order to avoid selling out, his generation has to make a difference:

Hang on and hang in there. You know I know all about the hating and sneering. I'm a member of the why bother generation myself, but why did I bother coming out here tonight? And why did you? It begins with us. not with the politicians, the experts, or the teachers, but with us, with you and me. The ones who need it most. He wants his generation to create something new, not rely on the same tired old themes: "There's nothing to do, nothing to look up
to, it's an exhausted decade. We can't even build any more theme
parks, because all the themes have been used up." This
hopelessness is evidenced in Harry's narrative as he explains why
the students live in an exhausted decade. Harry blames the
earlier generations for many of the problems his own generation
faced. In one scene, he puts on a record from the 1960s and sings
along to "Come on everyone, smile on your brother, everybody get
together now, let's love one another right now." He claims, "Yeah,
well look at where the sixties got them." He urges, through his
own personal narrative, a change in the attitudes of the students.
And his audience sees Harry change throughout the film.

From the beginning of the film, Harry is a cynical youth,
simply trying his best to disgust his peers. However, as the radio
program becomes an important message for the students, Harry's
perceptions about his role change. As the film progresses, the
audience sees more self-disclosure and responsible behavior from
Harry. While he still pulls some of his same stunts, he is
progressing towards a more active role in changing not only
himself, but also his surroundings. As a perceptive audience, the
students realize that the change is a positive one, and through
Harry's use of the narrative, a possible one for them to choose. It
is then evident that Harry's actions and use of the narrative incite
the students of Hubert Humphrey High School to reach towards
higher goals by realizing that Harry's rhetoric creates within the
students a desire to strive toward a higher goal.

MacIntyre declares that the use of the narrative is an
important tool in creating an audience which is ready for change.
Harry also realized the power of the narrative in Moyle's film. As Harry told his story to an audience of peers, he experienced some changes in himself. These changes are the important part of the narrative as far as the audience is concerned. By realizing that it is possible to have an effect on one's own life, the students of Hubert Humphrey High understand the need for change in their own lives. It is then clear that Harry's use of the narrative, as prescribed by MacIntyre, creates an understanding within his peers of the importance of being an individual.

**Step Three: Moral Tradition**

The final aspect of MacIntyre's method involves the use of the **moral tradition**. In *Pump Up the Volume* one of the moral traditions used is that of Jesus. Jesus is commonly perceived as exemplifying morality with his willingness to accept others' faults, his humility and his words of wisdom. Throughout the gospels, Jesus is written as accepting everyone: the young, the old, the infirm and the healthy. Harry parallels the moral tradition with his scenes with those who wrote letters. He deals with a pregnant girl, a homosexual and a suicidal person. He does not condemn these students for their behavior, instead, following the moral tradition of Jesus, Harry accepts these people into his flock.

Cheryl is a girl who was kicked out of school because she was pregnant. Because Mark's father was an administrator at the school, Mark obtained a letter from a guidance counselor, Mr. Deever, to the principal about a confidential conference Mr. Deever had held with Cheryl. Mark, as Harry, is outraged at the
treatment given to Cheryl because of her condition. Instead of lecturing her about the morals of today's society, Harry plays an active role in getting Cheryl reinstated to the school. He calls Mr. Deever repeatedly and broadcasts the phone calls in order to question him about the supposedly "confidential" conference he had with Cheryl. With these actions, Harry brings to the attention of the student body some of the problems within the school system.

Not only does he help Cheryl, but he also deals with a number of other social problems with which the students are faced. At the start of his radio program, Harry declared that if anyone had a question, or anything else, they should send it to a post office box and if they left a phone number, he would call and answer their question. One of the requests he gets is from a boy who has had a humiliating homosexual experience. After telling his story on the air, about how he as a homosexual teen was exploited by some other boys, Harry sits thoughtfully. The teen, angered by the silence says "I'm not ashamed of what I did. I bet you think it's gross don't you?" Harry responded by simply saying, "No, I was just thinking about how strong people can be." Through his reaction to this situation, Harry responded by accepting the situation and in fact encouraging a youth who no one else would encourage.

Perhaps the most poignant example of Harry's behavior involves Malcolm Kaiser. Malcolm wrote Harry a note which said "Do you think I should kill myself. Signed, Serious." Harry's initial response was one of reverse psychology. "Well," he replied, "How
serious are you. I mean, do you have a gun? You left a note
didn't you?" His response was one which was simply reactive to
the situation in which he had been placed. He did not condemn
the student, and wanted to help him, but was unable to. The next
day, it was announced that Malcolm Kaiser had killed himself.
Following in the footsteps of traditional martyrs, Harry adopted a
humility which he felt was necessary because of the guilt he felt
for Malcolm's suicide. Strains of "If it be your will, that I speak no
more. And my voice be still, as it was before. I will speak no
more. I shall abide until, I am spoken for, it it be your will"
echoed through the air waves as Harry apologized for his behavior
and offered to go off of the air. The response was immediate and
loud: his audience did not want him to leave. With that, Harry
stayed on the air.

The final reference to moral tradition lie in the fact that
characters such as Jesus and John the Baptist were often
perceived as the voice of God in the Bible (e.g. Matt.3:3, 17:5), and
throughout the film, Harry is referred to as "the voice." Nora,
Mark's girlfriend, who aided his cause claimed "You're the voice.
You're the voice crying out in the wilderness, you're the voice that
makes my brain burn. You're the voice we were waiting for."
Throughout the film, Harry is portrayed as the "savior" of Hubert
Humphrey High School. In his final speech, Harry claims, "The
whole world is longing for a healing." For the students, Harry is
that healing power, the one who can change the world. It is
parallels such as these which allows Harry to make good use of
the moral tradition aspect of counter revolution. His audience
believes that he is indeed the "voice" of their generation, and because of this they are willing to follow him to a new time.

MacIntyre's method of counter revolution through the example of the speaker is an appropriate method by which to analyze Moyle's film *Pump Up the Volume* because of the steps involved in creating a counter revolution through one's peers. Harry utilizes MacIntyre's three steps to create within his audience a feeling and need for counter revolution through his use of practice, personal narrative and moral tradition. MacIntyre's method is an important rhetorical tool by which Moyle's film can be analyzed for impact and rhetorical significance. Moyle created a film which appealed to an audience who is faced with a number of personal problems. By understanding Harry's life, the students at Hubert Humphrey High School are able to better analyze their own role in the counter revolution which takes place in their own school system. It also creates a larger message to individuals who feel that change is necessary in almost any area. For MacIntyre, Harry exemplifies an attempt to create Nietzsche's "great man" through the use of practice, personal narrative and moral tradition which relies on Aristotle's belief of the search for happiness. For Harry, happiness lie in the fact that Hubert Humphrey High became a high school again, through his efforts, and the efforts of the students.
Part Five: Definition and Explanation of Generation X

Theoretical description of Generation X

Before moving on to analyze the impact Pump Up the Volume had on Generation X, it is important to have a better understanding of what Generation X is by looking at a brief background and what kind of characteristics its member possess.

Generation X is a term given to individuals born between 1961 and 1971 by author Douglas Coupland in his book Generation X. Other titles for this particular group, such as "The Twentynothing Generation" are simply labels which the media have applied to a generation which to date has simply defied definition. In examining the various titles, it is evident that the media still cannot find one particularly identifying trait for those who belong to this generation. While "Baby Boomers" seems to aptly describe those born in the boom after World War II, Generation X simply has not made it's mark on the world as of yet.

Generation X is defined as those who were born between 1961-1971 (Coupland), 1964-1972 (Barringer A26), 1958-1973 (Cannon), 1956-1966 (Vega 99), 1965-1985 (Deutschman), 1961-1981 (Strauss and Howe 317), 1961-1972 (Gross and Scott 57), 1960-1970 (Ansley 1D). Obviously, there is some debate as to whether or not Generation X is the tail end of the "Baby Boomers" or their own generation. The Xers would have their own generation instead of living forever in the shadow of the "Baby Boomers." When asked about their lives, Xers simply respond with a shrug. Esquire magazine declared:
This generation is not really a generation at all. It's an interregnum between the generation that came of age in the Sixties and the kids for whom the Sixties are just an Oliver Stone movie. Curiously enough, this faceless, colorless, odorless transitional group -- too young for Vietnam, too old for the Gulf -- is the largest collection of people ever born in this country (1957 was the peak), considerably larger than that of the thirty-five to forty-five-year-olds who claim to hold the patent on the baby boom (57).

For the Xers, however, it is these attitudes which have shaped the future of the "Twentynothing Generation."

In their book Generations, Strauss and Howe state that the "13ers," or the 13th generation, are the first generation to survive the contraceptive pill. Birth control was first put into national use in 1962, the second year of Generation X (318). Not only did they survive birth control, but Xers went on to survive the first national epidemic of divorce (Strauss and Howe 325). Approximately 40% of people in their twenties are the children of divorce (Gross and Scott 58). The Xers learned very quickly that it was important to be an adult, because the adults certainly were not going to take care of them. This era of "latch-key" kids created a generation which was not only independent, but often aloof. Films such as The Breakfast Club and Less Than Zero appealed to the Xers because of their cynical attitude about life (Gross and Scott 62). Not only this, but historically, Xers have very few heroes or important national events in their "growing up" period.
These factors and others combine to create a generation of individuals who simply do not seem to care. *Fortune* claims that Xers want to have their way (Deutschman 42). Much of the media portrayal of Xers has been negative. Strauss and Howe claim that Xers are simply living up to a self-fulfilling prophecy of "adults doing so little for them and expecting so little from them" (325). It is these low expectations and the lack of a real unifying factor which, surprisingly enough, unifies "Generation X."

**Detailed Explanation of common characteristics of Generation X**

Some key traits which can be found in most, but not by any means all, of the member of this generation have been explored by a number of writers for magazines such as *Details, Time, Fortune, Mademoiselle, New York,* and newspapers as well (see appendix A). Some of the important characteristics are as follows: silent, solitary, plain, literate, respectable, intelligent, charming, bitter, bright, unpredictable, ready to conquer the world, uncertain if the world is worth the trouble. Generation X is commonly associated with characteristics such as: having trouble making decisions, few heroes, no anthems, no style, and no culture to call their own. These are the people who will be running the country in a decade or two (Blumenfeld B1). However, an endless string of adjectives simply does nothing to dispel the myth about Generation X. Instead an in-depth analysis of particular Generation X traits will illuminate exactly what is meant by the term Generation X.
In recent years, Generation X has become a topic of media attention. Cover stories in both *Time* and *Fortune* devoted page after page to an explanation of the hard-to-define individuals. Each study done about this generation has created new aspects of the culture and beliefs of these individuals. However, throughout the studies, a number of particular aspects prevail. It is now possible to delve into the three most important areas of a "typical" Xers life: family, emotions and outlook on life.

Part One: Family

One of the most talked about factors which affects the lives of almost all Xers is the family. Coming from a latch-key background themselves, many Xers are determined to make a better life for their own children. Xers feel that the only legacy left for them from the Baby Boomers was a worn out world in which Xers had no place (Strauss and Howe 321, Gross and Scott 57, Abcarian E1, Page 3C, Blumenfeld B1). This "empty platter" which was presented to the Xers left them wondering exactly what their position was in life (Blumenfeld B1). One thing they know for certain is that they will not leave such a mess for their own children. A common response concerning parents can be exemplified in Coupland's words as "I want to tell them that I envy their upbringings that were so clean, so free of futurelessness. And I want to throttle them for blithely handing over the world to us like so much skid-marked underwear" (Coupland 86).
This negative attitude concerning parents is also affects Xers own family lives. Xers are waiting longer to get married and to have children (Abcarian E1). By doing this, they feel they can secure the necessary finances used in raising a child. According to Gross and Scott, Xers want to:

spend more time with their kids, not because they think they can handle the balance of work and child rearing any better than their parents but because they see themselves as having been neglected. "My generation will be the family generation," says Mara Brock, 20, or Kansas City. "I don't want my kids to go through what my parents put me through" (58).

This obsession with making their children feel wanted and loved is one which almost ever Xer can identify with.

As far a beginning a family, say the Xers, "We'll wait." No longer do teens rush off to get married after high school or college. Now, people are waiting longer to get married so that they can experience more before they get caught in those "ties that bind" (Neimark 160). Xers view about marriage is different from that of those preceding them. Xers simply feel that marriage is an extension of a friendship (Deutschman 47). According to Gross and Scott, 77% of men and 61% of women ages 20-to-24 in 1988 had never married (59). Often, Xers spend time living together before they get married because they are afraid of divorce (Strauss and Howe 321). This fear of commitment and relationships, according to Strauss and Howe, simply stems from the fact that most of the Xers feel that they did not have a good
childhood; they were forced to grow up to fast, and missed the "quality time" that parents simply did not offer (321).

Among Xers, there is also the problem of sexual identity. They are often reluctant to claim a sexual identity. Xers were prepared to reap the benefits of the sexual revolution, when they found that the "free love" of the 1960s had wreaked havoc on the sexual possibilities for the next generation (Gross and Scott 59). An increased awareness of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS have created a generation who is almost afraid of sex. Not only that, but Xers often face difficulties in assuming one role. Nancy Smith recalls that Xers grew up dating in groups and having friends of both sexes (5D). This statement essentially encapsulates the entire sexuality of Generation X. The lack of sexual identity has seen an increase in the androgyny of individuals. Coupland, as usual, has created a term for this: "platonic shadow: a nonsexual friendship with a member of the opposite sex" (62). Xers who are not paired off with other Xers simply are not concerned about finding a steady relationship (Smith 5D).

For the Generation X members, family is an important developmental aspect of life. These individuals feel, in many cases, that they were neglected as children. As a result, members of the Twentynothing generation now feel it necessary to put off their family life in order to create a secure atmosphere in which to bring the children up. Family ties are ones which almost all Xers can identify with, and indeed play an important part in the
role of developing the personalities, beliefs, and truths associated with those of Generation X.

Part Two: Emotions

Another identifying trait of Xers involves emotional range which is almost non-existent. One of the most identifying traits is the fact that Xers are simply "laid back" and do not allow others to see their emotions. Because of their background, Xers learned very quickly how to turn on their Walkmans, and tune out others (Smith 1D). This isolation is the Xers response to emotion. Coupland coined the term "Emotional Ketchup Bursts: the bottlenecking Xers do with their emotions explosively burst forth all at once, shocking and confusing employers and friends--most of whom thought everything was fine" to describe the bottlenecking Xers do with their emotions (21). Growing up among people who simply do not care, Xers have decided that showing emotion is "corny" (Abcarian E1).

Part of the emotional crisis Xers face is the fact that they have trouble naming heroes, or professing values: "You can torture an Xer with four tractors attached to all limbs before he'll tell you what he believes" (Abcarian E1). Faced with a very bleak world, Xers have developed very bleak emotional lives. It is not that Xers do not have anything to believe in; it is that they feel if they do believe, they will be ridiculed. This total lack and fear of emotions leads many Xers to question exactly what it is they care enough to get worked up about. The answer: not much. In an attempt to maintain an aloof emotional life, Xers have adopted a transient lifestyle. After all, buying a home or making a
commitment would be opening oneself up to emotional pain. Nancy Smith, of the Associated Press, declares "Certainly we have no commitment to place. There seems to be a terror or owning anything that can't be thrown in a hatchback or disposed of in a yard sale; it might pin us down" (5D).

To "pin down" an Xer is often a difficult task. The one issue which almost all Xers will admit to is the fact that they want stability. For Xers, this stability comes in many different packages. In any case, Xers want to avoid "risk, pain, and rapid change" (Gross and Scott 57). Anonymity is most commonly used by Xers to create a seemingly stable world. Xers are a generation of individuals who have made a fortune for companies such as the Gap, which offers low-cost, low-profile clothing (Gross and Scott 62). This particular type of clothing brings the emphasis away from brand name labels and designer clothes, a definite no for the Xers. The Gap, Banana Republic and other clothing stores offer down-to-earth clothing at a down-to-earth price. This is exactly what the Xers are looking for. The return of hand-me-downs and secondhand stores heralds an age in which individuals pick a particular time frame from which to dress. There is no consistent style to the Xers, just inconsistency (Smith 5D). Not only this, but Xers have learned to keep their heads down and their ears open, and this has "... concealed their plight thanks to the[ir] distinct... habit of calling as little attention as possible to what they are feeling... they know how to keep others from knowing what they're hearing, watching, or thinking" (Strauss and Howe 330). Because of this desire to be unknown, "Generation X" has yet to
"make its mark" (Smith 5D). Instead, they are blending in to the world around them, watching with a careful eye what is going on. Generation X has yet to make its mark, but is simply waiting for an opportunity to do so.

Part Three: Outlook on Life

The final aspect which the media has tried to pin the Xers with is that of their outlook on life. Like their emotions, Xers outlook is pretty bleak. Coming from a generation of individuals who never really had any heroes to speak of, or any particularly important national events (see appendix B), Xers feel that the only thing they have left is the future. The Baby Boomers and a negative impression of Ronald Reagan have ruined the present by leaving the United States an economic garbage dump, which the Xers feel compelled to sweep up (Page 3C). As far as important political matters, the world is currently broken up into a jumble of smaller issues. Says Nancy Smith: “You guys [Baby Boomers] had the burning causes. Yes, the issues are still there, but our world is crammed with mini-crises, each with their 15 minutes of pop news fame" (5D).

Outlook on life affects not only political issues and heroes, but also career choices. For the Xers, career choices and the future are other mitigating factors in their behavior. For the most part, Xers want to have careers they enjoy, as compared to Baby Boomers who prefer to work long hours in order to buy a house or a BMW. What Xers want from their job is “flexibility, access to decision making and a return to the sacredness of work-free
weekends" (Gross and Scott 59). This results in a societal belief that Xers are lazy and not willing to take advantage of career opportunities (Strauss and Howe 323, Deutschman 50). Many Xers have put off a job, just as they put off marriage. Many of today's Xers are continuing their education through graduate school, or touring Europe, not as the antiquated finishing school, but as a last-ditch attempt to create some sort of identity for themselves. Their only requirement for a career is that they want to be happy (Deutschman 47). Upon entering into the "real world," Xers require constant feedback and evaluation. Unlike Baby Boomers who wanted to be left alone, Xers want to be assured that they are doing the job correctly, and don't typically feel right unless they know (Cannon 29).

One thing that Xers are sure of is the fact that they want to keep up with the latest technological advances. Having grown up in an information-laden age, Xers learned to process information in sound-bytes and news articles (Smith 5D). This information-laden society has produced a generation of individuals who feel important when they know how to do something technical (Cannon 6). These technological skills the Xers possess will be their future. But first, they have to "struggle to filter out noise... and isolate the handful of practical truths that really matter" (Strauss and Howe 322) When the Baby Boomers retire it will be the Xers who fill their shoes, working in management positions as an entry level job. Fortunately for Xers, this advanced knowledge will allow them future career opportunities which older, typewriter-generation individuals cannot match (Deutschman 45).
For Xers, technology is one of the answers in dealing with today's world. In having the key to technology, many Xers feel that they have the answer to the world's problems. In a world in which technology is increasingly important, Xers feel confident that their ability to utilize technology will lead them to a happier future.

Another aspect in the Xers favor is that they are increasingly aware of the importance of integrity and fairplay in both the office and at home. In their outlook on life, "... seeking money is American, but seeking power is odious" (Vega 100). As Gross and Scott reiterate through interviews with typical Xers, Xers:

... want to be happy and fulfilled -- socially and culturally -- and to progress in the work world to the point where each is happy with him or herself. Xers are not shooting for a title. Titles are bunk. The X generation is much less political in the work place than the ones that preceded us. Xers want to earn their place with grace and style, not to lick someone's heels for it. (Deutschman 47)

As a group, Xers hope to return to the days where hard work and ability is the standard by which an individual's work performance is judged. After the yuppies, Xers refuse to rely on political maneuvers to get and stay in a job. Cannon states that "Expertise is important to Xers" because they want to progress to partner status, or other higher positions (36). This can only be attained, according to Xers, through hard work. In this case, Xers are intent on maintaining the integrity they feel is necessary in the work
place. No longer is the world obsessed with competition, but with a spirit of hard work.

As far as politics are concerned, Xers are often not interested. There has been a political swing to the right as indicated by the important issues and political figures over the past ten years (Strauss and Howe 318). Xers are pragmatic and believe that a few more years of conservative Republicanism could lead the country back into a more stable economic time. The tone of voters has shifted from a ten-point Democratic advantage to a Republican edge which reached 18 points in 1985 (Strauss and Howe 326). For the most part, Xers steer clear of politics. Strauss and Howe state that only 12% of Xers view voting as the responsibility of a concerned citizen. However, 48% mentioned personal generosity (333). This shows that while Xers do not seem to really care about politics, they feel being involved is important. Once again, though, Xers feel overshadowed by the Vietnam era: “The kids of the 1960s had it easy. Back then they had a war and the civil rights movement. Now there are so many issue that it’s hard to get one big rallying point” (Gross and Scott 61). Xers view activism as merely one other area in which they’re outdone by someone else. They’re discovering they’re “powerless at a time when they should feel empowered” (Blumenfeld B1). Surprisingly enough, 80% of the Gulf War troops were Xers. For a generation that is politically unaware, quite a few have taken advantage of the military as a means of affording college. This also may lend to the political swing to the right which the Xers are currently undergoing.
The final attribute which Xers are labeled with is cynicism. Introduced into a world which is facing economic crises and other structural damage, Xers don’t have any option but to be cynical about the world. This can be seen in the dry wit often associated with Xers. Coupland’s Generation X is filled with cynical barbs and comments which has the power to make other Xers laugh. Smith claims: “If we’re short on heroes and villains, we’re not short on people to laugh at. In fact, our sense of humor is one of the few qualities people notice about us. Frequently they don’t get it. Our humor is deadpan, sometimes even vicious” (5D). She goes on to mention some examples of Xers humor: David Letterman, Heathers (a film comedy about teen suicide), Penn and Teller (useless magicians), and Dan Quayle (the ultimate Xers joke). This particular type of black humor appeals to the cynical side of the Xers. What makes Xers laugh is often exactly what makes the Baby Boomers cringe—dead baby jokes, bad jokes told poorly, Dan Quayle jokes. It is this humor which often carries the Xers through the difficult times. For many, one requirement of friendship is someone who can "make me laugh." This cynical humor is an attempt for the Xers to regain their sanity through the use of laughter. Like many generations before them, humor is a panacea. However, for the Xers, humor about the desperation of the situation is the only type of humor at which they can feel comfortable laughing (Smith 5D).

Not only are the Xers cynical in their humor, but Xers are cynical about important issues which plague their world. AIDS, crack, homelessness and other issues are those which Xers
grudgingly accept as "part of the norm" (Strauss and Howe 319). This cynical attitude shines through in the future plans for the Xers -- they don't make any. Xers try to "keep their options open" as far as careers and the future (Cannon 38). For Xers, nothing in the world is stable: the economy, family life, jobs. Because of this instability, Xers avoid making a commitment to one particular item. Instead, they create within themselves a broad-based knowledge which can be useful in case the first option is not a success. Even religion is something which Xers do not really concern themselves with. Strauss and Howe state that for the most part, Xers grew up without a religious background (321). Coupland refers to this as:

Me-ism: A search by an individual, in the absence of training in traditional religious tenets, to formulate a personally tailored religion by himself. Most frequently a mishmash of reincarnation, personal dialogue with a nebulously defined god figure, naturalism, and karmic eye-for-eye attitudes.

It is issues such as these and others, which lend Xers such varied labels. Although many have tried to label Xers as something specific, it has not yet become a reality. Instead, Xers continue to baffle both the media and themselves. The issues raised about Xers lifestyle are not new ones, but important ones which many are attempting to address.

While most of the press about "Generation X" has been bad publicity, people are fairly optimistic about the future with Xers. Strauss and Howe said it best when they said: "... this streetwise
generation does indeed bring a bag of savvy tricks their elders lack -- skills that may come in handy the next time America gets in real trouble. More than anyone, they have developed a seasoned talent for getting the most out of a bad hand” (334).
Part Six: Examples of Generation X Attributes in *Pump Up the Volume*

After a brief look at the background behind Xers and some of the outstanding characteristics, it is important to understand why *Pump Up the Volume* has such a great appeal to Xers and indeed can be considered a film about the "Twentynothing Generation."

In examining both *Pump Up the Volume* and "Generation X," a rhetorical analysis can be drawn as far as the connection between the two elements. This analysis will lead to some rhetorical conclusions about the use of *Pump Up the Volume* as a film which is intended to relate to "Generation X." In order to create a synthesis between the two, it is important to examine the factors which are inherent to "Generation X" and obvious in *Pump Up the Volume*. The two factors which are evident both in Generation X and the Moyle's film involve emotions and outlook on life. By examining these aspects, we can create a better awareness of the aspects and an understanding of how *Pump Up the Volume* can indeed be considered an important rhetorical tool of Generation X.

Part One: Emotions

The first aspect which is applicable to both the film and the generation is the use and abuse of emotions. While Xers are portrayed as aloof individuals, they do have an emotional side.
The same holds true for Harry in *Pump Up the Volume*. There are various elements which make him a typical Xer. He spends his life hiding his emotion from those around him and working hard to blend in. Harry (as Mark) dresses just like any other student and avoids all situations in which conversation is necessary. When he first meets his girlfriend Nora, she tries to talk to him, but he's too shy to reply. Throughout the film, Nora helps Mark understand the importance of communication. Mark's reaction, however, is typical of many Xers when faced with a problem. Instead of trying to talk to Nora, Mark simply avoids her whenever possible. He does not allow Nora to realize that he cares for her. The implication is that Mark is simply afraid to make a connection because of the mobility of his parents, and his own inability to create lasting relationships. Whether or not his is shy, or simply hiding his emotions, the portrayal of Mark is one of a typical X generation.

The one truly positive aspect of both *Pump Up the Volume* and Generation X is the strong bonds of friendship which stem from a common enemy -- life. Laura Blumenfeld, along with many others, state that one truly strong aspect which comes from Generation X is the development of important ties with friends. Although Xers are labeled as lonely individuals, for Xers, friendship is a surprisingly strong bond. It is often the friendships developed, such as the one between Nora and Mark, which make the difference. In *Pump Up the Volume*, it allowed Mark to realize his potential leadership and bring his school
together. But for Xers, friendships are often difficult to begin (Strauss and Howe 320).

Xers, and many of the characters in *Pump Up the Volume* use indifference as a tool to keep people away. This does not always deter others, but when it does, the bond which may eventually formed is a lasting one. Xers use an "I don't care" attitude to make people believe that it is true. Instead, what Xers are watching for is an opportunity to care. Throughout the film, those who seem to care the least are the ones who finally make a difference. The punk rocker is one of the first students to protest the expulsion of the pregnant girl. While his whole attitude is geared towards being cool, he simply wants to help his fellow students. Mark is not the only student who hides behind a cool mask of indifference. Many of the other students act as though they don’t care about the problems they see within the school, but the fact is they are all scared. In one particular scene, Paige (known as "Miss Perfect") speaks to an audience of parents and says “Don’t you see? We’re scared. We’re all scared to be who we really are.” This fear to face reality and individuality is pervasive throughout both the film and “Generation X.” Individuals simply are unsure of what they want from life and exactly what it is they believe in (Blumenfeld B6). While most Xers will not admit to feelings such as this in public, Paige’s outburst is simply exemplifying Coupland’s “Emotional Ketchup Burst.” By refusing to share her emotions with her friends she had been storing up feelings to an extreme level.
Part Two: Outlook on Life

Not only are the students emotions kept in check, but their outlook on life typifies the Xers attitude of “who cares.” One of the slogans which Harry perpetuates through his rhetoric is “So be it.” He essentially tells the students that things are what they are and that they are the only ones who can make a difference. Many Xers feel that in order to make a change you have to “do something real, like bringing food to the homeless . . . something that matters if only on a small scale” (Strauss and Howe 333). This is what Harry is advocating for the students of Hubert Humphrey High. He asks them to do something small “saying shit and fuck a million times. Fill the air, steal it, keep it alive.” In doing this, Harry says that every small movement towards a change makes a difference.

While he feels that the world is a “screwed up place,” he reiterates that that does not make the individuals messed up as well. In a discussion on the air Harry says “Just because you’re living in a screwed up place in a screwed up time doesn’t mean you’re screwed up.” Harry does not blame the individuals for their problems; he, like most of the audience he appeals to, realizes that in the case of “Generation X,” it really is the environment in which Xers grew up. Any generation which was forced to accept The Brady Bunch as cultural icons simply can not avoid some psychological problems.

The music Harry plays at Hubert Humphrey High reflects a cynical attitude about life. The lyrics play an important role in creating an atmosphere. The strains of “Everybody knows that
the dice are loaded, everybody rolls with their fingers crossed, everybody knows that the war is over, everybody knows that the good guys lost” are pervasive throughout the film, with various strains occurring at pertinent points in the dialogue. This exemplifies the outlook many Xers have. The song reiterates the fact that the world is simply not a fair place, and it is seldom when the good guy wins. These lyrics echo the sentiment felt by many of Harry’s generation.

Having grown up in the era of Reaganism in which the United States felt safe and secure Xers expected to find the American Dream for themselves. Instead they found out that Ronald Reagan, their own version of Mr. Rogers, mislead them as to the actual state of the nation (Gross and Scott 57). Both Xers and the characters in Moyle’s film realized that the American Dream is simply that--a pipe dream which the Xers will never experience (Deutschman 46).

These shared experiences and attitudes exemplify the important message which the film is attempting to present to Xers: life may be bad, but it will get better. This message can be found in the rhetoric of Happy Harry Hard On and the media today. What Moyle attempts to do with his film is examine the rhetoric of Generation X, present it in an acceptable rhetorical format, and explore the relationships between individuals. The rhetoric of both Harry and the film itself offers some important insight into the psyche of Generation X. Pump Up the Volume is actually an important explication of a generation. The Baby Boomers had The Big Chill, and now Xers have a rhetorical vision
of their own lives. Perhaps through his rhetoric, Moyle has created a model for individuals who are still searching for individuality and purpose.
Part Seven: Conclusion and Goals for Future Research

After having examined a brief description of *Pump Up the Volume* and analyzing it using Campbell’s method for establishing rhetoric and MacIntyre’s analysis of the counter revolution, exploring a brief background and characteristics of Generation X and drawing some rhetorical implications from these areas, some important rhetorical conclusions can be drawn. First, a better understanding of the definition of rhetoric as defined by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell allows a broader understanding of the use of film as an important rhetorical tool. More specifically, an analysis of MacIntyre’s counter revolution method explores the role of individuals in making a difference in the world around them. An exploration of the Generation X label and understanding of particular characteristics also brings a greater understanding of how *Pump Up the Volume* serves as an important rhetorical tool of Generation X.

The current research concerning Generation X is based on speculation and observation of Xers, and is often conducted by Xers themselves. This research exhibits an ongoing attempt of all individuals, not just Xers to understand exactly what type of people the world will be facing in the very near future. Magazines and newspapers offer a variety of topics about Generation X, showing as many traits as possible. Strauss and Howe have a good start on the understanding of a generation. It is only through observation and research that we can understand what Xers are trying to say. Rhetorical models found in various
communication journals also offer important tools by which to analyze this behavior.

Allan Moyle created a film which he hoped would speak to the masses and it did. Unfortunately, the film spoke to the wrong masses. Because *Pump Up the Volume* appealed to an older audience the revenue was not exactly what Moyle expected. However, revenue is not always the answer. Due to a misunderstanding of the film’s audience, Moyle has perhaps created a *Big Chill* for the members of Generation X. In Xers eternal search for understanding and truth, *Pump Up the Volume* offers a view into the lives of others. While the film may not be the answer Xers are looking for, Moyle's work and other films like it offer the first step in a long journey to understanding the rhetoric of Generation X (Esquire 99). The impact of the film on Generation X was great, and will have lasting effects. It has allowed Xers one of their first opportunities to view their own lives through the eyes of others. This viewpoint allows the audience more time to draw conclusions about their own lives by viewing the life of others. Perhaps Moyle should view this not as an error, but one of his greatest rhetorical achievements.
Appendix A

Characteristics of Generation X

1. A craving for stimulation
2. Need for personal contact
3. Preference for concrete, specific information
4. A desire to learn leading-edge technology
5. Searching for traditional goals
6. Looking for the Good-Looking Job
7. Emotionally repressed
8. Keeping options open
9. Postpone commitment
10. Mortal fear of boredom
11. Love to learn process, feel powerful by knowing "how to do"
12. Crave continuous feedback/external vilification
13. Believe they are inherently good
14. Want marriage, family, material success-jobs that are 'sexy' in the eyes of their peers
15. Increasing fear of the "Big City Factor"
16. Possess 1990's survival skills
17. Unique concept of integrity and fair play
18. Emotionally suppressed and secretive, often feel stressed and exhausted
19. Have a need for affiliation

Appendix B

Political Events in Generation Xers Lifetime

1962: U.S. government approves public sale of birth-control pill
1965: “Baby boom” ends; Supreme Court upholds right to contraceptives
1968: *Rosemary’s Baby* begins decade-long popularity of bad-child films
1973: *Roe v. Wade* abortion case; Christmas Without Lights
1979: U.S. hostages seized in Iran; long lines at gas pumps
1980: Military enlistments surge; youth vote supports Reagan
1983: *A Nation at Risk* criticizes students; Grenada invasion
1986: Schoolchildren watch *Challenger* shuttle explode on takeoff
1989: Surge in gang killings, Berlin Wall dismantled
1990: Rock lyrics censored; U.S. troops go to Persian Gulf

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