

FEMALE METAL FANS AND THE PERCEIVED POSITIVE EFFECTS OF METAL MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Despite increasing literature that confirms the therapeutic benefits of music, metal music is still stigmatized as sexist, masculine, and detrimental to its fans. Psychology researchers have generally focused on trying to identify the negative effects of metal music (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007), and have succeeded in finding links between metal music and aggression (Rubin, West, & Mitchell, 2001) and suicide (Lacourse, Claes, & Villeneuve, 2001) for example. Most of the research has focused on male fans as well, with little research from the perspective of female metal fans and musicians (Diehl, 2013). Hence, we conducted a qualitative study focused on female metal fans perceived positive effects of metal music for its female fans. An online survey, distributed through social media, was completed by a purposeful sample of 224 female participants (aged 18-65+) from around the world who described critical incidents specific to metal music and its positive impact in their lives. Several key themes were identified through analyses: (a) creation and awareness of identity, (b) forging and strengthening relationship, (c) provision of life experience and knowledge; and (d) helping with emotions. Implications for counselling practice and recommendations for future research are made.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all female metal fans! \m/

“If you want the world

Use your mind

Take control

Feel the strength

Rise from within

If you really want it the world is yours”

----- “The World Is Yours” by Arch Enemy

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Introduction

This study on the perceived positive effects of metal music for its female fans arose, in part, from my own experiences as a female metalhead with a love of metal music. So, I would like to begin with some of my story as a female fan of metal music to help portray the significance of the research topic, let the reader learn about who is behind this study, and share my experience with stigma as a female metalhead.

My passion for metal music started in high school. I was already listening to rock music, and bands like Disturbed and Blessthefall, which I later discovered were bands that border on heavy metal music. I was in grade twelve when a friend and a metal fan, introduced me to the song 'Nemesis' by Arch Enemy. I did not like the song at all. I told him that I hated the male singer's growl but then he told me that the growl belonged to a female singer named Angela Gossow. I had a hard time believing that such a deep growl could belong to a female, however he claimed that once I listened to more growls, I would be able to distinguish between female and male singers. I decided to listen to the song 'Nemesis' more to see if I could identify the growl as female, and the song grew on me. I quickly discovered more of Arch Enemy and realized that I really liked their songs, especially 'We will rise'. Arch Enemy opened my world to metal music (especially death metal, which is the genre they play). Arch Enemy and Amon Amarth (Viking death metal with a male growler) quickly became two of my favourite bands. My favourite bands evolved to be Agalloch, Amon Amarth, Mastodon, Moonspell, and Swallow the Sun. These bands portray a range of musical styles.

Variety in metal music is something I came to really enjoy. The variety is fascinating. For example, I learned about Norse mythology from listening to Amon Amarth, and about Jewish beliefs through Orphaned Land. I also have listened to metal bands (e.g., Eluveitie) who sing in

dead languages, and other bands that use different types of instruments such as trumpets (e.g., Sear Bliss), hurdy gurdy (e.g., Eluveitie), cellos (e.g., Apocalyptica), which I really appreciate. Another reason I love metal music is because of its hold on me. Metal music grips me with its powerful style and I just feel like I need it. Metal music is pretty much the only kind of music I listen to. It makes me happy and energized; it calms me when I am angry or stressed; and it helps me to release emotions and overcome obstacles. I also know that I am not the only one who has experienced this. I have observed this with my fiancé, as well as with the lead singer of a metal band I saw perform on Mother's Day one year.

Iced Earth, whose lead singer is Stu Block, was the headliner. Close to the end of the concert Stu Block announced that they would play a song called "If I could see you" from their new album. He explained that the drummer of the band originally wrote this song to grieve the loss of his grandfather. Stu Block continued to say that he had just lost his mother in the summer and that the song has helped him with his grief. Since it was Mother's Day, he wanted to sing the song; but, he warned the audience that he may not get through the song. He managed to get through the song, but he cried throughout because of his pain and sorrow. This experience powerfully showed me how metal music can be therapeutic. It was also a moment that broke stereotypes about metal music and male singers. The singer revealed himself, showed his humanity, and challenged the assumption of non-metal fans that metal music is always aggressive.

Over the years, with my passion for metal music only growing stronger, I learned about stigma and stereotypes associated with female fans of metal music. I do not look like a metalhead, and therefore many people are surprised when they find out. I never really felt the urge to dress the part except for when I go to a metal concert, and like to show off a t-shirt from

a band I really enjoy. So, people do not always know I am a metalhead, which has led to some interesting conversations. For example, when I asked if I could write a paper on the influence of Norse mythology on metal music, my undergraduate English professor said, “How can such a passive girl like such aggressive music?” His comment really stayed with me. Even if I seem passive, this does not exclude me from enjoying metal music. Not all metal music is aggressive. For example, “Not unlike the waves” by Agalloch is not an aggressive song. It has ambiguous lyrics that might be talking about a sunrise because of lines like “Aurora swims in the ether” or “Amber streams from Sol.” Sol is the Sun goddess in Norse Mythology and is talked about in Poetic Edda and the Prose Edda. Other examples of non-aggressive songs include “Dreamer” by Ozzy Osbourne, “Nothing else matters” by Metallica, “Afterlife” by Testament, and “Twilight Innocence” by Novembers Doom.

Based on this experience with my English professor, I quickly learned that people believe that metal music is not for passive women but more for aggressive, darker-minded, non-innocent metalheads because metal music is assumed to be aggressive. This judgement was reinforced by a friend’s mother. When I told her that I was studying the positive influence of metal music on its female fans, she responded that she believes good research requires knowing what the participant is going through. When my friend told her mother that I am a metalhead, her mother looked at me and said that she would have never guessed that I like metal music since she thought I am “too innocent.” Can metal music not be for the innocent? What does it mean I am too innocent? If I remember well, she also said that she thought I was Christian. I am not, but even if I was Christian it would not mean that I cannot listen to metal music. It may come as a surprise, but there is Christian metal that is represented by bands like Underoath and The Devil Wears Prada (Jones, 2014).

Sometimes people laugh when they find out that I am a metalhead. They say they would have never guessed that I am a metalhead. Some people have found it “awesome” that I am a metalhead, but not others. For example, a nursing student at my practicum site laughed when she found out that I was a metalhead. Fed up by the reaction, I asked her why that was funny. She replied that she would have never guessed that I am a metalhead since she always thought that metalheads had rough and tough lives. Her statement sounded quite negative, as if metalheads may be to blame for their tough lives. Once again, negative stereotypes were associated with metal music.

People have also laughed when I tell them that I am writing my thesis on how metal music positively influences the lives of female metal fans. One person asked me how anything positive could possibly come out of metal music, but would not let me explain. Others asked me things like “is that a real topic?” or “are you serious?” I guess they do not realize that this is an important topic and very real.

On the other hand, the importance of this topic was reinforced when a female metalhead I know thanked me for doing this study. There have also been other very positive reactions. Many people have been fascinated by the topic and want to read the thesis. A woman working at the office of my optometrist said she could understand the importance of this topic because she knows from personal experience how therapeutic music (non-metal) is for her. She also wanted to know about the literature I found on the topic. On another occasion, my fiancé and I were on a recent 70000 tons of metal cruise and we went to the performance of an all-female band called Nervosa from Brazil. I ended up telling the lead singer about my study, and she was very excited and thankful. She explained that research like this is needed and more women are needed in

metal music. She also said that if I needed any help with my thesis, I could contact her and her band. After that, she gave me a hug.

This personal history with metal music informed the present study. I wanted to challenge the stereotypes associated with metal music and metalheads. I wanted to inform and educate people about metal music and its female fans. I wanted to dispute the idea that nothing positive can come out of metal music. Metal music has positively influenced my life and I know this is true of others too. I also know from experience that fewer females attend concerts and I wanted to give a voice to this minority group. I wanted to learn more about how metal music positively influences the lives of other female metal fans, and for other people to understand that too, especially helping professionals.

Present Study

Significance. Due to high public anxiety regarding consumption of various types of media such as metal music, psychology researchers have focused on trying to identify its negative effects (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). This focus led Miranda and Claes (2007) to express concern that the debate about metal music's possible negative influence on adolescents had become a subjective moral debate rather than a scientific rational debate. A quick internet search revealed that there has been much focus on metal music's possible negative effects on its fans and that this debate has been ongoing. Two common negative themes are aggression (e.g., Lawrence, & Joyner, 1991; Rubin, West, & Mitchell, 2001) and suicide (e.g., Lacourse, Claes, Villeneuve, 2001; Scheel & Westefeld, 1999). However, finds are not definitive. Results do not always support the idea that metal music has negative effects, and there are also a growing number of studies reporting on the benefits of music in general. North, Hargreaves, and O'Neill (2000), for example, confirmed that music helps adolescents with their emotional needs and

Lonsdale and North (2011) discovered that undergraduate students use music for mood management and regulation.

However, there is little research on the positive impacts of metal music. Exceptions include studies that revealed that listening to metal music can have benefits for its fans such as preventing them from being reckless and calming them down (Arnett, 1996), and providing a sense of community (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Another exception was a study by Ahmadi (2009) who reported that metal music helped cancer patients find meaning and tranquility as well as express their identity.

These studies that focus on the positive effects of metal music are important given the assumption that metal music is harmful. Unfortunately, research has exaggerated the negative effects of metal music. For example, studies that find correlations between suicide and preference for metal music have been interpreted as causal relationships suggesting that a preference for metal music is detrimental.

Statement of purpose. There has been a lack of scholarly research on the experiences and perspectives of female metal fans and musicians (Diehl, 2013). Few studies concentrate solely on female fans (e.g., Ahmadi, 2009; Diel, 2013; Krenske & Mckay, 2000; Precin, 2011; Vasan, 2010). This may be due to the fact that even though heavy metal's subculture has evolved significantly, male fans and musicians remain the majority (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). Most of the research has been about men. Exceptions include Arnett (1996) and Snell and Hodgetts (2007), although these limited studies that include women fans tend to discuss them passively rather than as individuals with agency of their own (Diehl, 2013). Diehl (2013) also noted that there is little information about why women like metal music and why they perform it.

The focus of the present study was to research the perceived positive effects of metal music for its female fans. An online survey using the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) was used to generate data on critical incidents when metal music positively influenced the lives of female metal fans. This study was designed to address a gap in the literature and to give a voice to a minority group in the metal community. It also focused solely on the benefits of metal music for its female fans, an understudied topic in the current literature.

Definitions. The following important terms and definitions are used throughout the thesis:

Metal Music: A “genre of rock music that includes a group of related styles that are intense, virtuosic, and powerful” (Walser, 2014). The use of “distorted electric guitars” (Walser, 2014) is common in heavy metal music. For the purpose of this document, metal music and heavy metal music are used interchangeably.

Death Metal: A genre of metal music that concerns itself mostly with the topic of death and suffering (Oxford University Press, 2018 https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/death_metal). It also preoccupies itself with themes of politics and violence (Admin, May 16, 2012 <http://metaldescent.com/death-metal/>). Death metal music is best recognized by the singers growling and guitar distortion (Admin, May 16, 2012 <http://metaldescent.com/death-metal/>).

Glam Metal: A genre that became popular in the 80’s and was heavily influenced by pop music (Admin, October 4, 2012 <http://metaldescent.com/glam-metal/>). Appearance in glam metal is as important as sound in glam metal (Admin, October 4, 2012 <http://metaldescent.com/glam-metal/>). Performers tend to have makeup on, eccentric hair styles, and very colourful and flamboyant clothes (Admin, October 4, 2012 <http://metaldescent.com/glam-metal/>). Glam metal

is also well known for its power ballads (Admin, October 4, 2012 <http://metaldescent.com/glam-metal/>).

Metalhead: A person who listens mostly to metal music, which is their favorite type of music (Rick, August 2001). Metal music is a constant in their lives (Rick, August 2001). This term will only be used when introduced by the participants themselves. Otherwise, the more inclusive term “metal fan” is used.

Moshing/ Mosh Pit: Moshing is a sort of dance held in front of the stage which involves bumping or jumping into each other (Krenske & McKay, 2000). The mosh pit, which is usually in front of the stage at a metal concert, is where fans do moshing (Rader, Aug. 31, 2009)

Headbanging: The “rhythmical moving of the head up and down” when listening to metal music (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt., 2010).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the existing research available on metal music, its fans, and how metal music fans are perceived by society. The literature review is organized around four major themes: “Metal Music, Gender and Power,” “Stigma Associated with Metal Music,” “Mental Health and Metal Music,” and “Releasing Emotions through Metal Music.”

Metal Music, Gender and Power

Throughout its history, heavy metal music has been perceived by both outsiders and its partakers as masculine and connected with men (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). Even though heavy metal’s subculture has evolved significantly, male fans and musicians remain the majority (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). Moreover, some people believe that heavy metal music is not only male-dominated but also unwelcoming and hostile towards females (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). However, claiming that all metal musicians and fans are white males is not only wrong but also harmful to female and/or non-white male metal musicians/fans, especially if academics are making such arguments (Hickam & Wallach, 2011).

For example, in preparation for their presentation at the *Heavy Metal and Gender International Congress*, Hickam and Wallach (2011) interviewed 19 scholars of both genders who had been editors or authors for books or chapters on heavy metal music, and found a range of opinions. Interestingly, they reported that if the genders on the surveys were removed, it would be difficult to identify whether responses were from a female or a male. For example, one of the women explained that she did not think that metal is sexist and that even though it is a male-dominated culture, metal music is open to everyone. Conversely, one of the male interviewees believed that metal is not only male-dominated but also sexist. Other interviewed scholars who also said that metal music is sexist, stressed that the sexism is more of a game than

‘real’ sexism (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). According to Hickam and Wallach (2011), sometimes female bands partake in or parody the sexist gimmick. An example of this is the all-female band named Virgin Killer, which refers to the sexism of the Scorpion’s original cover art for an album of the same name.

This does not mean that gender is insignificant, even if the metal scene has changed over the years (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). For example, the founding metal bands in Britain (e.g., Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, and Black Sabbath) were made up of white males and therefore Hickam and Wallach (2011) disagreed with Cope (as cited in Hickam & Wallach, 2011) who argued that metal music is “anti-patriarchal” (p. 263). On the other hand, they agreed with Cope’s assertion that metal music is unlike hard rock, where a crucial theme appears to be “heterosexual conquest” (Hickam & Wallach, 2011, p. 263); a theme that is less visible in core traditional metal songs (e.g., songs by Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, and Judas Priest) and songs by more extreme metal bands. Hickam and Wallach (2011) claimed that those songs are not typically misogynistic. Cope (as cited in Hickam & Wallach, 2011) argued that the difference between the “misogynistic Led Zeppelin-inspired hard rock and Black Sabbath-inspired heavy metal” (Hickam & Wallach, 2011, p. 263) is that the Black Sabbath-inspired heavy metal lets women performers rise in a non-sexist space.

Because heavy metal subculture involves mostly men, and because there is a belief that heavy metal music is masculine, there has been limited research on the perspectives of female metal fans and musicians (Diehl, 2013). Furthermore, Diehl (2013) noticed that when scholars referred to women they were often deemed to have no agency of their own but instead, were portrayed as objects for men. In other words, women metal fans and musicians were discussed in a passive way by many scholars and when something was written about female fans, they were

perceived through male eyes rather than from their own perspective. Diehl (2013) also noted that there is not much information about why women like metal music or why they perform it.

Therefore, people are often surprised to discover how involved women are in metal music. Women participate in all aspects of the metal music industry, for example as record label executives, fans, artists, and/or scene leaders (Vasan, 2010). They even participate in metal sub-genres that have misogynistic aspects to them (Vasan, 2010). They also produce scholarly articles and books (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). Women's involvement in the scholarship on heavy metal music indicates that even though women may not have a visible presence at most metal shows, they do have a significant influence on the heavy metal culture (Hickam & Wallach, 2011).

For example, in 1985, Carol Leggett wrote *Heavy Metal Bible* and revealed that females are fans of heavy metal music (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). Also, two of the first three, very crucial, monographs to focus on heavy metal music were written by women and published in 1991 (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). The female authors were Donna Gaines and Deena Weinstein; the other monograph was written by Robert Walsner (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). The works by Weinstein and Walsner are the two most cited monographs about heavy metal music, which can be interpreted as indicating some gender equality within popular heavy metal print (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). There are also some well-known documentaries directed or produced by women such as *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years* (1988), *Full Metal Village* (2007) and *Until the Light Takes Us* (2008) (Hickam & Wallach, 2011).

Not only are women involved in the production of documentaries and scholarly writings, they also participate in the planning and execution of metal entertainment for its fans (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). For example, the 'Metal Female Voices Fest' ran for the eighth year in October

2010 (Hickam & Wallach, 2011), and the last festival was October 2016. This event has been very popular among male and female fans for many years (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). There are also websites committed to supporting the contributions of women to the metal culture (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). For example, the website www.metalmaidens.com focuses on news about female metal performers, while the website www.metaladies.com is dedicated to listing bands that are composed of only female members (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). The fact that there is so much female participation in both scholarly writings and entertainment, indicates that women's contributions to the metal culture have been, and will continue to be, valued, as well as helpful to the evolving metal culture (Hickam & Wallach, 2011).

Hickman and Wallach (2011) concluded that women's print culture and scholarly work on metal music is recognized and acknowledged with pride in the heavy metal culture. Female production in metal music is well-received, and according to Brown (as cited in Hickam & Wallach, 2011) who conducted studies that examined heavy metal tabloid magazines, female fans are neither new nor opposed by male metal fans. Weinstein (1991) claimed that metal fans place value on the metal music more than anything else, so if the music or writing of the music is good, the gender and background of a musician or an author does not seem to matter (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). For example, there are many powerful female metal musicians/role models on stage for female metal fans to admire (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). For example, Angela Gossow, Doro Pesch, Anza, Sean Yseult, and the all-female band ShEver are internationally recognized women in heavy metal music and subculture (Hickam & Wallach, 2011).

So, what does this information about metal music and its scene mean for a female adolescent metalhead? Arnett (1996) published a book called *Metalheads: Heavy metal music and adolescent alienation* in which he described his interviews with 108 American adolescent

metalheads (70 males; 38 females). Their ages ranged from 13 to 25 years with an average age of 17.6 for the males and 18.4 for the females. Arnett discovered that female and male metalheads had a similarity: alienation. Both male and female metal fans were drawn to heavy metal music because it conveyed and lessened their alienation (e.g., from school, home, religion, pending adulthood, loneliness), an experience encountered by many adolescents. Arnett (1996) suggested that metal music may lessen youth alienation because although the music may portray the world as hopeless, adolescent metalheads become aware they are not alone in thinking that the world is despairing.

Sadly, female metalheads have an additional alienation; how women are perceived, exploited, and degraded in American society (Arnett, 1996). This exploitation, degradation, and sexism is also portrayed in some heavy metal songs that show female metalheads are not always respected and welcomed in the heavy metal world (Arnett, 1996). Women metal fans also realize that they are a small minority in the heavy metal world, which can cause a struggle (Arnett, 1996).

In heavy metal music, according to Arnett (1996), there is only a rare mention of a female-male relationship, “but when females do appear in songs they are frequently described with anger, fear, and exploitation” (p. 146). The female teenage metalheads interviewed by Arnett disapproved of bands that depicted women like this. However, male interviewees considered these bands to not be real heavy metal bands. Rather, the male interviewees regarded those bands as “glam rock,” “glam metal,” or “poseurs” (Arnett, 1996, p. 146). This view was supported by female metalheads as well. One of those adolescents exclaimed that discrimination is less common in heavy metal than in rap or glam rock, and that it angers her when these bands

are classified as heavy metal. Many female adolescent participants said that glam metal is not music that they listen to.

Arnett (1996) found that the female adolescent metalheads he interviewed had many reactions on the topic of discrimination and sexism in metal music. One participant explained that she “laugh[s] it off” (p. 147), because the men in the glam rock/ metal scene tend to dress feminine, and therefore they must have some sort of problem to call women names. Others did not find the sexism funny and could not forgive it; they expressed anger and resentment. For example, one female metalhead described the band Guns N’ Roses as “vile and repulsive” (Arnett, 1996, p. 147). She claimed that it is not good for males or females to grow up with Guns N’ Roses messages, which portray women as sex toys. She believed that those messages are especially detrimental for females as they could affect how they let themselves be treated. Another female adolescent metal fan believed that “somebody should shoot Axl Rose [lead singer of Guns N’ Roses] in the knee” (Arnett, 1996, p. 147) because of how Guns N’ Roses’ lyrics portray women. She claimed that males should not watch the bands videos because they show off female body parts, especially “tits and ass” (p. 147). Another female was more worried than angry. She explained that the glam metal or hard rock bands did not portray women very highly and when people her age or younger cheered to those lyrics, she worried that it could affect how they treat women.

Some of the female metalheads interviewed seemed confused about how they should react to the degradation and sexism (Arnett, 1996). They both defended and criticized the heavy metal songs and videos. One participant argued that “a lot of bands [degrade women], but it’s just been a part of the way people think for so long, that probably they’re not thinking about it. But they’re not helping it any, by not thinking about it. Maybe they do contribute to it.” (p. 147).

This same female said that both the bands and the women in their videos are to blame because the women did not have to agree to be in the video. Other participants just saw exploitation as another part of life. One female metalhead claimed that “metal songs are no worse than most other songs” (p. 148) and that “every song is [antiwomen]” (p. 148), especially that “every fucking rap song is [antiwomen]” (p. 148). Another interviewee stated: “I think the world is antiwomen. There is so much in everyday life that I come across. I think it is a male-dominated world and I think it will always be that way.” (p. 148). Arnett (1996) concluded that for the adolescent female metalheads, heavy metal music is a relief of alienation (e.g., comfort, calming them down, letting their anger out) but also a part of the alienation they experience. Heavy metal music can make the alienation stronger because some “bands on the fringes of heavy metal” (Arnett, 1996, p. 148.) are sexist, which confirms the female metalheads’ feelings that the adult world is dangerous and uninviting. Arnett (1996) believed that both male and female adolescent metalheads are not prepared for the adult world.

So, how do female adolescent metalheads manage in the adult world when they become adult metal fans? Many factors appear to be involved. For example, Snell and Hodgetts (2007) wanted to document and portray how heavy metal fans create a community to appreciate the music. They observed a heavy metal bar called 6ft Under in New Zealand compared with a mainstream bar called the Outback. Although 6ft Under had no dress code (unlike mainstream bars that do have a dress code), there was an attitude code (many mainstream bars do not have an attitude code): no gang patches are allowed, aggressive behaviour was not tolerated, and intimidating behaviour, disrespect and drunkenness were also discouraged. Because of the large numbers of regulars, the code could be enforced, and a sense of community and safety was formed. Six participants were interviewed and asked about why they came to the bar, their

interest in heavy metal music, and their sense of identity and community (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). One 21-year-old participant was a woman who went by the alias of Halloween and worked as a light technician (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007).

For Halloween, the bar 6ft Under, was a place where she could participate in the heavy metal community without problems (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). The communal practices that she engaged in at the bar were listening to music, conversing about bands, and dancing. At 6ft Under, there was a shared sense of belonging and identity that was reinforced by an interaction between personal style and taste. At a mainstream bar, Halloween felt that there was no synergy between the physical environment and her sense of community. She also believed that her identity at a mainstream bar was viewed as different and marginalized. Halloween explained that at 6ft Under the norm was to accept and respect female heavy metal fans while at the Outback, she felt like the norm was to disrespect women and assume that all females are sexually available. She described the men at the Outback as abusive and lewd. Halloween referred to the mainstream bars as “disrespectful meat markets” (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007, p. 440). Halloween was angry that when her roommate went to the Outback, or other mainstream bars, she was groped since the men believed that she was there looking for sex. According to Halloween, if any sort of unsolicited groping of women were to occur at 6ft Under, the man would get thrown out after the females “beat him up.” In other words, unsolicited groping was not permitted at the 6ft Under bar, which let the women feel like they belonged to the community (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Halloween claimed that the men from the mainstream bars had different values than the ones at the 6ft Under bar. From her perspective, 6ft Under bar had a focus on metal music instead of sex.

An earlier study (Krenske & McKay, 2000) also focused on female metalheads in a club, but the results were less positive. The study consisted of observations and interviews at Club Thrash, which was the only venue where heavy metal bands performed in Brisbane, Australia. A feminist social constructionist framework was used to analyze heavy metal music and power structures enforced by gender. This view claims that gender identities and associations are institutionalized procedures that everyone follows, they are not a result of biology or socialization of sex-roles (Krenske & McKay, 2000). Since men rule the most significant social conventions and their beliefs are regarded more highly than women's, women must constantly 'do gender' on men's terms (Krenske & McKay, 2000), terms that are a disadvantage for women (Krenske & McKay, 2000). Krenske and McKay (2000) interviewed and observed both females and males, because they believed that to understand a women's status according to a gender system, the relationship between men and women must be analyzed. Krenske and McKay (2000) noticed that, at the location for their study, the bands performing were mostly made up of young, white males who played heavy metal music in an aggressive "heterosexist" (p. 290) way (e.g., homophobic, valuing straight males). Krenske and McKay (2000) claimed that the heterogeneity of the bands and the club members was because of the small population of Brisbane, as well as a lack of a crowd that could really delve into the heavy metal subculture. Another reason for the heterogeneity of the bands and members was because, according to Krenske and McKay (2000), heavy metal music's artwork, lyrics, bodily practices, language, and dress code favour the stereotypical masculinity (e.g., tough, straight, dominant). Therefore, it demeans women and gay men. Hickam and Wallach (2011) argued that most metal fans do not seem to really care that the lead singer of Arch Enemy is a woman and that Judas Priest, one of the founding bands of heavy metal, had a gay lead singer. Krenske and McKay (2000) argued that successful heavy metal

women artists only managed because they have conformed to the masculinity criteria. Women heavy metal artists tend to be discriminated against, seen as trivial, and marginalized (Krenske & McKay, 2000).

Krenske and McKay (2000) also discovered six different types of dress and behaviour codes among women that may play into the masculinity criteria. Three main codes were easily identified since participants talked about them a lot: *Metalheads*, *Metal Wenches*, and *Glam Chicks* (Krenske & McKay, 2000). The less popular codes that were harder to identify, since not many participants talked about them, included: *Fanatics*, *Cool Dudes*, and *Hardcore Bohemians* (Krenske & McKay, 2000). The *Metalhead* code was applied to men who wore black jeans and a picture t-shirt. He usually entered with friends or a *Metal Wench*, drank at the bar while very rarely moshing or stage-diving, and managed to intimidate women. Moshing and stage-diving are commonplace at metal concerts. Moshing is a sort of dance held in front of the stage which involves bumping or jumping into each other. Stage-diving is when a person leaps into the crowd from the stage and gets held up by the crowd. The *Metal Wenches* were pretty much the female equivalent of the *Metalhead*. They wore little to no makeup and they followed male rules of participation. The younger ones might occasionally mosh and stage-dive. Since *Metal Wenches* wanted to fit in with the men they would deny the fact that there is sexism in the heavy metal culture. The *Glam Chick* wore very sexual clothes and seemed to attain status and access through being with a *Metalhead* or *Cool Dude*. The *Glam Chick* was also known by others as the *Groupie*. Some of the club goers were part of two or more codes while others did not fit into any of them.

Krenske and McKay (2000) proposed that Club Thrash provided evidence that a person's environment and gender are interlinked. In other words, an occupied space is determined by

gender (Krenske & McKay, 2000). For example, the intimidating look of a male could make women self-conscious and aware of taking up space. Therefore, the females at the club expanded their social space by either going with a male friend or partner, or going in groups of women. Krenske and McKay (2000) noticed that each code had their own territory, for example, the *Metalheads* and *Metal Wenches* stayed mostly at the bar. They suggested that these territories could be intimidating for other women. Krenske and McKay (2000) argued that there seemed to be a hierarchy for both women and men since most people did not try to enter territory associated with another code, and if they did, there would be tension. It was hard for women to gain a higher status because there was a hierarchy among them, alongside a competition for the attention of the men. According to Krenske and McKay (2000), power of the space was defined by the men, which could be seen in the fact that some women had to use their boyfriends or male friends as protection from unwanted advances. Sexual harassment was much easier and more likely to happen if a woman stood by herself. Therefore, according to Krenske and McKay (2000) these social interactions of space constrained women spatially and made them feel vulnerable.

As stated by Krenske and McKay (2000), if a woman was a performer in a metal band she was not taken very seriously by the club's crowd. One female performer explained in her interview that the crowd thought her performance was inauthentic since she dressed as *Glam Chick* and *Hardcore Bohemian* instead of as a *Metal Wench*.

According to Krenske and McKay (2000), the consciousness about the women's body and appearance was also present in the context of moshing and stage-diving. Krenske and McKay (2000) observed that for women, both moshing and stage-diving were difficult to partake in because one has to display bravado and impose pain on one's body to gain any status. Both

moshing and stage-diving rely on violence and male bonding. Krenske and McKay (2000) stated that the movements made by women who did mosh seemed to be frightened and uncertain. Krenske and McKay (2000) observed that females kept more to the outside of the moshing pit, and seemed to react to the males' movements rather than act independently. According to Krenske and McKay (2000), they also seemed to mosh to themselves individually instead of moshing with the men. Not very many females stage-dived. When a woman did stage-dive, she hardly ever used her body in a confident way according to Krenske and McKay's (2000) observations. They noticed that the women who did finally decide to stage-dive were coaxed by the catchers. After a woman stage-dived, not only was she considered one of the men, she reported feeling an incredible sense of liberation. Krenske and McKay (2000) argued that stage-diving was freeing, but pain inflicted on her body was the cost.

The women were asked why they did not stage-dive (Krenske & McKay, 2000). Although the men confirmed that there was anonymous fondling of stage-diving women and believed that this explained why so few women wanted to stage-dive, the women claimed that it was a fear of physical pain. They rarely cited fear about how men might treat their bodies as a reason for not stage diving or moshing. According to Krenske and McKay (2000), the men's perspective showed that they view women's bodies in an objectified and sexualized way.

In conclusion, Krenske and McKay (2000) argued that since Club Thrash had "highly gendered structures of power" (p. 301), women 'did' gender on male terms. They claimed that women's experience of the subculture was determined by unequal relationships with men; meaning that if women wanted to participate, they had to follow the rules made by men. Although the women claimed that they got into heavy metal to escape from oppression associated with adolescence, everyday struggles, and "small town mentality" (p. 302), Krenske

and McKay (2000) concluded that women who were into the heavy metal scene seemed to have exchanged one oppression for another. This conclusion illustrates false consciousness.

False consciousness. False consciousness “is a term that Marxist economists and philosophers use to describe a particular state of mind that prevents a person from recognizing the injustice of their current situation” (Scarince, 2014, para. 2). In other words, the person in that state of mind will not recognize or do anything to change their situation. Diehl (2013) disagreed with Krenske and McKay’s (2000) conclusion that female metal fans place themselves into a sexist environment due to false consciousness. Diehl (2013) criticized Krenske and McKay (2000) for using language that portrayed female metal fans as passive. For example, they wrote: “Consequently, women drawn to the HM scene to escape one oppressive context merely **inserted** themselves into another.” (Krenske & McKay, 2000, p. 302). To focus on the agency of women involved in the metal culture, and to challenge stereotypes, Diehl (2013) decided to conduct a narrative analysis of the autobiographical books written by women who identified as metal music fans, groupies, or musicians. The autobiographical writings she analyzed were: *Diary of a Redneck Vampire: The True Story of a Rock and Roll Girl in a Boy’s World* by Flo (2003), *Sister Outsider Headbanger: On Being a Black Feminist Metalhead* by Chaney (2006), *Right Side Out: In Tune Within, To Be in Harmony with the World* by Moore (2006), *The Last Living Slut: Born in Iran, Bred Backstage* by Shirazi (2006), and *I’m in the Band: Backstage Notes from the Chick in White Zombie* by Yseult (2010).

Diehl (2013) was also motivated because women’s contributions to music in general have been disregarded. Diehl (2013) argued that this exclusion of women in musical history stems from a larger problem: the exclusion of females from making art. According to Kearney (2006), from adolescence on, women learn to focus on making their bodies beautiful instead of making

art. Diehl (2013) also believed that there is an exclusion of women from expressive culture unless it involves serving 'the male gaze.' Diehl (2013) argued that the women she studied are trying to secure a place in metal culture and in music history. Diehl (2013) wanted to explore gender roles for these women when it comes to the metal culture.

Diehl (2013) stated that sexism occurs in metal music culture like it does in other music and other aspects of society, but that does not mean that it is more common in the metal culture than anywhere else. In other words, sexism is not an intrinsic part of the metal community (Diehl, 2013). Shirazi, a woman from Iran whose family escaped from the Iranian Islamic regime to London, England, wrote an autobiography about her experience of adjusting to a new country and becoming a groupie in the glam metal scene. She quickly discovered that, after trying to find a surrogate family in the glam metal scene, metal had double standards about gender that she deemed as not any different than those from an Islamic fundamentalist country. As a refugee, Shirazi experienced a lot of alienation so she tried to find comfort in metal music; but, she found that it was "another sanctuary port for refugees that did not keep to its promises" (Diehl, 2013, p. 38).

Both Sean Yseult (former performer for White Zombie and co-founder of the band) and Flo explained in their autobiographies that they were greatly outnumbered by male musicians (Diehl, 2013). Yseult found this experience quite positive, since she felt like she had managed to dodge the prevailing sexism that was quite common for the 1990s. She claimed that all the musicians she met on the road were respectful to her although occasionally she would not be allowed on stage because she was a woman and the stagehands assumed she was a friend, not part of the band she co-founded. Flo's experiences were mixed. She felt extremely close to one of the male members of the band, and she loved the other ones too, but she sometimes felt left

out of social events like sight-seeing or watching the tape of their performance. The band member she was especially close with once used the word ‘girl’ to insult a male band member. Flo also experienced sexism from males not in the group. For example, a friend of a friend wanted to have sex with her simply because she was a female playing a ‘male’ instrument in the band. Other experiences of sexism that Flo reported included the manager of their band sexually harassing her and the assumption that she was a lesbian since she played the drums in a metal band.

Annah Moore, a transwoman, reported in her autobiography that since she transitioned she was not viewed as a musician anymore when she goes to buy an instrument (Diehl, 2013). On the other hand, after Moore moved away from her ex-wife and son, and told her band that she was a transwoman, they were intrigued and accepting. This band was composed of four men and one female who became Moore’s best friend. The next metal band she was with (Red Volution) was astonished when she told them that she was a transwoman; the four men in the group had always believed she was a female and had never imagined that she used to be biologically a man. They subsequently appeared with her on a TV show about Moore’s transgenderism.

Doing masculinity or femininity? Deena Weinstein (as cited in, Diehl, 2013), a well-known author on heavy metal music, proposed that metal music’s biggest characteristics (e.g., rebellion, strength, and power) are “culturally masculine” (Diehl, 2013, p. 35) and therefore everybody involved in the culture is partaking in this masculinity, even if they are a woman. Diehl (2013) disagreed, noting that Annah Moore used the power of metal music to help her transition to a woman, thus she was not following and partaking in the whole masculine idea, and not holding the “culturally masculine” standard up (p. 35). Rather, Annah Moore believed that metal music is for the people who do not want to follow social norms and are outcasts (Diehl,

2013). For example, Marilyn Manson's gender-bending on CD covers and in shows allows people to explore gender (Peraino, 2006). According to Diehl (2013), Moore's experience as a transwoman challenges Weinstein's perspective on gender.

Another challenge to Weinstein's theory is found in the story of Kiedra Chaney, an African American woman, who wrote in her autobiography that at the age of 10 she already knew that power was enticing, and that metal music was power (Diehl, 2013). Metal music was different from her experiences, and gave her the ability to imagine she was someone else. She claimed that metal music empowered her since it did not try to define who she was or should be as an African American woman. Chaney also stated that metal music's power and emotional overdrive allowed her to develop her identity as an African American feminist.

Even though these women's autobiographies describe very different experiences, there were common reasons that attracted them to metal music: a sense of community, power, and freedom (Diehl, 2013). Instead of *women-doing-masculinity*, Diehl (2013) proposed that they were just doing different types of femininity. For example, all the female musicians attempted to avoid being objectified and sexualized as females, while also trying not to estrange and lose their male fans. At the same time, they were trying to retain their female identities. According to Diehl (2013), this was demonstrated by them wearing female clothing mixed with male clothing (e.g., leggings with combat boots). Diehl (2013) argued that Shirazi, the groupie, was another example of doing different types of femininity because she felt powerful by having sex with band members since she believed it was on her terms. According to Diehl (2013), other examples of different ways to do femininity in the metal scene were illustrated by Chaney, an African American woman who attended concerts and headbanged even though Caucasian men were staring at her, and Moore, a transgender woman, who experienced performing metal music as

therapeutic. Diehl (2013) concluded that these females still held to their identities as women while simultaneously challenging the notions and stereotypes of what is appropriate for being female (Diehl, 2013). Diehl (2013) argued that “metal femininity” (p. 59) can help female metalheads confront traditional views of femininity. For example, according to Diehl (2013), the female metalhead can be lively and loud in public or she can wear clothing and accessories that are considered masculine (e.g., spiked wristbands, combat boots).

Continuing with the idea of masculinity, Vasan (2010) examined the negotiation of gender identity boundaries by female death metal fans. Her study also focused on why female fans are drawn to death metal, especially since it is the most androcentric and male-dominated sub-genre of metal music. In a preliminary study based on observation of death metal concerts plus field and telephone interviews, Vasan (2010) concluded that there are two types of females involved in the death metal subculture: the self-masculinized woman, who acts and dresses like a man, and the groupie, who acts and dresses sexually provocative. The first group of females identify themselves as true fans and distinguish themselves from the second group of females who they believe are just there for sex.

Vasan (2010) also discovered in the preliminary study that there are females in the death metal scene who play significant leadership roles in the community, but only within the behavioural boundaries of the death metal culture. This means that breaking those rules set by the death metal culture “would include explicit criticism of practices or ideologies central to the subculture, or behavior that challenges those practices or ideologies.” (Vasan, 2010, p. 17). For example, it was not permitted to discuss “representations of women in lyrics and cover art” (Vasan, 2010, p. 17) or to question “individual scene members’ adoption of sexist behavior” (p. 17). According to Vasan (2010), overstepping those boundaries could result in criticism, since

the death metal culture is androcentric and both males and females who are a part of it must follow the androcentric boundaries such as partaking in or not challenging misogyny and sexism. Since trying to cross the boundaries was taboo, one could only create another subculture outside the androcentric boundaries. But that is a rare occurrence, so women follow the masculine codes to be part of the culture. Vasan (2010) suggested that females follow those masculine and androcentric codes because they value all the power they can get.

Maccoby (1998) proposed in an earlier study of work culture that power is only given to those who mirror those already in power. Applying Maccoby's theory of power in the work place, Vasan (2010) developed two hypotheses for her main study: women will masculinize themselves to fit in, and women who masculinize themselves will have more leadership positions than those who do not. Vasan (2010) theorized that since those in power in the death metal scene are men, the women who want power will resemble those men in behaviour, ideology, and personality. As such, women wearing sexually provocative clothing would not access power in the death metal scene. Vasan (2010) collected data through interviews with female scene leaders and non-scene leaders. Some of the scene leaders were: Leona, Laina, Laura, Scarlet Goat (name she goes by in the scene), Kim, Jess, Jexxykill (name she used in the scene), Kesh (pen name), and Leah. One of the non-scene leaders went with the pseudonym of Sara.

Findings suggested that the gender interactions in the death metal scene were like those reported by Maccoby in her study of women in the workforce. Vasan (2010) concluded that there is a barrier in equality of participation for women because they are not seen as equals by men in the subculture. In accordance with Maccoby's 1998 findings, some women masculinized themselves to blend in, and therefore received leadership roles and respect from males. Also, consistent with the corporate world described by Maccoby (1998), Vasan (2010) discovered a

hierarchy in the death metal scene which consisted of men on top, then masculinized women, and then groupies. According to Vasan (2010), women who used their sexual appeal to get status in the metal scene received attention and were in favour, but did not obtain power. Vasan (2010) argued that if they tried for power they would receive a *token* position akin to secretaries in the corporate world. Vasan (2010) concluded that the groupies would not have true power or respect in the scene, and would be marginalized by men as well as women who consider themselves as true fans (masculinized women).

According to two interviewees, women death metal musicians are not treated as well as the men in the bands. One interviewee claimed that there are barriers for women who want to be part of a band. For example, female musicians in the death metal scene received compliments from men that were based on gender. Males would tell these musicians that they play well or sing well “for a girl.” The interviewees also reported that female musicians needed to perform better than their male peers to receive the same recognition as them. Vasan (2010) argued that musicians in the scene who have the highest position that can be attained are still treated differently according to gender.

Vasan (2010) claimed that women run into barriers just entering the death metal scene. For example, they must consistently “prove themselves worthy of the honor to the men who control it” (Vasan, 2010, p. 193), since their presence is questioned. Vasan (2010) argued that there are several ways they prove that they are worthy of respect and honor: wearing band t-shirts and other clothes worn by men, having a great amount of knowledge about bands, and moshing beside men. Vasan (2010) suggested that new males to the scene are not tested as much as women. According to Vasan (2010), when females are accepted in the scene they still follow patriarchal rules of how to dress and behave. However, there were contrasting views about the

death metal scene being male-oriented: one interviewee claimed that the number of women at death metal shows is increasing; another female participant stated that she has not seen many women at any type of music concert unless that type of music is marketed for them; and the third female interviewee claimed that men are more accepting of women in the scene now than when she was an adolescent.

So, why are women fans willing to be part of the death metal scene when there are so many barriers for them? For some, it promises freedom and power, especially for those women who have “strong personalities” (Vasan, 2010, p. 193) and “reject the traditional female roles” (p. 193). For example, Laura, one of Vasan’s (2010) participants, claimed that death metal changed her life and that it was the most powerful music she had ever heard. She also explained that it fulfilled her and gave her an adrenaline rush. Similarly, Donna Gaines, a popular metal music scholar, discovered a liking for metal music because of her research that made her aware of thrash metal music lyrics that described real problems for adolescents (like drugs), and provided an important source of strength and meaning for her research consultants (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). In agreement, Angela Gossow, a very well-known metal music musician, explained that when she is on stage she not only feels strong but is strong (Hickam & Wallach, 2011).

Conversely, one participant believed that there is never complete freedom, but instead a trade of “one form patriarchy for another” (Vasan, 2010, p. 193). She also claimed that female fans still manage to fight for a spot in the death metal scene and experience the “power and aggression” (p. 193) that used to be only for men. The fact that most of the women who Vasan (2010) interviewed were not just fans but also scene leaders provided evidence for this idea.

Vasan (2010) concluded that women could experience some power and freedom if they act and dress like men.

In regard to dressing and acting like men, one of Vasans' (2010) participants explained that the female band t-shirts are hard to wear. Many women fans would modify male t-shirts to fit them. Vasan (2010) thought this was a great metaphor for female participation in the death metal scene, since the scene was not made to 'fit' female fans, they alter the music and its culture into something uniquely theirs. For example, according to Vasan (2010), when asked what death metal meant to them, the women's explanations about their love for the music and the scene were in "distinctly female terms" (p.194), even possibly feminist terms. For instance, Kim (a scene leader) used death metal music as a rebellion against religious constraints. Laina (a scene leader), with the use of death metal music, revolted against constraints of race. Laina also believed that metal music and its scene let females flee from the patriarchy of the mainstream society, therefore being liberating and offering a sort of a freedom for women (Vasan, 2010). While Leona (also a scene leader) used the music to escape both religion and race. Leah (a scene leader) used death metal to recover from trauma, while Jess (also a scene leader) felt like she was the "black sheep" (Vasan, 2010, p. 194) of her family and that is why she got attracted to death metal music. "Scarlet Goat [a scene leader] found a surrogate family" (Vasan, 2010, p. 194) through the death metal scene. Vasan (2010) concluded that what led all the women she interviewed to death metal was: discovering "meaning in a male-dominated world" (p. 194), creating significant relationships with others, and finding an identity that is not prescribed by mainstream society.

Even though the women could assume a non-mainstream identity, Vasan (2010) believed that because of victimization and marginalization of women in society, many women embraced a

“masculine identity” (p. 195). For example, Leah professed that metal defined her and that as a child she favoured her masculine side more since she did not want to be disrespected for her feminine side. JexxyKill (scene leader) became interested in death metal because it was not feminine, meaning that she did not have to worry about being skinny, having good hair, and being not too loud. At shows, she had the freedom to be as loud as she wants to be. Vasan (2010) concluded that the death metal scene has patriarchal barriers, but it still provides women with a liberating experience.

Finding the complexity of death metal music and gender in that scene interesting, Vasan (2010) wanted to know how her participants felt about misogynistic death metal bands like Cannibal Corpse. She noticed that many females seemed to either find a way to justify misogynistic death metal or they claimed that it did not bother them. For example, some stated they liked those bands, while others explained they did not like those bands but condoned them being in the death metal scene. Vasan (2010) argued that it made sense that women would turn a “blind eye” (p. 198) to some aspects of the death metal music scene, which they would not let slide in other incidents, because death metal music and its culture play a significant role in their lives. Vasan (2010) concluded that death metal gives it female fans liberation, euphoria, and power, which is worth the compromise. However, Vasan (2010), who is also a fan of the music, noticed during the interviews not only how marginalized women are in the death metal scene, but also how deep their feelings for the music went. Vasan (2010) realized that even though the music helped them through adolescence, the women still needed it in their adulthood. Laina had put it in a great way: “incredible, intelligent, creative, very thoughtful women” (Vasan, 2010, p. 199) who use death metal music as a space for their need to be truly themselves. For securing this space, it may even mean, as Leona had said, that death metals’ female fans have to “rip off

that sign on their little treehouse that says, ‘No Girls allowed’ and just walk right in.” (Vasan, 2010, p. 199).

Stigma Associated with Metal Music

Gender and harmful impacts are two stigmas strongly associated with metal music. Diehl (2013) argued that the American public dislikes metal music and that metal fans are viewed as coming from low socio-economic standings. Furthermore, Diehl (2013) suggested that female metal fans are negatively stigmatized with the same stereotypes that white working-class women received beginning in the Victorian age. McClintock (1995) explained that historically the white working-class woman was viewed as a degenerate. She threatened the stability of the middle class since she was believed to be independent (especially financially) from the family structure, which was patriarchal and heterosexual (Agustín, 2007). At the same time, working class men were stereotyped as being “sexist and racist white males” (Diehl, 2013, p. 9).

Hall (2007) provided empirical evidence for these kinds of claims of stigma associated with metal music. Young adults (college students under the age of 30 with a mean age of 23.19) were asked to rate their enthusiasm about living with a hypothetical same-sex roommate who liked one of 19 music genres (heavy metal was included), 11 film genres, and 10 television genres. The participants were supposed to also rate if their expectation of a hypothetical roommate being “interesting, smart, and cool” (Hall, 2007, p. 263) would change depending on the genres they liked. There were 108 participants and 66% were female. Findings showed that hypothetical roommates who listened to metal music were rated lower on the expectation of being intelligent and interesting to live with. Since 66% of the survey takers were female, and female respondents rated a roommate who liked metal music more negatively than male

participants did, Hall (2007) concluded that females especially had negative judgments about females who listen to metal music.

In addition to gender stereotypes, news and social media have managed to panic society with a claim that heavy metal music, because of its dark lyrics, has a negative effect on the minds of its listeners (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Due to this stigma, heavy metal music has been linked to problems such as the improper use of substances, suicide, and low educational achievement (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). For example, the perpetrators of the 1999 Columbine shooting (a high school massacre that took place in the United States) liked heavy metal music, which the media quickly discovered (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). After the Columbine shooting, there were demands through the media for an increase of censorship and regulation of metal music (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Due to high public anxiety regarding consumption of various types of media (e.g., music, television), including metal music, psychology researchers have focused on trying to identify its negative effects (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). In a 1999 keynote address at the annual American Psychological Association's conference, psychologist Stuart Fischhoff jokingly described the tendency to blame media (e.g., music, television) for social problems as *fundamedia attribution error*, a play on words for the actual term *fundamental attribution error*. Fischhoff (1999) argued that there was not strong research evidence for negative effects of media on its audience.

Mental Health and Metal Music

As mentioned, heavy metal music has been under scrutiny, especially in the United States. One concern is band names like Slayer, Suicidal Tendencies, Megadeth, and Black Sabbath, which are believed to portray societal and mental chaos (Weinstein, 1991). Band names like Megadeth and Suicidal Tendencies, are associated with death and suicide, and band names like Black Sabbath are viewed as satanic (Recours, Aussaguel, & Trujillo, 2009). These concerns

started with rock and roll, which has lyrics about those subjects as well (Trzcinski, 1992), and grew as punk and heavy metal music became popular in the 1970s, followed by the rise of industrial and gothic music in the 1980s, and peaking in the 1990s with the emergence of extreme death metal and black metal (Lacourse, Claes, & Villeneuve, 2000). Critics claim that metal music has a negative effect on the mental and physical well-being of its fans, especially the young fans, while those who defend metal music claim it has no harmful effects (Recours et al., 2009).

Suicide and metal music. Music in general, not just metal music, has been associated with negative effects for its young fans. In the United States, suicides by adolescents have increased three times over a few decades while suicidal ideation and attempts have also grown (Garland & Zigler, 1993). Around the same time in Canada, suicide was rarer but still the leading cause of death for adolescents (Lacourse, et al., 2009). These increases have led to national concern and anxiety (Garland & Zigler, 1993) and the musical preferences of adolescents have been under scrutiny as a possible cause (Garland & Zigler, 1993). For example, in 1985, the U.S. Congress debated about requiring parental warning labels on CDs (Martin & Segrave, as cited in Scheel & Westfeld, 1999).

Heavy metal received even more public criticism because of suicide pacts arising among adolescent fans (Gaines, 1991; Lester, 1987, as cited in Scheel & Westfeld, 1999). Parents, who have lost their children to suicide, tried, unsuccessfully, to sue some of the heavy metal bands (Lacourse et. al, 2000). Because of the criticism directed to heavy metal music, it was suggested by Brown and Hendee (as cited in Scheel & Westfeld, 1999) that music preference (especially heavy metal music) should be used by physicians as a possible indicator for psychological problems in adolescent clients. There also has been a recommendation from the American

Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry that troubled teenagers who are preoccupied with music that has themes about suicide or other types of destruction (e.g., metal music), should receive psychiatric evaluations (Alessi, Huang, James, Ying, & Chowhan, as cited in Scheel & Westfeld, 1999). Rosenbaum and Prinsky (1991) reported that psychiatric hospitalization for teenagers is a decision greatly influenced by the adolescents' preference for heavy metal music, among other factors (Rosenbaum & Prinsky, 1991). Nevertheless, a causal link between adolescent suicidality and heavy metal music is hard to prove, despite research that has investigated heavy metal music as a possible risk factor for suicidality for adolescents (Scheel & Westfeld, 1999).

Martin, Clarke, and Pearce (1993) examined correlations of music preferences and suicide vulnerability in a sample of 247 Australian high school students (n = 138 male; n = 109 female) with a mean age of 14.76 years. The results indicated that 66% of the females who liked rock/metal had thought about killing themselves versus only 33% of the females who liked pop (Martin, Clarke, & Pearce, 1993). Furthermore, 62% of the 'rock/metal' females reported having self-harmed themselves on purpose contrasted with only 14% of the females of the 'pop group' (Martin et al., 1993). Interestingly, there were no significant differences for males (Martin et al., 1993). Martin et al. (1993) reasoned that adolescents, who have had previous problems like psychopathy in their family and personal lives, may reach out to rock/metal music because their feelings are reflected in the negative themes in that type of music. Martin et al. (1993) concluded that female adolescents' preference of rock/metal music could be an indicator of being vulnerable to suicidal behaviours and thoughts. However, the combining of rock and metal music is a limitation of this study given earlier research by Arnett (1992) reporting more serious

negative attributes for American adolescent heavy metal fans contrasted with fans of mainstream and hard rock.

Stack, Gundlach, and Reeves (1994) reported that heavy metal fans share common risk factors with people with moderate to high risk for suicide, and argued that metal music encourages the increase of suicidal tendencies. However, Lester and Whipple (1996) disagreed based on findings, using a sample of college students, that showed a relationship between past suicide ideation and heavy metal music preference, but no current relationship between them. Lacourse et al. (2000) argued that Lester and Whipple's (1996) results demonstrated that heavy metal music is not responsible for the growth of suicidal tendencies.

Scheel and Westfeld (1999) also investigated heavy metal music as a risk factor for suicide. They hypothesized that heavy metal fans have less robust cognitive structures than fans of other types of music, which leaves them more vulnerable to suicide. They speculated that this was especially true for female heavy metal fans given findings reported in the literature. Scheel and Westfeld (1999) also wanted to analyze the relationships between listening to a specific type of music, negative effect, and the risk of suicide. A sample of 121 grade ten to grade twelve students ($n = 77$ female; $n = 44$ male) completed three instruments during regular class hours. One of the inventories was the Reasons for Living Inventory (RFL), a standardized instrument, which determines the reasons someone would not want to kill themselves. The RFL is divided into six subscales: Survival and Coping Beliefs (SCB), Responsibility to Family (RF), Child-Related Concerns (CC), Fear of Suicide (FS), Fear of Social Disapproval (FSD), and Moral Objections (MO). The CC was not used in Scheel and Westfeld's (1999) study since it does not apply to most high school students. Another instrument was the Suicidal Risk Questionnaire (SRQ), a standardized instrument, which involved participants rating past, current, and future

suicidal risk. The last instrument was a Music Survey created by the researchers. Based on a telephone poll targeting music stores focused on adolescents, the researchers calculated that the five most popular types of music among teenagers were; 'pop/mainstream rock,' 'heavy metal,' 'rap,' 'alternative,' and 'country.'

Data analysis showed that there was a significant positive correlation between liking rap, country music, or pop/mainstream rock, and many of the RFL scores. Conversely, liking heavy metal music had a significant negative correlation with RFL scores. In other words, it appears that the more a fan liked heavy metal music, the fewer reasons they had to live, while the more a fan liked rap, country music, or pop/mainstream rock, the more reasons they had to live. They further discovered that heavy metal fans had weaker reasons for living than non-fans. Also, female heavy metal fans did not have greater suicide risk than males in this study. A comparison of the heavy metal fans and non-fans on the five RFL sub scales indicated that that heavy metal fans had significantly lower coping and survival beliefs, and reduced feelings of responsibility to family compared to participants who were not fans of heavy metal music (Scheel & Westfeld, 1999).

When the data for the Suicidal Risk Questionnaire were analyzed, it was discovered that the self-reported risk of occasionally or seriously thinking about killing oneself was highly significant ($\chi^2 [1, N = 73] = 8.41, p < .004$) for female heavy metal fans, but not as significant ($\chi^2 [1, N = 39] = 2.83, p < .10$) for male fans (Scheel & Westfeld, 1999). For the females, 74% of the heavy metal fans (compared to only 35% of the non-fans) reported that they occasionally or seriously thought about killing themselves. For the males, 42% of the heavy metal fans reported that they occasionally or seriously thought about killing themselves, while only 15% of the non-

fans reported the same. Scheel and Westfeld (1999) suggested that perhaps female adolescents are less reluctant than male adolescents to show distress and admit to having suicidal thoughts.

In conclusion, Scheel and Westfeld (1999) argued that the level of suicidal risk should not be overemphasized, because these results do not portray individual variables in the group. In other words, according to Scheel and Westfeld (1999), there is a possibility that adolescent heavy metal fans are having no more troubles in their lives than other adolescents, and that they cope using other adaptive strategies. Scheel and Westfeld (1999) argued that since only 40% of students in their study liked heavy metal music, the probability of serious risk of suicide is only for a very small group of adolescents. Another reason that suicide risk should not be overestimated is because the RFL scores were not confirmed by completed suicides. Scheel and Westfeld (1999) argued that even though suicide attempts and ideations are predictors of completed suicides among teenagers, suicide ideations are more frequent than attempts, and attempts are more common than completed suicides. Therefore, according to Scheel and Westfeld (1999), immediate suicide risk is not necessarily predicted by the lower RFL score of the heavy metal fans or the fact that more of them reported thinking about killing themselves. Scheel and Westfeld (1999) suggested that a more accurate conclusion from their results is that heavy metal fans are more vulnerable to suicide because the adolescents' weaker sense of confidence about the future, as well as a weaker confidence in their ability to cope, may not help them through a crisis as effectively as for other adolescents. Scheel and Westfeld claimed the same about the metal fan adolescents' weaker devotion to their family, and their reduced moral objections to suicide. Therefore, according to Scheel and Westfeld (1999), the suicidal vulnerability that heavy metal fans experience may not be a direct cause of the heavy metal music but rather due to personal and family problems.

Scheel and Westfeld (1999) found it surprising that liking heavy metal music was so steadily linked to higher suicide vulnerability. They argued that it is hard to justify that the pro-suicide lyrics of the music, which is what most people criticize, lead to the suicide vulnerability. Scheel and Westfeld (1999) reasoned that if lyrics had a significant effect, there would have been notably lower results for the heavy metal fans on the sub-scales of Fear of Social Disapproval, Fear of Suicide, and Moral Objection. The only sub-scale where heavy metal fans did score significantly lower was Moral Objection, and that was only for male heavy metal fans. Scheel and Westfeld (1999) suggested that if lyrics had an influence on suicidal vulnerability, then it would be difficult to explain why there was a positive correlation between country music and reasons for living, since country music has many unhappy themes in its lyrics as well.

Lacourse, Claes, and Villeneuve (2000) also examined if heavy metal music has an influence on suicide. They applied Arnett's *adolescent alienation theory* to understand the participation of adolescents in the heavy metal subculture. Arnett (1996) hypothesized that adolescents may have an urge to join or create musical preference subcultures because of feelings of anomie or alienation due to societal individualism and damaged social institutions (e.g., community, family, school, and religion) (Lacourse et al., 2000). Lacourse et al. (2000) suggested that adolescents' attitudes and individual values are consciously or unconsciously reflected and validated through the heavy metal subculture. Lacourse et al.'s (2000) study had two purposes: "to define the suicidal risk factors found in adolescents who prefer [heavy metal] music, who worship music, and who listen to music for vicarious release" (Lacourse et al., 2000, p. 324); and to find out the independent relationship between heavy metal music and suicidal risk when controlling for other factors. Of the 275 participants, there were 154 males and 121 females, whose age ranged from 14 to 18 with the average being 16.22 (Lacourse et al., 2000).

Some of the measures (all standardized except for the last two) used by Lacourse et al. (2000) were: Family Relationships, Alienation/Anomie, Suicidal Risk, Drug Use, and Musical Preferences and Musical Related Behaviors.

Data were analyzed separately by gender, and results showed no significant effect of gender and age on liking heavy metal music. However, there was a moderate correlation between heavy metal music and suicidal risk for female adolescents. Liking heavy metal music was related to alienation and anomie for females and drug use for males. Since female adolescents reported having higher feelings of alienation and anomie than other females and males, as well as having higher suicide risk than other females, Lacourse et al. (2000) hypothesized that Arnett's theory applies more to females than males. They suggested that females may report more feelings of alienation and anomie than males because "it may be more socially acceptable for boys to listen to HM [heavy metal] music and to be attracted to its morbid and aggressive symbolism than it is for girls" (Lacourse et al., 2000, p. 329). After performing a logistic regression, by introducing other risk factors, they discovered that heavy metal music preference did not have a significant effect on suicidal risk for the female group after all. Based on that result, Lacourse et al. (2000) concluded that other attributes of the adolescents who like heavy metal music are more likely to play an important role as suicidal risk factors than their musical preference. Therefore, they argued it is misleading to claim that there is a causal relationship between suicide and musical preferences.

Lacourse et al. (2000) determined adolescents with feelings of anomie and alienation, as well as those with poor family relationships, listened to heavy metal music for vicarious release. Interestingly, the female adolescents in their study had a higher score on vicarious music listening than the males did. Music listening for vicarious release was not linked to suicidal risk

for the female group. Lacourse et al. (2000) discovered that vicarious listening had a suppression effect on suicidal risk, with potentially an inverse relationship between the two. Lacourse et al. (2000) argued listening to music to release and express negative emotions is a potentially effective coping mechanism for females since there is a reduction in suicidal risk.

Depression, anxiety, behavior problems, and metal music. Also interested in the effects of different types of adolescent music preferences on mental health, Miranda and Claes (2007) focused on depression. There was scarce research on depression and music for adolescents, even though depression in adolescence is a significant issue, especially for females (Lewinsohn & Essau, 2002). Female adolescents are known to report higher depression levels and episodes than males (Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994). Hyde, Mezulis, and Abramson (2008) explained these gender differences in depression for adolescents with an “affective, biological, cognitive model” (Hyde, Mezulis, & Abramson, p. 305). Hyde et al. (2008) argued that these “affective, biological, and cognitive factors” (p. 292) lead to vulnerability, which lead to depression and gender differences under stress.

Miranda and Claes (2007) used five types of music categories that have been stable over the years with French Canadian adolescents: metal music, soul music, electronic music, pop music, and classical music. The metal music category was composed of heavy metal music (e.g., heavy metal, death metal, and black metal) and alternative hard rock (e.g., punk rock, and alternative rock). The soul music category encompassed music types that have been inspired by modern African-American culture (e.g., reggae, R&B, hip hop, and rap). Techno and trance comprised the electronic music category; pop rock and dance pop made up the pop music category; and the classical music category was represented by classical music, blues, rock oldies, and jazz (Miranda & Claes, 2007). The study’s main objective was to determine if adolescents’

musical preferences (e.g., classical, electronic, pop, soul, or metal) were associated with depression levels. Since depression has high comorbidity with drug use, academic problems, and trait anxiety, these factors were controlled for. Miranda and Claes (2007) also focused on how often the adolescent listened to their music and how much attention they paid to lyrics.

Miranda and Claes (2007) hypothesized that liking metal music would be linked to higher depression levels, while a preference for soul and pop music would be associated with lower levels of depression. Hip hop and rap, which are in the soul music category, have faced their fair share of criticism as well because of antisocial themes (Heusmann, Moise, & Podolski, 1997). Miranda and Claes (2007) argued that antisocial rap may be harmful to adolescents, but the lyrics of the different types of music in the soul category are usually positive because they are about optimism, hedonism, cultural celebration, pride, and spirituality. Miranda and Claes (2007) also hypothesized that there would be more significant links to depression for female adolescents than for males, because it is known that females listen to music longer, are more likely to use music for mood-management, and potentially ruminate over song lyrics more than males. To test their hypotheses, they had 329 (179 female and 150 male) high school students fill out self-report questionnaires.

Miranda and Claes (2007) discovered that female adolescents had higher depression rates than male adolescents, and that, although they did not listen to music any more than males, they paid significantly more attention to the lyrics. Because of these results, the main analyses were conducted separately by gender. There were no significant correlations between any type of music and depression for the male adolescents, including any sub-genres of depression. The factors of depression for metal music preference in adolescent females positively correlated with dysphoria, anhedonia, pessimism, suicidal ideation, work inhabitation, indecisiveness, and a

sense of worthlessness. Miranda and Claes (2007) speculated that the reason there are higher links between depression and music for adolescent females than for males is because the young women are potentially more involved in regulating their depressed mood through songs or rumination of songs. Miranda and Claes (2007) theorized that metal music may also just be a better fit for the females' moods, but at the same time reinforce depression levels in females because of negative themes (e.g., death, distress, despair, suicide) that are in the music, which can be used for rumination. Miranda and Claes (2007) argued that another reason that metal music might be connected with depression for females but not males, is different coping styles. According to Miranda and Claes (2007), adolescent females tend to use a coping style that is passive and includes the self and rumination (e.g., listening to music), while males have a tendency to choose a coping style that involves more action (e.g., playing an instrument). None of the music types led to depression episodes in male or female adolescents, but metal music was associated with suicidal ideation for females (Miranda & Claes, 2007). Also, none of the music preferences were significantly linked with state anxiety, but liking metal music for females was linked with higher drug use (Miranda & Claes, 2007).

As mentioned before, preference for metal music was significantly correlated with higher depression rates for female adolescents, while preferring soul and pop music was correlated with lower depression levels (Miranda & Claes, 2007). Miranda and Claes (2007) argued that these results make sense, because they believe soul and pop music have positive lyrics that are comforting to female adolescents. Miranda and Claes (2007) theorized that female adolescents who are not very depressed are attracted to soul and pop music because of its comforting and positive lyrics, which can reduce depression. They concluded that metal music, because of its negative themes, attracts female adolescents with depression and makes them more depressed. A

potential flaw in Miranda and Claes' (2007) argument is that as they acknowledged, antisocial rap music, which is a part of the soul music category, is potentially harmful to adolescents. Also, because rap music has been overtly misogynistic since the 1980s (Adams & Fuller, 2006), it seems surprising that female adolescents would find it comforting or positive.

Miranda and Claes (2007) noted limitations to their study. For instance, data were based on self-reports, which means that there could have been a memory bias or an effort on the part of adolescents to appear socially desirable. As well, the study was correlational, and therefore cannot support causality or a direction between levels of depression and female adolescents. However, Miranda and Claes (2007) argued that even if negative metal music songs are potential risk factors of depression, they are not significant or strong enough to be generic risk factors and to be a priority. According to Miranda and Claes (2007), it is crucial to remember that there are more important risk factors than metal music associated with depression for adolescents.

Recours, Aussaguel, and Trujillo (2009) investigated depression and anxiety amongst metal music fans. They conducted an online study in France to examine if metal music had higher levels of anxiety and depression than people who are not fans of metal. Depression and anxiety were the dependent variables in their study. Age, employment, education, attending concerts, participating in concerts, tattooing, and body modification, were included as independent variables that might mediate levels of anxiety and depression. They used a standardized instrument, the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, and a sample of 282 male and 39 female metal fans with an average age of 22.67 years.

Results indicated that most of metal fans had good health regarding anxiety and depression (Recours et al., 2009). In general, they had low levels of anxiety and depression, and gender, age, the number of concerts attended, preferred music style, tattooing, and piercing were

not linked to depression or anxiety. Recours et al. (2009) claimed that if there is a relationship between mental health and any kinds of rituals of engagement at concerts, the link is weak.

Other researchers have focused on behavioral problems. Dutch researchers, Selfhout, Delsing, Ter Bogt, and Meeus (2008), designed a longitudinal study to examine if metal music and hip-hop music affected problem behaviors in Dutch adolescents. Although metal music was not analyzed separately from hip-hop music, the findings are pertinent. Participants (including adolescents who liked other music instead of hip-hop and metal music) completed the Peer Crowd Identification Questionnaire, the Musical Preference Questionnaire, Direct and Indirect Aggression Scales and a delinquency questionnaire (Baerveldt, Van Rossem, & Vermande cited in Selfhout et al., 2008). However, only the data from the participants who liked metal music or hip-hop music were used. Data were collected from various types of music fans because the researchers wanted to disguise the study's intent. Two years later, the adolescents were asked to fill out the same questionnaires (Selfhout et al., 2008). The final sample included data from 931 participants between the ages of 11 and 18 who liked metal music and/or hip-hop music; 52.3% were male and 47.7% were female. Findings indicated that adolescent music preference stays moderately the same as well as which group they associate with. Selfhout et al. (2008) also determined that metal music preference foretold behaviour problems in male metal fans, but not in female metal fans. For hip-hop, the music preference predicted behaviour problems equally in male and female fans. The authors theorized that, perhaps, the female metal fans in the Netherlands (where the study was performed) preferred the gentler types of metal music (e.g., gothic metal) while the males liked more of the aberrant metal music.

Whereas these studies investigated an assumed negative association between metal music, depression, anxiety and behavioral problems, a case study reported by Precin (2011) is an

example of metal music being used to treat an anxiety disorder and its associated behaviors. Jakee was described as a 20-year-old woman with post-traumatic stress disorder and sadomasochistic features stemming from traumatic events in her childhood associated with a violent, indifferent and cold-hearted father who beat her, and a depressed mother who might have had Munchausen's disease. Jakee felt she only received attention when she was sick and she was never allowed to show her anger. At the age of 17, Jakee started writing and playing music, joined a band, took drugs, and cut herself to cope with feelings caused by her past trauma. She was hospitalized for depression and self-mutilation, where she requested to see an occupational therapist because she had a desire to work.

Precin (2011) was the assigned occupational therapist who worked with Jakee using Jakee's love of metal music and Hermans' 1997 three step model for healing post-traumatic stress disorder: 1) develop a healing relationship; 2) recall the traumas and grieve what was lost; and 3) create a connection with the outside world). Precin (2011) realized that Jakee was too distressed to perform her metal music, but she believed that Jakee was trying to work through her trauma via her music, since Jakee's lyrics talked about abuse and the music was full of rage, which Precin interpreted as unexpressed anger to her parents. Consequently, she suggested that Jakee talk about the lyrics. This went well, but as soon as Jakee ran out of lyrics to discuss she became uncooperative. Precin (2011) then suggested that Jakee and her band do live performances, and after each performance Precin and Jakee would have a therapy session. Jakee and her band agreed. According to Precin (2011), performing helped Jakee work through Hermans' three stages. Through the performances and traveling, Jakee developed close relationships with the other band members thereby developing healing relationships (Precin, 2011). The second step was accomplished because performing allowed Jakee to recall her trauma

and grieve the loss because “Singing, screaming, jumping, throwing herself into the audience, and playing loud, powerful music allowed her to express unnamed emotions in the context of a heavy metal band concert venue” (Precin, 2011, p. 80). Being able to express her emotions and her rage in a safe (there were bouncers at the shows to make sure everyone is safe), structured, and time-limited environment, enabled Jakee to avoid turning to drugs or cutting (Precin, 2011). The third step occurred because of the audience. The fans let her work through her trauma by permitting her to be whoever she wanted to be; they knew the lyrics of her songs; and Precin believed that the connection with the audience gave Jakee back some of the power that she had lost through her aggressors because the audience let her be the dominant one (Precin, 2011).

In conclusion, Precin (2011) noticed that performing in a metal band helped Jakee resolve trauma. Singing and playing an instrument in a metal band allowed Jakee to explore her emotions in a safe and public environment and to evaluate who she was, while her fans let her do so without judgment. The loud and powerful music let her explore unnamed emotions and herself, and let her build healthy connections with people.

Releasing Emotions through Metal Music

The literature indicates that Precin’s (2011) description of a client working through trauma and releasing emotions with metal music is not unusual. For example, Vasan (2010) reported that death metal gave many participants comfort in their youth, and in the case of one participant, Loana, comfort from her trauma. For Loana, the music seemed to give her a way to release her angst. Loana explained that metal music also let her feel invincible when she needed to. Vasan (2010) also believed that the content of death metal music may be therapeutic for females with trauma experiences because death metal lyrics address many taboo issues that people may feel they cannot express. So instead, the music conveys these issues for them (Vasan, 2010).

One participant, JexxyKill, claimed that she found the mosh pit to be an “emotional safety zone” (Vasan, 2010, p. 196). JexxyKill also expressed that she had experienced some horrifying things in her life, and death metal gave her comfort. JexxyKill believed that death metal clarifies how terrible rape is, something another participant, Leah, seemed to agree with since death metal let her explore disturbing things that developed because of childhood abuse. Laina was a participant who kept experiencing racist as well as sexist barriers in society, and she argued that death metal music was liberating and “emotionally cathartic” (Vasan, 2010, p. 196).

Emotional catharsis through metal music to overcome obstacles was also reported by Diehl (2013) who described Moore and her ex-wife Cindy; who had a metal band together. Although the band never performed live, Cindy used the band to release her emotions about Moore transitioning to a woman (Diehl, 2013). The performance of metal music helped them cope with the situation and emotions connected to the transition, and was therapeutic (Diehl, 2013).

Similarly, Lacourse et al. (2000) reported that female metal fans listen to metal music for vicarious release as did Arnett (1996) in his book *Metalheads: Heavy metal music and adolescent alienation* (1996). Both male and female metalheads explained that heavy metal music does not tempt them to be reckless. Although this result is possibly counter-intuitive because it is easy to believe that listening to angry, violent, or sad music (which Arnett claims heavy metal music often is) when in a corresponding mood will lead to an increase in that mood and thus result in destructive or self-destructive behaviour, Arnett’s study showed that heavy metal music purged both male and female metal fans of sadness and anger (Arnett, 1996). According to the results, 63% of the 73 females interviewed (a higher percentage than for the males) explained that they listen to heavy metal music “especially when they are angry or sad”

(p. 146). Most of these females claimed that the music relaxed them and calmed them down, therefore resulting in emotional catharsis. What the females professed about heavy metal music was much like what the males expressed. The emotions described by the women in the moments they chose to listen to metal music were anger, sadness, fright, boredom, and excitement. The resulting emotion after listening was calm.

One of the females interviewed admitted that listening to heavy metal music was her way of letting go of her anger without hitting someone (Arnett, 1996). For another female, listening to heavy metal music let out the negative emotions that she could not verbalize, therefore resulting in “vicarious expression” (p. 136). One female’s reply was the same as one of the males; she explained that when she listens to heavy metal music, it “intensifies her anger, then sweeps it away” (p. 146). Another interviewee explained that heavy metal music was like what a massage therapist does with your muscles - it relaxed her. Another female participant stated that she listens to heavy metal music “instead of yelling or throwing things” (p. 146) and it lets her anger out. Arnett (1996) discovered that for both female and male metalheads, listening to heavy metal music was an alternative to destructive behaviour that allowed the release of negative emotions and emotional catharsis. Arnett (1996) suggested that metal music has similar effects on both genders, especially when it comes to releasing emotions.

In regard to releasing anger, Lerner (1985) argued more than 30 years ago that men are encouraged to express anger, even if it is almost a pathological anger; but, for females, even a healthy or realistic anger is not allowed to be shown. If a woman expresses her anger openly, especially towards a man, she is judged as “sexually unattractive,” “unfeminine,” and “unladylike” (Lerner, 1985, p. 2). Lerner (1985) argued that with so many taboos about women feeling or expressing anger, women have a hard time knowing when they are angry and therefore

fear their own anger. Lerner (1985) suggested that a woman being angry is threatening to others, because it means that she may strive for personal and social changes, which disrupts the lives of others.

Miller (1985) argued that women's anger is viewed with fear and almost always considered as pathological, because a woman is perceived in culture as the primarily caregiver who needs to be there for others. Miller (1985) also claimed that society is androcentric and patriarchal, meaning that males have the power and make the rules. Therefore, according to Miller (1985), women are subordinates, and those with power do not want subordinates to express anger. Miller (1985) argued that even if those with power act in a hurtful way towards subordinates, subordinates are viewed as abnormal if they express anger.

It appears that even so many years later, girls and young women are still not free to express their anger. Van Daalen-Smith (2008) conducted a study focusing on the experiences of anger for Canadian adolescents and adult females. Van Daalen-Smith (2008) wanted to examine: “(a) what generates anger for young women, (b) their experiences surrounding the expression of anger, (c) their relationship with this emotion, and (d) how their lived experience of anger affects their mental health” (p. 117). Data were generated using focus groups (N = 65) and face-to-face individual interviews (n=9). Participants ranged in age from 14 to 24 years old. For the focus groups, the females were asked to recount their experiences of anger. For the individual interviews, the participants were asked to reflect on a time they were angry and if they had communicated their anger, to describe the result. They were also asked to make a piece of art about the experience.

Van Daalen-Smith (2008) discovered that many participants experienced anger because they perceived themselves as “being dismissed, devalued, disbelieved, judged, and made to never

feel good enough” (p. 119). These experiences reflected “gender-based expectations” (p. 119). The participants talked about countless experiences where they were “not listened to or taken seriously” (p. 119). This happened when recounting experiences of anger with family, friends and associates. Through the data, Van Daalen-Smith (2008) realized that both expressing and not expressing anger had negative impacts for the participants. If they expressed anger, they lost integrity or relationships. For example, showing their anger would lead to “judgment, relational disruption, dismissal (of their anger), or pathologization (of their anger)” (Van Daalen-Smith, 2008, p. 119). If the females did not show their anger, the result was “a steady shift away from their needs and their true selves” (p. 119). Van Daalen-Smith (2008) argued that females learned through those experiences that they should not get angry, and therefore to separate themselves from that emotion. She also claimed that females would end up “self-silencing” (p. 119) their anger meaning that they “eventually learned to divert it, to self-dismiss it, loathe it, and doubt it” (p. 119).

Hickam and Wallach (2011) argued that metal music gives women a voice for their anger because metal music is not primarily a release for the “antisocial rage of the straight, white, angry male” (p. 268), but instead a means to promote strength, often regarded as a celebration of freedom for a worldwide audience. This means that people of different genders, sexualities, and countries are encouraged to participate (Hickam & Wallach, 2011). The fact that metal music gives its audience the strength to withstand and persevere could be why the music is so appealing to what Hickman and Wallach described as the “dead-end kids” (p. 268), youth who have a right to be angry because they have been neglected or abused by society, parents and others. Thus, Hickam and Wallach (2011) argued that metal music is about releasing the fury of the people who are mistreated and misunderstood. Hickam and Wallach (2011) believed that metal music is

a way to release healthy and justified anger, since it is better to externalize anger in a way that harms no one rather than to keep it inside. Leona, a participant from Vasans' (2010) study, exemplified this belief with her statement that metal music gave her a way to vent her "female anger," (Vasan, 2010, p. 195) the anger that women were socialized not to express (Vasan, 2010). For example, when Leona's mother told her not be upset, Leona used metal music to convey her anger (Vasan, 2010). Leona claimed that metal music changed her life and she owes her life to it because she could release her anger in a healthy way through metal music (Vasan, 2010). She lived in a neighbourhood where there was a lot of criminal activity, so instead of releasing her anger through drugs and gangs, she did it through music (Vasan, 2010). Loana was not the only participant who talked about releasing anger through death metal music: Sara said that the music calmed her down, while Kesh claimed that death metal music helped her focus her anger so that she can eliminate it, and Leah explained that metal music is a way to let out and express her anger (Vasan, 2010).

Summary

Metal music tends to be viewed as male-dominated and sexist (Hickam & Wallach, 2011; Vasan, 2010). Krenske and McKay (2000) and Vasan (2010) discovered that women had to masculinize (wear male clothing, act like a male) themselves to fit in the metal scene and gain power. However, some of the participants from Vasan (2010) and Diehl (2013) talked about how metal music let them escape from traditional or stereotypical female gender roles, and let them explore their masculine side. Diehl (2013) suggested that instead of the women doing "culturally masculine," as Weinstein (as cited in, Diehl, 2013, p. 35) suggested, they were doing their own kind of femininity. Vasan (2010) noticed that her participants would talk about their love for

metal music in very feminine or even feminist terms. Therefore, the theme of gender and metal music is a complex and contradictory one that the present study hopes to shed some light on.

Metal music is also commonly associated with negative effects on mental health, especially related to suicide and depression in adolescents (Garland & Zigler, 1993; Miranda & Claes, 2007; Recours et al., 2009). For example, Scheel and Westfeld (1999) found that heavy metal fans had weaker reasons for living than non-fans, but female heavy metal fans did not have greater suicide risk than male heavy metal fans. Scheel and Westfeld (1999) also discovered that metal fans had poorer family relations, which led them to suggest that suicidal vulnerability reported by heavy metal fans may be due to personal and family problems, rather than a direct result of heavy metal music.

Although adolescent female metal fans reported more factors associated with depression than non-fans or male fans (Miranda & Claes, 2007), Miranda and Claes (2007) theorized that depressed female metal fans are attracted to metal music because of its negative themes, which then enhances their depression. Conversely, Recours et al. (2009) discovered that most metal fans had good health in terms of anxiety and depression. Continuing the positive note, Lacourse et al. (2000) discovered that, compared with males, females listened to metal music more for vicarious release. Listening for vicarious release was not linked to suicidal ideation, and there seemed to be a suppression effect between it and suicidal risk (Lacourse, et al. 2000). Lacourse, et al. (2000) concluded that female metal fans were experiencing metal music as a potentially effective coping mechanism that reduced suicidal risk (Lacourse, et al., 2000).

The subject of mental health is closely related to the theme of releasing emotions. Arnett (1996) reported that, 63% of the adolescent female metalheads, he interviewed, explained that they listen to heavy metal music especially when they are sad or angry. Most of them claimed

that the music soothed them and calmed them down, therefore resulting in an emotional catharsis (Arnett, 1996). Lerner (1985) argued that expressing anger is encouraged in males, even if it is a pathological anger, but for women even a healthy or realistic anger is not allowed to be expressed. This idea was supported by the results of Van Daalen-Smith's (2008) study, which showed that females' ages 14 to 24 learned to "self-silence" (p.119) their anger to avoid loss of integrity or relationships. Loana, a participant from Vasana's (2010) study, used metal music as a way to vent her "female anger" (p. 195). She described "female anger" (p. 195) to be the anger that women were socialized not to express, therefore the music would convey it for her, especially when her mother would say that she was not allowed to feel upset about something (Vasana, 2010).

In the studies that included anger (Arnett, 1996; Precin, 2011; Vasana, 2010), releasing anger was mentioned but not focused on (except in Arnett's study). What stood out in those studies, was that anger was released through listening or playing metal music, since females were not allowed to express it otherwise or they did not know how to. This result supports Lerner's (1985) theory and Van Daalen-Smith's (2008) results that women are expected to suppress their anger and not show it. Van Daalen-Smith (2008) had suggested that suppression of anger could lead to mental health issues, which is a very serious problem.

Present Study Purpose

Informed by this literature, the present study focused on how female metal fans perceived metal music positively influencing their lives. An online survey was used to have female metal fans speak for themselves and write about their positive experiences with metal music.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The following chapter focuses on the methodology of the present study, critical incident technique and thematic analysis. Critical Incident Technique is described as well as the use of online studies in research. Next, procedures and participants, data collection strategies and analysis are presented. The chapter concludes with sections on trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Critical Incident Technique

Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was developed during World War II by John Flanagan (1954) for understanding the selection process of pilots by the US Army Air Force's Aviation Psychology Program. According to Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, and Asa-Sophia (2005), Flanagan's original description of CIT was an approach to qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) described qualitative research as a method that uses "an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p. 2) or in other words, a qualitative study examines things in a "natural setting" and tries to "make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Originally, CIT research was performed in a natural setting and focused on the observations of participants (Creswell as cited in Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Asa-Sophia, 2005) although subsequently, having participants report important incidents from memory became an accepted valid way of gathering data. When Flanagan researched the accuracy of recalled incidents, he found that if the participant gave in-depth and precise details for the incidents, accuracy could be concluded.

Two fundamental principles of CIT include "factual reports of behaviour are preferable to ratings and opinions based on general impressions and that only behaviours which make a significant contribution to the activity should be included" (Woolsey, 1986, p. 243).

Importantly, some of the specific characteristics and behaviours to be noted during a study are determined and defined beforehand (e.g., in the present study – self-identified female metal music fans’ positive experiences with metal music). The recalled incident (or observation) is called a critical incident, that is “observable human activity” (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327) and “real-life events that stood out” (Brown, Collins, & Arthur, 2014, p. 304) for that person.

Overtime, the CIT was adapted as a research method in counselling psychology (Butterfield, et al., 2005). Woolsey (1986) identified some strengths and applications for the CIT in counselling. For example, the CIT is flexible and can be used to study different types of phenomena (e.g., group process, relationships, and decision-making). Woolsey (1986) argued that the CIT studies are very useful in early stages of research because “they generate both exploratory information and theory or model-building” (p. 252) since CIT is “descriptive and exploratory” (p. 245). CIT was well suited to the present study’s purpose of learning about an understudied topic, female fan’s positive experiences with metal music.

Online studies

As mentioned, interviews became more commonly used in CIT research as it was easier to interview participants and still generate sufficient data (Butterfield, et al., 2005). More recently, data have been generated using self-report data collected with online surveys. For example, Voss, Gruber, and Reppel (2010) published a study titled “Which classroom service encounters make students happy or unhappy? Insights from an online CIT study.” Online studies involve particular considerations.

Matsuo, McIntyre, Tomazic, and Katz (2004) suggested that by conducting an online survey, researchers can access certain populations that traditional methods (e.g., interviews and observations) cannot access. Another benefit of using the CIT online is that it is more suitable for

participants since they can take more time and feel comfortable in a safe environment (Wood, Griffith, Eatough, 2004 as cited in Voss et al., 2010). The anonymity of an online survey also reduces the chance of the participants giving socially desirable answers because the participant cannot view voice and body language cues from the researcher (Voss et al., 2010). For the present study, an online survey was an appropriate option given the anticipated limited number of female metal fans in the local region. Also, online surveys are less costly than other methods (Reips, 2002), so the potential number of participants was not limited by financial considerations (Matuso et al., 2004).

Even with all the benefits of online surveys, there are some methodological issues that should be considered (Matuso et al., 2004). One issue to consider is who responds to the study (Matuso et al., 2004). For example, Matuso et al. (2004) argued that “self-selection may be common in internet designs because participants who respond may be especially motivated or interested in the research topic, exacerbating the problem of sample representativeness” (p. 3998). However, self-selection was not an issue for the present study since purposeful sampling was used and sample representativeness was not a goal. Another potential problem with online research is that it is impossible to know who answered the study (Matuso et al., 2004), meaning that responders can be dishonest (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). Last, participants could possibly enter a survey multiple times because IP addresses are not typically tracked (Matuso et al., 2004).

Procedures

Woolsey (1986) outlined four steps for conducting a CIT study: a) establishing the aim of the study, b) outlining the criteria and specifications for participation, c) data collection, and d) data analysis. These steps applied to the present study are described in more detail below.

Participants. The aim of the study was to learn about female metal fans' positive experiences with metal music. Participants were recruited using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is when participants are selected because they can provide in-depth information regarding the purpose of the study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 178), in this case, being a female fan of metal music who perceived the metal music as having a positive impact in their life. For the current study, the key criteria for inclusion were being adult women (18 or older since 18 is the age of consent in Canada) who self-identify as metal fans and speak English.

The participants were recruited through targeted websites such as <http://www.7000tons.com>, which is frequented by fans of metal music from around the world. I am familiar with this website and posted a call for participants (see Appendix A) on the "Engine Room" under the account "researcher." I introduced the study in the thread and posted a link to the survey which was through the University of Saskatchewan's "Fluid Survey Tool." Once the participants accessed the survey, they started with the consent form. They could not continue with the survey until they pressed the button saying that they agreed with the terms and at the end of the survey they were asked to provide consent again. I also posted the survey on other forums at these websites: "Encyclopaedia Metallum: The Metal Archives," "Metal Forum," "Heartofmetal," "Metalireland," "Metalrarities," "Metalthrone," "Ozzfest," "Rateyourmusic," "Reddit.com/r/SampleSize/," "Thegradcafe," "Ulitmatemetal," "Worldmetalalliance." When I did not receive many responses based on posting on the forums, I decided to post the survey on my university's website as well as Facebook. Facebook generated an incredible number of responses and I closed the study.

Data collection. An online survey was used to collect data. In the present study, the questions were designed to focus on gathering critical incidents describing how metal music

positively influenced the lives of female metal fans. As directed by Woolsey (1986), the survey questions had to “indicate exactly the kind of incidents desired or the data will be diffuse and difficult to categorize” (p. 248). The survey questions were generated following the first two steps presented by Woolsey (1986) for doing CIT research. As mentioned the first step was to establish the aim by stating it in a “simple and clear form” (Woolsey, 1986, p. 244), which in the present study was to identify how metal music positively influences the lives of female metal fans. Woolsey (1986) argued that the wording of the aim of the study is crucial since participants will use that description to choose which incidents to report.

The second step was deciding who the sample should be (participation criteria) and how the information can be obtained as well as what was important to know about the sample (e.g., incidents and behaviours and demographics) (Woolsey, 1986). For examples, for the present study, there are certain demographics that are important to know such as age, country they reside in, how many metal festivals they have attended, how many metal concerts they attend in a year, and how much metal music they listen to during a day. See Appendix B for the questions developed for the present study.

Data analysis. The last step was to analyze the data using thematic analysis (Woolsey, 1986). Thematic analysis describes patterns and themes in the data, while also reporting and organizing data in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Fitting with the description of thematic analysis, data analysis in CIT aims to “provide a detailed, comprehensive, and valid description of the activity studied” (Woolsey, 1986, p. 248). In the present study, the focus was producing a valid and detailed description of how metal music positively influences the lives of female fans.

Woolsey (1986) claimed that there are three steps for CIT data analysis: “a) selecting a frame of reference, b) forming categories, c) establishing the level of specificity-generality to be

used in reporting findings” (p. 249). The first step is completed by considering what the results are intended to be used for. For the present study “formulation of the categories is done inductively, by sorting the incidents into clusters that seem to group together” (Woolsey, 1986, p. 249) which means that the critical incidents (examples of how metal music positively influenced a female metal fan) were placed together according to a theme (e.g., emotional release). For the third step, the categorization of data was completed with themes and sub-themes. According to Woolsey (1986), the level of generality of a category is created by the sub-theme or theme. Woolsey (1986) suggested that the data should not be forced into “superficially ‘equal’ categories” (p. 250) because then findings would be significantly inaccurate.

Trustworthiness

As CIT has evolved over the years, there has not been much literature on a standard or proposed method to confirm trustworthiness of the results of a CIT study (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Asa-Sophia, 2005). Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, and Asa-Sophia (2005) suggested that researchers and students should follow the nine trustworthiness checks established at the University of British Columbia where CIT has been used for more than a decade by graduate students and faculty. Butterfield et al. (2005) argued that these checks are consistent with Flanagan’s intent for CIT and Woolsey’s (1986) suggestions of how to apply CIT to Counselling Psychology research. I followed as many of these steps as possible, although some were adapted because the strategies were appropriate for interview studies.

The first step is to have a person who is familiar with the CIT to identify a number of critical incidents (25% of critical incidents discovered by researcher) from the participant’s original written information (Alfonso; Novotny as cited in Butterfield, et al., 2005). This step determines if the researcher has identified critical incidents that other people would see as critical

incident as well (Butterfield, et al., 2005). A higher concordance rate means that the critical incidents are significant to the activity being studied (Butterfield, et al., 2005). My thesis supervisor assumed responsibility for this task in the present study.

The second step is to cross-check with participants, through an interview, if the categories make sense, if the categories match their experiences, and to evaluate the critical incidents (Butterfield, et al., 2005). This step was not possible for us to complete since the participants were anonymous. We had no way of tracking them. I believe that leaving out this step was not a significant limitation since most participants provided critical incidents that pretty much stated what kind of category the critical incident fits in by the word choice the participants used (e.g., using the word identity).

For the third step, a specialist places 25% randomly selected critical incidents into the categories the researcher had created. The categories have titles and descriptions which are also given to the specialist. Once again, the categories are believed to be more reliable the higher the agreement rate is between the researcher and the specialist. This step was addressed through discussion with my supervisor.

The fourth step consists of the researcher checking for when exhaustiveness or redundancy occurred (Flanagan, 1954). This means that the researcher has to find the place in the data in which new categories have stopped appearing, suggesting that the activity has been sufficiently covered (Butterfield, et al., 2005). Flanagan (1954) suggested that exhaustiveness and sufficient coverage are reached when, based on 100 critical incidents, only two or three critical behaviours are uncovered, but Butterfield, et al. (2005) argued that this guideline has to be adapted for each study. I am confident that redundancy existed for the themes identified and

although there may be other themes that were not identified because of insufficient critical incidents, the present study did have a large data set that exceeded my expectations.

The fifth step entails having the categories formed from the data reviewed by two or more experts in the field of the study who have reviewed the generated categories in order to increase the credibility of the categories (Barbey, 2000; Morle, 2003 as cited in Butterfield, et al., 2005). This step was not completed as it would be difficult to reach researchers who studied the effects of metal music on female metal fans. However, I expect that dissemination of the research will lead to judgements about the credibility of the findings.

For the sixth step, a calculation of the participant rate is done by dividing the number of participants who mentioned a specific incident by the total number of participants (Butterfield, et al., 2005). Borgen and Amundson (as cited in Butterfield, et al., 2005) discovered that for a category to be regarded as valid a participation rate of 25% or more needs to exist. We did not do this step since we believe the themes are adequately supported without doing a mathematical calculation.

The seventh step is to establish theoretical validity, which can be evaluated by considering if the terms used in the study are also used in “the community of inquirers about the descriptive or interpretive terms used” (Maxwell as cited in Butterfield et al., 2005. p. 487). The procedure for this involves the researcher first stating his or her presumptions and checking if they are supported by scholarly literature (Alfonso; Butterfield as cited in Butterfield, et al., 2005). Next, the categories are compared to the literature (Maxwell as cited in Butterfield, et al., 2005). This occurred through the literature review and discussion chapters. There was commonality in the terms and phrases reported in the literature and in the present study’s findings.

The eighth step is ensuring accurate reporting of participants' words and the ninth step is having an expert in CIT check for leading questions (Butterfield et al., 2005). For the present study, I worked directly with online data written by the participants so I am confident in the accuracy of quotes. For the ninth step, asking the participants about their positive experiences with metal music might be viewed as a leading question, but it was the focus of the study. To the best of my ability, the survey was constructed without using leading questions.

Ethical Considerations

I sought permission through the university behavioural sciences research ethics board and was granted permission in March, 2015. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants were asked not to use any names. Also, demographic data and written responses were separated as soon as I checked if the survey entry met the requirements of liking metal music, age, and identifying as female. Participants were not able to continue with the survey until they agreed with the terms of the consent form. The consent form explained the purpose of the study, confidentiality, how the data will be stored and for how long, that the study will be published and viewed by others, and that the participants can withdraw from the study at any point until they complete the questionnaire. In special circumstances, they were allowed to withdraw from the study a month after the study was closed, but that would have meant they would have to email me and reveal who they were so I could take their data out. No one emailed me to have their data removed. In the consent form, it was also explained that anonymity was provided by not tracking their IP addresses and locations, and by enabling the secure socket layer (SSL) connection. The SSL is "a standard security technology for establishing an encrypted link between a server and a client" (DigiCert, 2014, para. 1). Usually the information between browsers and web servers is

sent in plain text, but the SSL encrypts it making it harder for an unattended party to access the information (DigiCert, 2014).

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, the results of the data analysis that explored the positive effects of metal music on female fans are presented. The preliminary analysis is described first, followed by a description of the sample. Then four major themes and their sub-themes are named and illustrated with verbatim excerpts from the critical incident survey data.

Preliminary Analysis

Data cleaning. The data were retrieved from Fluid Surveys which was used to design the online study. Of the 346 participants who clicked the link for the survey, 224 comprised the final sample. There were 122 responses that were deleted; 117 responses were incomplete and therefore consent was not obtained at the end of the survey for the use of the responses, and another five responses were completed by individuals listing their gender and sex as male.

Participant Characteristics

Socio-demographic data. Percentages and frequencies for the socio-demographic data are displayed in Appendix C. The sample (N=224) was composed of female metal fans, recruited from internet sites (metal forums, paws, and Facebook) around the world, and who ranged from 18 years old to 61 years and older. Of the sample, 223 of the 224 respondents specified that their biological sex was female. From the 224 participants, 219 respondents (97.8%) reported that their gender was female. The other five respondents claimed their gender was: gender void, gender fluid, bi-gender, AFAB (Assigned Female at Birth), agender, and female but leaning towards gender fluid or agender. For the purpose of this study, participants are referred to as 'she,' 'female,' and 'woman' since they completed a study that called for anyone who identified as female and also because the demographic information is not linked to the written responses.

Of the sample, almost half of the respondents (44.2%) were born in Canada and 30.8% were born in the United States of America. Some other countries noted by the participants included Bermuda (0.9%), Bosnia-Herzegovina (0.4%), Botswana (0.4%), Colombia (1.3%), Israel (3.1%), Latvia (0.4%), Japan (0.4%), and Zimbabwe (0.4%). There was one participant (0.4%) who did not answer this question.

Similarly, the majority (47.8%) of respondents lived in Canada while another 33.5% lived in the United States of America. The remaining respondents lived in countries such as Brazil (0.4%), Chile (0.4%), China (0.4%), Denmark (0.4%), Israel (2.7%), and New Zealand (0.4%). Two participants (0.9%) did not answer this question.

For ethnic background, participants could choose more than one response. Most of the respondents (87.0%) identified as Caucasian. Another 6.3% identified as North American Aboriginal (e.g., First Nations, Indigenous, Inuit, Metis), 4.9% (n=11) had a Latin American ethnic background while six (2.7%) identified as African American. There were three participants (1.3%) with an Arab ethnic background. Three participants (1.3%) preferred not to answer this question, while three participants (1.3%) gave no response.

For chosen religion, seven (3.1%) out of 224 participants preferred not to answer the question. Almost a third (31.7%) of the respondents were atheist, 18.3% said they had no religion, 15.6% of the participants were agnostic, while 12.1% were Spiritual. Another 11.2% identified as Christian, and 4.5% as Satanists.

The sample was well educated. Almost a third (31.2%) had completed some University, another 26.8% had completed a Bachelor's Degree, and 19.2% had completed a Master's degree. One participant preferred not to answer while another gave no response.

Almost half of the sample (40.6%) had full-time employment, 22.3% were employed part-time, while 15.6% were employed but did not specify if it was full-time or not. Another 20.1% of the sample were students. Two (0.9%) preferred not to answer what their job was and the job status and seven (3.1%) of the 224 participants did not respond to the question at all.

Of the 224 participants, 18.3% had jobs categorized as “Hospitality, Retail, Sales, and other services.” (e.g., cook, cleaning lady, nanny, barista, waitress, and selling items); 11.2% worked in in “Arts, Sports, Recreation, and Entertainment” (e.g., Graphic Designer, Artist, Musician, Yoga Instructor, Esthetician, and Show promoter/ Talent buyer); 11.2% worked in “Administration, Business, and Finance” (e.g., Accountant, Administration, and Mortgage Underwriter); and 10.7% had jobs in “Academics and Education” (e.g., teacher, tutor, researcher, research assistant, lab assistant, and professor). Other categories included: “Animal Care and Nature related work” (1.3%), “Architecture, Engineering” (1.3%), “Construction, Trades, and Transport” (1.3%), “Government, Communications, International and Foreign work, Politics, Legal Services” (4.0%), “Librarian, Archivist, Secretary, Curator, Real-estate agent” (2.2%), “Management” (6.2%), “Mental and Physical Health services, Helping Profession, Social Services” (4.5%), “Natural Science and Chemical safety” (1.8%), “Programmer, Web designer, Technology” (4.0%), “Writer, Editor, Journalism” (5.4%). The “Animal Care and Nature related work” involved kennel technician, forestry, and tree planting.

About 26% of the sample was married: 24% were in a relationship, while 23% are single. Two participants preferred not to answer the question. Heterosexual was the most commonly identified sexual orientation (60.3%) while 19.8% of the participants identified as bisexual and 5.8% as pansexual. Eight (3.6%) respondents preferred not to answer the question, while one (0.4%) participant gave no response. For the question of whom they live with, participants could

choose more than one response and four (1.8%) participants preferred not to answer the question. Slightly more than a quarter (26.3%) of the sample lived with their husband. 21.9% of the respondents lived with their boyfriend. 17.9% of the participants lived with their children or their partner's children, while 15.2% lived with their friends.

To summarize, the participants of this study were diverse and challenge stereotypes and judgements about who a metal fan is. The majority of the sample were Caucasian and were born and/or lived in North America. A full list of countries the participants were born in and lived in was placed in Appendix C to portray the variety of countries metal fans are from and live in. Variety was apparent when it came to religion with the most common being atheism which was represented by almost a third of the participants. Only 4.5% of the participants were Satanists, which contradicts the belief that metal fans are all Satanists. The participants were also well educated and mostly employed. Employment diversity was also present in the sample with jobs ranging anywhere from kennel technician to professor to yoga instructor to accountant. Most of the participants were heterosexual and most were in a relationship.

Metal music-related data. Percentages and frequencies for the Metal Music data are displayed in Appendix D. The 224 participants were asked to list their five favorite metal bands. A total of 443 bands were named with the five most commonly mentioned bands being: Metallica (17.0%), Black Sabbath (15.6%), Iron Maiden (15.6%), Judas Priest (10.3%), and Slayer (9.8%). Slightly less than half of the participants (41.1%) became a metal fan between the ages of 13 and 15 years of age. For 21.9% of the participants, they became fans of metal music a bit earlier between 10-12 years, and 19.2% of participants became metal fans a little later in adolescence, between the ages of 16 to 18. After the teenage period fewer participants became

fans of metal music although interestingly, one participant discovered a liking for metal music much later in life, between the ages of 51 to 60.

Most of the participants (74.1%) did not have any piercings related to their metal music identity. The same held true for tattoos with 69.2% of the participants not having any related to their metal music identity. These results align with the finding that the participants did not rate appearance as very high in terms of revealing their identity as a metal fan. Most of the respondents (71.9%) said someone would recognize them as a metal fan by seeing them at a concert; 54.5% of the participants (they were allowed to choose multiple responses for this question) said that people would know that they are a metal fan because they talked a lot about the music and artists; 52.2% would be recognized as a metal fan if someone heard their music when passing by.

Of the 224 participants, the majority (80.4%) participated in the metal scene by going to metal concerts, and 19.2% of the sample (they were once again allowed to choose multiple responses for this question) said that they are active in the scene by photographing or videotaping performances. There was another subset (17.4%) who noted that they do not participate in the metal scene. One participant (0.4%) preferred not to answer this question.

Most participants (almost 80%) listened to metal music every week: 29.9% listened to six to ten hours of metal music in a week; 25.9% listen to metal music two to five hours per week, while 23.2% of fans listen to metal music 21 or more hours per week. Interestingly enough, 75.4% of the participants listened to other music as much as metal music in a week. Last, 36.6% of the sample did not play an instrument, while 33.0% do, and 33.8% played in a band.

In summation, when asked about their top five bands, a total of 443 metal bands were named. Of the 443 metal bands, the top five for the whole sample were Metallica (17.0%), Black

Sabbath (15.6%), Iron Maiden (15.6%), Judas Priest (10.3%), and Slayer (9.8%). These top five bands consist of all male band members, which shows that participants were not attracted to bands because of female musicians. Interestingly, the sixth most popular band was a tie between System of a Down and Nightwish, and Nightwish has a female singer. The fact that Nightwish was in sixth spot out of 443 metal bands shows that female singers are appreciated as well. A list of all 443 bands was posted in Appendix D, because it portrays the diversity in metal music and in what female metal fans enjoy listening to. Most of the participants became fans of metal music between the ages of 10-18 years, and very few later on in life. The majority of the participants did not have any piercings or tattoos related to their metal fan identity, which was consistent with the fact that most claimed that people would know that they are a metal fan in other ways (e.g., hearing their music, hearing them talk about metal music, seeing them at a concert). The majority of participants were involved in the metal scene by going to concerts. Most of the respondents listened to metal music weekly.

The Importance of Metal Music for Its Female Fans

The participants' words, time and time again, underscored the powerful role of metal music in their lives. This was illustrated with short, succinct statements like: "Without metal, I probably would have committed suicide by now. Metal speaks to me in ways words and voice cannot." or "It [metal music] just fires up my passion and makes me feel empowered." to more detailed statements such as the following:

(...) Metal and music in general was always there when no one else was. It helped me calm down when I was angry. When my favourite song played it would make me happy and I would dance around my room. When I was sad it cheered me up. When I felt defeated it gave me hope. Whenever I felt like no one would ever understand me and I gave up trying to please people or be considered popular it gave me reassurance that being true to myself was the best thing I could ever do. Metal understood me in a way that not even my own parents could. (...) I will still love metal when I'm 60. I'll still love metal for as long as I live. Nothing will change that. Just like my experiences have

shaped who I am as a person so has the different styles of metal have changed me and watched me grow into the strong and independent person that I am now. (...).

Another participant expressed not only how meaningful metal music was in her life, but also, how validating it was when she discovered the survey for this study:

I love metal music, and it is essential in my life. A lot of people do not understand this, but it fills my heart with joy when I find people who do. Just knowing that this survey exist means that at least one of you who created it knows exactly where I am coming from! ... Thanks for creating this survey...it is important for people to see that metal saves lives and brings great joy to a lot of women in the world :) \m/ [This symbol represents the hand sign metal fans use.]

Without a doubt, metal music is very important in the lives of its female fans, and for many different reasons. The range of reasons were captured in the four themes: 1. *Metal Music and Identity: Creation and Awareness Thereof*; 2. *Metal Music Helps Forge and Strengthen Relationships*; 3. *Metal Music and its Scene Provides Fans with Life Experience and Knowledge*; 4. *Metal Music Helps with Emotions*. These themes and their sub-themes are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Key Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Metal Music and Identity: Creation and Awareness Thereof	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Sense of community and belonging (Positive Identity) 2.Personal growth (Identity Development) 3.Gender awareness (Identity as a Woman)
Metal Music Helps Forge and Strengthen Relationships	
Metal Music and its Scene Provides Fans with Life Experience and Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Accomplishments due to metal music 2.Keeping focus on a task- doing things for the task to run smoother 3.Learning, life experiences, and new opportunities due to metal music 4.Opportunity at a different life
Metal Music Helps with Emotions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyday Emotions 2. Intense Emotions 3. Suicidal thoughts and feelings

Metal Music and Identity: Creation and Awareness Thereof

Of the four themes, “Metal music and identity: creation and awareness thereof” was represented by the most critical incidents. This is perhaps not so surprising as almost half of the participants (41.1%) reported becoming a metal fan between the ages of 13 and 15 years of age, a time when teenagers are exploring their identity (American Psychological Association, 2002, p. 5). The following quotes are typical of a sentiment expressed by many of the participants:

Metal helped me figure out who I wanted to be, how I wanted to express myself, and what types of friends I wanted to have. I know that metal has made me a stronger, more confident and more interesting person.

Metal music and being part of the metal community has greatly influenced who I am, where I am in life, and the wonderful people who surround me.

Within this larger theme, three sub-themes related to metal music and identity were identified:

“Sense of community and belonging through metal music or its scene (positive identity),”

“Personal growth (identity development),” and “Gender awareness (identity as a woman).”

Sense of community and belonging (positive identity). Many critical incidents focused on community and belonging, being “part of a tribe.” Metal music provided a “sense that I belonged to something,” which helped create a positive identity. For example,

The metal community gave me a place where I could belong. It helped me shape who I am. It helped me meet people. It helped me look to alternative sources for my beliefs and my world views.

Several participants commented on high school and how important metal music was at that time because being a metal music fan gave them a sense of identity and belonging:

Metal gave me an identity throughout high school. It gave me a place to belong where I could meet other people who had the same interests. It's a great anger outlet for ‘teenage angst’ so to speak. I know that high school is a critical time in one’s life and without metal I know I would have been a different, less strong person.

I was in high school and never had many friends ... but when I started listening to metal and attending shows, I felt a sense of community and belonging that I never felt before. I no longer felt down on myself and I learned so much about who I am as a person and who I want to be.

Having a place to belong was really important. As one woman wrote: “Feeling a connection and common mind with all the people at those shows was POWERFUL.” Another wrote: “When I went to my first metal concert when I was 12, it filled me with such a sense of belonging that I dream of going to concerts to feel that rush again and again.”

The importance of having a place to belong was demonstrated as well by feeling part of the metal music community which helped participants accept themselves and feel positive about their identity:

Being bar age and getting into my first live metal show ... the experience definitely changed me. I left feeling so good about myself, and just excited. I'm from a super small town so I didn't have the opportunity to really explore other music that much so stumbling into a crowd of people who dressed like me, looked like me and likes the same things as me was overwhelming. It was the best.

It has provided me with more self-confidence. Being around crowds at a concert or seeing the type of people that play at shows you notice that there is an underlying message that your worth is not defined by your image but your attitudes and skills.

I listen to and deeply love a wide variety of music, from Black Sabbath to Bruce Springsteen to Oasis. I find that metal has the deepest and most accepting community, and that is part of what keeps me going back to shows even as I get older and start removing the piercings and wearing more 'normal' clothes.

Another participant wrote about pride and belonging to the metal music community. She attended an Amon Amarth concert despite icy roads because it had snowed the night before:

(...) I remember the lead singer, Johan Hegg, speaking between the songs and pointing at the crowd with the metal hand symbol saying, 'YOU are TRUE Vikings!' for coming out to the concert despite the snow and icy conditions. At that show, I met so many other people who listened to the same music I did and we instantly had that that thing in common and you just feel at home. When Johan said that to the crowd I felt like there was this underlying tie between all of us and it is just an amazing feeling to have a place where you belong.

A participant wrote about singing together leading to a sense of community:

At one metal kegger, a large group of us were in a circle, boys and girls, head banging for several songs in a row with our arms around each other. (...) it was intimate and aggressive at the same time...peaceful and supportive.

Other participants identified particular lyrics as producing a powerful experience of belonging and positive identity. One participant wrote about singing the phrase "We were Here":

There was a moment right toward the end of the show when they performed 'Greatest Show On Earth' and the floor was singing 'We were Here' and it just hit me how important that is. I almost cried actually.

Another woman wrote about the song, “Raise Your Fist”

(...) Everyone [at the party] was singing along the song ‘Raise Your Fist’, which spoke to me entirely. Mostly it was seeing the group, and me being part of it, that made it such a good fit. That was probably the beginning of my intense relationship with the metal scene.

How powerful the sense of belonging was, was portrayed by several participants who used the word “family” to capture the significance of the belonging and love associated with the metal community:

The community of metal fans has become like family. I never feel afraid or alone going to a metal show because there is always someone there to get to know. The music releases tension and takes me to a place of complete contentment.

Metal is a community and I have met many incredible people because of it. It’s like a family without the blood bond. When I went to Wacken in Germany, I met some amazing lifelong friends that will forever be part of my life...I was alone [at Wacken, Germany] but not lonely even though I was surrounded by over 80 000 strangers, we were all there for the same thing, it felt like being with family.

As summarized by one participant: “I have the impression that metalheads are a bunch of good, lovely, trustworthy people. It's like entering a house where you're always welcome.” And in this metal music family, female fans are comfortable – “I felt at ease and like I belonged” – and safe – “It is difficult to pinpoint a specific event. In general, it just made me feel safe and included. Several participants described feeling safe and protected, especially experienced at metal concerts in the mosh pits.

Every time I was in a mosh pit and fell down, someone helped me up immediately.

At a Rammstein concert I was abruptly pushed by a person to enhance the pit. (...) I lost my balance but before had hit the ground I felt one hand around my forearm and another on my shoulder. Two different people had grabbed me and pulled me up so that I was standing again. ... I heard stories mentioning a ‘code’ at metal concerts such as if someone falls in the pit everyone will rush to pick them up. But I had never been part of that.

At graspop I saw Dimmu Borgir by myself ... I felt totally unafraid, and had a brilliant time. I went in the pit, fell over, and was immediately pulled back on my feet ... I felt part of a community, I felt strong and supported.

From the multiple examples, it is clear that participants connected with other fans but a number of them also experienced transcendent “bigger picture” connections. As one fan wrote: “(...) I enjoy going to metal concerts because it feels like I'm part of something bigger.” Another woman wrote about a particular event:

In 2009, I was lucky to participate in Mayhem Fest in Tampa, Fla., and see some of the biggest performing artists out there- Slayer, Cannibal Corpse, Marilyn Manson to name a few. (...) Knowing in my heart I had seen these guys, made me feel like a part of a bigger scheme of things. Like I am part of a universal community, which does not conform nor does it apologize for its choices- choices that a large part of society deems evil, irresponsible, misunderstood. It felt good knowing I am there, taking a stand against that righteous, metaphorical judgment.

In summation, metal music and its community not only played a significant role in providing a sense of community and belonging but also in establishing a positive identity for its female fans. For example, the sense of community and belonging to the metal community made participants feel strong, self-confident, and self-accepting. The sense of community and belonging due to metal music and its community was so powerful that participants felt safe (e.g., being helped up when falling down) and considered the other members as family. Some participants also felt a connection to something bigger than community. Positive identity through metal music and community was also associated with identity development.

Personal growth (developing identity). For some participants, a significant part of being a metal music fan was positive change and growing as a person. Self-acceptance was an important aspect of the personal growth described by participants. As one participant succinctly stated, “To sum it up: Metal has helped me to accept both light and dark aspects of who I am (and who we all are) as a human being.” Other participants wrote that: “Metal music shaped my

being and taught me it's ok to be different,” and “Being a metal fan has made me confident about being an outsider instead of feeling awkward or ashamed.” More detail is given in the critical incident below about how being with other metal music fans led the respondent to realize that she was okay being herself, even if she did not “fit in” with the popular people at school:

I think a lot of adolescents go through phases of their life where they feel like no one understands them. Being a bisexual female, always with school work and roughly 15 hours of dance training a week, and listening to metal music, (clearly not a popular genre choice in girls at age 14/15) I felt quite alone. I only had one close friend, who was equally involved in dance and school as much as me. There were days where sometimes my emotions would get the best of me, and I would waste away the day feeling sad and alone. A metal music festival was coming through our city and I saved up to go. And being in these rooms full of other people who love and appreciate the music as much as I did was a real feeling of acceptance. It made me realize I don't have change myself and try to fit in to get along with the more popular kids in school. I can still have my own likes and style and love for things maybe not everyone else agrees with, and that's ok. A lot of people stereotype metal kids as these broken, attention seeking, problematic adolescents but that was never me. Yea, I was lonely, but never depressed or suicidal. I was and still am quite healthy. And the lyrics that I love and sing along to, aren't usually negative or hurtful. Most of the songs I really enjoy are positive, or poetry/spoken word put to metal music.

The metal music community she experienced at a metal show helped this woman accept herself and realize that she did not have to change her identity. Another woman also recalled a particular concert that led to self-acceptance:

The first real metal concert I attempted when I was 15 was Iron Maiden and I remember looking around and seeing people who were all very different from each other yet were brought together for their passion of this music. That is when I decided to accept myself for who I was and the positive attributes I possess.

For others, it was listening to metal music that was important for their self-acceptance. In the next critical incidents, solitary music listening helped the participants to accept the full range of their feelings, positive and negative. The participants also express that listening to metal music not only helped them accept themselves but also made them into the person they are today:

For the first years of my life, I had never been one to oppose authority or even talk back to bullies. Up until that point, I had mostly kept my head down and tried to stay

unnoticed. When I was 16-17, I was just starting to gain confidence and stand up for myself. This was the time I started to listen to music that didn't come from my parents- it was heavier, louder music, fierce, almost angry. For me, it started out as a way to express or channel my teen anxiety, and it seemed to coax me into expressing myself better- for me the message was 'it's ok to be angry/ sad/ aggressive'. (...) Overall, it helped me discover other sides to my personality, which helped shaped me into the well-rounded individual I am today.

Throughout my last year of my GCSE's [General Certificate of Secondary Education], I used to isolate myself from others as much as I could. I would shove my headphones in and blare out my metal music to cover up the thoughts in my head. It helped a lot actually, and listening to the lyrics made me realize that I had more to live for than to be hung up on a pathetic boy. (...) Music was my life, my passion and I don't regret isolating myself. I worked a lot harder than I ever had before- I had achieved 2A*'s, 7 A's and a B. It made me think about myself and what I wanted to be, and how I could become more independent and what I could do with my life, especially my education. (...) I decided to dedicate time to listen to music and to think about everything-positive and negative. (...) This positively influenced my life because it made me who I am today, it made me less over-sensitive to certain things and made me realize my worth in society and as an individual. I had great potential, and those many hours of metal-blarng paradise made me a better person, despite the foul language and 'meanness' to it.

In the critical incident above, it is clear that metal music helped her with her confidence. Metal music helping with confidence was echoed in the next critical incident:

I think metal music has made me stronger, more courageous, and proud of myself as a person. Most metalheads are generally considered 'rejects' or 'outlaws' and to know there is a whole world out there of other fans and people creating music that identifies with that personality type is really pleasant, and makes you feel more confident in yourself.

The next participant expressed that different styles of metal music helped her grow as a person:

(...) Just like my experiences have shaped who I am as a person so has the different styles of metal have changed me and watched me grow into the strong and independent person that I am now. (...)

It was not only the diversity in metal music that helped participants grow, but also the metal scene. This next participant wrote that it was the diversity of the metal music scene that allowed her to explore and accept the range of her interests and values:

I like that once you get into the metal community you really start to realize that it is so diverse and cannot possibly be stereotyped the way people seem to think. It is an eclectic group of people that all simply share a love of good music. I have learned that it is ok to be vegan and into metal (thanks to Alissa White-Gluz) or that it is ok to enjoy fantasy and video games as well as metal (thanks to Combichrist, Visigoth, Blind Guardian and many others). I just like to embrace all the things that I was never really sure about before getting into metal music.

Another woman wrote that the diversity of the metal music scene increased her acceptance of others “It contributed to me developing and growing as a person - respecting and appreciating diversity, not judging people based upon superficialities.”

Another aspect of personal growth, after self-acceptance and acceptance of others, involved expanding beyond oneself to understand the “bigger picture.” One woman linked self-acceptance, meaning and spirituality with metal music:

Metal music has a mysterious way of making you come to terms with yourself, your own nature, your individuality. Not relying on cliches of heaviness/aggression/shock factor of the more classic and renown bands, but just the complexity of the genre itself and its subgenres is almost like a transparent look into human nature and life in raw form. The raw ugliness of Metal and yet the surprising beauty of it, the philosophical and political ideology that is conveyed lyrically, through the instrumentals or both that can be incredibly misanthropic and bleak...and yet deeply spiritual, reflective, imaginative and creative. Metal music reflects just how chaotic and changing life is, and being a person is, and yet it is all who you are and on many levels, it just makes sense.

One woman simply wrote ““It [metal music] provided comfort during my younger years that the world wasn't a terrible, meaningless place. I've met a lot of wonderful, deep people who do great things for society and I know how appropriate metal is in aiding this.” Another participant wrote that: “I also believe that as oppose to common belief - being a metal head teaches you harmony and how to interact with the universe in a more serene and accepting way. I have my sanctuary, my outlet and nothing can compare.”

Whereas acceptance of self and others was the important aspect of personal growth for some participants, others wrote about the need to change and how metal music helped with this

process of changing. A good example of becoming aware of needing a change is the next critical incident that occurred when the participant was at her daughter's metal concert:

As I stood with all the other individuals, head keeping beat with the steady beat, I closed my eyes. All these bodies around me. (For me, I am always the oldest person attending and I am very self-conscious about that fact). I forgot the age difference. I forgot gender and all was the music-like it was beating from my own heart. Releasing the pent up frustration of how I so often feel. It was the deepest trance. I knew then when I opened my eyes there is more for me to do in my life than what I am doing (career wise). I decided then that I would start to make some changes before I stagnate. Music has always helped me as far as clarity and vision and decision making-especially metal as it pulls at my mind and forces me to think.

Another metal fan wrote that metal music helped her in decision-making about changing and figuring out what that change should be:

A few years ago, I separated from my husband. It had been my choice, but it was still very difficult emotionally. One of my favourite bands, Heidevolk, had just released a new album, and something in that album called to me. I listened to it on my ipod every day, while I walked through the labyrinthine paths through my local forest, thinking; about what I wanted in my life, about how I could move forward from this relationship, about what kind of person I wanted this to make me. Perhaps I could have found the same realizations without that album, or perhaps without the help of music at all. But I don't think so. I credit that album for ensuring that I didn't just drown in beer and loneliness.

Particular songs and lyrics also helped another participant decide how to be different after a friend died:

I was going through a rough time, and a friend gave me a Manowar cd. I wasn't impressed at first, and then the song 'Carry On' came on. A friend of mine had recently passed away, and I was just starting to figure out that I myself wasn't immortal. I was in that space of 'why does it matter?' and then I heard that song. It pulls you in slowly, but then it picks up like a whirlwind and whisks you away. The message, too-Carry on, my sons, forever, Carry on, when I am gone. That song made me want to be a better person, to make a mark on the world where a part of me would carry on when I was gone. It's kinda when I stopped being a total bitch 100% of the time.

In this critical incident, it is obvious that she was aware of wanting a change, but also applied herself to create the change she needed. Metal music motivating the participants to create the change they needed was mentioned in the next critical incident:

One of the first bands I got into, Gojira, I started listening to during an emotionally turbulent time in my teenage years. (...) I felt lost. Gojira makes metal music that is very much spiritual, placing emphasis on the beauty of the natural world, the inherent power every human being has from being connected to and being a part of nature, the ability human beings have over conquering personal obstacles through spirituality and self-reflection (...). Gojira will always be a special band to me, it was the first time (other than listening to Dark Tranquility) I felt understood and consoled at the same time. I felt affirmed. Their music helped me grow as an individual. I didn't feel alone and I was able to challenge myself and connect to my own inner self, with Gojira as my motivation.

Contrasting with the idea of creating change, other women wrote about how metal music restored them, helping them back to allowed them to find themselves again. This notion of “Restoring ‘me’ - finding oneself (again)” encompasses critical incidents that described the participants feeling restored or returning to a true identity. These next three critical incidents involve different circumstances; but, describe similar experiences of metal music helping to restore identity. For one woman after leaving an abusive relationship, for another woman following an intensive period of child rearing, and last, for one woman moving back home after years living abroad:

Dealing with the aftermath of emotions after I escaped from my very abusive ex, I listened to the songs we used to listen to together until I felt like they were once more MY songs instead of ‘our’ songs; realizing the music belonged to me as it did to him. I felt empowered the more I listened and just walked alone with my headphones in, letting every conflicting thought and emotion run free and accepting all of it and moving along to greater things in my life. Also, realizing on my own that I have value in the metal community was a great thing.

After having my daughter my life was very absorbed in her—I had a home birth and breastfed on demand for 3 years and used cloth diapers and made my own baby food...I was intensely involved with her. And I lost most of myself along the way. Loud music wasn't part of the game anymore—I studied and worked and took care of her. When she finally got to be slightly more independent, and didn't have to be with me every second (like age 2), I started listening to music again, and I got really into it, and started playing guitar again, which I hadn't done in about 8 years. My desire to emulate some of what I was hearing in metal gave me some purpose again—an interest, a goal, something that was ME.

I was born in Israel, but for almost 8 years (age 21-29) I lived in the US. After years of living abroad, I came back home to Israel, where I had to literally start over my entire

life. (...) One night, I went to a metal concert with 2 friends. The venue was packed and I remember standing at the left-hand side of the stage, holding a beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other, and feeling like myself again for the first time in a long, long while. It was as if I was able to breath, to reconnect with a primordial feeling that I had forgotten was inside me.

Restoring identity was also described in different ways by other women. For example, one participant described how metal music gave her a foundation to “get back to my life:”

I was 33 and going through a crisis, depression and anxiety made it hard for me to go outside, yet alone go to work. At this time, I remembered metal. I had left my albums in the basement, thinking I was too grownup. Now I found my old favorites, particularly the Black Sabbath albums featuring Ozzy. They became a pillar in my life that I used to stand up and get back to my life.

In summation, metal music and its scene can help female metal fans with personal growth. For example, going to a metal music concert or listening to metal music could increase self awareness and acceptance of oneself and others. Some participants expressed that metal music helped them become who they are now. Metal music and its scene also aided in providing motivation to change something in life and therefore grow as a person. For two participants metal music even connected them to the “bigger picture” of life, therefore providing an awareness of the world and leading them to grow as a person. For some participants, metal music helped them return to an identity that they had lost at some point. One of those identities was lost during child rearing. Gender and metal fan identity are further discussed in the next sub-theme.

Gender awareness in the metal scene. This sub-theme encompassed critical incidents that indicated participants’ awareness of their gender in the metal scene. Participants described a range of experiences about how they perceived being a woman involved with metal music. Some suggested it was freeing because gender did not matter: “As a female metal fan, I have never felt judged within the metal community because of my gender.” Another participant commented that “I like the women aren't overly sexualized in most metal acts. You never see some girl twerking

or shaking their ass for attention.” These statements are illustrated more fully in the next two critical incidents:

I went to Wisconsin for a metal festival and I had plans to stay with some friends. I thought there was going to be another woman there, but she wound up backing out at the last minute. Instead I spent the night watching bands with 4 dudes I had never met before and it was totally fun. We all stayed in a house together that one guy rented and I was treated like a normal human being, not a woman. No one objectified me or made me feel othered. It was great.

The first time I ever went to a metal concert was significant to me. I was almost scared to go because I knew that there wouldn't be many other females there at all. I got there and mostly stayed off to the side until I started getting into the music that I didn't care about anything else. I made my way to the front of the mosh pit and went crazy. At that moment it didn't matter that I was the only girl in the mosh pit. The only thing that mattered to me was the music and being able to jump around and headbang all I wanted to without being judged by anyone there because that's what they came for too. There was a wall of death at that concert and I enthusiastically made my way to the front of the wall and quickly found myself underneath three people. I was being pulled up off the ground quicker than I found myself on the ground. It took me a moment to realize what happened. The metal community is amazing. Moshers take care of other moshers (generally) and most importantly, no one cares if you're a girl. They respect that you get out there and do your thing and I like that I can be in the middle of a giant mosh pit of men and feel comfortable and know I probably won't be getting harassed.

These participants enjoyed the experience of interacting with male metal fans as equals. For them, being a woman who goes to a metal concert or festival means being a human being rather than a female human being. Two participants who were metal music musicians also experienced and appreciated this. One wrote about “being respected and valued as a musician, without prior awareness of my gender” and the other wrote “I have not met a single metal head that really gave a rat's ass (pardon the language) about whether I am female or male. It's basically, oh you like metal? Cool what are your fave bands? What do you do other than going to concerts? Oh you're in a band? Awesome!”

Another woman also commented on the unsexist nature of the metal scene: She wrote

that although the metal scene is considered violent and sexist by outsiders, that is not how it really is. She feels safe as a woman:

In the past some people, who were not metal fans, have asked why I go to concerts on my own, and how don't I feel unsafe being in a group of large, aggressive, violent men? I'm always so flabbergasted at outsiders' opinions of the scene. I don't think there is any other place where I feel so safe as within the metal scene.

On the other hand, not all participants had this experience. One woman wrote:

As a female in a male-dominated scene, there was a time when I was mocked because of my gender at a concert. I went to see Mayhem play in Seattle, had bought my own ticket, and traveled to the show by myself. I was wearing 4.5" high heels and had dressed myself up particularly feminine and slightly 'un-metal' that night. I went out to the smoke pit for a cigarette and asked to use a man's lighter. He said something along the lines of, 'So, where's your boyfriend?' and I asked what he was talking about, and he responded, 'Well, by the looks of it, you can't be here on your own, you've got to be here for someone.' I was livid. How dare he question my metal authenticity and accuse me of only going to a concert just for a boy??

Another woman wrote:

As females, many unjust and unfairly disproportionate duties are piled upon us, and we are expected to accept this with a smile. I couldn't pretend. I found my soul and true self again by listening to music like OM, which offered me a peaceful escape into the collective unconscious, where anything was possible, and everything was beautiful. Women are overly and unfairly burdened enough with prejudices and stereotypes, and I am not going to allow the "metal is bro music" stereotype pin me down now that I've discovered my desire and source of power.

However, these negative experiences were in the minority. One participant who had studied and written about women in the metal music scene, was surprised by the receptivity:

I would also have to say the experience of publishing a book on women in heavy metal music and seeing how much support there is for me in the scene. I expected to at least have a few haters who sent me emails or left me comments tearing the book to shreds and making sexist comments, but this still has not happened after the book has been out for a year. (...) But overall, the scene has been so welcoming and kind!

She further explained:

One of the most positive differences metal music has made in my life is the camaraderie that can be found with other women in listening to a genre of music that has often been coded only for men.

Being a female metalhead inherently challenges society's expectations of what a woman is, and many respondents commented on this. For example:

It allowed me not to buy into the portrayals of how women should be as presented by the media.

Loving metal music has given me confidence, as a female and helped me to feel tougher, more capable, in a male-dominated world."

I like to think it helped me cultivate a more assertive attitude and be able to care less about what others think of me. I don't take no for an answer or let myself be typecast by my gender. (...)

Another participant saw being a metal music fan as an act of feminist appropriation:

I felt that as a woman, my very gender challenged the societal construct of what was acceptable music for women to listen to. With this, it became, in my opinion, a space for feminist appropriation.

Other women credited metal music with helping them accept their bodies – "It's given me a lot of confidence. I'm a fat chick, but when I'm listening to metal or at a show, I'm just another music loving tough as nails bitch. (In the best way possible)." -- or accepting and exploring aspects of themselves that were stereotypically associated with men – "Also, the music allowed me to express, without shame, the masculine side of my nature." For one woman, this involved permission to explore her anger. She wrote that she did not know that women could feel anger until she listened to metal music given to her boss:

I was having a bad day. My boss recommended I put on 'Ride the Lightning' and listen to it, loud. It was the first time I recognized that ferocity and anger in music was a way to release tension, to engage with my own anger, and that it just made me extremely relieved to hear someone expressing the angst or anger I was feeling. Once I heard 'Ride the Lightning' I realized metal was a fascinating way to express a common experience of anger and frustration. (...) And that as a woman I was allowed to feel those emotions.

Other participants described metal music as making them feel empowered as women.

One fan wrote: "When I discovered My Dying Bride. It was their Like Gods of the Sun album.

Its doom metal but at the same time, I never felt so feminine and empowered.” Another wrote: “Metal music and the people enjoying it brought into my life have made me the strong and independent woman I am today.” Others felt empowered because of female metal singers, and conversely, a few participants were metal band members and recognized their impact as role models:

The album Deathhead's Extermination (1996) by the NY death metal band, Crisis is very significant to me. Its music, which deals with the human condition, pro-feminist themes, as well as other darker themes, really hit home for me. The lead singer- Karyn Crisis opened my eyes and ears to the range and vocal capabilities of women. Her vocal styles range from ethereal and quite feminine, to extremely low and brutal. During the early 90's in NY, Karyn Crisis was perhaps one of the only women who was really employing this style of singing. The only other woman I am aware of doing this was Runhild Gammelsæter of Thorrr's Hammer. In essence, Crisis's music made me feel empowered.

Playing metal music positively influenced my life when I realized that I had the power to be a positive influence on other people. One night after playing a show, a father of a young girl (who was not present) came up to me and asked for some inspirational words for his daughter. From his perceptions, this was coming from a female musician in a male-dominated genre (me), to his young daughter who he perceived as also being a potential minority in her future music career (her). ...it reminded me that I was potentially a role model and encouraged me to act with an increased level of self-respect and self-awareness.

(...) I remember once playing a show with a few bands touring through. (...) After our set, I remember a little girl being brought towards the stage by her mother, and she asked if I could sign an autograph for her. (...) Looking back, it was a really cool experience, because I hadn't really thought I was doing anything meaningful for anyone but myself, by being the only girl in our band. But apparently, there were people out there who thought that was really cool, and respected that. It made me feel almost role model-like.

In summation, being a female metal fan and being part of the metal community was perceived differently by the participants. Some respondents appreciated that attention was not drawn to the fact that they are female and that they were regarded as just another metal fan. A minority of participants expressed negative experiences related to gender although they managed to turn the experience into a positive one. Many of the respondents communicated pride in being a female metal fan. For example, one participant spoke about the book she wrote about women in

the heavy metal scene. Two other respondents expressed how meaningful it was to be role models for young girls who want to be part of as a metal band as well. Others commented on how metal music let them express anger, and realize that they do not have to follow societal views of females. Some participants expressed how metal music let them accept their bodies, and celebrate their feminine or masculine side.

Metal Music Helps Forge and Strengthen Relationships

Another major theme involved critical incidents that described how the women forged and strengthened relationships with family members, friends, intimate partners and other people due to their passion for metal music. Being passionate about metal music strengthened a range of different kinds of relationships. For example, a respondent described how as a teacher she commented on her student's work and included lyrics from a metal band: "He was shocked but his demeanor toward me changed completely. He wasn't oppositional, he tried on his assignments. I have seen him at shows and he's not embarrassed to say 'hi' to his teacher. I think that's pretty awesome."

Metal music also strengthened family and intimate relationships. A mother wrote: "My daughter and I have gone to see many bands including Black Sabbath, Marilyn Manson, Against Me, Children of Bodom and every time we go to concerts we strengthen our bond." This idea was echoed by another mother:

I'm raising a little metal fan now, and we have recently started taking him to concerts (he's turning 5 this summer), and it's a great bonding experience when he gets to experience the same type of things we've experienced, and he gets to see how his mom and dad 'grew up' and where his dad works.

A mother strengthened her relationship with her children by "rocking out" to metal music:

I've enjoyed seeing my kids enjoy it! They are 14 and 11 now and we have a good time at our house listening to it loudly and just rocking it out. They have developed a music appreciation via us and old YouTube videos. They see the humour in it, but also how much talent it takes.

Daughters also expressed that metal music aided them in strengthening their relationship with their parents. For example, one participant explained that metal music strengthened her relationship with her mother and uncle: "My mom and uncle took me to my first metal concert. It started a tradition in my family and it has brought us all closer." Another metal fan explained that the music helped her strengthen her relationship with her father: "It has helped me bond and relate to my dad a lot better. Even though I haven't lived with him in over 10 years, me and him are much closer than my mom and I. My dad and I go to shows together and rock out."

Metal music also helped strengthen relationships with other family members. Two participants talked about metal music letting them strengthen their relationships with their sisters: "Metal has brought me closer to my sisters. We send each other links to new bands and trade music. One of my sisters is rather distant, so that is a big deal to me," and "My sister moved to town and we started going to concerts together. We hadn't been close for some years, and remembering those crucial years when we were teenagers brought us together again."

In another case, the relationship metal music strengthened was an aunt with her niece and nephew:

I've introduced my niece for metal when she was about 11. We had just started drifting apart, as grown-ups and kids getting to their teenage years do, and music helped us build a different relationship. I took her to concerts then, and we still attend some (granted, not as many as before) concerts together, couple of times a year. We have spent some great hours listening to metal and one of my more treasured birthday presents is a book on history of Norwegian metal which I got from my niece and nephew.

These examples show that liking metal music can be a family event and can bring family closer together. This last example displays how metal music connected a whole family:

Metal has given me beautiful relationships. My husband loves metal (I introduced him to it, by the way), my brother loves it, my cousin loves it. We talk about our favorite bands, go to concerts together, listen to music together. We have bands and albums for every occasion, every emotion, every season. We have traditions (my husband and I play Type O Negative around Halloween, my cousin plays Kind Diamond and Merciful Fate, my brother plays Black Sabbath). It's just so much more than the music. (...)

In addition to family relationships, participants wrote about how metal music helped forge new friendships as well as strengthen friendships. For example: "I've met some of the best people in my life through metal;" "... metal music has been the factor that lead to me meeting one of my very best friends of all time;" and "It helped me make friends that actually cared for me." The participants "made many close friends through musical preference," and were dedicated to these friends:

... I met some very, very dear friends who live, breathe, and ooze metal. They're still in my life and would go to the ends of the earth for me if I needed them to. And I would for them also.

Other females saw metal music as helping them make friends because otherwise they were too shy or too outcast. One participant started Junior High and did not know anyone or have any friends. She wrote that:

The very first real friend I made was because she was wearing an Ozzy shirt. I was like, 'I like Ozzy too.' and then we started talking about bands and we were super close for years. We both had guitars and we'd go into her parent's basement and learn to play Judas priest songs. We wanted to be Glenn Tipton and KK Downing. ... Long story short, had I not been a Metal fan, I would have been friendless.

This female metal fan perceived metal music as crucial in letting her make a friend and experience good times learning how to play metal songs on guitar and having someone there for her. For another woman, metal music enabled her to step out of her shyness and connect with people; "I am quite shy. I struggle to talk to people and socialize. (...) But, having metal as a common basis made it easier for me." Another participant explained how liking metal music helped her meet people and overcome a perceived barrier of introversion, especially after high

school when she went to different schools across the province: “I’m introverted, so making friends can be very difficult for me.” She decided to go once a month to shows of local and regional bands, and described these shows as follows: “I found it really easy to make friends there. Complimenting someone’s band t-shirt/hoodie, or asking about the next band on stage isn’t scary, and can lead to some great conversations, and later, good friends.” She is not the only participant who managed to forge a friendship based on a metal t-shirt. Another woman’s critical incident focused on her Strapping Young Lad t-shirt that she wore to University. Another female metal fan approached her and they developed an important friendship:

She’s been my best friend ever since and we’ve gone to gigs and festivals together. We lived together and when awful things happened, we were there for each other. We bonded over music and still joke about our lounge versions of DM songs that we would sing when we were drunk in uni.

For these women, very significant friendships were forged because they were wearing metal band t-shirts. Another participant described the reverse situation, that some very significant long-time friendships were formed because of someone else wearing a band t-shirt. For example:

My first day of German 101 in college, I complimented a guy on his Queensryche t-shirt. I went on to befriend him and his engineer buddies, and they became my best friends in college. We were eventually roommates, and I sat with his family at his wedding. Many of my closest friends are fellow metal fans.

Wearing metal band t-shirts or commenting on someone else’s was not the only way the female metal fans forged friendships over metal music. One woman developed a friendship with a fellow metal fan in Barcelona when she was traveling alone. She explained in her critical incident that she went to a club with a group of women she had met in the hostel. She “dolled up” and went to the club even though it is not “her scene.” She wrote that:

Partway through the night the DJ played some heavier stuff (Motorhead I believe) and my enthusiasm level immediately skyrocketed. I burst onto the dance floor, rocking out, and with me was one other lone metalhead. We had a great time together during the song and ended up shooting the shit for the rest of the night. We met up again the next day, hit

the beach, and just wandered in Barcelona together. The music gave us an immediate connection, and having that particular something in common was the reason we became friends and spent those great days together.

In this case, being the only metal fans dancing to the metal song at a club where metal music was not the norm led to companionship during time abroad. Although the friendship was for a shorter time and ‘in the moment,’ not one sustained over a longer period of time, it was still valuable and crucial.

Whereas a passion for metal music helped some participants to forge significant friendships, other participants wrote about friendships that were strengthened when they went to a metal concert together. One participant explained that she attended a concert with her two friends, one who had to be convinced to go since she had not been before. In her critical incident, she described her reluctant friend:

She was kind of timid and I asked her if she wanted to dance. (...). She was on the fence about it so, as my other friend used to do to me, I dragged her in and jumped around and yelled lyrics (...). It was an awesome time to share something I personally love so much with her, and to see that sometimes it’s the first step or leap into a situation that is holding you back but once you dive in you get swept away by the storm of awesomeness and belonging. (This friend can’t wait to go to another concert!).

One woman explained that she went to a metal concert with a friend, which strengthened that relationship, but also became a reunion with old friends.

We got there, and found our spot. Looking around, I started seeing a lot of people I knew. No matter where I looked, there was someone I had known for years, or just met, but didn’t know were into metal, just people. Awesome people. My people, everywhere. It felt like coming home. What went from an I’m tired and I don’t really want to go out kind of turned into a big ole lifelong reunion. I had the best time. It also bonded me with my friend that I went with.

Two other critical incidents related to listening and singing were more detailed and expressed how metal music strengthened their relationships in beautiful ways. The first was about a college friend:

I had a friend in college who was a huge metal fan and some of the best nights of my life were spent singing along at the top of our lungs as we drove around aimlessly for hours. We would listen to it as we painted each other's nails (black), as we drove, while we sat parked in an empty lot smoking and talking all night. It was like a third person there with us and fueled a lot of elation that we felt about just having fun and being not-so-normal together.

The second was about friends and her future husband:

Time and again, I have connected with people over metal music. In high school, I found like minds, and metal was one of the ways that we found each other. This continued through university. I met my husband through those friends. I remember the summer that we started dating, when he and my room-mates drove to the lake for a night-time picnic and bonfire. As we drove under a beautiful full moon, listening to a metal tape that I had made, we sang together and all fell silent simultaneously to listen to one song that seemed to perfectly fit the beauty of the night landscape (not in lyrics, but in mood). After the song ended, we had this incredible feeling of connectedness and love for each other. I felt a rare sense of peace. I was so happy in that moment, with my friends.

In the second critical incident, the participant felt the particular metal song was very fitting to beautiful scenery, and made her feel a strengthened bond with her friends and significant other.

Others also commented on how metal music strengthened their bond with intimate partners. For example:

My fiancé and I also initially bonded over our love of metal. He writes reviews for a metal site and both of us have had a lot of great times at metal gigs. When we first met, we spoke for hours about different death metal bands and local Irish bands. (...) On the third date with my now husband, we discovered we both loved Night Wish (particularly a song called "Bless the child"). We were at a party at some friends of mine who are not very fond of metal, and ended up spending a few hours huddling in a corner over our mobile phones sharing music. (...) Although I don't remember exactly what we said, I remember being happy about having something as important as music in common.

We sometimes sing along pretending to play instruments or head banging (not when driving of course, safety first) we generally act silly and it's really funny and amusing. Sometimes we listen to a new album together and discuss the album. Sometimes we may question the lyrics for their ridiculousness or sometimes the songs will bring up a topic for discussion. Usually longer road trips are taken to visit family in other provinces and they always ask what we talked about on the long trip and are baffled by the amount and variability we did discuss. It is partially due to metal music's complexity and how we both think when we listen to it, it really can bring up a lot of varied topics!

The fact that metal music let them discuss many topics shows how metal music can provoke both emotional and cognitive responses. Metal music can be complex and interesting to discuss, which can positively strengthen a relationship.

Many participants met their husbands through a mutual like of metal music. For example, My husband and I got together because of a mutual love of this music and going to shows.

I met my husband at a metal concert. We have now been together for 18 years, sharing life, music and gigs together. He is a complete metal head, he listens to all kind of metal.

I also met my husband in my favorite metal bar and got Married there with a cerimônia from the 'metal God.'

Some participants not only felt that metal music helped them forge relationships with their significant others, they believed that metal music had actually given them their significant other because they would have not met or even started talking if they did not know the other one was a metal fan. For example: "I met the love of my life through the metal scene. If we did not have that common interest then we probably wouldn't have met." Similarly, another woman stated:

I met my husband thanks to metal: first on a thread about metal on a website we were both members of. (...) Then I met him IRL at Bloodstock festival in 2008- and fell in love at first sight. He felt the same. Metal helped bring us together and we both still love it now.

In the critical incident, it is clear that her passion for metal music brought her and her husband together and it is still important for them.

One female metal fan met her current intimate partner when she wore a Hellfest shirt into a non-metal shop while trying to find a present for her mother. She explained the encounter and the result of it:

I met my current boyfriend because I was wearing a metal shirt. (...) He recognized the shirt immediately and commented on it. Though he was working, we ended up talking for an hour and a half about the bands that had played, bands we liked/didn't like in general, then non-metal related things. He gave me his contact info and we met up a few days

later to go to a show. We've now been together for almost 3 years (and lived together for most of that) and it's a very wonderful, healthy relationship. Metal is still very important for both of us (we make music together, we're constantly looking for new bands on the Metal Archives and other websites, we share and promote music, etc.), but we also have a much deeper relationship and connect on many levels. We often like to joke about if I hadn't been wearing that Hellfest t-shirt (or any other metal shirt) that day when I walked into the shop where he works, he probably wouldn't have talked to me any differently from any other customer, and we wouldn't be in this very wonderful relationship we are in now.

In this critical incident, it is clear that metal music let them forge a healthy relationship and that it continued to play a crucial part in their relationship.

In summation, a shared passion for metal music and lifestyle can forge and strengthen relationships. Metal music can forge and strengthen a relationship between a professor and her student as well as strengthen relationships between family members. For example, because of metal music, mothers strengthened their relationships with their children, sisters strengthened their relationships, and daughters bonded with their parent. Metal music was how an aunt bonded with her niece and nephew and another woman strengthened her relationship with her uncle. In one critical incident, metal music strengthened the relationship between many family members.

Metal music also forged and strengthened relationships between friends and significant others. Some participants expressed that it was due to metal music that they made friends, because they were otherwise too shy to meet people. Many participants explained that metal t-shirts prompted conversations and friendships. Some participants strengthened their friendships by going to concerts together, and others met their significant others. The respondents explained that listening to music together strengthen their intimate relationships and provided conversation. The conversations and experiences due to metal music led participants to learn together and become knowledgeable.

Metal Music and its Scene Provide Fans with Life Experience and Knowledge

The third major theme is about metal music providing a way to acquire new life experience and knowledge. This theme has three sub-themes: “Accomplishments due to metal music,” “Keeping focus on task- doing things for the task to run smoother,” and “Opportunity at a different life.”

Accomplishments due to metal music. This sub-theme includes critical incidents that described situations where, due to the participants’ passion for metal music, they accomplished something that they felt proud of. Examples ranged from more ordinary to far-ranging experiences. Some experiences were work-related:

(...) I slowly realized I had loved a few other random metal tracks I’ve heard in my short musical history and wanted to expand my knowledge, so I proposed a metal show for beginners at our radio station. Eight years later I’m still producing it.

I am a music writer, and having published a book on metal and written many articles has had a huge impact on my work life and confidence.

One participant was a poet who drew on metal music to prepare for and strengthen the public performance of her work.

I used to do spoken word poetry. I was always scared shitless before a performance, even though I loved it ... One night on my way to a performance I was the most nervous I had ever been, because I had friends and family coming that night to watch me, too. I had too much nervous energy and it was making my voice shaky and my hands shaky. I knew I wouldn’t be able to perform. So, I had the thought to turn on some metal music to scream and headbang out some of the energy, and also to use it to bring up my courage level and confidence levels. When I performed that night, I thought of singing/ yelling to the metal music in the car, and, even though the poem itself was ‘all butterflies and kitty cats’ as they say, I performed it with a strong, loud, and moving voice, thanks to my metal warm up.

A related idea is focus. In order to accomplish achievements, people must be able to focus on their task. Several participants noticed that metal music helps with focusing on their tasks.

Keeping focus on a task- doing things for the task to run smoother. Due to metal

music, fans were able to concentrate and achieve certain goals that ranged from child birth to daily activities of living to studying and exercising. For example:

While I was in labour with my child, I was able to focus on the Pantera and Slayer albums that I had brought with me rather than the pain. As I went for over twelve hours without an epidural because there was no one available to put it in having a distraction from the excruciating pain I was in was a blessing.

The labour critical incident may be considered something that usually does not occur, but metal music helped participants focus in every-day-events, like work, as well. For example,

I worked at Red Lobster restaurant for some horrible months while I was in college. (...) One way to get through my shift successfully, both in terms of performance and mental encouragement, was to sing metal songs I enjoy. For example, I know how many seconds it takes to load a pallet of glassware for the washer, and I know how many seconds it takes beyond that for the biscuits or potatoes to need turning in the oven. I also know how long it takes me to properly sing specific lines of my favorite songs. So, I would use the lyrics and memorized music in my head to keep my timing correct. (...) And the kitchen was so loud that I could sing as loud as I wanted without the embarrassment of anyone being able to hear me. Doing this also helped me to block out the radio of the actual kitchen, which would invariably play music I did not like.

Metal music helped another woman with work-related activity that required focus and attention:

I drive truck for a living, so there are times when I need to get my mind engaged and my blood pumping so I can stay aware and alert, so I pick the most upbeat, hardcore songs I can find to groove and sing to stay more on the ball while I go about my day.

Metal music also aided participants focus on their sports:

Singing 'Master of Puppets' in my head helped me shoot free throws in basketball in high school and we made it to basketball provincials because of all my free throws.

The most recent incident was when I entered my first martial arts tournament a year or so ago. I was really nervous because, even though I was just a beginner at that time and beginner level is pretty mellow, the ladies in my division were straight up nuts. They hit heavy and had no control. That's a recipe for injury, and that scared me. I knew that to have the best chance of protecting myself, I had to be fully present and have control of my fear. That meant not just having a strong guard, but also having a strong mind. I found songs that resonate with me ('Iron Will' by Kataklysm and 'Destroy and Dominate' by Chimaria), and I played them while visualizing myself efficiently defending attacks and kicking ass. I paid attention to the way it made me feel - calm, strong, powerful, fearless- and I found a place inside myself where that feeling could be available to me when I needed it. While I listened to those songs, I kept that place until tournament day.

Tournament day was long, and, by the time my division was called up to spar, I was tired from waiting, but it didn't matter. I flipped the switch to Beast Mode and was calm, focused, patient. When my turn came and I was standing there opposite my opponent, (the hardest hitting woman in the bunch, of course) for just a moment, fear flooded my body. Then I found that place again and I stayed there until I was done. No one got through my guard that day, (...). I went all the way to the last round and earned some hardcore respect that day.

Learning, life experiences, and new opportunities due to metal music. This sub-theme encompasses critical incidents where participants associated metal music with learning, new experiences, and new opportunities. As one woman succinctly stated: "It [metal music] helped me identify something I didn't know I hadn't been able to identify - the burning need to know more. That intense drive and passion that fuels all artists." This motivation to explore and learn is further exemplified in the critical incidents below:

Metal music gave me an opportunity to explore my assertiveness and even become slightly more determined/aggressive with goals or ambitions. Metal gave me the confidence to stand up for what I believe or what I know is best for me, not to please the masses. I attended a metal show against the wishes of my parents and left town for several days, met many people, was exposed to many different lifestyles, views and perspectives which opened my eyes to things I wouldn't have necessarily had the chance to know otherwise. Since this experience, I fight much harder to do things the way I feel they should be done (even if it's more difficult) because it gives me the opportunity to learn more than what others want me to Learn.

I believe it helped me to search for things that are not the most obviously choice I could have. I don't like popular music, I like heavy metal. I don't like to travel to Disneyland, I like to travel to Iceland and Nepal. I don't want to use the same clothes everyone is wearing...

Seeking more knowledge also involved being accepting, open minded, and non-judgmental. This was well portrayed in the following critical incident:

I would say the fact that I have listened to metal for basically half of my life, and since I was a child, has made my ears very sensitive to small things, has taught me how to sing, has shown me that one can do unconventional things and make them great, and that it's perfectly ok to not be "normal" and to have your own opinion, life and style. And the concerts I've been to, the people I hang out with and the artists I have seen and met have taught me that appearance and taste doesn't (necessarily) say much about personality ... I certainly learned that mutual respect is key, but that it doesn't mean you have to speak

nically all the time. And last but not least - I got to learn that it's ok to have different opinions, and that, despite that, you can still stay civilized in conversation and be friends.

This was echoed by more participants, for example: “It has broadened my political consciousness and it has made me more accepting of all types of people.” Along with the idea of being open-minded came the notion of liking and being open to different types of music. For example:

Listening to metal music in general has broadened my tastes in music. Since all the subgenres of metal are vast and varying, I have always wanted to look into every one and see what different types of metal there is. Because of this, I have been introduced to a lot of music, I would never have otherwise heard of, and the more I listen, the more my taste in music becomes more refined and evolved. If it weren't for metal giving me an open mind about music styles in general, I wouldn't even be listening to more than half of the non-metal music I listen to now.

Metal music opened up a lot of doors to other music that I never would have thought of listening to. Many metal musicians are inspired by classical music. Beethoven was metal. So was Mozart. I never thought I'd ever listen to that stuff. Metal definitely teaches you to never judge a book by its cover.

Metal music has also encouraged its fans to learn how to play music or sing, or other artistic talents. For example:

It has helped me become successful in many different instruments, music styles, and has given me many different opportunities in life.

... discovering Kayo Dot was an important turning point, as I was recommended the band by a new friend after sharing some poetry. They were recommended based on their experimentation with instruments, composition and lyrics. This band was one of the first metal bands I came to really love, and still do, and much of it is due to the intricacy of their lyrics. Connecting with the words, and the mythological references they pulled throughout all of their albums, reading about their experimentation with other artistic disciplines, was important to encourage my own experimentation in art and specifically in pursuing my writing. In many aspects, many situations, metal music has been present in my life in a positive way: writing articles, singing, writing songs for bands, being part of a particular group of metal listener.

Metal music gave me the chance to discover a broader community and history of avant-garde art, and become more knowledgeable about the modes of both experimentation and classical form in music. This is important for me as I do not have a musical background, yet I feel more confident and appreciative of the music I enjoy specifically because I started learning through reading about metal. Progressive and avant-garde metal always pulls from multiple genres and disciplines, sounds and languages, so this has also helped

develop my appreciation for exploring subtle cultural influences (particularly Far Eastern, as Japan has a strong history of metal and has contributed crossover of philosophical ideas into the composition of metal). These are somewhat abstract incidents, but I feel they are most representative of the influence metal has had on my life.

Two participants learned about world history from metal music: “Aside from the empowerment and positive attitudes I draw from it, I have also learned a lot about human history,” and from another fan, “I was knowledgeable about the Holocaust because I listened to ‘Angel of Death’ by Slayer which helped me get a good grade in History in Grade 12.” Other participants learned new languages:

I can speak a second a second language now instead of only Portuguese and this is definitely because of heavy metal, I wanted to be able to understand what the singers were singing about, I wanted be able to talk with my idols and happily I can say I achieved this because of the music influence.

One of my favorite bands of all time is from Japan. They inspired me to learn other languages and I now dream of becoming a linguist. Even though we speak differently, there is no such thing as a language barrier in music despite what many say.

Prompting a different life. Metal music was associated with key junctures in some of the women’s lives that changed where they lived and what career they pursued. One woman became a British citizen, another immigrated to Europe, and yet others moved, which impacted their educational and work opportunities.

Heavy Metal positively changed my life in many circumstances and periods of my life. It certainly changed my life for the best, this event happened when I was 26 years old. I was at a Metal concert in Brazil when I met the person who gave me a better opportunity in life, an opportunity to migrate from Brazil to Europe.

He was a tour manager for a band touring in my country. As a journalist student and manager in a heavy metal clothes shop I was lucky enough to be there at the gig and get the attention of this man who end up being my boyfriend and brought me to live in England. This was how heavy metal hugely and positively influenced my life.

I was 17, graduated from high school and I was working at the metal magazine that me and my friends started years before. I had learned to be a ‘go getter’ by having to create the scene that we wanted (to have our music available to us and a space for it). So, since I was writing to the magazine already, I thought what was missing was an international

correspondent - to help the scene. I took off to England, on my own and not knowing much English at all. I worked from England for 2 years, doing interviews with metal bands, following the scene and reporting back. What was so special about this event was the strength that I had, at an early age to go on my own to a different land, not knowing the language (yet) and follow what I believed in. But could only happen because I felt the connection with that group and at that time knowing that I was part of something. I belonged. That gave me the strength to do one of the craziest moves to date.

In summation, metal music provides fans with life experience and knowledge by helping participants with accomplishments, focusing on tasks, learning and new opportunities, and prompting a new life. Accomplishments due to metal music included writing a book about metal music, creating a radio show on metal music, and having metal music help prepare for a poetry reading. Metal music also helped participants focus on tasks like giving birth, work, and sports. Participants also learned because of metal music. The learning about instruments, signing, languages, and open-mindedness. Learning due to metal music also led to new opportunities arising, like being able to start a new and better life somewhere else.

Metal Music Helps with Emotions

Emotions were part of many critical incidents, ranging from the everyday ups and downs that everybody experiences, to the more extreme and acute emotions of desperation, pain, and hopelessness. The participants described metal music as helping them manage, express, and identify emotions. Some of these emotions were experienced on a regular basis; others were extremely intense or magnified (e.g., euphoric instead of happy), and others were related to self-harm and suicide. These critical incidents were frequent enough to identify the fourth theme, metal music helps with emotions.

Everyday emotions. Here are some examples of how metal music was a constant in the participants' lives, helping them manage everyday life and/or improve the quality of their everyday lives:

(...) Metal can encompass so many different moods, and it can help to inject that mood into my day and inspire how I interact with the world... from playfulness and carefree joy, to difficult or exciting introspection, to feeling powerful and confident, and beyond!

(...) Metal has always been there for me. The music makes me happy, the scene makes me happy, and the people make me happy. All I want in life is to be happy, so I think I'm pretty damn lucky! Thanks Metal! \m/

Other female metal fans wrote that metal music “lifted their mood,” serving as a reliable comfort:

I'm not entirely sure I understand this question. I can think of countless situations where metal has improved my mood. After a bad day at work or anywhere else there is nothing better than getting in my car and cranking the metal. It's like I can feel any anger or frustration or other bad feelings just melt away. By the time, I get home I don't feel like I even need to talk about my bad day.

Importantly, metal music helped the women manage feelings:

It's the music I listen to whenever I feel like I need to turn my mind off and relax or when I feel like I need to headbang it out.

I really cannot give one particular event, it just happens to make me happy. When I am down, it fuels me up. I have power again. When I am stressed out or feeling angry, metal releases this feelings within the music. I just can give one example of how I was down after my boyfriend ended my first relationship. Listening to 'After Dark I Feel' (Rotting Christ) I really got my shit together to go on again.

Since discovering metal music, I continually use it as an outlet to get my anger, frustration and stress out in a healthy way. There is nothing better than cranking a metal song and screaming your lungs out even if you can't scream. Head banging and moshing are also amazing ways to get all of your pent-up energy out in a healthy way.

For some participants, they described metal music as being valuable in particularly difficult times:

I think just getting through being a teenager, I used to fight a lot with my mom. I didn't really have an outlet for anger, but music and singing in my room helped me let out some teenage angst!

(...) They were my favourite nights: hanging out with someone who was quickly becoming my best friend, drinking beer and sharing bands and playing sloppy, heavy, awesome LOUD music. When we started, I was doing my Masters and quite stressed out,

suffering from PTSD and depression. I was working three jobs and doing my MA, so this weekly or bimonthly release was hugely important. (...)

When I was going through my divorce I was so sad and angry. I tried all kinds of music to distract me and change my mood but I soon realized that when I listened to metal music it put a smile on my face, made me energized and happy.

In summation, metal music was a constant in the lives of many participants. Metal music helped participants on an every-day basis with everyday emotions. The participants' lives were improved regularly by metal music. In some cases, metal music helped them work through tough times. In the next sub-theme participants explained how metal music helped them with acute emotions and unique situations.

Intense emotions. Other incidents described by the participants seemed distinct because of the quality of emotion, which was much more intense and acute than every day emotions. Many participants wrote about incidents that focused on expressing and releasing intense feelings. One woman wrote that “Emotional release is somewhat of a theme in my life, (...). If I had to come up with a singular experience in which metal music positively influenced my life, it would definitely be the below story:”

Several years back, my younger brother was in the midst of gearing up to be deployed. We were all unsure where he'd be deployed, but we knew the time frame and we knew where. I am the eldest and the only sister, and felt more like a mother to both my brothers growing up; the sheer thought of my little brother going to a war zone scared me to the point of being absolutely numb. (I tend to emotionally shut down when something is going to hit me hard.) One night, I was sitting alone in my bedroom. I was on my computer, headphones on, with the lights off. I had my Nightwish playlist on, as I essentially always did at that point in time. ‘Ghost Love Score’ came on. I had not truly listened to the song before, typically skipping over it when no vocals came on for pretty much a full minute. I was distracted, busy worrying about my brother as I leveled up in Lord of the Rings Online (an MMO). I apparently made it past the part I normally skipped, as I noticed the chorus was stunning. The chanting of the choir in the background took my breath away. I stopped playing my game, hit stop on my keyboard, then hit the play button so I could hear the whole song in its entirety. By the time, I reached the end of the song, I was outright sobbing. Something about the song completely broke my (usually very strong) emotional wall, and all of my fears about my

brother came out in the form of a very hard, very long cry. For the first time in weeks, I was able to sleep (after I calmed down, of course).

A specific metal song broke through her strong emotional wall and let her release her emotions by crying. The music got her out of her numb state. She was able to focus on something else than her problems for a while and “escape” her issues. This was echoed in other incidents too, escaping as well as processing emotions. For example,

(...) The most recent and most emotionally charged was seeing Yob play and as I was grabbing a snack a few blocks from the venue when I received a call about my father. An MRI earlier in the day had revealed extremely aggressive cancer in his bones, liver, and lungs. They were giving him a few months to live. Being very close to my father, this news was devastating. I was very upset and not sure what to do. I decided the best course of action was attend the show. I cried through Yob’s performance, but the music was healing and helped me to process the intense emotions. While this story sounds negative, it’s really quiet the opposite. I am forever grateful for music and specifically for Yob for helping me get through one of the most difficult nights of my life.

For another woman, she used metal music to express the anger she felt about a friend’s death that she could not show in public:

(...) I was so angry and upset, metal music was my solace to help me work through my exponential grief and anger was difficult to move through. Metal music helped soothe and reflect my anger that I didn’t feel was appropriate to display to others, my grief I could share but my anger not so much. The complex and long experience of this really made me appreciate metal’s darker themes or in this case sad themes, because listening to other lighter genres that neglected darker themes were unhelpful.

Another critical incident involved processing and coming to terms with the death and loss of a loved one.

I gravitated towards extreme metal music when my mother passed away. I was 23 years old. (...) Being able to listen to death metal music at this time served as a cathartic experience for me. The musical styling that I found in death metal; it’s down-tuned guitar play, blast beat drumming and vocal growling appealed to my emotional state at the time. I found it appropriately aggressive and freeing. It allowed me to exist in a space of liminality as well.

Metal music also helped a participant process her emotions after a violent unexpected death:

When I lived in London I saw a woman commit suicide by jumping under Central Line tube train. She had been standing right next to me while waiting for the train. I was devastated by what I saw. I just couldn't figure this event out in my head. When I got home (I was crying and shaking on the train all the way home), by chance the song entitled 'The Tide' by Neurosis came into my mind, and I 'dedicated' this song to the dead woman. It gave me some kind of understanding about the situation I had witnessed. The lyrics made me feel a little at peace.

She was not the only participant who used a specific metal song to "bring in peace" to a very intense emotional situation. Another participant described how metal music helped her act despite difficult emotions because a metal song validated that she was not the only person to feel this way:

Thinking back further, I have one vivid memory of metal music getting me through an incredibly painful and awkward family reunion. (...) I knew I would be expected to be the perfect eldest child, and there wasn't much more that I despised than that. As we reached the park where the reunion would be held, I was sitting in the back of the minivan (my preferred spot) when 'Dead Bodies Everywhere' by KoRn came on my headphones. I took a deep breath, and allowed the song to scream everything, say everything, that I couldn't. It ended up carrying me through the entire picnic. (...) It saved me a lot of grief, and that crystallizing moment of 'someone else HAS gone through this, they've felt this pain, this frustration, this outright hatred' is something that was forever burned in my mind.

The song, "Dead Bodies Everywhere" is about the lead singer of KoRn working at a morgue, which he did not enjoy, and about his tense relationship with his father who did not want him to become a musician. The song lyrics were validating: "Tell me what you need, tell me what to be. What's your vision? You'll see, what do you expect of me? I can't live that lie", "You! Really want me to be a good son. Why?", "Let me live my... life", and "You want me to be, something I can never ever be!"

Another participant also used a metal song to "carry her through" an emotionally intense time. In this critical incident, metal music motivated her, allowing her to act despite being anxious or fearful.

I listened to metal all through my adolescence and it helped me through that tumultuous time when I was so incredibly insecure and shy. But, even though I'm all grown up and love myself to pieces, I can still have those moments as an adult sometimes. I love yoga, and I wanted to start taking classes from a particular teacher, but she only taught classes at a gym. I had never been to a gym in my life, and it made me feel insecure and fearful about going. I don't like unknowns and, even though I just told you a story about fighting in a tournament, I'm actually a fairly delicate and introverted little flower. So how did I find the courage to go all by myself to this super weird and intimidating place? I pulled up my socks, I walked into that gym straight to the yoga studio, set up my mat, put on my headphones and played 'The Death Plague' by All Shall Perish while I waited for class to start. It was my reward for being brave and awesome. I would listen to that song before every practice, and, by the time my teacher arrived, I was always ready to fearlessly rock out my shit! (...)

Metal music gave her strength and courage. Metal music providing those feelings to its female fans was also expressed in the next critical incident as well:

I was diagnosed with Colon Cancer in 2010 and got a polypectomy in 2011. I remember just going to metal shows (mostly local) almost every day to get my mind off of things. I'm not one to dwell on illness or being sad but every time I felt that way I would go to a show and know that it was gonna be ok. I'm not sure why metal was more comforting than relaxing songs but to me, it gave me strength, it gave me courage, and it made me feel badass, like I can beat this thing.

Going to metal concerts provided the participant with hope, courage, and strength in an acute emotional situation. Listening to multiple metal bands provided the next participant hope as well and a chance to escape reality for a bit:

Several years ago, I became homeless for two months. During this time, my mp3 player full of metal acted as the force to let me enter another mental place for a while and take a break from my life's difficulties. It helped me stay optimistic and playful, and think of my homelessness as a medieval adventure. I spent a lot of time walking in the woods where I thought about mythological creatures and Vikings while listening to folk metal bands like Ensiferum, Eluveitie, later Bathory, Manegarm, and Elvenking.

Metal music helped cope with other pressures as well by prompting hope and motivation:

I was also under immense pressure, being branded a 'gifted child', and felt that I could never live up to the expectations placed upon me. I felt completely isolated, but I would listen to 'Imperium' and feel as though I could pull through. I got my first tattoo at 16, and it was 'Imperium'. No matter what changes in my life, I know that I will never regret that. It's a symbol of what I learned of my own strength and that I can pull myself through when things feel as though they will never improve.

These women were in crisis and metal music was there for them. In the next two critical incidents, metal music seemed to jolt them “into” life, breaking their stagnation, letting them do more than just exist:

(...) I experienced stalking more than once. I became agoraphobic for almost a year; merely going to school and coming back to my white-walled dorm; afraid to go anywhere else. But I learned about Punk-Metal concert happening in Brooklyn so I mustered up the strength and courage not only to go but also to free myself of the fear I had felt for so long. I wrestled with the decision in my dorm, almost deciding not to go. But then I'm just like 'Fuck it'. This is my first concert in the city and I want to go. So, I went, stayed out late as fuck, met a friend I had known online there and came back as confident as I had left. The triumph really made me overcome my agoraphobia. I always look on that as one of my greatest personal triumphs. (...)

It is clear how metal music helped her overcome her agoraphobia and let her truly live life. In the next critical incident, it is clear how she used metal music to move on and live life:

I spent 7 years in an alcoholic relationship. Throughout this, he would drink, smoke crack and text his exes. It filled me with many emotions of anger and hurt. I would go to bed with my headphones on just to tune him out and find my happy place. No matter what I was feeling I could find a song that I could relate to and blast in my ears to help keep my cool and not hurt him or worse. When we finally separated, I used the music to help rid my body and soul of all the negativity he brought into my life. I spent an entire month in a haze, listening to music at the highest volume to help provide an avenue of release, and at the end of the last month, I had a concert with a good friend where I was finally able to let loose and have the time of my life. It was able to help me move on with my life.

For some participants it seemed like listening to metal music was the only coping mechanism they had that to keep them sane, grounded, and alive. It is obvious in the previous critical incidents that metal music played a tremendous role for participants in coping with intense emotions. In the next critical incidents there is a sense that nothing else but metal music could have pulled them through intense emotional times. For example,

I cannot pin a particular critical incident, but I have had many: from my mom almost being killed by her ex-boyfriend due to drug issues, to my grandpa suddenly passing away, me having to put down my 16-year-old cat, to my mom attempting suicide by overdose.... metal has always been there for me to help relieve the pain a little. I always listen to it in my car quite loud and sing to it at the top of my lungs. I find it soothing and

stress relieving, especially if the lyrics pertain to my situation. It helps me feel like someone relates to me and that I am not alone. And if the lyrics hit home enough, it triggers tears which I normally never shed so it helps relieve some of the burdens I have been building up over the years.

It is crucial to note that she also mentioned, in the critical incident above, that metal music can help her cry and also that it can make her feel like she is not the only one who has gone through these events. The next participant not only expressed how metal music helped her process acute emotions but also that it let her not have to own her emotions, which helped her cope. Because of the music, she can now process and own her emotions:

I was sexually assaulted when I was in my mid-teens and as a result I withdrew pretty heavily. I had a LOT of emotions and no way to process them or to even to understand the gravity of what had happened other than to blame myself. Metal and the way it allows and celebrates the chaos of our emotional spectrum gave me a way to vent some of the anger and sadness without having to own it. I could be screaming along to a song but I didn't have to acknowledge that it was my own emotion, I could pretend it was me getting into the music. This was certainly a big part of my healing and now I can channel my own emotions more comfortably while still relating to the song as art.

The next participant confided a very personal, intense, and highly unusual critical incident. She explained that she could not express her acute emotions, for obvious reasons, but metal music could vocalize her emotions and let her know she was not alone. Listening to metal music essentially saved her life since it kept her sane and let her fight back:

A couple years ago I was manipulated into living on an isolated ranch with an older predatory man who I worked for, under false pretense. I was deeply depressed and often suspicious and on guard. At nights to help soothe my anxiety and fall asleep, I would listen to Shining (Sweden), Lifesaver, Deathspell Omega, Gris, Woods of Desolation, and Pensees Nocturnes (among others). Highly depressive music with a vibe of insanity or tragic desperation made me feel not alone, because I knew there were others who 'got' what I was experiencing. The music felt like it embodied my emotions, and as I was unable to express my own emotions, listening to the music was a catharsis. During and after listening to the music I felt comforted, and like I had a greater sense of sanity and courageous fighter's spirit.

Metal music helped her keep sane and not sink into her depression. Metal music was strong enough to elicit energy and positive emotions, despite the depression described by these two participants:

Metal is one of the few things that may occasionally trigger emotion during the more severe bursts of lethargic/apathetic depression. Metal is also one of few things I can generally enjoy regardless of depression and/or its severity and has in the long run been one of my sadly very few anchors.

Suffered serious depression my whole life and the euphoric feeling you feel when you listen to the heavy bass and drums would, and still does, lift me out of depression. I dealt with depression growing up due to a number of factors, one of which was dealing with a chronic medical disorder. Metal helped to channel those feelings into something constructive. The album 'And Justice for All' by Metallica was crucial for me because in words and music it helped me articulate my feelings about justice and the American Judicial system.

In summation, metal music helped participants with acute emotions and unique situations. Participants used metal music to express emotions and release emotions. For example, metal music helped participants grieve or manage a challenging family event. For other participants, metal music helped them find the strength to overcome fear and agoraphobia. Metal music also provided hope and sanity for a patient with cancer, a woman who was homeless, and a participant who was abducted. In some cases, metal music seemed to be the only coping mechanism available for the participant. For example, only metal music could elicit emotions in women who were severely depressed. Metal music could also help participants want to live, essentially saving their lives. Metal music was a lifesaver for women who wrote about emotions related to self-harm and suicide.

Self-harm and suicide. Some participants shared incidents that involved suicidal thoughts and self-harm. Since a significant part of the recent literature found a correlation between metal music and suicidal ideation in female metal fans, it felt important to distinguish this findings as a sub-theme. Although researchers have wondered that metal music caused these

ideations, for the participants in this this study, the metal music did not seem to push the women further into suicidal ideation and self-harm. Rather, metal music helped them recover and increase their motivation to live. Metal music was something that kept many of the women going, sometimes the only thing that could. For example,

There's no single specific incident I can think of, but I tend to have panic attacks. A lot. After they're over I'm left with this feeling of dread, the incapacitating sort- when you just want to crawl into a hole and die because you can't imagine any other possible outcome to your current situation, and maybe you have important things to do but you feel so useless you can't see how you'll ever get them done, so instead of doing them you sit down and stare at the wall or ceiling. Usually when this happens to me I put on one of my Judas Priest CDs- doesn't matter which one. It's not exactly an enormous positive event that changes my life forever, but it does help. Something about Rob Halford's screaming calms me down and temporarily shuts off the part of my brain that keeps aggressively telling me to hate myself.

The next participant, explained what would have happened to her if she did not have metal music:

(...) I can't actually remember the words she [mother] said or even what she said, but I remember how it made me feel: extremely unloved, and like I had been wronged my whole my whole life by this woman, and I was just realizing it; it was like I had been blind to someone verbally beating me up for years and years, and the veil suddenly lifted. I was absolutely stunned, shocked, and angry as hell. My stomach was nauseated. I wanted to kick the shit out of something, even though I was never a violent person. I wanted to scream blood-curdling screams. I wanted to crash my car. I was in a truly ungodly amount of pain... like all the pain I had stuffed down for all those years was coming out at once. (...) I recognized that night that my mom had caused me a tremendous amount of pain throughout my whole life, that had never been verbalized. I was always a "good girl" and never talked back, which also included never standing up for myself even when I was mistreated. That night I felt like talking back, and then some. My friend loved System of a Down too, and I told her I NEEDED to listen to SOAD RIGHT NOW. We put it on and cranked it until it almost hurt our ears, and I screamed to the songs at the top of my lungs, driving down some desolate back road. I felt like I was throwing out all the pain, like I was SHOWING it to the ether, I was letting it out, letting it be heard, letting it be seen, letting it be felt. In my opinion, if I had not had metal music exposure before that point, I might have caved in as person, and become some continually quiet, voiceless, low-self-esteem nobody; or, perhaps, my suicidal thoughts would have gotten the better of me and I wouldn't have been strong enough to fight them off.

For some participants, metal music kept them alive and saved their lives. For example:

(...) On the multiple occasions when my stress and depression levels have been through the roof, and self-harm had started sounding very appealing, metal has essentially saved my life. Passionately lip syncing and/or thrashing to loud music on headphones is tremendous therapy.

The music was my escape. When I was sad and angry I could listen to it and feel like I'm not alone and as if I'm strong again. It kept me alive, basically. There was a lot of times when I didn't want to keep going on the earth but instead of giving up, the frustration came out with the headphones.

Metal was always there for me when my feelings were too strong. It has saved me from going out and doing something stupid countless times. I didn't kill myself after my two best friends committed suicide, I just listened to certain songs over and over and grieved.

It was obvious that metal music was powerful enough to save the lives of these participants. Metal music and its community were also powerful enough to make a participant realize the importance of life:

There were some dark times in my life where I didn't know if I could make it through... I hated myself and the world around me and didn't want to live in it. Going to the metal shows helped me feel like I was important and that I had purpose in life. Not only did listening to the music help me through the difficult times, but going to the shows and feeling the support from everyone there was a huge help and made me turn around the way I thought. Life was important again.

In the critical incident above, it is clear how metal music and its community helped her process her intense feelings and let her realize the importance of life. In the next critical incident, the participant clearly expresses that metal music was the only coping mechanism powerful enough to let her cope with her acute emotions and to let her stay alive:

(...) There was a time when I used to cut myself and metal gave me a reason to stay alive. I owe my life to metal. I really do. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for it. Growing up, my parents were both alcoholics and could be abusive. Lots of small things happened over time. One night my Mum came into my room and threw up on my bed. Another time, when I was around 15, I had to hide the car keys from my parents so they wouldn't drive drunk. My mum was subsequently arrested and charged with drunk driving. When I was 11, my mum, after drinking, became convinced my teacher was sexually abusing me. He was not. She spent the whole night asking me repeatedly what he had done and how he had touched me. Between the ages of 15-18 I self harmed regularly. Metal music became a very cathartic release for me. I wouldn't have made it through as balanced as I am now without it.

The next participant also spoke of a very personal, intense, and highly unusual situation. She describes extreme emotions and the event in detail. It is very clear in her critical incident how metal music was the only thing powerful enough in that situation to literally save her life:

I attempted suicide when I was 14. (...) I was VERY into Nine Inch Nails at the moment. The only thing that soothed my soul was to hear the beautiful sounds of Trent Reznor's guts being spilled, and recorded, and given to instrumentation. I knew what the last song I wanted to hear would be. (...) The lyrics from the fragile rang out, "I won't let you fall apart." Those words saved me. I drank rubbing alcohol, a bottle of Robitussin, and about 50 aspirin. Those words kept repeating. I collapsed and let the deep, 14-hour sleep take hold, without finishing the rest of the medications I'd lined up for the purpose of taking my life at age 14.

In summation, metal music sometimes was the only thing that could make the women keep on going. Participants wrote that metal music kept them alive and saved their lives. For example, one participant expressed that because of metal music she did not kill herself following the suicides of her two best friends. Another participant claimed that metal music stopped her from self-harm. Metal music also restored the importance of life in one participant. Another participant expressed in detail how she was going to kill herself, but the lyrics of a certain song literally saved her life when she was already in the act of committing suicide.

Revisiting the Importance of Metal Music for its Female Fans

Since humans and their experiences and emotions are complex and integrated, not all of the critical incidents illustrated just one theme. Some illustrated multiple themes and were exemplar because they really articulated the importance of metal music across many aspects of the female participants' lives. One of these exemplars is copied below. It reveals the meaning and powerfulness of metal music for its female fans and is a good way to end the chapter.

(...) I was an angry kid and stayed an angry kid for a long time. I was also painfully awkward, with issues making friends. I was lucky that one girl reached out to me and I managed to make friends that first day at a new school, but I was still a really angry kid in a catholic school full of judgmental people, and I still had moments where I lashed out

at my mom, siblings and even my new friends and I didn't know how to control it. (...) I got to be friends with other people who liked metal as well, and I remember one of my new friends asking what I wanted on a CD for my birthday, so I asked for Slipknot and System of a Down. I remember after I got it I listened to that CD over and over (...). It gave me an outlet for all the anger I didn't know how to deal with. I would stay in the basement of our house until late at night just listening to music on the computer and trying to lose myself. But the positive part of this that through metal I made so many friends who also had similar taste and didn't judge me when I couldn't control my emotions. They accepted me, something I hadn't really felt since my father died and my mother moved us to a brand-new city. (...) Between metal and my friends, I was able to make it through my teenage years, which might not seem like much but at the time it was a real struggle to just keep going at times.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the current study in terms of the literature about metal music and female metal fans. A consideration of the strengths and limitations of the present study, as well as implications for future research and practice are also presented.

Summary of Findings

The current study focused on female metal fans and the perceived positive effects of metal music. Identifying the recognized positive effects of metal music for female metal fans was important since metal music has the stigma of being ‘male dominated’ and ‘sexist’ (Hickam & Wallach, 2011; Vasan, 2010). Most of the current research on metal music has focused on male metal fans, and the studies that have included females have tended to focus on both female and male fans, thus reducing the attention to women’s voices and experiences. In order to investigate female metal fans’ perceptions about the positive effects of metal music in their lives, an online study was used to capture the active voices of 224 female metal fans who wrote about critical incidents from their lives about positive experiences with metal music. Thematic analysis was used on the qualitative data (Woolsey, 1986) and generated four major themes. Thematic analysis describes patterns and themes in the data, while also reporting and organizing data in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Fitting with the description of thematic analysis, data analysis in CIT aims to “provide a detailed, comprehensive, and valid description of the activity studied” (Woolsey, 1986, p. 248).

Some of the present study’s findings support findings reported in the literature, while others appeared to be unique to the present study; yet, other findings that have been reported in the literature, were not found in the present study. An integration of the present study’s findings with the current literature is presented in the following sections.

Contribution and significance of the study

Before summarizing how the present study confirms or disputes the current literature, an overview of the potential contributions and significance of this study may be beneficial for a better understanding of this study and its results. A key contribution of this study was helping to address a gap in the literature. There has been scarce research on the positive effects of metal music for female metal fans. The significance of this study's findings is providing great detail about why female metal fans like the music as well as how metal music and its scene benefit its female fans. The benefits of metal music for female fans are not readily visible in the literature, therefore it was important to focus on them.

In the present study, the importance of metal music for its female fans was clear in every critical incident. Metal music and its scene could help participants create or return to an identity as well as give them meaning as a female in a male dominated society. Female metal fans also expressed that metal music and its scene helped them find a place in a community and provided them with a sense of belonging. Belonging to a community can also be aided by having relationships with people. Some respondents expressed that metal music helped them forge and strengthen relationships with family members, friends, students, and significant others. Some participants explained that without metal music they would have been friendless since otherwise they were too shy to interact with people. A few respondents felt that metal music actually gave them their significant other.

Based on what metal music and its scene has done for its female fans, it is not surprising that metal music also helped participants acquire life experience and knowledge. For example, metal music has helped participants keep focus on important tasks like work, sports, and giving birth. Metal music also helped women with accomplishments like writing a book about female

metal fans and creating a radio show about metal music. Participants also learned Norse mythology, history, languages, and respect for diversity due to metal music. A few participants expressed that metal music let them move or become citizens in a different country.

Metal music also helped participants with their daily and intense emotions. Metal music made its fans happy on a regular basis and introduced other emotions into their day as well. Metal music could also calm participants when they were angry, and help with acute emotions in intense situations. For example, metal music helped with the grief of losing someone or seeing someone die. Participants also used metal music to cope with cancer diagnoses, their own or others. Metal music provided hope in situations like homelessness and provided sanity and an outlet for anger in a hostage situation. Metal music also elicited emotions during a serious depression when not much else could.

An important result in this study was evidence that metal music literally saved participants lives, which was significant since some of the current literature shows a correlation between liking metal music and suicidal ideation for females (e.g. Martin, Clarke, & Pearce, 1993). In the current study, participants explained that they would not be alive if it was not for metal music. Metal music helped them re-discover the importance of life. Metal music helped participants stop self-harm and avoid suicide.

Integration of Findings with Existing Literature

New findings not reported in the literature. A result of the current study but not addressed in current literature was that metal music provides life experience and knowledge. In the present study, for example, some participants elaborated on the fact that metal music led them to learn about history and mythology, a musical instrument, and another language. Some participants expressed that metal music also helped them learn about diversity. Other participants

described how metal music helped them discover new possibilities in life like a career related to metal music (e.g., working as a radio show host). Some participants expressed that metal music helped them with accomplishments and stay on task with work, sports, and even child birth. Other female fans spoke of how metal music encouraged them to move to another country, change their world view, or how they perceived life.

Life experience and knowledge can lead to personal growth, which metal music aided with as well. Some participants expressed that metal music and its scene lead to self-awareness and self-acceptance. A few respondents acknowledged that metal music helped them become who they are today. Metal music also provided female metal fans with accepting diversity and realizing that there is a “bigger picture.” For some participants, metal music encouraged personal growth by motivating them to change an aspect in their lives, while for others metal music encouraged returning to an identity that they had lost on the way.

Metal music also helped with another important aspect of the participants’ lives, which was relationships. Some participants expressed that they would be friendless without metal music because without metal music they would have remained too shy to interact with other people. Some participants also felt that metal music gave them their significant other and that their relationship works because of metal music. Metal music also helped strengthen relationships between family, friends, and significant others. The significance that metal music played in relationships was clearly stated in many critical incidents showing the intense relationship female metal fans have with the music. This intense relationship was scarcely present in the current literature.

Findings from the literature that were elaborated on in the present study. Most of the studies on metal music and mental health, in the current literature, were correlational, with

the exception of a case study by Precin (2011). Since the present study was qualitative, it could not confirm or deny correlational results but rather, elaborated and provided rich details of lived experience. For example, experiences with suicidal urges and attempts were described in the critical incidents. As noted in the literature review, Martin, Clarke, and Pearce (1993) found significant differences between female adolescent metal fans and non-metal fan females. For example, 66% of the female adolescent metal fans had thoughts of killing themselves compared to only 33% of non-metal fan females; and 62% of the female metal fans admitted to having self-harmed contrasted with only 14% of the non-metal fan females. Similarly, Scheel and Westfeld (1999) learned that 74% of the female heavy metal fans, compared to only 35% of the non-fans, reported that they occasionally or seriously thought about killing themselves. Interestingly, Lacourse, Claes, and Villeneuve (2000) discovered that there was a moderate correlation between heavy metal music and suicidal risk for female adolescents; however, when they performed a logistic regression, by introducing other risk factors, they found that heavy metal music preference did not have a significant effect on suicidal risk for the female fans after all.

Given these statistics, I was not surprised that the subject of suicide and self-harm appeared in the critical incidents. Some participants expressed that metal music helped them to not attempt suicide, and, in one case, stopped the participant from completing a suicide attempt. Metal music was described as kindling hope and a reason to live. Nicol (2007) reported on a phenomenological study of music listening experiences of women with chronic illness, and one participant who described music as “a lifesaver.” This word seems to capture the experiences of some women in this study as well.

Depression and metal music has also been investigated by researchers. Miranda and Claes (2007) examined different types of music such as: metal music, soul music, electronic

music, pop music, and classical music, and how these genres effect depression in adolescents. The results showed that factors of depression for metal music preference in adolescent females positively correlated with dysphoria, anhedonia, pessimism, suicidal ideation, work inhibition, indecisiveness, and a sense of worthlessness, although there were no significant correlations between any genre of music and depression for males (Miranda & Claes, 2007).

The present study extended understanding on the subject of metal music and depression since some participants spontaneously described their experiences with depression and metal music. Several participants expressed that metal music aided them by offering comfort and/or a means for expressing emotion. Metal music also helped some by energizing them with motivation and hope. This self-therapy with metal music was similar to the case study of Jakee (Precin, 2011), which described how metal music aided a young woman through her depression and PTSD (an anxiety disorder). Precin (2011) had Jakee talk about the metal music lyrics she wrote, as well as about the experience of performing with her band.

Findings confirmed in the literature. Arnett (1996) reported that the adolescents he interviewed said that metal music releases emotions like anger, sadness, or any other negative emotions, instead of intensifying them. Many participants in the present study wrote about how metal music helped them release emotions like anger, grief, and pain. Arnett (1996) had a few female metal fans express that metal music vocalized their anger for them, which seemed significant given societal expectations that although expressing anger is encouraged in males, such expression is not encouraged in women (Lerner, 1985). In the present study, a few participants indicated that metal music expressed the anger that they could not otherwise express.

Other findings in the literature review that were also represented in the current study included metal music helping manage intense situations and helping achieve goals. Just as Precin

(2011) used metal music to help treat Jakee's PTSD, metal music helped many participants in the present study overcome difficult experiences (e.g., abduction, divorce, homelessness, coping with cancer, loss of someone). Metal music also helped with a sense of accomplishment (e.g. learning something new, creating radio show, creating metal forum/ magazine, reciting poetry without stage fright, overcoming other types of anxiety/ agoraphobia, and learning a new language) just as metal music helped Jakee achieve her goal of workings (Precin, 2011).

Mixed results. Given that the focus of the current study was positive experiences with metal music, some findings could be understood as both confirming and refuting findings reported in the literature. Gender was a theme where both negative and positive interactions in the metal scene were reported. For example, a negative gender interaction, in the literature, was when Annah Moore transitioned from male to female and suddenly she was not recognized as a musician anymore when she went to buy instruments (Diehl, 2013). A positive experience was the acceptance Annah Moore experienced from her band when she came out as a transgendered woman. Another negative example was the conclusion made by Krenske and McKay (2000) that women had to do masculinity and follow male rules to fit into the metal scene, whereas Vasan (2010) concluded that many of her participants had freedom to explore their masculine side through metal music and Diehl (2013) suggested that metal music lets its female fans do a different type of femininity.

In the current study, participants described gender interactions as positive, or as negative interaction with a positive message or spin to it. For example, one participant expressed how much a certain metal band means to her, and that she will not let male-dominance in metal music and its scene scare her away. Other participants perceived positive gender incidents such as no comments being made about their gender; rather, they were accepted into the scene as just

another metal fan. Other positive gender experiences were: being able to celebrate and explore more of their “masculine side” because of metal music, and being role models for girls through being part of a metal band.

The same mixed results were also present for sense of community and belonging. In the literature review, researchers reported that participants had either negative or positive experiences related to their sense of community and belonging in the metal culture(s). A negative experience was Shirazi (Diehl, 2013) feeling out of place in the metal scene since she was a refugee. A positive experience was the sense of community and belonging Halloween was feeling at the metal bar 6 Feet Under (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007), or Chaney feeling that metal music was not trying to define who she should be as an African American woman (Diehl, 2013). Diehl (2013) discovered, through her examination of autobiographies by female metal fans, that one of the common reasons they were attracted to the metal scene was because a sense of community and belonging. In the current study, due to the criteria for the study, the participants shared positive experiences of sense of identity and belonging in the metal music culture. For example, quite a few participants in the present study expressed that before they really got into metal music and went to a metal concert, they felt they did not belong anywhere. But once they became metal fans and/or went to a show they felt like they found a community to belong to. The same was expressed about identity for many of the present study’s participants.

Strengths of Current Study

A strength of the current study is that it addresses a significant gap in the literature. Female metal fans have not been asked about their positive experiences with metal music before. The current study provides rich and compelling descriptions about the lived experience of being a female metal fan who values metal music and perceives metal music as making a positive

difference in her life. The importance of the study to the women who participated was obvious. Some offered thanks and many wrote in great detail and with great insight.

The use of an online survey was also a strength. It is possible that many participants who had a voice in this study contributed because it was an anonymous study. This may also have encouraged the participants to be honest and provide detail about very personal experiences. The fact that the study was conducted online was also a strength because it reached females from around the world.

Limitations of Current Study

Some limitations are inherent with online studies. Only people with internet access could participate. The fact that the study was anonymous was also a limitation as one could not prove that the participants were female and 18 years of age or older. Someone could have misrepresented their age or gender. The study was also restricted to people who spoke and wrote English.

Implications for Future Research

This study was unique given detailed reports about how significant metal music is for its female fans. Knowing now how crucial metal music is, future research could focus on positive results with non-English speaking participants as well as with different age groups. Researchers could conduct the study in different countries in the native language of that country, which is important since, according to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, perception and worldview are influenced by language.

Regarding perception and worldview, Arnett (2003) discovered in his study on transitioning to adulthood and ethnicity, that whether participants believed that they transitioned to adulthood or not depended on their ethnicity. Arnett's (2003) discovery is in line with

Crockett's (1997) findings that even though adolescence is mostly defined by psychological and biological developmental changes, it is also influenced by social and cultural aspects in that person's life. Therefore, since many of the participants expressed that metal music especially helped them in their adolescent years, it may be wise to conduct further study on the positive effects of metal music for adolescent female fans. Since metal music may play a different role depending on the participant's culture, due to the age of transitioning to adolescence varies in countries and due to language, it could be important to study adolescents from varying cultures. Since age may play a role in the liking of metal music, it would be interesting to also conduct a study on women from different cultures who came to like metal music at a later age. Their perspective of metal music and their worldview could be beneficial to the research of the positive effects of metal music, because they may have a different view of metal music benefits than someone who came to like the music in a critical developmental stage.

Another suggestion is for researchers is to conduct a long-term study, which would allow researchers to track the significance of metal music for female fans over the years. The purpose of tracking this phenomenon over the years would be to discover if the importance of metal music changes for its fans. For example, perhaps the positive impacts of metal music can change over the years depending on life events. Perhaps, female fans will have even more positive experiences with metal and its scene when it becomes more and more female-dominated.

Regarding gender, it may be significant for researchers to focus on the positive effects of metal music on female fans in a specific theme. For example, a researcher may want to discover how metal music was positive for females in gender interactions. For example, studying the interaction of transgendered or non-binary people with metal music and its scene could be

important for understanding the potential benefits of metal music and if the metal music community is defined by strict gender rules.

Furthermore, I was asked at a conference if I believed that the same results would be found with male participants. That is a crucial question. I think that some results (e.g., using metal music to calm down) would be found because of what we know from Arnett's (1996) research. On the other hand, there may be different results for metal music and stigma, but that stigma would still be an issue for males. I believe that researching the perceived positive effects of metal music for its male fans would be significant.

Implications for Practice

The current study has implications for helping professionals, because it brings attention to the significance metal music can play in the lives of its female fans. By understanding and appreciating the importance of metal music for female fans, helping professionals can use this to work with clients who are metal music fans. A person in the helping profession can encourage clients to talk about metal music, important lyrics, and what its role is in their lives. This will enable helping professional to better understand their clients and their needs, as well as their strengths.

Since metal music explores many taboo subjects (e.g. politics, darker side of humanity, death, etc.) in its lyrics, awareness of this might be used to help clients explore the darker feelings and darker thoughts. Also, metal music can provide a means for expressing and processing feelings.

It is important to note that metal music aided its female fans with mental health issues (depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicide ideation, etc.). Some researchers, who performed correlational studies, have argued that metal music caused those mental health problems. In the

current study, participants spoke about how metal music helped them with mental health issues. Mental health professionals who know this can find ways to use metal music to help female metal fans address their mental health issues.

Conclusion

The study was conducted to a lack of research focusing on female metal fans perceived positive benefits of metal music. The majority of the research on metal fans has been conducted with males, and if female participants were included, the researchers have been criticized as portraying them in a passive way (Diehl, 2013). Therefore, this study allowed female metal fans to assert their voice. Four major themes were identified based on critical incidents described by participants: “Metal Music and Identity: Creation and Awareness Thereof,” “Metal Music Helps Forge and Strengthen Relationships,” “Metal Music and its Scene Provides Fans with Life Experience and Knowledge,” and “Metal Music Helps with Every-Day-Emotions and Intense Emotions.” The rich data convincingly establishes that metal music has a positive influence in every aspect of female metal fans lives. Findings demonstrated the importance of metal music for its female fans as well as the value of this research because it brings a better understanding of what female metal fans experience as positive and important.

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Appendix A: Recruitment for Study

FEMALE METAL FANS NEEDED AS PARTICIPANTS FOR A STUDY ON THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF METAL MUSIC

We are looking for female metal fan participants who are 18 or older. Enough knowledge of English to understand written English and to provide a detailed reply to an online survey is a requirement as well.

If you meet the requirements and are interested in participating, then you are welcomed to fill out an anonymous (no tracking of IP address, and encryption of information will be added) online questionnaire where you have to provide detailed responses.

Your participation will be one time and will be 30 minutes to 45 minutes.

If interested, please follow this link for the survey:

Thank you for your time and participation.

Appendix B : Survey Questions

Demographic Questions

1. How old are you?
2. What country were you born in? (Or is continent better because of selecting a choice?)
3. What country do you live in? (Or is continent better because of selecting a choice?)
4. What is your religion?
5. What is your ethnic background?
6. What is your completed Education level?
7. What is your current occupation?
8. What is your current relationship status?
9. What is your sexual orientation?
10. Do you live with anyone? Who?
11. What is your household income?
12. Do you have any piercings related to your metal fan identity?
13. Do you have any tattoos related to your metal fan identity?
14. What are your favourite metal bands? List up to 5.
15. At what age did you become a fan of metal music?
16. About how many hours a week do you listen to metal music?
17. How many metal concerts do you attend on average in a year (excluding festivals and cruises)?
18. Do you listen to any other type of music as much as metal music in a week?
19. How do you participate in the metal scene?
20. Do you play a musical instrument?
21. Are you or have you been part of a metal band?
22. How would someone else know that you are a metal fan?

Context:

1. Please describe your experience when you first noticed you like metal music. What happened and how did you get attracted to it?
2. What attracted you to metal music back then?
3. What attracts you to metal music now?

Critical Incidents:

Critical Incident: A critical incident is an event that was very significant for you and which stands out to you. Please describe the incidents into as much detail as you remember from

beginning to end. Examples of details you can provide are the situation, how you felt, what you thought, and who was there.

1. Please think of a particular critical incident when metal music positively influenced your life. Please describe it in as much detail as you can.
2. Please describe another incident (a different situation) when metal music positively influenced your life.

Anything else you want to write about?

Appendix C: Frequencies and Percentages for the Socio- Demographic Variables

Variable	N	Percentage
Participants	224	
Gender		
Female	219	97.8%
Other	5	2.2%
Sex		
Female	223	99.6%
No response	1	0.4%
Country born in		
Australia	1	0.4%
Bermuda	2	0.9%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1	0.4%
Botswana	1	0.4%
Brazil	4	1.8%
Canada	99	44.2%
Colombia	3	1.3%
Continent	1	0.4%
England	3	1.3%
Finland	2	0.9%
Germany	1	0.4%
Greece	1	0.4%
Ireland	2	0.9%
Israel	7	3.1%
Italy	2	0.9%
Japan	1	0.4%
Latvia	1	0.4%
Netherlands	2	0.9%
New Zealand	1	0.4%
Nigeria	1	0.4%
Norway	2	0.9%
Philippines	1	0.4%
Russia	2	0.9%
Scotland	1	0.4%
Spain	1	0.4%
Sweden	1	0.4%
Switzerland	1	0.4%
Turkey	1	0.4%
Ukraine	3	1.3%
United Kingdom	4	1.8%
United States of America	69	30.8%

Zimbabwe	1	0.4%
No response	1	0.4%
Country they live in		
Australia	1	0.4%
Austria	1	0.4%
Brazil	1	0.4%
Canada	107	47.8%
Chile	1	0.4%
China	1	0.4%
Continent	1	0.4%
Denmark	1	0.4%
England	4	1.8%
Finland	2	0.9%
Germany	1	0.4%
Ireland	2	0.9%
Israel	6	2.7%
Italy	1	0.4%
Netherlands	2	0.9%
New Zealand	1	0.4%
Norway	3	1.3%
Scotland	1	0.4%
Spain	2	0.9%
Sweden	1	0.4%
Switzerland	1	0.4%
Ukraine	1	0.4%
United Kingdom	6	2.7%
United States of America	75	33.5%
No response	2	0.9%
Ethnic Background		
Aboriginal- Australia/New Zealand	1	0.4%
Aboriginal (e.g. First Nations, Native American, Indigenous People, Inuit, Metis, etc.) - North American	14	6.3%
African	9	4.0%
African American	6	2.7%
Arab (Middle East, North Africa)	3	1.3%
Asian	2	0.9%
Caribbean	1	0.4%
Caucasian (White)	195	87.0%
Latin America (Central and South America)	11	4.9%
Pacific Islander	1	0.4%
Prefer not to answer	3	1.3%
No response	3	1.3%

Chosen Religion		
Agnostic	35	15.6%
Atheist	71	31.7%
Buddhist	2	0.9%
Christian	25	11.2%
Jewish	5	2.2%
Multireligious/Interfaith	2	0.9%
Nature religion (e.g., contemporary Pagan, Indigenous religions, Wicca)	28	12.5%
None	41	18.3%
Personal Religion	1	0.4%
Satanist	10	4.5%
Spiritual	27	12.1%
Taoism	1	0.4%
Uncertain	1	0.4%
Unitarian Universalist	1	0.4%
Uncategorizable	2	0.9%
Prefer not to answer	7	3.1%
Highest education level		
Elementary School	3	1.3%
High School	20	8.9%
Some College	2	0.9%
Some University	70	31.2%
Some Professional Program	1	0.4%
Diploma/Certificate	33	14.7%
Bachelors degree	60	26.8%
Masters degree	43	19.2%
Fellowship	1	0.4%
Doctoral degree (PhD)	5	2.2%
Postdoctoral	4	1.8%
Prefer not to answer	1	0.4%
No response	1	0.4%
Employment status		
Disability	3	1.3%
Employment (not specified if full-time)	35	15.6%
Full-time Employment	91	40.6%
Homemaker	3	1.3%
Part-time Employment	50	22.3%
Seasonal	3	1.3%
Student	45	20.1%
Unemployed/No employment	6	2.7%
Prefer not to answer	2	0.9%
No response	7	3.1%

Employment		
Academics and Education	24	10.7%
Administration, Business, and Finance	25	11.2%
Animal care and Nature related work	3	1.3%
Architecture, Engineering	3	1.3%
Arts, Sports, Recreation, and Entertainment	26	11.6%
Construction, Trades, and Transport	3	1.3%
Government, Communications, International and Foreign work, Politics, Legal Services	9	4.0%
Hospitality, Retail, Sales, and other services	41	18.3%
Liberian, Archivist, Secretary, Curator, Real-estate agent	5	2.2%
Management	14	6.2%
Mental and Physical Health services, Helping Profession, Social Services	10	4.5%
Natural Science and Chemical safety	4	1.8%
Programmer, Web designer, Technology	9	4.0%
Writer, Editor, Journalism	12	5.4%
Prefer not to answer	2	0.9%
No response	7	3.1%
Age		
18-21	24	10.7%
22-25	43	19.2%
26-30	51	22.8%
31-40	69	30.8%
41-50	21	9.4%
61 and older	1	0.4%
Prefer not to answer	1	0.4%
No response	14	6.3%
Relationship status		
Celibate	1	0.4%
Civil union	1	0.4%
Common law	22	9.8%
Dating	9	4.0%
Divorced	6	2.7%
Engaged	2	0.9%
In a relationship	54	24.1%
In an open relationship	6	2.7%
It's complicated	9	4.0%
Married	59	26.3%
Separated	1	0.4%
Single	51	22.8%
Other: Common law and open relationship	1	0.4%
Prefer not to answer	2	0.9%

Sexual Orientation		
Asexual	6	2.7%
Bisexual	43	19.2%
Bisexual and Pansexual	1	0.4%
Mostly Heterosexual	2	0.9%
Heterosexual	135	60.3%
Homosexual	6	2.7%
Pansexual	13	5.8%
Sexual	1	0.4%
Undecided	8	3.6%
Prefer not to answer	8	3.6%
No response	1	0.4%
Who they live with		
Alone	30	13.4%
Boyfriend	49	21.9%
Children (their own and step-children)	40	17.9%
Common law partner	6	2.7%
Family of significant other (e.g., mother-in-law, brother-in-law, etc.)	2	0.9%
Friend(s)	34	15.2%
Girlfriend	1	0.4%
Husband	59	26.3%
Parent(s) (Including step-parents)	31	13.8%
Partner (not specified)	1	0.4%
Pets	7	3.1%
Relative(s) (e.g., aunts, cousins, uncles, grandparents)	6	2.7%
Roommate(s)/Housemate(s)	6	2.7%
Sibling(s) (e.g., brothers, sisters, step-siblings, half brothers or sisters)	14	6.3%
Spouse	1	0.4%
Wife	2	0.9%
Prefer not to answer	4	1.8%

Appendix D: Frequencies and Percentages for the Metal Music Variables

Variable	N	Percentage
Participants	224	
Favourite Metal Bands		
Metallica	38	17.0%
Black Sabbath	35	15.6%
Iron Maiden	35	15.6%
Judas Priest	23	10.3%
Slayer	22	9.8%
Nightwish	15	6.7%
System of a Down	15	6.7%
Tool	13	5.8%
Behemoth	11	4.9%
Gojira	10	4.5%
Korn	10	4.5%
Megadeth	10	4.5%
Motörhead	10	4.5%
Slipknot	10	4.5%
Avenged Sevenfold	9	4.0%
Pantera	9	4.0%
In Flames	8	3.6%
Lamb of God	8	3.6%
Rammstein	8	3.6%
AC/DC	7	3.1%
Anthrax	7	3.1%
Apocalyptica	7	3.1%
Blind Guardian	7	3.1%
Death	7	3.1%
Disturbed	7	3.1%
Eluveitie	7	3.1%
YOB	7	3.1%
Agalloch	6	2.7%
Amon Amarth	6	2.7%
Bathory	6	2.7%
Dio	6	2.7%
Five Finger Death Punch	6	2.7%
Katatonia	6	2.7%
Mercyful Fate	6	2.7%
Alexisonfire	5	2.2%
Amorphis	5	2.2%
Bolt Thrower	5	2.2%
Carcass	5	2.2%

Dimmu Borgir	5	2.2%
Faith No More	5	2.2%
High On Fire	5	2.2%
Iced Earth	5	2.2%
Manowar	5	2.2%
Marilyn Manson	5	2.2%
Mötley Crüe	5	2.2%
Opeth	5	2.2%
Protest the Hero	5	2.2%
Sabaton	5	2.2%
Strapping Young Lad	5	2.2%
Type O Negative	5	2.2%
Cannibal Corpse	4	1.8%
Darkthrone	4	1.8%
Devin Townsend Project	4	1.8%
Ensiferum	4	1.8%
Immortal	4	1.8%
In This Moment	4	1.8%
Linkin Park	4	1.8%
Mastodon	4	1.8%
Melvins	4	1.8%
Napalm Death	4	1.8%
Ozzy Osbourne	4	1.8%
Septicflesh	4	1.8%
Soundgarden	4	1.8%
Venom	4	1.8%
Alice in Chains	3	1.3%
Anaal Nathrakh	3	1.3%
Arch Enemy	3	1.3%
Arkona	3	1.3%
Asking Alexandria	3	1.3%
Atreyu	3	1.3%
Corrosion of Conformity	3	1.3%
Dark Tranquillity	3	1.3%
Dir En Grey	3	1.3%
Dragonforce	3	1.3%
Electric Wizard	3	1.3%
Epica	3	1.3%
Ghost	3	1.3%
Inquisition	3	1.3%
Insomnium	3	1.3%
Kataklysm	3	1.3%
King Diamond	3	1.3%
Kreator	3	1.3%
Lacuna Coil	3	1.3%
Mushroomhead	3	1.3%

Neurosis	3	1.3%
Of Mice and Men	3	1.3%
Pentagram	3	1.3%
Queensrÿche	3	1.3%
Rotting Christ	3	1.3%
Sepultura	3	1.3%
Sonata Arctica	3	1.3%
Symphony X	3	1.3%
Testament	3	1.3%
The Dillinger Escape Plan	3	1.3%
The Sword	3	1.3%
Volbeat	3	1.3%
Witch Mountain	3	1.3%
Within Temptation	3	1.3%
3 Inches of Blood	2	0.9%
Acid Bath	2	0.9%
Amaranthe	2	0.9%
August Burns Red	2	0.9%
Black Label Society	2	0.9%
Black Veil Brides	2	0.9%
Blessthefall	2	0.9%
Blut aus Nord	2	0.9%
Boris	2	0.9%
Bring Me The Horizon	2	0.9%
Bullet For My Valentine	2	0.9%
Burzum	2	0.9%
Celtic Frost	2	0.9%
Clutch	2	0.9%
Cradle of Filth	2	0.9%
Darkspace	2	0.9%
Deathspell Omega	2	0.9%
Def Leppard	2	0.9%
Delain	2	0.9%
Deströyer 666	2	0.9%
Devildriver	2	0.9%
Dissection	2	0.9%
Down	2	0.9%
Dream Theater	2	0.9%
Dying Fetus	2	0.9%
Enslaved	2	0.9%
Equilibrium	2	0.9%
Every Time I Die	2	0.9%
Eyehategod	2	0.9%
From Autumn to Ashes	2	0.9%
Godflesh	2	0.9%
Godsmack	2	0.9%

Graveyard	2	0.9%
Guns N' Roses	2	0.9%
Halestorm	2	0.9%
Kamelot	2	0.9%
Killswitch Engage	2	0.9%
Korpiklaani	2	0.9%
Kvelertak	2	0.9%
Led Zeppelin	2	0.9%
Lord Belial	2	0.9%
Melechesh	2	0.9%
Meshuggah	2	0.9%
Moonsorrow	2	0.9%
Moonspell	2	0.9%
My Dying Bride	2	0.9%
Nails	2	0.9%
Necrophobic	2	0.9%
Obituary	2	0.9%
Orphaned Land	2	0.9%
Overkill	2	0.9%
Paradise Lost	2	0.9%
Parkway Drive	2	0.9%
Pig Destroyer	2	0.9%
Rage Against the Machine	2	0.9%
Rob Zombie	2	0.9%
Satyricon	2	0.9%
Saxon	2	0.9%
Sleep	2	0.9%
Soilwork	2	0.9%
Stone Sour	2	0.9%
SubRosa	2	0.9%
Summoning	2	0.9%
The Amity Affliction	2	0.9%
Therion	2	0.9%
Tiamat	2	0.9%
Triptykon	2	0.9%
Trivium	2	0.9%
Tyr	2	0.9%
Ufomammut	2	0.9%
White Zombie	2	0.9%
Windhand	2	0.9%
Wintersun	2	0.9%
Wolves in the Throne Room	2	0.9%
1349	1	0.4%
86 Happiness	1	0.4%
A Day To Remember	1	0.4%
A Forest of Stars	1	0.4%

Aborted	1	0.4%
Abruptum	1	0.4%
Absu	1	0.4%
Acid Witch	1	0.4%
Aeon	1	0.4%
Affiance	1	0.4%
AHNA	1	0.4%
Akhenaten	1	0.4%
Alcest	1	0.4%
Alesana	1	0.4%
Alestorm	1	0.4%
All Shall Perish	1	0.4%
Allegaeon	1	0.4%
Altar of Plagues	1	0.4%
Alunah	1	0.4%
Amenra	1	0.4%
Anathema	1	0.4%
Anhedonist	1	0.4%
Animals as Leaders	1	0.4%
Annihilator	1	0.4%
Anvil	1	0.4%
Architects	1	0.4%
Arcturus	1	0.4%
Artillery	1	0.4%
As I lay dying	1	0.4%
At the gates	1	0.4%
Atriarch	1	0.4%
Attila	1	0.4%
Auroch	1	0.4%
Autopsy	1	0.4%
Avantasia	1	0.4%
Baby Metal	1	0.4%
Baroness	1	0.4%
Battlecross	1	0.4%
Beartooth	1	0.4%
Before the Dawn	1	0.4%
Beherit	1	0.4%
Behexen	1	0.4%
Being as an Ocean	1	0.4%
Belphegor	1	0.4%
Bethlehem	1	0.4%
Big Business	1	0.4%
Bison	1	0.4%
Black Breath	1	0.4%
Black Witchery	1	0.4%
Blackguard	1	0.4%

Blood Ceremony	1	0.4%
Bloodbath	1	0.4%
Bolzer	1	0.4%
Bongripper	1	0.4%
Burn to Black	1	0.4%
Bury Tomorrow	1	0.4%
Butcher Babies	1	0.4%
Cadaveria	1	0.4%
Cain and Abel 90210	1	0.4%
Cancer Bats	1	0.4%
Carnifex	1	0.4%
Cathedral	1	0.4%
Chalice	1	0.4%
Chevelle	1	0.4%
Children of Bodom	1	0.4%
Chyshuga	1	0.4%
Clandestine Blaze	1	0.4%
Coheed and Cambria	1	0.4%
Converge	1	0.4%
Coroner	1	0.4%
Craft	1	0.4%
Crisis	1	0.4%
Danzig	1	0.4%
Dark Funeral	1	0.4%
Darkestrah	1	0.4%
Dead	1	0.4%
Dead Congregation	1	0.4%
Deap Vally	1	0.4%
Deathklok	1	0.4%
Deep Purple	1	0.4%
Deftones	1	0.4%
Demon Hunter	1	0.4%
Demonaz	1	0.4%
Demons & Wizards	1	0.4%
Demontage	1	0.4%
Derketa	1	0.4%
Devourment	1	0.4%
Diablo Swing Orchestra	1	0.4%
Die Mannequin	1	0.4%
Disgust	1	0.4%
Dismember	1	0.4%
Disposable	1	0.4%
Dope	1	0.4%
Earth	1	0.4%
Einherjer	1	0.4%
Elder	1	0.4%

Elvenking	1	0.4%
Envy	1	0.4%
Esoteric	1	0.4%
Evereve	1	0.4%
Exodus	1	0.4%
Fear Factory	1	0.4%
Fen	1	0.4%
Finntroll	1	0.4%
Fire Next Time	1	0.4%
Fleetwood Mac	1	0.4%
Fleshgod Apocalypse	1	0.4%
For Today	1	0.4%
Forgotten Tomb	1	0.4%
Frostmoon	1	0.4%
Fu Manchu	1	0.4%
Galneryus	1	0.4%
Gamma Ray	1	0.4%
Goatwhore	1	0.4%
God Dethroned	1	0.4%
Gorgoroth	1	0.4%
Graves at Sea	1	0.4%
Gwar	1	0.4%
Hammerfall	1	0.4%
Harakiri for the Sky	1	0.4%
Hatebreed	1	0.4%
Havok	1	0.4%
Headpins	1	0.4%
Hecate Enthroned	1	0.4%
Heidevolk	1	0.4%
Hellhammer	1	0.4%
Helloween	1	0.4%
Heretoir	1	0.4%
Hinder	1	0.4%
Hollywood Undead	1	0.4%
Holy Grail	1	0.4%
Huntress	1	0.4%
Hypocrisy	1	0.4%
I Mother Earth	1	0.4%
I see stars	1	0.4%
I, the Breather	1	0.4%
In Extremo	1	0.4%
Indian	1	0.4%
Inter Arma	1	0.4%
Isis	1	0.4%
Jethro Tull	1	0.4%
Jex Thoth	1	0.4%

Kayo Dot	1	0.4%
Kittie	1	0.4%
L7	1	0.4%
La Dispute	1	0.4%
Led Zeppelin	1	0.4%
Lee Aaron	1	0.4%
Les Discrets	1	0.4%
Lesbian Bed Death	1	0.4%
Lifelover	1	0.4%
Liturgy	1	0.4%
Locrian	1	0.4%
Lustre	1	0.4%
Machine Head	1	0.4%
Madder Mortem	1	0.4%
Manegarm	1	0.4%
Manilla Road	1	0.4%
Master's Hammer	1	0.4%
Maximum the Hormone	1	0.4%
Memphis May Fire	1	0.4%
Merv	1	0.4%
Metsatoll	1	0.4%
Mgla	1	0.4%
Midnight	1	0.4%
Ministry	1	0.4%
Monster Mouth	1	0.4%
Morbid Angel	1	0.4%
Mortals	1	0.4%
Motionless in White	1	0.4%
Mournful Congregation	1	0.4%
Mourning Beloveth	1	0.4%
Mudvayne	1	0.4%
Nasum	1	0.4%
Necros Christos	1	0.4%
Negura Bunget	1	0.4%
Nekrogoblikon	1	0.4%
Nevermore	1	0.4%
Nile	1	0.4%
Nine Inch Nails	1	0.4%
Northlane	1	0.4%
Nuclear Death Terror	1	0.4%
Om	1	0.4%
Origin	1	0.4%
Pain of Salvation	1	0.4%
Pallbearer	1	0.4%
Pantara	1	0.4%
Pennywise	1	0.4%

Perfecitizen	1	0.4%
Periphery	1	0.4%
Poison the Well	1	0.4%
Porcupine Tree	1	0.4%
Portal	1	0.4%
Power Symphony	1	0.4%
Primordial	1	0.4%
Profanatica	1	0.4%
Propagandhi	1	0.4%
Pungent Stench	1	0.4%
Putrid Pile	1	0.4%
Queens of the Stone Age	1	0.4%
Rainbow	1	0.4%
Raised Fist	1	0.4%
Razor	1	0.4%
Ready, Set, Fall	1	0.4%
Red	1	0.4%
Repulsion	1	0.4%
Reverend Bizarre	1	0.4%
Roadrunner United	1	0.4%
Royal Hunt	1	0.4%
Ruins	1	0.4%
Running Wild	1	0.4%
Rush	1	0.4%
Saag	1	0.4%
Sargeist	1	0.4%
Sevendust	1	0.4%
Shining (Sweden)	1	0.4%
Sigh	1	0.4%
Sirenia	1	0.4%
Skepticism	1	0.4%
Skid Row	1	0.4%
Skindred	1	0.4%
Skinless	1	0.4%
Skullfist	1	0.4%
Skyclad	1	0.4%
Skyforger	1	0.4%
Solstafir	1	0.4%
Somastate	1	0.4%
Sombres Forêts	1	0.4%
Speedwolf	1	0.4%
Spiritual Beggars	1	0.4%
Steel Panther	1	0.4%
Stoned Jesus	1	0.4%
Straight Line Stitch	1	0.4%
Stratovarius	1	0.4%

Suicide Silence	1	0.4%
Sunn O)))	1	0.4%
Susperia	1	0.4%
Swallow the Sun	1	0.4%
Swans	1	0.4%
Tank	1	0.4%
Tenebrarum	1	0.4%
Tesla	1	0.4%
Tesseract	1	0.4%
Texas in July	1	0.4%
The Agonist	1	0.4%
The Distillers	1	0.4%
The Faceless	1	0.4%
The Runaways	1	0.4%
The Word Alive	1	0.4%
Thou	1	0.4%
Truppensturm	1	0.4%
Turisas	1	0.4%
Twisted Sister	1	0.4%
Ufomammät	1	0.4%
Ulver	1	0.4%
Uncle Acid	1	0.4%
Upon a Burning Body	1	0.4%
Urfaust	1	0.4%
Van Halen	1	0.4%
Vanhelga	1	0.4%
Veil of Maya	1	0.4%
Vemod	1	0.4%
Vyrju	1	0.4%
Whitechapel	1	0.4%
Windir	1	0.4%
Witch	1	0.4%
Woe is Me	1	0.4%
Woods of Desolation	1	0.4%
Woods of Ypres	1	0.4%
Xandria	1	0.4%
Yngwie Malmsteen	1	0.4%
No response	3	1.3%
Age they became a metal music fan		
Younger than 10 years of age	18	8.0%
10 -12 years of age	49	21.9%
13-15 years of age	92	41.1%
16-18 years of age	43	19.2%
19- 21 years of age	8	3.6%
22-25 years of age	8	3.6%

26-30 years of age	2	0.9%
31-40 years of age	2	0.9%
51-60 years of age	1	0.4%
No response	1	0.4%
Metal concerts a year (excluding cruise and festivals)		
0-1	54	24.1%
2-5	63	28.1%
6-10	41	18.3%
11-20	27	12.1%
21-30	15	6.7%
31-40	6	2.7%
41 or more	13	5.8%
Prefer not to answer	4	1.8%
No response	1	0.4%
Metal festivals a year (including cruises)		
0-1	159	71%
2-5	51	22.8%
6-10	9	4.0%
11- 20	1	0.4%
Prefer not to answer	2	0.9%
No response	2	0.9%
Piercings related to metal fan identity		
Yes	52	23.2%
No	166	74.1%
Prefer not to answer	3	1.3%
No response	3	1.3%
Tattoos related to metal fan identity		
Yes	64	28.6%
No	155	69.2%
Prefer not to answer	2	0.9%
No response	3	1.3%
Participation in the metal music scene		
I do not participate in the metal scene.	39	17.4%
I go to metal concerts.	180	80.4%
I am in a metal band.	25	11.2%
I manage/promote concerts/bands.	19	8.5%
I advertise concerts/bands (posters, social media, forums, etc.).	52	23.2%
I write reviews/blogs for concerts/bands/albums.	21	9.4%
I photograph or videotape performances.	43	19.2%

I run/moderate/post on metal websites/forums.	5	2.2%
Significant other or friend are in a metal band.	3	1.3%
I do research based on metal music.	3	1.3%
I actively search out metal music/buy it/share it with friends/ support it/socialize	5	2.2%
I run channel/show around metal music or own a venue	5	2.2%
Prefer not to answer	1	0.4%
How someone else can recognize them as metal fan		
They would not be able to tell unless they know me very well.	99	44.2%
They would know by how I dress.	98	43.8%
They would know by hearing my music when passing me.	117	52.2%
They would know by seeing me in the metal scene or performing in concert.	70	31.3%
They would see me at a concert.	161	71.9%
They would know by me doing research on metal music.	32	14.3%
They would know by me talking about metal music/artists a lot.	122	54.5%
They would know through social media	5	2.2%
They would know by my physical appearance other than clothing.	2	0.9%
Hours spend per week listening to metal music		
0-1 hours	12	5.4%
2-5 hours	58	25.9%
6-10 hours	67	29.9%
11- 20 hours	35	15.6%
21 or more	52	23.2%
Listen to other music as much as metal music		
Yes	169	75.4%
No	55	24.6%
Play a musical instrument		
Yes	74	33.0%
Yes, and I sing or growl or scream as well.	46	20.5%
No	82	36.6%
No, I sing or growl or scream instead.	22	9.8%
Part of a metal band (including managing a band)		
Yes	50	22.3%
No	173	77.2%

No response

1

0.4%
